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Effects of One-on-One Support for English Language Learners through Collaboration, Compassion, and Engagement

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Abstract

English language learners (ELLs) make up a huge student population in schools. As this trend continues, there is a need for educators to support these ELL students academically. Given this, one-on-one support for them is crucial for their academic success. The purpose of this capstone research project is to examine how one-on-one support for ELL students through teacher collaboration, compassion, and student engagement. Through the use of a literature review, a survey of four teachers, and an anonymous survey of sixty-two ELL fourth grade students in a fourth-grade class and two third-grade classes, the result findings revealed that one-on-one from teachers through collaboration, compassion, and student engagement found to be the most effective means to help ELL students to succeed academically.

Introduction and Background

The United States each year becomes more ethnically and linguistically diverse. English Language Learners (ELL) refers to students whose first language is not English and who have limited proficiency in the English language. The percentage of English Language Learners continues to grow dramatically. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), the percentage of students in the United States who are English Language Learners is 10.4 percent which is around 5.1 million students. California is the second state with the highest percentage of English language learners in its public-school system which is 18.6 percent. As these numbers continue to grow across the country, ELLs are placed in the mainstream classrooms and are not given the extra support that they need.

ELL students who are mainly Spanish speaking hardly attain the same levels of achievement in reading and writing compared to native English speakers (Zhang et al., 2013). The level of academic achievement for ELL students is way behind, for example in California, where there are over 1.5 million ELLs attending public schools, students who are not proficient in English perform less well on standardized tests (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006). Educators need to understand the importance of providing one-on-one teacher support for ELLs. One-on-one teacher support can be a key factor that students can benefit academically, especially English language learners who often are academically behind their peers.

As English Language Learners make up a huge population, we need to see how one-on-one teacher support affects ELLs through collaboration, compassion, and engagement. While completing my service learning hours, for the course LS 386S (Service Learning for Social Change in Education), the topic of one-on-one support for English Language Learners

came up. To complete my hours, I volunteered at a public elementary school located in Monterey Bay County for a whole semester. While observing, one noticed how this school was heavily populated with ELL students. Within that classroom, the majority of English language learners needed extra support to succeed academically. These English language learners did not get any one-on-one support from their teachers which they can benefit from. As a future educator, I believe that one-on-one support for English language learners can be helpful to help these students academically succeed.

The purpose of this senior capstone research paper is to examine the benefits of one-on-one support for English language learners through collaboration, compassion, and engagement. My primary research question is, How does one-on-one teacher support affect English language learners through collaboration, compassion, and engagement? My related secondary research questions include:

(1) What is one-on-one support for English language learners? To what extent, does this entail?

In another word, what does it involve?

(2) What does the research say about the effects of one-on-one from teachers on English language learners through collaboration, compassion, and student engagement?

(3) When and where does one-on-one support to English language learners takes place with regard to teacher collaboration and compassion, and student engagement?

(4) Given the importance of teachers' one-on-one support to English language learners, how does it affect students academically?

Lastly, (5) Are there sufficient resources for teachers to support English language learners one-on-one through collaboration, compassion, and engagement? If not, how do they continue to support English language learners one-on-one?

Literature Review

As each year, the ELL population continues to grow. Educators need to provide additional support for these students. One-on-one support for English language learners is essential to help ELL students who are academically behind. English language learners are a portion of students who struggle with learning to read, surpassing national averages (Mohr, & Mohr, 2007). According to Hansen (2006), English language learners have special needs that must be met with exact strategies that target language so that they will be able to understand the content being taught. Even though teachers are aware of how one-on-one teacher support affects English language learners, many teachers can not provide this teaching strategy due to time constraints.

One-on-One support. So, what is this One-on-one support? One-on-one support is provided as a supplement to classroom instruction and is generally considered to be the most effective way of increasing student achievement (Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, & Watson, 2000). Although one-on-one support for ELLs can be beneficial for students, classroom teachers identify adult-delivered one-to-one support as the ideal teaching practice but report that they are rarely able to implement it in their classrooms (Moody, Vaugh, & Schumm, 1997). One-on-one support can be a helpful approach to use in the classroom setting to help ELL students in areas where they need that additional support.

On average students who received one-to-one instruction performed at a level $\frac{1}{2}$ of a standard deviation higher than the average level of the comparison group, corresponding to a move from the 50th to the 65th percentile on standardized measures. For students experiencing severe difficulty in reading, an effect of this magnitude would not likely be sufficient to raise performance to within the average range for a grade level or to eliminate the need for sustained support beyond the time frame of the intervention. The benefit might, however, be great enough to allow these students to keep up with classroom instruction and avoid academic failure (Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, & Watson, 2000, p.615-616).

Even with the research on the benefits of one-on-one support, it is not done as much as teachers want to. One-on-one instruction or small group instruction has been recommended as one of the most effective instructional practices for students with cultural backgrounds and diverse linguistic backgrounds. (Tang, Irby, Tong, & Lara-Alecio, 2021). Although English Language Learners learn from one-on-one teacher support, researchers argue that the use of CCP strategies (Cooperative, Collaborative, and peer tutoring strategies) is better than one-on-one instruction because it accommodates every student in the classroom.

Teacher Compassion and Collaboration. An important part of a successful one-on-one support for English language learners is to have teacher collaboration and compassion. Teacher compassion can be when “Effective teachers encourage their students to participate in classroom discussions, welcome their contributions, and motivate them through such practices” (Mohr, & Mohr, 2007, p. 440). When teachers work with English language learners, they can use ELLs’ home environments as guides to construct a classroom environment to help students feel included, and supported. Researchers have stated that culturally and linguistically diverse students require culturally responsive teachers who develop supportive relationships with their diverse students (Banse, Palacios, & Martin, 2019, p.5)

According to Banse and Palacios (2018), teacher compassion leads to positive student comes, they state:

Both teacher warmth and classroom management are generally beneficial in upper elementary classrooms. Each is associated with positive student outcomes, including achievement. Having a positive relationship with a warm, caring teacher is associated with higher levels of student engagement and achievement in upper elementary schools (p. 646).

According to Diaz and Karlin (2016), when English language learners receive motivational help from their teachers, the emotional responses that they expressed were

admiration, feeling proud, determined, not feeling dumb, and being able to learn, etc. Providing compassion for English language learners makes a difference in their lives. When teachers incorporate collaborative learning, it provides opportunities for language use, and practices, and ELLs can benefit from observing. When teachers collaborate and use GRIT in their classroom it helps students' academic achievement. Using GRIT in the classroom is beneficial for ELLs by:

Moreover, a strong, positive relationship between student perceptions of teacher care and student characteristics similar to grit may lead to better academic outcomes. For instance, student perceptions of strong teacher-student relationships can be indicative of higher levels of student engagement, may indicate students' developing passion for the subject, and may also lead to improved academic achievement. It is therefore important to consider students' perceptions of grit in the context of these two classroom characteristics (Banse & Palacios, 2018, p. 648).

Creating an empathetic classroom environment is one of the most significant contributions which a teacher can make toward understanding others and building relationships. Being able to understand others will help teachers start to build cooperation, collaboration, and teamwork (Stead, 2018).

Student Engagement. Although one-on-one support can be very beneficial for English language learners, for them to benefit from this additional support, ELLs must be engaged in the lessons. When students are engaged in school they are more likely to get higher grades, and test scores. There has been research that links higher levels of engagement in schools with improved performance (Klem, & Connell, 2004). There have been studies where it shows that students with caring and supportive interpersonal relationships in school report more positive academic attitudes and more satisfaction with school.

Methods and Procedures

After picking my research project topic, I decided to seek the answer to my research questions. I would conduct some research to find peer-reviewed articles that relate to my

research questions. After looking for articles, I thought that it was a great idea to come up with teacher survey questions (See Appendix 1 for Teacher Survey Questions) that could help me answer my research questions and have teachers answer them. The teacher survey questions were designed around my related secondary research questions. For the teacher survey questions, I did a Google form so that the teachers could fill them out whenever they were not busy and had enough time to fill the questions. There were a total of seven questions for the teacher survey questions. To get responses to the teacher survey questions, I got in contact with four teachers (Teachers A, B, C, & D) that I have previously worked with while attending California State University Monterey Bay. I decided to give these survey questions to them because they are teachers who work in schools whose majority population are English language learners. Doing these teacher survey questions will help me understand the teachers' perspective on one-on-one support for English language learners and will help me see what they think about that approach.

Besides looking at peer review articles and doing teacher survey questions, I also decided to do student survey questions (See Appendix 6 for Student Survey Questions). For the student survey questions, I came up with questions that can help me understand what ELL students think about working one-on-one with teachers. For the student survey questions, I came up with six questions. For the first five questions, I did a simple format for the students to choose between "Yes" or "No". The last question was sort of like a multiple-choice question and the students had four answers and had to pick just one. For the student survey questions, I printed them out on paper and gave them a physical copy to fill out. The students that I gave the student survey questions to were 3rd and 4th-grade students from the four teachers that did my survey questions. These students were from two different public elementary schools, which are heavily

populated with ELLs. These two public schools are located in Monterey Bay County. The student survey questions were given to twenty-one fourth-grade students and forty-one third-graders (See Appendix 7 for student survey questions responses). Doing both teacher and student survey questions help me get answers to some of my research questions. Not only did I get answers, but I also got answers that helped me understand what one-on-one support is, and what teachers and ELLs think about using this teaching strategy for ELL students.

Results, and Findings

Through my research, the results showed that one-on-one support is beneficial for English language learners through teacher compassion, collaboration, and with student engagement. Through literature review, teacher and student survey questions, data was gathered to respond to my secondary-related questions.

What is one-on-one support for English language learners? To what extent, does this entail? In another word, what does it involve?

One-on-one support is when a teacher or trained/qualified adult supports an individual student at a time in an area they are struggling with, using various strategies. This support is provided as a supplement to classroom instruction. This involves an educator and student working in a designated area away from the core class practicing skills needed to progress academically. “One-on-one support can also involve doing a guided reading in which the teacher would fill in gaps “(Teacher B, Teacher Survey Questions).

As stated by Teacher B (See Appendix 3), one-on-one support refers to differentiate instruction. Equity, in other words, each student gets what they need. One-on-one support for English language learners can involve a teacher walking around the room as students are working and giving individual feedback and/or help while students are working on something.

One-on-one support can also include scaffolding throughout the instruction, using sentence frames, word banks, anchor charts, GLAD strategies (standing for Gratitude, Learned, Accomplishment, and Delight), hands-on activities, and presentations. In addition, this type of support can involve building background knowledge through discussion, and vocabulary development (See Appendix 4).

What does the research say about the effects of one-on-one from teachers on English language learners through collaboration, compassion, and student engagement?

According to Ross and Begeny (2011), there is substantial evidence that shows that fluency-based one-on-one interventions are effective for many students, especially those with reading difficulties. Students who receive one-on-one support performed at a higher average level. The effectiveness of one-on-one instruction has been validated by empirical research for students who are at risk for school failure or have been identified as having reading or learning disabilities (Elbaum et al, 2000). Research also suggests that one-on-one instruction is one of the most effective instructional strategies for students with cultural backgrounds and diverse linguistic backgrounds. On the other hand, they argue that CCP strategies are better than one-on-one instruction.

When and where does one-on-one support to English language learners take place with regard to teacher collaboration and compassion, and student engagement?

As each teacher has their teaching style, the when and where one-on-one takes place with regard to teacher collaboration and compassion, and student engagement can vary for each classroom. One-on-one support can take place during designated and integrated ELD. This support can take place before school, after school, haphazardly as teachers go through the day, and try to squeeze in a miniature here and there. Especially now that schools no longer have

volunteers allowed on campus (Teacher A, Appendix 2). One-on-one can take place in the back of the classroom, in an empty classroom, or in a conference room. “ The one-one intervention happens when a student does not master a particular standard for example; so, the teacher needs to provide extra support to ensure student success (Teacher B, Teacher survey Questions).

Given the importance of teachers’ one-on-one support to English language learners, how does it affect students academically?

Just like any other teaching strategy, one-on-one support can positively affect English Language learners’ academic achievement. “Usually, students who receive one-on-one support show progress through gains in reading, writing, and in math skills through the evidence on common assessments: (Teacher C, Appendix 4). Not only do they show progress, but also students succeed by providing individual, explicit, and target instruction and start closing gaps (Teacher A, Appendix 3). In the teacher survey questions, Teacher D responded that one-on-one support provides students the additional resources to meet their academic goals and make progress in that academic area (Teacher D, Appendix 5). One-on-one support helps fill learning gaps and helps provide “Goldilocks” which is providing students with just the right time, just the right levels, and just the right skills (Teacher A, Appendix 2).

Are there sufficient resources for teachers to support English language learners one-on-one through collaboration, compassion, and engagement? If not, how do they continue to support English language learners one-on-one?

Based on the teacher survey responses, of the four teachers who work in an area that is heavily populated with English language learners, there are both not sufficient resources and sufficient resources for teachers to support ELLs. Teacher A (See Appendix 2), responded that there are not sufficient resources. Not only are there not enough resources for teachers to

support ELLs but Teacher C (See Appendix 4 for responses) stated that depending on funding for the school year there are sufficient resources to support ELLs one on one. Teacher D (See Appendix 5 for response) reported that there are sufficient resources for teachers but it can be difficult to find these resources to help ELLs. Based on my teacher survey questions, only one teacher said that there were sufficient resources. According to Teacher B (See Appendix 3 for responses), there are sufficient resources, and teachers can design lessons that are targeted to specific needs, by providing scaffolds for students to access the content. Teachers can help support ELL students by providing a safe learning environment for practicing new skills. They can also use “Be GLAD” strategies to help support ELLs. Teachers are also able to incorporate GRIT into their classrooms to help ELLs academic achievement.

Discussion

One-on-one support for English language learners through collaboration, compassion, and engagement can be effective for them. Just like any other strategy, one-on-one teacher support has shown that it has been effective for students with reading or learning difficulties, and students who are at risk for school failure. One-on-one support can help English language learners to be at the same level as their peers, by receiving additional support from teachers.

The student survey question responses demonstrated that eighty-three ELL students liked working one-on-one with their teachers, yet only twenty-six students picked that they preferred working one-on-one with their teacher. English language learners like working one-on-one with their teachers and have responded that this approach helps them learn more (See Appendix 7). Suggesting that more one-on-one teacher support should be provided for English language learners to help them with their academic success.

As a future educator, I believe that one-on-one support for English language learners through collaboration, compassion, and engagement can be beneficial in the school setting. Throughout my educational experiences, I have seen the benefits of one-on-one teacher support for English language learners. I believe that one-on-one does help students with diverse and linguistic backgrounds to succeed academically by getting additional resources to meet their academic needs.

Problems and Limitations

As I was conducting my research project, I ran into a few minor problems. When conducting my literature review, I felt there were not enough current research articles/literature reviews on the effects of one-on-one support for English language learners. When looking for resources many of the articles that I would find were older than ten years old, or would talk about one-on-one vs small group instruction. Some of the literature reviews were old but they were relevant to one-on-one teacher support for English language learners. The majority of these sources also did not talk about one-on-one teacher support for English language learners.

Another problem that I faced was that I planned to do at least six teacher interviews. I got in contact with six teachers but two teachers that I contacted never responded to me. While trying to set a time to meet with each of the four teachers, our schedules made it difficult to find a time to meet. So instead I decided to do teacher survey questions, to do that I created a Google form. Doing this, allowed the teachers to fill them out when they had time and allowed me to get their responses faster. As I was glad that four of the teachers did contact me back, I got another setback. Once I got my teacher survey question responses back, I noticed that a couple of teachers responded with very short responses. This was a setback because I was expecting the teachers to give more explained responses to help me more with my research project.

When looking at the teacher survey question responses, Teacher A, informed me that she does small groups when working with ELLs and provides one-on-one support to each student within the small group. This was a problem since it brings up one-on-one teacher support within small groups. As I ran into a few minor problems while doing my research project, I think my collection of data was sufficient and I was able to answer my secondary-related research questions.

Recommendations

As a future educator, I want to inform others about how important one-on-one teacher support is important for English language learners. For that reason, I recommend that one-on-one teacher support is essential for educators to provide to English language learners. One-on-one teacher support for ELLs is beneficial since they get additional support to ensure student success academically. Eighty-three percent of the anonymous 3rd and 4th-grade students responded that they like working one-on-one with their teacher and eighty-five percent of them said that they learn more when working one-on-one with their teacher (Student Survey Questions, See Appendix 7). Not only do English language learners learn more when working one-on-one with their teacher, but forty-six of the students prefer working one-on-one with their teacher rather than in a group, alone, or together as a class. As ELL students like and prefer working one-on-one with their teachers, educators should provide this type of support because it is crucial for their academic success.

Conclusion

While English language learners make up a great amount of the population in schools, they need to be given supplemental support to help them with their academic achievement. This can be through providing one-on-one support for English language learners through

collaboration, compassion, and engagement. This senior capstone research points out that one-on-one teacher support to English language learners does positively affect ELL students, which is reflected in the teacher responses. Providing one-on-one support for ELLs, allows students to get supplemental instruction in an area they are struggling with, by using various strategies. One-on-one teacher support helps students succeed by providing individual, explicit, and targeted instruction. This type of support can help English language learners to have a positive attitude towards school. Teachers can use their compassion to motivate ELL students and to create a classroom environment where ELLs feel included. By creating a positive classroom environment, it allows English language learners to have a positive relationship with the caring teacher which associates with a higher level of student engagement and achievement.

The research points out that giving English language learners additional one-on-one support is effective, especially for those with reading difficulties. Not only does one-on-one support help ELL students who have reading difficulties, but helps English language learners to meet their academic goals and make progress in that academic area. Research also suggests that one-on-one instruction is one of the most effective instructional strategies for students with cultural backgrounds and diverse linguistic backgrounds. To help English language learners to succeed in their academics, teachers need to provide additional one-on-one support so that English language learners can continue to get ahead in their education.

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Appendix 1

Teacher Survey Questions:

1. What is one-on-one teacher support?
2. What does one-on-one teacher support look like?
3. What strategies help the most ELL students?
4. How does one-on-one support affect students' academic performance?
5. Are there sufficient resources for teachers to support ELL students with one-on-one support?
6. When and where does one-on-one support for ELL students take place?
7. Are there any other ways you can support ELLs in the classroom?

Appendix 2

Teacher Survey Question Response

Teacher A

1. When teachers, aides, parents, or school volunteers work with students on skills.
2. It can be a person working one on one with a student; A teacher working with a small group (but offering individualized help to each child within the small group); A teacher walking around the room as students are working and giving individual feedback and/or help while students are working on something.
3. Having the opportunity to talk out and practice what they need to say, read, or write.
Having targeted lessons differentiated to their specific learning levels and learning needs.
Help with filling in learning gaps. A safe learning environment for practicing new skills.
Timely feedback opportunities to listen to language role models.
4. It helps to fill learning gaps and provide "Goldilocks" (just right time, just right level, just right skills) interventions for students.
5. No
6. During Designated and integrated ELD, before school, after school, haphazardly as a teacher goes through the day, and can squeeze in a minute here and there (especially now that we no longer have volunteers allowed on campus).
7. Making sure that students have access to comprehensible input. Provide lots of environmental print (word banks, sentence frames, paragraph frames, anchor charts).
Using realia when possible. Using BeGLAD strategies.

Appendix 3

Teacher Survey Question Response

Teacher B

1. It refers to differentiate instruction. Equity; in other words, each student gets what they need.
2. For example, in guided reading, the teacher would fill in gaps.
3. Some strategies that work for ELLs are sentence frames and sentence starters.
4. One-on-one helps students succeed by providing individual, explicit, and targeted instruction and closing the gaps
5. Yes, teachers can design lessons that are targeted to specific needs. We can provide scaffolds for students to access the content
6. The one-one intervention happens when a student does not master a particular standard for example; so, the teacher needs to provide extra support to ensure student success.
7. I generally use Be GLAD strategies, realia, hands-on activities, and presentations.

Appendix 4

Teacher Survey Question Response

Teacher C

1. One-on-one support is a trained/qualified adult supporting one student at a time on targeted skills.
2. One-on-one support looks like an educator and student working in a designated area away from the core class practicing skills needed to progress academically.
3. Building background knowledge through discussion, vocabulary development, and reading and writing.
4. Usually, students who receive one-on-one support show progress through gains in reading, writing, and math skills through the evidence on common assessments.
5. Depending on funding for the school year there are sufficient resources to support ELLs one on one.
6. One-on-one support for ELLs could take place in the back of the classroom, in an empty classroom, or in our conference room.
7. Besides one-on-one support which can be difficult in a classroom full of students, ELLs can be included in an after-school program to target listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills

Appendix 5

Teacher Survey Question Response

Teacher D

1. One-on-one support is when a teacher supports an individual student in an area they are struggling with, using various strategies.
2. A teacher setting time aside during the school day to focus on an area of concern with an individual student.
3. Sentence starters, visuals, cognates, building background knowledge, and connecting culture/ experiences.
4. One-on-one support provides students the additional resources to meet their academic goals and make progress in that academic area.
5. There are sufficient resources for teachers but can be difficult to find.
6. This can vary for each classroom.
7. Provide scaffolds throughout the instruction. Don't only provide support during one-on-one teacher support, integrate these strategies into your instruction.

Appendix 6

Student Survey Questionnaire

1. Does your teacher provide help when you need it? Yes or No

2. Does your teacher encourage you in the classroom? Yes or No

3. Do you like when you work one-on-one with your teacher? Yes or No

4. When you work one-on-one with your teacher is it engaging? Yes or No

5. Does working one-on-one with your teacher help you learn more? Yes or No

6. Which do you prefer doing when learning?
 - Working one-on-one with your teacher
 - Working in a group
 - Working alone
 - Working all together as a class

Appendix 7

Anonymous 3rd and 4th Grade Responses

Student Survey Questions

1. Does your teacher provide help when you need it? Yes or No 100% of the students said Yes
2. Does your teacher encourage you in the classroom? Yes or No 98% of the students said Yes and 2% said No
3. Do you like when you work one-on-one with your teacher? Yes or No 83% of the students said Yes and 17% said No
4. When you work one-on-one with your teacher is it engaging? Yes or No 77% of the students said Yes and 23% of the students said No
5. Does working one-on-one with your teacher help you learn more? Yes or No 85% of the students said Yes and 15% of the students said No
6. Which do you prefer doing when learning?

Working one-on-one with your teacher (26% of the students picked this one) Working in a group (47% of the students picked this one)

Working alone (10% of the students picked this one)

Working all together as a class (17% of the students picked this one)

