

Culturally Responsive Leadership: Critical Pedagogy for  
English Language Proficiency

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English Language Proficiency

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## ABSTRACT

Culturally responsive leadership and instruction have proven beneficial for racially minoritized student populations. Similarly, linguistically minoritized students benefit from a learning environment that values students' experiences and culture. Connections of students' experiences help support learning through meaningful connection to local values and social political application. The learning has meaning for the students. Student and teacher discover and learn together.

Students identified as English learner, [EL] is one of the fast growing populations within Ohio. District leaders need to continue to develop programs and services for this population to appropriately meet their educational needs of both language proficiency and content mastery.

Through study of district assessment data relating to language proficiency district leaders will increase their motivation for change to improve the learning experience for students identified as EL. District demographics of percentage of EL students and student diversity have statistically significant relationship for language proficiency.

Findings support that culturally responsive leadership, in partnership with specific language proficiency programing, results in positive outcomes for EL students. Districts report a higher gap-closing grade when the district meets the EL proficiency target. Districts with average or above EL student enrollment are more likely to meet the proficiency target compared to districts with below average EL student enrollment. Student diversity does not have a correlational relationship with district EL performance.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The United States is a nation of immigrants, with a diverse population representing many ethnic groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Student enrollment in K-12 public schools is becoming more diverse. From 2000 to 2015, students identified as White decreased from 61% to 49%, students identified as Black decreased from 17% to 15% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). During the same period, students identified as Hispanic increased from 16% to 26%, and students identified as Asian/Pacific Islander increased from 4% to 5% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). The student population is becoming more diverse each year. Even with this foundation of diversity, the equitable treatment of residents does not exist in many public service domains, specifically education (De Souza, 2013; Freire, 2000; McCloud, 2015). Educational leaders should use this growing student diversity as motivation to seek ways to improve the school experience for all students, especially those marginalized by traditional instructional approaches.

Recognizing that public education can serve as the great equalizer for individual success and prosperity, Duncan (2018) noted that the inverse is also true. “Students who receive a poor education, or who drop out of school before graduation, can end up on the wrong side of a lifelong gap in employment, earning, even life expectancy” (Duncan, 2018, p. 1). The recognition that failure to provide quality instruction and learning, based on the needs of the student, will result in a lifelong struggle for individual success is a reality for students whose primary language is not English (Ohio Department of Education, 2012).

The provision of quality instruction for students identified as EL<sup>1</sup> compounds when the majority of the students enrolled in the school are monolingual English speaking (Blaise, 2018). When an EL student attends a school with a significant EL student population, resources are more robust (Blaise, 2018). In comparison, when EL students attend a district with few EL students enrolled, resources are limited and harder to effectively distribute (Blaise, 2018). Universal instructional approaches that value student diversity can support meeting the educational needs of EL students (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Moll et al., 1992; Morrison et al., 2008, Zipin, 2009). The challenge for educational leaders is, while providing specific language development services, leaders must also consider universal instructional approaches that will support meeting the needs of the targeted subgroup. Fostering a school environment that supports all learners will improve the learning conditions for all students, including those within small representations of the total student body.

### **Problem Statement**

As school accountability increases, school leaders are seeking ways to better support their diverse student bodies (Hutchings, 2017). One subgroup with unique learning needs are students identified as English learners<sup>1</sup> [EL] (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). As a result of policy and legislative action, school leaders must ensure staff provides ELs instruction for language development while providing access to

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<sup>1</sup> Resources from the Ohio Department of Education use the term of English learner, EL, to identify this student population. Use of EL throughout this manuscript will provide clarity for reader of the student population within the scope of Ohio public schools. The researcher recognizes that the progressive and developing term for this student population is *emergent bilingual*. This term gives value to the students' development of both English and primary language.

rigorous curriculum content (Moran, 2005). As school leaders recognize the benefits of approaching instruction from a culturally relevant pedagogy mindset for racially minoritized students, this approach can also be beneficial for students identified as EL (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b; Morrison et al., 2008).

Change leadership recognizes the need for a catalyst to initiate change (Heifetz, 1994; Wagner & Kegan, 2006; Yukl, 2013). Language development assessment reporting as part of the gap-closing score may illuminate a need for change. Existing research supports instructional approaches based on culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching for instructing students identified as EL (Gay, 2002, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b). A review of culturally relevant pedagogy literature details effective strategies for meeting the learning needs of marginalized students. The research provides the context for school accountability that drives school leaders to improve instruction for student subgroups, specifically those identified as EL.

### **Statement of Purpose**

Student assessment data drive school accountability (Ohio Department of Education, 2012). Language proficiency assessment results can serve to motivate leaders to change school practices (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Existing research indicates proficient language development can take 5 to 7 years within an effective learning environment (Howard et al., 2018; Lindholm-Leary, 2012). Concurrent provision of targeted language development and content instruction is required (Howard et al., 2018; Lindholm-Leary, 2012). Both critical pedagogy theory and culturally relevant pedagogy are frameworks for ensuring all students connect to their learning through validation of personal experiences within the learning experience. (Brown-Jeffy

& Cooper, 2011; Freire, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Mayo, 1993). Change leadership must have a catalyst to support the desired change (Heifetz, 1994; Wagner & Kegan, 2006; Yukl, 2013). There is a gap in the research on what school leaders can use to ignite change within a critical pedagogy and culturally relevant pedagogy for adaptive change. Studying past assessment accountability data will determine if it can serve as the needed catalyst to drive change that includes culturally relevant approaches.

### **Research Questions**

From the 2016-2017 school year through the 2018-2019 school year, the n-size for reporting the EL subgroup performance reduced from 30 students to 20 students (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). This resulted in more Ohio public school districts reporting EL subgroup performance in the third year compared to the first year (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). State policymakers implemented this lower reporting size to have more students state-wide included in district accountability data resulting in more districts receiving a letter grade within the gap-closing section of the report card (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). State education leaders hope that increasing the number of students included in accountability measures will result in district leaders allocating more resources, services, and supports for these student populations.

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What effect on Ohio public school districts' gap-closing score occurred as a result of the increased number of districts reported EL subgroup performance over the 3 years?
  - Hypothesis 1: Ohio school districts' gap-closing score is not equal over the years studied.

- Null hypothesis 1: Ohio school districts' gap-closing score is equal over the three years studied.
2. Over the 3 years, did the percentage of students identified as EL and diverse student populations serve as explanatory variables for district subgroup performance on the Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment, OELPA?
- Hypothesis 2: Demographics of percent of students identified as EL, diverse student enrollment, and the combination of both explain district subgroup performance on the OELPA.
  - Null hypothesis 2: Demographics of percent of students identified as EL, diverse student enrollment, and the combination of both do not explain district subgroup performance on the OELPA.

### **Methodology**

The study design was a longitudinal retrospective study (Cherry, 2019). A retrospective study utilizes past historical information (Cherry, 2019). Variables for the study were derived from the Ohio school district report card and enrollment data. Variables included districts with a reported EL subgroup, gap-closing score, language development performance percentage, percent of students identified as EL, and Ohio district diversity explaining district outcome on the OELPA (Ohio Department of Education, 2019).

The sample population was the Ohio school districts that reported a district EL subgroup score. The study used data from 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years. Subgroup minimum n-size for reporting decreased over these school years, so

additional school districts were included in the study in later years of the longitudinal study (Ohio Department of Education, 2019).

The intent of the research study was simply to identify explanatory variables, not to manipulate an independent variable to reach the desired outcome (Schenker & Rumrill, 2001). Ex post facto data utilized in the study measured differences found within the preexisting group (Schenker & Rumrill, 2001). One aspect studied was the effect of EL subgroup reporting on the overall gap-closing score over time. The second aspect considered the factors of percent of students identified as EL and diverse student enrollment, explanatory of EL subgroup performance on the OELPA. The first aspect considers whether or not the impact of decreasing n-size serves to motivate school leaders to seek change. The second aspect considers district demographics correlation to student performance on language development assessment.

### **Rationale and Significance**

The benefit of this study is that the findings help support school leaders with change motivators. Staff can be resistant to change until the identification of the problem and a desire to address the problem develops (Heifetz, 1994; Wagner & Kegan, 2006; Yukl, 2013). This study also considers critical pedagogy theory and culturally relevant pedagogy approaches for the instructional delivery benefit for EL student subgroups (Adamson et al., 2011; Flory & Wylie, 2019; Morrison et al., 2008; Smith & Salgado, 2018). Beyond obligations imposed by policy and legislation, this study couples assessment compliance and critical pedagogy theory approaches of instruction for students identified as EL (Dixon, 2018; Menken, 2013; Moran, 2005; Thomas, 2017;

Vergon, 1994). School leaders will find an authentic desire for improved services and supports for students regarding language development.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As a school leader charged with overseeing programming for students identified as EL, the researcher wants to increase quantitative study resources to support effective services for students (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). By design, qualitative studies support the value and benefit of specialized services for students identified as EL (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). When pressed to allocate limited school resources for services, quantitative research provides calculated justification (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Additionally, by the design of a quantitative study, this study is reproducible by other researchers to confirm findings (Simon, 2011). Direct implementation of the findings in operation is expected. Researcher bias is limited through the use of ex post facto data; manipulation of the data to fit the assumptions of the researcher is not possible (Simon & Goes, 2013). The study provides educational leaders with quantitative data to support universal approaches to instruction that will help all students, including those identified as EL. Studying student performance on English language proficiency assessment based on specific district demographics may confirm existing research of effective practices for students identified as EL. Comparing the performance of districts with an extremely undiverse student body, to be defined later, and districts with an undiverse and diverse student body will support the need for critical pedagogy and culturally relevant pedagogy approaches to school improvement.

## **Research Assumptions**

With a background in special education and experience in programming for EL students, the researcher sought ways to bring attention to instructional approaches that are universally effective for all students, specifically students identified as EL. The influence of bias was limited in the study due to the design of a causal study of ex-post factor data (Cherry, 2019; Lewin, 1951). The timing of the study also played a factor due to the school years used. The n-size for subgroup reporting reduced from 30 to 20 during the 3 years (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). This reduced n-size resulted in more districts reporting the subgroup, increasing the data points for study (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). The researcher hopes that, as the n-size reduces, and more schools report for the EL subgroup, others will look to the findings of this study when considering holistic approaches to improve student assessment performance.

The intended audience of this study are district leaders charged with supervision and administration of English language programming and services. Recognizing that Ohio public schools are structured as local educational agencies situated within boundaries set by cities, townships, and small municipalities, Ohio district administrators can be assigned supervision of many specialized programs and services. As a result of this local district structure many responsibilities limit a leader's ability to be highly proficient in all areas. This results in administrators ascending to district level positions to administer programs and services in which they may have little to no previous experience.

The researcher recognizes the limited depth and scope of full understanding of all the obligation and responsibilities district leaders have with regard to services for students identified as EL. The hope is this study may help deepen the novice



understanding of the history, obligations, and best practices for the EL student population. This study is not a script for how to develop and deliver services. It simply provides additional details and considerations for district leaders to formulate and design programs and services that are appropriate for the EL student population enrolled in their school district.

### **Definitions of Key Terminology / Operational Definitions**

English Learner [EL] is the current term in Ohio for identifying students whose primary language is something other than English (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Some studies included in the literature review may use the term English as a Second Language, ESL, or English Language Learner, ELL. When direct quoting from the literature the term used within the literature was included in the quote (American Psychological Association, 2020). These labels all represent the same general student population.

Accountability assessments include any state-mandated assessment used to report the performance of school districts (Ohio Department of Education, 2018b).

Accountability assessment in this study focused on the Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment, OELPA. The OELPA has four areas assessed: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Only students identified as EL participate in this assessment (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). The Administration of the OELPA is one-on-one or in a small group depending on the area assessed (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c).

The gap-closing score is part of Ohio's Annual Measurable Objective and was created to meet the federal requirements included in the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act [ESEA] and the No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB] for measuring student subgroups (A New Education Law, 2019; Ohio Department of Education, 2019). The score is comprised of subgroup student performance on items of English language arts, mathematics, language proficiency assessments, and graduation rates (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). The subgroups are all students, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, English learners, African-American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, Hispanic or Latino, multi-racial, and White (Ohio Department of Education, 2019).

Language proficiency assessment results determine how schools are performing concerning addressing English language proficiency targets (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). The OELPA measures the students' proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening English (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). The individual components score on a 5-point scale; level 1 – *Beginning*, level 2 – *Early Intermediate*, level 3 – *Intermediate*, level 4 – *Early Advanced*, and level 5 – *Advanced* (Ohio Department of Education, 2017b).

The variable of *students identified as EL* is the total percentage of students in a district identified as EL. Identification occurs during initial enrollment into the district through a home language survey and screener tool developed by the Ohio Department of Education (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Once identified as EL the student remains classified as EL until meeting the exit criteria of the OELPA or graduation (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). OELPA exit criteria are subcategory scoring of four or five in each area of reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c).

The collection of student diversity variable occurs through self-reporting by the student's parent or guardian at the time of enrollment (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). Students self-identify a single race criterion of African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific islander/native Hawaiian, Hispanic or Latino, Multi-racial, or White (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). Students only receive one category as determined by the parent and it is set for the student's career after initial enrollment data collection (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b).

Culturally responsive leadership is the development and implementation of an inclusive environment focused on improving learning experiences for a diverse population of students and families (Khalifa et al., 2016). The diversity of students and families includes culture and linguistics (Khalifa et al.). Leaders need to be aware of students' needs and promote an inclusive environment to support teacher development of the same culturally responsive orientation (Khalifa et al.).

Culturally relevant pedagogy is an instructional approach that includes the ideas of academic achievement/student learning, cultural competence, and socio-political/critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). This approach to teaching embraces students' home culture and connects the instruction to that home culture to not replace but to support one another creating multicultural students (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Critical pedagogy is a teaching and instructional approach that attempts to balance instructor and learner as equals (Shor, 1992). Together they explore and discover learning (Freire, 2000). The instructor and learner are on a journey together, as opposed to the teacher being the master of content bestowing knowledge to the student (Freire, 2000;

Shor, 1992). Additionally, the students' values and life experiences are values to learning, not deficits (Freire, 2000).

### **Summary**

Chapter I introduced Ohio public schools services for students identified as EL. The United States is a nation of immigrants with a growing diverse student body. Students identified as EL are a small but growing student population. As school leaders consider language development needs in balance with the delivery of rigorous content, universal approaches can support teachers' development of a supportive classroom environment to help meet the unique learning needs of ELs.

Analysis and study of state-mandated language proficiency assessment results may serve as a key to motivate school leaders to seek change. A culturally responsive leadership mindset can foster a learning environment better suited to meet the learning needs of ELs.

Chapter II is a review of the literature relating to this study. Specifically, the review includes the theory of critical pedagogy. The literature review connects critical pedagogy theory and culturally relevant pedagogy and how it relates to the EL subgroup of students in school. The review includes the history of EL policy and legislation, and how those actions have shaped school districts' instructional and support obligations for the EL population. From the history, the literature review arrives at the present regarding Ohio EL subgroup reporting and service obligations schools must meet. Chapter II concludes with the identification of change leadership characteristics and qualities. School leaders will use the results of this study to support instructional changes in schools for improved experiences for the students identified as EL.

Chapter III, methods, detailed the research questions, hypotheses, and variables studied. The researcher detailed the types of study and data sources. Through the use of ex post facto data, the 3-year longitudinal study examined all Ohio school districts that report the subgroup of EL. The study examined the impact of the EL subgroup performance on the overall district gap-closure score, and what demographic variables can serve as explanatory variables of performance.

Chapter IV reviewed the findings of the study and detailed the relationships identified and possible motivators for change leadership to take action.

Chapter V applies the findings to the current practices for EL programming and services by linking existing literature and deepening understanding through the confirmation of findings.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing research supports the benefits of school districts focusing on culturally responsive professional development for linguistically minoritized students' improved achievement (Aasebo et al., 2017; Adamson et al., 2011; Auslander, 2018; Blaise, 2018; Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2018; Gardner, 2017). There exists a strong positive correlation between culturally responsive instruction and academic achievement of students identified as English learners [EL] (Orosco & O'Connor, 2014; Ryan, 2006; Smith & Salgado, 2018). If staff is serving a diverse student population, critical pedagogy practices including culturally relevant pedagogy should be an essential element of teacher professional development and practice (Freire, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Morrison et al., 2008; Shyman, 2011; Smith & Salgado, 2018).

State and federal policy drive the need for public schools to address opportunity gaps of students whose primary language is not English (Dixon, 2018; Menken, 2013; Moran, 2005; Thomas, 2017). These students have equal rights to education, instruction, and learning as their English-speaking peers (Civil Rights Act of 1964). Identification, assessment, and monitoring spotlight the weaknesses in schools when it comes to meeting these students' unique needs. (Lau v. Nichols, 1974). Through the lens of culturally relevant pedagogy educators can recognize students' personal experiences as values to learning and motivators for student engagement (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Morrison et al., 2008) Students need to feel safe and valued in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Framing students' beliefs and experiences as a benefit to learning, not a

barrier, will lead to successful learning and societal promotion of all students (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Educational leaders must implement the strategies of change leadership to drive the development of their staff's cultural proficiency (Heifetz, 1994; Wagner & Kegan, 2006; Yukl, 2013). By using accountability assessment data as the alarm to create awareness and urgency, the leader can gain understanding and buy-in from staff to initiate change (Heifetz, 1994; Wagner & Kegan, 2006; Yukl, 2013). The leader must be mindful to approach this issue with an adaptive change approach as opposed to a technical change approach (Heifetz, 1994). Through the adaptive change process, the leader will bring all stakeholders to develop a new, previously non-existing state for the betterment of students and staff (Heifetz, 1994).

### **Theoretical Framework**

In the state of Ohio, students identified as EL are a growing population (Sugarman & Geary, 2018). According to the Migration Policy Institute, in the 2016-2017 school year Ohio school districts reported 58,603 students identified as EL to the state Department of Education for grades PreK-12; this represents 4% of the total student population within the State of Ohio (Sugarman & Geary, 2018). Instructional staff serving this population have the dual responsibility of addressing core content standards and English language development (Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2018). Instructional approaches based on the culturally relevant pedagogy and critical pedagogy theories of education can make a positive impact on learning for the population of students identified as EL (Freire, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

In addition to direct services, school culture and climate can foster a supportive learning environment (Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2018; Gay, 2002; Moyer & Clymer, 2009). Culturally proficient staff will foster a supportive school environment, embracing students' differences, providing a foundation for the academic and social success of all students, including those identified as EL (Moyer & Clymer 2009). According to Moyer and Clymer (2009):

Many teachers are unaware of the importance of helping [English Language Learners] ELLs—who frequently feel lost, depressed, alienated, lonely, fearful, and abandoned when immersed in a class of students that caters to a culture unlike their own—develop a sense of belonging. (p. 16)

Teachers need to recognize the support needs that exist for students identified as EL and work to meet those needs through a welcoming and sensitive learning environment. If educators are not aware of and working to develop culturally responsive instructional delivery, unconscious barriers to language development for the students identified as EL may exist (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Moyer & Clymer, 2009). It is the responsibility of the district leadership to demonstrate cultural responsiveness and foster it within the staff they supervise.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Culturally relevant pedagogy is the practice of teachers aligning instruction to their students' home and community culture (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Three equal tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy are academic success/student learning, cultural competence, and social-political consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Educators must address all three areas for effective instructional delivery. Failure to provide all three in



unison fails to fully deliver content within a culturally relevant pedagogy framework (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Content mastery is not simply memorization of key data but syntheses of ideas and concepts in unison arrived at through thought-provoking questions and considerations (Morrison et al., 2008). Teachers need to advance the learning beyond basic skill development and toward an experience that makes student learning meaningful to their current reality (Morrison et al., 2008). There must be teaching for understanding, not teaching to a test (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Externally created textbooks are available to learners as supplemental materials, not the core content. Teachers develop the classroom content with their students' interests, culture, and experiences known and lead the learning to bridge the formal curriculum to those experiences (Moll et al., 1992). These connections help engage the student in personalized and meaningful learning where they are producers of the knowledge, not simply receivers of facts (Moll et al., 1992). The teacher serves as the bridge between school learning and the students' world, the family funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). School leaders must support and encourage teachers to investigate students' home and community funds of knowledge and apply them to the classroom learning and instruction.

Cultural competence is a recognition of students' culture and experiences and how those can support and extend learning. Culturally competent teachers continually seek to utilize students' culture and experiences in instruction and learning (González & Moll, 2002). Teachers help students to bridge personal culture with the school dominant culture (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Teachers demonstrate a value for the students' culture to exist in unison with typical school expectations (González et al., 1995). There is no

attempt by teachers to have students reject personal culture for academic success in the school culture (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

To strengthen students understanding of the value of culture within the context of learning teachers purposefully seek parent and community involvement in the learning. Parents are encouraged to share experiences for learning (Moll et al., 1992). By using these shared experiences as the vessel for learning, teachers can deepen student understanding and retention of the desired learning outcomes (González & Moll, 2002). The teacher is still addressing the content standards required for the grade and content areas but doing so in a way students relate and connect resulting in increased engagement and retention (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

School leaders need to support teachers' development of social/political inclusion into the learning experience. By framing the learning experience within the social-political context students can understand the purpose and value of learning the content presented (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). By designing real-life learnings, the meaning and application are clear to the learner. This approach to learning helps develop and support a democratic mindset for the students now and into the future (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Students begin to understand their role in the greater existence of their community (Morrison et al., 2008).

School leaders need to encourage and support their teachers' perspectives of self and others. Teachers need to believe all students are capable of academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Teachers are designers of the learning experience, not simply implementers of a scripted instructional model (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Teachers need to find ways to give back to the community that they serve and belong to (Ladson-

Billings, 1995b). Teachers are not outsiders but part of the community they serve (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

### **Critical Pedagogy**

In critical pedagogy theory, education serves as the vessel for social movement and justice of marginalized citizens within society (Freire, 2000). Educators do not always recognize the connections instruction and learning have with political activity and social justice (Shyman, 2011). Schooling, especially public education in the United States, can serve as the opportunity to support and develop oppressed individuals and improve their access to societal resources and benefits (Auslander, 2018; Carger, 1996). Critical consciousness encourages individuals to develop a critical evaluation of social and political actions to challenge inequitable power and promote self-actualization (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 2000).

Oppressive practices restrict racially minoritized and marginalized students' access to resources, learning, and prosperity of educational benefits afforded to majority populations (Elias, 1994). When teachers are considered the keepers of information, the depositors of knowledge to the students (Elias, 1994), this is called the *banking model* of education (Freire, 2000). In this model, students are simply collectors of information, and consideration of their past experiences, culture, and beliefs are not included in the design and delivery of instruction and learning (Elias, 1994; Freire, 2000; Mayo, 1993). Within this school model, students must conform to the societal majority, so racially minoritized students can experience success only when they reject personal cultural practices to accept the dominant culture (Freire, 2000; González et al., 2005).

An alternative model of education that challenges the banking model is one where students are co-creators of learning. Student differences in culture, practice, and experiences are benefits to learning (Freire, 2000; Grill, 2010). Students learn with, not from, the instructor, exchanging ideas, and building consensus (Grill, 2010). Learning is a cyclical process (Grill, 2010). This method of learning demonstrates value to individuals (Freire, 2000; Grill, 2010). It moves all participants, students and teachers, forward in understanding and valuing others' differences (Elias, 1994; Freire, 2000). Critical pedagogy promotes power balance in action between instructor and learner. (Fraser, 1997). Learning is a shared experience where both teachers and students exchange ideas and think critically to arrive at a deeper understanding (Shyman, 2011).

Proponents of critical pedagogy support the concept of teachers demonstrating respect towards students and bridging the cultural distance between instructor and learner (Flory & Wylie, 2019; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999; Roberts, 2003). Traditional approaches to instruction negatively impact marginalized students (Grill, 2010; Miranda & Cherng, 2018). Within a school environment that demonstrates value and respect for culture, students can feel safe to take risks and participate in the dialogue for learning (Aasebo et al., 2017). Persons of authority need to remove the expectations of individuals to conform to dominant cultural views and positions (Flory & Wylie, 2019). Oppressive, majority-dominated instructional approaches are destructive to authentic learning and growth (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 2000; González et al., 2005). Critical pedagogy purposely works to challenge and undo effects of the oppressive power struggle by promoting creative and supportive learning (Elias, 1994, Mayo, 1993).

## **Culturally Responsive Leadership**

District leaders need to support teachers' reflection and refinement of their instructional approaches to be more inclusive of the cultural factors of their students. Culturally responsive leadership is action from leaders who move an organization to one that promotes and values a multitude of diverse perspectives within the learning process (Khalifa et al., 2016). Educational leaders must consider ways to support staff's development of culturally relevant pedagogy practices within the classroom to foster a supportive learning environment (Aasebo et al., 2017; Grill, 2010; Miranda & Cherng, 2018). A district leader needs to ensure academic success of all students (Johnson, 2006; Viloría, 2019). The leader must ensure incorporation of student and local history, values, and culture into lesson design (Johnson, 2006; Viloría, 2019). Additionally, the district leader needs to advocate for social and political reform ensuring all students gain the benefit of the school experience (Johnson, 2006; Viloría, 2019). Culturally responsive leadership fosters awareness and movement towards greater cultural awareness and the balance of power in the classroom between teachers and students (Morrison et al., 2008). School leaders must support the teachers' development of shared power for control of the learning experience with students (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Leaders must be willing to take risks and allow others to do the same for the advancement of change which includes developing culturally responsive pedagogy applications in the classroom (Khalifa et al., 2016).

A district leader demonstrating culturally responsive leadership will ensure all students' academic success (Khalifa, 2020). The leader will see all students as capable of learning and achieving. The leader holds high expectations for all students to

academically succeed. The leader ensures teachers challenge students in the learning and that focus is on meeting all students' needs in the classroom (Khalifa, 2020). The district leader must ensure teachers implement instructional practices that promote incorporation of cultural values. Culturally responsive pedagogy instructional approaches delivered by teachers are not sustainable unless supported by the educational leader of the school (Khalifa et al., 2016). Leaders fostering staff development of these approaches will demonstrate value for the experiences and perspectives of the learner, as opposed to viewing the learner's experiences as deficits (Freire, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Moll et al., 1992).

The district leader must ensure incorporation of the students' history, values, and culture into the classroom learning environment. Through the leader's support teachers must ensure the content is presented to students in a meaningful way that supports students' connection to the content (Viloria, 2019). District leaders need to support teachers' identification of students' culture, values, and experiences to purposefully bring those experiences into the learning (Khalifa, 2020). By promoting this cultural connection with staff, school leaders support students' learning and mastery of the content as the students connect the material to meaning in their personal life (Khalifa, 2020).

Culturally relevant leadership advocates for social and political reform. The leader develops the school into a community-centered entity through engagement of community stakeholders within school decision-making processes (Khalifa, 2020). The school welcomes parents' and community members' involvement in the schools' operations (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). The leader sees these members' culture and the

school's neighborhood as resources (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). Leaders will encourage parents to come into the school and classrooms to share their experiences so the content becomes more meaningful for the students resulting in authentic learning (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). The district leader has reach into the community beyond what a classroom teacher may have (Khalifa, 2020). The leader needs to use the local community connects to further bridge the school with the community they serve.

A culturally proficient leader will recognize the mismatch of culture between students and teachers. The leader will actively work to find ways for students and families to share their culture and experiences with teachers (Khalifa, 2020). Leaders will then encourage and support teachers to incorporate the culture and experiences into the learning process (Khalifa, 2020). Additionally, the leader will ensure staff are developing reflection and openness for learning about their students' personal life experiences, cultures, and values (Khalifa, 2020). Through ongoing and consistent professional development leaders can change teachers' instructional approaches to be more culturally relevant. The leader must ensure a constant and consistent message of aligning curriculum and instruction to the experiences, history, languages, and traditions of marginalized students.

The leader's purposeful and consistent promotion of student culture and experiences will move the teaching staff towards a more culturally relevant pedagogy within the classroom (Khalifa, 2020). Even without such a leader there may exist teachers approaching learning from a culturally relevant perspective. Those teachers' success may be limited because of the leaders' failure to imbed culturally relevant approaches within the complete school district (Khalifa, 2020). Teachers' effectiveness

with culturally relevant pedagogy is depended upon support from the district leader (Khalifa, 2020).

### **Uniformity of Theory**

Culturally relevant pedagogy and critical pedagogy have a commonality concerning teachers' approach and lesson delivery. Both pedagogies have a strong emphasis on the teacher-student relationship. While critical pedagogy emphasizes the need for students to seek power control, both pedagogies address teachers' need to be aware of who their students are concerning culture and experiences, strengths, and values (Freire, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Leaders can use this knowledge to support teachers' design of personalized learning that will increase student engagement and understanding of the content (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, Morrison et al., 2008). Through effective student engagement, mastery and retention of content will occur (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

District leaders must support teachers' development of a classroom environment where students' culture is valued and seen as a benefit to learning. Teachers must be discouraged from expecting students to reject their home/community culture. Encouraged by school leaders, teachers need to see that students connect their experiences and values to the learning occurring in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Morrison et al., 2008; Zipin, 2009). Leaders must encourage teachers to teach beyond a test by way of authentic and engaging learning (Gay, 2002). School leaders need to ensure both students and teachers share in the learning process resulting in both growing and developing a deeper appreciation for the content and each other.



## **Review of Literature on English Learners**

Educational equity must be a focus for all school leaders striving to meet the unique needs of all students (Auslander, 2018). Students identified as EL present unique needs and equity issues within the school (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018). Federal and state policy outlines detailed considerations school leaders must make when meeting the learning needs of students identified as EL (Dixon, 2018). Policy and legislation have also implemented limits, or restrictions, upon school leaders to provide equitable school services (Moran, 2005). The policy sets the framework for school leaders to meet the diverse needs of students identified as EL (Dixon, 2018).

### **Educational Equity – English Learner Policy**

Through the action of the Supreme Court, schools need to deliver services for language development and provide such services concurrent with content instruction (Crawford, 1996; Kim & Winter, 2017). The court determined that schools must provide students with meaningful access and benefits to education (Crawford, 1996; Sugarman & Widess, 1974). Failing to address the language development needs of EL violates their rights (Baker & de Kanter, 1983). This judicial influence on public policy leads to increased opportunities for students identified as EL across the United States (Kim & Winter, 2017; Sugarman & Widess, 1974).

Indicators of discrimination and inequitable treatment against immigrants were evident in the public policy early in United States history. In 1882, the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act limited additional immigration of Chinese workers and barred current residents from obtaining U. S. citizenship (Zong & Betalova, 2017). General anti-Chinese public attitudes, specifically pressures from labor unions whose members found

the Chinese workers a threat to economic prosperity, were the catalyst for this policy's development (Zong & Betalova, 2017). Sixty years later the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed, but Chinese immigration was still limited due to other restrictions placed on non-European immigration in the 1920s (Zong & Betalova, 2017). Additional discrimination existed for Chinese-Americans in California. The California Constitution of 1879 explicitly excluded "natives of China" from voting and prohibited the employment of Chinese persons by state and local governments (Sugarman & Widess, 1974).

Discriminatory practices extended with the establishment of an English-literacy voting requirement by the California legislature (Zong & Batalova, 2017). Efforts to exclude American-born children of Chinese immigration persisted. As late as 1947, state legislation authorized the establishment of separate but equal schools for children of Asian lineage (Sugarman & Widess, 1974). Teachers in these schools instructed in the native language and did not teach English language instruction.

The first federal case to challenge the concept of separate but equal is the *Mendez v. Westminster School District* (1947), decided by the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals. This case focused on the practice of California schools denying students of Mexican and Latin descent enrollment into the public school that they were otherwise eligible to attend (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1947). The practice of California schools segregating students of Indian, Chinese, Japanese, or Mongolian parentage extended to include students of Mexican and Latinx descent (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1947). The practice of segregating minority groups was a violation of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment of the constitution in *Mendez v. Westminster School District*, (1947). Students were not provided the services and supports needed to develop English.

Instruction delivered only in Chinese met the students' academic needs yet failed to promote students' social inclusion in broader society (Zong & Betalova, 2017). The key ruling of the Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), determined that state required or sanctioned separate educational facilities are inherently unequal; thus, separate public schools are unconstitutional (Vergon, 1994). San Francisco Unified School District would integrate the students of Chinese ancestry into the general school system, consistent with an earlier ruling in *Mendez v. Westminster School District* (1947) involving the segregation of Hispanic students.

The Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 caused a significant change in public school access; however, it did not remove the San Francisco Unified School District's "English-only" policy (Vergon, 1994). So while segregated schools delivering instruction in Chinese only failed to provide students services to develop English comprehension, enrolling them in English-only schools failed to meet students' language development needs. The district provided instruction only in English regardless of the students' ability to understand the language (Zong & Betalova, 2017). This resulted in students not receiving meaningful educational services. Increased placement of these students into remedial or special education courses occurred (Zong & Betalova, 2017). Due to inadequate educational provisions, increased dropout rates occurred for EL students (Zong & Betalova, 2017).

San Francisco Unified School District held firm to the English-only policy for instruction due to requirements set by the state laws of California (Zong & Betalova, 2017). Other parts of the country, however, approached the issue of serving students identified as EL differently. In 1963, Florida's Dade County School system instituted the

first large-scale bilingual program (Kim & Winter, 2016). With a large number of Cuban refugees settled in Florida, the state and federal governments financially supported Dade County to provide specialized language instruction (Everett-Haynes, 2008). Known as the Coral Way initiative, students learned in both Spanish and English regardless of their dominant language upon entering school (Everett-Haynes, 2008). All students, regardless of home language background, benefited and became bilingual and bicultural (Everett-Haynes, 2008).

In 1964 Congress enacted the Civil Rights Act, which Title VI of the Act (42 USC, 2000), specifically prohibits racial and national origin discrimination in all federally funded programs. As a result of this Act, minority students are entitled to the same access as non-minority students to federally funded programming. Minority groups included the nation of origin or language minority students. As a result of this Act school district leaders must ensure equitable access to programming for all students.

Congress would extend the rights of language of minority students through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1968. Included in this Act, Title VII, known as the Bilingual Education Act, established rights for limited English-speaking students in public schools and allocated financial assistance for bilingual programming (Everett-Haynes, 2008). This Act recognized the needs of schools to deliver content in a language that the student can understand while concurrently addressing the student's need to develop English proficiency. District leaders must ensure programming and resources are committed to meeting students' language development and academic needs.

### ***Cases That Promote English Learners Services***

*Lau v. Nichols* (1974) was a class action suit claiming that the San Francisco Unified School District denied more than 1,800 Chinese-American students an equal education because the district failed to meet students' language needs. Supported by the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund, the plaintiffs in the case argued that the schools these students were required to attend did not meet the educational needs of the students learning English (*Lau v. Nichols*, 1974). Therefore, the school denied them the opportunity for equal educational access compared to their English-speaking classmates (Sugarman & Widess, 1974). Chinese-American students attended a classroom where the teacher spoke only English and did not have training in how to communicate with children identified as EL (Sugarman & Widess, 1974). As a result, the EL students' participation in the school's educational program was nonexistent (*Lau v. Nichols*, 1974).

The Ninth Circuit found the plaintiffs' argument in the *Lau v. Nichols* case ungrounded. The court concluded that because of the district's uniform policy of English-only instructional delivery, the school was not discriminating against any individuals (Thomas, 2017). The Ninth Circuit considered the demand for equal protection satisfied through equal access. The Court of Appeals reasoned that all students enter school with different advantages and disadvantages and since the schools did not cause the advantages or disadvantages the district did not have an obligation to address those differences (Moran, 2005). The court did not feel the school district had the obligation to change service provisions due to causes outside of the school district control (Sugarman & Widess, 1974).

The Ninth Circuit extended its defense of the English-only policy by noting that, because the school did not affirmably cause the hardship, the school did not have to account for the consequences of the hardship (Sugarman & Widess, 1974). The school was treating all students the same, so it was not acting in a discriminatory fashion (Sugarman & Widess, 1974).

The case escalated to the Supreme Court, contending that the lower courts did not give proper consideration of the discriminatory effects of the English-only policy (Sugarman & Widess, 1974). Acknowledging that the students do not speak English leads to the conclusion that the students are not able to access the educational services offered to other students (Sugarman & Widess, 1974). While physically present, the EL students were not able to beneficially access learning (Sugarman & Widess, 1974). The school was obligated to provide English instruction in addition to instruction of content standards provided to all students (Sugarman & Widess, 1974). This is addressed in the Supreme Court's ruling in *Lau v. Nichols* (1974):

Where inability to speak and understand the English language excludes national origin-minority group of children from effective participation in the educational program offered by a school district, the district must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency to open its instructional program to these students (p. 568).

By not recognizing the students' primary language and instructing only in a language unfamiliar for the students prevents the students from fully accessing the content. Schools must actively address the language needs of the students so content access is available to students.

The Supreme Court, finding in favor of Lau, did not base its decision on a violation of the Constitution but found a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (Lau v. Nichols, 1974). The Court concluded that the school's policy of English-only instruction excluded children from the education process based on language, and language is a proxy for race, ethnicity, or national origin (Crawford, 1996; Moran, 2005). School districts had to provide special language instruction so non-native speakers could meaningfully benefit from school services (Crawford, 1996). English-only instruction policy meant that schools were obligated to provide supports to the EL students to have access to the curriculum (Crawford, 1996).

This case differs from previous Supreme Court decisions in that it directly impacted school services for minority students (Kim & Winter 2017). In *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) the ruling, while significant and groundbreaking, only ensured equal access for minority students. "It opened the school doors for minority students to receive the same educational services as the majority, white, peers" (Sugarman & Widess, 1974, p. 162). In *Lau v. Nichols*, the Court determined that schools must provide services and supports to national origins minority students to ensure equitable learning within the school setting (Sugarman & Widess, 1974). Schools must actively meet the diverse needs of these students for students to have equitable access to instruction and learning (Moran, 2005).

This Court decision did not provide additional funding or specific guidance as to how districts were to provide language instruction for EL students (Moran, 2005). It recognized the value of equitable education and the district's obligation to provide

services and supports to students learning English. Passage of the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (1974) confirmed the Lau decision.

In 1974 President Nixon signed into law the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (1974). This Federal law prohibits educational discrimination for students and staff, requiring schools to take action to overcome barriers to students' access for equal participation. Schools now must ensure all barriers are addressed to remove limitations on linguistically minoritized students' access to equal education, including limitations previously determined to be outside the control of the district (20 USC Sec. 1701-1758, 1974). Specifically, section 1703(f) of the EEOA obligates schools to take action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation. District leaders are tasked with ensuring programming and services are in place to meet the unique needs of EL students enrolled.

### ***Legislation That Defines English Learners Services***

Not all states and schools adopted bilingual approaches resulting in additional court action. In *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981) the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit court established a legal standard for the district's obligation to provide appropriate service supports for limited English proficient students. District programs for limited English proficient students must be research-based and provided sufficient resources to expect a positive impact on students' language development (*Castañeda v. Pickard*, 1981). The Court decision does not prescribe the provision of services methodology (*Castañeda v. Pickard*, 1981). School districts, based on valid and reliable identification of EL students, must provide appropriate language assistance services (Zong & Batalova, 2017). These services can vary depending on factors such as the degree of students' English proficiency and



projected timeline of learning a language (Ohio Department of Education, 2019; Zong & Batalova, 2017). Students with a strong foundation in a foreign language that uses a similar alphabet system to English (Spanish or German) are typically anticipated to learn English at a greater rate than those students with a native language significantly different than English (Chinese or Arabic) (Thompson, 2017; Zong & Batalova, 2017). This legislature confirmed schools' obligation to serve but provided the flexibility of those services to be something less than bilingual instruction potentially limiting the program's effectiveness to support ELs. District leaders must determine the most appropriate service model for the EL student population enrolled in their schools.

After *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981) the Office of Civil Rights provided districts with further guidance regarding services for students identified as English Learners (U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education, 2020). District leaders must evaluate programming to ensure it is research-based and providing adequate annual growth for students' language development (Moran, 2005; U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education, 2020). District leaders must ensure proper implementation of self-selected language programming, ensuring they provide staff with adequate training, support, and resources to meet the needs of the identified students (Moran, 2005; U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Exit criteria must be determined, and students exited from services monitored for ongoing language development and academic achievement success (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a; Moran, 2005). Districts have struggled with providing language development services while fully integrating EL students into the general population (Moran, 2005). The guidance from the Office of Civil Rights intended to support the delivery of language

development services but allowed broad interpretations resulting in variation of service among public school districts (Moran, 2005).

According to Cardenas (1976), the Lau ruling still permits segregation on a limited scale for schools to provide students language development services that would not be possible to provide in the general education classroom. This perspective is different from previous interpretations of the Lau decision (Cardenas, 1976). It recognizes that for a limited time and a targeted purpose, segregating students identified as EL from their monolingual peers is permissible (Cardenas, 1976). Exclusion is justified when necessary to provide the foundational skills needed to advance to their potential when included with the general population (Cardenas, 1976). English learner advocates continue to advocate for schools to provide high-quality instruction for English development, concurrent with high-quality content instruction (Crawford, 1996).

The Supreme Court in the *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) case did not address adequate State and Federal funding for EL services and programs. In the Supreme Court case of *Flores v. Arizona* (2009) the plaintiffs argued that the State of Arizona did not provide adequate funding for local districts to carry out effective language services. The lack of adequate funding limited services for EL students and failed to provide meaningful benefit in school programming (Flores, 2009). The case contends that the Nogales Unified School District failed to provide adequate services for English-learners due in part to receiving inadequate funding from the state (Flores, 2009). The Supreme Court ruled that state funding was inadequate but did not mandate how the state should correct the funding shortcomings (Flores, 2009).

In an attempt to weaken the plaintiff's argument before this case reached the Supreme Court, the voters of Arizona passed Proposition 203 (State of Arizona, 2000). Proposition 203 minimized the districts' obligation to provide bilingual education in the state of Arizona (State of Arizona, 2000). By eliminating bilingual instruction, students received English-language instruction separated from their peers in required four-hour daily blocks (Gregg, 2008). This was an example of legislative action that further reduced the original intent of the Lau ruling for EL students (Gregg, 2008).

Proposition 227 (State of California, 1998) is another example of state legislature working to minimize EL services for students. Students were to receive intensive instruction in English, separated from monolingual peers (State of California, 1998). After this instruction, the students could then enter the mainstream system with a linguistic foundation to access academic content (Gardner, 2017). The law also reduced the length of time students were to receive these services, limiting to one year or less of pull out language instruction (State of California, 1998). This countered the ruling in Lau that students receive both English language instruction and instruction in the same rigorous content standards all students receive (State of California, 1998). In 1998, Proposition 58 repealed Proposition 227 restoring the requirement that public schools ensure students receive adequate English language instruction (Senate Bill 1174, 2016; State of California, 1998). Proposition 58 (Senate Bill 1174, 2016) allowed students to learn English through multiple programs, not just English-only classes and removed the one-year limitation for access to services.

These legislative actions since the Lau case continue to shape and modify the instruction and services schools must provide students identified as EL. The rights of EL

students continue to evolve through each court decision and legislative response. District leaders must understand their obligations to the EL student population and ensure adequate programming and resources are provided to expect reasonable growth of these students in both language development and academic content.

### ***Legislation and Policy in Action***

The rights of EL students in the United States have increased over time (U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education, 2020). The growth of these rights, provisions, and safeguards run a parallel timeline with increases for other student groups (Thomas, 2017). Many of these rights have occurred through judicial decisions from groups that argued from a position that promote inequitable laws for students (Thomas, 2017).

Through judicial action, advocates fostered support for equity rights, not just to access, but meaningful participation in the educational system (Lau, 1974; Sugarman & Widess, 1974). Students all enter the school system with different readiness and experiences (Deville & Chalhoub-Deville, 2011). The Courts recognized these differences and ruled in ways that placed responsibility for reducing those deficits directly on the schools and district leaders (Thomas, 2017).

With equal physical access to public education, the Lau case challenged the idea that access alone was enough (Lau, 1974; Sugarman & Widess, 1974; Thomas, 2017). Schools must provide supports to the students, so students have meaningful benefits when accessing those services (Lau, 1974; Thomas, 2017). Schools must provide instruction to the students for language development (Lau, 1974; Sugarman, & Widess, 1974; Thomas, 2017). The ruling from the *Lau v. Nichols* case supported the use of

bilingual instruction so was interpreted to mean that bilingual instruction was required. Later rulings clarified that bilingual instruction was not required. (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). District leaders determine the appropriate language support for EL students (Gregg, 2008).

As a result of the Court ruling in the *Lau v. Nichols* case, school districts needed to reassess their supports for all students concerning language development for meaningful and beneficial access to the curriculum (Crawford, 1996). Addressing English language development was not an immediate result since the Court did not prescribe action district leaders needed to take to address the needs of EL students (Crawford, 1996). To help guide district leaders' responses to this new responsibility, the U.S. Department of Education adopted the Lau Remedies policy guidelines (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). In understanding these guidelines, it is important to acknowledge that these were the minimum expectations of what resulted from the *Lau v. Nichols* case (Baker & de Kanter, 1983). Secondly, it is important to recognize that these changes required major efforts and allocation of resources including time, staff, funds, space, and curriculum (Cardenas, 1976).

It was not the intention, or expectation, of the Lau Remedies to have an immediate overnight result (Bake & de Kanter, 1983; Cardenas, 1976). Lau Remedies provided districts the outline to develop comprehensive programming, building over time, to support EL students' development of the English language (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). The Lau Remedies include:

Although adherence to a narrow legal interpretation of *Lau v. Nichols* has led to the formulation of what appears to be a complex conglomerate of requirements, the remedies simply require:

- a) that schools systematically and validly ascertain which of their clients are linguistically different;
- b) that schools systematically and validly ascertain the language characteristics of their clients;
- c) that schools systematically ascertain the achievement characteristics of their clients; and
- d) that schools match an instructional program to the characteristics as ascertained. (Cardenas, 1976, p. 3)

These guidelines have led to districts improving services for EL students (Moran, 2005). Because the remedies are limited to the minimalist interpretation of the law, school districts and state departments of education have varied their implementation of these remedies for meeting the language development needs of students (Moran, 2005). While bilingual education is one approach, it is not a required approach (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Other methods, such as English as a second language classes, or other research-based approaches, can meet student language development needs (Crawford, 1996).

Some states extended the interpretation of the Court's decision and mandated bilingual language instruction (Menken, 2013). This resulted in district leaders adopting programming and services to foster bilingual delivery of content (Thomas, 2017). In the 2012-2013 school year, 39 states and the District of Columbia reported the use of Title III

funding for dual language programming. (Escalante, 2015). The majority of states provide the local school districts autonomy for much of the instructional support and delivery decisions (Escalante, 2015). By only framing schools' obligations and not mandating specific approaches, schools can provide services and supports that best align with the specific needs of the students enrolled (Moran, 2015). The population of students identified as EL has great diversity and varying needs (Escalante, 2015). Providing the supports for EL students to develop their English proficiency while still receiving content instruction in their native language is the cornerstone of the *Lau v. Nichols* decision (Crawford, 1996).

School leaders must ensure programs and services are addressing the needs of students, including English development. With guidance from the Lau Remedies, as a result of the *Lau v. Nichols* Supreme Court case, districts have obligations for students who are non-native speakers (Lau, 1974). These services ensure equity to the students providing them the opportunities for success in school and beyond.

### **Accountability Assessment**

American schools are serving a more diverse student body than at any time previously in the history of American public education (Duncan, 2018). This growing diversity is something to celebrate as the schoolhouse is a starting place for Americans to learn of other cultures and develop an appreciation for differences (Grill, 2010). The strengths diversity brings to any setting supports reasons to celebrate the changing American school demographics.

While the student body is becoming more and more diverse, the demand for school accountability is also growing from politicians and the general public. Through

public policy, school accountability is growing more complex, focusing on assessment accountability as the cornerstone (Miranda & Cherng, 2018). This focus is driving teachers to scale back personalized learning to increase time spent on test preparation activities and strategies (Hutchings, 2017). These approaches get short-term gains in school assessment accountability (Miranda & Cherng, 2018). What policymakers do not consider when deciding on school accountability measures is the impact of assessment bias and minority subgroup performance on these assessments (Miranda & Cherng, 2018). Public schools have served a generation of students with accountability assessment as the primary focus of content selection and lesson design (Miranda & Cherng, 2018).

### ***Origins and Current Implications of Education Policy***

In 2002, the No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act passed, placing a strong emphasis on school and district accountability through student assessment (Grinell & Rabin, 2013). Student achievement assessment was to serve as the method to assist educators in identifying gaps in subgroups of students who were not achieving as expected (Haertel, 2013). This identification would presumably provide district leaders the information to improve instruction and lead to improved results (Haertel, 2013).

What developed from this initiative is the measurement and tracking of student achievement performance as the primary method for determining school accountability (Suzuki et al., 2001). This focus has led teachers to forgo personalizing the learning experience to give way to simplification of content, covering topics broadly, in hopes of student success on these single-event accountability assessment measures (Haertel,



2013). This approach to instruction is in stark contrast to the theory of culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally responsive leadership.

NCLB Act puts measures in place to expose opportunity gaps among underserved student populations (Gorski, 2017; Turner et al., 2015). While this Act may have helped identify assessment performance gaps, it failed to complete the circle in supporting district leaders with ways to properly address the gaps and close the opportunity gap for all learners (Haertel, 2013). Proponents for achievement testing point to the need for determining student and school performance on relevant content areas (Oakes et al., 2000). On the surface, this motivator sounds admirable until one realizes that knowing which students and schools need support has not led to the effective delivery of support (Pearson et al., 2014). Identification of districts that did not perform to the standards laid out by NCLB simply encourages the development of a culture of competition in education (Haertel, 2013).

The promotion of high-stakes assessment and accountability measures has driven many educators to focus on test preparation and strategies for incremental improvement of performance on these assessments (Rojas & Avitia, 2017). Educational researchers have determined the assessment-focused approach to education has harmed both teachers and students (Dixon, 2018; Turner et al., 2015). Watered-down curriculum and disengagement from personalized authentic learning experiences are a result of assessment-driven lesson development (Turner et al., 2015). The teacher is not recognizing the culture and community experiences of the students which can lead to meaningful learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995a)

In response to feedback from educators, families, and school advocates, in 2010, the Obama administration set out to create a better education policy that focused more on student outcomes towards college and career success (A New Education Law, 2019). President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA] in December 2015 (A New Education Law, 2019). While ESSA did place more focus on student outcomes relating to graduation and college and career readiness, it maintained the high-stakes accountability assessment of students (Turner et al., 2015).

### ***Impact on Student Subgroups***

In response to the gap-closing score criteria set by ESSA, Ohio developed a process using statistical analysis of subgroups participating in accountability measurements (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). This mathematical processing is an effort to identify the gap-closing score impact schools are achieving relating to accountability measures.

The Ohio Department of Education defines annual measurable objectives as “academic performance of specific groups of students, such as racial and demographic groups” (Ohio Department of Education, 2019, p. 4). Each subgroup of a school or district compares the expected performance of that subgroup set by the State with the local performance (Ohio Department of Education, 2019).

The gap-closing score measures the subgroup performance in the four domains of English-Language Arts, mathematics, graduation rate, and English language proficiency (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). The student subgroups consist of all students, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, non-Hispanic, Hispanic, Multiracial, White, non-Hispanic, Economically Disadvantaged, Students with

disabilities, and English Learners (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). A student may qualify for multiple subgroups which increases the assessment performance impact on gap-closing score calculations (Ohio Department of Education, 2019).

States responded to the Federal requirements set in ESEA for gap-closing score requirements as determined appropriate for individual state factors. Florida has reset annual measurable objective percentages to improve the appearance of gap-closing score efforts by the State's public school districts. Florida based its proficiency target on 2011-2012 school year assessment results (Bureau of Accountability Reporting, 2012). Each subsequent school year the target increases by a set calculation (Blaise, 2018). Factors of student learning experiences, personal experiences, and teacher readiness to instruct are not factors considered when setting these targets (Blaise, 2018). Students and schools that do not reach the target in one year are less likely to reach it in future years due to the incremental increase of the target for compliance with federal regulations (Blaise, 2018). As a result, Florida went back to the inception of the proficiency target and lowered the target to demonstrate improved performance in current years (Bureau of Accountability Reporting, 2012).

In 2015, the Ohio Department of Education set the varying cut scores for each subgroup based on past performance trends (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). The Ohio Department of Education did not provide statistical analysis for cut score development. One example is the gap-closing score expectation for English Learners on the English proficiency exam (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). This cut score was set at one or two points based on grade level and proficiency at initial enrollment into an Ohio school, to be detailed (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). State officials noted

that, according to research, language development supports may be needed for 5 to 7 years after initial enrollment into EL services, thus leading the Ohio Department of Education to create cut scores to align with broad research, not specific data from Ohio's EL student population (Driver & Powell, 2017).

Further analysis of Ohio's Annual Measurable Objectives, AMOs, confirms policy implementers' recognition of assessment bias yet lacks strategic planning to address the bias beyond setting different success indicator targets for given subgroups (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). Table 1 lists the target by subgroup for ELA, math, graduation, and English language proficiency, ELP, progress for school years 2018-2019, and 2025-2026 (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). For the *all students* subgroup the target is 100% for the 2025-2026 school year (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). In the same year, the race subgroups have different, lower targets (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). Even the subgroup of Asians, which has a higher target compared to all students in the 2018-2019 school year, has a lower target in 2025-2026 (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). The expectation for lower growth results in this lower target.

**Table 1***Target AMO's by Percentage*

Group	2018-2019 ELA %	2025-2026 ELA %	2018-2019 Math %	2025-2026 Math %	2018-2019 Grad Rate %	2025-2026 Grad Rate %	2018-2019 ELP Progress	2025-2026 ELP Progress
All Students	85.8	100.0	86.2	100.0	86.0	93.0	n/a	n/a
Economically Disadvantaged	72.4	83.8	72.7	84.0	75.7	85.7	n/a	n/a
Students with disabilities	59.6	76.3	60.5	76.8	73.8	84.6	n/a	n/a
English learners	67.5	80.9	71.8	83.4	61.2	77.2	54.0	75.0
Black	65.4	79.7	63.5	78.5	70.3	82.5	n/a	n/a
American Indian or Alaskan Native	79.8	88.1	78.1	87.1	79.9	88.2	n/a	n/a
Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	92.8	95.8	97.9	98.8	89.3	93.0	n/a	n/a
Hispanic or Latino	73.4	84.4	73.8	84.6	76.2	86.0	n/a	n/a
Multiracial	79.5	88.0	78.9	87.6	81.0	88.9	n/a	n/a
White	87.1	92.4	88.3	93.1	89.1	93.0	n/a	n/a

*Note:* Data source from Ohio Department of Education, 2018c.

The State recognizes that assessment bias does impact a student's ability to demonstrate proficiency on the mandated accountability assessments. Recognizing that the Federal law requires states to measure and rate school performance, at least in part by race subgroups, states should consider alternatives to achieving this objective with minimal dependence on assessment data knowing biased exists for the very groups of concern.

***Assessment Bias***

There is abundant research to support the concept of assessment bias in almost all mainstream assessment instruments (Grinell & Rabin, 2013; Hutchings, 2017; Warlop, 2016). The assessments are norm-referenced with a subset of the total population that typically best aligns with White, middle-class, and monolingual English-speaking individuals (Shohamy, 2011; Warlop, 2016). With the growing diversity in the United States this norm grouping does not accurately reflect the student enrollment demographics, resulting in negative, and skewed, data for racially minoritized students (Zwick et al., 2014). Due to the bias in these instruments, standardized assessment

instruments inappropriately test approximately five million students (Gapaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998).

As public school student enrollment increases past the 50 million student mark, student demographics continue to become more diverse (Duncan, 2018). From 2000 to 2015, students identified as White decreased from 61% to 49%; students identified as Black decreased from 17% to 15%. In the period, students identified as Hispanic increased from 16% to 26%, and students identified as Asian/Pacific Islander increased from 4% to 5% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). This growing diverse student body forces educators to consider the cultural factors present in student learning (Gay, 2002). District leaders need to find ways to support teachers' connect with their students to support making the content standard topics relevant to all learners, not just those from the dominant culture (Freire, 2000; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). High-stakes assessments have implications for critical decisions so it is important to recognize Ohio's culturally diverse student population and district leaders should challenge test developers to mitigate test bias when possible (Suzuki et al., 2001). By having a strong linkage of assessments to educational decision making, district leaders must consider the impact of biased assessments and how to counter negative impacts.

Assessment researchers have noted the impact of cultural bias on an individual's performance score (Auslander, 2018; Blaise, 2018). One approach to address this cultural difference is to develop a *correction factor* for the final score of the student (Mitchell, 1937). For a Spanish-language-dominant child with cultural experiences different than the norm-referenced population, testing in English with a correlation factor may have a more accurate final score minimizing the cultural bias impact (Mitchell, 1937). In 1986,

the Justice Department challenged the practice of applying a correction factor for ethnically minoritized groups taking career or job-embedded assessments (Hartigan & Wigdor, 1989). The argument was this correction factor placed an unfair burden on white candidates participating in the same assessment (Hartigan & Wigdor, 1989). Recognition of assessment bias for racially minoritized students exists; the correction factor after the assessment was an attempt to address bias (Mitchell, 1937). This example is to recognize that assessment bias is a known existence and fixes outside of addressing the bias itself have been attempted. By not addressing the root causes of the bias within the assessment, skewed results for test-takers, not of the majority for which the assessment was norm-referenced against will persist (Dugan, 2012). Suzuki et al. (2001) said:

Minority individuals are often forced to compete on unequal terms with Euro-white, middle-class persons, giving the latter a marked advantage. It is not surprising, then, that scores on tests of all types are consistently lower for individuals who differ from the normative population. (p. 15)

School-decision makers need to continually be mindful of assessment bias (Mitchell, 1937). Assessment bias for ELs exists with the context that the student is unfamiliar with. When making decisions based on these assessments, consideration of bias impact must occur.

Students identified as EL need special consideration for assessment results and the context of their cultural environment as appropriate for educational and psychological services (Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998). These students, newest to the American school system structure and processes, may underperform due to the district's inability to provide appropriate instruction, connect students' previous school experience

to the American school instruction, and the appropriateness of assessment methods (Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998).

While research strongly supports the concept and impact of assessment bias, policy makers and implementers have resisted including this component into decision making with regards to school accountability (Koretz, 2015). Policy tends to favor a mathematically measurable accountability system that does not credit or value a diverse student population.

### ***Language Proficiency Assessment***

Evaluation of student English language development is uniform across all schools in Ohio. All Ohio students identified as EL must participate in the Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment, [OELPA]. There are three critical understandings about the OELPA administration and design that all school leaders need to understand.

First, school leaders in Ohio must understand the Department of Education's accountability standards for EL students' language development (Ohio Department of Education, 2018a). The Ohio Department of Education has accountability standards identifying English learners as a specific subgroup (Ohio Department of Education, 2018a). Second, performance on language development measures contributes to districts' overall and the school achievement gap-closing score (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). Third, the evaluation of students includes the four areas of language acquisition originally identified in the Lau case as reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Lau, 1974; Ohio Department of Education, 2019). Students score on a 5-point scale for each domain and must attain a score of 4 or 5 in each area to meet the state's exit criteria of English Learners (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Without progress, district



leaders must reflect on the support offerings and consider ways to improve services to drive improved outcomes.

Annual participation is required for students until the student earns a composite score demonstrating proficiency, or graduates (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Before ESSA, Ohio was part of a multi-state consortium utilizing the English Language Development Assessment (Bunch, 2011). With the implementation of ESSA, Ohio changed assessment instruments to one developed by the English Language Proficiency Assessment for 21<sup>st</sup> Century [ELPA21] consortium of seven states: Washington, Oregon, Nebraska, Iowa, Arkansas, Ohio, and West Virginia (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Ohio titled this assessment Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment [OELPA] which is the same ELPA21 test administered by the other ELPA states (OELPA FAQ 2458, 2018). WIDA English Language Development Standards is a second major ELP multistate consortium that developed ELP standards, in which Ohio is not a member (Escalante, 2015).

As one example of a language development assessment, Spanish-English language-specific assessment, Spanish-English Language Proficiency Scales, SELPS, exists. SELPS has supporting research that it is valid for determining students' language proficiency (Smyk et al., 2013). Through this assessment, students demonstrate mastery of language skills (Smyk et al.). With this assessment specific to Spanish only it cannot serve as a standardized state assessment. SELPS is assessing for Spanish-English bilingual proficiency (Smyk et al., 2013). State accountability assessments for language development are measuring only for English proficiency (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c).

The OELPA has six grade bands, Kindergarten, grade 1, grades 2-3, grades 4-5, grades 6-8, and grades 9-12 (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Instruments developed in other states have similar grade band development to provide leveled assessment, based on age and grade-appropriate skills (Bunch, 2011). These grade bands, while necessary for appropriate assessment of students, appear to create a reclassification window during the upper elementary grades (Thompson, 2017). Students who do not reach a proficient level of 4 or 5 scoring before entry into high school become less likely to ever do so, due to the greater depth and volume of academic content and the increased difficulty of the grades 9-12 band for the OELPA (Thompson, 2017).

Another impact of grade bands for the OELPA is vertical scaling (Kenyon et al., 2011). Vertical scaling ensures that the grade bands before and after a given grade band are in alignment. For a language proficiency assessment, vertical scaling can be difficult to achieve due to the standards associated with language development (Kenyon et al., 2011). The effect of weak vertical scaling can result in student performance becoming stagnant or appear to decrease (Kenyon et al., 2011). This negative student performance is not because of the student's abilities, but because of the student advancing to a new grade band and the instrument increasing in difficulty greater than appropriate (Kenyon et al., 2011). In the initial grade level of a grade band, student performance may dip compared to the previous year in the final year of the lower grade band (Kenyon et al., 2011).

With the assessment of students' language development through OELPA, there is no consideration if denied access to formal education previously occurred for the student (Kenyon et al., 2011). Lack of previous formal education, due to the age of the student

(not yet school age), or life events (refugee with breaks in formal schooling), may result in the student taking longer to develop academic English (Bigelow & Schwarz, 2010, Vinogradov & Bigelow, 2010).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act does allow for the consideration of the student’s English proficiency level and grade level when first identified as an EL for annual improvement (Deville & Chalhoub-Deville, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). With the administration of OELPA, the student-level target for annual improvement target is determined by the student’s grade level and English proficiency when first identified (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). As detailed in Table 2, students in grade 8 and lower who initially obtain a composite score of 11 or fewer points on the OELPA receive an annual improvement target of 2 points per year. Similarly, students in high school (grades 9 -12) with an initial composite score of 7 or fewer points on the OELPA receive an annual improvement target of 2 points. Students in grades 8 and below who earn 12 or more points and students in high school who earn 8 or more points receive an annual improvement target of 1 point (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a).

**Table 2**

*ELP Improvement Measure*

Grade Band	Initial Composite Score	Annual Improvement Target
PK-8 <sup>th</sup>	11 points or less	2 points
	12 points or more	1 point
9 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup>	7 points or less	2 points
	8 points or more	1 point

*Note:* Data source from: Ohio Department of Education, 2018b

The annual target does not change once set until a student graduates or exits EL status based on earning a proficient rating (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). District reported gap-closing score is the compilation of individual students met or not met growth target (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). To achieve a proficient rating the student must obtain a comprehensive score of 16 or greater with a minimum score of 4 in each of the four domains. (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a).

### **Compliance to Authentic Learning**

Through policy implementation and leadership qualities, educational leaders must develop approaches for effectively meeting the needs of students identified as English Learners (Auslander, 2018). School leaders must understand their obligation for services to EL students. Districts must appropriately identify services and evaluate programming for students meeting the EL qualifications (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). Ohio requires districts to conduct a home language survey for all students enrolling in the district (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). Districts must screen students with responses on the home language survey that indicate possible EL eligibility (Ohio Department of Education, 2019, 2020a).

The district must monitor student progress and make changes to the service if services are determined to be ineffective (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). Data sources for this monitoring are determined by the local district and typically include assessment performance on classroom and state assessments, attendance, participation, credit attainment, and grade advancement (Dickinson & Adelson, 2016). Student assessment and achievement data cannot be significantly different from those of monolingual peers (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). District leaders need to

deepen their understanding of the needs of the students they are serving (Freire, 2000; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). When progress is minimal, school leaders need to consider the reasons for stagnated progress (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c).

When determining appropriate services to support language development for EL students, school leaders must consider the implications of service delivery location (Menken, 2013). To follow the Lau ruling, schools must provide instruction for both language development and the same rigorous content standards all students receive (Lau v. Nichols, 1974). Some school leaders see these two obligations as separate entities of language development and content mastery. To pull the students out of the mainstream classroom for language instruction deprives them of equal access to instruction for the content standards (Gardner, 2017). Students in an English as a second language course may excel within the language-rich environment only to struggle when advancing to a mainstream classroom where content is a priority and language learning is not embedded (Gardner). School leaders with this perspective of language development or content need to adjust their perspective to one where content exposure drives language development.

A different approach to address young student language development and school readiness in an English-dominated classroom is to delay enrollment (Gottfried et al., 2016). Parents seeking to apply for early entrance must understand the career-long deficit they are imposing on their child (Gottfried et al.). Similar to English-speaking students, early entrance students identified as an EL risk underdevelopment of academic and social skills for effective engagement in the learning process (Gottfried et al.). A school readiness program focused on language development can have greater positive effects compared to traditional early entrance structure (Gottfried et al.).

Some district leaders feel that delivering language instruction within the general classroom limits the intensity of the language services, potentially leading to a prolonged need for services to address language development (Adamson et al., 2011). While EL students can receive instruction separated from their monolingual peers, school districts must utilize this delivery method to the least extent possible (Ohio Department of Education, 2015). Research indicates that advanced language proficiency can take a student four to seven years (Zong & Batalova, 2017). Recognition that language development is a process, school leaders cannot wait to deliver content until the student is English proficient, so they must provide both concurrently.

Implications of high-stakes testing kill authentic learning experiences for both teachers and students (Schlechty, 2009). The system based on a single test measurement of performance limits imagination and creativity for both the instructor and learner (Dixon, 2018; Schlechty, 2009). Instructional time dedicated to creative and engaging learning in a topic of interest cannot be afforded when the threat of a high-stakes assessment leading to retention or prevention of graduation are potential outcomes (Haertel, 2013). District leaders need to challenge and support teacher implementation of culturally responsive teaching (Khalifa, 2020). The district leader can demonstrate high expectation of all students succeeding in academic learning (Khalifa, 2020). The school leader needs to promote recognition of the students' culture and community experiences ensuring teachers incorporate students' values in the teaching and learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Through the district leaders' promotion of value of students' culture teachers will have support to approach instruction in a culturally responsive approach (Khalifa, 2020)

## **Application in the Field**

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the goal of staff should be to foster a classroom where learning is an exchange of ideas resulting in both teacher and learner sharing the power of knowledge and both grow as a result of the experience. (Freire, 2000). The banking model of education focuses on the teacher being the holder of knowledge and depositing information to the students (Freire, 2000). This approach is oppressive to students with different backgrounds and experiences (Freire, 2000). This system of education focuses on learning to perform on a test, not learning to improve one's self-development and advanced growth (Rhodes, 2013).

School leaders and teachers should strive for culturally relevant pedagogy practices (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Morrison et al., 2008). Teachers need to learn who their students are and their interests for incorporation into the learning (Gay, 2002; Moll et al., 1992). Once students' interests are identified, incorporation of students' interests into the learning process will lead to lasting success beyond what a single standardized assessment can measure (Ryan, 2006; Schlechty, 2009). School leaders must encourage the development of a learning environment where the teacher and students exchange knowledge and communally learn beyond the current state (Freire, 2000; Schlechty, 2009).

Schlechty Center for Innovative Learning promotes engaging instruction that addresses the individual and personal needs of students (Schlechty, 2009). This work largely rejects the current path many districts are on of chasing accountability and high stakes achievement assessment compliance set by state and federal regulators (Schlechty, 2009). "By ignoring local knowledge and culture, accountability testing systematically

devalues what many students bring to school and makes it difficult for teachers to design lessons that complement these attributes” (Ryan, 2006, p. 10). This statement has direct alignment with the work of the Schlechty Center, describing it as *knowing your who* (Schlechty, 2009). By promoting the value of knowing the students’ interests, experiences, and motivators, teachers can design lessons to tap into students’ specific experiences and values making learning engaging and meaningful to the learner (Moll et al., 1992; Schlechty, 2009).

### ***Instructional Approaches***

With an understanding of legislative requirements and State compliance obligations district leaders need to consider ways to approach the unique needs of EL students. District leaders need to recognize that no single approach will effectively meet the complex language and academic needs of EL students. District leaders must support teachers’ development of an approach to instruction that values student diversity, culture, and community as benefits to learning.

Student demographics in Ohio schools are changing and becoming more diverse (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). One way district leaders are responding to the changing student demographics is to improve staffs’ cultural proficiency, to deliver culturally responsive instructional approaches, and to foster a school climate that embraces student differences (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Morrison et al., 2008; Ryan, 2006; Schlechty, 2009). This embrace aims to build a community where all students can feel safe, valued, and appreciated (Ryan, 2006; Schlechty, 2009).

Colleges and universities are addressing the topic of culturally responsive instruction as part of their curriculum to prepare future teachers to be ready to meet the



needs of a diverse student population (Kelly, 2017). Improving teacher candidates' cultural competency using the Cultural Proficiency Continuum can improve new teachers' perceptions and responses. As an example, teachers' perception of the behavior of students of color, which is an important component for teachers-in-training (Kelly, 2017). Training for pre-service teachers in the area of student discipline has improved in recent years, but failure to recognize cultural differences can lead to disproportionate student discipline for racially minoritized students (Freire, 2000; Kelly, 2017). Kelly contends that to address disproportionate student discipline there must be a "focus on the relevance of cultural proficiency and its importance in developing effective classroom management and discipline" (2017, p. 54). Similarly, for ELs success of both content and language development teachers need to take a culturally competent perspective.

Teachers with a lack of cultural competency will perceive student behaviors and begin to anticipate future similar behaviors, which leads to overreaction and student discipline disproportionate to the behavior offense (Orosco & O'Connor, 2014). The lack of cultural competency and its impact on students identified as EL can stifle language development growth for the student (Gay, 2002). District leaders must support and encourage staff to foster and develop cultural proficiency as this will improve the learning experience for all students.

American and Canadian colleges and universities use the Test of English as a Foreign Language, TOEFL, to assess international students' language readiness to study in English-speaking schools (Scarinci & Howell, 2018). Scarinci and Howell (2018) studied a test group of students that included cultural development instruction for preparation to learn in an American school model and compared the test group's

performance on the TOEFL to a control group excluded from cultural development instruction. The results of the study found a statistically significant difference between the test group and the control group for students' improvement with TOEFL scoring (Scarinci & Howell). This demonstrates EL students' better preparedness for undergraduate studies when specifically taught how to develop cultural competency (Scarinci & Howell, 2018). Cultural development has a positive impact on undergraduate students' ability to develop language development (Scarinci & Howell). In K-12 schools teacher professional development should address ways teachers can support similar positive development of students' English language development (Scarinci & Howell).

In a study of the educational system in Mexico, researchers worked to identify critical characteristics of schools in Mexico that international students attended before enrolling in American schools (De Souza, 2013; McCloud, 2015). The difference in design, approach, and classroom community created barriers for learning within the American school for these newly enrolled students from Mexico (De Souza, 2013). De Souza (2013) suggested that it would benefit the students for American teachers to recognize the differences in Mexican school methodology. District leaders need to encourage and support their teachers' development in understanding of alternatives instructional approaches that their students may have previously experienced. American school teachers do not need to duplicate the strategies implemented by the Mexican school but work to find bridges between the different models to support the newly enrolled international students (De Souza, 2013; McCloud, 2015). Researchers identify that student choice, accommodations, and pedagogical approaches open to cultural differences can create a positive, inclusive environment where all students benefit

(González et al., 1995; Zipin, 2009). This cross-categorical benefit will lead to greater academic opportunities for all students, including those identified as EL (De Souza, 2013; McCloud, 2015).

In a study specifically for teachers' cultural proficiency of Latin students and students identified EL in the American south, teachers received specific professional development of Instructional Conversation (Mellom et al., 2018). "Instructional Conversation is a culturally responsive pedagogy, which has been found . . . to raise the achievement of marginalized learners" (Mellom et al., 2018, p. 100). The data from the study support that the development of staff's culturally responsive pedagogy does mitigate negative attitudes over time (Mellom et al., 2018). This supports the consideration of work done by districts in fostering staff development around culturally responsive pedagogy that can benefit Latinx and students identified as EL (Freire, 2000; Mellom et al., 2018). District leaders need to allocate resources of time and funds to such professional development, then find ways to continue the work beyond the initial training for staff.

Culturally responsive instructional approaches for dual-identified students, students identified both as EL and with a disability, is another area of research relating to improving language development of students identified as EL. In a study by Pereira and Gentry (2013) the experienced teacher implemented various instructional strategies to address the learning of the dual-identified students and found the students benefited from culturally responsive approaches. Orosco and O'Conner (2014) found evidence to support that culturally responsive instruction promoted reading development. Both studies concluded the benefits include instructional engagement, oral language

development, and reading comprehension development through the use of various strategies that met the culturally responsive needs of the students (Orosco & O’Conner, 2014; Pereira & Gentry, 2013). Extended from mutual finding, through the recognition of conditions that limited her students’ achievement, the teacher made extra efforts to connect with families (Orosco & O’Conner, 2014). This connection resulted in the parents’ perceptions of the teacher and school as positive, leading to greater collaboration and cooperation from the families (Orosco & O’Conner, 2014). So while culturally responsive professional development may be a focus for general education staff, all staff need to be included in this development so all staff understand the needs of their students and build connections to meeting those needs (Orosco & O’Conner, 2014; Pereira, & Gentry, 2013). Student benefits of culturally responsive instructional approaches are evident for all students (Orosco & O’Conner, 2014; Pereira & Gentry, 2013).

Incorporation of culturally responsive instruction specific for mathematics reveals other factors to consider when researching successful approaches for the instruction of students identified as EL (Driver & Powell, 2017). Driver and Powell (2017) studied a population of students identified as EL and their achievement in mathematical word problems when instructed using culturally responsive strategies. Different from previous studies reviewed, the findings were not conclusive that culturally response strategies resulted in a statistically significant positive outcome (Driver & Powell). Driver and Powell noted the variations of contributing factors for the students included in the study. Students with multiple years of instruction in their native language were stronger with mathematical calculations compared to peers with less formal instruction in their native language (Driver & Powell). Additionally, one student in the study had significant

achievement struggles and later was found eligible for special education services, concluding that the original difficulties with mathematical word problems might have related more to a learning disability and less on factors relating to English development (Driver & Powell).

While some educators may seek a singular reason or cause for academic struggles, influence of multiple factors may contribute to the cause. “Academic performance, native and secondary language proficiency, the number of years ELs have lived in the United States, and their academic experiences before arriving are samples of the factors that should be considered in student mathematics achievement” (Driver & Powell, 2017, p. 50). This recognition that multiple factors have influence supports the thinking that all students identified as EL are unique and individual approaches to support success for educators need consideration (Driver & Powell, 2017; Menken, 2013). This research does not suggest that culturally responsive instruction is destructive to student development, only that culturally responsive instruction alone is not a solution to meeting the varied needs of students identified as EL (Driver & Powell, 2017).

Diverging from a focus on culturally responsive approaches and broadening to more general high-quality curriculum instruction, students identified as EL are found to benefit from authentic, hands-on, learning experiences. The hands-on science curriculum, which integrates mathematics, supports students identified as EL (Adamson et al., 2011). Academic opportunity gains for the English learner population were less significant than gains for other subgroups measured in the study, but were positive, suggesting that universal high-quality instructional approaches benefit all students including those identified as EL (Schlechty, 2009; Smith & Salgado, 2018). This research supports the

need for educators to hold high-quality instructional strategies as a core value for the instruction of all students (Schlechty, 2009; Smith & Salgado, 2018).

### ***Responsive Leadership***

School and district leaders have a role in promoting school culture, including language instruction and development (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018; Freire, 2000; Morrison et al., 2008). Through the promotion of critical pedagogy practices, school leaders will ensure all students, including marginalized students, benefit from instruction and learning (Freire, 2000). Students learn best when they are valued and feel safe within the school (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018; Guiberson & Ferris, 2019). The leader needs to recognize the motivators which currently exist, accountability assessments, and use that data to justify change (Heifetz, 1994; Wagner & Kegan, 2006). Change leadership approaches will guide the leader through this transformational process (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018; Heifetz, 1994; Wagner & Kegan, 2006).

### **Change Leadership**

Educational leaders must consider adaptive solutions to create a new state that improves addressing the root causes (Heifetz, 1994). When “no organizations response can be called into play that will resolve these kinds of problems,” leaders must look to adaptive changes for improvement (Heifetz, 1994, p. 72). Adaptive change does not have a prescribed solution, but the discovery of a solution occurs by working through the problem collaboratively with critical stakeholders (Heifetz, 1994; Wagner & Kegan, 2006). Leaders are not the implementers of the solution but lead the social system toward a solution and an improved state (Heifetz, 1994; Wagner & Kegan, 2006).

Educational leaders are responding to the changing student demographic with adaptive change leadership to improve teachers' cultural proficiency and culturally responsive instructional approaches (Ezzani, 2014; Flory & Wylie, 2019; Gay, 2002). The goal is to foster a school climate that embraces student differences (Gay, 2002). This embrace of diversity builds a community where all students can feel safe, valued, and appreciated (Flory & Wylie, 2019). This work does not directly address language development but fosters a school environment to support learning, inclusive of standards-based learning (Ezzani, 2014).

According to a study on educational administration efforts toward cultural proficiency, school leaders must foster staff development of cultural proficiency (Ezzani, 2014). In response to growing student diversity, the focal school district in the study engaged in several initiatives (Ezzani, 2014). The district provided staff cultural competency training system-wide as a way to support student learning (Ezzani, 2014). Because the leader supported and prioritized this staff professional development it confirmed the importance of cultural proficiency for staff. "A culturally proficient leader values difference and the growth occurs from increased knowledge about those who are different from them" (Ezzani, 2014, p. 2). The leaders' validation of cultural proficiency strengthened staffs' understanding of the district commitment to cultural proficiency implementation (Khalifa, 2020). Researchers found that these staff development activities are beneficial for all students (Ezzani, 2014; Flory & Wylie, 2019). The researchers report that staff cultural competency development should result in students from all subgroups to perceive stronger connections to school and learning environment (Ezzani, 2014; Flory & Wylie, 2019). Researchers conclude that a culturally responsive

environment will support learning for students identified as EL. Without meaningful and purposeful cultural response instructional training for staff a culturally neutral or destructive environment may persist in a district, creating barriers to learning for students (Ezzani, 2014; Morton, 2015).

Instructional leaders in schools must develop ways to increase the cultural proficiency of staff and consider ways student diversity impacts lesson design (Gay, 2013). By embracing an approach that considers and values student diversity, the teacher's effectiveness with instruction is intended to increase (Khalifa, 2020; Schlechty, 2009). This positive change ideally will lead to a slow but lasting impact within the school community (Heifetz, 1994; Wagner & Kegan, 2006). With a culturally accepting and welcoming learning environment the students ideally will increase performance and achieve beyond a single achievement test (Schlechty, 2009).

### ***Types of Change Leadership***

Traits and skills of leaders drive the potential success of the delivery of effective leadership qualities (Yukl, 2013). One of the greatest challenges for leaders can be about change leadership (Heifetz, 1994; Wagner & Kegan, 2006; Yukl, 2013). The best idea can fail during implementation when the leader does not demonstrate behaviors to lead the change process successfully (Yukl, 2013). Traits, skills, and change leadership are leadership focuses that require additional study for success of developing leaders.

Yukl's presentation of traits and skills manifests from the perspective that all leaders possess traits and skills and no single set will ensure leadership success or failure (Yukl, 2013). It is the use of those traits by the leader that determines leadership effectiveness (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). To acknowledge that the implementation of



traits, and not the traits themselves, support the concept that anyone can develop into an effective leader through study, practice, and self-reflection (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). “Some traits and skills increase the likelihood that a leader will be effective, but they do not guarantee effectiveness.” (Yukl, 2013, p. 144). This quote supports the perspective that traits and skills are not simple possession (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). Effective leadership is how the use of those traits and skills are applied (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013).

The change process is predictable through a pattern of events that occur before, during, and after a change process. First described in Lewin’s (1951) force-field model, change within an organization has three defined phases. First, unfreezing of the current practice (Lewin, 1951). In this phase, stakeholders recognize a need for change and a break from past practices that are no longer effective or efficient (Lewin, 1951; Yukl, 2013). The second phase is the change process (Lewin, 1951). The old behavior is being broken and the new, desired behavior is being defined (Lewin, 1951; Yukl, 2013). During this phase attempts and failures will model the developing process (Lewin, 1951; Yukl, 2013). Push for more drastic change will counter pulls for less drastic change that nears the old method (Yukl, 2013). The leader’s task is to balance this push and pull to develop the new process into one that best meets the needs of the problem or process while maintaining buy-in from all stakeholders impacted by the change (Yukl, 2013). The finale phase is refreezing (Lewin, 1951). In this phase, the change solidifies to become the new process or procedure (Lewin, 1951; Yukl, 2013).

The leader must be mindful that this freezing process occurs only when the change is fully complete (Lewin, 1951; Yukl, 2013). If refreeze occurs and the change

was short of the true need it will falter (Yukl, 2013). Falter will allow slide back to the original, ineffective behavior or operation (Yukl, 2013). Resistance to change will persist when the leader fails to follow this change process (Lewin, 1951; Yukl, 2013). Moving directly to change without developing the unfreezing phase will meet great resistance from stakeholders (Lewin, 1951; Yukl, 2013). This resistance can slow, or end, the change process (Lewin, 1951; Yukl, 2013). A leader needs to ensure the change process moves through the three phases systematically, ensuring the outcome of the desired new state (Yukl, 2013).

The leader initiating change must ensure proper justification and supports for the change provided to stakeholders affected by the change (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). The leader must create a sense of urgency, driving stakeholders to recognize the need for change (Yukl, 2013). The leader can create urgency through the use of local, state, and federal policy implementation. Accountability assessment data can catalyze the urgency driving change (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). One perspective could be that without change, maintenance of the current practice leads to failure, non-compliance, and intervention from outside forces (Wagner & Kegan, 2006; Yukl, 2013).

Through the use of accountability assessment data, school leaders can gain the stakeholders' buy-in for the need for change. The leader's challenge is ensuring the change process properly addresses the root cause and does not only superciliously address the visible problem of poor accountability assessment data (Freire, 2000; Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). To truly address school equity and EL learners' instructional needs adaptive change must occur (Vera et al., 2018).

Two types of change are technical change and adaptive change (Heifetz, 1994). Technical change is a change that has a prescribed process (Heifetz, 1994). The process might be complex and difficult to learn or implement, but a known solution can be implemented for total success (Heifetz, 1994). Adaptive change is a process that has an unknown path (Heifetz, 1994). The leader brings stakeholders together and identifies the problem (Heifetz, 1994). Working in collaboration, leaders and stakeholders change the organization for an improved state (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). The process is undefined and evolves as the organization begins to change and improve (Heifetz, 1994; Schlechty, 2009).

### ***Assessment Influence on Leadership***

Federal and state accountability has driven many district leaders to focus on student performance from a single accountability assessment (Hutchings, 2017; Koretz, 2015; Miranda & Cherng, 2018). This focus has reduced educators' view of the student as an individual who is learning to better one's self (Hutchings, 2017; Koretz, 2015, Miranda & Cherng, 2018). The current system forces district leaders to see students as data points (Hutchings, 2017; Koretz, 2015; Miranda & Cherng, 2018). With the right amount of targeted instruction, some students can show competence in the accountability assessment (Ohio Department of Education, 2018b). Other students remain unengaged and negatively impacted by bias within the assessment machine currently driving education (Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2018; Hutchings, 2017; Koretz, 2015; Miranda & Cherng, 2018).

Not all students come to school with the same experiences (Moran, 2005). Not all students demonstrate mastery in the same way (Moran, 2005). An assessment focused

institution views these facts as detriments to overall school performance (Hutchings, 2017; Koretz, 2015; Miranda & Cherng, 2018). Schools that see the value of a diverse student body and demonstration of mastery in a variety of methods will see all students, not just racially or linguistically minoritized students, thrive and excel (Khalifa, 2020; Paris, 2012; Schlechty, 2009).

The original intent of accountability assessments was to help school leaders identify areas for improvement. “Without assessment, individuals and organizations would not be able to describe impact and success” (Roberts & Bailey, 2016, p. 7). The accountability movement has fallen short of this intent and created competition in education for school leaders to seek ways to outperform other schools.

While accountability assessment is oppressive to groups of marginalized students, it has benefits, while limited, which may help educational leaders identify the problem and measure growth (Roberts & Bailey, 2016). When assessment scores are the only measure of success and serve as the ultimate goal, they become oppressive to the very subgroups the assessments were originally designed to identify for outcome improvement (Roberts & Bailey, 2016). Assessment data should serve as the floor of the learning experience. Assessment serves the public by creating transparency, but limiting district effectiveness measurement to just assessment performance stifles true learning and growth (Roberts & Bailey, 2016).

Using school accountability assessment data as the catalyst, district leaders can consider ways to use the attention to motivate stakeholders to seek change for improvement (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). With the spotlight on the accountability scores, stakeholders will ideally recognize the need for change, and the need to improve

the current state (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). The leader must be cautious, though, that quick fixes through technical changes do not overshadow the root causes (Heifetz, 1994; Schlechty, 2009). To address the root causes, adaptive change must occur (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). To improve the school experience for ELs, leaders must deepen stakeholders' recognition of, and instructional approaches with, cultural competency (Heifetz, 1994; Paris, 2012).

Technical change can lead to a false sense of success in the short term, only to lead to greater failure long term (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). With Ohio accountability cut scores increasing each school year in all subgroup areas including EL performance, the leader must be mindful of limitations of technical change-only approach (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). From the perspective of a school leader who may not see language development linked to content instruction, the leader may implement a technical change of more pull-out time for targeted language development. This solution may produce short-term benefits on the accountability assessments but will fail to sustain true growth over time (Driver & Powell, 2017; Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). As cut scores increase in future years, the leaders' approach of increased pull-out services for language development cannot be continued as it will result in less and less time for content instruction which contributes to language development. This approach for meeting the cut score standard does not consider all ways language development occurs in learning and does not value the student's culture, experiences, and norms. (Flory & Wylie, 2019; Gardner, 2017; Morrison et al., 2008).

## Summary

Public schools are serving a student population that is more diverse today than at any time previous (Duncan, 2018, Sugarman & Geary, 2018). School leaders must be ready to address the students' needs (Heifetz, 1994; Schlechty, 2009; Yukl, 2013). Leaders need to support teachers with addressing students' language development concurrently with content mastery (Auslander, 2018; De Souza, 2013; DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018). Instructional approaches through a cultural response lens will ideally foster a classroom environment that supports student learning (Gardner, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Students and teachers will ideally learn together and value differences, as opposed to viewing them as deficits (Freire, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Schlechty, 2009).

Policy and legislation have set expectations for schools to support all students' learning and growth (Crawford, 1996; Gregg, 2008; Sugarman & Widess, 1974; Thomas, 2017). Schools must respond to growing accountability expectations (Hutchings, 2017). These accountability measures can serve as a motivator for school leaders to seek change (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). Specific language development assessment measures exist for students identified as EL (Ohio Department of Education, 2018b, 2020a).

For change to occur and sustain there must be a motivator for leaders and followers (Heifetz, 1994; Yukl, 2013). The existing body of literature is missing a connection of assessment accountability as a motivator for school leaders to improve culturally responsive instruction for improved school experience for ELs. This study examined this connection to add to the existing body of literature.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

In the field of education, an experimental study is limited due to subject protections and fluidity of the population (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Due to these factors research study can be an effective method to identify and understand the impacts of assessment accountability on leaders' decision making (Trochim & Donnelly). A longitudinal study compares the same variables over time, identifying patterns over time (Trochim & Donnelly). Through a quantitative longitudinal study of district performance indicators on accountability assessments school leaders can use results to drive change in instructional practices and changes to improve outcomes for students identified as EL. This methodology chapter sought to explain the research purpose, questions, design, participants, instrument, procedures, and data analysis of this quantitative longitudinal study (Trochim & Donnelly).

#### **Research Purpose and Questions**

Change requires a catalyst to motivate leaders and followers to take action for improvement (Heifetz, 1994). Ohio accountability assessments and reporting can serve as this catalyst to motivate leaders to implement adaptive change for improved services specifically for students identified as English Learner, EL (Heifetz, 1994). This study examined the language proficiency assessment subgroup performance and the impact on overall gap-score reported on the district report card as the reported subgroup size decreased (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). The study also examined district demographic categories of percentage of students identified as EL and districts with diverse student enrollment, explanatory for language development score performance.

During the three years, the n-size for reporting the EL subgroup performance reduced from 30 students to 20 students (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). This resulted in more districts reporting EL subgroup performance in the third year compared to the first year (Ohio Department of Education, 2019).

The study addressed the following research questions:

- What effect on Ohio public school districts' gap-closing score occurred as a result of the increased number of districts reported EL subgroup performance over 3 years?
- Over a 3-year period, do the percentage of students identified as EL and diverse student population serve as explanatory variables for district subgroup performance on the Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment, OELPA?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The research hypotheses for the study are:

Hypothesis 1: Ohio districts' gap-closing score is not equal over the 3 years studied.

Null hypothesis 1: Ohio districts' gap-closing score is equal over the 3 years studied.

Hypothesis 2: Demographics of percent of students identified as EL, diverse student enrollment, and the combination of both, explain district subgroup performance on the OELPA.



Null hypothesis 2: Demographics of percent of students identified as EL, diverse student enrollment, and the combination of both, do not explain district subgroup performance on the OELPA.

### **Research Design**

The researcher conducted a longitudinal study, specifically a retrospective study, to discover the relationships between two or more variables (Cherry, 2019). A retrospective study utilizes past historical information; for this study, the Ohio school district report card and enrollment data were used (Cherry, 2019). The researcher studied the relationship between increasing districts reporting language proficiency performance and overall gap-closing score for the district report card as the primary variables (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). This part of the overall study determined if EL subgroup reporting could motivate change. The second aspect of the study determined if school demographics explain EL subgroup performance on Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment OELPA; the language proficiency assessment (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). This part of the overall study determined if factors of percent of students identified as EL, schools with diverse student enrollment, and the combination of both explain district outcome on the OELPA. Determining if these student demographics contributed to explaining the outcome of assessment performance can lead future research into culturally responsive instructional approaches (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). If found to be an explanatory variable, culturally responsive instructional approaches may serve as the change leaders implement (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

The research study was simply to identify relational and explanatory connections among variables, not to manipulate an independent variable to reach the desired outcome

(Schenker & Rumrill, 2001). The research was not an experimental design; the study did not assign manipulation to the group within the study (Schenker & Rumrill). The study measured differences found within the preexisting group (Schenker & Rumrill).

By way of an ANOVA test, the relational study used a categorical independent variable of reporting an EL subgroup score or not. The ANOVA test compared Ohio school districts' gap-closing scores over the 3 years studied to identify changes as a result of the independent variable (Schenker & Rumrill, 2001). Through the use of binary logistic regression analysis the explanatory relationship between variables of percent of students identified as EL, diverse student enrollment, and the combination of both, served as explanatory variables for OELPA performance outcomes (Schenker & Rumrill, 2001). A future study based on the findings of this study could consider supporting the use of evidence-based practices to improve leadership change approaches regarding instructional services for students identified as EL (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). This study provided a strong empirical base for predicting future outcomes driving support for change leadership approaches (Heifetz, 1994; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

The researcher chose a longitudinal study to identify trends over time (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). A longitudinal study is observational, conducted observations of the same subjects over time (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). A benefit of a longitudinal study is the researcher's ability to look at changes over time of the same variables (Cherry, 2019). Detection of developments and characteristics of the target population are the benefits of a longitudinal study (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Student performance on OELPA assessment can vary due to factors of grade-level scaling, previous formal schooling in a language other than English, and time in a school with English as the dominant language

of instruction (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). This longitudinal study minimized these negative impacts since the study included three consecutive years of data performance (Schenker & Rumrill, 2001).

A weakness of both relational and explanatory studies is the lack of random sampling and manipulation of an independent variable to test other possibilities for improvement (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Longitudinal studies have drawbacks that the researcher considered. A longitudinal study takes extensive time and expense to conduct (Cherry, 2019). The use of historical data required of Ohio school districts by state legislation minimized this factor (Ohio Administrative Code, 2020). A second limitation of a longitudinal study is the risk of a high participant dropout rate (Chery, 2019). Participant dropout can lead to bias results since the final participant group is now a non-representative population compared to the start of the study (Cheery, 2019). In this study, the data loss was minimal due to Ohio school districts' requirement to report assessment performance to the Ohio Department of Education (Ohio Administrative Code, 2020). Public school districts must conduct accountability assessment and report results, the data utilized derived from these assessments and district demographics (Ohio Administrative Code, 2020).

The researcher used ex post facto data in the study. Benefits of ex post facto data include the collection and storage of data ensuring it remains consistent and accurate (Newman et al., 1997). The collection of the studied data is scientifically valid and reliable (Newman et al., 1997). The data source includes large-scale collection covering the entire subject source resulting in robust information for analysis (Lord, 1973).

A weakness of ex-post factor data is that it exists only as originally collected. While the data analysis can illustrate a hypothesis, it cannot test a hypothesis (Lord, 1973). Additionally, ex-post factor limited data analysis to the data set provided (Lord, 1973). The researcher is limited in using findings to make generalizations beyond the given data set (Lord, 1973). Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio legislature controlled the collection and reporting of this data set (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). Valid and reliable data collection within this system depends on assessment vendor reporting and data review by individual districts before final submission (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b).

The goal of this study was to understand the impact of language proficiency performance on Ohio school districts' gap-closing score as well as other district descriptive variables as explanatory variables of OELPA performance outcome over time.

### **Target Population**

The target population was Ohio school districts that report performance on OELPA and that have student population identified as EL equal to or greater than the subgroup n-size in a given year (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). Ohio Department of Education reduced the reported n-size as 30 students in the 2016-2017 school year, 25 students in the 2017-2018 school year, and 20 students in the 2018-2019 school year (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). All school districts in Ohio with a reported EL subgroup were included in the study. With the minimum n-size for reporting smaller over time, more participants were included in the study, not less, as is typical of a longitudinal study, strengthening the findings (Cherry, 2019).

Factors of the percentage of students identified as EL and diverse student population were included to consider district demographic factors for an explanation of EL subgroup performance. The percentage of students identified as EL was set to categorical data at the district level. Ohio's total population of students identified as EL is 4%, so districts were categorized as at or above average (4% or above) or less than the average enrollment (less than 4%) (Sugarman & Geary, 2018). In the 2016-2017 school year, first year of the 3-year study, there were 182 Ohio public districts with a reported EL population of 20 students or more (Ohio Department of Education, 2017a). Of those districts, 56 had a percent of students identified as EL at 4% or more of the total student population (Ohio Department of Education, 2017a). This results in 126 districts reporting an EL population less than 4% of the total student enrollment (Ohio Department of Education, 2017a).

Categorizing Ohio school districts by the diverse student populations is the second explanatory variable considered. The research defined diverse student population of extremely undiverse, or not extremely undiverse (Rabinowitz et al., 2019). Extremely undiverse schools have a single race reported at or above 90% of the student population (Rabinowitz et al., 2019). A school district is diverse when it has no single race reported above 75% of the total student population (Rabinowitz et al., 2019). To maintain inclusion of all Ohio school districts in the study categories of districts diversity was set at extremely undiverse or not extremely undiverse (Rabinowitz et al., 2019).

The common thread linking these district descriptive variables came through during the review of the literature. Ohio school districts report additional descriptive data of percent of poverty, percent of Title I eligible, per-pupil spending, and others. The

researcher sought to stay focused on the two primary variables (and combination of them) that continually resonated from the literature review (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). Additionally, there is limited existing quantitative research relating to critical pedagogy theory approaches and instruction support for students identified as EL (Aasebo et al., 2017; Ryan, 2006; Shyman, 2011). This study contributed to that void of research with the included variables as the focus of analysis (Aasebo et al., 2017; Ryan, 2006; Shyman, 2011).

### **Sampling Method and Sample Size**

Ohio Department of Education collected and reported all Ohio school district data through the Educational Management Information System [EMIS] (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). As a provision of the Ohio Revised Code, and established in 1989, EMIS serves as the data collection and reporting platform (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). EMIS management information includes, but is not limited to, school district student, staff, and financial information (Ohio Administrative Code, 2020). Districts report accountability assessment performance through EMIS (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). Data reported into EMIS determine state and federal grant funding allocations (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). This is the data center for district academic achievement information that drove the report card metric (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b).

### **Instrumentation**

#### **General Narrative of the Instrument**

Ohio's EMIS system was a data collection platform required of all Ohio public school districts to report critical student, staff, financial, and assessment data (Ohio

Department of Education, 2020b). Through this instrument, analysis of school district performance and comparability to similar districts are possible (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). Uniformed collection and reporting of critical district data allowed the researcher determination of relational and explanatory connections that generalized to Ohio public school districts.

### **Scale and Scoring System of the Instrument**

Language proficiency assessment reported a percentage of ELs who attained the annual progress target (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). Calculation of the percentage for districts through the scoring of individual student performances combines to determine the overall target achievement percentage (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment [OELPA] achievement scoring is a 5-point scale for each area assessed of listening, reading, writing, and speaking (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). Students have an individual growth target of one (1) or two (2) cumulative points (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). The student's growth target is set by grade level when first enrolled in the school district and cumulative score earned on the first OELPA participation (detailed in chapter II) (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). The rating is part of the district's annual measurable objective describing the gap-closing score on the district report card (Ohio Department of Education, 2019).

To comply with Federal regulations under the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), the Ohio Department of Education lists a cut score for districts' EL annual progress toward attaining English language proficiency (A new education law, 2019; Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). The percentage baseline for EL annual progress

toward attaining EL proficiency was set at 45% during the 2015-2016 school year (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). Each year this percentage target increased to 48% in 2016-2017, 51% in 2017-2018, and 54% in 2018-2019 (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). This increasing target compounds the difficulty in calculating EL proficiency improvement in year over year analysis. To minimize the changing target the researcher analyzed data from all three years in the study using the final year's target percentage, 54%. This was to normalize the data so as to compare performance of the three-year period to the same standard (Abdi, 2010).

### **Previous Usage of the Instrument by Other Researchers**

The use of the data is extensive both internally with the Ohio Department of Education and with external researchers studying educational trends in Ohio's public schools (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). Because of the depth and breadth of the data collected through the EMIS platform, research to understand past trends and help set direction for future work for improving Ohio's schools is common with this data set (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher collected data by way of formal public records request to the Ohio Department of Education. All variables are included in EMIS reports from the Ohio school districts to the state department of education (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). Ohio Department of Education requires various data collection windows during the school year (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). These collection points include data for the main student, additional student and staff, assessment, and financial (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). There are 34 specific data collection windows during



each school year relating to these topics (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). The earliest window opened in September and the latest window closed in October after the conclusion of the school year (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). School districts must identify an employee responsible for these reporting tasks. Accurate reporting was critical for comparable district data analysis, performance ratings, and funding allocations (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). Reporters' desire for accurate, error-free data ensured small margins of error and data that were reliable and valid.

For the longitudinal study design, data were collected from 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years. The specific variables studied were: (1) gap-closing score, (2) language proficiency score, (3) percent of students identified as EL, and (4) district student diversity.

The department of education maintains data collection and storage from EMIS in a secure manner (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). To fulfill the public records request, the researcher obtained the data in the Microsoft Excel file version. To maintain subject confidentiality, the data set removed district school names and reference numbers (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Clean-up of the data reduced collected data to just variables needed for the study. The researcher edited labels to align with the terminology of the study. Conversion of the reported data to categorical data occurred for analysis. The researcher then uploaded the data into the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) created by IBM. This software program generated data analysis based on the stated hypothesis.

Through the power of SPSS, data analysis and modeling tested the given hypothesis. All 611 Ohio public school districts were included in the data set. This

sample size ensured a 95% confidence interval for the data analysis (Fowler, 2009). The variable of language proficiency reported was not applicable for all school districts due to the student subgroup total below the reported subgroup minimum within the given school year (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). As the subgroup minimum size decreased each school year, more districts had a reported value for this variable (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). Through the use of data analysis, the researcher presented data in a neutral, unbiased method (Newman et al., 1997). Future researchers can repeat this analysis for confirmation of findings.

### **Data Analysis Methods**

The researcher began the study analysis by running an ANOVA test, analyzing the gap score reported for Ohio school districts over the three school years of the study (Field, 2018). The ANOVA test compared the districts' rating and determined the variation between the given school years (Field, 2018). The ANOVA test determines the differences between each of the three studied school years (Field, 2018). A large difference in the districts' rating indicates an impact on gap-closing score due to EL subgroup reporting (Field, 2018). The research analyzed the three school years studied. This longitudinal aspect of the study was to see trends over time, especially as the n-size reported subgroups decreased resulting in more districts included in the analysis (Cherry, 2019,;Ohio Department of Education, 2019).

To extend the analysis of the data, the researcher next conducted a binary logistic regression analysis to determine the explanatory of specific categorical variables for district performance on the Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment, OELPA (Field, 2018; Ohio Department of Education, 2019). The researcher converted the

reported percentage to a binary variable of met the target or did not meet the target (Field, 2018). In the test, the researcher was able to determine the explanatory of performance on OELPA from variables of a high or low percentage of students identified as EL enrolled and district with extremely undiverse student enrollment, and district with student enrollment not extremely undiverse (Field, 2018; Ohio Department of Education, 2019; Rabinowitz et al., 2019). The researcher analyzed all three school years of the study, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019. Because of the decreasing n-size of subgroup reporting, more districts were included in the analysis of each subsequent school year (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). The researcher determined the odds ratio of these school demographics and language proficiency performance.

### **Internal and External Validity of the Instrument**

With 611 public school districts in Ohio reporting into EMIS the collection size exceeds the desired participant size of 500 (Fowler, 2009). Additionally, the longitudinal study increased the data size confirming the necessary confidence interval (Field, 2018). With the sample size inclusive of all Ohio public school districts the results are generalizable within Ohio (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

Students identified as EL must participate in the OELPA assessment regardless of consent to participate in EL services provided by the district (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). Allowance of an exemption exists for dually identified students, EL and disabled, when the student's education team determines that student's disability prohibits participation in a particular domain (Ohio Department of Education, 2018a). Exemption of up to three domains for this reason is allowable, and documentation of the

exemption must appear on the student's individualized educational plan (Ohio Department of Education, 2018a).

A second internal limitation is the proper initial identification of students who are EL. In Ohio, schools must issue a home language survey to all new enrollments into the district (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Based on responses within the survey additional investigation and screening is necessary to determine if the student meets the Ohio Department of Education's definition of EL (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Before the 2018-2019 school year districts could use a home language survey different from the example survey provided by the Ohio Department of Education so long as it included the same components (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Before the 2018-2019 school year districts permitted to use a screener tool of their choice either vendor created or self-created if validated (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Starting with the 2018-2019 school year ODE required the use of the prescribed home language survey and screener tool due to noted variation in identification across the state (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Variations of students identified by districts can result in variation of performance on OELPA (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). If districts over-identify, those districts may perform better than those districts with conservative practices for the identification of students as EL (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c).

### **Limitations**

The use of ex post facto data has inherent limitations to any study. The sample cannot have a random selection; so in this study, the researcher used all available data within the given parameters of the study (Simon & Goes, 2013). Ex post facto data have

no random assignment of treatment so it's simply looking at causal relationships not treatment and control outcomes (Simon & Goes, 2013).

This study examined only Ohio's assessment performance of the EL subgroup for language development. This study was limited to the available assessment and district data, limiting conclusions to just the narrow areas studied (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). While Ohio is part of the multi-state ELPA21 consortium that designed a uniformed language proficiency assessment, this does not mean that the finding within Ohio will extend to those other states (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Because the data set is specific to Ohio, the generalizability of the study result is limited outside of Ohio public schools with a reported EL subgroup (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The cut scores, classification determinations, and other significant factors contribute to differences even within the consortium of states (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). Although less diverse than in some other parts of the country, Ohio has a diverse population of students identified as EL (Ohio Department of Education, 2012). Ohio reports more than 110 different primary dominant languages of students identified as EL enrolled in public schools (Ohio Department of Education, 2012). The top 10 predominant languages are Spanish, Somali, Arabic, Pennsylvania Dutch, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, French, Russian, and Twi (Ohio Department of Education, 2012). A perception of district leaders is that this diversity of languages complicates the determination of effective interventions within a given school population of students identified as EL (Ohio Department of Education, 2012). Finally, the lack of pre-existing study of assessment results for this specific subgroup limits comparison of similar studies.

## **Summary**

The researcher set out to study the impact of the language development for the EL subgroup on the overall gap-closing score reported on district report cards based on the district percentage of students identified as EL. The researcher conducted a 3-year longitudinal study to consider trends and patterns over time. Additionally, the study included consideration for the additional factors of district's percent of students identified as EL and district student enrollment diversity to consider variables that explain language proficiency assessment performance in Ohio schools. The findings cannot prove causation but confirm the relationship of factors for further study by future researchers (Trochim, & Donnelly, 2008).

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this quantitative, longitudinal study is to discover the relationship between two or more variables over time. This is a retrospective study. District demographic and achievement data identify trends for English learners [EL]. The researcher examines district performance with meeting the EL proficiency target and the overall gap-closing grade on the district report card.

Additionally, the researcher considers the relation of district demographics (percent of students identified as EL and student diversity) to district performance outcomes on the Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment [OELPA]. This analysis can identify possible demographic indicators of high performing districts. Knowing the types of districts that perform well, district leaders can further study those types of districts for approaches to improve programs and services.

#### **Demographic Characteristics**

The research population includes all Ohio school districts in the Ohio Department of Education's [ODE] report card system. This study includes 607 of the 611 public school districts in Ohio. The remaining four districts are excluded from the ODE report card system due to the near-zero student enrollment (Ohio Department of Education, 2017a). Each district is coded in one of three ways; met the EL proficiency target, did not meet the EL proficiency target, or EL subgroup is not reported. The EL subgroup is not reported when the district EL population is less than the minimum subgroup size in each of the academic years in the study, (30 students in 2016-2017, 25 students in 2017-2018,

and 20 students in 2018-2019) (Ohio Department of Education, 2018a). As the minimum number of students needed for reporting the subgroup reduces, the number of districts reporting an EL subgroup increases (98 districts in 2016-2017, 109 districts in 2017-2018, and 143 districts in 2018-2019). This increases the number of districts reporting in the *met target* and *did not meet target* groups.

Data collection is through publicly accessible sources from ODE. The ODE’s Education Management Information system [EMIS] data collection system records and reports district and student demographic and achievement data. These data are accessible through the ODE’s public website (Ohio Department of Education, 2020b). Because the focus is on district type, removing identifying data occurs before analysis to maintain district anonymity. Table 3 and Table 4 outline the data characteristics of this study.

**Table 3**

*Ohio Districts’ EL Proficiency*

EL Proficiency	Frequency			Percent		
	Academic Year			Academic Year		
	16-17	17-18	18-19	16-17	17-18	18-19
Met Target	84	67	131	13.8	11.0	21.6
Did Not Meet Target	14	42	12	2.3	7.9	2.0
Not Reported	509	498	464	83.9	82.0	76.4

Analysis of the characteristic data confirms that more districts reported an EL subscore each year of the study. There is an increase in districts reporting *met target* in



the third year of analysis (131 districts, 21.6% of all districts in the analysis). The third year also reports the lowest number of districts to not meet the EL proficiency target (12 districts, 2.0% of all districts reported). This increase of districts reporting *met target* indicates that as the threshold for the n-size decreases and more districts report an EL subgroup score newly reported districts benefit with a positive outcome.

**Table 4**

*Ohio District EL Demographics*

Academic Year	Target Met			Target Not Met			Not Reported		
	16-17	17-18	18-19	16-17	17-18	18-19	16-17	17-18	18-19
EL Population %									
At or Above 4%	33	19	40	10	25	4	6	5	5
Below 4%	51	48	91	4	17	8	503	493	459
Enrollment Diversity									
Not Extremely Undiverse	81	64	122	14	42	12	169	158	130
Extremely Undiverse	3	3	9	0	0	0	340	340	334
Both Characteristics Present	30	16	37	10	25	4	3	2	2

Districts are categorized by each demographic using 2018-2019 academic year data so grouping stays consistent each academic year of the analysis. Analysis of the district demographic data confirms that districts with an average or above EL population within Ohio are a small representation of all Ohio districts (8.1%). The division of districts by student diversity is 43.5% are not extremely undiverse and 56.5% are extremely undiverse. The majority of extremely undiverse districts do not report an EL subgroup score (99% in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, 97.4% in 2018-2019) and all

extremely undiverse districts that report an EL subgroup score meet the target in all three academic years.

The third demographic is districts reporting to have both not extremely undiverse student population and an average or above EL population (43 total districts). Overall, regardless of the grouping, there are a large number of districts that do not report an EL proficiency score in each year. The majority of districts that do report a score meet the target. The proficiency target used for this analysis was the target set by ODE for the 2018-2019 academic year at 54%.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Question 1**

An analysis of variance, ANOVA, studies the effect of the Ohio school district's gap-closing grade when reporting an EL proficiency subgroup score as met or not met the target. This analysis is to determine if the reduction of the subgroup size for reporting could motivate district leaders to consider program improvements for students identified as EL.

Question 1. What effect on Ohio public school districts' gap-closing score occurred as a result of the increased number of districts reported EL subgroup performance over the three years?

- Hypothesis 1: Ohio school districts' gap-closing score is not equal over the years studied.
- Null hypothesis 1: Ohio school districts' gap-closing score is equal over the three years studied.

**Table 5***One-way ANOVA Longitudinal Gap-closing Score*

Measure	Not Reported		Met Target		Not Met		F (2,604)	n <sup>2</sup>
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
16-17	2.15	0.27	1.87	1.14	1.07	1.22	7.14**	.001
17-18	3.91	1.13	4.21	0.71	2.31	1.18	45.03***	.000
18-19	3.83	1.22	4.04	0.96	2.25	1.42	12.82***	.000

*Note.* \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

The researcher uses a one-way analysis of variance to examine the impact of EL proficiency reporting on the overall district gap-closing score. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .01$  for all three years of the study and a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .001$  for the second and third years of the study (2017-2018 and 2018-2019 academic years).

The researcher conducts a Levene test for homogeneity. When a significance value is greater than .05, the test does not violate the assumption of homogeneity (Field, 2018). In this test, the significance value was less than .05 (less than .000) meaning the different n-size of each group within the test may skew the results. Because of the lack of homogeneity, a Tukey post hoc test to analyze between-group differences can lead to false outcomes (Field, 2018).

To determine the differences among the groups of the analysis the researcher conducts the post hoc test of a Games-Howell Mean Difference Analysis. If homogeneity of variance is violated, a Games-Howell test will compare all possible combinations of group differences (Field, 2018). Games-Howell test shows whether the differences are

statically significant (Field, 2018). Table 6 reports the outcome of a Games-Howell Mean Difference analysis.

**Table 6**

*Games-Howell Mean Difference Analysis*

		FY17	FY18	FY19
Participation	Comp	Mean Diff	Mean Diff	Mean Diff
Met %	Not Met %	0.80*	1.90*	1.79*
	Not Reported	-0.28	0.30*	0.21
Not Met %	Met %	-0.80*	-1.90*	-1.79*
	Not Reported	-1.08*	-1.60*	-1.58*

\*Statistically significant

In each of the three academic years, the gap-closing score of districts that did not meet the EL proficiency target is statistically different from districts that report meeting the EL proficiency target and districts that do not report on the EL proficiency subgroup. Districts that do not meet the EL proficiency target have a lower reported gap-closing score. When comparing districts that meet the EL proficiency targets and districts that do not report EL proficiency, only the 2017-2018 academic year has a statistical difference in performance. This analysis simply identifies the differences. It does not give an analysis as to why the differences are present.

**Question 2**

The second test is a binary logistic regression analysis to determine if specific categorical variables explain language proficiency outcomes for Ohio school districts. The characteristics are the percent of EL students enrolled and the diversity of the student population.

Question 2: Over the 3 years, did the percentage of students identified as EL and diverse student populations serve as explanatory variables for district subgroup performance on the Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment, OELPA?

- Hypothesis 2: Demographics of percent of students identified as EL, diverse student enrollment, and the combination of both explain district subgroup performance on the OELPA.
- Null hypothesis 2: Demographics of percent of students identified as EL, diverse student enrollment, and the combination of both do not explain district subgroup performance on the OELPA.

The researcher conducts a binary logistic regression analysis to examine the relationship between variables of percent of students identified as EL, diverse student enrollment, and the combination of both (Table 7). This analysis is to determine if these characteristics serve as explanatory variables for the expected outcome of a district meeting the language proficiency target in each of the three years of the longitudinal study.

**Table 7***Binary Logistic Regression – EL Proficiency Performance*

	2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Topographical (control)	.004	.004	.004	.008	.008	.008	.002	.002	.002
Average or greater EL population	.051			.096***			.002		
Not extremely Undiverse		.006			.018			.015	
Variables Combined			.066*			.130***			.004
Constant	.873	.901	.857	.646	.694	.613	.889	.883	.885
N	98	98	98	109	109	109	143	143	143

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

To strengthen this analysis the researcher uses the control variable of district topology. The ODE groups all public districts into three major topologies of rural, suburban, and urban. Including topology as a control variable stabilizes the analysis regarding the types of districts reporting *met target* or *did not meet target*. The control variable ensures the analysis is controlling for other influencers for district EL performance. While EL students most frequently enroll in urban districts, EL students enroll in all district types to some degree. Topology as a control variable ensures the analysis is accurate to the variables of the average EL population and student diversity.

A district's student diversity does not have a statistically significant relationship with the district's outcome of meeting the language proficiency target. The sample size is

too small for reliable analysis between student diversity and district performance on the EL proficiency target.

The results indicate a statistically significant relationship at the  $p < .05$  level for districts with an EL population greater than or equal to the average EL population of four percent. This significance is evident in the first and second years of the study, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years. A school district's EL population does not have statistical significance in the third year of the study, 2018-2019.

The results indicate a statistically significant relationship at the  $p < .01$  level for the combination of both variables in the 2016-2017 school year. A statistically significant relationship at the  $p < .001$  level for the combined variables in the 2017-2018 school year. In the 2018-2019 school year, neither of the variables individually or in combination have statistical significance. In this school year, 143 districts have an EL proficiency score. This is the largest group of the three-year analysis. In the 2016-2017 academic year, 98 districts report a language proficiency score and in the 2017-2018 academic year, 109 districts report a language proficiency score.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, the diversity of a district's student body cannot be determined to play a factor in the outcome of language proficiency target. The percent of EL students enrolled may relate to the performance outcome of districts meeting the language proficiency target. That relationship diminishes as the minimum reporting n-size reduces, resulting in more districts reporting in the analysis in the 2018-2019 academic year.

Considering the impact of reporting EL proficiency target on districts' overall gap-closing score, districts that do not meet the proficiency target have a lower gap-

closing score than districts that either meet the language proficiency target or do not report a language proficiency target.



CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

**Introduction**

Using assessment performance to define district success continues to grow. The intent is to foster the improvement of instruction and learning. In practice, assessments drive district leaders to focus almost exclusively on achievement outcomes. This focus creates a culture of competition among Ohio school districts (Haertel, 2013). The focus of school leaders is to help teachers improve their students' assessment performance, minimizing the focus on helping teachers create authentic learning experiences for student success (Haertel, 2013). School leaders need to move beyond the simple focus of student assessment performance and toward a focus on authentic learning experiences for all students. Moving the focus to authentic learning through culturally responsive instructional approaches will better immerse students in the content and support connections to the students' reality (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Instruction that values the diversity of experiences and the home knowledge students bring to school connects to the learning in the classroom and provides meaning to the learner (Mole et al., 1992; Morrison et al., 2008).

As the student population in schools continues to become more diverse, teachers need to develop approaches for instruction that are meaningful and connect to the students. Specifically for a student whose dominant language is not English, meaningful instruction in both content and language development is necessary for success (Gardner, 2017). Language development can take five to seven years in an effective learning environment so district leaders need to develop the staff's ability to meet the needs of

students developing English through content learning (Howard et al., 2018; Lindholm-Leary, 2012). State assessments consider the two learning objectives of content and language separately. School leaders need to help teachers connect and integrate content and language so that students advance in both areas simultaneously.

A review of the literature confirmed that culturally responsive approaches to leadership, teaching, and instruction have positive outcomes for all students, especially racially and linguistically minoritized students. Most studies from the review of literature were qualitative in design. Few quantitative studies documented the impact of culturally responsive leadership. Because most school leaders heavily focus on achievement performance through a quantitative lens this study attempted to use a quantitative perspective to support the use of culturally relevant leadership as the approach for change.

This study of historical assessment data for language proficiency can serve as a way to use current accountability measures to help motivate district leaders to move instructional improvements beyond simple compliance and towards true change that will better meet the needs of students identified as EL. The impact of assessment performance on overall district performance may serve as the motivator for change. The demographics of districts with improved outcomes may serve to help researchers identify types of districts to further study in identifying effective approaches.

### **Summary of Findings**

This study addresses two aspects, motivator for change, and characteristics of successful districts. The Ohio Department of Education [ODE] lowered the minimum n-size of reported subgroups from 30 in the 2016-2017 academic year to 20 in the 2018-

2019 academic year. Did this cause a change in school performance data? Does the decreasing n-size serve to motivate district leaders to seek program improvements through a culturally responsive pedagogy approach? Did specific district demographics have an explanatory connection with the district language proficiency performance?

The study examines historical district performance data from the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 academic years. The specific data are district meeting language proficiency target, district gap-closing grade, district EL student enrollment, and district student diversity. Data for this study are derived from the state EMIS data Ohio school districts collect and report annually.

### **Demographics**

Each year of the study has more districts reporting an English learner [EL] proficiency subscore when compared to previous academic years. The ODE is progressively lowering the subgroup reporting size so reporting includes more districts. In the 2016-2017 academic year, 98 districts report an EL proficiency score. In the 2017-2018 academic year, 109 districts report an EL proficiency score, and 143 districts report in the 2018-2019 academic year. This increasing number of districts increases the number of students represented in the analysis of EL performance which should result in more district leaders seeking support and guidance on ways to effectively meet the needs of the EL student population.

Analysis of the district characteristics that meet or do not meet the proficiency target uses the 2018-2019 academic year for classification purposes. This provides consistent groupings across years studied. In each year of the analysis all districts identified as extremely undiverse and reporting an EL subgroup score met the target. This

study does not have a sample size to reliably correlate student diversity and language proficiency performance. While the analysis includes all Ohio districts, the sample size is too small to generalize findings beyond the given sample group.

In the 2017-2018 academic year more districts reported to not meet target compared to the previous and next year. This result could be from more districts being included in the reporting in that academic year. The next school year those districts improved programing resulting in meeting the target. Continued focus on staff development for program improvement is necessary. EL student needs are unique since staff must balance instructional needs for both language proficiency and content mastery.

### **Research Question 1**

**EL proficiency impact on district sub-group score.** The first research question examined districts meeting the EL proficiency target and the effect meeting the target has on the districts' overall sub-group score. The analysis identifies that there is a statistically significant difference in each of the three years of the longitudinal study. In each of the three years, not meeting the EL proficiency target negatively affects the district's overall gap-closing score. Districts not meeting the target earn a gap-closing score lower in comparison to districts that either meet the target or do not have an EL proficiency score. Districts do not have an EL proficiency target reported when the district enrollment of EL students is below the threshold in the given academic year, 30 in 2016-2017, 25 in 2017-2018, and 20 in 2018-2019 academic years.

To ensure a 95% confidence interval, a study must consist of 500 participants (Fowler, 2009). This analysis includes all Ohio school districts with report card data, 607. Only in the 2016-2017 school year do districts in the not reported EL proficiency

subgroup surpass this minimum threshold with 506 participants. All remaining subgroups are below the 500 participant threshold resulting in a confidence interval that is not generalizable. Because all Ohio districts are included there are no other subjects to include in the analysis.

These findings support Federal and State policy requiring language proficiency assessment which serves as a motivator for district leaders to consider ways to improve programming and services for EL students. Districts have requirements to identify, serve, assess, and monitor EL students (Lau, 1974). Confirmation that reporting district performance on EL proficiency can negatively affect district gap-closing score should motivate leaders to ensure meaningful programming and service improvements.

## **Research Question 2**

**Percentage of students identified as EL and diverse student population as explanatory variables for EL proficiency performance.** Percentage of students identified as EL categorizes into binary data of those districts at or above the Ohio average EL enrollment of 4% and those districts with an EL student enrollment below the Ohio average. The diverse student population categorizes into binary data of those districts with an extremely undiverse student population of one race at or above 90% and districts without an extremely undiverse student population (Rabinowitz et al., 2019).

To ensure the analysis focus is on these two variables a control variable of topology is included in the analysis. The ODE codes all districts as rural, suburban, or urban. The use of this control ensures output data reports on the variables in the study and not a secondary factor of district topology.

Findings support that a district's student diversity does not have a statistically significant relationship with districts' outcomes for EL proficiency target. The student diversity of a school district did not serve as an explanatory variable for the EL proficiency outcome. Being a diverse districts does not equate to the district practicing culturally responsive practices. Culturally responsive practices must be a focus of leadership and consistently included in staff development (Khalifa, 2020).

The percentage of students identified as EL does have statistical significance in the first and second years of the longitudinal study. When a district has an EL student enrollment at or above the average EL population that district is more likely to meet the proficiency target in comparison to districts with EL student enrollment less than four percent of total student enrollment. The percentage of students identified as EL does not have statistical significance in the 2018-2019 school year. This year has the lowest n-size for reporting, resulting in the greatest number of districts (143 total districts) receiving a score for the EL proficiency indicator. This increase of districts with smaller EL populations in the analysis may diminish the effect of the EL student enrollment percentage on the outcome of district EL proficiency percentage. More districts with less than the average EL student enrollment met the proficiency target in the 2018-2019 academic year in comparison to previous academic years.

For the combination of both variables, student diversity and EL student enrollment, there is a statistically significant relation to the EL proficiency target outcome. This relationship is evident in the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years but did not occur in the third year of the study, 2018-2019. Districts that have both a diverse student population and an average or above EL student population (43 of the 607 districts

or 7.1%) are more likely to meet the EL proficiency target in comparison to districts without a diverse student population and below-average EL student population. This does not occur in the 2018-2019 academic year. There was no statistical significance in district performance with or without both variables in the third year.

### **Discussion**

Like all students, EL students benefit from a classroom teacher who demonstrates value and appreciation for the different experiences that students bring to the classroom (Ladson-Billing, 1995b). EL students' values and experiences add to the learning experience for all students (González et al., 1995). The literature review details the benefits of a culturally responsive leadership approach for instructing linguistically minoritized students. Leaders must develop an inclusive environment focused on improving learning experiences for diverse populations of students and families (Khalifa et al., 2016). Academic achievement is just one aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Cultural competence and social-political/critical consciousness are an equal focus within a culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Examination of English learner performance through a culturally responsive lens helps school leaders see the whole-student of the EL student population. Concepts of culturally responsive leadership focus on supporting racially minoritized students in school and can apply similarly to students identified as EL. Student achievement is only one aspect of the school experience for students. Leaders need to support teachers' development of designing learning experiences that value the students' personal and family culture (Moll et al., 1992). Leaders need to support teachers' development of

learning within the context of the broader socio/political spectrum (Moll et al., 1992). When designing instruction teachers need support in developing approaches to engage students for critical thinking of concepts (Khalifa, 2020). When incorporating students' values and interests in the learning experience, positive growth occurs beyond indicators measurable by standardized assessments.

With leaders' support, teachers can develop instructional practices that are inclusive of the cultural factors of their students. Content mastery occurs when information synthesizes from relatable concepts and concrete connections to the students' real-life experiences and knowledge. The leader should encourage teachers to focus on making the content relevant and relatable as opposed to focusing on shortcut approaches for short-term gains on achievement assessments that are not sustainable.

A culturally responsive instructional approach is not enough for supporting the learning growth of EL students. The policy sets the minimum standards for school leaders' obligation to meet the needs of EL students. A district must ensure programming addresses both English proficiency and content mastery (Thomas, 2017). Districts must identify, serve, assess, and monitor students who are not English language dominant (Sugarman & Widess, 1974). District leaders must balance instructional time between language development and content mastery. These two obligations exist in connection with each other. The student cannot focus on one exclusively with an expectation of mastery to allow exclusive focus on the other. Content mastery and language mastery intertwine and occur in concert with each other (Crawford, 1996).



### ***Decreasing n-size for reporting***

This study considers the results of language proficiency accountability assessments and how the outcomes can help motivate leaders to seek alternative approaches for meeting the needs of EL students. Change occurs when pressure exists that leads stakeholders to determine that improvement is necessary (Yukl, 2013). The ODE creates pressure for change by progressively reducing the n-size for subgroup reporting on the district report card. As the n-size reduces from 30 in the 2016-2017 academic year to 20 in the 2018-2019 academic year additional schools are included in the reporting of the EL proficiency subgroup (143 districts in the third year compared to only 94 districts in the first year of the study). This study examined those results in a longitudinal study to determine if the additional reporting results in district performance reporting that can provide the needed change for district leaders to consider program and service improvements for EL students. The analysis determined that the decreasing n-size results in more districts reporting a score for EL proficiency does have a relationship to the district gap-closing score. When a district reports *met target* the district performs better on the overall gap-closing grade in comparison to districts that report *not met target*. Districts that do not report an EL proficiency score perform similarly to a district that reports *met target*.

Reporting of the EL proficiency subgroup draws leaders' attention to the EL student population. District leaders can point to the proficiency assessment as a critical element of overall district performance which needs attention to ensure the design of school programming meets the needs of the students. Schools that do not provide proper programming, services, and supports to EL students risk not meeting the EL proficiency

target. Failure to meet the target results in a lower district gap-closing score. Providing the EL students with supports and resources to maximize performance on the EL proficiency assessment helps the district reach the EL proficiency target, resulting in a higher gap-closing overall score.

### ***Ideal n-size for EL reporting***

In the 2019-2020 academic year the n-size for reporting decreases to 15 students within the district (Ohio Department of Education, 2017b). Thereafter the n-size will remain at 15 students. Because of factors other than programming and services, districts with small EL populations may have inconsistent reporting. Other factors can include grade level scaling, dominant language of the EL students, and the students' time in language program. Looking at the proficiency target for the 2025-2026 academic year of 75%, a district with 15 EL students would need 12 students to meet their growth score annually. This result may inaccurately report lack of progress when other factors contribute to the students not meeting the growth target in a given school year.

In the analysis of the three academic years studied the 2017-2018 academic year, with the reporting size of 25, has the most robust reporting relating to demographics relation to proficiency reporting. The reporting size of 25 students provides a participation size that best reflects actual district performance. By lowering the reporting size the additional districts included in the analysis have very small EL student populations and cause analysis results to have minimal statistical significance.

### ***Assessment Design***

Individual student performance combines to report the district percentage performance to meet the target, 54% in the 2018-2019 academic year. Grade level and

proficiency at the time of enrollment set students' annual growth target (Ohio Department of Education, 2020a). Students are to improve performance annually by one or two points. EL students have a variety of previous school and formal language development experiences before enrollment (Kenyon et al., 2011). These differences can affect a students' readiness to meet the growth target.

Additionally, the Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment, [OELPA], has grade bands for vertical scaling of the assessment (Ohio Department of Education, 2018c). These grade bands impact student progress reporting when the student advances grade level into a higher, more difficult, grade band. The student performance may appear to not improve but this is due to the grade band advance and not student performance and growth.

District leaders must recognize and understand the impact on reporting these assessment limitations can cause. A single year analysis could result in false indicators of student performance. The multi-year analysis in this study helps diminish the effect of assessment design flaws.

### ***District Characteristics for Success***

The second element of the study is examining district characteristics to determine if any relate to EL subgroup performance. Characteristics of the percentage of students identified as EL, overall diversity of student enrollment, and the combination of the two may explain patterns of districts that perform better on the EL proficiency assessment in comparison to other districts. The findings identify that the EL student population at or above Ohio's average EL population (4%) does have a connection to positive EL proficiency performance. These results simply identify a connection. The design of the

analysis is not to suggest why the relationship exists. It simply determines that a connection exists.

The overall student diversity does not have a statistically significant relation to the district EL proficiency performance. The lack of connection supports recognition that the EL student population is different from other racially minoritized student populations (Zong & Betalova, 2017). EL students bring unique perspectives and experiences with them to school. Traditional understandings of racially minoritized student populations may not hold for students identified as EL. This recognition further supports the need for leaders to support teachers' development of approaching lesson design in a culturally responsive approach (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Teachers need to learn about the experiences and values EL students have from their families and community then find a way to bring those experiences and values into the classroom. The teacher has the obligation of making connections by including students' beliefs and values into the learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

The combination of both EL population and student diversity does have a relational connection to districts' EL proficiency performance in the first two years of the longitudinal analysis. This relational connection is not evident in the third year when the greatest number of districts report an EL proficiency score. This result indicates that there is a connection between the EL population, student diversity, and EL proficiency performance until the reporting n-size reduces so much that many districts report an EL proficiency score. The increase of districts reporting may cause a devaluation of the EL population and student diversity as relational variables on EL proficiency performance. This lack of connection may cause school leaders to not recognize the benefit of studying

schools with larger EL populations or diverse student populations to identify specific strategies for improving services and supports for EL students within their district.

### ***Assumptions of District Data***

This study focused on the district characteristic data of the percentage of EL students and student diversity. The researcher recognizes other district characteristics may influence the outcome of the analysis. The *not extremely undiverse* district set consists of urban districts within Ohio. These districts have higher EL student enrollment in comparison to suburban and rural districts. With the larger number of students in urban districts, the performance outcome is more consistent. In comparison, a suburban or rural district with few EL students could have significant variance in EL performance year to year as a result of the students who may demonstrate significant progress in one year and less progress in the following year.

Additionally, districts receive federal funding specific for EL programming and service, Title III, by student enrollment (Ohio Department of education, 2018b). Urban districts with larger EL populations receive more Federal funding in comparison to suburban and rural districts. Allocation of these funds are specific for EL services and programs. Districts with smaller EL populations, that receive less funds, cannot provide as robust of service offerings as the urban districts. So while the researcher uses district topology as a control for urban influence on the results some influence remains in the reporting.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings support that districts reporting an EL proficiency subscore and do not meet the EL proficiency target correlate with a negative district gap-closing score.

Because the number of districts that report an EL proficiency subgroup score increase over the three years this relation can serve as a motivator for district leaders to seek program and service improvements for the EL student population in the district.

The study did not analyze specific program and service improvements that have the greatest positive impact. The literature review confirmed that district leaders need to consider programs and services for EL students that address both content mastery and English proficiency simultaneously. In compliance with Federal and state policy, districts have minimum service provision requirements for serving students identified as EL. District leaders must ensure school programs are properly identifying, serving, assessing, and monitoring students whose primary language is not English.

### **Student Benefits**

Students all enter the school system with different levels of readiness and experiences (Deville & Chalhoub-Deville, 2011). This study supports the call for equity of services and supports for EL students to meaningfully access and benefit from school services. Districts with large EL student populations may have greater resources for meeting students' needs. Districts with small EL student populations have the same obligations for service provisions. Students benefit in language development and content learning when district leaders are strategic in resource allocation. The student benefits when adequate and relevant services are provided and staff demonstrate culturally responsive pedagogy that welcomes all students into the learning.

### ***EL Students Impact on District***

Proponents for policies that discriminate and promote inequitable treatment against immigrants claim EL student inclusion lowers the educational standard and

performance of schools (Flores, 2009). This study confirms the opposite. When EL students receive services and support for language proficiency they succeed. The success of subgroups supports the overall success of all students. Public schools can serve as the great equalizer for individual success and prosperity (Duncan, 2018). The findings of this study confirm that perspective for the EL student population in Ohio. The success of the EL student population does not diminish the success and prosperity of others. EL success enhances life for all participants. Culturally responsive leadership recognizes the value of diversity and how it can improve success for all participants (Khalifa, 2020).

### ***Culturally Responsive Alignment***

The study links characteristics of schools that effectively meet the language development needs of EL students. The study includes characteristics of the percent of students identified as EL and the diversity of student enrollment. The percent of EL students correlates to greater achievement of reaching the EL proficiency target, except in the third year of the study. A district's student diversity does not correlate with the EL proficiency outcome. This suggests that the district's obligation to meet the diverse and unique learning needs of EL students is not simply treating this subgroup like other subgroups. Culturally responsive leadership and instruction cannot be the only focus of district leaders seeking to improve programming and services for EL students. Districts must ensure programming and services specific for language development are in place and provided in unison with content instruction (Gardner, 2017).

Culturally responsive approaches help bridge the connection between home and school. The connection between content and life experiences strengthens making learning meaningful to the learner. This approach provides a venue for students to focus on

learning and growth. The district leader must also ensure the core skills of language development occur for the student. Even when a school can provide culturally responsive learning experiences, instruction specific for language development still must be present for the students' development of English proficiency.

### ***Implications for the Field***

The purpose of this study was not to provide a road map for improvement but to give district leaders additional information to consider when designing and implementing program improvements for learning outcomes beyond achievement testing. The relentless focus on remedial drill and memorization may result in short-term EL language development gains from one year to the next but limits long-term sustainable growth over time (Miranda & Cherng, 2018).

It is important to use these findings as part of a larger conversation for how school leaders can support teachers' design of engaging and meaningful lessons for students. Teachers need support from district leaders to move beyond compliance tasks for assessment measurers and to a classroom design that demonstrates value and appreciation of diverse student experiences. Connecting the learning goals to the students' cultural values and life experiences benefit the students' learning.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This longitudinal study focuses on EL proficiency scoring and state report card performance for districts within Ohio at the district level. Application of the findings outside of Ohio is limited as each state sets subgroup performance targets and gap-closing rating. Additionally, identification criteria of EL students and proficiency cut



scores on language development assessments are set by the individual state departments of education so are not uniformed.

So while an exact comparison of these findings with districts outside of Ohio is limited, the findings can be generalized to districts in states similar to Ohio. States in the Midwest have similar district structure and student demographic (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Public school districts in Midwestern states are similarly structured as local educational agencies (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Southern and western states have larger county based public school systems (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Ohio has an EL student population of 4%. Indiana's EL student population is 5.4%. Pennsylvania's EL student population is 3.6%. Kentucky's EL Population is 3.9%. This study can have general findings applicable for these similar Midwestern states. This study could be replicated using data from those states.

Internal limitations are the number of districts that report an EL proficiency subscore. While there are 611 total districts in Ohio, only 98 districts report an EL score in the 2016-2017 school year. In the 2017-2018 school year, 109 districts report a score and in the 2018-2019 school year, 143 districts report a score. This is less than the desired 500 participants for statistical significance, but inclusive of all participants so no additional participants can be included in the study. As the n-size is reducing to 15 for the 2019-2020 school year and beyond, the number of districts reporting an EL proficiency score will increase, resulting in district leaders dedicating greater attention to this student population to provide supports and services that benefit learning and growth.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

District leaders' attention on their EL student population is increasing. From this study, leaders can recognize the need for continued focus on programming, services, and resources for students identified as EL. Moving forward, a leader can have the motivation for change improvement through analysis of EL proficiency outcomes and how those outcomes can impact the district's overall gap-closing performance. Leaders can share this quantitative study with staff to help motivate the need for improvement.

There is a need for future research to determine the most impactful ways to allocate resources for programming and service improvements. The EL student population is extremely diverse even within the subgroup itself so the district leader needs to consider the specific needs of the EL population that they serve. Culturally responsive instructional approaches can foster a school environment where students feel welcome and valued. Students feel support and encouragement to take risks. This perspective helps district leaders recognize that the expectation for a single approach to language development for all EL students is not realistic. Through understanding the EL students' individual needs, previous experiences, culture, and values the leader can help teachers customize language development programming and services.

Research of existing programs and services can provide insight into specific approaches district leaders can take to improve the school experience for students identified as EL. Future research can examine districts with and without staff holding certification related to language instruction. What is the impact on student language proficiency when districts have formally trained staff compared to districts without staff formally trained? This research can consider how districts with low EL student

enrollment coordinate services for student benefit. Formalized training for staff with a culturally responsive perspective can ensure student achievement, cultural values, and social-political connections exist in the structure of the school (Ladson-Billing, 2014).

Research currently exists that confirms allocation of targeted funding improves student outcomes. Further research on Title III funding, funding specific for EL students, can identify the benefits of targeted funding for the EL population. From the findings districts an EL population average or above performed well. Does a contributor for success include funding resources that districts with smaller EL populations have limited access? While this study does not include analysis of funding the findings support the need for further research on that theme.

Analysis of current performance using the future outcome target supports the need for district leaders to continue efforts to improve programming and services for EL students. In the 2018-2019 academic year, the proficiency target is 54.0%. When a district meets or exceeds this proficiency target the district result is *met target*. As noted in chapter II, each year the ODE increases this target until it reaches the final target percentage of 75.0% in the 2025-2026 academic year. Table 8 details the 2018-2019 EL proficiency outcome for the districts using the same year proficiency target and the 2025-2026 academic year proficiency target.

**Table 8**

*Ohio District EL Proficiency Comparison – 2018-2019 Academic Year*

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	Target Met	Target Not Met	Not Reported	Total
<hr/>				
Proficiency Target Percentage				
2018-2019 (54.0%)	131	12	464	607
2025-2026 (75.0%)	23	120	464	607

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Using the current and future proficiency target percentage it is evident that -- while districts are currently meeting the standard -- if program and service improvements do not continue, districts will not sustain the current performance. In the 2018-2019 academic year, 131 districts met the proficiency target. Using the same performance results and the 2025-2026 academic year proficiency target only 23 districts continue to report *met target*. School leaders have the success now and the time to build staff capacity for better meeting the needs of the diverse EL population they serve.

**Conclusion**

Ohio school districts are on the right path for improving to meet the needs of their EL student population. Students are learning English and progressing to proficiency. The focus of school improvement for students identified as EL needs to remain a priority for district leaders. Through the development of culturally responsive leadership and instructional approaches, all students will benefit in learning, including EL students. Ohio report card data serve as a way to give district leaders attention to the EL population that otherwise may not occur due to the small enrollment size compared to overall student

enrollment. Leaders need to use report card data to motivate change and not allow it to become a singular focus for all decision making. Authentic student learning occurs when content connects to students' life experiences and family values. Application of the content into a larger social-political application supports students' connection and meaning of the content.

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## APPENDIX

APPENDIX A  
IRB APPROVAL



One University Plaza, Youngstown, Ohio 44555  
www.yсу.edu

November 3, 2020

Dr. Jane Beese, Principal Investigator  
Mr. James Tatman, Co-investigator  
Department of Teacher Education and Leadership Studies  
UNIVERSITY

RE: HSRC PROTOCOL NUMBER: 025-2021  
TITLE: Culturally Responsive Leadership: Critical Pedagogy for English  
Language Proficiency

Dear Dr. Beese and Mr. Tatman:

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed the abovementioned protocol and determined that it meets the expectations of DHHS 45 CFR 46.101(b)(4) and therefore is exempt from full committee review and oversight. Your project is approved.

Any changes in your research activity should be promptly reported to the Institutional Review Board and may not be initiated without IRB approval except where necessary to eliminate hazard to human subjects. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects should also be promptly reported to the IRB.

The IRB would like to extend its best wishes to you in the conduct of this study.

Sincerely,

Dr. Severine Van Slambrouck  
Director Research Services, Compliance and Initiatives  
Authorized Institutional Official

SVS:cc

c: Dr. Marcia Matanin, Chair  
Department of Teacher Education and Leadership Studies

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