Whole School Approaches to Supporting English Language Learners in Public Elementary Schools

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to discover more about what a whole school approach to supporting English language learners entails and prioritizes. The main research question that guided this study was: how is one Toronto school effectively enacting a whole school commitment and approach to supporting English Language Learners? Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with a classroom teacher, ESL support teacher, and a school principal, all working within the same TDSB school. Findings suggest that it is essential to create inclusive, caring, and risk-free school-wide environments for ELLs to succeed. Having professionals within the school who create personal connections with ELLs and who can relate to them on a personal level was a large factor in supporting this approach. Another finding was the importance of communication and collaboration between key stakeholders in facilitating a whole school approach. These stakeholders include a variety of individuals both within the school and the surrounding community. A key stakeholder was found to be the school board as it provides the resources and finances that the school needs in order to implement a whole school approach. An implication of these findings is the important of understanding that the school board does not actually support or implement the whole school approach, but provides resources that the school can choose to use to create this type of approach to supporting ELLs.

Key Words: ELL, Whole School Approach, Support, Strategies, Personal Connection, English, Language, Culturally Diverse, Linguistically Diverse
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Research Context

Canada is a country that takes pride in being one of the most multicultural nations in the world. In fact, every year over the past decade, Canada has welcomed approximately 250,000 immigrants (Butler, 2014). In Statistics Canada’s 2011 Census of Population, it was reported that 20.6% of Canadians have a mother tongue other than English or French.

Each year, over 12,000 students are welcomed into Toronto public schools from other countries (Regier, Goossen, DiGiuseppe, & Campey, 2005). In fact, in the Toronto District School Board alone, 50% of students speak a language other than English at home (Toronto District School Board [TDSB], 2014) and 34% of students were born in a country outside of Canada (Regier et al., 2015). With a large number of students in Canadian elementary schools not speaking one of Canada’s two national languages, English language learners (ELLs) have established a strong presence in Canada’s education system. In Ontario, 72% of publicly funded English elementary schools include English language learners, and in some schools, the population of ELLs is as high as 92% (People for Education, 2013). The number of ELLs in Canadian elementary schools is going to see a dramatic increase over the next couple of years as the Canadian government plans to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees (Government of Canada, 2015). Given the high population of non-English speakers in Canadian elementary schools, it is of utmost importance to provide meaningful support to these students in order for them to achieve the same level of success as their native English-speaking peers.

In 2013, People for Education conducted a study of Ontario’s publicly funded schools. Of the 1122 schools that responded to the survey, 23% of elementary schools and 13% of secondary schools with 10 or more English language learners reported having no specialist ESL teacher
present at the school (People for Education, 2013). In the same study, some principals mentioned that due to funding issues, not all ELLs receive the support that they need. Sometimes, support is only given to students who have recently immigrated to help them with ‘survival English’, which is not sufficient for the level of English these students need to be on par with their peers and successfully complete Ontario grade level curriculum (People for Education, 2013).

Significant research has been conducted to date in the area of effective instructional strategies for supporting ELLs. Research has found that these strategies include opportunities for group work, providing additional time, prioritizing scheduled routines, using visuals, and involving families and home language as resources (Rader-Brown & Howley, 2014; Goldenberg, 2008; Houk, 2005). As well, higher levels of English reading are more often seen when a student can already read proficiently in their mother tongue (Goldenberg, 2008). Research has also noted a positive correlation between teacher training in supporting ELLs and these students’ academic success (Plough & Garcia, 2015; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). Although there has been significant research conducted in the area of English language teaching strategies, there have been many problems and concerns reported with the development and implementation of these strategies, which will be outlined below.

1.1 Articulation of the Research Problem

Despite all of the research done on learning strategies to support ELLs, when it comes to actually using these strategies in a classroom setting, there are often misconceptions about the definitions or tactical teaching approaches of the different strategies, which leads to inconsistencies in teaching (O’malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, & Russo, 1985). As well, teachers continue to self-report that they lack confidence in their individual skills and capacities for working with ELLs, identifying a shortage of school resources and school
leadership as key barriers to their work (Téllez & Manthey, 2015). Research is also beginning to learn that many teachers lack proper training and are unsure of how to support and accommodate ELLs who they are seeing increasingly integrated into their mainstream classrooms (Iiams, Shafer, & Walker, 2004; Short & Echevarria, 2004).

Relatedly, we are beginning to learn that whole-school approaches to supporting ELLs have the potential to increase the academic and social success of these students (Plough & Garcia 2015; Téllez & Manthey, 2015; Elfers & Stritkus, 2014; Leyden, Stackhouse, & Szczerbinski, 2011; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). Nevertheless, there has been minimal attention to date focused on learning what such whole school approaches look like, what sustains them, or which stakeholders play a role and how. This is a vital area of research for us to now turn our attention.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore meaningful whole school approaches to English language development to support ELLs in the mainstream classroom. I aim to learn about views of the effectiveness of whole school approach practices used to support ELLs through the lens of three different professionals working in different areas of support within a school- a classroom teacher, an ESL teacher, as well as a principal. I will explore how these different professionals within a single school are working together to meaningfully support ELLs. My research findings will not only inform how schools can further support our growing numbers of new Canadian students, but will also inform my own instructional practice as a beginning teacher.

Along with exploring the positive aspects of whole school approaches used to meaningfully support ELLs, I also hope to discover different strategies that have previously been detrimental to supporting ELLs. By uncovering strategies that did not work in the past, this will
allow myself, as well as other future educators, to learn from these mistakes and better see areas for improvement in our school-wide English language systems.

1.3 Research Questions

Given the landscape outlined above, my main research question is: how is one Toronto school effectively enacting a whole school commitment and approach to supporting English Language Learners?

Additional questions include:

• What does this approach entail and prioritize?
• What resources and factors support the development of this approach and the capacity to sustain it?
• What range of stakeholders are involved and what role do these groups each play?

1.4 Background of the Researcher

As a native English speaker who was educated in Canada, I was privileged to learn from teachers and peers who spoke my first language, and to engage in texts and curriculum materials written in my first language. Aside from my daily French and Spanish classes during high school and university, I never knew what it was like to be in a place and sincerely have no idea what was going on or what was expected of me, with people explaining things to me in a language I was not fluent in. This all changed in October 2012 when I moved to South Korea to teach English for 3 years.

Through my experience living and working in South Korea, I can confidently say that I have experienced what it is like to be on either end of the spectrum of this study. I have been in the shoes of both the teacher and the student. The teacher, who is teaching English to students
who have little to no English language ability, as well as the student who is trying to live and learn while immersed in a foreign language. Because of this, I feel that I am coming at this study from a very unique perspective, as I realize the struggles one can encounter in the positions of both the teacher and the student.

To elaborate, I have seen and been involved with first hand the many hardships that English language learners can face in a classroom setting. Such as simply not understanding; boredom due to different cultural content in textbooks; reading and writing challenges, etc. Contrarily, I have also been a language learner who is trying to learn a new language through complete immersion. This can be extremely frustrating at times, lonely, embarrassing when you make mistakes and the receiver is not understanding, and mentally tiring when you are constantly trying to listen and understand a foreign language. As well, learning a new language through complete immersion can be demotivating, when at times you see your peers moving ahead and understanding concepts quicker than you are.

Throughout my time in South Korea, I was lucky to work in both a school that worked together as a whole to promote English language development for students as well as a private school that was more concerned about prestige and the money making business involved with ESL. These two very different experiences intrigued me and inspired me to learn about what strategies are used school-wide to promote and successfully support English language learners, as well as why these strategies work.

During my first and third practicum placements in the Master of Teaching program at the University of Toronto, I was lucky to be placed in a school that had one of the highest populations of ELLs in the Toronto District School Board. This school had amazing in-school supports and programs for English language learners and saw great success and development in
students new to Canada who quickly caught up to their peers through the school-wide aids provided to the students. I was fascinated with the approaches used, which further encouraged me to explore the topic of whole school approaches to English language development.

Through my personal experiences, both in South Korea and Canada, I have developed a very strong interest in this topic. I want to explore how schools can meaningfully support ELLs through using whole school approaches and working as a team to support English language development. I am confident that my experience teaching abroad, combined with my commitment to supporting ELLs, uniquely positions me to conduct this timely research. As a Canadian living in a growing multicultural society, I am committed to learning how to strengthen the support available to ELL children in schools, and to sharing this knowledge with the broader educational community.

1.5 Preview

To respond to these questions, I will draw on characteristics of case study research by conducting semi-structured interviews with teachers, ELL support workers, and school administrators working in a school that has demonstrated a commitment to whole school support for ELLs and has one of the highest populations of ELLs in the TDSB. In chapter two I review literature in the areas English language development and English language learners. Next, in chapter three I elaborate on the research design. In chapter four I report my research findings and discuss their significance in light of the existing research in literature, and in chapter five I identify the implications of the research findings for my own teacher identity and practice, and of the educational research community more broadly. I also articulate a series of questions raised by the research findings, as well as point to areas where future research may be beneficial.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

In chapter two of this research paper, I review literature surrounding the topic of English language development and English language learners in public elementary schools. First, I review the definitions of English language learner (ELL) and English as a second language (ESL), as these terms are often misused. Next, I discuss the importance of learning English in Canada’s ever-growing multicultural society and the realities of program styles and outcomes in Canadian elementary schools. Then, I move on to review barriers that have been proven to effect the quality of English language instruction in schools, such as a reduction of ESL programs and lack of teacher preparedness. Subsequently, literature is reviewed in the area of instructional strategies that have been proven to work for ELLs in mainstream classrooms and the importance of leadership in creating English language programs. And finally, I look at the current literature regarding what research already says about the main area of my study - whole school approaches to English language development used to support ELLs.

2.1 Defining “ELL”

A common misconception is the distinction between English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Language Learner (ELL). The two words cannot be used interchangeably, which is a common mistake.

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2007) defines English language learners as:

Students in provincially funded English language schools whose first language is a language other than English, or is a variety of English that is significantly different from
the variety used for instruction in Ontario’s schools, and who may require focused educational supports to assist them in attaining proficiency in English. (p. 8)

There are over 200 home languages represented by students studying in Ontario’s elementary schools (People for Education, 2012). In Ontario alone, roughly 20% of students in English public schools have a first language other than English (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2010). This is a large proportion of students in the province’s public school system.

Not only are English language learners represented by students who immigrated to Canada or have refugee status, but they are also Canadian citizens who grew up in areas where English is not a widely spoken language, such as rural Aboriginal communities or culture-specific community clusters (MOE, 2007). The Ontario Ministry of Education (2007) states that students new to Canada can have a variety of prior English language experience depending on their situation before coming to Canada. Whether the student came to Canada as part of a planned immigration process, or the students’ family left their home country as a result of war, or even if the student is paying for education through a student visa, individual student’s previous educational experience can vary greatly. Also, there are many factors that determine the success of ELLs in English speaking public schools in Canada. These factors include, but are not limited to: prior experience with English, adjustment process to life in Canada, previous schooling, learning exceptionalities, individual student personality, and motivational factors (MOE, 2008).

On the other hand, English as a Second Language refers to the instruction of students in English to students with limited English ability (Dooley & Furtado, 2013). This generally refers to instruction or teaching. Dooley & Furtado (2013) state that the main goal of ESL classes is to improve language skills to be better prepared for the Canadian work force, and to meet school curriculum objectives.
To better clarify through using these two terms collectively in a sentence, we could say: ELL students learn English from an ESL teacher.

2.2 Importance of Learning English

With approximately 510,000,000 speakers, English is the second most spoken language in the world (World Languages and Cultures, 2005). In today’s society, English is very important, and is a global language being the most common for worldwide communication (Huang, 2016). The Government of Canada (2014) as well as Regier et al. (2005) suggest that the possession of English language skills is critical and the key to successful settlement within Canada. They both also state that immigrants of all ages can integrate into society and life in Canada with more ease if they can speak English (Government of Canada, 2014; Regier et al., 2005). Not only is learning English essential for settlement within Canada, it also provides the learner with greater job opportunities both in Canada and abroad. Huang (2016) states that there is a notion of power and higher status attributed to English speakers as well as a direct positive correlation between English competency and job prospects worldwide. With all of this being said, it is obvious that learning the English language is or should be of big importance to newcomers to Canada.

2.3 Current English Language Programs in Public Elementary Schools

Depending on the school, characteristics of the student population, and resources available, there are a variety of different program models for ESL classes that are currently in use in public elementary schools (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011; Regier et al., 2005). Sometimes ELLs are assigned to specific ESL classes and/or integrated into regular classes with some time allowed for small language-specific group withdrawals (Regier et al., 2005). Reiger et al. also
note that some schools only have support available for limited time periods or don’t have any ESL supports, and are forced to be creative by using other resources that may be available, such as librarians. The three most common models of ESL programs within elementary schools, which will be outlined below, are the ‘Pull-out Method’, the ‘Push-in/Inclusion Method’, and the ‘Bilingual Method’. Although some schools use just one model, many schools choose to use a combination of different models.

2.3.1 Pull-out method

The pull-out method is when students are pulled out of their homeroom classroom for a specified period of time during the day to get structured English language instruction (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011; Crawford, 2004). The ELLs are able to get more individualized attention and are placed in ESL groups according to English ability (McMahon, 2013). However, McMahon mentions that a problem with the pull out method is that classroom teachers often complain to ESL teachers that the ELLs are missing too much class time. Crawford (2004) also argues that a pull out method to ESL classes may lead to segregation of the ELL within the classroom if they are taken out for a large portion of the day. Despite this, McMahon (2013) and Thoharis & O-Toole (2011) agree that the pull-out method of English language instruction in elementary schools allows for more targeted and structured English language development. Archuleta (2016) argues that the pull out method to English language instruction not only provides more targeted English instruction, but also creates a safe place and sense of community among the ELLs. Generally, ESL teachers have many qualifications specific to teaching students who do not speak English that classroom teachers may not have, therefore, pull out methods with a specialized teacher may provide greater benefits to the student (Archuleta, 2016).
However, Theoharis & O’Toole (2011) conducted research in two elementary schools that adopted inclusive learning opportunities for ELLs. During the study, both schools eliminated the pull out method bringing ESL services into the general classroom, reduced class sizes, and provided professional development courses to teachers regarding teaching ELLs. Through this, they found that in both cases, the elimination of the pull-out method greatly improved the achievement of the ELLs. They also discuss that removing ELLs from the classroom during the pull-out method frequently results in the assumption that curriculum content learning needs for the ELL have been met during the time spent with the ESL teacher, which is generally not the case, resulting in the ELL falling behind in curriculum (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011; Handscombe, 1989).

After looking deeper into this study, it can be seen that the majority of ELLs at the two case study schools speak Spanish or Hmong. This may make it easier to take away pull-out methods of ESL instruction as the students can be placed in small native language groups inside the classroom with interpreters, which may not be an option if there were ELLs who spoke a variety of different languages within the school. Therefore, this can be seen as a downfall to Theoharis & O’Toole’s study because although the extraction of the pull-out method works here, it may not be feasible for other school communities with ELLs speaking more than two different native languages.

2.3.2 Push-in method

The push-in method is when the specialized ESL teacher comes into the homeroom classroom for a period of time during the day to help the ELLs with the content that is being taught (McMahon, 2013; Fu, Houser, & Huang, 2007). Depending on the educator, there are mixed opinions about the push-in method. Some educators welcome ESL teachers into the room
seeing this as a positive experience, however there are other teachers who see this as intrusive and prefer to have privacy while teaching with the whole classroom to themselves (McMahon, 2013).

Theoharis & O’Toole (2011) find that bringing ESL methods into the general classroom encourages inclusion and is the best method for teaching students learning English. It has also been found that this may be the best method to balance content and English language (Alonso, 2013; New, 1993). However, McMahon (2013) argues that the push-in method is beneficial for advanced ELLs as the ESL teacher can offer differentiated instruction during class time, however for new ELLs, the push-in method is not quite as useful as the ESL teacher is not able to focus on basic language skills during in-class instructional time.

Although this method has been seen to be beneficial, Fu et al. (2007) argue that a number of other problems begin to arise with a push-in method, such as: not enough ESL teachers to foster this model of instruction, the ESL teacher cannot have their own language learning goals for the student, and the ESL teacher cannot know the content for every grade. Despite these problems, a push-in model of ESL instruction does allow the student to fit in and feel more comfortable within the classroom setting (McMahon, 2013; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011; Fu et al., 2007).

2.3.3 Bilingual programs

A bilingual ESL program is one where a group of students with the same mother tongue are taught curriculum in both English and in their common mother tongue (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Theoharis & O’Toole (2011) state that this type of program promotes bilingualism, however may create barriers for ELLs and isolate them to a few specialized teachers. This type of system may also only work in certain areas where the population of ELLs share the same mother tongue, and
the teacher is fluent in both English and the student’s native language, which is fairly unrealistic of most school communities where ELLs come from a variety of different backgrounds (Colorin Colorado, 1993). Theoharis & O’Toole (2011) reiterate this by stating that bilingual programs can be hard to achieve when not enough students speak the same home language.

2.3.4 Combination of programs

As outlined above, there is no perfect model of instruction for supporting ELLs as each method has its pros and cons. Researchers, however, have highly recommended collaboration or combination models of different approaches that draws on expertise of both the classroom teacher and ESL teacher (Fu et al., 2007).

A school district in St. Paul, Minnesota has successfully implemented an inclusive ESL program using a combination of the three different programs outlined above (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). Zehr (2006) states that the ELLs are placed in mainstream classrooms with their English-speaking peers. Throughout the day, the ELLs receive different supports from ESL teachers within the classroom, home language support, as well as about 30 minutes during the day when they are pulled out of the classroom to receive some differentiated instruction (Zehr, 2006). The program implemented has significantly lessened the achievement gap between the ELL students and their native peers (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011; Zehr, 2006).

2.4 Achievement Gap Between ELLs and Native English Speaking Peers

Although there has been significant research in the area of strategies to aid in teaching ELLs, a large and growing achievement gap is still reported between ELLs and native English speaking peers (Plough & Garcia, 2015; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Ngo, 2007). People for Education (2012) reported that ELLs are still scoring significantly below the provincial average
on the EQAO test (standardized provincial math, writing, and reading test). In fact, Ngo (2007) reported that previous research stated that on average, ELL students are two or more years behind their Anglophone peers by the time that they reach Grade 6. Despite the fact that there are large achievement gaps, Elfers & Stritikus (2014) found that the gap begins to close after ELLs graduate out of the ESL program and start to catch up to their grade level.

There are many reasons, other than English language ability, that may contribute to the gaps in academic achievement. Students coming from outside of Canada come with a huge array of previous family situations, cultural heritage, socio economic classes, knowledge of English, as well as life and academic backgrounds (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Pang, 2010). For example, refugees coming to Canada can vary from middle-class students who have never missed a day of school in their lives, to students who have spent the majority of their lives in refugee camps and have yet to acquire literacy skills in their own language let alone in English, which can really complicate systems for ELL students and further the already large achievement gap (Hyslop, 2015).

Plough & Garcia (2015) looked at three key areas in their study. They looked at the English learner achievement gap, whole school reform, and professional development. They found that teachers often focus on the ELL acquiring English to a certain level, while delaying content rich areas until their English level is high enough. Therefore, ELLs often find themselves even further behind than their peers, which in turn leads to greater achievement gaps. They also found through their study that initiatives to lessen achievement gaps are well on their way towards being successful, however, they only looked at results from a single school in a longitudinal study over just two years, which could be a potential downfall to their findings.

Achievement gaps don't stop after comparing ELLs to their native English speaking
peers. Gaps are also seen in groups within the ELL population. For example, students who speak Chinese, Hindi, Serbian, Bengali, and Tamil have graduation rates higher than 78.6% (the average graduation rate of native speakers in the TDSB), however, Spanish and Somali speakers have the lowest graduation rates at 65.3% and 65.8% respectively, which is well below the 78.6% average (TDSB, 2012). In order to lessen these gaps, it is imperative to understand some of the key barriers that work against English language development.

2.5 Barriers to English Language Development

2.5.1 Reduction of ELL programs

As mentioned previously, there has been a significant increase in the number of ELL students in Canada, which is only going to grow as the government continues its plan to welcome Syrian refugees over the next two years. With this influx of newcomers to Canada, it's obvious that there will be a growing need for ESL instructors as well. Despite the need for a greater number of ESL services and teachers, it is no secret that school boards across Canada have been falling behind by steadily reducing and neglecting ESL programs (Ngo, 2007; Regier et al., 2005). Regier et al. stress that there are five factors that explain the reduction of ESL programs in public schools: First the number of ELLs needed in order to get an ESL teacher has increased significantly, second, funding is not specifically dedicated for ESL teachers, so schools sometimes use that funding for other core programs, third, the introduction of restrictive provincial funding formulas created a budget crisis which resulted in cuts to ESL programs, fourth, there has been a drastic decrease of translation or interpretation services for parents who cannot speak English, resulting in the parents not being able to connect with schools and communicate if the academic needs of their children are not being met, which is very important,
and finally, there is a lack of accountability for ESL programs regarding where the funding is actually being spent.

Duffy (2003) raises a good point when stating that, “Canada has successfully structured its immigration system to draw the best and brightest from other countries, yet it seems willing to squander both their talent and that of their children” (p. 1). It is unfortunate that we continue to welcome so many intelligent people into our country, yet have reduced the systems available to help them succeed and prosper from life in Canada.

People for Education reported in their 2011 survey that roughly 63% of Canadian schools include children who need support with English, however 19% of schools with 10 or more ELLs report having no ESL teacher (People for Education, 2011). They also reported that there has been a 24% decrease in schools with ESL teachers despite the fact that ESL learners have increased by approximately 10%. These facts say a lot about the systems that are currently in place for our ELLs. Canadian schools are seeing a huge increase in ELLs yet the resources for these students are decreasing at alarming rates. How can we expect these students to succeed? We need to put more of an effort into supporting these students and allocating specific funding in order to see these students succeed at the same rate as their native English speaking peers.

2.5.2 Funding

Funding is another barrier to implementing effective ELD programs in public elementary schools (Dooley & Furtado, 2013; Ngo, 2007). With decreased provincial funding came a budget crisis and resulted in cuts to ESL programs in schools, which in turn created issues with schools struggling to provide the long term support that ELLs need (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Regier et al., 2005). Regier et al. (2005) state that Ontario provincial ESL funding for elementary school students only covers students who have been in Canada for four years or less (in the province of
Ontario) and five years or less (in the province of British Columbia) and have come from non-English speaking countries. Funding does not include students who: are born in Canada but cannot speak English, are born outside of Canada but cannot speak English, speak a different dialect of English, or enter a school after the beginning of the school year (Dooley & Fortado, 2013; Regier et al., 2005).

Due to other factors and challenges that immigrants face when moving to a new country, Dooley & Fortado (2013) argue that many students take longer than the four to five years of ESL classes provided through funding to learn academic English. This could put a lot of stress on the teacher to teach effectively and fast. A principal working in an elementary school in the TDSB disclosed that he was forced to assign an untrained resource teacher to work with an ELL who was in need of ESL classes but denied funding because of being born in Canada (Regier et al., 2005). In the future, it would be beneficial to Canadian students to not judge funding for ESL classes based on the country a student is born in, but rather on an individual needs basis.

### 2.5.3 Teacher preparedness for teaching ELLs

The reality of teacher preparedness and confidence in teaching ELLs is quite unfortunate. Despite the increase of immigrants and refugees in Canadian education systems, there has been an abundance of research reporting that teachers have not received adequate relevant professional development to effectively teach ELL students (Haworth, McGee, & MacIntyre, 2015; Plough & Garcia, 2015; Téllez & Manthey, 2015; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; O’Day, 2009; Ngo, 2007; Regier et al., 2005). This indicates that teachers may not have the adequate professional development needed to teach a high proportion of students within their classrooms. Haworth et al. (2015) argue that even if a teacher has a high sense of general teaching efficacy, this sense of efficacy may not translate into teaching ELLs. However, it has also been reported
that the same strategies used to teach native English speakers can also be used to teach ELLs (O’Day, 2009).

Plough & Garcia (2015) discuss that a positive relationship exists between effective professional development programs and student academic achievement, they therefore insist that staff development is critical in schools with ELLs. They argue that good qualities of professional development include ongoing training, school based work, a focus on student learning, curriculum and instruction, and includes opportunities for professional interactions between colleagues (Plough & Garcia, 2015). Theoharis & O’Toole (2011) state that principals often respond to new demands on both teaching and non-teaching staff by offering professional development opportunities. However, even if there is the option of professional development for teachers, Plough & Garcia suggest that a common trouble is that teachers are often attending workshops or conferences as professional development, intaking knowledge, and are then expected to regurgitate everything that was learned and immediately put this knowledge into practice in their own classrooms, but it isn't that easy.

To go along with the points discussed regarding teacher preparedness, Elfers & Stritikus (2014) state that even if a school does have ESL programs, if teachers are lacking proper training and support, it can rob students of the help that they need. Teachers can benefit from professional development and supports that provide explicit assistance to teaching ELLs as many teachers are facing new teaching challenges as they are seeing ELLs being increasingly integrated into their classrooms (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). If obtained, professional development proves to build teacher confidence and encourage ongoing learning for the future (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014), however, it has also been reported that even with explicit training, teachers still continue to doubt their individual skills and capacities while teaching ELLs (Téllez & Manthey, 2015). This
suggests that the type of training or professional development received could be a determining factor of whether or not positive outcomes are observed.

It can be seen that part of the problem with the lack of professional development directly related to teaching ELLs could have something to do with the requirements for teachers in different school boards. For example, in the Toronto District School Board, where some schools have ELL populations as high as 80-90%, formal ESL training is not a requirement of classroom teachers (Regier et al., 2005). In their study, Regier et al. (2005) state that although ESL teachers are required to have a ESL-specific additional qualification, some teachers can get out of this by only working part time as ESL teachers, in which the additional qualification is no longer a requirement. In order to rectify the problem of teacher preparedness, in their study, Regier et al. outline four recommendations. They suggest that, first, all teacher-training programs include a course on how to support ESL students, second, all teachers hold accountability and responsibility for the education of ELLs, third, the needs of ELLs should be addressed in all subject areas, and fourth, ESL professional development be made mandatory for all teachers who have ELLs in their classrooms. To add to this, Ngo (2007) suggests that boards should begin to recruit and hire teachers who have ESL certifications in order to address the needs of the growing ELL community within schools.

2.6 Effective Approaches and Instructional Strategies

2.6.1 Instructional strategies

Effective instructional strategies and approaches to teaching ELLs is an area of research that has had a lot of attention (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). In this paper, I will only slightly touch on in-class instructional strategies that have been proven to benefit ELL students.
Some instructional strategies that have proven to be effective when working with ELLs are: read alouds, creating visual representations, family involvement, translation to native language, creating friendly caring and belonging environments, maintaining native language, use of technology, cultural relevance of curriculum materials, balanced curriculum, explicit instruction, opportunities for practice, and systematic assessment (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Rader-Brown & Howley, 2014; Pang, 2010; Goldenberg, 2008; Houk, 2005). O’Day (2009) argues that a lot of the same instructional strategies that are beneficial for native English speakers can effectively be used for ELLs as well. However, research is currently limited in this area.

The importance of the student’s native language has been a topic of debate over the years. However, researchers are now beginning to see that the benefits greatly outweigh the downfalls and that bilingual educators can assist ELLs with learning English (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011; Elfers & Stritikus 2014). Theoharis & O’Toole (2011) suggest that principals should aim to maintain healthy connections between families and the school as well as encourage a smooth transition from grade to grade to further aid in ELL achievement. Along with maintaining healthy connections with ELL families, it is important for teachers to ensure that they are teaching material that is culturally relevant to many different learners in their classrooms as this supports both relatability and participation, and in turn, the success of ELL students (Yoon, 2007). As well, it has been proven that ELLs achieve stronger English literacy skills if they already possess adequate literacy in their native language (O’Day, 2009).

Aside from instructional strategies, it has been recommended that teachers of ELLs should try to balance curriculum content instruction with language acquisition strategies (Alonso, 2013; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). A common misconception about ELLs is that they need
simplified material and isolated instruction away from their native English speaking peers, which is not the case (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

Effective instructional strategies alone cannot produce optimal learning conditions for ELL students. ELLs are most successful when there is a supportive school-wide climate, effective leadership, customized learning, collaboration between teachers, shared pedagogical vision, and impactful professional development (Haworth et al., 2015; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014)

2.6.2 Importance of school leadership

The role that professionals in leadership roles in educational institutions play is for the most part absent from research (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). Despite the limited research in this area, it has been proven that one of the most important attributes of successful schools, not only for ELLs, but the student body as a whole, is strong school leadership (Téllez & Manthey, 2015; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011).

In the typical school, the principal is the leader who can have the greatest impact on the school community, influencing teachers, other staff, and students. Therefore, the principal can often be seen as the person who creates the most influence for long term success of teachers and students, including ELLs (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). Theoharis & O’Toole (2011) argue that leaders in schools can view the learning of English language in two ways, as a right or as a problem. When leaders view language as a right, they promote social justice for ELLs and encourage equal educational opportunities, however, when they view it as a problem, they in turn view ELLs as having a problem that needs to be fixed, which is a very negative view (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). Theoharis & O’Toole suggest that principals benefit from using current ELL research and should be educated about second language acquisition to be able to effectively place languages and cultures “as a central, integral aspect of
the school community” (p. 649). Although there is a lot of emphasis placed on the principal, because the principal is often the highest level of leadership within the physical school, it can’t be the principal alone creating successful programs for ELLs, the most effective programs come from comprehensive, school wide efforts, involving principals, teachers, as well as staff (Plough & Garcia, 2015; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011).

Elfers & Stritikus (2014) studied how leaders can create systems of support for classroom teachers who work with linguistically diverse students, and suggest that there is indeed a link in which the principal influences teachers, which in turn impacts student learning. The teachers at one of the schools that Elfers & Stritikus conducted research at, reported that besides professional development, other factors such as a collegial school community, teacher collaboration, effective school leadership, and access to appropriate curriculum and materials all support their teaching of ELLs. They concluded that not enough is currently being done and that knowledge of how teachers are supported by leaders is extremely limited, which could be because there are not enough whole school approaches happening. Despite Elfers & Stritikus finding that support from school and district leadership is crucial for classroom teachers to aid in teaching ELLs, their study also found that often, this doesn’t happen and leaders do not share their knowledge or support to classroom teachers. Although the study done by Elfers & Stritikus provided a lot of insightful information, there are also some limitations to the research they conducted such as the fact that the schools were only studied for a period of four months and that each of the schools had a different research team, which could lead to different interpretations of findings.

Support systems where school leaders intentionally, purposefully, and knowledgeably create workplaces that encourage teachers to learn and effectively support their ELLs builds
teacher confidence and inspires ongoing learning (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Plough & Garcia, 2015). The importance of leadership regarding whole school approaches to ELLs is also very important. In the case of school-wide approaches, leaders must engage teachers in the context of their own classrooms, provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate with each other, and include experiences for teachers as learners (Plough & Garcia, 2015).

2.7 Whole School Approaches

2.7.1 What is a whole school approach to English language learning?

A whole school approach happens when educators designate ESL to be a priority at the school so senior administrators, principals, teachers, support staff, and the community work together as a team to promote English language development within a school community (BC Teachers’ Federation, n.d.).

2.7.2 What we already know about whole school approaches

Research has outlined many positive aspects of whole school approaches to ELD within schools. Leyden et al., (2011) state that there has been a widespread recognition of the need for whole school approaches to support children with language development.

Through the implementation of whole school approaches, staff are proven to be more motivated and enthusiastic when they are working together and sharing a sense of purpose in their work towards common goals rather than working alone toward individual goals (Haworth et al., 2015; Leyden et al., 2015; Téllez & Manthey, 2015). With a whole school approach, there is a shared pedagogical vision and teachers are more likely to be supported with professional development (Haworth et al., 2015). This suggests that if more whole school approaches were to be implemented, we may also see an increase in teacher preparedness for teaching ELLs.
Evidence suggests that the school rather than the teacher should be the focus for improvement and that school related variables that work together to provide success for whole school approaches are: staff capacity to address ELL needs, school wide focus on ELD, shared priorities and expectations, and ongoing assessment (Téllez & Manthey, 2015). Researchers agree that whole school approaches to ELD provide caring and supportive school environments for ELLs and helps to improve academic achievement (Haworth et al., 2015; Téllez & Manthey (2015). However, it is declared by Elfers & Stritikus (2014) that not enough is currently known or being done to provide effective whole school approaches in schools.

### 2.7.3 Challenges and barriers to whole school approaches

A common challenge to implementing a whole school approach to ELD is that the implementation of these school-wide approaches is complex and all members of the school community must work together to coordinate and create supportive and cohesive school environments with common goals regarding ELLs (Plough & Garcia, 2015; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). Basically, all professionals within the school must support, guide, and work with each other in order to realize whole school success, which may not happen if there are tensions or discrepancies between staff members. For example, a whole school approach may fail if certain professionals within the school are not on the same page, have extremely different philosophies of education, are not willing to listen to their colleagues input, or simply do not get along.

According to O’Day (2009) and Theoharis & O’Toole (2011), a barrier to whole school approaches is that there is not just one set way to approach a school-wide system to ELD. Unlike the more straightforward methods such as the pull-out, push-in, and bilingual methods outlined above, O’Day (2009) and Theoharis & O’Toole (2011) state that there isn't just one cohesive
whole school approach. There are many factors that come into play when implementing a whole school program such as school dynamics, ESL resources, student population, etc. A whole school approach to supporting ELLs will look different in each school depending on the factors above. For example, a school with one part-time ESL instructor compared to five full-time ESL instructors, or a school with a 90% population of ELLs compared to a 10% population of ELLs.

Haworth et al. (2015) claim that whole school approaches are more often implemented when there are ‘problems’ within a school such as violence, mental health issues, academic struggles, or refugee students. In this sense, whole school approaches are implemented to fix a problem where minority students are not succeeding in mainstream classrooms. In my opinion, ‘problems’ should not be the reason to implement whole school approaches to English language development, more often than not, there are benefits to being proactive about situations to avoid these ‘problems’ or issues from occurring in the first place.

2.8 Conclusion

In this literature review, I examined current research surrounding the topic of English language development, unfortunate barriers to ESL programs, and practices currently in place in Canadian elementary schools. This review of literature emphasizes the importance of the English language in Canadian society, individual professional development for educators, support from school leadership, and the need for improved ESL programs in elementary schools across the country.

Finding new ways to meaningfully support new students to Canada through school wide efforts is timely and fits within the existing landscape of current research. Through focusing on whole school approaches to support English language learners, I aim to build on the limited existing research and provide new insights on ways schools can support the growing number of
ELLs who are seen increasingly integrated into Canadian classrooms. I hope to determine what factors help to support and sustain whole school approaches as well as discover what these approaches entail and prioritize.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

Chapter 3 of this paper outlines the research methodology used and gives reasoning for the different choices I have made in regards to this research study. I begin by reviewing the general approach, procedures, and methods of data collection implemented. I then go on to elaborate specifically on the participant sampling and recruitment strategies used, before giving a brief introduction of the participants who took part in this research. Next, I review data analysis procedures and explain the ethical considerations pertinent to my study. I then go over some of the methodological limitations that can be experienced in a study similar to this one as well as highlight various strengths that can also be seen. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a brief summary of key methodological decisions and my rationale for these decisions given the research purpose and questions.

3.1 Research Approach and Procedures

Every researcher is obligated to make choices regarding data collection, and the choices they make will differ depending on various qualities of the study. In the academic world, there are often debates over qualitative versus quantitative research and the merit that each type of research holds for a certain type of study. Neither method is superior as each method is used for different purposes (Hegde, 2015; Walsh, 2012). Quantitative research is based on collecting precise objective measurements and uses numeric analysis to prove or disprove a theory (Campbell, 2014, Carr 1994). On the other hand, qualitative research is often humanistic, conducted in a natural setting, and supports the discovery of data that is then used to develop themes surrounding a topic (Campbell, 2014).
This research study aims to discover how one school is effectively enacting a whole school commitment and approach to support English language learners through inquiring about the lived experiences of educators working in a single school environment. As Morse (2005) and Carr (1994) argue, qualitative research is guided by ideas or perspectives about a subject that needs to be investigated, and is based on communication, understanding stories, descriptions of others’ experiences, and narratives that are then analyzed and assessed to pick out common themes. Given the research question, this study was conducted using a qualitative research approach involving a literature review and semi-structured face-to-face interviews with three educators working in different areas of a single school: a classroom teacher, a principal, and an ESL teacher. Marshall (1996) highlights that quantitative studies are used for answering the mechanistic ‘what?’ questions, whereas qualitative research answers the humanistic ‘why?’ and ‘how?’ questions, which is what I aim to do in my study. Through the qualitative approach, I was able to draw on the unique experiences of each participant and view the research question through their unique perspectives rather than those of the researcher (Carr, 1994).

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

Conducting interviews is one of the most common ways of collecting data in qualitative research studies (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Taking the research question into consideration, the researcher must decide which type of interview is best suited to their particular study.

Leavy (2014) and DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) agree that unstructured interviews offer very little guidance and structure to the conversation had with the interviewee and are most often used when studying tradition, life stories, or narratives. In situations with unstructured interviews, the interviewer often cannot prepare for the themes that will arise through the
conversation with the interviewee and instead must find ways to encourage ongoing facilitation of the interview (Leavy, 2014). On the other side of the spectrum, structured interviews are often in the form of surveys or questionnaires with standardized questions that are asked in the exact same manner to every participant so their responses can be easily compared or quantified (Leavy, 2014). Leavy (2014) suggests that a downfall to structured interviews may be that participants often choose the ‘best’ answer, not necessarily one that they believe is true. Semi-structured interviews on the other hand, are able to reap the benefits of both structured and unstructured interviews. They are the most common type of interview used to collect data in qualitative research studies and are often organized around a predetermined set of open ended questions (Leavy 2014; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Leavy (2014) argues that semi-structured interviews allow much more leeway and can make better use of knowledge by producing potential dialogues that can come up depending on what angle the interviewee comes from regarding the research question. Unlike unstructured interviews where there is often observational data as well, semi-structured interviews are often the sole source of data for a research study (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Semi-structured interviews are usually scheduled in advance at a set time and location, and are for the most part held outside of regular activities (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

For the purposes of this research, I conducted semi-structured interviews to collect the data needed to investigate my inquiry. Through semi-structured interviews I was able to follow a set of protocol (see Appendix B), but also had the flexibility to slightly stray from these questions depending on how the conversation with the interviewee unfolded. This was advantageous as it gave me the opportunity to uncover different areas that were important to explore for this study if the occasion arose. Although semi-structured interviews have been seen
in both group and individual settings, I conducted individual face-to-face interviews. It was important for my interviews to be individual as I interviewed three different educators working in different areas of a school: a classroom teacher, a principal, and an ESL teacher, therefore the questions I asked each person varied slightly according to their position. Also, I wanted the research data to be as meaningful as possible, and individual interviews allow the interviewer to delve more deeply into personal experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Individual interviews were beneficial as they allowed me to lead the conversation in a direction that was useful to the study, and allowed for more confidentiality while talking with each participant separately (Leavy, 2014).

My interview protocol is organized into five sections starting with background information about the participant, followed by teacher’s perspectives/beliefs. I then explored questions relating to teacher/principal/ESL support practices, before moving on to consider supports and challenges the teacher has encountered, and finally I conclude by looking into next steps. Examples of questions that I will ask my participants include the following:

- What do you believe a whole school approach to supporting English language learners looks like in a school setting?
  a) What does this approach entail and prioritize?
  b) What resources and factors support the development of this approach and the capacity to sustain it?
- How have you been involved in promoting English language development within the school community?
- What do you believe are some of the challenges of implementing a whole school approach to supporting English language learners in public elementary schools?
3.3 Participants

A critical part of any research is choosing the participants to be used in the study. DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) state that the participants chosen should share various similarities regarding the research question. In this section, I outline the sampling criteria used for participant recruitment as well as explain how I actually went about recruiting these professionals. Finally, I give a short bio of each participant.

3.3.1 Sampling criteria

The following criteria were applied to the research participants:

1. The participant has worked in a school community with a high proportion of ELLs for a minimum of five years.
2. The participant has consistently demonstrated a commitment to providing whole school support or other types of support to ELLs.
3. The participant currently works in a school implementing a whole school approach to supporting ELLs.
4. Each participant works in a different role of support for ELLs in a single school environment (classroom teacher, principal, ESL support teacher).
5. The participant is an advocate for and has demonstrated leadership towards English language development within the school community.
6. The participant works in a school that has a medium to high population of ELLs.

In light of the main research question, the criteria above were used to select participants to take part in this research study. In order for the participants to be able to draw on their past experiences working with ELLs, they were required to have worked in a school community with ELLs for at least 5 years. This allowed them to have more meaningful insights regarding their
past experiences. Requiring the participant to have consistently demonstrated a commitment to providing support to ELLs ensured that they had enough to discuss and draw on while answering the protocol questions. The third criteria was especially important for this study because I explored whole school approaches. Therefore, I needed my participants to be professionals who support ELLs, however each participant must work in a different capacity at the school in order to thoroughly investigate and address my research question. I wanted to know that my participants were genuinely committed to the ELL students that they support, which is why it was important for me to know that they have previously demonstrated leadership towards English language development within their school. Finally, it was essential that the participants in this study worked at a school that had a medium to high population of ELLs so that they could draw on knowledge and supports that were currently being implemented within their working environment. With these criteria, I was able to be confident in knowing that I selected the proper participants to take part in my research to acquire the most meaningful data possible.

3.3.2 Recruitment

Participant recruitment is essential to any research study (Newington & Metcalfe, 2014). Newington & Metcalfe (2014) state that it is very important to understand the sample of participants selected and the way that they are recruited depends greatly on the structure of the research being conducted. Marshall (1996) argues that unlike for quantitative research, qualitative research generally has a small sample of participants and that an appropriate sample size is defined only as one that adequately answers the specific research question.

Marshall (1996) outlines various types of sampling such as convenience, purposeful, and theoretical. He states that convenience sampling is the least rigorous, involves the least amount of time and effort by the researcher and often results in the poorest quality results (Marshall,
1996). On the other end, theoretical sampling is theory driven and prioritizes making theories from emerging data (Marshall, 1996). According to Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood (2015), purposeful sampling is “…identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest.” (p. 534) In a study such as this one, it is important to use purposeful sampling as it maximizes the breadth and richness of the data that will be used to address the research question as the participants have more of a connection to the issue (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Although DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) and Marshall (1996) agree that an element of convenience may be present in purposeful sampling, the latter is often more thoughtful and strategic in order to get information you can depend on to make conclusions in your research.

For the purposes of this study, I interviewed three participants who I actively and thoughtfully selected based on the criteria above (see section 3.3.1) and their conceived knowledge of the research topic, I used a combination of both purposeful and convenience sampling. As a pre-service teacher who is immersed in a network of educators through the Master of Teaching program at OISE, I was able to rely on my connections and immediate network to find the participants for this study. Although there was an element of convenience used to find the participants, I made sure to be thoughtful and strategic in whom I chose by following the criteria above (see section 3.3.1) to make sure each participant met the needs of my research.

3.3.3 Participant bios

My first participant, Fred, started as a classroom teacher, moved on to become a vice principal, and has now been a principal for the past eleven years. He is the principal of a large K-5 school that has a high population of English language learners. For his entire career, Fred has
been working in schools with high populations of ELLs. Fred has always felt a strong sense of commitment to supporting ELLs as he was once an English language learner himself. His family immigrated to Canada when he was young and he grew up in a community that spoke very little English. On a daily basis, Fred deals with many newcomer families and partner agencies such as settlement workers to help provide support for the students at his school.

My second participant is an ESL teacher named Chad. Chad is currently working as a Grade 4 ESL support teacher at Fred’s school. Chad has been an ESL support teacher for 5 years, however has been working at this current school for the past 14 years. Prior to becoming an ESL support teacher, he taught Grade 2 as well as Grade 4. Chad has always worked in schools that have high populations of ELLs and has a strong commitment to enabling ELLs to get an equal opportunity and be able to achieve things that all other students can achieve despite the limitations of their English language ability. To enhance his teaching, Chad has taken part in many different types of professional development including additional qualifications in ESL.

My final participant is a Grade 4 classroom teacher named Sally. She works directly with Chad, the Grade 4 ESL support teacher, and under Fred, the principal at her school. Sally was an English language learner herself, and came to Canada with her family when she was in Elementary school. Sally said she has a strong commitment to supporting ELLs as she knows what it is like and has a personal connection with these students. She mentioned that trying to get support for her parents, constantly translating for them, and trying to get others to understand what they need, has always been a part of her life. Her aim is to support her students, in particular ELLs in order to make things easier for them. Sally has also taken part in professional development such as ESL Part 1.
3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis can be summarized as the portion of the qualitative study where the information is sorted, organized, refined, and interpreted, and is often seen as the most complex stage of the qualitative study (Thorne, 2015; Seers, 2012). Thorne (2015) suggests that the researcher take one piece of data and compare it to all others that may be similar in order to develop different conceptualizations and themes that may be present across data sets. However, Seers (2012) states that a good first step to take when analyzing data is to sort and organize the data through coding the interview transcripts, which allows the researcher to determine specific topic areas or categories that emerge in the data that may not be apparent at first sight (Seers, 2012). From the categories made from coding, more encompassing themes form that can be used to describe and summarize the data while at the same time maintaining the richness, context, and depth of the original set of data (Seers, 2012). Whichever way data analysis is done, Thorne (2015) and Seers (2012) both agree that organization is extremely important.

For the purposes of this research, I used the coding method of tagging similar ideas and sorting them into respective categories in order to further organize the data into different overarching themes (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). I found that this was an effective way to sort through the data and uncover various themes relating to my research question. In addition to uncovering themes in the data, I also discovered null data, which is important to address and look into further. After uncovering various themes in the data, I examined their importance in relation to the main research topic to make meaning of them and what it contributes to the existing research.
3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

In order to protect the interest of the participants and avoid harm, there are many ethical considerations that must be taken into account when conducting research (Fisher, 2012; Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden, 2000). Ramos (1989) noted that there are three main problems that have the potential to effect qualitative studies: first, the relationship between the researcher and participant, second, the researcher’s interpretations of the data, and third, the research design itself.

In order to minimize the issues that could potentially arise throughout the research process, precautions have been taken that will be outlined below. DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) outline the importance of protecting the anonymity of the interviewee in relation to the information being shared. In order to ensure the participants confidentiality, all participants were assigned a pseudonym and were notified of their right to withdraw from the research at any stage. In addition, participant’s identities as well as identifications that may be associated with them such as their students or the name of their school will remain confidential. DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) and Orb et al. (2000) state that it is essential to ensure adequate communication about the intent of the investigation, which may be hard as it is not easy to tell what type of information will emerge in the process of the interview. With that being said, participants had the right to refuse to answer any question, withdraw from the study at any stage, as well as the opportunity to review the transcripts before I conducted the data analysis in order to retract or clarify any statements previously said. It is important that the interviewee is interviewed in a safe and comfortable environment so that they feel relaxed while describing their personal experiences in relation to the research topic (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). For this reason, the interviews will take place in a predetermined spot agreed upon by the interviewee outside of
their immediate school or classroom environment. Before participating in this research, each participant was asked to sign a consent letter (see Appendix A) that provided an overview of the study, addressed ethical implications, specified expectations of participation, and gave consent for them to be interviewed as well as audio recorded. All data (audio recordings) will be stored on my password protected laptop and will be accessible by only my course instructor and I before being destroyed after five years. Participants were made aware that during the five years leading up to the disposal of data, there is potential that I will publish, present, or use the data for purposes other than this study.

There were no known risks involved with taking part in this study and permission and approval was given from the research ethics board of the University of Toronto prior to starting this research.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

In any research study, there will be various limitations and strengths that can be seen in the research methods used. With a sample size of just three participants, the data collected is not able to be representative of the general population (Carr, 1994). However, Marshall (1996) argued that an appropriate sample size for qualitative research is one that is able to answer the research question, which I was able to do with three participants. Therefore, I do not see the sample size of this study to be a limitation to the findings.

Being restricted in terms of gathering data was a limitation to this research in two ways. First, I was only able to conduct semi-structured interviews. Although DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) state that semi-structured interviews are often the sole source of data in a qualitative study, it could have been beneficial to draw on data from other sources as well. The sole use of interviews may be a limitation, but it can also be seen as a strength as through
interviews I was able to get more substantive responses than a survey and I was also able to go more in depth into the teachers lived experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The second limitation that was seen in terms of data collection was that I was only given permission to do interviews with professionals and could not incorporate the views of students or parents who may also have some insightful input in this area of inquiry.

Carr (1994) states that a strength of the semi-structured interview used in qualitative research is that it allows the subjects to raise issues or topics that the researcher may not have thought about. This is definitely a benefit in this type of study as I am not limited or restricted in the questions I can ask the participants. I was able to slightly stray from the set protocol (see Appendix A) if I saw the opportunity to strengthen the data through alternative or variations of existing questions.

It has been proven that combining different aspects of various types of research allow the researcher to maximize the strengths of each approach, while at the same time minimizing the limitations (Carr, 1994). Carr (1994) suggests that in most cases, when research is given more time, it results in richer and deeper findings. Therefore, I would consider the timeframe of this study to be a limitation to the findings as the research had to be done over a two-month period. With a research question like this, a longitudinal study would have been beneficial in order to see whole school approaches implemented over time, however the nature of the research did not allow for this.

3.7 Conclusion

In chapter three, I gave an overview of the research methodology used in this study. I began by outlining the research approach and highlighted my rationale for choosing to use
qualitative research over quantitative. I chose to conduct a qualitative research study as I wanted to uncover data surrounding the theme of whole school approaches to English language learners. As stated above, for the purpose of discovering data surrounding a topic, qualitative research makes more sense. I then went on to discuss my reasoning for choosing to conduct individual semi-structured interviews which included but was not limited to, wanting flexibility and leeway within the interview in case I needed to alter or change questions in the event that an unexpected theme arose. I moved on to outline the criteria used to choose the research participants and how I recruited these professionals. In selecting my participants, I sought professionals who had a lot of experience working in a school with a high proportion of ELLs as well as professionals who worked in varying areas of support to ELL students (a principal, a classroom teacher, and an ESL teacher). Next, I described how I analyzed the data through coding, creating categories, and finally generating overarching themes seen in the data, which I felt helped to organize my findings. I then moved on to outline the ethical implications that were pertinent in this research study, which are also addressed in Appendix A. Finally, I finished chapter three by exploring some of the limitations of the research such as the restricting timeframe as well as highlighting some strengths, such as the use of semi-structured interviews. Next, in chapter four I report the research findings.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine and report on the findings that came from interviews with three TDSB professionals who are committed to supporting ELLs using a whole school approach. The purpose of these interviews was to examine how a principal, home room teacher, and ESL support teacher integrate and view whole school approaches to support English language learners. Also, through these interviews, I hoped to answer the main research question of this study, which is: how is one Toronto school effectively enacting a whole school commitment and approach to supporting English Language Learners? I investigate the following three themes in connection to the literature outlined in Chapter 2: The whole school approach entails collaboration between schools and families prioritizing student success and professional training; The development and capacity to sustain the whole school approach is a joint effort between the entire school as well as school board funding and allocation of resources; There are a range of stakeholders serving different roles involved in a whole school approach including the school, families, and the broader school community. These three themes also have sub-themes that allow me to analyze my findings in greater detail. I will first describe each theme, then report on my research findings, and finally connect these findings to the existing literature.

4.1 The Whole School Approach Entails Collaboration Between Schools and Families that is Aimed Toward Student Success and Supported by Formal Professional Training

The main idea that will be uncovered in this section is determining what a whole school approach to supporting English language learners entails and prioritizes. Through uncovering this information, educators can begin to learn more about the procedures accompanying a whole
school approach to supporting ELLs. Through this discovery, I will touch on the importance of hiring professionals with formal experience and personal connections, the encouragement of personal as well as academic student success, and finally, the significance of collaboration between the school and student families in supporting ELL students.

4.1.1 The whole school approach prioritizes hiring professionals with ELL experience, formal training, and personal connections

Teacher preparedness was a very common theme throughout the literature and was also something that all three participants agreed is essential for successfully supporting ELLs. All three participants in this study have some form of professional training, a personal connection to understanding the needs of ELLs, or both.

Fred and Sally both discussed how they were once newcomers to the country and felt that this allowed them to better connect with and understand the struggles or needs of the ELL students that they encounter on a daily basis. Sally went on to explain how her entire life, she has been an advocate for her parents who do not speak English. Supporting her parents, translating for them, and helping them has always been a part of her life, which allows her to have a deeper connection with her students. She feels that she is able to empathize with her ELL students on a different level because she was once also in their shoes. When teachers are able to make personal connections such as the examples above with the participants, it helps to create a friendly, caring, and belonging environment, which has proven to be an effective strategy to support ELLs (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Rader-Brown & Howley, 2014; Pang, 2010; Goldenberg, 2008; Houk, 2005).

In regards to a whole school approach to supporting ELLs, there is a gap in current research surrounding the importance of making personal connections to show greater empathy and support to ELLs. The participants all agreed that these personal connections they are able to
make with their students are an integral factor in providing more meaningful support to their newcomer students.

The participants have a specific type of empathy to ELL students because of their own personal experiences. Chad stated, “I think I have been very lucky. I haven’t had any real challenges with anyone. We support each other at this school so its good.” Although the participants at this school did not see collaboration with other professionals as a barrier to supporting the students, research mentioned that a common barrier to implementing a whole school approach is that there may be discrepancies or tensions between professionals (Plough & Garcia, 2015; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). There is a possibility that this could be a barrier to whole school approaches in other schools where professionals do not have personal connections to ELLs and therefore cannot share the same level of empathy to their students.

Fred and Chad have over 20 years of experience working in schools with high populations of ELLs and Sally has 8 years of experience. Therefore, all three participants have knowledge and familiarity with supporting these students. Having this professional experience is important as they have had time to identify their skills when working with ELLs as well as practice self reflection to work on things that they may have had to improve on that beginning teachers have not yet had the opportunity to do.

With regards to professional development, Sally and Chad have both completed additional qualifications in ESL, which was a choice they made knowing that they would have ELLs in their classrooms. Fred, who is the principal at the school, mentioned that himself as well as the four ESL teachers at the school, including Chad, take part in an annual conference for supporting ELLs that is held by the University of Toronto. Chad stated,
We recently went to an iPad ELL workshop at our yearly conference and we learned about and received three apps that we were able to put on our iPads and we were given instructions and examples about how to use them. I have tried them, and they have been very receptive for my ELL students, they are asking to use it now!

The notion that there is a positive relationship between student academic achievement and professional development programs was a prominent theme in the literature findings. Plough & Garcia (2015) discuss that good qualities of professional development include ongoing training, school-based work, and making connections, which was all very evident at this school. The professionals at this school made it clear that they do partake in ongoing training as well as implementing the knowledge gained back into their practice, which suggests they get the most out of the professional development opportunities that they take part in. This aligns with current research that states that as there is a shared pedagogical vision with a school-wide ESL effort, teachers are more likely to be supported with professional development to benefit ELLs (Haworth et al., 2015). With professionals in different areas of the school taking part in and implementing the knowledge that they have gained, it shows that the participants’ school is committed as a whole, to professional learning and ongoing development, which in turn assists ELLs and other students in the school environment.

4.1.2 The whole school approach is committed to personal and academic student success

As mentioned by one of the participants, professionals working within the education system, whether engaging in a whole school approach or not, should have an underlying commitment to the success of the students surrounding them. After analyzing my research findings, I found that the three participants had a similar goal within their educational positions: student success, which here not only means academic success, but also personal success.
All three participants emphasized the importance of ensuring academic success for all students, including ELLs. Part of Fred’s philosophy of education stems from “ensuring every student reaches their maximum potential”. He mentioned that in order to facilitate this, “educators have to realize that equity does not always mean equality”. What he meant by this is that in order for students to meet their maximum potential, they may not always be given the same supports. ELLs have different needs and support requirements to meet their maximum potential than native English speaking students have, and students with special needs might require a whole different set of resources to meet their own maximum potential. All three participants agreed that, despite the possibility of needing different resources and supports to be successful, ELLs should not be treated any differently than their peers. Chad mentioned that part of his goal through teaching ESL classes is to support the ESL students to try to make them feel comfortable and achieve the same things that every other student is able to achieve. For example, he stated “I try to be as pupil-friendly as I can be so that they [the ELL students] are not afraid to share what they know and to make it kind of like a risk-free environment.”

A commonality found between the three participant interviews was the fact that allowing students to feel comfortable can contribute to their academic success at school. The three professionals mentioned a variety of ways to encourage student comfort within the school. All three participants said that they allow the students to speak in their native language, promote inclusivity, get to know their students, and show that they understand and truly care for their well-being. Sally stated, “I try to make sure all students are included. I try to do this with ELLs by incorporating their culture and finding out more about their culture to incorporate it into the classroom and different activities that we do.” This ties in nicely with research surrounding this area that states it is important to employ strategies to help ELL students feel comfortable within
the school such as creating caring and belonging environments, use of native language, inclusivity, and cultural relevance in lessons (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Rader-Brown & Howley, 2014; Pang, 2010; Goldenberg, 2008; Houk, 2005). It is clear to see that the educators at this school are trying hard to provide a comforting environment, which leads to academic success for the students. The care towards the ELLs is not only seen from the home room teacher, but from many different professionals working within the school, which helps to create a whole school approach to supporting these English language learners.

4.1.3 The whole school approach seeks to foster collaboration between schools and families

Within a school, many educators agree that collaboration is key, not only within the school between staff members and students, but also between families in the community. Many times throughout the interviews, each of the three participants mentioned the importance of collaboration and communication between staff, students, and families.

As the principal, Fred mentioned, “We have to take a very collaborative approach and one that will support the students entirely.” By this he meant that everyone has to work together within the school to collaborate and create a whole school approach. He later stated “Whether you are a classroom teacher or a subject specific teacher, we all have a responsibility to educate students, even if their English is not at an efficient level.” He mentioned that in some schools, teachers can be guilty of thinking that the ELL is not their “problem” and that the ESL teacher is the sole educator. He went on to discuss that this is not the case, and that staff members working within the school environment need to share responsibility as everyone is there to educate the children. Sally mentioned that her and Chad (the ESL resource teacher for Grade 4) collaborate by doing parent teacher interviews together, team up when doing report cards, and meet regularly throughout the week to discuss the ELL student needs. Chad also mentioned, “We are very lucky
at this school to have good administrators that help us to support the ELLs as well.” Through analyzing the interview transcripts, it is clear to see that each role in the school depends on others for support as well as seen in the above examples with Chad, Fred, and Sally. Research suggests that some of the most effective and successful programs for ELLs come from comprehensive, school-wide efforts, involving principals, teachers, as well as staff (Plough & Garcia, 2015; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). It can be seen that the approach at this school does indeed involve principals, teachers, and other staff, suggesting the school prioritizes collaboration among staff and a whole school approach to supporting learners.

In regards to collaboration with families in the community, the three participants all agreed that working together as a team with families, teachers, and students is an important strategy to supporting ELLs. Fred stated, “When we [families, staff, and students] work together as an entire family, we see the benefits of that. One of the comments I make very often is when families and staff work together, our children are the ones who benefit.” Sally reinforced Fred’s thoughts by stating “Our approach is to not only rely on the ESL teacher, but to make a whole school community effort, which does the child best.” It says a lot about the environment and sense of community at this school when the staff working in different areas such as Sally and Fred make such similar comments. It shows that collaboration between families and the school really is an important factor in this school’s approach. A common theme in the literature surrounding the topic of supporting ELLs through a school-wide commitment was the importance of the principal as well as staff to maintain healthy connections with student families (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011), which was made clear in the interviews is also a priority at this school. The views and experiences of the professionals at this school shows that research in this area is still relevant. Each of the participants expressed that having connections to the families
within the community and providing support for them along with the student is something that is considered a priority.

**4.2 The Development and Continued Success of the Whole School Approach is Maintained Through Partnerships, Financial Resources, as well as Pedagogical Tools These Financial Resources can Provide**

In this second theme, resources and factors that support the development of a whole school approach to supporting English language learners will be outlined. Elaborating on the resources and factors that are involved in sustaining this approach is important as it will help us to gather more information about what a whole school approach actually entails. In order to get a full understanding, the sub-themes included in this section include, exploring resources within the community, within the actual school, and those provided by the school board.

**4.2.1 In a whole school approach to supporting English language learners, professionals and students rely on partnerships between federal assistance programs and families to help with translation and language acquisition**

Mentioned by all three participants was the amount of support received from members of the community for the ELL students and their families. The main community support used at this school by families as well as staff members are the settlement workers who come into the school and according to Fred, are part of a partnership with the federal government. These settlement workers are at the school and are there to support the school staff as well as families if they need help communicating with each other. Sally mentioned, “It’s nice because I know that if I ever have an issue with a student whose family speaks Farsi, I can go to that support worker and know that the issue will be correctly translated and communicated to the parent.” Working
within the school, the community settlement workers represent the top three languages spoken at the school: Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Korean, and Farsi, however, many other languages are available upon request. The settlement workers are not only there to support the staff at the school, but also to support the family if they have any concerns about their child. Regier et al. (2005) stress the importance of student families being able to have access to translation services so that they are able to connect with schools and communicate about academic or social needs. The research findings align nicely with what the existing research deems to be beneficial for ELL students and student families in that these resources are available and used by all participants in different ways to benefit the child. The participants’ school is very fortunate to have this service available and seems to be using it to its full potential.

Parents and families were also mentioned as being a great support within the school community. Chad mentioned that he relies on the families of his students to help support them with their English language acquisition at home. This can be in the form of practice, homework help, or even just having a positive outlook on schooling so that their child is excited about learning. Encouraging family involvement in the student’s school life was mentioned as one of the fundamental strategies to supporting English language learners (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Rader-Brown & Howley, 2014; Pang, 2010; Goldenberg, 2008; Houk, 2005). There is a strong connection with what existing research already says regarding family involvement and ELL success and the priority that the school places on ensuring student families are involved as possible in their child’s education. At this school in particular, family involvement can be seen everywhere, from volunteers on fieldtrips to native language class teachers after school, family involvement is something the school really uses as a resource.
4.2.2 The school board provides financial resources to sustain ELL education through budget allocations and individual professional development opportunities

Although there are many factors that support the development of the whole school approach, the resources provided by the school board are quite possibly the most significant. The reason for this is because it is the board that allocates the budget for the amount of ESL teachers at each school. Because this is a large school with a high population of ELLs, the board has allocated four ESL teachers, which is a huge factor in the support that the students receive and their success with the English language. The principal at the school, Fred, stated in his interview, “We are very lucky at our school. We currently have four teachers allocated just to support our ELLs, which is very significant.” The number of ESL teachers allocated to this school allows for one ESL teacher for each grade. It is possible that with more professionals in the school concentrated on the success of ELLs, like in the participants’ school, a whole school approach to supporting these students is more easily implemented as there are more stakeholders dedicated to their success. This is significant as many schools are losing funding for ESL teachers and struggle to have even one full time ESL teacher allocated to their school. With some schools only having an ESL teacher working in the school part-time, it may be harder to implement a whole school approach. Although budget cuts resulting in fewer ESL teachers directly relating to whole school approaches is absent from the literature, only having a part time ESL teacher might create disconnect and lack of communication between key players, therefore interrupting a whole school approach. The research however does shows that in many cases, decreased funding results in cuts to ESL programs, which then caused schools to struggle to provide long term support that ELLs need (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Regier et al., 2005). Compared to other schools that do not
have this much support, the participants’ school is very fortunate to have enough ESL teachers allocated to properly support the high population of ELLs enrolled.

Through the board’s budget allocations for this school, the staff have been fortunate to have the use of a variety of technology aimed at better supporting the ELL students. Fred mentioned that because the population of ELLs is so high in this school, they get a higher budget for supports for these students, which includes technology. The way that the professionals in this school actually use the technology provided through board funding will be outlined in the next section of this research paper.

Pertaining to professional development opportunities offered by the board, Fred stated, “Our board does support English as a second language through their own department, and there is a coordinator who would support schools, so I have a direct link or a contact if I need to speak to someone.” Later, it was mentioned that the board offers workshops to support ESL teachers as well as individual programs for teachers who may be struggling to support these learners. Plough & Garcia (2015) stress that a positive relationship exists between effective professional development programs and student academic achievement, and therefore insist that staff development is critical in schools with ELLs. Having a principal at the school like Fred, who supports the staff and their professional development opportunities, is definitely beneficial as well.

4.2.3 Schools may use the allocated government financial resources on pedagogical tools to support ELLs through a whole school approach

There are many resources and factors that support the development of the whole school approach at this school including supportive staff and students, the use of technology within the school, as well as the actual ESL program implemented. In the previous section, it was
mentioned that the board helps to sustain support for ELLs through the allocation of resources such as technology. In this section, it will be discussed how the allocated technology is actually used as a resource to support the students.

In her interview, Sally discussed how she uses the smart board, which is a great visual for the ELL students. She also talked about how she uses different apps on the class iPads, such as duolingo, to help the ELLs with their language acquisition. Chad mentioned how the teachers at this school are so fortunate to have access to technology such as iPads, computers, chromebooks, and smart boards, which are made possible by board financial allocations to help the students. He stated that in each class, he tries to incorporate the use of some form of technology that he has access to in order to better engage his students to help with their learning. Instructional strategies to aid ELLs is an area that is very prominent in the literature. Among the many strategies mentioned in the literature are creating visual representations and incorporating the use of technology (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Rader-Brown & Howley, 2014; Pang, 2010; Goldenberg, 2008; Houk, 2005). There is a gap in current research relating whole school approaches and technology used. However, Chad and Sally mentioned using some of the same apps to support their ELL students and the benefits that they see through using these applications. It has been made clear by the interviewees that they are indeed incorporating the use of technology and realize the importance of this for the benefit of the ELLs.

The three participants agreed that the actual ESL program utilized in the school is a huge factor that supports the development and success of the ELL students. Fred described the program implemented at his school as a combined approach. In this approach, students are removed from the regular classroom for a portion of the day, while the other portion of the day the ESL teacher comes into the classroom to support the ELLs. Chad (who is in charge of Grade
4 ESL) stated that although it is a great ESL program, “it’s hard for me to give as much time as I can to all of the ELLs. I take less prep time in order to give my time more evenly to the four Grade 4 classes in the afternoons”. This method has been shown to draw on the expertise of both the ESL teacher and classroom teacher, and is a method that is highly recommended by researchers as of late (Fu et al., 2007). However, this combined approach may be putting some strain on the ESL teachers at this school who feel they do not have enough time in the day to provide the same support to all students in addition to collaborating with other professionals. Theoharis & O’Toole (2011) state that in order to support a whole school approach, principals must ensure that teachers have enough time to work together to develop programs for ELLs. They also state that, although it may be difficult, in effective school-wide efforts for ELLs, there must be time for staff to work together to engage in concentrated efforts to meet the needs of ELLs even if it means reconstructing class schedules and instructional time (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). This shows that research aligns with Chad’s concerns outlined above about time constraints for providing support to his ELL students.

4.3 A Whole School Approach Involves a Range of Stakeholders and Collaboration

Between the School, Families, as well as the Broader Community

In this section, the stakeholders involved in a whole school approach to supporting English language learners as well as the role that they play will be explored. It is imperative to understand the full range of individuals that have an effect on ELLs in the public education system and the role that each plays, as it helps to learn more about the complexity of whole school approaches. This theme is broken down into three sub-themes including stakeholders in the classroom, in the school, as well as within the broader community.
4.3.1 Through shared responsibility, acceptance, and interdisciplinary support, individuals within the mainstream classroom help to maintain a whole school approach to supporting ELLs

A range of individuals can be seen in the classroom throughout the school day, such as the teacher, the ESL teacher, and students. The three participants agreed that each of these individuals play an important role in supporting the ELL. Both Chad and Sally mentioned many times throughout their interviews that they depend on each other to help support ELL students. In the morning, the ELLs go to Chad’s classroom to get support, however in the afternoon, Chad comes into Sally’s classroom to support the ELLs in their homeroom. Although Sally is the main classroom teacher, Chad and her are essentially sharing the responsibility of these students. Because they are working so closely with one another, it is essential that Chad and Sally get along and work well as a team to support the students in the most effective way possible. Sally said, “My ESL support teacher is Chad, we constantly meet and ask each other’s opinions. If I have any issues I will go to him.” Chad and Sally act as the main educators for the ELL students and work together as a team to support them. Chad also touched on this by saying, “My main role is working with ELLs, however I also go into the classrooms to provide support for the classroom teacher. In the afternoon, I support the teacher and the students in whatever subject they are doing.” According to McMahon (2013) when the homeroom teacher and ESL support teacher can work as a team to educate the students, the push in method, which is the method used in the afternoons at this school, is very beneficial. This is because it creates a positive experience for the ELL as they are getting specialized support in their actual classroom with their peers (McMahon, 2013).
When thinking of the individuals who support the ELLs within the classroom, the teacher and ESL teacher are usually the people who get the most credit. However, the other students within the classroom acting as resources was a common theme in the participant interviews. Sally stated,

I think the other students are really supportive, just because I would say 80 percent or more of my Grade 4 students are ELLs or have been an ELL before in Kindergarten or Grade 1, Grade 2, so they all understand where the newer students are coming from. There is a huge level of acceptance and willingness to help the newer ELL students that you might not expect or see in other schools.

She went on to explain how there are always students in her class who are eager to help the newer students who are learning English. Some students with higher levels of English even help to translate into the ELLs native language. Fred mentioned,

With the exception of 10-20% of students, everyone at some point has come from another country. Therefore, almost all students can relate to the students who are new to the school. At any given time of year, I can go to any classroom and say I need a Korean student to help me with something or translating for a student and I will have 15 hands go up, so I think that becomes the benefit.

This level of acceptance for the ELL students really helps to build the confidence and comfort of the new students. Current research shows that through embracing inclusion, all students are valued for their unique abilities and are included in the school community that sees diversity as a strength, not a weakness (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). At the participants’ school, there seems to be a school-wide importance on providing an inclusive community where everyone wants to help each other.
4.3.2 Within the school, teachers and students outside of the homeroom classroom are involved and committed to facilitating a whole school approach

Often, when we think of the individuals who support English language learners, we think of the ESL teacher and the classroom teacher. However, there are a variety of other stakeholders within the school who play a role as they also have contact with the students. Everyday the students go to other classes such as gym, music, drama, etc. so these teachers also play a big part in giving support to not only the ELLs, but all students. Sally mentioned, “The students have different teachers who also play a role in education. For example, we have a computer teacher, a gym teacher, a music teacher, and a drama teacher.” These other subject specific teachers need to be on the same page with supporting the English language learners so they are not left behind. When the ELLs go to these other classes such as gym, music, drama, or technology, they do not have the extra support of the ESL teacher; the one subject-specific teacher is the only educator in the room, as well as the other students. Sally mentioned that she often communicates with the other teacher about the needs of her students who require some extra assistance. She also said that some of the subject-specific teachers use helpful strategies such as pairing up the ELL students with another student who speaks the same first language but has a stronger grasp of English. That way, the ELL students wont feel left behind or left out as they have someone there who can translate for them if needed. Although in most school environments there are other subject teachers that the ELL students encounter on an everyday basis, there seems to be a gap in current research regarding the role that these other teachers play. The teachers at the participants’ school seem to value working together with these other professionals as well.

The school administration and leaders are key stakeholders in the effectiveness of the programs implemented and mind set of the school in regards to ELLs. Chad mentioned that he
believes the effectiveness of the programs implemented for ELLs starts with the school leadership. He then said that the leadership’s mind set and sense of importance regarding different programs such as ESL trickles down to the staff at the school. Chad later mentioned, “I think leadership is very important and that with a supportive principal and vice principal it helps a lot. To know they understand what we are doing and give us back up is so important.”

Therefore, the views of the principal really set the tone for the entire school’s success of the ESL program, with of course other factors such as budget and allocations playing a role as well. With regards to research on whole school approaches, it was found that the principal can often be seen as the person who creates the most influence for long term success of teachers and students, including ELLs (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). The views at this school align with the current research as the two other participants respect the visions of the school leadership in regards to the development and growth of the students’ English language skills.

Not only students within the physical classroom, but other students in the school can also be seen as stakeholders in the development and success of the English language program and acceptance of new students. Sally mentioned a program called ‘Student Language Ambassadors’. When a new student first comes into the school, the language ambassadors, usually a 4th or 5th Grade student who speaks the same first language as the new student, take the student and their family as well as a school administrator on a tour around the school. This way, they can have a tour in their own language and the parents or new student can have their questions answered in their native language. Sally said that this program really helps to make the new student feel comfortable in the new school environment. Research in this area aligns with the positive views of the language ambassador program available to families at this school. Leadership in effective schools for ELLs ensure that the school is connected to ELL families and that family
involvement in the school is facilitated in innovative ways and in their home language (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). The participants viewed the language ambassador program to do just that, and thought that it was an excellent way to provide an inclusive environment to new students from the start.

4.3.3 Outside of the school and within the community, stakeholders range from government supports to student families

Within the broader school community there are a variety of key players who also influence the effectiveness of the school’s English language program. As mentioned previously, the support workers who are part of a program sponsored by the federal government come into the school to help with translation services for students and families and play a big part in the success at this school. They are key stakeholders in the development of the English language program as they offer a line of communication and facilitate the communication between the families and the school. They do this through offering in-person translation services to teachers, students, and parents, to ensure everyone is on the same page and issues are fully understood. The language-specific support worker comes into the classroom to meet with the teacher and parents to discuss their concerns and immediately translates any discussion into the parent’s native language. This can be done by appointment for parent-teacher interviews, or also last minute if an issue arises.

The school board is also within the community and is the institution that allocates the budget and resources available to each school. Therefore, the board plays an important role and is a key stakeholder in the development and maintenance of the English program. In his interview, Fred mentioned, “I know that our board really cares about supporting our students who are learning English.” The school board seems to be putting forth an effort to provide
schools with high populations of ELLs with resources so that they can set up respectable language programs like the whole school approach at Fred’s school. Although resources provided by the school board seem play an important part at this school, there is limited current research that suggests school board resources help foster a whole school approach to English language learners.

The expectations from families and other individuals within the community serve as a positive motivation for the development of the English program at this school. Fred stated during his interview, “The families that come to us from all of these different countries have high expectations for school and high expectations for their children.” Expectations alone and talk from within the community can indeed effect the outcomes at the school. If there aren’t any community expectations for a school, will that school’s leadership have the same motivation as a school that has high expectations from the surrounding community? Chad touched on the importance of having a good reputation within the community,

I think that our school has developed a reputation. Even speaking with parents outside in the community, they know that this school has been a good school to support English language learners. I think it [whole school approach] works really well at this school and I think new arrivals to Canada appreciate and recognize the support that this school can give.

From the above examples, both Chad and Fred recognize the positive reputation that this school has created and the expectations that come along with it from members of the community.

The student families are another part of the community that plays an important role in the outcome of the school programs. Chad mentioned how parents volunteering and working at the school help to support ELLs when he stated,
Whether it’s the principal, the vice principal, the teachers, the ELL teachers, the parents in the community who volunteer and work at the school, I think all of us as a team work together to support all of the ELL learners.

Parent involvement in the school was also witnessed by myself in the two practicum placements I completed at this school. Family members were always seen around the school from lunchroom supervisors, field trip volunteers, to parents sitting in on presentations to watch their child.

Research stressed that family involvement is one of the fundamental strategies to supporting ELLs when they come into a new school (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Rader-Brown & Howley, 2014; Pang, 2010; Goldenberg, 2008; Houk, 2005). With regards to a whole school approach, Elfers & Stritikus (2014) stress the importance of providing families with opportunities to come into the school as this in turn supports their children. They state that typically in other countries, families aren’t invited into the school unless it is for something negative, so it is important to have them come in for positive experiences as well (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). There is a strong alignment between family involvement at the participants’ school with the importance of family involvement in existing literature. August & Hakuta (1997) state that optimal learning conditions for culturally diverse students that lead to high academic performance include a supportive school-wide climate, staff development, home and parent involvement, native language in instruction, and supportive leaders. The participants at this school have exhibited that these attributes are definitely all a priority in their whole school approach to ELLs.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed my research findings from the three interviews, which I organized into three main themes along with relevant sub-themes. Through my first theme, the whole school approach entails collaboration between schools and families prioritizing personal
connections, student success, and professional training, I found that the participants placed a strong importance on making the ELLs feel comfortable in the school setting. Being able to make connections with the students to better understand them and where their families are coming from seemed to be an important aspect in creating an atmosphere that encouraged student success both personally and academically. Through my second theme, the development and capacity to sustain the whole school approach is a joint effort between the entire school, resources from the school board, as well as the surrounding community. It was seen that the three professionals studied really valued the resources from the board, community, and school. There was a strong emphasis put on the privilege of having settlement workers in the school to create a line of communication between the school and families who do not speak English. Another important factor stressed by all participants was the supportive school community and the fact that the board has allocated four ESL teachers to support the students. The third theme regarding the stakeholders involved in the whole school approach and the roles that they each play uncovered the importance of the variety of individuals that have an influence on the ELLs and the outcome of their education.

Most of the existing literature uncovered stated that, indeed, whole school approaches are beneficial. However, these findings dig deeper into what a whole school approach to supporting ELLs actually entails and the resources and other factors that support this type of learning environment. These findings make a significant contribution to the existing literature by emphasising the importance of teachers having personal connections to ELLs, outlining the importance of other subject specific teachers, and highlighting the resources that the school board provides that make it possible to implement a whole school approach.
After analyzing the research findings, it can be seen that the three professionals working in different areas of the school had very similar things to say about the school’s approach to supporting English language learners. This shows that the leadership is really going above and beyond to create a mutual understanding regarding the importance of the English language program within this school community. Although this school proved to be a good example of an educational environment implementing a whole school approach, there are still recommendations for further research that will be addressed later in this paper. Next, in Chapter Five, I discuss the implications of implementing a whole school approach to supporting English language learners and recommendations for the educational community.
Chapter 5: Implications

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I begin by providing an overview of key findings and their significance in relation to my main research question, which is: how is one Toronto school effectively enacting a whole school commitment and approach to supporting English Language Learners? Then I move forward to discuss the implications of these findings for the broader educational community as well as for myself as a beginning teacher-researcher. Next, with these implications in mind, I make recommendations for professionals in the field of education such as teachers, school boards, and administrators. Finally, at the end of this chapter I suggest important areas that might benefit from further research in the future.

5.1 Overview and Significance of Key Findings

The findings of this study were organized into three main themes. The first theme involved understanding that a whole school approach entails collaboration between schools and families that is aimed toward student success and supported by professional development. Through this theme, I found that the three participants as well as current literature emphasized the importance of creating a risk-free environment and an atmosphere where students felt comfortable. Some factors that were said to contribute to this level of comfort include use of the student’s native language as well as culturally relevant pedagogy/themes around the school. The participants stressed that part of this comfort was created through making personal connections to the ELLs, which allows them to empathize with and better support these students. This was an important finding as making personal connections was something that was not previously mentioned in literature surrounding the topic, yet was of great importance to the participants in
facilitating a whole school approach. In addition, the significance of collaboration between staff, families, and students was a strong focus in this first theme and one that also aligned with current research.

The second theme in this study considered the factors that maintain a whole school approach to supporting ELLs such as partnerships, financial resources provided by the school board, and pedagogical tools that these resources can provide. The main factor mentioned by all three participants were the support workers who are provided through a partnership with the federal government. These support workers speak the main languages represented within the school and are able to translate issues between teachers, parents, and students. The participants stressed these support workers to be a great resource and very conducive to creating a whole school approach. A significant finding in this second theme was the importance placed on school board allocations of financial and staffing resources in facilitating a whole school approach to supporting ELLs. This finding was significant as it was an area that was largely omitted from the research, yet highlighted by all three participants. The participants mentioned that the technology, such as iPads, Chromebooks, SMART boards, and laptops, made possible through board financial allocations, assist with supporting ELLs. Although technology was mentioned in research as an important resource to support ELLs, it was not mentioned in the context of a whole school approach. A final key finding in the second them was brought up by Chad regarding not having enough time in the day to give enough attention to his ELL students. This issue of time constraints is significant as it connects with current literature and is a common issue among professionals trying to implement a whole school approach to supporting ELLs.

The final theme in this study identified the roles of major stakeholders involved in a whole school approach including the community, the individuals within a school, and student
families. It was found that professionals within the school place a large importance on depending on each other for support, as well as sharing responsibility for educating ELLs. There was a strong correlation between these findings and existing literature, which shows that this is still relevant. However, an aspect that was not found in literature, yet stressed by the three participants, was the role that other students within the classroom play in supporting ELLs. The three professionals mentioned that because almost every student in the school was once an ELL, they have greater empathy, acceptance, and sense of respect for these newcomer students, which helps to create the risk-free environment discussed above. The participants agreed that all professionals within the school (not just the main classroom teacher and ESL teacher) must work together to facilitate a whole school approach, including the HPE teacher, music teacher, technology teacher, etc. This is important because most research focuses mainly on the homeroom teacher and ESL teacher as the only means of support for ELLs. There was strong alignment between the findings and existing literature surrounding the role and importance of school leadership as well as family involvement in a whole school approach. The role of the support workers was discussed in more detail throughout the third theme and connected with existing literature that suggested families benefit from access to in person translation services to aid in the shared education of the students.

5.2 Implications

In this section, I outline the implications of my research findings. First I discuss the broad implications for the educational community including schools, school boards, administrators, and professionals. I then discuss implications for myself as a researcher and beginning teacher.
5.2.1 The educational community

Both the existing literature as well as my participants’ experiences emphasized the importance of collaboration and communication in effectively implementing a whole school approach to supporting English language learners. So much emphasis is usually put on the classroom teacher as well as the ESL teacher for providing the sole means of education for ELLs. However, this collaboration and communication is not only needed between professionals within the school, but also between families and services such as support workers within the community. An implication of this study is understanding the significance of the key stakeholders within the school community such as families, support workers, the school board, teachers, administrators, ESL teachers, other staff within the school, etc. who all work together to support ELLs.

Another aspect that was prominent in the literature was creating a caring, inclusive, and safe environment for ELLs so that they can be successful. Part of this sense of inclusivity comes from allowing the use of the students’ L1, including culturally relevant pedagogy and allowing students to bring their own culturally diverse identities into the classroom. However, through this study, it was found that a key factor in creating this type of environment is having teachers who share personal connections with the ELLs and have a sense of empathy towards them. It is important to understand what ELLs are going through in order to help them succeed academically in their new environment.

Within the literature, although certain resources such as technology and ESL staffing support were discussed as factors that improve the quality of ELL education, it was not mentioned how schools actually get these resources. However, the participants each mentioned that the school board is an important player in allowing the school to maintain and sustain the
whole school approach that they have implemented. Therefore, it is important to know that although the school board does not actually implement a whole school approach, there are resources and financial help that are made available to schools that can then be used to help support ELLs and to create a whole school approach to supporting these students.

5.2.2 My professional identity and practice

Through this study, I have gained a lot of insight about what factors contribute to and help to sustain a whole school approach to supporting ELLs. I now have a deeper understanding of the importance of working with other professionals within the school to support ELLs and am aware that the education of these students is a shared responsibility. I am now conscious of the fact that my own strong interest and prioritization of the needs of ELLs could be due to personal experiences and connections that I can make with these students. As I have spent time as a language learner overseas immersed in a different culture and have personal experience supporting my fiancé who is a newcomer to Canada, I may have more empathy towards ELLs than the average pre-service teacher. I understand that, in future classrooms, I may not have the same access to the abundance of resources that this school has, such as four ESL teachers, in-school support workers, technology, etc. If this is the case, I will make it a priority to find other ways to support these students to the best of my ability. I will make it a priority in my future classrooms to get to know my students and about where they come from in order to create a risk-free, caring, and comfortable learning environment. I am prepared to be an advocate for ELLs within the school if there are not already programs in place.

What I have learned through this study will also help to shape myself as a teacher-researcher and lifelong learner. The three participants, as well as current literature, emphasized the importance of professional development. As a teacher, I believe that it is important to stay
current in research to constantly learn ways to improve my teaching practice to support ELLs through both professional development and independent research. Staying current in research and continuously taking up opportunities to participate in professional development will help me to be a contributing member in facilitating a whole school approach.

5.3 Recommendations

In order to continue to improve our education system, it is important for professionals in the field of education to continually review their practices and engage in life long learning. In this section, I make recommendations based on my research and what I have learned in order to help inform and improve future practice in the area of whole school approaches to supporting ELLs. I have organized my recommendations into four main sections: faculties of education, school boards, schools, professionals within a school, and families.

5.3.1 Faculties of education

- In order to have teachers who can share personal connections to ELLs, it is important that faculty of education admission teams make an effort to accept students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- As the population of ELLs in Canada’s education system is only growing, a mandatory two-year course dedicated to supporting ELLs would allow teacher candidates to be more prepared to teach and support these students.

5.3.2 School boards

- With the population of newcomers in Canada continuing to rise, it is imperative that school boards stop budget cuts to ESL programs.
- In order to support teachers or other professionals within individual schools, it is important that school boards offer professional development opportunities for those who feel that they could benefit. As well, school boards could offer programs to schools that want to implement a whole school approach but are unsure what steps to take.

- In any school that has ELL students, it is crucial that there is a professional within the school who can support them. Therefore, it is recommended that there is a full-time ESL teacher allocated to any school that has ELLs.

5.3.3 Individual schools

- It is important that schools wanting to implement a whole school approach hire staff who represent similar cultures as the students and have diverse backgrounds or experiences so that they can make personal connections and have a sense of empathy towards ELLs. This might include hiring professionals with personal experiences of being language learners themselves or those who have diverse experiences supporting ELLs.

- It is essential that schools ensure that all professionals within the school are on the same page and share similar goals with respect to educating ELLs.

- It is critical that schools have an open dialogue about the needs of ELLs and prepare programs throughout the school that promote English language development.

- In order for students to feel comfortable and to promote an inclusive culturally diverse environment, schools might want to make connections with different community support groups and programs for newcomers. It would be helpful to keep this information in the main office to give to families so that they know the services available not only within the school, but in the community as well.
To acknowledge and promote the population of linguistically diverse learners, schools might want to set up an international languages program so that ELLs can continue their path of literacy in their L1 as well.

Invite families into the school for positive experiences such as volunteering, attending assemblies, etc. Many newcomer families are only used to being welcomed into the school for negative reasons such as to discuss bad behaviour. Open the school doors to include families and welcome them as part of the learning community.

5.3.4 Professionals within a school

Professionals within the school need to work together to create a shared sense of responsibility to educate students and create a whole school approach to supporting ELLs. Support for ELLs needs to continue into other subjects and areas of the school such as office interactions, library time, health and physical education class, etc.

In order to include culturally relevant pedagogy and make the classroom or school a more inclusive place, educators need to learn about their student’s identities, families, past life experiences, etc. as this can have a great impact on ELL academic achievement.

Professionals working within a school should take advantage of professional development opportunities that are available in the area of supporting ELLs, which can help them to guide their practice and be life-long learners. Actually implement the things learned through professional development into your daily practice.

Know the services that are available within the community for newcomers so that you can recommend these services to families.

Have high expectations for all students, including ELLs in order to motivate them and encourage student success at school.
5.3.5 Families

- Communicate with professionals in the school about your child, making sure to always be aware of what your child is doing at school so that you can help to support them at home.

- If possible, make an effort to come in to the school to support your child through volunteering, field trip supervision, lunchroom supervisors, etc.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

Through this study, it was found that research is abundant in the area of supporting ELLs, however, research in the area of whole school approaches to supporting these students is quite limited. Therefore, in this section, I outline areas that could benefit from further research in the area of whole school approaches to supporting ELLs. Through investigating this topic over the past two years, I found that there is a lack of research in the way of implementing a whole school approach from its beginning stages. Although I learned a lot about factors that support a whole school approach, what this approach prioritizes, and the key stakeholders involved, it is still unclear how to implement a whole school approach in a school that does not already have one in place. Therefore, I believe that this area should be researched further.

All participants in my study mentioned how they use technology in their specific roles to support ELLs, however the use of technology was more on an individual basis. I would love to know more about how technology is used between professionals within a school to maintain and facilitate a whole school approach to supporting ELLs. Are there applications that professionals in different roles use to communicate with each other about these students? Are there programs available for parents to connect with classroom teachers and ESL teachers to support their children at home? Because of these questions, I feel that more research in the area of technology use in whole school approaches to supporting ELLs would be beneficial.
A significant finding in this research study was the importance placed on professionals and other students within the school having personal connections with ELLs in order to create a sense of empathy towards them and their learning. All three professionals in this study, had personal experiences or connections with their students, whether it was their own language learning experiences as a newcomer to Canada or vast experience working with ELLs. As well, the majority of other students in the school had once been an ELL. I believe further research should be conducted to find out how ELLs are supported and what challenges arise in a school where professionals do not have these personal connections and/or the majority of students had not once been an ELL at some point in time.

5.5 Concluding Comments

This research study has helped me to better understand the intricacies involved in a whole school approach to supporting linguistically diverse students. Through interviewing my three participants and comparing the results with existing literature, it was found that it is essential to create inclusive, caring, and risk-free school-wide environments for ELLs to succeed. A vital component for creating this type of environment includes having professionals within the school who can relate to these students on a personal level. The interviews also emphasized the importance of communication and collaboration between key stakeholders in order to facilitate a whole school approach to supporting ELLs. These stakeholders include, families, teachers, ESL teachers, support workers, administration, and anyone else who might come in contact with these students on an everyday basis. It was found that literature underscored the importance and contributions of the school board in providing schools with the resources and finances that they need in order to implement a whole school approach.
Through this research, I have learned a lot about the type of teacher I want to become in the future and the challenges that I may face. Overall, this research has strengthened my interest and passion for supporting ELLs and made me realize that this topic is not only extremely relevant, but also crucial in the Canadian education system. With growing numbers of ELLs, it is essential that professionals work as a team to support these students so that they can achieve the same level of success as their native English speaking peers.
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Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interviews

Date:

Dear ______________________________,

My Name is Natasha Rooney and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on whole school approaches to support English language learners. I am interested in interviewing teachers who have experience teaching a minimum of five years in a school with a strong and exemplary commitment to supporting ELLs. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60-minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates. I may also present my research findings via conference presentations and/or through publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. Any information that identifies your school or students will also be excluded. The interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only person who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor Dr. Angela MacDonald. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question during the interview. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks to participation, and I will share a copy of the transcript with you shortly after the interview to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,

Name: Natasha Rooney
Phone Number: ***-***-****
Email: ******@gmail.com
Course Instructor’s Name: Dr. Angela Mac Donald  
Contact Info: angela.macdonald@utoronto.ca

Consent Form  
I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.  
I have read the letter provided to me by Natasha Rooney and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ________________________________

Name: (printed) ________________________________

Date: ________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Introductory Script: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study, and for making time to be interviewed today. This research study aims to learn about effective whole school approaches to support English language learners in Ontario elementary schools. This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, and I will ask you a series of questions focused on your background in the field of education, beliefs, practices, and challenges you face in the area of supporting English language learners. I want to remind you that you may refrain from answering any question, and you have the right to withdraw your participation from the study at any time. As I explained in the consent letter, this interview will be audio-recorded. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background Information

1. What is your current position of employment at this school?
   a. What grades and subject areas do you currently teach? (if applicable)
   b. What other roles (if any) do you fulfill in the school? (e.g. resource, advisor, coach, ELL support worker, parent liaison)
2. How many years have you been in your current position, and worked at this school?
3. How many years have you worked in a school with a medium to high population of English language learners? Can you tell me about your experience working with ELLs?
4. Can you tell me about how, if at all, support for ELLs figures in your philosophy of education?
5. Can you tell me more about your school? (e.g. size, demographics, program priorities)
   a. How would you describe the school’s commitment to ELL support?
   b. How would you describe the school’s approach to supporting ELLs?
6. What experiences have contributed to developing your commitment to supporting ELLs, and which have contributed to preparing you for this work?
   a. Personal experiences? (e.g. own multilingual identity, travel, friends)
   b. Educational experiences? (e.g. university course work, teachers college, additional qualifications, professional development).
   c. In what ways have you taken part in professional development to better your own knowledge about supporting English language learners in the capacity of your current position in the school?
   d. Professional experiences? (e.g. teaching experience, particular job positions held)

Teacher Perspectives/Beliefs

7. What would you say are the some of the most significant needs of ELLs in schools?
8. How well, generally speaking, do you feel that schools are meeting these needs? What gives you that impression?
9. What do you believe are some of the key barriers that stand in the way of strengthening support for ELLs in schools? What do you believe are some current downfalls of support systems in place for English language learners in a school community?
10. How do you think those barriers could be addressed?
11. What do you think are the strengths and benefits of adopting a whole-school approach to supporting ELLs?
12. Why do you believe a whole school approach to supporting English language learners is important in a school community?
13. In your view, how could whole school approaches help respond to some of the barriers that you identified?
14. Why do you believe whole school approaches to supporting English language learners are currently not common in Ontario schools with high numbers of ELLs?

Teacher Practices
15. What does a whole school approach to supporting English language learners look like in practice?
   c) What does this approach entail and prioritize?
   d) Which professionals working within the school community provide some type of support to English language learners?
   e) How do professionals working in the school community support each other and work together to help English language learners?
   f) Who are the key stakeholders in implementing a whole school approach to support English language learners? What range of stakeholders would you say is involved in supporting ELLs in your school? (e.g. administration, teachers, support workers, parents, students, community members/volunteers)

16. In your position at the school, in what ways do you currently provide support to English language learners?
   a. How have you been involved in promoting English language development within the school community?
   b. What strategies are you implementing to provide support for ELLs and why?
   c. What resources are you using to help provide support to English language learners? How are you using these resources?
   d. In what ways do you work with other professionals in the school community to help provide support for English language learners? How do you feel these colleagues provide support to you? Can you provide me with some specific examples?

17. How do ELL students respond to the supports that they receive in your school? What outcomes do you observe from them?

18. What outcomes of this approach, if any, do you observe from non-ELL students?

19. How does this approach affect the culture and climate of the school?

Supporting Resources & Challenges
20. What resources and factors support the development of this approach and the capacity to sustain it? (e.g. leadership, budget allocations, physical space, commitment, donations, volunteers, communication, material resources like books, technology, PD etc.)

21. What challenges accompany adopting a whole school approach to ELL support? What do you believe are some of the challenges of implementing a whole school approach to supporting English language learners in public elementary schools?
22. What challenges do you personally encounter in our own role in the school community when providing support to English language learners?
   a) How do you overcome these challenges?
23. What challenges do you personally encounter when working with other professionals in the school community in providing support to English language learners?
   a) How do you overcome these challenges?

Next Steps
24. How do you believe your school could improve its whole school approach to supporting English language learners?
25. In the future, how do you believe you could improve in your role in the school community to better support a whole school approach to supporting English language learners?
26. What advice, if any, do you have for beginning teachers who are committed to supporting ELLs and interested in initiating whole school approaches in their teaching careers?

Thank you for your participation in this research study.