Supporting English Language Learners in Full-Day Kindergarten

By

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Abstract

Ontario schools have a large influx of English Language Learners (ELLs). Many Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) teachers feel ill-equipped to support ELLs in their classrooms. This research paper explores what supports FDK teachers have in place to support ELLs in the classroom. This study examines the following research question: *How are teachers in FDK supporting ELLs?* A literature review indicated a number of themes and issues including teachers' preparation and knowledge, challenges, and advantages of FDK, and effective teaching strategies. Using the convenience sampling, two teacher participants were chosen for the study and data was gathered using semi-structured interviews. The sampling method used in the study was convenience sampling to choose two participants. The data for this study was collected through a literature review and two semi-structured interviews. In addition to the research, the findings and implications presented in the study revealed that more resources such as professional development are needed for FDK teachers to ensure that ELLs are receiving the appropriate supports to succeed in FDK.

*Keywords:* English Language Learners (ELLs), full-day kindergarten, teaching strategies, supports
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Research Context

Canada is known for being a country that receives many immigrants from all over the world. As immigration continues to fuel Ontario’s population growth, contributing to linguistic diversity (Webster & Valeo, 2011), many arrive in Ontario with limited English language skills. For example, as of April 5, 2016, a total of 26,213 Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada, (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2016), many of which are children who will attend Ontario schools and will likely require support from their teachers to adjust to the school system. Besides Syrian refugees, many others immigrants choose to reside in Ontario, particularly in Toronto (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012), which consists of 49% of residents from different countries (The National Household Survey, 2013). For many children, the unfamiliarity of the English language as well as the culture they are immersed in may cause them to feel a culture shock (Pelletier & Corter, 2005). This is why it is important for teachers to be equipped with appropriate support and strategies to assist English Language Learners (ELLs).

According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007) ELLs may be Canadian-born or newcomers from other countries. The Ministry states that ELLs are comprised of students whose first language is a language other than English, or is a variety of English which differentiates from the predominant English used for instruction in schools in Ontario. ELLs make up a substantial part of Ontario classrooms due to Ontario’s escalating immigration trends (Webster & Valeo, 2011). In Ontario, 60% of elementary schools have ELLs; the figure increases to 85% in the Greater Toronto Area (People for Education, 2012). Therefore, it is evident that classrooms are highly diverse. In kindergarten for example, 50% of children speak a language other than English (Pelletier & Corter, 2005).
Kindergarten is a pivotal year in a child’s educational life (Gallant, 2009). In Ontario, children four and five years of age are now able to be a part of a full-day of learning with the recent implementation of full-day kindergarten (FDK). Although the purpose of FDK is to establish a strong foundation for learning in the early years (Early Learning Full-Day Kindergarten, 2010-11) ELLs might find this challenging because they lack skills in English, the language of instruction. It is crucial for FDK teachers and the school to work collaboratively to support the continued development of these learners. Much research has been conducted on supporting ELLs in educational contexts (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; The Capacity Building Series, 2014), however there is little research on FDK, particularly on how teachers support ELLs.

1.1 Research Problem

Although FDK has provided positive opportunities for ELLs to thrive, challenges still exist. Three main challenges include, the rise of classroom enrolment, teachers’ preparation to support ELLs, and how that preparation affects students success. The enrolment rate has risen in full-day kindergarten from a classroom of twenty students and one classroom teacher to a class of approximately thirty students with a teacher and an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) (ETFO, 2015). Although ECEs assist the teacher with the implementation of the program, many FDK teachers continue to feel overwhelmed with the recent changes. Furthermore, there has been an increase in immigration rates which contributes to the diversity among students who are attending FDK.

For many teachers, supporting ELLs continues to be a challenge because of the lack of training they receive within their teacher preparation program. Many mainstream classroom teachers are not equipped with adequate knowledge regarding what effective instruction entails
Studies have shown that teachers who graduated from teacher preparation programs do not have the strategies required to support students in academic content development and English-language growth (Evans, Arnott-Hopffer & Jurich, 2005; Webster & Valeo, 2011). This could be due to the fact that English as a Second Language (ESL) is not a mandated component of most teacher education programs in Ontario (People for Education, 2012). In a study conducted by Webster and Valeo (2011), teacher candidates (TCs) felt that the general approach to course work in the teacher preparation program did not provide them with the sufficient skills to feel confident when working with ELLs. These results coincide with much of the research conducted in the United States. Lucas and Grinberg (2008) says that 74% of teachers have minimal to no preparation to work with ELLs, which creates implications for the education system. Essentially, this number demonstrates that there is a significant amount of teachers that are not prepared to support ELLs. Meskill (2005) states that due to a lack of training many teachers are unaware of their responsibilities in educating ELLs. If teachers are unaware of their responsibilities, this may cause them affects ELLs’ learning. Thus, the likelihood that ELLs will receive the appropriate support to succeed is minimal. Teachers need to have a better understanding of how to accommodate their students because their ability to work in the second language can impact their social and cognitive development.

It is common for ELLs to look up to their teachers as role models, but, if unsupported, they may experience a drop in their social and emotional well-being, as well as academic success. One of the effects of this drop is the ‘silent period’ as referenced by the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007) which states that ELLs endure this period of silence when they do not know how to communicate their message, leading them to abandon their effort to communicate with others. ELLs’ academic success pertains to their literacy development and can
be affected if teachers are not aware of strategies to encourage students to speak. These challenges are important to address because many classrooms in Ontario, particularly in Toronto, are composed of ELLs that require diligent support from their teachers to strive. For many teachers, supporting ELLs continues to be an ongoing challenge that needs to be promptly addressed.

1.2 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to find out how FDK teachers are supporting ELLs in the classroom. Investigate what FDK teachers perceive to be challenges when working with ELLs. Identifying the strategies that are working and are not working lead me to a better understanding of how teachers support ELLs. This topic requires exploration because there a number of ELLs attending FDK and it is not clear – due to the lack of investigation – whether teachers are adequately prepared to support them effectively. Ultimately, the findings will benefit FDK teachers’ practice as they support ELLs and teachers if the strategies that are discussed are infused into their own classroom.

1.3 Research Questions

Qualitative research questions restate the purpose of the study in specific terms (Creswell, 2013). The primary research question of the study is: How are teachers in FDK supporting ELLs? Creswell (2013) notes that the purpose of sub-questions is to specify the central question into areas for inquiry. Thus, this overarching research question will be followed by three sub-questions: The first question is: What do FDK teachers perceive to be the challenges of working with ELL students? The second questions is: What strategies are FDK teachers using to support ELLs? The final questions is: What do FDK teachers need to better support ELLs?
1.4 Background of the Researcher and Positionality

The reason why I chose this topic is because it has a personal significance in my life. Personally, I know what it feels like to be an ELL because I was one myself. My parents only spoke their native language with me at home. Therefore, when I began school, it was a challenge to adapt to the mainstream English that was spoken in the classroom. It took me some time to gather the courage to speak English. In hindsight, if my teacher had encouraged me to speak my home language, I would not have experienced the silent period for quite some time. My mother informed me that my kindergarten teacher found it a challenge to accommodate me in the classroom. My parents also felt obligated to learn English to communicate with my kindergarten teacher because there were no resources available, such as a translator. With the recent implementation of FDK, along with the rise of immigration rates, the number of children attending FDK has increased (ETFO, 2015). This could translate into a higher percentage of ELLs in FDK.

Another reason for pursing this study is because I have always had an intrinsic desire to work with ELLs in kindergarten after my first co-op experience in high school. At that time, kindergarten was still run on a half-day basis. My associate teacher (AT) taught me about the supports she had in place pertaining to the ELLs; however, she shared that she felt as though she was not doing enough. From this experience, I have always possessed a will to advocate for ELLs in kindergarten. I knew working with children was my calling after this co-op experience, therefore I majored in Early Childhood Studies. Part of the program requirements involved students completing practicum experiences. For the final practicum experience students were given the opportunity to independently locate a practicum. I decided to complete my practicum in a FDK classroom. Although the half-day program and full-day differs significantly, one of the
commonalities in the practicum's was that both of my ATs found it a challenge to support the ELLs. The biggest challenge that my AT faced after FDK came into effect was the significant increase of students in her classroom. She truly believed that the number of students in her classroom took a toll on how effectively she supported the children in the program. My AT also shared that she was given one workshop to attend pertaining to FDK and she emphasized that she and her colleagues required much more. This supports previous findings (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Webster & Valeo, 2011; Meskill, 2005) that teachers are not receiving nearly enough training to effectively support ELLs. The lack of training my AT expressed she had was a great concern to me because I questioned if the ELLs in the classroom were receiving the supports they required to succeed. If students are not receiving adequate support it could cause them to feel disconnected to their learning.

1.5 Introduction to Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach, which offers a opportunity for a collection of rich data. Semi-structured interviews were administered with two FDK teachers that addressed questions pertaining to their experiences and personal beliefs to gain a clear understanding of how they support ELLs in the classroom.

1.6 Overview of the Paper

Chapter one contains an introduction of ELLs in Ontario classrooms, the research problem and the purpose of the study. The primary research question as well as the sub-questions are followed by an explanation pertaining to how I became interested in exploring this topic. Chapter two, includes a review of the literature revolving around the major focuses of the study which are: background of full-day kindergarten in relation to ELLs, challenges teachers face when working with ELLs, supporting literacy development in the early years and what
teachers can do to help ELLs succeed. Chapter three centers around the methodology and procedure used. It begins with information pertaining to the sample participants and data collection instruments. Then, emphasis is placed on the ethical review procedures as well as the limitations of the study. Chapter four highlights the research findings, particularly the themes that were found thorough the collection of data. The final chapter includes an overview of the key findings, broad and narrow implications of the study, recommendations for practice, areas for further research, and concluding comments. References and appendixes finalize the study.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction to the Chapter

Immigration rates continue to rise in Canada. Many of the 1.2 million immigrants who arrived in Canada between 2006 and 2011 settled in the three largest cities: Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver (Statistics Canada, 2013). These rates continue to grow with the recent immigration of Syrian refugees. This translates to an increase of English Language Learners (ELLs) in Canadian classrooms. People for Education (2012) reports 60% of elementary schools in Ontario have ELLs; the figure increases within the Greater Toronto Area to 85%. More specifically, in kindergarten, 50% of children speak a language other than English (Pelletier & Corter, 2005). Therefore, it is clear that full-day kindergarten (FDK) comprise of many ELLs. Due to their varying abilities and needs, ELLs require diligent support from their teachers to integrate into the classroom. However, many teachers, in particular FDK teachers, may find it a challenge to meet the needs of ELLs for a variety of reasons, such as the insufficient training they receive in school, and a communication barrier. It is essential that teachers have a better understanding of how to support ELLs in the classroom because their ability to assist ELLs will be hindered. The focus of this study is to analyze how teachers in FDK are supporting ELLs. In this chapter, I provide a literature review of research studies about the learning needs of ELLs. These studies are comprised of primary and secondary sources, as well as qualitative and quantitative studies. The literature review is divided into four sections. First, a definition of who ELLs are in the context of FDK is made. Next, a discussion on the history of the FDK in Ontario and its defining features. Second, the challenges teachers face when working with ELLs are discussed. Next, focus on the supports that are currently available in the education field to
support ELLs succeed in FDK. Finally, the literature review ends with an emphasis on what kindergarten teachers need to do to help ELLs succeed.

2.1 Definition of English Language Learner (ELLs)

It seems that the Ontario Ministry of Education has taken into consideration ELLs and how teachers can effectively support them in FDK because they published a detailed policy. A definition is provided to readers to gain a clear sense of what qualifies an individual to be recognized as an ELL.

According to The Ontario Ministry of Education (2007), ELLs are defined 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.6). This connects to FDK because classrooms are comprised of ELLs who will have an impact on how the kindergarten teacher will plan for instruction because all the students bring a rich diversity of background knowledge and experience with them that the teacher needs to take into consideration (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007).

The policy also discusses what ELLs with prior schooling should expect. The Ontario’s policy for English language learners was intended for students with limited literacy skills. The vision that constitutes the Ontario policy include every English language learner with limited prior schooling: can learn to be successful when given the appropriate supports and opportunities; can thrive in a school where everyone has a shared understanding of their backgrounds and where all educators share a vision of high expectations for every student; needs to see himself or herself as a learner, with a place and a contribution to make in the classroom
and the school community; will often require more time than most English language learners to achieve academic proficiency (Numeracy and Literacy and Secretariat, 2014).

2.2 Background of Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK)

The aforementioned definition of ELLs as well as the policy will allow FDK teachers to know exactly what is expected for an ELL upon entering FDK. Within the last few years, the Ontario curriculum has undergone a significant change with the gradual implementation of FDK throughout Ontario schools. With this transformation, FDK teachers must continue to adapt their method of instruction to cater to the ELLs found in their classroom. Prior to 2010, a majority of Ontario’s kindergarten classrooms were run on a half-day basis. Subsequently, the Ontario government pledged to reduce poverty through the implementation of full-day junior and senior kindergarten (de Groot-Maggetti, 2011). While this change was made to benefit all children, full-day kindergarten allowed parents to work full-time without the worry of having to make alternative care arrangements for half of the day that could cause a financial burden. At this point in time, full-day kindergarten has been rolled out in every elementary school across Ontario. A FDK classroom consists of one teacher, one Early Childhood Educator (ECE) and an average class size of twenty-six children (ETFO, 2015). There is no cap for FDK classrooms so class sizes can fluctuate from fifteen students to thirty students. The number of kindergarten students in a class acts as a determinant in regards to how well the class operates (ETFO, 2015). Due to this large shift in the program one must question if the supports that were previously provided to ELLs have remained the same or altered.

According to the Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program document, there are four goals of the program. The first is to establish a strong foundation for the early years by providing young children with an integrated day of learning; another is to provide a play-based
learning environment also referred to as inquiry-based learning. Bennett (2015) states that “inquiry-based learning does not teach the product of curriculum, but rather instructs the process of critical thinking so that students may navigate their way into the future (p. 389) The others include helping children make a smoother transition to Grade one, and to improve children’s prospects for success in school and in their lives beyond school (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). These points apply to ELLs as well whose main objective in kindergarten is to understand the words being spoken so that they can communicate effectively; this understanding allows meaningful interactions to occur with others which forms friendships among children (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). The friendships and cognitive skills that ELLs gain in kindergarten will make the transition to Grade one effortless. It is evident that the goals of the FDK program coincide with what the main objective of kindergarten entails for ELLs.

In addition to Ontario’s program goals, there are four primary reasons for the shift into FDK in the United States. These reasons include the increase in single-parent families and two-parent families in which both circumstances parents work outside the home. Secondly, many children do not speak English as their first language and therefore are not fluent in the language. Thus, they require language instruction promptly. Thirdly, there are movements toward greater accountability and educators are feeling pressured to accelerate through the curriculum expectations. Lastly, it has become a priority to close the gap pertaining to the achievement of children coming from disadvantaged homes (Cooper, Allen, Patall, & Dent, 2010). Presumably, Canada and the United States of America decided to make the switch to FDK because they believe the program benefits all students, in particular ELLs because the full-day of learning allows them to be immersed in the English language, which offers the opportunity for their language skills to be enhanced.
2.2.1 Purpose and benefits of the full-day kindergarten programs for ELLs.

Behind any successful program, lies a clear purpose. The Ontario Ministry of Education created the FDK program with a purpose of establishing a strong foundation for learning in a safe and play-based environment that supports the developmental domains of four-and five-year-old children (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). The literature states that FDK has positive effects on children’s academic achievement. The FDK program increased grade four educational attainment, producing statistically and socially significant impacts (Warburton, Warburton, & Hertzman, 2012). Moreover, WestEd (2005) reports that FDK contributes to increased school readiness by better preparing students for first grade, leads to higher academic achievement, supports literacy and language development, and benefits children socially and emotionally. ELLs, in particular, benefit immensely from additional time spent listening to and speaking English. These findings coincide with the goals outlined in the FDK program. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2005) “a language is best acquired when it is used to do something meaningful” (p.25). I witnessed the authenticity of this statement as an ECE student. I have had the opportunity to work with ELLs where I saw their language abilities develop significantly with the play-based curriculum. My AT implemented activities that allowed ELLs to enhance their listening and speaking skills. For example, she would encourage students to share their art work daily. Also, students were encouraged to bring in an object for show and tell once a week. I noticed that the ELLs began by using headline speech at first, which involves the naming of objects (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). However, as time progressed the ELLs began using sentences to describe their objects.

There is also evidence that contradicts the positive effects of FDK. Scholars (Cannon, Jacknowitz & Painter, 2011) believe that FDK may not be all that it claims to be. Attending a
FDK program does not mean there will be long-term benefits for low-income or higher-income students. Furthermore, Cannon et al. found that “full-day students are 5.2 percentage points less likely to retain the information they receive in kindergarten than their half-day peers” (p. 289). Although FDK has significant impacts on academic achievement, the gains are short-lived, in particular for minority children (De Cicca, 2007). It is evident that there are opposing views on the effectiveness of FDK programs. Nonetheless, research conducted by both spectrums of this debate present valid arguments. Although previous research highlights negative effects of FDK, there are numerous studies that counter agree these findings. I agree that a full-day program benefits ELLs, but the question is, to what extent? How much of those benefits are ELLs in taking if there are 24 other children in the classroom that the teacher and ECE need to attend to?

2.3 Challenges Teachers Face when Working with ELLs

Teachers can face challenges when working with ELLs because their abilities are so diverse in nature (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). Two of the challenges they encounter involve assisting those who have recently arrived from another country and the lack of training they receive. These challenges are important to address because they determine how effectively teachers will work with ELLs and can be applied to FDK classrooms.

2.3.1 Assisting newcomers.

Assisting newcomers ensures a strong bond between the ELL, his/her family and school community is formed. When schools cherish the richness of the culture that ELLs and their families bring to the classroom, ELLs learning and sense of belonging will flourish (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). Because the children as so young and some do not possess the language proficiency yet, teachers must rely on communicating directly with ELLs families.
Chumak-Horbatsch (2012) says that Toronto is known as one of the world’s most culturally and linguistically diverse cities, so many newcomers decide that Toronto is an ideal place to settle down. Newcomers are defined as individuals that arrive from countries around the world at various stages in their educational career (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). They may arrive at any time throughout the school year, and they may have varying educational experiences depending on their age and country of origin (Ontario Ministry of Education). The children of Syrian refugees are amongst the newcomers that teachers will inevitably work with at some point in their career. It is important to keep their thoughts and feelings in mind as they are coping with this new transition. Because their educational experiences are so different, they may require a different level of support to succeed in the classroom. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2007) reports that there are many agencies that have specific services for newcomers such as, Best Start networks, settlement workers in schools and parenting and family literacy centres. I completed a practicum experience in a child care centre that also had a family literacy centre. However, the biggest challenge I noticed were the hours of operation. The centre was open a few days a week for two to three hours in the morning. I questioned how accessible the centre was for children that attended school and parents that work full-time hours. It is excellent to know there are agencies available but one must question if teachers are aware of these agencies. If teachers are not aware that these agencies exist, how will they be able to refer their ELL families to them?

2.3.2 Lack of support for teachers.

Teachers are expected to support ELLs in their developmental stage; this becomes a challenge if teachers have not been adequately trained. Taylor and Sobel (2013) stated that 73% of pre-service teachers identified student diversity as their greatest challenge to teaching. The
National Center for Education Statistics (2002) states 42% of teachers surveyed indicated that they had ELLs in their classroom, however only 12% of these teachers received more than eight hours of professional development specifically related to teaching ELLs. Additionally, Lucas and Grinberg, (2008) state that 74% of teachers have had little to no preparation to work with ELLs. These statistics reflect the lack of training teachers receive in both countries, which indicates that those teachers are not receiving adequate training to support ELLs. The lack of training has been translated in my own experience. I completed a practicum experience in a FDK classroom. My AT shared that she was not sure how to implement a play-based approach, let alone accommodate ELLs because of the lack of training she had received prior to the implementation of FDK. She felt ill-prepared to assist any of the ELLs. Therefore, I agree that receiving proper and adequate training on how to support ELLs in FDK is imperative for teachers to support ELLs and minimize the challenges they face. Other reasons for why teachers may be hesitant to support ELLs in their classrooms include: discomfort around other languages; disbelief that they can make use of students’ languages in the classroom; belief that ELLs will acquire English faster if they are restricted from using their home language (Pappamiheli & Lynn, 2014). The final belief should be avoided because research indicates that becoming proficient in two languages is not only possible but also is beneficial for the students because it increases cognitive, linguistics, and social-emotional advantages (Bialystok, 2008; Kuhl, 2009 as cited in Magruder, Hayslip, Espinosa & Matera, 2013). Furthermore, phonological awareness skills can transfer from the first to the second language depending on the similarities and differences of the two languages (Chiappe & Siegel, 1999; Cisero & Royer, 1995). This is why students’ first languages are critical foundations that can be built upon to enhance their understanding of English (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). It is clear that teachers’ play a significant role in how successful ELLs will be,
not only in their classroom but also in their long-term success that is why it is essential that teachers place their hesitations aside and support ELLs to the best of their ability.

2.4 Supporting Literacy Development in the Early Years

Thus far I have discussed a few challenges that teachers endure in a FDK program which includes assisting newcomers, insufficient training and hesitations they face when supporting ELLs. In this section emphasis is placed on how teachers can support the literacy development of ELLs through programs and strategies. Being able to decipher print-based literacy is a key to academic success; foundational literacy skills are interrelated and build on one another, essentially they are stepping stones for higher-level reading and writing skills (Numeracy and Literacy Secretariat, 2014). Foundational literacy skills must be taught through literacy activities that are significant and interesting to students (Numeracy and Literacy Secretariat).

2.4.1 Programs that support ELLs.

English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Literacy Development (ELD) are two programs in Ontario that support ELLs with acquiring English (Numeracy and Literacy Secretariat, 2014). Both of these distinct programs allow ELLs to receive support from teachers who specialize in meeting their language learning needs (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). ESL is a program that is familiar to many. This program is for “ELLs who have had educational opportunities to develop age-appropriate first-language literacy skills” (Numeracy and Literacy Secretariat, 2014, p.2) On the other hand, ELD supports those who have had limited to no opportunities to develop language and literacy skills in their first language. Regardless, of what programs the students are classified under, teachers need to remember that children are active participants in the construction of literacy knowledge (Araujo, 2002). Although ELLs may attend one of the two programs, it is important that classroom teachers do not rely solely on those
programs. Teachers must remember that it is still up to them to continue to provide appropriate modifications/adaptations for ELLs to enhance their literacy development. It is important to know the defining features of each program because depending on the ELL, teachers will need to determine what program, if any, is suitable for the ELL.

Chumak-Horbatsch (2012) reports on the Linguistically Appropriate Practice (LAP) which is an inclusive approach to working with immigrant children. LAP is grounded in “dynamic bilingualism (a theory that focuses on languages that speakers use rather than on separate languages they have)” (p. 53). LAP is defined by various aspects: it views ELLs as emergent bilinguals: acknowledges dual language, and literacy needs in the classroom: prepares them for the complex communication and literacy demands of the twenty-first century, and helps children understand and accept linguistic diversity (Chumak-Horbatsch). I agree with this approach because I adopted some of the LAP practices with ELLs in my practicum experience in a full-day kindergarten classroom. Therefore, I believe that this approach can be beneficial to use in the classroom and contributes valuable insight to my key question on how FDK teachers are supporting ELLs. Another program was designed in the United States called Personalized Oral Language(s) Learning (POLL). The goal of this program is to provide teachers with a detailed set of strategies and practices that will increase the effectiveness of language and literacy instruction with particular emphasis placed on ELL (Magruder et al.). The three components of POLL are: families first, environmental supports, and instructional supports (Magruder et al.). POLL is a useful program to adopt into the classroom because there are specific strategies and practices outlined that teachers can attempt to administer with their ELLs. The specific components allow teachers to easily navigate to the area of question to see if there is any content that will assist them in their practice. Because there are a variety of programs available to support ELLs,
teachers’ need to determine which one the ELL is going to benefit from and adopt that program or aspects of that program into their classroom.

2.4.2 Strategies FDK teachers can use to enhance literacy development for ELLs.

To begin implementing appropriate strategies for ELLs, teachers need to first and foremost know who their learners are. Teachers need to be cognizant of the students’ strengths, weaknesses and interests. An assessment determines where the child lies pertaining to their language proficiency and literacy development in oral language, reading and writing. The Ministry of Education (2012) designed a resource called, Steps to English Proficiency (STEP): Elementary and Secondary Continua. This resource is a “framework that assess and monitors the language acquisition and literacy development of ELLs across the Ontario curriculum through everyday learning experiences” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012, p.3). Teachers identify students’ strengths as well as the instructional strategies that ensures a differentiated approach is being provided. STEP is used for initial and ongoing purposes. An example of an initial assessment consists of developing a student profile, that represents the students characteristics such as, cultural background and language spoken in the home. Pelletier (2011) reports key findings from early literacy research. She states “engaging children in conversation facilitates learning different forms of language, expands vocabulary and can help children learn to read” (Pelletier, 2011, p. 1). The student profile encourages narrative skills because students can recount a story or event.

In addition to STEP, another strategy that has been explored is the use of drama and movement to enhance ELLs’ literacy development. Kinesthetic activities such as drama enhance the development of creative expression, social interaction and meaningful opportunities for reading and writing (Reig & Paquette, 2009). With these opportunities ELLs develop various
forms of knowledge and ways of thinking. Language skills can be boosted through dramatization and movement as students express their movements in words.

Another example of this is the Teaching Artist Project (TAP) which is a two year arts and literacy program directed towards kindergarten to Grade 2 students (Greenfader & Brouillette, 2013). A mix-methods study conducted on TAP found that the implementation of the program boosted the oral language skills of ELLs’, particularly at the kindergarten level through creative arts activities (Greenfader & Brouillette). This finding adds insight to the key question because it focuses on a program that FDK teachers can use to support the language skills of ELLs.

There are also benefits of using music to support literacy development. Paquette and Reig (2008) suggest incorporating musical experiences into daily activities by providing specific examples of activities that can be integrated through all the strands within the curriculum. Paquette and Reig note that incorporating songs into language lessons can teach language and writing skills, as the students use sentence patterns, vocabulary and pronunciation to create literature connections. This learning can be facilitated through the use of the Total Physical Response (TPR) Approach and The Language Experience Approach (LEA). TPR involves teaching language that pairs actions with words to ultimately convey meaning (Peregoy & Boyle, 2008). When TPR is integrated with music selections it can teach body parts and action concepts. Additionally, LEA requires the teacher to facilitate a shared experience among the students that will provide a framework for reading, writing or discussion (Paquette & Reig). Both approaches are beneficial to use in a FDK classroom because they each offer the students a meaningful context to enhance their literacy skills.
2.5 What Teachers Need to do to Help ELLs Succeed

Teachers can and need to cater to the needs of all ELLs. However, this can be a daunting task for teachers if they are not aware of what they need to assist ELLs. I have witnessed some teachers rely on their intuition to support ELLs and others not provide any supports at all because they do not know where to begin. These circumstances can be avoided if teachers know how to support ELLs in FDK, it is a matter of educating oneself. This could be done by reading guides tailored to ELLs in FDK, collaborating with colleagues that have expertise in the matter, and ultimately the ELLs and their families.

2.5.1 Collaboration amongst colleagues and families.

There is no question teachers need to provide assistance to ELLs, although many teachers are unclear about what strategies and practices can be used to improve the way in which they support ELLs. Many teachers feel a sense of reassurance when they collaborate with colleagues. Brown (2005) proposes implementing a systematic approach within the school system, to utilize English as a second language (ESL) teachers as educational consultants. These ESL teachers would assist general education teachers who are not able to confidently provide assistance to ELLs. This collaboration among both educators is viewed as a consultation model that places an emphasis on shared responsibilities. ESL teachers provide their expertise to general education teachers and together they collaborate to accomplish the same goals. Research demonstrates collaboration through co-teaching and planning improved student achievement and teacher effectiveness (Green, Arrega-Mayer, Utley, & Terry, 2001; Klingeer & Vaughn, 2002). ESL teachers can provide guidance through instructional and curricular adaptations strategies in a direct or indirect way depending on the general education teachers comfort level (Brown). Being a part of a consultation model allows both the ESL teacher and general education teacher to feel
a sense of confidence and reassurance that they are capable of providing assistance to ELLs. I believe this collaboration is beneficial to teachers in FDK because they each come from different disciplines, hence they can use this to their advantage as they bounce ideas back and forth from each other and implement those ideas in the classroom. However, from what I have witnessed in the classroom collaboration amongst colleagues was important to create a sense of inclusiveness, although there was never an ESL teacher that worked with any of my AT’s. My AT shared that in her experience that there was a slim chance of having an ESL teacher that collaborated with her.

Working with families is also an essential part in the process of ELLs success. The Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016) acknowledges that parents are a central part of the program. Engaging in meaningful interactions with parents will be beneficial for teachers because parents will be able to provide them with vital information pertaining to the child. This information needs to be taken into consideration to successfully meet the children’s needs. ELLs language, culture and personal identity are inextricably tied to one another (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). When schools cherish and value these characteristics and experiences of the child, both children and families feel as sense of reassurance that they are a part of the classroom, as well as the school community as a whole. Hence, children’s learning are enhanced because they feel a sense of belonging and worth. Many teachers question how they can begin to communicate with an ELL family when they have no knowledge of the language. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2007) suggests providing an interpreter to assist a teacher communicate complex ideas. This interpreter could also assist throughout face-to-face interactions or informal interactions such as writing a letter home to the family. This is a wonderful idea in theory, although from my experience an interpreter is hard to
find. Typically, a student acts as an interpreter for the ELL or another teacher within the school who speaks the same language may be asked to translate. Thus, this leaves me with to question how realistic is it to have an interpreter translate information to ELLs for each language that they speak. Some other strategies that encourage the involvement of parents in the classroom include learning greeting words in the child’s language, and talking to parents informally on the playground during pick up and drop off times (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). Ask parents to bring in objects from home, such as food containers and boxes in their first language that could be placed in the dramatic centre. Also, invite parents to come to the classroom to read stories in their first language and create dual-language books (Ontario Ministry of Education). All these strategies are great starting points towards making families feel comfortable in the classroom. Although, teachers need to keep in mind that each of their families are different. Teachers need to assess each of their students’ families individually so they can better assist them. It is crucial that teachers express to parents that they are partners when it comes to their child’s success in school.

2.5.2 Teacher-child interactions.

When a teacher strives on building a trustworthy relationship with a child it allows the child to feel a sense of comfort in the classroom. This sense of comfort can be built on the use of emotional scaffolding. A qualitative case study conducted by Park (2014) explores how pedagogical decisions made by a teacher could be considered emotional scaffolding. Emotional scaffolding is derived from Vygotsky’s (1960’s) concept of “scaffolding.” Emotional scaffolding is “the use of positive emotional experience in the classroom” (Park, 2014, p. 20). A theme that emerges from the data analysis pertaining to emotional scaffolding consists of how much knowledge the teacher has of her students (Park). Through that knowledge, the teacher integrates
demonstration teaching through non-verbal expressions which includes body movements, gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice and speed. The use of non-verbal communication assists students with visualizing abstract words and concepts (Park, 2014). It also assists ELLs who may experience a silent period, in which they have abandon their efforts to communicate in their first language causing them to not speak at all (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). The use of emotional scaffolding is beneficial to incorporate within a kindergarten classroom because it offers teachers the opportunity to be in tune with their students’ thoughts and feelings through non-verbal expressions.

Moreover, Pappamiheli and Lynn (2014) highlight activities that teachers can implement with ELLs to allow them to continue to use their first language while building the confidence they need to acquire English. The examples are presented in scenarios adapted from personal experiences. In order for these strategies to be successful they need to be tailored to suit the students within the classroom. Some of the strategies consist of having study buddies, dialog journals, coding the text by placing sticky notes or blank thoughts bubbles on the ELLs’ sheet, and word walls.

Some recommendations drawn from research-based teaching strategies pertaining to how to assist ELLs in school include: learn as much as you can about your students, foster ongoing relationships, connect with home, family and the community, collaborate with colleagues, and learn, explore and try new teaching strategies (Castro, 2015). The Ontario Ministry of Education (2005) suggests teachers to use a assortment of resources to promote language acquisition. These resources consist of photographs, printed materials such as posters, brochures, manipulatives, art materials, timetables and schedules, maps, physical models and many more (Ontario Ministry of Education). If teachers discover a few good teaching strategies to use with ELLs it is often easy
to resort to implementing those strategies each year. However, it is important to identify targeted needs for each student because they vary immensely from one student to the next, therefore strategies need to be tailored accordingly.

2.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this review is to analyze the literature pertaining to the support given to ELLs in schools in Ontario. This topic is significant because many teachers are not aware of how to adequately accommodate ELLs when they enter their classroom, which impacts ELLs’ learning in a negative way. There has been much research and discussion conducted research (Brown, 2005; Castro, 2015; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005; 2007) on how to assist ELLs, including the programs available to support ELLs, collaboration among colleagues and a variety of other strategies. While most of the research focuses on how to support ELLs as a whole, there is a gap in the research in regards to how teachers support ELLs in FDK. As FDK is still fairly new in Ontario, it is pertinent to determine how kindergarten teachers are supporting ELLs in Ontario this is the what I intend to address within this study.
Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction to the Chapter / Overview

In this chapter the research methodology is identified, the methodological decisions are chosen, and an explanation for these decisions is given. A review of the general research approach and procedures is followed by a description of the primary instrument of data collection. The participants of the study are elaborated on, with a focus on the sampling criteria, participant recruitment, and participant biographies. A literature review indicated a number of potential themes and issues including teachers' preparation and knowledge, challenges, and advantages of FDK, and effective teaching teaching strategies. Using the convenience sampling, two teacher participants were chosen for the study and data was gathered using semi-structured interviews. An explanation of how the data is analyzed is provided. Afterward, a review of ethical considerations pertinent to the study is made. A range of methodological limitations are identified, while also acknowledging the strengths of the methodology. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief summary of key methodological decisions and a rationale for these decisions given the research purpose and questions.

3.1 Research Approach and Procedures

This research study was conducted using a qualitative approach. It includes a literature review of previous literature pertaining to how FDK teachers support ELLs. This study aims to determine how FDK teachers are supporting ELLs; therefore, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with two FDK teachers who have experience working with ELLs.

Qualitative research is holistic and involves a rich collection of data from various sources to gain an authentic understanding of each participant (Nassaji, 2015). Qualitative researchers are concerned with comprehending human beings’ richly-textured experiences through their
thoughts, opinions, perspectives, and reflections (Jackson II, Drummond & Camara, 2007; Nassaji, 2015). Learning how people think and feel about a circumstance they are involved in is important, therefore ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions are predominately used in qualitative studies, whereas quantitative studies are useful for answering mechanistic ‘what?’ questions (Marshall, 1996). Quantitative researchers concern themselves with forming judgements about whether the experiences in which those thoughts and reflections were created are justifiable (Thorne, 2000). They often test pre-determined hypotheses and produce generalizable results (Marshall, 1996).

Qualitative studies typically begin with assumptions and use interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study or research problems (Creswell, 2013). Researchers embark on a study because they are genuinely intrigued by the topic. “Researchers want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices and minimize the power relationships that exist between a researcher and the participants in a study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 48). The main assumption of this research study is that FDK teachers need to gain more support to adequately meet the needs of ELLs. This assumption was formed from my previous practicum experiences in which I witnessed kindergarten teachers facing challenges to support ELLs because they felt they were not prepared to assist them.

Given that researchers are responsible for approaching each study with as much objectivity, ethical diligence and rigor as possible (Jackson II et al., 2007), I decided to investigate my assumption. A qualitative research approach was employed that applies both inductive and deductive process. Qualitative research is the most suitable approach for my particular research because it provides me with a medium in which to inquire the lived experiences of a small sample size of FDK teachers to gain a perspective of how they support ELLs.
3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

As a student of the Masters of Teacher program, this Master’s thesis research project has strict parameters, one being that the only instrument of data collection that can be used is a semi-structured interview protocol. It was used to examine how FDK teachers are supporting ELLs in their classrooms. Di Cicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) note a semi-structured interview is organized around a set of pre-determined open-ended questions which offers the opportunity for participants to provide in-depth responses to questions about their experiences. These questions lead to a rich and detailed discussion between the interviewer and interviewee (Jackson II et al., 2007). Throughout the discussion, further questions can arise that may introduce the interviewer to a different outlook that may have not been considered previously. Furthermore, it seeks to explore meaning and perceptions to gain a better understanding and generate a hypothesis (Di Cicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The format of the interviews gives the interviewer a chance to create and plan an interview that emphasizes the research focus and questions in a manner in which they are comfortable in. Di Cicco-Bloom and Crabtree highlight that generally, semi-structured interviews are used in qualitative studies because they are conducted once throughout the study and they allow the interviewer to delve into social and personal matters of the participant. I organized my protocol into four sections, I began with the participant’s background information, followed by questions pertaining to their perspectives and beliefs of the inclusion of ELLs in FDK. Next, questions were asked that pertained to their experiences and practices with ELLs in a FDK program. I ended with what supports and challenges they face when supporting ELLs, also I asked them to reflect on their experiences.
3.3 Participants

In this section of the study, I reviewed the sampling criteria established for participant recruitment, and considered a range of possible avenues for teacher recruitment. According to Di Cicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), the interviewees should be homogenous and share critical similarities that are relevant to the research question.

3.3.1 Sampling criterion.

Due to the nature of this study, the most suitable sample criteria that was administered in the study is purposeful and convenience sampling. According to Sargeant (2012), participants who are selected need to be able to provide information that will enhance the understanding of the research question under investigation. In order to address the research question in the most effective way, the participants that were interviewed had to meet a set of criteria. The participants needed to be full-time kindergarten teachers working in the Toronto or Greater Toronto Area because the purpose of the research is to determine how kindergarten teachers are supporting ELLs with a focus on the Ontario context. With that said, teachers were required to have a minimum of six years teaching experience. Ideally, the participants would have experienced working in a half-day and full-day kindergarten program because I was interested in learning if the supports that they provide ELLs now differ from those that were in half-day programs or whether they have stayed the same. Also, teachers must work directly with ELL students in their classrooms to speak to the strategies they have provided to ELLs over their years of teaching.

3.3.2 Participant recruitment.

Sampling procedures need to take into account an individual’s characteristics as well as temporal, spatial and situational circumstances pertaining to the context of the study (Marshall,
1996). The researcher selects participants for the study because they can purposefully provide information to the research problem (Creswell, 2013). To recruit participants, I attended a professional development conference titled ‘Celebrating Linguistic Diversity Conference’ hosted at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). This conference gave me the opportunity to attend workshops that focused on supporting ELLs and I got to meet professionals in the field of Linguistics. I turned to my associate teachers (ATs) in previous practicum experiences who have worked both in half-day and full-day programs in the Toronto Area. Also, I provided my professor in my course titled Supporting ELLs with an overview of my research study as well as the sampling criteria so that she could direct me towards any potential participants. She was my previous Faculty Advisor (FA) as well, which signified to me that she has connections with many teachers in various areas of the city through her field visits. Participants were recruited based on characteristics that met the requirements of the study, and their willingness to be interviewed (Del Baso & Lewis, 2001).

Selecting a sample for a qualitative study is composed of three general approaches which include, convenience, purposeful and theoretical sampling (Marshall 1996). Convenience sampling involves selecting participants that are easily accessible and requires the least effort to execute in comparison to the two other approaches (Marshall). Marshall explains purposeful sampling deliberately selects the most ideal sample that will provide insightful answers to the research question, the third approach is theoretical sampling, which requires interpretative theories to be built from the data that emerges, then a selection of a new sample to examine and expand on these theories is formed. The approach that was used for the research study was a combination of convenience and purposeful sampling. Convenience sampling was relied on because I was surrounded in a community of mentor teachers and professors, thus I recruited
participants through existing connections and a professional development conference. Purposeful 
sampling was employed because the participants were intentionally selected based on a set of 
criteria.

3.3.3 Participant biographies.

The first participant, Samantha has been teaching in the Toronto Catholic District School 
Board (TCDSB) for the past fourteen years. Specifically, she has taught Junior/Senior 
Kindergarten for eight years, seven of which have been at her current school. I chose Samantha 
because of my familiarity with her through my practicum. I had the opportunity to be a student 
teacher in her full-day kindergarten classroom, in which I learned various strategies pertaining to 
how to implement the full-day program. However, I was curious to see how Samantha supported 
ELLs in the classroom, considering we did not have any that particular year.

The second participant, Jane, has taught in Toronto for almost thirty years. She has been 
teaching at her current school for ten years, specifically she has taught ELLs in kindergarten for 
the past six years. Jane was chosen because I was aware of how she supported ELLs. This insight 
was gained from my co-op experience in her classroom. Both participants were asked to 
participate in this research study because they have had years of experience working both the 
half and full day programs with ELLs.

3.4 Data Analysis

The process of analysis consists of an inductive exploration of the data, which involves 
interpreting, theorizing, or making sense of the data to code and identify recurring themes, 
patterns, or concepts, and then describing and forming an interpretation of the data (Nassaji, 
2015; Jackson II et al., 2007; Creswell, 2013). Inductive reasoning uses the data to form ideas, 
known as hypothesis generating (Thorne, 2000). Qualitative data occurs simultaneously among
data collection to allow researchers the opportunity to form an understanding about the research questions, which then informs the interview sample (Di Cicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Additionally, Thorne (2000) reports data analysis involves comprehending the phenomenon that is being researched, creating a representation of the phenomenon that corresponds to connections and bonds. Additionally, Thorne says, theorising emerges in relation to how and why these connections and bonds appear in the way they do, and finally re-contextualizing forms as the new information gathered from the phenomena is added into the existing context.

The data was collected at a convenient location of participants’ choice. Once both interviews were completed, the interviews were transcribed. Afterwards, I coded the transcripts individually and identified categories of data and themes found within those categories. According to Creswell (2013) coding involves aggregating the text into small categories of information, seeking evidence from the code from different databases, and then assigning a label to the code. Upon completion, categories and themes were read side by side and synthesized those themes accordingly. Creswell notes the processes of coding entails combining the codes into broader categories or themes, and displaying and making comparisons through the data collected. Finally, an emphasis on why those themes were important given what the existing research has found and recognized the null data in the research, and discussed its importance.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

Creswell (2013) explains that ethical issues can occur at any stage of the research process, specifically within the aspects of data collection, data analysis, and dissemination. For example, Creswell says an issue that arises during data collection involves gathering data in such a way that will not create power imbalances between the interviewer and interviewee. It is crucial for researchers to consider what ethical issues might surface during the study and to plan
how these issues need to be addressed (Creswell). Four ethical issues that arise out of the interview process include, the unforeseeable events that may occur which can cause unintentional harm to the respondent; ensuring that the information shared by the participant remain anonymous; appropriately informing the participant about the purpose and logistics of the study and lastly decreasing the participants risk of exploitation (Di Cicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

To avoid these issues from occurring, I verbally revised the purpose and the logistics of the study with the participants. They were also aware that there were no known risks of this study, however participants had the right to refuse to answer any questions in which they did not feel comfortable answering. The choice to remove a answer or themselves entirely from the study at any point in time was also made available. All of this information was reiterated on the consent form (Appendix A), which provided an overview of the study, addressed ethical implications and specified expectation of participation such as the semi-structured interview. The consent form was given to the participants to sign prior to the interview. Throughout the interview, I periodically re-assured the participants that they had the right to refrain from answering any questions. Participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts to ensure that all the data gathered was accurate and clarify or retract any statement prior to conducting the data analysis. I ensured their anonymity was secure by informing them that all the data such as the audio recording will be stored on my password protected computer and will be destroyed after five years. Also, the participants were assigned a pseudonym and any identifying markers related to their school or students were excluded.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

Due to the ethical parameters that MTRP researchers have approval for, we were faced
with many limitations in the way in which the study is conducted. The largest limitation to this study was the small sample size. Qualitative research standards rely on the quality of the data collected rather than quantity (Webster & Valeo, 2011). That is why a small sample size was appropriate to use. However, the data cannot be considered generalizable because only two mainstream teachers participated in the study (Jackson II et al., 2007). Another drawback is the fact that the study is only limited to conducting interviews with educators. I was not able to conduct in-class observations or speak to ELLs themselves, which would allow me to put into perspective the information the teachers have shared.

The strength of this methodology is that there are less threats to external validity because the participants were interviewed in their natural setting (Carr, 1994). Also, the relationship formed between the researcher and participant can be seen as advantageous because if the participant trusts the interviewer, he/she is most likely willing to provide detailed and authentic information. Baruch (1981) reports that time and the subsequent relationship between the researcher and the subject was crucial for a genuine relationship. Furthermore, interviews conducted with teachers provided me with the opportunity to hear from them in a more in-depth way as they elaborated on thoughts. A survey could not allow this to occur because they include close-ended questions. Also, it created an environment for teachers to speak about what truly signifies supporting ELLs. The interview validated the participants' voices and experiences, which allowed them to address what truly signifies supporting ELLs to them, and reflect while also making meaning of their own lived experiences.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter began with a brief overview of what aspects would be addressed throughout the chapter. A description of the research approach and procedure was given through delving
into what qualitative research entails, and highlighted how it differs from quantitative research. Then, the instrument of data collection that was used in the study was discussed, which was the semi-structured interview. The key features of using this interview were highlighted. Afterward, the participants were identified in the study, and provided a list of criteria that was applicable to all participants. The chapter proceeded with a discussion of the sampling procedure. A brief overview of the three approaches to selecting a sample procedure and how the procedure would be used in the study was given. Then, the data was analyzed, which involved transcribing each interview and then identified categories and themes that prevailed. Ethical procedures were addressed, such as unexpected events, anonymity of participants, member checks, the right to withdraw, risk to participants and ways to avoid these issues were elaborated on. Next, the methodological limitations were addressed, such as the parameters of the study and the sample size. The strengths, such as fewer threats to external validity and the authentic information that is shared when a trusting relationship is formed between the interviewee and interviewer was emphasized. In the next chapter, a report on the findings that emerged from the research will be discussed.
Chapter Four: Research Findings

4.0 Introduction to the Chapter

Based on qualitative data analysis of two interviews, this chapter explores how FDK teachers are supporting English Language Learners (ELLs) in their classroom and, more specifically, how prepared FDK teachers are to support ELLs and the types of strategies and approaches they use. As stated in chapter three the participants of this research were two FDK teachers with a variety of teaching experience, one with 14 and one with 30 years of experience within the Toronto Catholic District School Board. One semi-structured interview with each participant was conducted in August of 2016 and later transcribed. After the transcriptions were complete, notes were made in the margins and the process to code the data began. Each teacher contributed to the data by answering the main research question: How are teachers in FDK supporting ELLs? Through the data collected from Samantha and Jane, three overarching themes were identified, as well as sub-themes. The main themes that emerged were:

1. Challenges of FDK for ELLs and teachers
2. Advantages to FDK for ELLs
3. Strategies and approaches used by FDK teachers to support ELLs

Some of the challenges discovered include communication with ELLs, lack of time, absenteeism, and lack of training teachers received in their teacher preparation courses. Second the advantages to FDK are inclusion and inquiry-based learning. Third, the strategies and approaches that are used include use of visuals, picture dictionaries, technology, use of siblings and colleagues’ kindness, and lesson plans. The three themes are discussed below and compared to the existing literature.
4.1 Challenges for ELLs and Teachers in FDK

The FDK program has its challenges and advantages, however it is noted that most of the FDK teachers challenges stem from teaching ELL as oppose to the program itself. Research participants shared the challenges they faced with teaching ELLs in FDK. Each participants’ challenges varied. Some of the challenges were communication with ELLs, lack of time for program, absenteeism and lack of training in teacher preparation courses.

4.1.1 Communication with ELLs.

Although there are many benefits with working with ELLs, there are also a few challenges that the research participants have noted throughout their years of teaching. Samantha shared that her challenge lies in communicating with the ELLs. If ELLs are not able to speak English, it becomes a challenge to communicate basic phrases with them. To cope with this challenge Samantha shared that she used many visuals to assist with the communication barrier.

4.1.2 Lack of time for program and absenteeism.

Jane shared a different challenge that she faces which consists of not having enough time in the day. Many teachers can relate to this. Jane said, that due to all the different programs outside of the classroom, she finds its restricts the children from what is going on in the classroom. However, she admitted that the children still gain from all those programs, so she does not consider it a negative challenge. For example, she said: “Let’s say different programs outside of the classroom, that’s still not a challenge because their getting music literacy, they’re going to the library, and it’s a story about whatever, they are in the gym, but it’s another kind of language.” Another challenge that Jane addressed was either her absenteeism or her ECE’s. She stated that she found it a challenge when she was away and she would be replaced by a supply teacher that does not speak much to the students. She mentioned it was reducing the potential for them to learn.
4.1.3 Lack of training in teacher preparation courses.

Both participants were asked about what kind of teacher preparation training they received to assist them with supporting ELLs. Their responses were similar in nature. Samantha shared that she did not receive any training; however, she did note that, because she lacked the sufficient training she required to support ELLs, she decided to get training in this area: “I did need to take my ESL part one, AQ course because I found I didn’t know enough about what to do with ELLs learners.” When asked how long the course lasted for, Samantha noted that it was a few weeks. Similarly, Jane shared that she took a literacy course in her teacher preparation program and that was the extent of it. These responses correlate with Taylor and Sobel (2013) who stated that 73% of pre-service teachers identified student diversity as their greatest challenge to teaching. These statistics are reflective of the lack of training teachers receive in Canada. Lucas and Grinberg’s (2008) found that 74% of teachers have had little to no preparation to work with ELLs. This finding coincides with how many FDK teachers in the United Stated have had minimal preparation to work with ELLs. Furthermore, Taylor and Sobel (2013) stated that 73% of pre-service teachers identified student diversity as their greatest challenge to teaching.

Therefore, it is evident that many teachers from both countries are unaware of their roles and responsibilities towards ELLs in their classrooms (Meskill, 2005) and thus are not prepared for the diversity in their students.

Jane also shared that she attended an annual teachers conference titled *Reading for the love of it* to gain more knowledge to support ELLs. This conference holds a variety of sessions throughout the day that teachers can attend based on their interests. It took place over a day, where teachers had the opportunity to pick sessions that they were interested in. Another initiative that Jane shared that she tried to do is she searched for workshops on the board’s
system, some of the workshops she has been a part were the literacy and math workshops; however, she said there have not been as many offered now as before. I assume this is because the money that was previously used to put these workshops together is now being used elsewhere.

The lack of training both participants felt coincides with a study conducted by Webster and Valeo (2011) which found Teacher Candidates (TCs) felt that the general approach to course work in the teacher preparation program did not provide them with the sufficient skills to feel confident when working with ELLs. The lack of training, however, may be changing—at least for new teachers. Participants were informed that the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Master of Teaching program has introduced a course this year (2016) called Supporting English Language Learners. Fortunately, my cohort was one of the first to be a part of this course. Various insights were gained from the course which were shared with the participants, such as how to accurately place students on the STEP placement scale based on their abilities. Essentially, STEP is intended for initial and ongoing assessments (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). According to the literature review, STEP determines where a child stands in relation to their language proficiency in their oral language, reading and writing. This is the first year that the Master of Teaching program has implemented a course catered solely to supporting ELLs.

Both participants were pleased to hear that there is a course focused on supporting ELLs for new teachers because it will assist TC’s when supporting ELLs. It is evident that supporting ELLs is a major concern to both beginning teachers and for those that have been in the field for various years, therefore the question that lies is: When will we all have to be formally educated
to support ELLs? Whether this includes a course, or a series of workshops, I believe that every teacher should take part in some formal education in regards to supporting ELLs.

4.2 Advantages of FDK

Within the theme of advantages of full-day kindergarten, participants agreed that there are tremendous advantages ELLs gained from being a part of a full-day kindergarten program. The participants stated that FDK allows students to gained more exposure to the English language. Jane, for example, noted that FDK provides phenomenal advantages for ELLs in FDK

Absolutely, phenomenal, huge advantage. You’re basically getting some of these children who, if they did not come to full-day kindergarten, would be in front of a TV on their own. (And there’s nothing wrong with being in front of a TV if there’s someone to help explain certain things that their seeing. Then that becomes a rich experience.) What full-day kindergarten offers is a full-day. Yeah, we have a quiet time, but even that there is soft music playing, serenity music playing in the background. There’s still language going on. These children, in a lot of cases, we don’t know what their family life is like and some of them are coming from homes that are not as best suited for their learning, so FDK is giving them an enriched language playground that they may not have; they spend more time with us. When they go home, they may have dinner and go to bed. There is very little time for quantitative quality time, so if we could give them so many opportunities. Wow, so I just love it.

In my own practicum experiences in FDK, I also noted there are great advantages. For example, there was an ELL student in the classroom that did not speak English. My Associate Teacher (AT) immersed the students in a variety of learning centres in the classroom. She also read dual-language book to the students. Gradually, throughout my teaching experience, the ELL
began attempting to communicate in English. This coincides with WestEd (2005) who found that FDK contributes to increased school readiness by better preparing students for first grade; it also leads to higher academic achievement, supports literacy and language development, and benefits children socially and emotionally. Yet, authors Cannon, Jacknowitz and Painter (2011) and De Cicca (2007) question the effectiveness of the FDK program. Jane disagrees as she noted that, if ELLs did not come to FDK, it is unlikely in many cases that they would be a part of a stimulating and content-rich experience. This is an interesting remark because it points to the idea that, without ELLs presence in FDK, these children may face difficulties in the future.

### 4.2.1 Types of ELL support in half and full day FDK

Both of the participants agreed that they did not perceive a difference in the support they provided their ELLs when the half-day turned into the full-day program. The only notable difference that both of them made was that they had more time with the full-day program. Samantha said that the full-day program allowed the students to spend more time with the ECE at lunch time, as they learned different names of foods and took part of that quality instructional time. Similarly, Jane stated that her program did not change; however, she felt that with the half-day program, she had to condense it more, but the opportunities were no different. As opposed to the full-day program, it is a longer day; thus the exposure is greater. WestEd (2005) agrees stating that ELLs, in particular, benefit immensely from additional time spent listening to and speaking English.

### 4.3 Teaching strategies and approaches used by FDK teachers to support ELLs

Supporting ELLs can become a difficult task for teachers if they have not acquired the appropriate strategies and approaches. A few of the strategies and approaches the research participants used were: student inclusion, inquiry-based learning, visuals (which include picture
dictionaries), the assistance of siblings and colleagues, kindness, and lesson plans. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007) every English language learner with limited prior schooling can learn to be successful when given the appropriate supports and opportunities. The FDK teachers stressed the fact that, although they had a few strategies that were specifically tailored for ELLs, the ELLs took part in all aspects of the day, just as their peers did.

### 4.3.1 Inclusion.

The research participants discussed the importance of making their ELLs feel included from the moment they arrived in their classrooms. They ensured that the ELLs felt comfortable and welcome. For example, Samantha said that ELLs were a part of every aspect of the day: “I don’t see them as being separate, I don’t even know how to explain it. I don’t view them as being different; I include them in everything.” As an example, Samantha explained that “We sing songs together, we read stories together, like I’m reading a story I’ll point to pictures.” Paquette and Reig (2008) note that incorporating songs into language lessons can teach language and writing skills, as the students use sentence patterns, vocabulary, and pronunciation to create literature connections. Similarly, Jane stated that there is complete inclusion in her classroom and provided a few examples such as labelled bins that are accessible to all learners, labels with student names found on their cubbies, and signs used throughout the classroom indicating what everything is. Ultimately, these reports suggest that the participants wanted to ensure that ELLs felt a sense of comfort in the classroom so they could be engaged in learning. For example, one tool Samantha used to engage her ELLs in learning was a tablet to demonstrate visually what she was referring to in case her ELLs did not understand the content.
4.3.2. Inquiry-based learning.

One of the advantages that FDK claims to have consists of the inquiry-based learning (often referred to as play-based learning) that students engage in. Inquiry-based learning involves engaging students’ prior knowledge and extending their personal understanding based on topics of interest. Bennett (2015) states that “inquiry-based learning does not teach the product of curriculum, but rather instructs the process of critical thinking so that students may navigate their way into the future (p. 389). Inquiry-based learning coincides with the second goal outlined in the Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program document, which consists of providing a play-based learning environment (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Samantha said that one of the things she enjoys most about teaching kindergarten is the inquiry-based learning:

The inquiry based learning, that’s huge: taking what they come with, their excitement and branching off, and setting up the classroom so it meets their needs. So, you’re bringing in materials, resources, and getting that excitement, and hopefully it feeds off of the other children who perhaps may not have that kind of excitement and then you can plug it into the curriculum areas.

4.3.3 Visuals.

Both the participants stated that visuals are important resources to use in their teaching. Samantha believed that visuals are the most effective strategies to use when supporting ELLs. For example, she used visuals when she taught a junior grade. She said, that she would add a picture so the students could form an association between the picture and the content on the page. Similarly, Jane said that she used visual schedules, specifically pictures and cards for children who are not as articulate in English. Also, Jane said that the ESL teacher provided her
with a little box with visuals that were itemized by categories, such as life skills or home connections.

When schools cherish and value the characteristics and experiences of the child, both children and families feel a sense of reassurance that they are a part of the classroom, as well as the school community as a whole (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). The Ontario Ministry of Education (2005) suggests teachers use an assortment of resources to promote language acquisition. These resources consist of photographs, printed materials such as posters, brochures, manipulatives, art materials, timetables and schedules, maps, physical models and many more (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005).

4.3.4 Picture dictionaries.

Each of the participants discussed the use of picture dictionaries in their classroom. Jane shared that an ESL teacher provided her with visual dictionaries. She said that the visual dictionaries are important because ELL’s begin to learn words by pointing to the pictures and the words. The use of non-verbal communication assists students with visualizing abstract words and concepts (Park, 2014). Samantha also shared that she had picture dictionaries in her classroom, that were of great use in her earlier years of teaching. She said that she was introduced to the use of picture dictionaries after she was a part of an AQ course. Samantha got the picture dictionaries from the public library and school library. She also shared that parents have donated some picture dictionaries throughout the years. Picture dictionaries are useful resources to use with ELLs because it offers them the opportunity to articulate their thoughts using pictures and words and to make the association between the picture and the text. Samantha said that she may have not thought to include picture dictionaries because she had the preconceived notion that they
were for younger children; however, she found that picture dictionaries are helpful for ELLs if she got the age appropriate ones.

4.3.5 Use of siblings and colleagues.

Involving families in an ELL learning journey is important to ensure they feel at ease. The Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010) acknowledges that families, in particular parents, are a central part of the program. One of the ways Samantha invites families into her classroom is by giving ELLs the option to see their siblings or she invites the siblings to visit her classroom. She finds it helps some students when they are feeling sad or just need that comfort. Samantha also said that she allows the ELL to call home if that is what they need. If the ELL does not have a sibling, she will find a peer or a teacher who speaks the same language as the ELLs to translate. Samantha mentioned that she tries to repeat the word in the student’s home language and then she restates it in English.

In addition to using siblings for forms of translation, both participants discussed the use of colleagues. When asked if there were any supports for the ELLs or themselves, Samantha said that at her school there are no formal supports; the only support she gains is from her colleagues. She mentioned an instance when a colleague asked her for her picture dictionaries and any other visuals that she may have had because there was an ELL that had arrived and was placed in her colleague’s class. Brown (2005) proposes implementing a systematic approach within the school system, to utilize ESL teachers as educational consultants. According to several scholars (Green, Arrega-Mayer, Utley, & Terry, 2001; Klingeer & Vaughn, 2002), collaboration through co-teaching and planning improved student achievement and teacher effectiveness. Jane shared that she relied on colleagues for support:
There is a teacher on staff that, basically, I went to talk to her just so she could do an assessment and see where [the student] was and provide these visual dictionaries because visual dictionaries for these kids are important to learn certain things to point to. And then she had I perceive some things, like that from her there was a little box with visuals, itemized in categories, so let’s say it was life skills or toileting, home, school, bus, like that kind of thing. So, she gave me those and, basically, I just have a wealth of resources that I know I can use in my class.

Jane noted that working from the same page is essential; however, this may not always be possible with each colleague. She states that, as long as the effort is made to form that connection with colleagues, then that is the greatest effort a person can make.

4.3.6 Addressing negative behaviours through kindness.

Jane discussed turning a negative situation with a student into a positive one through kindness. ELLs may find it a challenge to communicate with others due to their language proficiency; therefore, they may resort to other methods of getting their teachers’ or peers’ attention, some of which are negative behaviours. Jane used a strategy to defuse a negative situation:

“I find what really works is he [the student] doesn’t want to clean up or whatever it’s like “Oh you don’t want to do that” and then I’ll throw in his name [the student] and I’ll have a face and a smile and he’ll laugh and that’ll kind of deflect the situation from escalating to become a power struggle.”

Jane believes a teacher’s body language and actions can say a lot to the students. Therefore, Jane expressed that teachers need to be fair and listen to students or else they may “shut down” which can cause them to not put in as much effort as they are capable of.
4.3.7 Lesson plans.

Jane highlighted that teachers must be organized and have a day and overall plan they want to cover to ensure they stay on task. Jane mentioned the half-day program had distinct expectations; now, with the full-day program, the expectations have become global. She reiterated the use of an inquiry-based approach. She provided a specific instance of inquiry-based learning in her classroom. Jane stated a student wanted to talk about dinosaurs so she decided to integrate multiple curriculum areas such as math and science. She infused math by graphing with dinosaurs to interconnect the learning and for science she brought in an object and transformed it into a dinosaur cave. Jane discussed the importance of the cross-curricular connections for assessment purposes. She has created a template with each of her students’ names along with boxes and, as they are engaged in an activity, she went around and made anecdotal notes of the students so that she had something to refer to when it is time to write the report cards. Anecdotal notes also allowed her to keep track of how her students progressed.

The above strategies and approaches are a few ways that the participants ensured that ELLs received the support they required. Many of these strategies and approaches benefited the other students.

4.4 Conclusion

Three major themes emerged through the analysis process. First, challenges that FDK teachers faced with ELL students. Each participant faced a different challenge. Samantha spoke about the communication barrier with her students. Ultimately, it became difficult to communicate with a ELL if she did not know any words in the student’s home language. Jane discussed lack of time in the day because it is taken up with other curricular activities and her absenteeism as her biggest challenges. Jane admitted that the other curricular activities are not
necessarily a challenge because the students are still learning, they just take up a lot of time. Also, she spoke about herself or her ECE being absent and having a teacher that did not engage the children in meaningful conversations. Within my literature review, I discussed the increase in class size as a challenge that FDK teachers face. However, it was a surprise to see that none of the participants identified the increase of their class sizes as one of the challenges they faced.

Second, the advantages of FDK for ELLs and teachers were discussed. The advantages of being a part of an FDK program involves the greater exposure to the language, as the students are immersed to various curriculum areas throughout the day. Another advantage noted by the participants is that there was no differentiation between the half-day and full-day program, the benefit of the full-day program involves spending more time with the ECE and in general more time in the day for meaningful interactions.

Finally, the teaching strategies and approaches used by FDK teachers to support ELLs were addressed. There is not one “right way” to support ELLs. Both the literature and the research participants spoke to a variety of strategies or approaches that they relied on to support their ELLs. The most important component of an FDK program is inclusion. All students must feel included within their classroom, or their willingness to learn and be an active member of the classroom will diminish. They mentioned some of the initiatives they took to make the ELLs felt included. The participants discussed inquiry-based learning as their approach to teaching FDK. They spoke about feeding-off of the students’ interests to inform their instruction. Other strategies and approaches that the participants highlighted were the use of visuals, picture dictionaries, and resorting to an ELLs’ siblings. Additionally, the participants also discussed that they gained assistance from their colleagues, spoke about how to defuse a negative situation,
how to implement an inquiry-based learning through a cross-curricular approach, and how to assess students.

I had initially approached this research study with the notion that teachers were really struggling with the implementation of full-day kindergarten because of the increase of classroom size and their lack of training. Based on my experience, I believed that half-day kindergarten was more manageable than full-day kindergarten. What was found through the literature and data analysis is that full-day kindergarten has its benefits and drawbacks; however, it does not mean it is not manageable by teachers. Both participants have strategies and approaches in place to support ELLs and what was found is that the length of the day is a positive component of the FDK program because the ELLs get a greater exposure to the language. Therefore, FDK may benefit ELLs more than half-day kindergarten. I was not surprised that teachers did not receive any preparation to support ELLs in their teacher preparation courses. This is an unfortunate, yet a reality for many teachers supporting ELLs. However, efforts to add courses tailored to support ELLs are being made in teacher preparation programs. Going forward, more research needs to be done on how FDK teachers can gain the knowledge they need to support ELLs.

Next in Chapter 5, an overview of the key findings, a discussion on the broad and narrow implications for the educational community and for me as a researcher and as a teacher will be discussed. This will be followed by recommendations for practice, areas for further research, a list of questions which were raised throughout the study and suggestions of research studies that could address these questions. Finally, it will end with concluding comments.
Chapter Five: Implications

5.0 Introduction / Overview

The present study was designed to gain more insight about how Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) teachers are supporting English Language Learners (ELLs) in their classrooms. The findings serve to support the existing literature pertaining to what the challenges and advantages are of FDK and it provides specific examples of strategies and approaches used by FDK teachers to support ELLs. This chapter summarizes the research findings, highlights the present study’s implications for FDK teachers, school boards, the researcher as a beginning teacher, and for various stakeholders such as teacher preparation programs, and the Ontario College of Teachers. Several recommendations are provided along with suggestions for future research based on the conclusion of the research study.

5.1 Key Findings and their Significance

The present study was created to acquire more knowledge and understanding of how teachers are supporting ELLs with the adaptation to the FDK program. Following two semi-structured interviews with FDK teachers, a rigorous analysis revealed three important themes:

(1) Challenges of FDK for ELLs and teachers

(2) Advantages of FDK for ELLs

(3) Strategies and approaches used by FDK teachers to support ELLs

The first theme, challenges of FDK for ELLs and teachers, served to remind us that although the FDK program has been implemented for quite some time, both ELLs and teachers continue to face challenges in the FDK program. The participants described two challenges which consisted of the difficulties with communicating with ELLs because of language barriers and the lack of teachers’ awareness of students first languages. Other curricular activities such as
library time and physical education were discussed because of how time-consuming they can be. As noted in Chapter Four, one participant mentioned that her absenteeism was a cause for concern because of the worry that the supply teacher would not provide a linguistically rich experience for the students. A key finding that both participants discussed was the lack of training they received in their teacher preparation courses to support ELLs.

The second theme, the advantages of FDK for ELLs, highlights the positives of the FDK program. The full-day schedule allows greater exposure to the English language. It offers more time to create meaningful interactions with the children and staff in the room through the various activities in the program such as circle time, which is designated time to sing songs and have conversations that are student-driven. Another advantage is that the program is focused on an inquiry-based learning approach. Therefore, students are engaged in activities that are based on their interests. For example, if a student brings in an object they would like to explore, the FDK teacher will launch an inquiry on this object; from there much of the program will be focused on exploring that inquiry.

The third theme, strategies and approaches used by FDK teachers to support ELLs, offers all FDK teachers a range of practical suggestions for classroom practice. One suggestion speaks to the need to incorporate strategies such as use of gestures, pointing, visuals, picture dictionaries, and technologies such as iPads and computers. Participants also felt that involving siblings and colleagues into their learning allowed ELLs' comprehension to increase as a result of enhanced instructional methods, and school-home connections.

5.2 Implications

The present study has important implications for educational reform. In broad strokes, this study should serve as a reminder to teacher educators, school boards, and the Ontario
College of Teachers that more supports need to be provided for FDK teachers in assisting ELLs. This will help ensure they succeed in the early years of their education. Consistent with the conclusions of Lucas and Grinberg (2008) 74% of teachers have little or no preparation with working with ELLs. The present study finds a lack of teachers receive training to support ELLs in their teacher preparation programs. As well, there are minimal professional development courses that are currently offered from school boards, which affect the way in which FDK teachers instruct ELLs. This lack of training makes teachers feel insecure in their classrooms to support ELLs. These findings correlate with Webster and Valeo (2011) who found that Teacher Candidates (TCs) felt they were not provided with sufficient skills to make them feel confident when teaching ELLs. The study also provides insight into the issue of how diverse students in our FDK classrooms are, thus pointing out to policymakers the consequences of a lack of appropriate supports for success.

The present study has three implications for FDK teachers supporting ELLs. First, there are implications for teachers’ practice. It is essential that teachers are confident in their practice, because the ELL requires supports from the teacher to progress in the classroom. Next, teacher training courses and professional development are vital to enhance FDK teachers’ practice. Finally, there are implications for my own professional identity and practice to ensure that I understand how to properly support ELLs given what I have learned from the existent literature and the data collected.

5.2.1 Implications for teacher practice.

If FDK teachers continue to lack the knowledge to support ELLs in their classrooms, ultimately it will place the ELLs at a disadvantage academically and socially. They will find it difficult learning the concepts that are being addressed in class, which may cause their self-
confidence to drop. This lack of confidence can make the ELLs feel isolated in their environment, which may lead them to experience what the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007) calls the “silent period.” This period of silence occurs when ELLs do not know how to communicate their message, leading them to abandon their efforts to converse with others.

5.2.2 Implications for teacher training.

It is evident that there continues to be a discrepancy from one teacher preparation program to the next in terms of training FDK teachers to anticipate ways to support ELLs. Diversity within the student population continues to rise in schools; therefore, it is essential that teachers are prepared to support ELLs in an effective and confident manner through their strategies and approaches. As discussed in Chapter One, People for Education (2012) found that in the Greater Toronto Area, 85% of elementary schools have ELLs. Ontario teacher preparation programs should thus invest time in creating a course that TCs can take to ensure they are receiving current information on how to support the variety of ELLs in their classrooms. The course should address the topic of how to assess and monitor the language acquisition and literacy development of ELLs through using the Steps to English Proficiency (STEP) framework (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012), which is used for initial and ongoing assessment purposes. TCs should be taught how to use STEP in their future practice to ensure that ELLs are being accurately assessed.

5.2.3 Implications for my own professional identity and practice.

As a beginning teacher, I have learned immensely from the scholars I have researched. This includes ensuring that I have the academic knowledge, strategies, and approaches in place to support ELLs when they enter the classroom. Moreover, the strategies that the FDK teachers use in their own practice can foster the development of ELLs skills. I have gained valuable
lessons from my participants, which include to ask questions, reflect, and most importantly to take the initiative to be a part of professional development courses. This can either be done on my own or provided by the school board to enhance my understanding of how to successfully integrate those supports into my practice and classroom.

Subsequently, as a beginning teacher, I want to ensure that all the ELLs present in my classroom feel comfortable playing and learning. This sense of comfort develops when FDK teachers genuinely want to assist ELLs. Implementing strategies, such as the use of visuals or technology in conversations, ensures ELLs are comprehending what is being said. Participants discussed involving ELLs parents and siblings in the classroom. A quick phone call to a parent, or visit from an older sibling can allow the ELLs to see that there is a home-school connection. Each ELL comes with their own skills, abilities, and preferences. Therefore, it is imperative to develop a broad array of strategies and pedagogical approaches to differentiate from one learner to the next.

5.3 Recommendations

The implications of the present study point specifically to several recommendations for the Ontario College of Teachers, school boards, and teachers. These recommendations will be outlined below:

(1) Teacher preparation programs need to provide a mandatory course for TCs to support ELLs with how to become a culturally responsive teacher.

(2) School boards need to provide more of arrange of professional development courses focused on supporting ELLs. Teachers who have not had any formal preparation to work with ELLs need to take an AQ course related to supporting ELLs that will be partially covered by the government.
(3) Have an ESL teacher in the classroom to work with ELLs each week.
(4) Teachers need resources, such as tablets, to enhance their instructions. This can help students further develop their English proficiency.

5.3.1 Teacher preparation.

The first recommendation is that the Ontario College of Teachers should require teacher preparation programs to create a mandatory course for TCs to take in order to support ELLs. This course will teach TCs how to be culturally responsive teachers, by providing the appropriate supports for ELLs. There are currently a few teacher preparation programs that offer courses on supporting ELLs—one of which is the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), which is currently in its first year of implementation (2016-2017). By educating beginning teachers, this program will be able to bring valuable insights to their own practice. Furthermore, new teachers and TCs can share this knowledge with other teachers, both in their practicum settings, and during their supply teaching experiences. Both participants interviewed, agreed that they did not receive adequate training in their teacher preparation program to support ELLs. This supports the need for additional training for supporting ELLs, concluding that Additional Qualifications (AQ) courses were necessary. Not all teachers will have the time or money to spend on AQs, which indicates the need for all teacher preparation programs to have all TCs trained to educate ELLs.

5.3.2 Professional development workshops and additional qualifications.

The second recommendation is that school boards need to provide more professional development workshops focused specifically on supporting ELLs. One participant noted that there are not as many professional development workshops offered by school boards and identified a decrease in availability from when they first started teaching. School boards need to be aware of the needs of, not only their student population, but their teachers as well. If there are
professional development workshops available, often times they are restricted to a certain number of people, which leaves many others without the supports they require. Ultimately, if teachers are not gaining the right supports to enhance their practice, how are they able to fulfill the needs of their ELLs? More conferences designed to support teachers’ work with ELLs should be offered. Within these conferences, there should be specific workshops directed towards FDK teachers and ELLs. For example, workshops should focus on items such as, supporting ELLs through a collaborative approach, partnering with ELLs families, and scaffolding instructions.

Moreover, teachers who have not had any formal preparation to work with ELLs need to take an AQ course related to supporting ELLs that will be partially covered by the government. As mentioned above, teachers may not feel the incentive to take an AQ course due to family responsibilities, time, or money. However, if this AQ was partially subsidized by the government, teachers may be more likely to take this as a valuable opportunity to enhance their practice. The Ontario College of Teachers could propose this suggestion in one of their monthly meetings and hold a vote to see if a majority of people agree. If there was a consensus on the decision, it would be brought to a chair personnel.

**5.3.3 Have an ESL teacher work with ELLs each week.**

Since an ESL teacher is specifically trained to work with ELLs, such a teacher should assist the FDK with all the preliminary steps in terms of figuring out where the ELLs stand academically in relation to their English proficiency. From there the ESL teacher and FDK team can work collaboratively to come up with strategies and approaches that they will use with the ELL throughout certain periods of the day. Having the ESL teacher work with the ELLs a few times a week allows for the opportunity to observe and work with the ELLs in a smaller teacher to student ratio and provide them with appropriate supports to enhance their abilities.
5.3.4 Resources to use in the classroom to enhance instruction.

The final recommendation is that teachers need to be provided with more pedagogical resources. This would involve providing tablets such as iPads to each FDK classroom. A tablet allows for various applications to be downloaded that can assist ELLs, such as Duolingo. Duolingo is an application that allow students to learn languages through various modalities, such as games. One of the participants used a personal iPad to enhance instruction, as pictures were shown to refer to what was being spoken of. The school board should allocate some money to purchasing tablets for the FDK classroom because they provide a multitude of possibilities to learn.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

As much as the present study has served to expand upon extant literature, it has also highlighted the need for further study. In future research endeavours, it is recommended that a greater emphasis be placed upon how the other stakeholders, such as the Early Childhood Educator (ECE) and the principal, supports ELLs and the teachers in FDK. Although one of the participants outlined how the ECE enhanced the ELLs vocabulary during lunch time, there was no other data collected about what is the role of the ECE to support ELLs. This could have been due to the fact that interviews were only conducted with classroom teachers. For future research, it would be valuable to learn how the ECEs educational background, which is focused primarily on child development, could assist them with supporting ELLs. By collecting this data, it will determine how the FDK teachers support the ELLs.

I am interested to see how principals provide support to teachers with a majority of ELLs, and allocate time for professional development based on this need. A new dimension of information would be added if principals were interviewed. Further knowledge would be gained
on their thoughts and perspectives pertaining to how they directly support ELLs in the classroom, and the ways supports are provided to teachers. Overall, I would be interested to explore what types of professional development is offered by the school board in regards to supporting ELLs, and what a ECE's and principal's role is in this matter.

5.5 Concluding Comments

The present study is important because it address the need for FDK teachers to be adequately and highly trained to ensure ELLs are being appropriately supported in FDK. The study addressed key findings on the advantages and challenges of FDK and how FDK teachers support the ELLs through the use of various strategies. By doing so, the study was able to gather data pertaining to the research question. The main reoccurring theme from the data collected was that FDK teachers are not adequately trained to support ELLs in their teacher preparation program and there is a scarcity in PD workshops available in school boards. This indicated the importance of creating teacher training courses and resources that will support FDK teachers. The areas for further research speak to gathering data from the ECE in the classroom, and the principal to get their thoughts of how they assist ELLs.

The findings within the study are valuable for teachers, school boards, and other stakeholders because it highlights how FDK teachers are supporting ELLs. From the data collected, it is evident that teachers require more training to support ELLs effectively. It is essential that ELLs receive the proper supports from their teachers, to ensure that they are enhancing their social and academic skills. Teachers need to gain adequate training to ensure they feel the confidence to assist their ELLs, at whichever point in their learning they may be in. To conclude, the present study serves as a reminder that we need to ensure that FDK teachers are
trained and feel confident to support ELLs because it will prepare ELLs for success both socially and academically.
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Appendix A: Letter of Consent

Date: August 2016

Dear,

My name is Monica Severino and I am a graduate student in the Master of Teaching program at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. I am studying how kindergarten teachers support English Language Learners for the purposes of a graduate research paper. Findings obtained from this study may be informative for your practice, and others who support English Language Learners. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in the research will involve a 45-60 minute interview that will be audio-recorded and transcribed. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to 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 and/or potentially at a research conference or publication. I will not use your name of anything else that might indentify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be course instructor Ken McNeilley. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific question. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.
Please sign the attached form if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher: Monica Severino

Course Instructor: Ken McNeilly

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 Monica Severino 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

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study, and for making time to be interviewed today. This research study aims to learn how teachers in full-day kindergarten are supporting English Language Learners. This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, and is comprised of approximately 23 questions. 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?

To begin, can you state your name for the recording?

Section A - Background Information
1. How many years have you been teaching in Toronto/ the Greater Toronto Area?
2. Which grade(s) have you taught? Which grade have you had the most experience with?
3. How long have you been working at this school?
4. How many years have you been teaching ELLs in kindergarten (JK/SK)?
5. What do you enjoy most about teaching kindergarten?

Section B - Teachers’ Perspectives/ Beliefs
6. What does the term “English Language Learner” mean to you?
7. What is your teaching philosophy regarding ELLs?
8. How do you include ELLs in your classroom?

Section C - Teachers’ Experiences and Practices
9. What are your experiences working with ELLs?
10. Have you ever taught in a half-day program, if so, for how many years?
11. Did the supports you provided ELL in the half-day program differentiate from the full-day program? If so please explain how.

12. How would you develop a relationship with a newly arrived ELL in your classroom?

13. How would you communicate with ELLs who have no or limited English proficiency?

14. What are the most effective strategies you use to support ELLs?

15. How have you come to adapt those strategies in your practice?

16. Can you recall receiving any preparation in your teacher preparation program to support ELLs? If so, approximately how many hours of training did you receive?

17. Were you provided with any training prior to the implementation of FDK? If so, please elaborate.

Section D- Supports and Challenges, and Reflections

18. In your experience, what are the benefits of working with ELLs?

19. What are the advantages of FDK for ELLs?

20. In your experience, what are the challenges of supporting ELLs in FDK? How do you overcome those challenges?

21. Are there supports available within the schools for ELLs and/or yourself should it be required? If so, please elaborate on what those supports are and how you can locate them?

Next Steps

22. Is there anything you wish you knew as a beginning teacher pertaining to supporting ELLs? If you were to give advice to a beginning teacher what would it be?

23. What recommendations would you give your faculty of education program, in regards to ELLs?

Thank you for your time and participation in this research study. It is greatly appreciated.