Negotiating the "Middle" Ground: How English Learner (EL) Focused Teacher Leaders and Teachers Work Towards EL Instructional Change in Mainstream Elementary School Classrooms

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Abstract

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This dissertation investigates the relationship between district supported teacher leadership and improving the teaching and learning of English learner (EL) students, a rapidly growing, yet continually underserved population of students. Utilizing a comparative case study design, this dissertation focuses on the work of two district-supported EL-focused teacher leaders within one district serving high populations of diverse EL students and the teachers with whom they work. The dissertation is presented as a set of three independent, but closely related, articles whose findings draw from a common empirical data source.

The first article investigates the nature of the instructional leadership work of EL teacher leaders regarding the teaching and learning of EL students and the influence of this work on instructional change and educational opportunities for EL students district-wide. Drawing upon a

distributed leadership framework centered on what I call the "English learner instructional core," this article focuses on how the two EL teacher leaders define and drive EL instructional change at multiple levels of the system through their "midlevel" positioning at the district and with schools and classrooms.

The second article examines the work and discursive interactions between Robin, one of the focal EL teacher leaders and three focal grade level teams at varying levels of EL-related knowledge and experience. Drawing upon analyses of the teacher leader/teacher discourse, this article shows how each participant draws upon different discursive resources - such as research, Robin's EL-related expertise and experience, and the teachers' knowledge of their classroom and students - to negotiate EL-related professional learning in productive ways.

The third article examines what EL-related knowledge and practices the focal mainstream classroom teachers took up through their work with the EL teacher leaders. Drawing from a framework based in social interchanges focused on problems of practice and relational agency, this article shows how work with the EL teacher leader on problems of EL instructional practice embedded in the teacher's classroom with her specific students and high levels of relational agency facilitated changes in the teacher's instructional practice.

Together these three articles comprise a beginning understanding of how teacher leadership, whose work is focused on the teaching and learning of English learner students, may strengthen the educational opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse children and youth.

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As with most journeys in life, I did not walk this academic one alone. I am forever grateful to Tom Stritikus for keeping me on track through this lengthy process and always finding time for me in his busy schedule to move me on to the next stage, so that I did not lag or falter. My committee – Manka Varghese, Mike Knapp, Chrysan Gallucci, Su Motha – have been instrumental in shaping my thinking, continuing to push me intellectually, and providing me with immeasurable support throughout the process, but particularly at crucial stages. Each one of them is a role model for the kind of scholar/professor I hope to become.

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DEDICATION

To my family, who has always believed in me, even during those times when I didn't believe in myself.

Introduction

Culturally and linguistically diverse students continue to rank high among the populations of underserved students receiving an inequitable education in the United States. The education of these students remains controversial and set within a complex social and politically-charged atmosphere related to immigration, immigration reform, and bilingual versus "English only" education, along with the intersection of multiple factors such as race, culture, gender and socioeconomic status. Within this complex space, reside the culturally and linguistically diverse students, often referred to as "English learners (ELs)," working to access the same high quality education often received by their native English-speaking peers. They share this space with their teachers, many of whom continue to struggle with providing that quality instruction, either consciously or unconsciously influenced by the social and political aspects of educating these diverse students in classrooms, schools, and districts.

Tensions continue to exist in how best to instruct EL students: separate classrooms or mainstream? Specific English language instruction and or integrated with the content? What about newcomer students? How do we get students at more advanced levels of English language proficiency to exit EL services? How much native language support do we provide and how do we do it? "Just good teaching" or something more? These issues, and many others, are played out daily in the work of teachers as they struggle to learn what it means to equitably educate students with whom they might have had little experience working. In contrast, other teachers have migrated to instructional leadership positions to support their colleagues' EL instruction. These "teacher leaders" find themselves not only addressing the instructional issues above, but also having to advocate for "a seat at the table and have the needs of the [EL] students

recognized." This "fundamental tension" continues to "hover in the background" (Hakuta, 2011, p. 170) of ongoing conversations at the school and district levels in which these teachers and teacher educators work, influencing the type of support teachers receive through their professional learning opportunities.

As a former EL/bilingual classroom teacher and EL-focused teacher leader, and currently as a researcher, I became interested in not only clarifying these tensions and challenges for EL students and their teachers, but in looking for productive ways that educators might be negotiating these tensions and challenges. The growing interest in teacher leadership both in the research literature and in schools and districts, caught my attention as a potentially productive way to address the gaps I saw (and experienced) between classroom, school, and district – a way to bring together on-the-ground experience teaching and work with EL students and families into conversation with how others' work on the teaching and learning of these students. I was particularly interested in how this teacher leadership work unfolded in schools and districts that were in transition as they sought to improve EL instruction and services.

Therefore, I chose to focus my dissertation study on investigating how EL teacher leaders and mainstream classroom teachers negotiate understandings about EL students and instruction, what gets negotiated, and how teachers leverage that knowledge in their classroom practice (or not). As the study unfolded, and as I learned more about how these teacher leader/teacher interactions nested within the broader work of district level EL teacher leaders, I expanded the study to include the wider context of the teacher leadership work.

In the dissertation that follows, the reader will see how two district EL teacher leaders worked both specifically with teachers and across the system, and how this began to play out in the teachers' instruction, opportunities for professional development, and movement towards

improving the teaching and learning of EL students. First, however, I briefly outline the dissertation study design, followed by a description of the dissertation format and its rationale.

Summary of Study Design

The research presented in this dissertation stems from a qualitative, comparative case study of two district EL-focused teacher leaders, Robin and Beth.[1] I conducted this study during eight months of the 2011 – 2012 school year in a school district and two of its elementary schools. All settings served high numbers of diverse EL students, somewhat more recently in the cases of the two elementary schools, and were transitioning how they addressed the teaching and learning of EL students. Teacher leadership played a key part in these transitions. I followed Robin and Beth in multiple aspects of their teacher leadership work with teachers, principals, administrators, and other teacher leaders, EL-specific or non-EL specific, observing meetings and professional development the teacher leaders led, and conducting multiple interviews with Robin, Beth, principals, and selected colleagues.

I focused heavily on Robin and Beth's work with mainstream classroom teachers, selecting three teachers in two different schools with different approaches to serving EL students. These teachers were at different stages of their professional learning and experience regarding EL students and instruction. I followed these three teachers throughout the eight months of the study as they worked with the EL teacher leaders in their schools and classrooms, observing their professional development and instructional coaching sessions, conducting frequent interviews, and observing classroom instruction.

Findings for the study were drawn from multiple ethnographic data sources. Following

[1] To protect the identity of the participants, all participant and place names in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

the teacher leaders and teachers, I wrote detailed field notes (and audio-recorded, in most cases) of their meetings together in grade level and district-wide professional development and one-on-one coaching sessions; transcribed audio-recordings of multiple interviews throughout the eight months with each participant; and collected documents relating to the participants' work together. In addition, for the teacher leaders, I took field notes and transcribed audio recordings of their meetings with principals and other teacher leaders, EL-specific and non-EL specific; interviews with selected teacher leaders, principals, and the district EL coordinator. I also collected pertinent school and district documents related to programs and services each context provided for their EL students and the work of teacher leaders. For the teachers, I also took field notes of semi-monthly classroom observations and transcribed audio-recordings of debrief interviews throughout the eight months. I provide limited information about the study design and focal teachers here to give the reader a general overview of the study. More details are provided in each article of the dissertation, whose format is described next.

Structure of the Dissertation Study and Write-Up

This dissertation consists of three empirical stand-alone articles resulting from a single qualitative, comparative case study. I conceived of the original study with one central conceptual framework, design, and set of overarching research questions. However, during the analyses of the data, I became interested in separate, yet related phenomena of the work of EL-focused teacher leadership and its potential impact on EL instruction. I also began to see opportunities, through addressing the research questions, for generating different theories of teacher leadership and instructional influence, each focused on a facet of EL teacher leadership, that had been previously under-theorized or under-investigated (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Therefore, while

each article draws upon a common empirical source, each article relies on separate analyses and draws upon separate, occasionally overlapping, literature bases and developing conceptual frameworks.

As a reader of this dissertation, you may find areas where concepts are given shorter treatment in one article but more elaborated treatment in another article. There may also be some redundancy as ideas from one article are summarized in another article. While I attempted to keep these redundancies to a minimum, I felt that some overlapping ideas were important to include in different articles. For example, the literature on teacher leadership is still growing. Therefore, while I attempted to reference different aspects of this literature, you might see some studies repeated in another article in the literature review or conceptual framework for different purposes.

The structure of the dissertation is as follows:

Article 1: How Teacher Leaders Leverage Position and Expertise for English Learner-Focused Instructional Change

This article examines the nature of the instructional leadership work of district level EL teacher leaders regarding the teaching and learning of EL students and the influence of this work on instructional change and educational opportunities for EL students district-wide. Drawing upon a distributed leadership framework centered on what I call the "English learner instructional core," this article focuses on how the two EL district teacher leaders define and drive EL instructional change at multiple levels of the system through their "midlevel" positioning at the district and with schools and classrooms. This article highlights how the district EL teacher leaders were able to leverage their work and professional relationships both horizontally at each level of the system, such as across departments at the district level or across

schools at the school level, and vertically, across different levels of the system, to move EL instruction forward. Finally this article emphasizes the strong role that the teacher leaders' EL-specific expertise played in being able to affect change in the system, and the integral role of advocacy in their work.

Article 2: Constructing English Learner Professional Knowledge: The Discourse of English Learner Focused Teacher Leaders and Mainstream Elementary Classroom Teachers

This article examines the work and discursive interactions between Robin, one of the district EL teacher leaders and three focal grade level teams at varying levels of EL-related knowledge and experience. These interactions are examined within the context of grade level professional development sessions called "ELL[2] studios." This article focuses on the kinds of knowledge and assumptions about EL students, learning, and instruction that are negotiated and how they are negotiated, focusing on the discursive resources that both teacher leader and teacher draw upon in their conversations with each other. Drawing on a sociocultural learning framework, centered on theories of discourse, this article shows how Robin drew upon discourses related to her knowledge of EL research, her EL teaching experiences, and work with other teachers and schools in the district to engineer the direction of and differentiate the focus of EL-related professional learning. The article also shows how teachers drew heavily upon their own current classroom contexts, filtering their learning through what they were experiencing or what they had already experienced, and how this influenced their learning and interactions with Robin.

[2] "ELL" refers to "English language learner." There are many naming conventions in relation to culturally and linguistically diverse students both in the practitioner and research worlds. In the research literature, "EL" is becoming more conventional to use, so I will continue to use the term "EL" or "English learner" throughout the dissertation articles. However, when referencing the titles or terms used by the district and schools in this study, I defer to their naming convention. For example, I retain "ELL studio," as termed by the district, and not "EL studio."

Article 3: Teacher Relational Agency and Improving EL Instruction: Leveraging Work with EL-focused Teacher Leaders through Problems of Practice

The last article in the series examines what EL-related knowledge and practices the focal mainstream classroom teachers took up through their work with the EL teacher leaders. Drawing from a framework based in social interchanges focused on problems of practice, and relational agency, this article also investigates how the teachers leveraged both the information from their work with the EL teacher leaders and the EL teacher leaders themselves (or not) to improve the teachers' EL instruction. This article shows how work with the EL teacher leader on problems of EL instructional practice embedded in the teacher's classroom with her specific students and high levels of relational agency facilitated changes in the teacher's instructional practice.

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Article 1

How Teacher Leaders Leverage Position and Expertise for English Learner-Focused Instructional Change

English learner (EL) students comprise more than fourteen percent of all students in grades K-12 in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009), and are the fastest growing student population (Freeman & Freeman, 2007), particularly at the elementary school level (García, Jensen, & Scribner, 2009). Research studies and analyses of student achievement data continually draw attention to the inequitable education that these students receive, with regards to, among others, teachers who are appropriately trained to work with EL students (Collier & Thomas, 2007; Gandara et al., 2000; Gold, 2006; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Rumberger & Gándara, 2004). As school and districts move towards integrating their EL students into mainstream elementary classrooms, many classroom teachers struggle with addressing the cultural and linguistic diversity in their classrooms (deJong & Harper, 2005) and are unprepared for the instructional challenges associated with providing rigorous instruction that addresses both their EL students' academic and language learning needs (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005).

Researchers have documented teachers' needs for ongoing (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009), instructionally focused, school-embedded professional development, supported by human and material resources (Stoelinga & Mangin, 2010), to understand the unique needs of EL students and guide decisions about how best to serve them (deJong & Harper, 2005, 2008; Elfers et al., 2009). Rumberger and Gándara (2004), for instance, emphasize the importance of knowing "how to intervene educationally with

students whose personal and educational backgrounds are significantly different from the [traditionally] mainstream English-speaking student," (Rumberger & Gándara, 2004, p. 2038). Despite the calls for stronger, more targeted professional development opportunities for mainstream classroom teachers to improve their instruction for EL students, however, there remains a need to better understand how teachers are supported in their professional learning and instruction (Knapp, Elfers, Plecki, Loeb, & Zahir, 2005) of their EL students.

In attempts to support teacher professional learning around EL students and instruction, and provide teachers with the type of professional development outlined above, many districts have developed teacher leadership roles to provide instructional leadership for the teaching and learning of the district's EL students. While the literature on school-based teacher leaders, and those focused on EL instruction specifically, is rapidly growing, there remains surprisingly little empirical research on the roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders situated at the district level and how their work may or may not influence instructional change in the district. This is particularly important as these teacher leaders may be in a position to influence EL instruction not only at the school and classroom level, but district-wide.

This article, then, attempts to examine the work of EL teacher leaders centrally located at the district level, but whose work occurs at all levels of a school system: district, school, and classroom. In addition, this article explores how this work may impact, or not, the instruction and educational opportunities provided to EL students district-wide and in its schools. More specifically, I examine the following: *For EL-focused teacher leaders centrally located at the district level, what is the nature of their work in providing instructional leadership with regard to the teaching and learning of EL students? In what ways might the presence and work of these EL teacher leaders influence instructional change and educational opportunities provided to EL*

students at different levels of the system?

This study emerges from a noticeable lack of detail in the literature concerning the work of EL teacher leaders and how this may or may not influence district instructional change for EL students. In this article, I suggest that such understandings are needed if the field is to recognize the value, successes, and difficulties of employing teacher leadership at the district level as a viable means of building the EL instructional capacity of its teachers and principals and providing more equitable learning opportunities for these groups of underserved students.

In what follows, I begin with a review of the teacher leadership and EL instructional literature that informed this study, followed by a conceptual framework for examining the work and potential impact of EL-focused teacher leaders on EL instructional change. I then present findings showing how two EL teacher leaders centrally located at the district negotiated the challenges associated with facilitating changes related to the teaching and learning of EL students at the classroom, school, and district levels. In the ensuing analysis, I highlight the integrated and advocacy orientations of this work and how these EL teacher leaders' approaches facilitated positive movement towards improving the teaching and learning of EL students in their district. The article concludes implications for structuring the work of EL teacher leaders to support changes in teachers' instruction of their EL students and move the district forward in how it serves its EL students.

Literature Review

Although teacher leadership has existed for the past few decades (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), the roles of teacher leaders have been more recently conceptualized as a means to build teachers' instructional capacity in improving their instruction. In addition to working directly

with teachers, these teacher leaders may also take on administrative and managerial duties such as overseeing teachers' instruction, professional development, implementation of curriculum, and availability of instructional resources, while facilitating instructional collaboration between teachers and becoming knowledgeable about subject matter and teaching strategies (Mangin, 2007). Teacher leaders, then, are defined as instructional leaders, whose main charge is to guide, support, and direct *ongoing* teacher professional learning for "continued instructional improvement" (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008, p.1) with the goal of positively influencing student learning and achievement (Elmore, 2000). The role of teacher leaders, however, in building instructional capacity continues to be a complex, often ill-defined one (Taylor, 2008) both in practice and in the developing research literature on teacher leadership and instructional change.

The relationship between teacher leaders and "the District"

Many studies on teacher leadership involve teacher leaders whose work is situated primarily at the school and classroom levels (e.g. Camburn, Kimball, & Lowenhaupt, 2008; Firestone & Martinez, 2007; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Portin et al., 2009). Some teacher leaders may be positioned at a "mid-level" (Burch & Spillane, 2004) between the district, schools, and classrooms, taking on multiple roles and facing unique challenges in implementing district policy or reform and facilitating instructional improvement. These teacher leaders often negotiate "the middle ground" as part of their work, and serve as two-way communication "conduits" between the district's learning improvement agenda with teachers and their classrooms, or with the school's own learning improvement agenda (Portin et al., 2009).

Because these teacher leaders negotiate instructional change at different levels of the system, such as working directly with teachers on improving their instruction or supporting

schools in planning for school wide improvement (Swinnerton, 2007), these district situated teacher leaders are also conceived of as "boundary crossers," (Swinnerton, 2007) or "boundary spanners" (Timperley, 2005). In these roles, teacher leaders focus their work on "brokering," or "cultivating the exchange of information and expertise within and across schools," (Burch & Spillane, 2004, p. 4) and among different levels of the system. As brokers, these district teacher leaders "may design tools, manage data, provide training, build networks, and coordinate work with others throughout the system" (Swinnerton, 2007, p. 199). While these few studies begin to explain the nature of the work of teacher leaders centrally located at the district, however, the teacher leaders are often portrayed as negotiators of other peoples' agendas either at the district, school, and classroom levels, with limited attention paid to the potential these teacher leaders may have to drive educational change.

As agents of curricular and pedagogical reform (Leander & Osborne, 2008), teacher leaders may take on a more active and flexible role in facilitating instructional improvement (Portin et al., 2009). This role may stem from both their "work with teachers in ways that differ from – and may powerfully complement – the instructional support offered by supervisory administrators," (Portin et al., 2009, p. 96) and through the unique positioning of the teacher leaders' work and roles at district, school, and classroom levels.

Why a Focus on District Teacher Leadership and EL Instruction?

The current research on and use of teacher leaders for building instructional capacity has typically focused on content areas such as math and literacy (e.g., Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; Marsh et al., 2008), and less on instruction in these areas in relation to the specific students whom these teachers serve. Many educators, however, continue to struggle with how to meet the

language and content learning needs of EL students in particular (Gándara et al., 2005), due in part to the challenge of providing quality instruction for these students.

Addressing the complexity of EL instruction. Scholars point to the complexity of teaching diverse groups of EL students within the mainstream classroom that vary not only by language and culture, but multiple, interrelated factors such as levels of English language proficiency and literacy, native language schooling, socioeconomic status, and life experiences in the students' home countries and immigration (Enright, 2011; Gándara et al., 2005; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). Educators must simultaneously provide ways for EL students to access rigorous, grade-level appropriate curriculum and to develop academic language in English (Collier & Thomas, 2007; Cummins, 2000; deJong & Harper, 2005; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008; Gibbons, 2002; Short, 2002) to provide EL students with learning opportunities on par with those of their native English speaking peers. Therefore, teachers need to develop an understanding of the English language demands of the academic curriculum and how to appropriately scaffold learning for EL students so that the students can participate successfully in academic tasks and develop their academic and linguistic competencies (deJong & Harper, 2005; Lucas et al., 2008).

Because of these instructional challenges, and the unique nature of language learning that infuses all content learning, teacher leaders are needed who have expertise in the teaching and learning of EL students, in order to support teacher learning of this instructional complexity. A few empirical studies have shown the strong potential EL-focused teacher leaders may have for improving mainstream classroom teacher pedagogy for EL students (e.g. Batt, 2010; Penner-Williams & Worthen, 2010; Teemant, 2010). These few studies, however, focused primarily on instructional coaching work of school-based teacher leaders, which often forms only a part of the

work of those EL teacher leaders whose role may extend beyond that of working in a single school.

The role of EL focused teacher leaders. As information brokers between district, school, and classroom, EL-focused teacher leaders who are positioned beyond the boundary of a single school, are in unique positions to support teachers as they collectively work to make sense of instructional policies and approaches for EL students. EL-focused teacher leaders may help organize, communicate and interpret information coming from various sources (e.g. district, state, community, research) to facilitate teachers' sensemaking (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Smircich & Morgan, 1982) as they continually examine, re-examine, and adjust their - instructional practices according to developing conceptions of "quality instruction" for EL students through curricular, programmatic, and instructional reforms adopted by school and district.

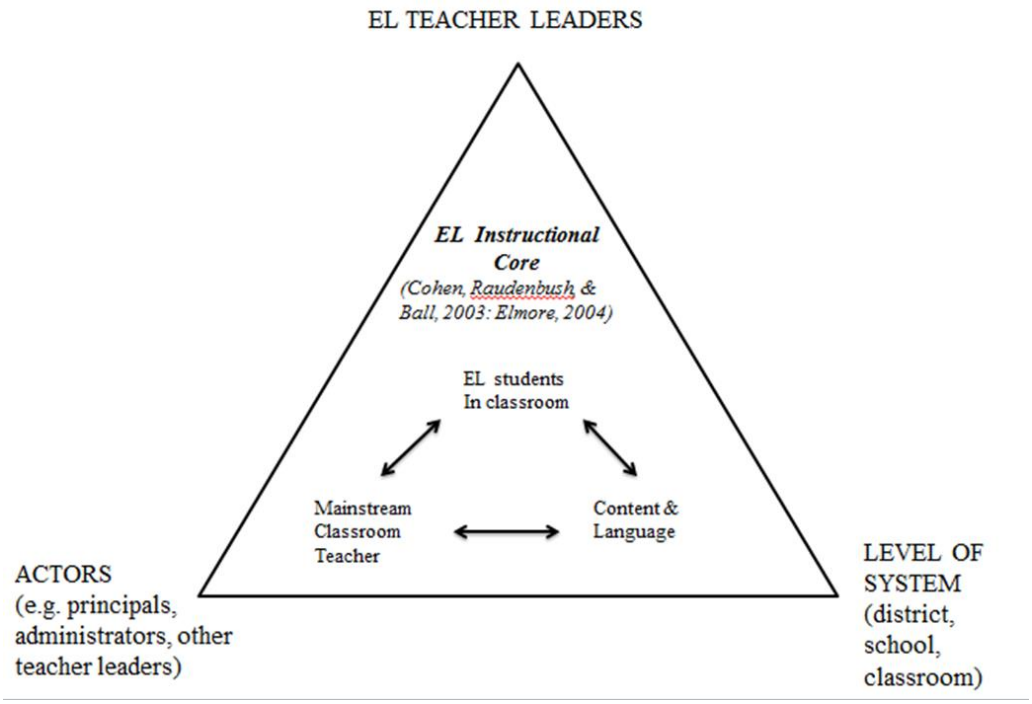
EL-focused district teacher leaders, however, because of their "mid-level" positioning, may also play a key role in facilitating important changes throughout the district that improve the teaching and learning of EL students. Some scholars have identified important systemic changes that have occurred in the few districts who have been successful in teaching their EL students: providing district-wide professional development opportunities for all teachers, integrating EL students into the general educational program (Hakuta, 2011; Horwitz et al., 2009) and providing "organization and coherence of schools and districts" (Hakuta, 2011, p. 171) around EL-related issues. Given the unique and simultaneous position of some teacher leaders at district, school, and classroom levels, the work of EL-focused teacher leaders may involve driving this systemic work focused on the teaching and learning of EL students. How then, might we go about conceptualizing and investigating the complexity and potential impact of the work of district EL

teacher leaders? In the next section, I present and detail the framing ideas that guided this study, followed by the methodology through which I addressed my research questions.

Conceptual Framework

The EL teacher leaders in this article are situated at multiple levels of the school system through their work with administrators and other teacher leaders at the district level, principals and staff at the school level, and teachers, instructional assistants, and specialists at the classroom levels. The work of these EL teacher leaders, then, necessarily involves being able to negotiate multiple contexts with multiple actors around a central focus on EL students, learning, and instruction. *(See Figure 1).*

Figure 1. A conceptual framework for the work of EL teacher leaders.



Instructional leadership is "distributed" among different actors at multiple levels of a system through their "activities engaged in by leaders, in interaction with others in particular contexts around specific tasks" (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004, p. 5) related to the teaching and learning of EL students. Within this distributed leadership framework, social context is a key constituent of the EL teacher leaders' practice, as the work with others to negotiate what EL instruction and services look like for the EL students at a particular school site, or for the district as a whole. Material artifacts, such as incorporation of EL strategies and products into the district's EL literacy frameworks; tools, such as EL student data or levels of English language proficiency; and language around EL students, instruction, and educational equity all define the work and interactions of district EL teacher leaders (Spillane et al., 2004) as they work to promote instructional change in the district.

Interactions between district EL teacher leaders, teachers, principals, and administrators

At the center of instructional change and creating more equitable learning opportunities for EL students is the interaction – activities, tools, artifacts, and discourse - between the EL teacher leader and other actors in the system, as they work together to address the learning and instructional needs of the school and district's EL students. The strength of these interactions lies in the focus on the "instructional core" (Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003; Elmore, 2004), consisting of complex relationships between teachers, their students and knowledge of the students' learning and instruction. Although not clearly defined for EL students specifically, beginning with the instructional core allows educators to focus on "what is required before teaching practice can be plausibly be expected to shift from its modal patterns towards more engaging and ambitious practices" (Elmore, 2004, p.14). In his research, Elmore, for example,

found that schools successful in improving classroom practices for their students focused on instructional practice first and then modified school structures in support of and around the students and instruction.

In this article, the EL instructional core is conceptualized as knowledge of EL students and instruction that addresses both content and language learning; how teachers understand the nature of this knowledge; the EL students' role in their own learning process and the teacher's relationships with their EL students, and how these ideas manifest in teaching and classwork. *(See Figure 1.)* Instead of seeing "knowledge" of EL students as fixed and something to be attained, however, the EL instructional core is dynamic, defined, and re-defined within the interactions of teacher leader and actors as new information becomes available and previously known information is questioned, validated, or discarded. Sense-making of the teaching and learning of EL students, then, involves co-construction and "coproduction" (Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006, p. 62) of understandings of how best to meet the needs of the EL students in a particular classroom, school, or district. Therefore, EL teacher leaders may cultivate and nurture professional relationships with multiple actors to develop social networks through which information can flow, learning can be negotiated, and capacity can be built, and to build the trust (Coburn & Russell, 2008) needed to open up productive conversations and action regarding educational equity for EL students.

Through their interactions with multiple actors – teachers, principals, administrators, other teacher leaders –EL teacher leaders centrally located at the district are also in a unique position to not only facilitate communication and the flow of information among people in different district, school, and classroom contexts around EL students. The EL teacher leader, as a boundary crosser, can begin to establish connections and coherence around EL teaching and

learning across district, school, and classroom contexts through their work with teachers, principals, and administrators as they work through problems of EL-related instructional practice or problems of implementation of services and professional support of EL students. Thus, the EL teacher leaders' role is to work with educators at all levels of the system focused on the EL instructional core, although how teacher leaders work with these different actors around this instructional core may vary.

Instructional change and the importance of social context in teacher learning

Within this distributed leadership and social interaction framework, social context is also a key factor in the EL teacher leaders' practice, as they work with others to negotiate what EL instruction and services look like for the EL students in particular classroom and school sites, or for the district as a whole. The classroom, school, and district contexts of approaches to EL instruction and perceptions of EL students and learning both mediate the content of the district EL teacher leader interactions with other actors and shape those interactions (Ellis, Edwards, & Smagorinsky, 2010). In other words, these contexts influence how the district EL teacher leader both works with different actors and what knowledge regarding the teaching and learning of EL students gets taken up and/or leveraged in instructional practice. "People grow into…frameworks from thinking afforded by the cultural practices and tools made available to them in the social settings of their development" (Ellis, Edwards, &Smagorinsky, 2010, p. 4). For example, in district, school, and classroom contexts that are transitioning to an EL focus, the EL teacher leader may necessarily take on an advocacy stance for even "bringing [EL] to the table" (Hakuta, 2011).

Teacher learning and EL instructional change, then, occurs in relation to the cultural

practices and social networks in the district and schools, such as current approaches to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students, the presence (or absence) of norms of collaboration, as well as tools such as talk (or discourse), curriculum, student data, available to them. Institutions, such as schools and districts, and social context play an important determining role in the systematizing ideas, opinions, and concepts that influence ways of thinking and behaving (Mills, 2004) with regard to EL students. EL focused teacher leaders may hold an important role in determining in developing those EL-related "ideas, opinions and concepts" that influence the way educators within the system think about the teaching and learning of EL students and reify that thinking through practice. Knowledge of what in which each context may facilitate or hinder EL instructional change may be particularly useful for EL teachers leaders working in school districts that are transitioning to more focused approaches to serving their EL students and learning to take ownership of the teaching and learning of their EL students.

Study Design

The research for this article comes out of a larger, yearlong qualitative, comparative case study of two district-level EL-focused teacher leaders and their work with different schools, principals, grade level teams and teachers. Overall, the study aimed to better understand the process of teacher professional learning to teach EL students more productively through work with a teacher leader and the potential of teacher leadership for affecting positive changes in teachers' instructional practice for EL students. During the course of the study, however, it became apparent that the work of the focal district EL teacher leaders was not only multi-faceted, but integrated in ways that both directly and indirectly influenced their work in schools and with teachers and principals. I, therefore, expanded the study to be able to investigate the role of the

focal district EL teacher leaders in developing the context for EL teaching and learning in which they also worked.

Selection of sites and participants

This study took place in the Horizon School District, an urban school district which served high percentages of diverse populations of EL students and which employed teacher leadership as a main component to supporting teachers' instruction and work with their EL students. I purposefully selected (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002) Horizon, as it was only a few years into the process of shifting its schools toward a more focused approach to working with EL students. I was interested in examining a "district-in-transition" to explore the potential role EL teachers leaders might play in the instructional change process as it was unfolding. The Horizon district teacher leaders were incredibly active in both fostering the shift and spearheading other EL-focused initiatives, working with teachers, principals, school-based EL teacher leaders, and other district departments. This district setting provided "information-rich" (Patton, 2002, p. 230) cases of teacher leadership that would yield important insights into teacher leadership, teacher learning, and instructional change regarding the education of English learner students.

As elementary schools were more highly impacted with growing numbers of diverse EL students (García et al., 2009), I chose to focus my inquiry at the elementary level. The schools within Horizon School District were in different places in their focus on EL students, and I chose two elementary school sites – Chestnut Elementary and Willow River Elementary - which represented two contrasting pathways for approaching the teaching and learning of EL students. Chestnut Elementary, for example, was moving toward a more school wide focus on EL students

and instruction, while Willow River focused on "good instruction for all students" regardless of EL designation. Both elementary schools were in transition in how they served their EL students, having experienced a significant demographic shift in the numbers and diversity of EL students attending their schools. Both schools had also recently integrated all of their EL students into mainstream classrooms, and therefore their teachers had different levels of EL expertise and experiences working with EL students. These types of settings provided rich contexts within which to explore the work of EL teacher leaders at different levels of the system – district, school, and classroom – and how the EL teacher leaders interacted with various actors set within different approaches and levels of focus on EL students.

Participants. I chose two teacher leaders centrally located at the district office, Robin and Beth, because of their high level of expertise in EL instruction and working with EL students, their commitment and passion for the equitable education of EL students, and clear visions of what mainstream classroom teachers should learn and attend to in their instruction of EL students. Both had varying levels of experience in working with teachers in professional development settings, and showed a continued vigilance towards their own professional development. They took it upon themselves to read and stay current with EL-related research through webinars, attending conferences, books, and articles. In addition, both teacher leaders were highly reflective upon their own work with teachers, work within the district, and what the research afforded teachers and teacher leaders in terms of EL students, learning, and instruction. Meeting these criteria provided rich information and potentially strong examples of how teacher leaders with solid EL expertise were able to work with different actors at multiple levels of the system.

Robin and Beth also provided a good contrast with each other, as both had varying levels

of teaching experience and experience working with teachers and in the district. Robin was an experienced teacher of EL students, professional developer, instructional coach, and teacher leader with numerous years in the Horizon School District. This was Beth's first year, however, in the district. While she had many years teaching experience working with EL students, as well as experience as a GLAD trainer, this was the first teacher leader position and at the district level. Thus, the variation in participants outlined above allowed me to compare and contrast how factors such as professional identity, background, and previous knowledge and experiences influenced the way these teacher leaders approached and addressed EL student learning and instruction through their work at different levels in the system.

By focusing on EL teacher leaders at the district level, I was able to examine not only their work with specific teachers, but to set that work within the context of their work with other key educators in the school system, such as principals and other district department personnel, on the teaching and learning of EL students.

Data Sources and Data Collection Approaches

Throughout the study, I employed ethnographic methods (Wolcott, 1978/1988/1997) of research to provide "thick" (Geertz, 1973) descriptions of the work and interactions of the EL teacher leaders and different actors in the system with whom they worked. These in-depth descriptions may hold important insights (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) about district level teacher leadership and the evolution of EL-focused instructional work that could be useful in other similar contexts where districts and schools may be utilizing teacher leadership as a way to support teacher learning and instruction of their EL students and improve the quality of how districts and schools serve their EL students.

Throughout the course of eight months of a school year, I followed the district EL teacher leaders, beginning with their work with the focal schools and teachers, and expanding to include meetings and professional development sessions with other actors in the system, as the teacher leaders' work unfolded. Data came from multiple ethnographic sources: interviews; observations of classroom instruction, meetings between EL teacher leaders and teachers, principals, and other district level teacher leaders; and pertinent documents to document the process, content, and context of the teacher-leader work.

A central component of this data collection strategy was observing and recording the discourse and activities of the EL teacher leaders and actors at various levels of the district system in which they interacted. At the district level, meetings ranged from district project work such as the integration of EL instructional strategies into the literacy frameworks to district wide professional development sessions for new teachers and school-based EL teacher leader meetings led by the district level EL teacher leaders. At the school level, meetings included those between the focal EL teacher leaders and the principals of the focal elementary schools, grade-level meetings and professional development sessions and individual instructional coaching sessions. (Although not addressed specifically in this article, at the classroom level, to investigate potential connections between the work of the EL teacher leaders and instructional practice, I formally observed the instruction of three focal teachers' classrooms semi-monthly, many observations taking place soon after meetings with the EL teacher leader.) I wrote detailed field notes for all meetings and classroom observations, and transcribed audio recordings of most of the meeting and professional development sessions, where participants had given their consent.

Throughout the eight months of the study, I also conducted frequent, individual semi-structured and open-ended interviews (Patton, 2002) with the participants to gain their

perspective and insights into the learning and decisions they made regarding the education of their EL students, their participation and interactions in the meetings and professional development sessions, and their reflections on classroom instruction. As the study evolved, I interviewed other key participants to include a wider focus on the work of EL teacher leaders with other actors in the system. For example, in observing one grade-level professional development session that focused on both EL and literacy instruction, I not only debriefed with Beth, the focal EL teacher leader, but also interviewed her co-facilitator, Krista, who was a district literacy specialist. At the administrator level, two interviews, one informal and one formal, semi-structured interview, were conducted with each principal of the focal elementary schools and the district EL coordinator to debrief their work with the district EL teacher leaders and to gain an understanding of the transitional nature of the school and district contexts (exs: demographics, history, mission, community, programs) and the initiatives related to the education of EL students. These interviews also revealed the philosophies and approaches each administrator had toward the instruction and services their schools and district provided, how "EL" fit, or did not fit, into what was being provided, and the changes and rationales of the principals and district EL coordinator were making at both the school and district levels.

I triangulated this observation and interview data (Merriam, 2009) with documents used during the teacher leader/teacher meetings and that were pertinent to the school's and district's curricular, instructional, and professional development plans, programs, and approaches to EL instruction and learning.

Data Analysis

As scholars have called attention to the need for more theoretical grounding of studies of

teacher leadership (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), I sought to not only understand the work of district EL teacher leaders in the processes of teacher professional learning and EL instruction change, but to seek to build a theory (Charmaz, 2001) about how the work of EL teacher leaders at the district level may influence instruction and services for the shifting demographics and growing populations of EL students. Although I did not conduct a pure grounded theory approach to data analysis, I relied on this approach's inductive strategies (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

All interview, observation, document, and discourse data went through successive rounds of iteratively selective, focused coding schemes (Charmaz, 2001; Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994) according to themes that emerged from the data. I separated the data into "school-level," "district-level," and "classroom level." Then, I overlaid these codes with three other sets of codes, related to (1) district and school projects, initiatives, programs, or services, such as "ELL service plan" or "EL/literacy frameworks," (2) EL-related topical codes such as "oral language development" and "EL literacy instruction," and (3) EL teacher leader codes that centered on the actions in their work such as "district collaboration," "developing teacher leaders," "work with principals." Some EL project and teacher codes were unique to the "level" I had previously coded while others occurred at multiple levels, such as "ELL service plan."

During subsequent rounds of analysis, I looked for patterns in the data for EL-related themes, projects, initiatives, perspectives; EL teacher leader work that cut across different levels of the school system; and codes that marked a shift, transition, or change for the school, teachers, and/or the district. For example, the "ELL service plan" code showed up at all levels of the school system. Using the constant comparison method (Merriam, 2009), I took those segments of data and triangulated them based upon source – observations at different levels of the system,

interviews with different actors, and the ELL service plan documents themselves – to seek confirming or disconfirming evidence and flesh out or problematize this emerging theme. I continued a similar process with the other emerging themes: comparing data, categories, and patterns that emerged and developed during the analysis (Charmaz, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and looking for continuities or discontinuities in all sets of data. As I compared and put these data pieces together, I was able to construct a more cohesive understanding of the nature and scope of the district EL teacher leader work in this district-in-transition.

The Horizon School District: A "district in transition"

The Horizon School district, like many school districts in the United States, was in the process of transitioning the ways it served its EL students in response to the changing demographics of its populations. The district's high numbers of EL students were very culturally and linguistically diverse. Over one hundred different languages are represented, with about 60-65% of the students speaking Spanish as a native language, and high populations of students from countries in southeast Asia and east Africa. As Horizon's numbers continue to grow, several important shifts occurred in how the district chose to serve its EL students that had a profound impact on what it meant for mainstream classroom teachers to teach and support the learning and achievement of their EL students.

One major shift, for example, was the continuing integration of EL students into mainstream classrooms. Previously, EL students were segregated into EL-designated classrooms that were multi-grade, taught by an "ELL teacher," and where the focus was on learning English. These classrooms often were not taught by highly qualified teachers, and the EL students did not have access to grade level content. In the past few years, recognizing this inequity, Horizon

shifted its focus to integrating EL students into mainstream classrooms. However, within the district, schools retained autonomy in its decision-making on how the schools chose to serve their students. While the district EL department could make strong recommendations to schools for mainstreaming EL students, the decision remained school-based.

One key influence, however, that promoted EL mainstreaming was the recent designation of an "ELL budget" for schools. This budget shifted the responsibility for funding ELL classrooms from the district to the individual schools, and increased the school's attention to how they were serving EL students. Robin, one of the district level EL teacher leaders explained,

> Most other schools now have gotten rid of their ELL classrooms for various reasons. Some of them to deal with problems that were created by having an ELL classroom – the multiple grade levels and no access to grade level content. Others are getting rid of them because they have to pay to have a lower class size. So they have to pay money out of their ELL budget to keep the class size lower. It's a financial incentive not to have an ELL classroom, basically…

This transfer of EL responsibility to the individual schools and therefore mainstream classroom teachers, however, also resulted in several areas that needed change at the school level, particularly taking ownership of and teaching EL students within the mainstream classroom. The district level teacher leaders, Robin and Beth, held a central role in supporting schools and teachers with this shift both at the school and district levels.

In the following sections, I will show how the district EL teacher leaders directed and managed this work through their connections to different areas of the district system. I will then bring this information together to show how these key connections were vital for moving the schools, teachers, and the district forward in serving its ELL students and the central role the district EL teacher leaders' played in moving this system forward.

Bringing together in-classroom, in-school, and across-district work: Changing teachers' EL instruction

The district level EL teacher leaders' roles were complex and multi-faceted. These teacher leaders, former classroom teachers themselves, were housed within the district office, but worked at multiple levels of the school district to strengthen how EL students were served at the classroom, school, and district levels. At the classroom level, Robin and Beth's work simultaneously aimed to move mainstream classroom teachers towards both taking ownership of the EL students who were now in their classes and build the teachers capacity to serve their EL students. Brian, the district EL coordinator, explained the challenge that lay with Robin and Beth's instructional leadership work,

> I think a lot of teachers don't even know that they don't know, right? They went to GLAD training and they think that that's it. And they're not hearing anybody tell them anything different except like the noisy ELL people that come in every once in a while…We've undone the structural barriers that kept kids out of access to core content. We've thrown them in; they have access to core content which is good…But we haven't done that deep instructional work to help teachers understand what they need to do to meet those kids' needs. That's still a pretty broad thing.

Brian outlines here how even though structural barriers had been removed so that EL students could access content, there was still much deeper work to be done in changing teachers' instruction and creating a more widespread, cohesive focus on improving the teaching and learning of EL students.

Robin and Beth began some of this work in providing direct professional development in the form of whole staff trainings, grade level focused professional development and meetings, instructional coaching, and modeling of EL lessons and strategies. Because the district EL teacher leader role that had them working with different schools and teachers across the district, however, Robin and Beth also brought a "big picture" view of the EL-related issues in the

district to ground what the teachers were learning in context. For example, in a sixth grade professional development at one school, Robin and the sixth grade teachers talked about long-term ELs and the importance of academic language. Robin shared that academic language had been a big focus "across schools" because "this is where kids seem to be stalling. They get to level 3 and sit there." Here, Robin underscored the urgency of addressing academic language with EL students by drawing teachers' attention to how the problem of EL students stalling at a level 3 was an issue in schools throughout the district.

Robin and Beth also leveraged their experiences with other teachers in other schools to help the teachers with whom they were working to understand key EL-related instructional concepts and second language acquisition and to provide the teachers access to what others were doing in other schools. Some of these were practical suggestions. For example, when discussing the logistics of assessing EL students' oral language, both Robin and Beth shared with their teachers how teachers in other schools orally assessed their EL students quickly, either using the Rigby oral assessment or simply writing down snippets of what their EL students say. Robin and Beth then explained how they were working with these teachers to understand the levels of English language proficiency of their students and to guide academic English language instruction.

On other occasions, the EL teacher leaders drew upon their knowledge of EL instruction in other schools and classrooms across the district to provide teachers with examples of what might or might not be productive in working with their EL students. For example, in one kindergarten ELL studio, Robin and the teachers discussed how to develop oral language for EL students. Robin explained how she had observed one kindergarten teacher in a different school doing a read-aloud. While the books "had pictures" to make the content more comprehensible to

the EL students, all of the talking had been done by the teacher and one or two students she had called on. Thus, the EL students in her classroom were not given an opportunity to talk and develop their oral language skills. In this way, both Robin and Beth leveraged their work across the district to provide teachers with access to information and EL instruction and assessment ideas that the teachers might not otherwise have had. This across-district perspective also allowed Robin and Beth to raise the urgency of the teachers' work with their EL students by setting that work within the context of similar issues happening district-wide.

Facilitating school level change: Work with principals and the ELL service plan

Robin and Beth's work with teachers was set within the school's capacity for and attention to the meeting the needs of their EL students. The schools varied within the district, however, with respect to the size of the population of EL students and the cultural and linguistic makeup of those EL students. The work that Robin and Beth did to support each school, then, varied depending upon multiple factors, but particularly the philosophy and commitment of the principal of each school to setting a focus on serving their EL students. Due to the school-based decision-making structure in the district, the principals held a lot of power in choosing to leverage, or not, Robin and Beth. Beth explained,

> I have to make sure that I'm being as kind as possible to the principal and following the principal's wishes 'cause at the end of the day that's like – they're the people who are gonna get the things done we need to get done…One of the things that I'm noticing is I feel like the principals are actually more reserved than the teachers. The principals, the three or four that I'm mainly working with, have all said, "I don't know how receptive the teachers are gonna be. I don't know if this is really the direction they want to go. I'm not sure if they're gonna wanna do this right now. They are already so busy." Then, when I meet the teachers, they're like, "Thank you for being here. Please help us. What can we do?"

Beth draws attention here to the importance of building positive relationships with the principals and the possible misalignment between what the principal's focus and the teachers' needs.

One key tool Robin and Beth leveraged in differentiating their work with schools was the ELL service plan. Each school was required to complete and submit to the district ELL department, a plan for how the school would spend the money they were allocated for their EL students to serve their EL students. This plan covered multiple areas such as, professional development support for the teachers, bilingual tutor services, newcomer student induction procedures, EL materials, and EL parental involvement. Built within this plan, there was also a requisite minimum of 10 -15 days in which the schools were required to work with Robin or Beth. The ELL service plan, then, held the principals and schools accountable for the programs, services, instruction, and professional development they put into place for their EL students with the Plan's specific money allocation and EL teacher leader time requirements.

Robin and Beth bore most of the responsibility for supporting principals both in writing and implementing the schools' ELL service plans. Beth explained, "the effort is to try and to get principals and teachers and whoever's in the building thinking more intentionally about how they're serving their ELL kids…that 'come in, sit down, and you'll figure it out' thing is not good enough." Often times, this entailed Beth and Robin actively pursuing meeting dates and times to write and discuss the plans. Through the ELL service planning and implementation, Robin and Beth not only leveraged space for their own work with teachers and schools, but used the plan as a tool to talk with principals about key, school-specific EL issues, advocate for certain EL services or programs to be put into place, and in general, to move the school forward in how it served its EL students. The teacher leaders' use of the ELL service plan differed, however, by school, reflecting in part how the principal approached EL-related issues.

Moving towards a school-wide focus on EL students: the Chestnut Elementary example. For example, Becca leveraged the ELL service plan to both further align her work with the principal's vision of moving Chestnut Elementary toward a school-wide focus on the teaching and learning of EL students and to advocate for implementing a full-time school-based EL teacher leader. Chestnut Elementary was in its first or second year of integrating its EL students into the mainstream classrooms. Over the past few years, the school had grown, with their EL population comprising 30% of the student body, and continuing to rise. Becca, the principal, committed to serving the EL students in her school, and actively sought out Beth's help in improving how Chestnut Elementary served its EL students. As a result, Beth and Becca worked closely together throughout the year to bring forward a focus on EL students in the teachers' instruction, targeting Beth's work with the fifth and sixth grades to build the teachers' EL instructional capacity.

During the ELL service planning meeting between Beth and Becca, Beth served as a sounding board and resource for Becca, as Becca thought through aloud what to keep or modify in her plan. Beth, however, also used the ELL service plan and meeting time with Becca to advocate for certain items that would be beneficial for Chestnut's developing school-wide focus on EL students. For example, in one key discussion, Beth pushed for Becca to "purchase" a school-based ELL teacher leader with the school's EL money. Beth explained,

> I feel like they need a facilitator because I get the ball started rolling, but it's not getting anywhere. It's like they don't have anybody to push instructional practice, to push thinking behind how they're serving their ELL population…They really need somebody there to do that because they have a lot of kids.

Beth highlighted here the importance of having a school-based EL teacher leader to move the work forward at the school and facilitate the school-wide focus on improving instruction and services for their EL students.

Throughout the discussion, Beth and Becca addressed several tensions around employing a school-based EL teacher leader. For example, Becca had used some of the money this year to pay for bilingual paraeducators for small group reading instruction, which fit into the school's recent adoption of the Response to Intervention[3] (RTI) framework for instruction. She agreed that Chestnut would benefit from having a school-based EL teacher leader, but stated a priority in using the money to buy more bilingual paraeducator time for small group instruction in RTI. Beth countered by telling Becca about not only the need Chestnut had for a school-based EL teacher leader in all of the initiatives and work the school would be doing in the future, but also bringing in Beth's knowledge of other schools and how they have used their EL money for part-time or full-time EL teacher leaders.

At the end of the lengthy exchange, Becca had moved from a "not possible" stance to one of wanting to learn more from Beth and other principals about how to fund a school-based EL teacher leader and run RTI. In the meantime, Becca included in the ELL service plan a focus on a TELL (Team ELL) team of mainstream classroom teachers with EL experience and expertise to oversee some of the EL work outlined in the plan that a school-based EL teacher leader might otherwise have done. Thus, Beth pushed Becca to think about not only the services she was providing, but how a school wide focus on EL students and instruction could potentially move forward and sustained through the use of a school-based EL teacher leader.

Working with Beth on the ELL service plan also helped Becca to include space for professional development around school-wide EL strategies. As Beth explained,

[3] Response-To-Intervention or RTI is a framework of instruction that focuses on the use of research-based instruction and interventions, regular monitoring of student progress, and the subsequent use of these data over time to make educational decisions. At the school and classroom levels, instruction is divided into three tiers. Tier 1 focuses on having most (~80%) of the students within a classroom accessing core instruction. Tier 2 involves small group instruction for those students who need more support (~10-15%), while Tier 3 focuses on intensive, one-on-one instruction for those student who need heavy support.

> I think it will build up the sense of community and that sense of "our kids" and how we instruct all kids and then second and quite honestly, because it's easier to support. Because I can go in and say, "I'm looking to see that pictorials are up and that you've got your spoons and if you don't, then I'm gonna come in and give you some coaching on that."

Beth draws attention to how the school-wide EL instructional strategies could potentially serve to build community and ownership of the learning of the teachers' EL students, to provide an access point into teachers' classrooms to support teachers as they build their instructional capacity for their EL students, and to provide accountability for implementing EL instructional strategies. Thus, the ELL service plan provided a vehicle through which Beth and Becca could concretely outline EL services and work out tensions between competing school initiatives.

Negotiating an explicit focus on EL students: the Willow River Elementary case.

Willow River Elementary, like Chestnut Elementary, also had a high and growing population of EL students. Jacob, the principal at Willow River, however, advocated for "All children means all; if we're going to teach them, we need to teach them." Jacob focused on the use of assessment in knowing where the teachers' students were and as a guide and benchmark for instruction. He explained,

> I did not want to focus our time and attention on all these separate groups of people who were solely focused in on this sector of student population because the only thing that does in time is breed resentment and dissension. Because if you're focused in on one group, somebody else is being left behind. Somebody's not being focused on and that's the thing I don't want to happen. I've seen it happen many, many times before back East 'cause these ideas were already in place or tried and I bear witness to that.

Jacob's view, while inclusive of EL students, often came into conflict with the efforts of Robin and Maggie, Willow River's school-based EL teacher leader, to bring a focus on EL students and learning to the forefront of instruction. Throughout the year, while Robin and Maggie were allowed to hold grade-level EL focused professional development sessions, the continuation of that work was often difficult due to the lack of support for the EL-focused work.

Over the course of the two ELL service plan meetings Robin held with Jacob, however, she noted a shift in Jacob's thinking. She noted that in the first meeting, "A lot of this is pretty new to him honestly because he wasn't involved and he delegates," so she had to explain the process and what other schools had done. However, Robin also noticed that he started to "realize that it seemed like that ELL kids – we do need to give teachers some specific support and training on how to most effectively teach this population of kid." Robin continued to use the ELL service planning meetings to push Jacob's thinking on resource allocation for supporting EL students. Although Jacob did eliminate the school-based EL facilitator position, Robin continued to push for identifying Willow River staff and faculty to develop and continue EL-focused work. This resulted in Jacob naming in the plan specific people and a team of teachers who are "ELL experienced" to cover duties formerly assumed by Maggie.

In addition, Robin used staff survey data, which aligned with Jacob's data-driven focus, in advocating for certain professional development options and services for EL students in the plan which seemed to influence Jacob's thinking. Thus, despite Jacob's initial resistance to put things in place specifically for Willow River's EL students and support teachers' development of their EL instruction, through Robin's advocacy and the ELL service plan, Jacob began to acknowledge a need for a more explicit focus on EL students.

Shifting momentum towards EL students and instruction. The ELL service plans, then, in conjunction with Robin and Beth's interactions with the principals, served as a tool to move schools forward in explicitly addressing the needs of EL students. This year, in the fourth year of the ELL service plan existence, Brian, Robin, and Beth began to see how their work with principals through the ELL service plan was beginning to bear fruit. Brian, for example, explained,

> I'm hearing from more principals that they're finding the process worthwhile to engage in and that they're able to get some traction with their teachers to get their teachers to move and that it was helpful. I'm hearing the same things from some of our [EL teacher leaders] and ELL specialists and teachers out in the field that "This is giving me the leverage I need to have this conversation."

The ELL service plan moved EL focused work forward on multiple levels - teacher's classrooms and teacher leaders and principals' work with schools - as a tool for negotiating more attention and addressing of EL-related issues.

EL teacher leaders and district level change: Integrating an EL focus into literacy

The work of the district EL teacher leaders was not limited to supporting specific teachers, principals, and schools. As EL students made up roughly over 40% of Horizon School District's student population, Robin and Beth, in conjunction with Brian, continually pushed to bring an EL focus to the forefront of district initiatives and integrate this focus into the work of other district level departments. Robin and Beth, for example, worked with the Special Education department in developing guidelines for the schools to use in assessing EL students for special education services, and worked with the New Teacher Induction department to integrate GLAD professional development training as part of new teacher induction support. Beth saw both this explicit focus and integration of EL instruction as "the only way we're going to get any traction is if we're all working together and showing solidarity towards improving student achievement." Collaboration with other district departments was necessary to not only ensure that the unique needs of EL students were being considered and addressed, but also to legitimize attention to EL student services, instruction, and learning, as a part of instruction.

Horizontal integration: Integrating "ELL" into the district literacy frameworks.

One key collaboration between the EL and literacy departments resulted in addressing EL instruction horizontally, integrating EL instruction into the district literacy framework initiative. For the past couple of years, teachers had been utilizing Horizon School District's literacy frameworks in their literacy instruction. The literacy frameworks, however, were not written with EL students in mind. Robin, however, explained that the district EL teacher leaders noticed that the EL students "were not accessing the [literacy] instruction as well, often, depending on the teacher. The [productive] teachers [of EL students] are doing things that they know need to be done," such as "adding more visuals and oral language practice." Robin made a distinction between good literacy instruction and modifying it for EL students:

> In the frameworks, there might be an example of a chart that could be used to create it, but we'd see ELL teachers putting lots more visuals on the chart. In the frameworks binder, it's just a table with text, and if you don't know any better and you just make a chart with text and two columns then that's what you do. But ELL teachers were adding more visuals and adding more oral practice. So that's what we are now attempting to get actually written into the frameworks; things like that, things that ELL teachers who are good with ELL students know to do.

In Robin's example above, she points out that while good literacy instruction may include using charts, "good *EL* instruction" would include appropriate visuals in or with those charts and incorporating oral language practice. Drawing upon the expertise of strong teachers of EL students, Robin and her EL teacher leader colleague at the time engineered a project to incorporate EL considerations and strategies directly into the literacy frameworks.

In this project, Robin and her EL teacher leader colleague at the time recruited teachers from different schools across the district who were trained, experienced, and successful in teaching their EL students to participate. These EL-experienced teachers would meet together by grade level after teaching each unit in the literacy frameworks to identify "accommodations and

adaptations that they made" to help make the literacy instruction in the frameworks "accessible to a range of ELL kids" and "perhaps more importantly trying to find places…that were rich opportunities for language development." Each grade level cadre was supported by a school-based or district EL teacher leader to write into the literacy frameworks as the teachers discussed and to moderate discussions if needed. Thus the district level EL teacher leaders were instrumental in recognizing the need to integrate EL instruction into the literacy frameworks and in innovating a project, drawing upon the expertise of strong teachers of EL students, to support others in their literacy instruction of their EL students.

Moreover, the teachers participating in the EL / literacy frameworks integration project used that opportunity as a professional development to learn from each other new ideas and ways of teaching literacy to EL students, and generating "rich discussions" around when and where to integrate a focus on EL instruction. Brian, for example, had heard,

> Lots of really, really healthy conversations about, "Well, do we call out the ELL? Where do we make it loud? Where is it just part of where it gets rolled in? Should this just be a part of the regular instruction? Is this good for all kids? Wait a minute, but when is it specific…" Really, really good discussions. In a lot we just don't have the right answer, right? But really rich discussions…

Through the EL/literacy frameworks project, teachers were actively involved in working out what it meant to "integrate EL" into literacy instruction and how to reify it through literacy instructional practice for EL students.

Vertical integration: **EL/literacy integration at district, school and classroom levels.** The collaboration between the EL and literacy departments also facilitated cohesion around EL and literacy instruction through different levels of the system: district, school, and classroom. As a part of the collaboration between departments, Robin and her colleagues created an addendum to the literacy frameworks of research on EL students, learning, and instruction, which included

topics such as profiles of EL students, bilingual education, levels of English language proficiency, second language acquisition, native language instruction, EL instruction, English language development instruction, and literacy instruction for EL students.

Robin and Beth used these addendums to structure their grade level EL professional development sessions in schools, called "ELL Studios," and guide the discussions and work of teachers with their EL students. At the beginning of each ELL studio, for example, Robin explicitly introduced the EL addendum as part of a collaboration between the EL and literacy departments to make it easier for teachers to integrate attention to EL instruction into their literacy instruction. Throughout the rest of the ELL studio, the district EL teacher leaders facilitated rich discussions with the teachers on their EL students and instruction, as the teachers made sense of the information in the ELL addendum in light of their own EL students and classrooms. The teachers then set concrete goals for their EL instruction to reify some of what had been discussed.

In some cases, Robin and Beth teamed up and co-facilitated with a district literacy specialist teacher leader, making the EL/literacy collaboration even more apparent. Robin, for example, teamed up with a district literacy specialist who was already supporting the kindergarten teachers with their literacy instruction. The ELL studio itself focused on EL students specifically, but with a literacy emphasis weaved in. Beth, however, worked closely with Krista, another district literacy specialist teacher leader, on several professional development projects, particularly at Chestnut Elementary. The emphasis was on implementing guided reading, with attention to EL students and instruction weaved in, particularly oral language development.

As this was Beth's first year of working in the district and with Chestnut Elementary, she

also used the EL/literacy collaboration as an entry point to get into classrooms working with teachers. As she explained,

> I feel like the tide is shifting [at Chestnut Elementary] and I feel like them viewing me as a literacy person, and not an ELL person is going to make a big difference. [At the first ELL grade level professional development session], there's a lot of resentment about ELL and about "those kids." It's a harder place to come at. It's harder for me to come in saying, "you need to help your ELL kids learn" when they're still in a place of "Why are those kids even in my classroom?" So if I come in and say, "We've got to help all kids read," well, "no duh." It's like they can be on board with that…I felt good about [the teachers] seeing the relationship between Krista and I and between Becca and I. I think it will just build upon what we started.

For Beth, the EL/literacy collaboration helped her to negotiate the initial resistance against teaching the ELL students in the teachers' mainstream classrooms by being viewed as "a literacy person" instead of an "ELL person." While not unproblematic, this provided an entry for her to begin to work with the teachers on EL-related matters. Beth also pointed out the importance of physically seeing the strong collaboration between the literacy specialist, principal, and Beth to drive home the importance and integrated nature of EL and literacy instruction for EL students.

Thus, the district EL teacher leaders' engineering of the EL/literacy collaboration provided not only a horizontal integration of EL instruction into district literacy initiatives, but a vertical alignment of EL/literacy frameworks at the district level, and EL/literacy professional development at the school and classroom levels. The new focus on EL and literacy also provided an opportunity for the EL teacher leaders to focus on developing and strengthening the teachers' professional learning related to the teaching and learning of EL students specifically. As Robin stated, "I hope, and I think is happening, is that people are seeing that there's this collaboration between literacy and ELL. Teachers in the field and administrators. Hopefully, it gives ELL a little more status in the frameworks."

Continuing the collaboration work: A work-in-progress. The EL/literacy

collaboration represents one particular movement forward in addressing the teaching and learning of EL students with teachers and schools. The challenge of collaboration, according to Robin and Beth, continued with other district initiatives, such as the adoption of a new math curriculum, in bringing the "urgency behind effectively teaching our ELL kids," to the attention of higher administration which Beth explained as "super hit or miss." Brian pointed out that both the math and literacy frameworks were created without "an EL lens in mind," even though EL students comprised 42% of Horizon School District's population.

> When I would knock on those doors and say, "Hey, can we talk about how ELL integrates in here so we get on the ground floor." The response was, "Well, we're just wrapping our heads around the 'basics' and teachers can't handle thinking about this ELL stuff too"…I've found it frustrating that we couldn't have an effort to integrate the work from the get-go.

Brian outlines the continuing challenge of integrating EL work into the district's instructional work. When the direct approach did not work for the literacy frameworks, however, Robin and Beth, with Brian's support, continued to push the EL integration through establishing and maintaining relationships with the district literacy specialist teacher leaders and developing the EL/literacy framework project.

District level EL expertise: Action research, collaboration, and continuing professional development

As seen above, Beth and Robin's work required a focus on developing relationships with teachers, principals, and other teacher leaders and administrators, and targeted, strategic advocacy efforts. Their work, however, was also rooted in the specific EL-related expertise that each district EL teacher leader brought to the role. Beth and Robin both had had many years of teaching experiences, both as mainstream classroom teachers and teachers of EL students. They

had also had extensive training in EL instruction, second language acquisition, and working with EL students. In addition, Beth and Robin were both advanced GLAD professional development trainers and had experiences as instructional coaches. These experiences and training informed not only how they worked with teachers and administrators, but the direction of that work.

Both, for example, had a vision for EL instruction and mainstream classroom teachers that included not only using EL strategies in their teaching, but establishing a solid foundation of understanding academic language, language proficiency levels, second language acquisition, and language development, and really knowing their EL students. Beth explained, "You need to have a strong foundation. Otherwise, even as amazing as GLAD is, if you don't understand how kids learn language even the best teaching strategies aren't going to be all that effective." Robin added, "but then [teachers] also need to be thinking about language all day long and how their kids are speaking and…specifically listening to [the teachers'] ELL kids throughout the day." Beth and Robin put these visions into practice in their work with the teachers around the EL research addendum, setting concrete instructional goals with the teachers based upon what had been discussed, and making plans for continued EL-focused professional development.

Perhaps equally important, Robin and Beth were continually building and refining their levels of EL expertise. They actively attended conferences and webinars, read articles and books, and engaged in action research projects to deepen and inform their work with EL students and mainstream classroom teachers. The action research projects, in which the school-based EL teacher leaders also engaged, in particular, not only had a strong influence on Robin and Beth's learning, but had other effects on instructional change in the district and the schools in which they worked.

In action research, the EL teacher leaders developed a question they were interested in

studying situated within their district or school contexts. They then designed a study through which to examine their question, and wrote up and presented the results of their studies at a district-wide action research conference. Brian, who actively supported the EL teacher leaders' action research as part of their positions, pointed out the impact that the teacher leaders' action research projects were having on the EL work both in "building this body of knowledge…of what effective work looks like in our system. And people are using that and reflecting on that…I'm beginning to see that happen."

These action research projects showed other positive effects on EL-focused work. For example, Robin conducted an action research project related to English language development instruction for EL students at more advanced levels of English language proficiency, "Level 3 students," who often plateaued and did not exit from EL services. In her project, Robin worked with one of her mainstream classroom teachers, having the teacher write down her Level 3 EL students' language and then working with her to identify what academic language they needed to develop or strengthen and how to teach it. Robin explained how, in addition to changing the ways the mainstream classroom teacher taught her EL students, Robin's action research had caught the attention of the principal, and academic language developed into a school-wide focus.

> They see the value in it. They see the results from what she did. It's a teacher telling them it's doable and it's effective and here's some stuff I already did and I'll share these with you. …They're going to assess everyone at the beginning of the year on the Rigby Oral Language Assessment. Then, for the first quarter, they're going to be collecting language information about their ELL kids' language – sticky notes, or writing down things that they hear and conferring. Then they are going to choose a focus and they are going to explicitly teach and then they're going to address and re-evaluate…That's all because of [the] action research.

Robin highlighted the spark that her action research project ignited in the school utilizing the professional social networks of the teacher in her study, as well as the currency gained by having a mainstream classroom teacher say her English language assessment and instruction was

"doable" and "effective."

Beth also mentioned the impact of Robin's action research project district wide. She explained that as a result of Robin's action research, explicit English language instruction and academic language had "suddenly turned into a huge thing that all of the [school-based EL teacher leaders] have really paid attention to and taken note about and are taking back to all of the schools we work with. It's gonna look different at schools but it is something that definitely wasn't on the forefront of my mind a couple of months ago but now is."

Thus, the district EL teacher leaders' engagement in action research projects served a dual purpose in deepening their own knowledge of EL instruction and learning in their specific contexts, with the added benefit of influencing instructional change in schools and throughout the district, through their professional social networks of study participants and other EL teacher leaders.

Discussion

Movement towards improved instructional change for EL students, as well as opening up more equitable opportunities for learning, hinged upon the work of the EL teacher leaders. The challenges of Robin and Beth's work lay chiefly with both carving out spaces for specific attention to and the addressing of EL students, learning, and instruction and integrating that focus into the work of the district, schools, and classrooms. These challenges required a great deal of expertise and strong focus on advocacy. Robin and Beth drew upon their expertise and advocacy to orchestrate both the direction in which the district was headed in terms of serving its EL students, and the specifics of how that was to be done instructionally and programmatically.

Leveraging the positioning of the EL teacher leader work within the district

One key factor that enabled Beth and Robin to influence change on multiple levels was the position of their role. Both were housed within the EL department in the district central office, but worked closely with schools, principals, teachers, and in some cases, students. Although this positioning was sometimes a source of tension in moving the EL instructional work forward with teachers or principals who viewed the district EL teacher leaders as the imposing "District," Beth and Robin's situation in multiple contexts of school, classroom, and district also afforded them many advantages in moving the EL instructional work forward.

Making connections horizontally within the system. One strong advantage was the connections the district EL teacher leaders were able to make both horizontally in the district system among departments at one level, among schools at another level, and across classrooms at yet another level, and vertically across all three contexts. Horizontal alignment provided access for actors on a similar level of the school system, to resources, information, and ways of addressing EL-related issues through the district EL teacher leader to build the actors' capacity. Robin, for example, was able to share teachers' expertise and instructional practice from schools across the district in her work with teachers which both legitimized the importance of the EL instructional work and provided a resource for teachers in working through their problems of instructional practice related to working with their own EL students. Beth leveraged her knowledge of other schools' ELL service plans and inclusion of school-based EL teacher leaders to advocate for Becca to create a school-based EL teacher leader at Chestnut Elementary.

Within the central district office, Beth and Robin worked to establish professional social networks with other district teacher leaders in other departments, such as literacy. These horizontal collaborations provided opportunities to bring a more focused attention to the teaching

and learning of EL students and infuse EL considerations into non-EL specific district-wide initiatives. Through these collaborations, Beth and Robin also began to address other systemic issues such as the over- or under- identification of EL students for special education services and building new teachers repertoire of EL instructional strategies through their induction and mentor support.

Simultaneous vertical movement within the system. The unique position of the district EL teacher leaders also facilitated vertical connections between district, school, and classroom contexts, supporting more coherence among the work being done for EL students at all levels of the system. While being positioned at the central district office is often a source of tension in working with teachers and principals (Swinnerton, 2007), Robin and Beth continually and actively negotiated their boundaries of "school" and "district" in different ways to facilitate EL instructional work.

When working with teachers, for example, the EL teacher leaders aligned themselves with the teachers with whom they worked, explicitly referencing the EL teacher leaders' own former experiences and knowledge forged by the classroom. Robin and Beth were careful to ground discussions of district initiatives in the work and experiences of the teachers with whom they worked. In addition, the EL teacher leaders were transparent and strategic about communicating the connections they facilitated between the central district office and the work of teachers and schools. For example, the EL/literacy frameworks project, while developed through interdepartmental collaboration at the district central office, brought expert EL teachers together from across the district to decide what to integrate into the literacy frameworks and to do the actual integration work. In this way, the EL teacher leaders framed and structured the central office work in ways that showed clear connections to the teachers' instruction of their EL

students and what was happening in other schools and classrooms.

The EL teacher leaders, then, negotiated the "middle ground" between district and classroom in ways that allowed the teacher leaders to leverage their positioning as former teachers and their current roles at the central office to provide more productive learning opportunities for teachers and influence changes in EL instruction. In this case, the often contested "middle" space of EL teacher leaders and their work became a potential advantage to moving the EL instructional work forward both in teachers' classrooms and district-wide. The physical positioning of Beth and Robin in the central district office allowed the teacher leaders a systems-wide perspective to identify EL-related problems and issues, as well as opportunities to address them. Grounding a generous portion of their roles in schools and classrooms, however, allowed the district EL teacher leaders to address these EL-related issues more consistently across contexts.

The teacher leaders' innovations with the EL/literacy frameworks and the EL addendum, as shown earlier in this article, provided one particularly powerful example of how this simultaneous vertical and horizontal alignment might positively influence EL instruction. While both documents were born out of the collaboration between the EL and literacy departments (i.e. horizontal EL integration), Beth and Robin utilized these products created at the "district level" in their professional development sessions with grade level teams at the school and classroom levels to engineer a specific focus on the teaching and learning of EL students. The district EL teacher leaders were then able to follow up these grade level meetings with continued grade level, EL-focused professional development sessions, or individual instructional coaching. This explicit vertical EL integration among district, school, and classroom, then, was more likely to provide a more coherent attention to EL instructional change.

In many cases, these vertical pathways were more complex in influencing EL instructional change. Simultaneous with the professional development sessions on the EL and literacy frameworks, the project to incorporate EL instructional strategies was based in what expert teachers of EL students were already doing when teaching the frameworks. The project meetings where EL instructional strategies were actively written into the literacy frameworks served as a professional development for those expert teachers as they learned from each other, and began to expand the teachers' own professional social networks with other teachers in the district. In a manner of speaking, the horizontal integration of EL and literacy at the district level, simultaneous with the vertical integration with schools and classrooms, established different pathways to strengthen EL learning and instruction for teachers at all levels of experience in working with EL students – beginning through expert.

Moreover, because of the positioning of the district EL teacher leader work at multiple levels of the system, Beth and Robin were able to relay EL-related issues, successes, and challenges with the work to Brian, the district EL coordinator. Brian worked closely with Robin and Beth to develop key EL-related projects and to advocate for inter-departmental cooperation, bringing EL-related teaching and learning issues to the attention of those at higher levels of administration to which Robin and Beth had limited access. Therefore, Robin and Beth's positioning at all levels of the system allowed them to make connections that otherwise might not have been possible, or made extremely challenging. These connections allowed a simultaneous movement of instructional change both horizontally and vertically within the district system, facilitating instructional change on multiple fronts with multiple actors at different levels of the system, and fostering coherence of EL focused work.

Leveraging EL-specific expertise to define and drive EL instructional change

Some scholars have pointed to the importance of content knowledge in teacher leaders' work, such as instructional coaching, to differentiate what they do with teachers according to the level of content instructional expertise of the teachers, to "advocate for the subject and students," (Manno & Firestone, 2008, p. 44), to align curriculum and instruction, and to build trust with teachers by demonstrating and leveraging their expertise, all of which lead to instructional change (Manno & Firestone, 2008; Stein & Nelson, 2003). In their study of expert vs. non-expert math and science teacher leaders, for example, Manno & Firestone concluded that "content expertise shape[d] and guide[d] the tasks in which teacher leaders engage[d]. Teacher leaders promote[d] change along a continuum which [was] directly related to their content knowledge and the tasks in which they engage[d]" (Manno & Firestone, 2008, p. 53).

In a similar manner, this article also shows the importance of EL-specific expertise in order to facilitate EL-focused work on multiple levels of the district system. Robin and Beth drew upon their expertise in order to identify and address areas of EL integration into curriculum, frameworks, and instruction, for example. They also utilized their expertise in guiding principals on developing their EL programs, services, and instructional work through the ELL service plans. Unlike content knowledge, however, the expertise of these EL teacher leaders necessarily focuses on a particular segment of the student population with a specific and complex set of teaching and learning issues centered on language, culture, and other issues related to the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

In addition, the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students, particularly EL students (often immigrants), is often politically charged, as in the case of this district-in-transition where teachers were learning to take ownership of the learning of their EL students

recently placed into their mainstream classrooms, and where the EL teacher leaders had to continually fight for legitimacy to establish EL-focused work at all levels of the system: in teachers' classrooms, in school focus and programs, and district initiatives.

Therefore, the expertise of these EL teacher leaders was founded on a continually evolving knowledge base of second language acquisition, EL students and EL instruction, but also one of advocacy, and the social and political realities of providing equitable instruction and learning opportunities for EL students. Beth and Robin both continually brought this advocacy focus into all aspects of their work with teachers, principals, other teacher leaders, and administrators. These EL-focused teacher leaders did not only serve as "brokers," (Burch & Spillane, 2004; Swinnerton, 2007) who negotiated district reform agendas, designed tools, and managed data, trained and supported teachers and principals, and built networks (Burch & Spillane, 2004). Instead, Robin and Beth leveraged their expertise to both drive and define what EL instructional change should like at all levels of the system within and across which they moved: classroom, school, and district. In other words, these EL teacher leaders did not simply implement and align district reform agendas, but created those agendas, and advocated for them.

Robin and Beth's strong foundation of expertise and experience, combined with their commitment to continually deepening that expertise, also strengthened their ability to identify the challenges of EL instructional change in the Horizon School District and evolve different ways to address those challenges. Robin and Beth actively sought out professional learning opportunities to keep themselves abreast of research on EL students, teaching, and learning. In particular, these EL teacher leaders, supported and encouraged by the district EL Coordinator, adopted an inquiry approach to their work to not only expand and deepen their knowledge, but become active in those areas where the research did not hold definitive answers.

Specifically, Robin and Beth's participation in action research projects helped them to expand their learning, and participate in generating a body of district-specific research for others in the system to draw upon. Sometimes, this research was used directly, cited by principals in writing their ELL service plans to support the required rationale for their decisions on the services and instruction they provided to their EL students. In other cases, the EL teacher leaders' action research generated other unforeseen effects, such as in Robin's work on English language development instruction with one teacher in one school which had evolved to be a new school-wide focus, gaining currency with teachers and principal alike. In this way, the action research projects provided yet another avenue for EL instructional change in the district.

Conclusion

Horizon School District, like many other school districts in the United States, was in transition in how it served its EL students, programmatically and instructionally. As Hakuta (2011) points out, establishing "coherence in leadership, in instruction, and in the school community in general is broadly recognized" for school improvement. However, the "ELL dimension," to instructional change "adds tension and complexity" to the work both in terms of addressing linguistic and cultural diversity and in part to the "political history in which advocates for ELLs have had to argue their way, often through litigious means, to get a seat at the table and have the needs of the students recognized" (p. 170).

In the case of the district in this article, the integration of EL students into the mainstream classroom meant that the district EL teacher leaders had to simultaneously advocate for a specific attention to and incorporation of EL learning and instruction into the work of teachers, principals, and administrators while building the capacity of schools and teachers to provide

equitable learning opportunities for their EL students. While these district EL teacher leaders did some brokering and boundary crossing work (Swinnerton, 2007), they were central to defining instructional change for EL students. Their positioning at all levels of the system, combined with the specialized EL expertise these district teacher leaders brought to their work, not only provided ways to "guide system learning," (Swinnerton, 2007, p. 200), but drove what that work might look like at each level of the system, as well as foster coherence among EL programmatic and instructional decisions. This might hold implications for how the district EL teacher leader role may be defined as not only a "resource provided to schools," but as a way to "to bring coherence to reform efforts" and "instructional improvement at the system level" (Swinnerton, 2007, p. 218).

While many questions remain, one key inquiry involves how these district EL teacher leader roles evolve as the district continues to change with regard to EL students and instruction. Both Beth and Robin talked about the sustainability of their work at the district level, their developing focus towards increasing the number of school-based EL teacher leaders, facilitating EL teacher leadership at the school sites, and shifting the district EL teacher leader role to one of more support of schools and school-based EL teacher leaders. It would be interesting, then, to see how this district EL teacher leader role might evolve as more schools take on EL students and necessitate a school-based teacher leader. In this district that is attempting "to strike the most productive combination of decentralized and centralized initiatives, school-based and system-wide reform," (King, 2005), what might this two-tiered EL teacher leader structure look like? How might this two-tiered structure facilitate or hinder EL-focused work and instructional change throughout the district? What implications might this two-tiered structure have for sustaining and evolving how the district, schools, and classrooms serve their EL students? How

might one sustain such a structure?

Finally, this study represents another foray into investigating how EL-focused teacher leaders may influence and strengthen EL instruction and educational opportunities for EL students, particularly for districts in transition. At a time where schools and districts are continuing to struggle in how to productively educate its growing numbers of EL students, EL-focused teacher leaders may provide a key access to expertise in order to craft productive change for EL student learning and instruction. New areas of investigation may also be opened up related to the importance of an EL focus in teaching and instructional work and what it means to provide instructional leadership that focuses on the learning and instruction of EL students. As Horwitz (2009) and her colleagues stated in their report on successful districts for EL students, "in each of the improving districts there was a particularly effective, vocal advocate for the improvement of ELL instruction and services who was skillful in forming strategic partnerships and rallying support behind their reform agendas" (p. 18). District EL teacher leaders, then, may be the keystone for generating and sustaining district and school improvement in providing equitable learning opportunities for their English learner students.

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Article 2

Constructing English Learner Professional Knowledge: The Discourse of English Learner Focused Teacher Leaders and Mainstream Elementary Classroom Teachers

Providing quality instruction for rapidly growing numbers of EL students in United States public schools continues to challenge educators. Whereas previously, elementary EL students had been segregated into separate classrooms under the domain of an English Language Learner (ELL) specialist or EL teacher, many schools and districts have moved towards integrating their EL students into mainstream classrooms. Mainstream classroom teachers, then, are expected to assume greater responsibility for addressing this cultural and linguistic diversity in their classrooms and ensuring their EL students' learning and academic achievement (deJong & Harper, 2005). Many teachers, however, find themselves unprepared to address the instructional challenges associated with providing rigorous instruction that addresses both their EL students' academic and language learning needs (Gándara et al., 2005).

In general, researchers have documented teachers' needs for ongoing (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009), instructionally focused, school-embedded professional development, supported by human and material resources (Stoelinga & Mangin, 2010), to understand the unique needs of EL students and guide decisions about how best to serve them (deJong & Harper, 2005, 2008; Elfers et al., 2009). Rumberger and Gándara (2004), for instance, cite inadequate professional development opportunities to help teachers address the instructional needs of ELs, as one out of seven inequitable conditions that exist in the education of ELs in California. The authors explain the importance of knowing "how to intervene educationally with students whose personal and educational backgrounds are

significantly different from the [traditionally] mainstream English-speaking student," (Rumberger & Gándara, 2004, p. 2038).

Despite these calls for stronger, more targeted professional development opportunities for mainstream classroom teachers to improve their instruction for EL students, there remains a need to better understand how teachers are supported in their professional learning (Knapp et al., 2005) and instruction of EL students, as well as how teachers learn the complexity of working with these culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms. There is surprisingly little empirical research literature on preparing teachers to teach EL students, and even less on preparing mainstream classroom teachers (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008).

In attempts to support teacher professional learning around EL students and instruction, and to provide teachers with the type of professional development outlined above, many schools and districts, particularly at the elementary school level, have developed teacher leadership roles to build the instructional capacity of their teachers, despite the lack of research on how work with a teacher leader prepares and supports a teacher to work with the EL students in her classroom. This article explores how EL-focused teacher leaders work with mainstream classroom teachers to build their capacity in working with these culturally and linguistically diverse students. *What* understandings are constructed around EL students, their learning, and quality instruction and *how* do teachers and teacher leaders construct this knowledge through their interactions? More specifically, I examine:

How do the mainstream classroom teacher and teacher leader interact to negotiate meaning around EL students, learning, and instruction to provide quality instruction for EL students?

- What discursive resources do the participants draw upon when analyzing EL student learning and making instructional decisions?

- What kinds of knowledge and assumptions about EL students, learning, and instruction are perpetuated, ignored, or created through the discourse?
- What role does the teacher leader play in these discursive interactions?

This article focuses on the interactions between EL teacher leaders and the teachers with whom they work, as both parties attempt to construct understandings of EL students, learning, and quality instruction. The research emerges from a noticeable lack of detail in the literature concerning the process of teacher learning in relation to working with an EL teacher leader, as both teacher leader and teacher engage with each other to align instructional practices with current ideas of and/or curricular reforms for quality EL instruction. In this article, I suggest that such understandings are needed if the field is to recognize the value, successes, and difficulties of employing teacher leadership as a viable means of supporting teachers as they learn and implement changes in instructional practice for improved student learning outcomes for their EL students.

I begin with a review of the teacher leadership, EL instruction, and discourse literature that informed this study, followed by a conceptual framework for examining the interactions between EL-focused teacher leader and teacher. I then present three contrasting cases of one district-level teacher leader working with teachers in three different grade level teams who work within the same school. Through an analysis of the discourse between the teacher leader and each grade level team, I analyze how the teacher leader organizes her work with the teachers in the grade level professional development sessions called "ELL studios," the key role she played in how the teachers made sense of EL-related issues, and the discursive resources both the teacher leader and teachers drew upon in their sense-making process. The paper concludes with a

discussion of the findings and implications for differentiating EL-focused professional development.

Literature Review

Teacher leaders, as explored in this article, are former teachers placed into formal instructional leadership roles by districts and schools (Murphy, 2005) seeking to build or expand teachers' knowledge and instructional capacity. While these teacher leaders may take on many administrative and managerial duties (Mangin, 2007), the main charge of the teacher leaders is to guide, support, and direct teacher learning for "continued instructional improvement" (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008, p.1) that results positively in student learning and achievement (Elmore, 2000).

Teacher leaders facilitate changes in teachers' instructional practices by fostering teachers' reflective practices related to their instruction , underlying assumptions and beliefs (Garmston, Linder, & Whitaker, 1993), and supporting teachers in changing or adopting specific forms of instruction or approaches (e.g., Batt, 2010; Penner-Williams & Worthen, 2010). The work itself remains embedded within the context of the teacher's classroom and instructional practice (Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010; Knight, 2006; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). The potential for instructional change in this form of professional development lies in the focus on ongoing (August & Hakuta, 1997; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995), and "context-specific instructional improvement" (Mangin, 2007, p. 322); learning, reflection, and feedback, (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Liston & Zeichner, 1996); and the promotion of deeper engagement in the teaching work by helping teachers to negotiate what they are understand and learn with classroom practices (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Knapp, 2003).

The empirical research on teacher leadership is still growing, but has already shown the strong potential teacher leaders have for supporting teachers in their instruction and mobilizing resources for teacher learning and educational reform (Stoelinga, 2008). A few empirical studies have shown that teacher leadership focused on instruction of EL students strongly influences mainstream classroom teacher pedagogy (Teemant, 2010), implementation of productive instructional practices or approaches for EL students (Batt, 2010; Penner-Williams & Worthen, 2010), and raising teachers' expectations of EL students (Batt, 2010). These few studies, however, focused primarily on the outcomes of the relationship between teacher leadership and classroom instruction, without unpacking what occurred in the work with the teacher leader to influence the teacher's learning and instruction of her EL students. A closer examination of the work of EL teacher leaders with their teachers may provide insights into the role of teacher leaders in building instructional capacity, an often ill-defined one (Taylor, 2008) both in practice and in the developing research literature around teacher leadership and instructional change.

Why a Focus on Teacher Leadership and EL Instruction?

The current research on and use of teacher leaders for building instructional capacity has typically focused on content areas such as math and literacy (e.g., Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; Marsh et al., 2008), and less on instruction in these areas in relation to the specific students whom these teachers serve. Many teachers, however, struggle with how to meet the language and content learning needs of EL students in particular (Gándara et al., 2005), due in part to the challenge of providing quality instruction for these students.

Scholars point to the complexity of teaching diverse groups of EL students within the mainstream classroom that vary not only by language and culture, but multiple, interrelated

factors such as levels of English language proficiency and literacy, native language schooling, socioeconomic status, and life experiences in the students' home countries and immigration (Enright, 2011; Gándara et al., 2005; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). While some researchers continue to debate what knowledge base teachers should build to provide quality instruction for EL students (e.g., Johnson, 2006; Yates & Muchisky, 2003), second language acquisition, cross-cultural communication, cultural competency, and methods of teaching both English and content represent just a few areas of specialized knowledge and skills cited as necessary to effectively teach these diverse groups of students (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008).

A substantial portion of the research draws attention to ways for EL students to access rigorous, grade-level appropriate curriculum and develop academic language in English simultaneously (Collier & Thomas, 2007; Cummins, 2000; deJong & Harper, 2005; Echevarria et al., 2008; Gibbons, 2002; Short, 2002) to provide EL students with learning opportunities on par with those of their native English speaking peers. Scholars draw particular attention to the need for teachers to develop an understanding of the English language demands of the academic curriculum and how to appropriately scaffold learning for EL students so that the students can participate successfully in academic tasks and develop their academic and linguistic competencies (deJong & Harper, 2005; Lucas et al., 2008).

Yet while the research identifies areas and instructional strategies that are productive for EL instruction, how a mainstream classroom teacher might begin to make sense of this instructional complexity to make decisions about and address her EL students' multiple linguistic, content-learning, and cultural needs remains unclear, particularly for teachers already in the field learning to work with the changing demographics in their classrooms. In addition, although schools and districts increasingly look to EL teacher leaders to provide this support,

there remains an inadequate understanding of how interactions with teacher leaders may influence, intersect, and/or define the process of teacher professional learning. How then, might we go about conceptualizing and investigating this work? In the next section, I present and detail the framing ideas that guided this study, followed by the methodology through which I addressed my research questions.

Conceptual Framework

The framing ideas for this study are rooted in sociocultural theories of learning, discourse, and instructional influence through teacher leadership (See figure 1.) The conceptual framework presented in this section attempts to provide a strong theoretical grounding for the social nature of teacher learning, work of EL teacher leaders, the central role of discourse in their interactions with teachers within a learning space, and how relationships among these factors may influence instructional change.

Sociocultural Views of Teacher Learning

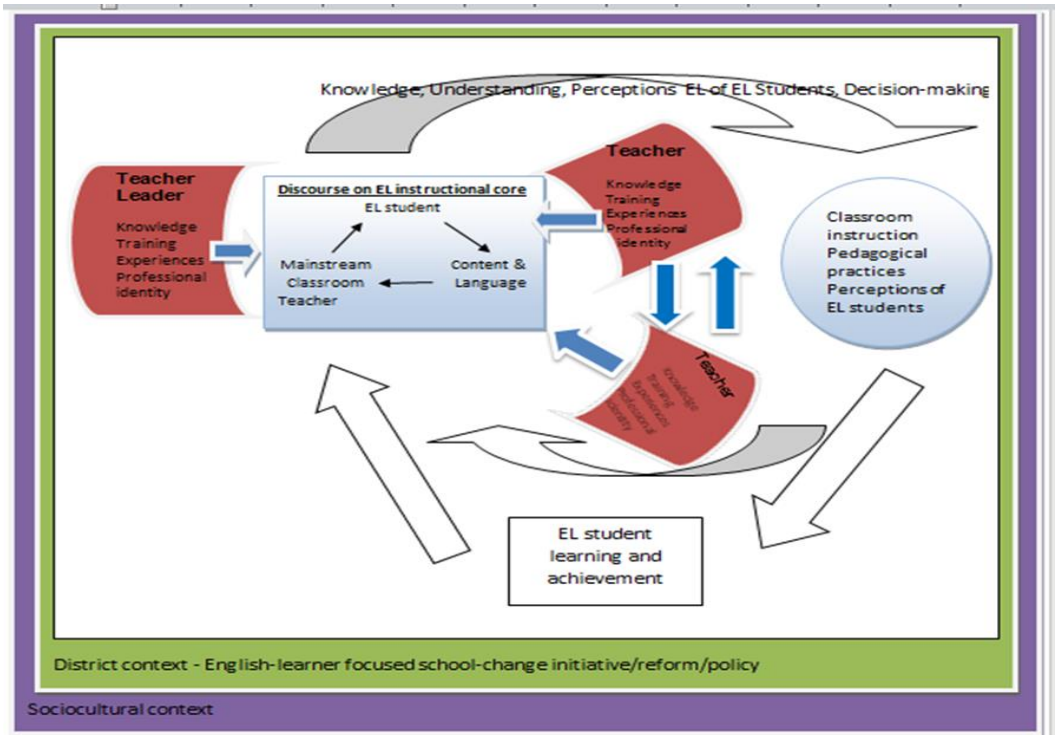
Teacher professional learning in this article is conceptualized and rooted in Vygotskian (1978) ideas of learning whereby learning is socially constructed and internalized as a result of social mediation. EL teacher leaders provide a form of social mediation through their work with teachers one-on-one, such as in instructional coaching, or with a group of teachers, such as in facilitating a grade-level collaboration or a teacher learning community, both examples of influential ways to facilitate changes in instructional practice (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Knapp, 2003). Learning here is situated within teachers' social and professional networks and relations where teachers' work, and what teachers know about teaching is socially

constructed and socially negotiated through their professional relationships (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Smylie & Evans, 2006). This social negotiation is a continual *process* that results in gradually transforming practices through ongoing negotiation of meaning as teacher leaders and teachers engage with one another and respond to changing conditions (Coburn, 2001; Gallucci et al., 2010) in the teachers' classroom and instruction.

The Teacher Leader/Teacher(s) Interaction

At the heart of teacher learning and evolving instruction for EL students is the interaction – both activities and discourse - between EL teacher leader and teachers (Figure 2) as they work together to address the learning and instructional needs of the teacher's EL students. This may occur one-one-one such as in an instructional coaching situation, or, in this case, in a group situation where the EL teacher leader fosters the learning and interaction among many teachers.

Figure 2. Interactions Between Teacher Leaders and Teachers



At the center of the teacher leader/teachers interaction lies the "instructional core" (Cohen et al., 2003; Elmore, 2004), which forms the basis for all dynamic goal- and meaning-oriented action (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) of the teacher leader/teacher work. The instructional core generally consists of complex relationships between teachers, their students and the content being taught. The *English Learner* instructional core is comprised of how teachers understand the knowledge of EL students and both content and language; the EL students' role in their own learning process; the teachers' relationships with their EL students, and how the interactions of all three instructional core components manifest in the teachers' work with EL students. The EL instructional core, however, is dynamic – defined and re-defined within the interactions of the teacher leader and the teachers as new information becomes available and previously known information is questioned, validated, or discarded. The EL teacher leader's role is to work with teachers focused on the EL instructional core, although how the teacher leader works with teachers around this instructional core varies.

Knowledge, Teacher Learning and "Collective Sense-making." While the EL instructional core forms the focus of EL work, knowledge and expertise related to the learning and instruction of EL students, is "distributed *socially*," (Spillane et al., 2004, p. 9, emphasis in original), embedded within a complex social context of practices, common beliefs, traditions, and the nature and structure of social relations within teacher networks and alliances. These social networks and social interactions influence the kinds of changes that teachers make in their instructional practice (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Gallucci, 2003; Knapp, 2003; Spillane et al., 2006) through a process Coburn (2001) calls "collective sense-making."

In learning to teach EL students, teachers may receive messages from multiple sources about what is considered "quality instruction" for EL students. For example, possible sources

may include school and district approaches to EL student instruction which may not always coincide with each other or conflict with other non-EL specific initiatives. In addition, school and district reform for EL students, typically around issues of curriculum and instruction, professional development, and programmatic structure and content, often involve negotiation of politics, ideologies related to the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students, and local education practice, context, and culture (Gebhard, 2002). Without time and support to make sense of EL instructional practices within the teachers' own contexts, in relation to previous reforms and practices, and theories of instruction, former and new classroom practice for EL students may "mingle unproductively" (Gutiérrez et al., 2002, p. 333).

The role of teacher leaders in "collective sense-making." As information brokers (Swinnerton, 2007) between district and school (and classroom), teacher leaders are in unique positions to support teachers as they collectively work to make sense of instructional policies and approaches for EL students. Teacher leaders may serve as "managers of meaning," (Smircich & Morgan, 1982) to help organize, communicate and interpret information coming from various sources (e.g. district, state, community, research) to facilitate teachers' sense-making as teachers continually examine, re-examine, and adjust their instructional practices (Coburn & Russell, 2008). Addressing the situated nature of teacher learning and professional development for teachers of EL students is particularly complex given the heterogeneity of these culturally and linguistically diverse groups of students, the need to mediate both the EL students' language and rigorous content learning, and developing conceptions of "quality instruction" for EL students through curricular, programmatic, and instructional reforms adopted by school and district. It is within the context of teacher leadership, then, that teachers' work and teaching quality for ELs may also be defined as teacher leader and teacher engage with each other around EL instruction.

Mediating teacher learning through discourse and other tools

Teacher learning, however, is also mediated by physical or psychological tools. Teacher leaders may facilitate the learning of their teachers through different tools such as student achievement data, curriculum (e.g., Manno & Firestone, 2008), or particular frameworks and approaches to EL instruction such as the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (Batt, 2010; Echevarria et al., 2008; McIntyre, Kyle, Chen, Muñoz, & Beldon, 2010), a popular approach to EL instruction to help mainstream classroom teachers meet both the content and language learning needs of their EL students. Language and conversation, however, are the primary tools that mediate a teacher's (and teacher leader's) learning (Vygotsky, 1986). For example, although a teacher leader may use EL student achievement data as a focal point to help teachers identify the areas their EL students may need to improve, it is the tool of language in that interaction with the teacher leader that mediates how the teachers interpret the data and how they respond through their instructional actions.

Discourse as a tool. Discourse in this article is defined as socially negotiated statements or talk mediated by the participants' ideologies, worldviews, and experiences (Fairclough, 1992b) and the social context in which the discourse occurs. In the case of teacher leader/teacher interactions, extended dialogues (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991) centered on the content and activities of teacher leadership – such as examining student data, modeling lessons, instructional coaching, co-teaching, and classroom observations of the teacher's instruction - serve as a basis for constructing meaning around classroom practice specific to the EL students whom the teachers serve.

As teacher leaders work with teachers to improve the teaching and learning of EL students, they are also working to influence how teachers talk about, and thus construct their

learning, around EL students, learning, and instruction. Fairclough (1992a) emphasizes the importance of language in social and cultural change, connecting attempts to "engineer the direction of change" with significantly changing discourse practices (p. 7). Through their discourse, teacher leaders and teachers actively construct meaning around the EL students in the teacher's classroom, problems of practice, EL student learning, and appropriate instructional responses, what Gee (1990, 2005) terms "language-in-use" (p. 67).

The discourse of teacher leader/teacher interactions, however, is mediated by the social contexts of school and district approaches to EL instruction and perceptions of EL students in which these dialogues are located. These contexts influence not only the interaction itself but the interaction's nature and content. Teacher professional learning on EL students and instruction occurs in relation to the cultural practices of the school (Ellis et al., 2010) and its social networks, such as current approaches to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students, the presence (or absence) of norms of collaboration, as well as tools such as talk (or discourse), curriculum, student data, available to them. Teacher leaders and teachers may "take on the cultural practices that are valued…and employ them to shape that social interaction" (Ellis et al., 2010, p. 4). Discourse, then, is also embedded within what is considered to be socially accepted ways of using language, thinking, and interacting (Gee, 2005) around EL learning and instruction.

The power to change EL instructional practice may lie within these complex discursive contexts and discursively constructed knowledge (Fairclough, 1992b) between EL teacher leaders and teachers. Therefore, in order to understand what and how learning occurs in the interactions between teacher leaders and the teachers with whom they work, "we must understand how activity, through the tools of talk and interaction, mediates learning for…

participants" (Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995, p. 448). In the next section, I lay out the research methodology through which I began this investigation.

Study Design

This research for this article comes out of a larger, yearlong qualitative, comparative case study of two district-level EL-focused teacher leaders and the grade level teams and teachers with whom they worked. Overall, the study aimed to better understand the process of teacher professional learning to teach EL students more productively through work with a teacher leader, and the potential of teacher leadership for affecting positive changes in teachers' instructional practice for EL students. The study specifically examined the practices and work of teacher leaders and the teachers with whom they worked, and the discourse that occurred in the interactions between the EL teacher leaders and teachers, as both parties attempted to construct understandings of EL students, learning, and quality EL instruction.

Selection of sites and participants

In order to obtain "information-rich" (Patton, 2002, p. 230) cases of teacher leadership that would potentially yield important insights into teacher leadership, teacher learning and instructional change regarding the education of English learner students, I purposefully selected (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002) Horizon School District in which to conduct my study. Horizon served high percentages of diverse populations of EL students and employed teacher leadership as a main component in supporting teachers' instruction and work with their EL students. In addition, Horizon was a few years into the process of shifting its schools toward a more focused approach to working with EL students. I specifically chose to examine a "district-

in-transition" to explore the potential role EL teachers leaders might play in the instructional change process as it was unfolding. The Horizon district teacher leaders were incredibly active in both fostering the shift and spearheading other EL-focused initiatives, working with teachers, principals, school-based EL teacher leaders, and other district departments.

Elementary schools were chosen as this was the level where schools were more highly impacted with growing numbers of diverse EL students (García et al., 2009). The schools within Horizon School District were in different places in their focus on EL students, and I chose two elementary school sites – Chestnut Elementary and Willow River Elementary - with whom the focal district teacher leaders worked and which represented two different school contexts for approaching instruction of EL students. Chestnut Elementary, for example, was moving toward a more school wide focus on EL students and instruction, while Willow River focused on "good instruction for all students" regardless of EL designation. Both elementary schools, however, had also experienced a demographic shift in the numbers and diversity of EL students attending their schools, had recently integrated all of their EL students into mainstream classrooms, and therefore had their teachers had different levels of EL expertise and experiences working with EL students.

These types of settings provided rich contexts within which to explore how the EL teacher leaders interacted with teachers at different levels of their EL knowledge and experience, set within different approaches and levels of focus on EL students.

Participants. As my study focused on the ways in which teacher leaders and mainstream classroom teachers work and talk about the teaching and learning of EL students, my focal participants included two district level EL-focused teacher leaders – Robin and Beth – and the grade level teams with whom they worked. In the larger study, I also chose three focal

mainstream classroom teachers – Nadia, Lindsey, and Beth – with whom to explore more in-depth their interactions with the Robin and Beth and EL instructional practice.

This small, purposeful sample allowed me to explore important commonalities and differences in-depth in the work and conversations of EL teacher leaders and teachers at multiple levels and set up important contrasts that influenced the conversations and work (Merriam, 2009).

The teacher leaders. I chose Robin and Beth specifically because of the high level of expertise both had in EL instruction and working with EL students, their commitment and passion for the equitable education of EL students, and clear visions of what mainstream classroom teachers should learn and attend to in their instruction of EL students. Both showed a continued vigilance towards their own professional development and took it upon themselves to read and stay current with EL-related research through webinars, attending conferences, books, and articles. In addition, both teacher leaders were highly reflective upon their own work with teachers, work within the district, and what the research afforded teachers and teacher leaders in terms of EL students, learning, and instruction. Meeting these criteria provided rich information and strong examples of how teacher leaders with solid EL expertise were able to work with teachers at varying levels of EL experience.

Robin and Beth also provided a good contrast with each other, as both had varying levels of experience working with teachers and in the district. Robin was an experienced professional developer, instructional coach, and teacher leader with many years in the Horizon School District. This was Beth's first year, however, in the district. While she had had experience as a GLAD trainer, this was the first teacher leader position and at the district level. These contrasting factors allowed me to explore how these differing levels of experience working with adult

learners in particular influenced how each chose to work with her teachers.

I chose to focus on teacher leaders at the district level because their position allowed me to set their work and conversations with teachers within the context of their other projects and work at the school and district levels. I was able to explore the teacher leaders' role at the district level and how their work with teachers connected with, or was influenced by, the work in both school and district contexts.

The teachers. The teacher participants consisted of both the grade level teams with whom Robin and Beth worked and three purposefully sampled teachers from those grade level teams (Patton, 2002). After attending a first round of grade level professional development sessions with varying grade levels at each school site, and in conjunction with recommendations from the focal teacher leaders, three teachers were selected from a pool of possible participants. Utilizing a maximum variation approach (Merriam, 2009), three focal teachers were selected at different grade levels and representing three different levels of EL experience and expertise, also representative of their grade level teams: beginning, mid-career, and experienced. These teachers were highly reflective and articulate about their own learning processes. The variation in participants outlined above allowed me to contrast how factors such as professional identity, background, and previous knowledge and experiences influenced both how the teachers worked with the teacher leaders and the teachers' learning.

The contrasts in the participants above were useful in exploring commonalities and differences across the way these teacher leaders and teachers approach and address EL instruction, and allowed me to explore the dimension of "EL expertise" of teacher leadership and teachers that has been called for recently by scholars such as deJong & Harper (see deJong & Harper, 2005, 2008).

Data Sources and Data Collection Approaches

In this study, I employed ethnographic methods (Wolcott, 1978/1988/1997) of research to provide "thick" (Geertz, 1973) descriptions of the interactions of teacher leaders and the teachers with whom they worked and instructional actions taken. These in-depth descriptions held important insights (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) about teacher leadership and teacher learning processes that could be useful in other similar contexts where schools may be utilizing teacher leadership as a way to support teacher learning and their work with EL students to improve the quality of instruction for EL students.

Therefore, data came from multiple ethnographic sources: interviews, classroom observations, teacher leader/teacher(s) meeting observations, and pertinent documents to document the process and content of the teacher-leader/teacher work, teacher learning, and instructional practice. The data collection strategies described below were employed over the course of a school year to explore the potential evolution of the work and interactions between the teacher-leaders and their teachers, teacher learning around EL learning and instruction, and the teacher's instructional practice for her EL students.

A central component of my data collection strategy was to observe and record of the discourse and activities of the teacher leader and teacher as they interacted. I wrote detailed observation notes on the meetings between the teacher leaders and the teachers over the course of eight months. These meetings ranged from grade level team professional development to one-one-one coaching sessions. Some of these conversations were audiotaped and transcribed, and some of them were observed and recorded through running field note records.

To investigate potential connections between the work with the teacher leaders and classroom practice, I also formally observed (Wolcott, 1978/1988/1997) each focal teacher's

classroom semi-monthly, many observations soon after meetings with the teacher leader. If there was a particular instructional focus from the meeting with the teacher leader, I observed the lesson or time period related to that focus. For example, if the teacher leader and teacher focused on reading/language arts work with ELs, then I observed during the reading/language arts period of the instructional day. Detailed field notes, in the form of a running narrative record (Merriam, 2009), paid particular attention to the teacher's instruction and interactions with the EL students. When the teacher leader was in the classroom at the same time of my classroom observation I recorded the type of role that she played and how she interacted with the teacher. These roles included: teacher observer and teacher demonstrator working with the EL student in the focal teachers' class.

Throughout the eight months of the study, I also conducted semi-structured and open-ended interviews (Patton, 2002) with the participants to gain their perspective and insights into the learning and decisions they made regarding the education of the teacher's EL students, their participation in the teacher-leader/teacher meetings, and the teacher's classroom instruction. Interviews were conducted with the teacher leaders and teachers separately, covering a variety of topics including, but not limited to: the teacher's classroom instruction for her EL students that was observed as part of the study; reflections on how the work with the teacher-leader may have influenced (or not) the teacher's planning and execution of instruction and interactions with her EL students; and what the participants took away from the teacher leader/teacher interaction.

I triangulated this observation and interview data (Merriam, 2009) with documents used during the teacher leader/teacher meetings and that were pertinent to the school and district's curricular, instructional, and professional development plans, programs, and approaches to EL instruction and learning. These documents also provided more information about the teacher

leader/teacher work and school and district contexts.

Data Analysis

The purpose of the study was to investigate the processes of teacher leader work with teachers, teacher learning, and instructional practice for EL students, as well as relationships among the three. As scholars have called attention to the need for more theoretical grounding of studies of teacher leadership, (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), I sought to not only understand these processes in my focal cases, but to seek to build a theory (Charmaz, 2001) about how a teacher's learning and instruction for EL students evolves in relation to the work with a teacher leader. Although I did not conduct a pure grounded theory approach to data analysis, I relied on this approach's inductive strategies (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

All interview, observation, document, and discourse data went through successive rounds of iteratively selective, focused coding schemes (Charmaz, 2001; Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994) according to themes that emerged from the data. Some of these codes were topical such as "native language support" or "English language development." Other codes focused on the discursive moves of the teacher leader, the discursive resources both teacher leader and teacher drew upon, and the types of learning of the teacher. Codes unique to each set of data as well as common codes across all sets of data were developed. For example, discursive move codes and discursive resources were specific to the teacher leader/teacher meeting observation data and transcriptions, while EL topical codes were developed across all datasets.

I used the constant comparison method (Merriam, 2009) to analyze segments of data alongside each other in order to seek confirming or disconfirming evidence. In the case of the research presented in this study, for example, one theme that recurred was Robin's adherence to

a continuum of EL professional learning for teachers in her work with teachers. I compared a segment of her interview outlining this continuum with pieces of data from each grade-level ELL studio professional development session that showed Robin explicitly relating the focus of the ELL studio with where she thought the teachers were in their learning regarding EL students, or what she referred to as "ready for." I then triangulated this observation and discourse data with other pieces of data where Robin reflected on what the teachers had learned in the studio and the different documents with which she had each grade level work. I continued a similar process with other themes: comparing data, categories, and patterns that emerged and developed during the analysis (Charmaz, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Discourse analysis. Central to the research presented in this article, I conducted an analysis of the discourse of key discursive excerpts from the conversations of teacher leaders with their teachers to investigate how the teacher leaders and teachers negotiated meaning around EL students and quality instruction for EL students. To identify these "key discursive excerpts," I first coded the teacher leader/teacher discourse data by EL-related topic, such that each exchange between teacher leader and teachers around a particular topic received a "discursive excerpt" in addition to an EL-topical code. For example, within a grade level EL professional development session, at a specific point in the conversation, the teachers and teacher leader talked about corrective language feedback. I coded this chunk of data with both "discursive excerpt" and the topical code "corrective language feedback."

Then, I went back through the discursive excerpts and looked for instances where the teacher leader and teachers were identifying and addressing tensions such as wrestling with an EL-related concept in relation to the teachers' classroom contexts, talking about a particular instructional problem of practice or discussing a larger school or social contextual issue in

relation to the work the teachers were trying to do in their classrooms. I then compared these discursive excerpts with emerging themes from the other coded data to find connections or disconfirming evidence. The "key discursive excerpts" I selected for discourse analysis were ones that related to the emerging theme.

In my discourse analysis of these key discursive excerpts, I used the following analytic questions to help guide my analysis: *What kinds of knowledge and assumptions about EL students, learning, and instruction are perpetuated, ignored, or created in this key discursive excerpt? What discursive moves did the teacher leader make, when in the discourse, and why? What discursive resources did both the teachers and teacher leader draw upon and for what purpose?* With these questions in mind, and using discourse analytic tools outlined by Gee's (2011) approaches to discourse analysis, I identified which information about EL students, learning, and instruction was foregrounded or backgrounded (Fairclough, 1992a) and by whom. I examined why the teacher leaders and teachers chose to initiate and sustain discussion on some EL-related topics and not others.

I also investigated how the teacher leaders and teachers drew on which discursive resources to do what: challenge an assumption, advocate for a particular point of view, support what someone has already said, introduce new information, etc. These discursive resources (Fairclough, 1992a) involved what language the teachers used in the discourse and the source of that language. For example, were the teachers using language from the EL research document with which they were working? Were the teachers drawing upon language that described their own experiences? Was the teacher leader drawing upon language that advocated for a particular form of EL instruction? These discourse analyses were then triangulated with interviews with the participants prior to and after the teacher leader/teacher meeting, and documents from the

meeting. In this way, the discourse analyses were used in conjunction with other data to substantiate and/or challenge developing analytic assertions from the data.

Focal setting and participants

In this article, I focus specifically on the discourse of one experienced teacher leader, Robin, and the teachers at three different grade levels as they work together in grade-level professional development sessions, called "ELL (English Language Learner) Studios" at Willow River Elementary School. I chose this particular subset of data to illustrate the different ways in which Robin and the teachers discursively constructed EL students, learning, and instruction at each grade level. Each grade level team represented a different level of expertise or experience in working with EL students, and the discourse of each ELL studio was rich in terms of the EL-related topics and content that was discussed and the ways that each grade level team tried to make sense of their EL students, learning, and instruction with Robin.

Willow River Elementary School. Willow Elementary School is a large, high-poverty elementary school with an ethnically diverse population, a high percentage of which are EL students. Over the past few years, the school has been gradually integrating its EL students into the mainstream classrooms. Previously these students were segregated into multi-grade ELL-designated classrooms. This year marked the first year where all EL students were integrated into mainstream classrooms. Some of the teachers had received some training in GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design), a popular approach to EL instruction particularly at the elementary school level. More will be discussed about the range of expertise of each grade level team later in the article.

Willow River's principal focused on being "inclusive" of all students, both physically, as

evidenced by the mainstreaming of EL students, and instructionally. He challenged the idea that teachers should focus "time and attention" on specific groups of students, such as EL students, because he felt that such attention would mean inattention to other students. The principal, instead, focused the teachers' attention on multiple forms of assessment to support *all* students learning, inclusive of, but not specific attention to, teachers' EL students. This interesting tension played out in the work Robin was trying to address in supporting teachers with teaching the EL students in their mainstream classrooms. The principal, while not actively hindering EL-focused work at Willow River, did not support it either, resulting in a lack of a school wide focus on EL students and instruction, despite the EL students recent mainstreaming into general education classrooms. As will be seen later in the paper, not all of the teachers shared the same perspective of the principal, particularly as they began to engage in the EL-related work.

Robin: The teacher leader. Robin was an experienced teacher and EL teacher leader, having worked in the district for over 15 years, with both a special education and ELL endorsement. She had taught EL students both as an ELL classroom teacher and as a mainstream classroom teacher, and also became a GLAD trainer for the district, working with teachers across the district. She described her teacher leader role as a "teacher-on-special-assignment," but was careful to emphasize that she was not an administrator, but a teacher "working in [the ELL] department to support the department." Robin's responsibilities were vast, working with teachers, principals, and in some cases, school-based EL teacher leaders in 18 elementary schools. (She split this school support with Beth, the other district-level EL teacher leader.) In addition to these responsibilities, Robin was also responsible for "other more district wide projects relating to ELL issues and provide district wide trainings." Therefore, Robin's expertise, combined with her perspective of how her work with Willow River Elementary fit with other

work in the district, provided a rich perspective and knowledge base to draw from. Willow River Elementary School in particular provided an interesting site to investigate how, as well as being representative of a current tension regarding providing specific attention to EL students or supporting them through "just good teaching" (deJong & Harper, 2005).

Findings

Robin and the mainstream classroom teachers, through their work and interaction, created an evolving teacher professional knowledge landscape that centered on English learner students and their education through instruction and other opportunities afforded to these students. The EL-related knowledge that was constructed, however, and the discourse between Robin and the mainstream classroom teachers in constructing that knowledge, differed by the collective experience level of the teachers at each grade level in working with EL students. While the teachers at each grade level were often experienced teachers in general, they were at different stages of knowing how to work with the EL students in their classrooms, as a result of the gradual mainstreaming of EL students over the previous couple of years. The discourse between Robin and the teachers at these different grade levels, then, was also used for different purposes, in building EL instructional capacity. In what follows, I examine the differentiated nature of Robin's interactions with the mainstream classroom teachers, how they negotiated meaning around EL students, learning, and instruction through their discourse, and what kinds of EL-related knowledge were privileged.

Case #1: Establishing the "basics" of English learner professional knowledge through discourse with the First Grade Team

Robin's organization and facilitation of this ELL studio was heavily influenced by her understanding that this was the first year the first grade teachers (with the exception of one teacher) had taught EL students in their general education classrooms. Going into the ELL studio, Robin's vision for the first grade teachers was "to just get them comfortable with having ELL kids in their classrooms." As the first grade level team was at the beginning of their learning process in learning to work with EL students, Robin focused on the EL-related knowledge she felt was needed in order to begin to build the teachers' instructional capacity, such as, but not limited to, cultural and linguistic profiles of the teachers' EL students, second language acquisition, and levels of English language proficiency.

Robin's role in the discourse: Teacher leader as expert and engineer. In working with the first grade team, Robin took on a clear role of expert and facilitator. For example, Robin and her teacher leader colleagues had synthesized EL-related research into one document, called *English language learners: The essentials*, for the teachers in the district. As with the other ELL studios, Robin drew upon the EL research document to both structure the first grade ELL studio work and discussions, and as a source of discursive information for the teachers. The majority of the ELL studio was focused on working with the parts of the EL research document that pertained specifically to learning about different profiles of EL students, second language acquisition, and levels of English language proficiency. Robin touched on other topics, but kept the main focus on learning about the first grade teachers' EL students.

Robin drew heavily on the discourse of the EL research document and her own knowledge of EL-related research to contribute to and guide her conversations and work with the

first grade teachers. However, kept the flow of the discussions moving, often summarizing information, explicitly relating the information to the teachers' contexts, or advocating for particular ways of looking at and instructing EL students, drawing upon her knowledge and interpretation of the research to lend what she was sharing some validity and weight. For example, Robin drew the group's attention to the importance of developing oral language and used the research document to reinforce that importance. She told the teachers, "I'm a really strong believer in working on oral language. If they can't say it, they can't read it or write it. [ELL kids] only will read to the level of their oral language. That IS in this document *(holds up the ELL document)*. There's a whole section on oral language. (Robin, first grade ELL studio, 2/15/2012).

In other cases, Robin used the discourse of the EL research document to validate what teachers were already doing in their classrooms. In one part of the first grade ELL studio, Robin summarized one part of the EL research document on comprehensible input for EL students. She told the teachers,

> I don't think it's really new information. It's more of how do you do it. And you do most of this already. Make pictures to go with things. Give directions in different ways. Talk about pictures…Developing oral language in everybody…I want us to set goals and talk about instruction. I see how complex this is in figuring out your kids, but we will continue thinking about this especially in a blended classroom where you have all levels, up to a level 3. They're benefitting from being with English speakers, and I'd like us to talk about how to address their needs using some of the structures of what you are already doing (First grade ELL studio, 2/15/2012).

In this excerpt, Robin moved the conversation forward to instruction, acknowledging the expertise that the first grade teachers were already utilizing in their instruction that would help support their EL students. She then validated the complexity of the teachers' attempting to "figure out" their EL students, acknowledging that this would be an ongoing process of learning. Robin rationalized the shift in focus to EL instruction so that they could begin to address

instructionally the needs of their EL students within the context of what the first grade teachers were already doing, emphasizing that their EL students were already benefiting from being in the same classroom as English speaker models. Thus, through her discourse, Robin simultaneously validated the teachers' knowledge, identified the complexity of working with EL students as a continued process of learning, and set up potential and obtainable changes in the first grade teachers' instruction.

Sprinkled advocacy. Robin also took on the role of advocate for EL students, finding moments and opportunities to advocate for particular ways of thinking about EL students and instruction. Again, she drew upon the EL research document to validate her advocacy. Early in the studio, for example, Robin commented, "Something I hear a lot is 'That's just good teaching. So if we do just good teaching that will be enough.'" She then read aloud the statement in the document, "good teaching practices will be insufficient for linguistic and cultural needs of ELLs" and used it to back up her assertion, "Yes, ELL students need good teaching, but they need more."

First grade teachers' discursive resources and moves: Wrestling ownership for EL students and their learning. This tension between an explicit focus on EL students and instruction and the perception that the needs of EL students would be covered if the teachers focused on "just good teaching" was threaded throughout the discourse of the first grade ELL studio. For example, the first grade mainstream classroom teachers wrestled with tensions surrounding their "new" responsibility for the teaching and learning of their EL students. Robin anticipated this tension and worked right from the beginning of the ELL studio to address it through her discourse. For example, towards the beginning of the first grade ELL studio, Robin introduced and described the content of the EL research document they would be working with

as “stuff ELL teachers have known, but now everyone is an ELL teacher.” Right from the beginning, then, Robin ascribed the ownership of EL student learning and instruction to all classroom teachers, not just those formerly designated as “ELL teachers.” She also paralleled this integration of EL students into general education classrooms with the integration of EL instruction into the teachers’ general instruction. For example, she described the origin of the EL research document as the result of a collaboration between the district’s ELL and literacy departments “to make literacy and ELL work together” instead of “ELL as an add-on as it often is.” Robin drew attention to EL instruction as integrated into content areas, such as literacy, in contrast to “something extra.”

Articulating a tension: “EL students” or “Just kids?” As the teachers engaged with learning about language proficiency levels and the English learning of their students through the EL research document, they surfaced different tensions as they actively tried to make sense of the research, language proficiency level descriptors, and the teachers’ own observations and interpretations of their EL students. The teachers articulated these tensions in trying to utilize the newly introduced discourse of both the EL research document and the discourse of the teachers’ own perceptions of their students. One tension revolved around knowing who their EL students were in their class and just “seeing them as kids.” Brian, for example, was one such first grade teacher, trying to reconcile what he had read about the stages of second language acquisition and levels of English language proficiency in the ELL research document with not knowing who the EL students in his classroom were.

> I have all these ELL kids. I don’t know if they are level 1, 2, 3. I was thinking about Those kids. I realized Level 1 – even my newest kid - is above that level. I have a couple of Level 1 beginning…*(reads Level 1 descriptors from the ELL document)*. This is half my class! *(laughter from the group)* I have one kid who says everything is “awesome.” *(After reading excerpts from his section of the ELL document)* [These are] all the things I’m trying to do. I highlighted “initiates conversation” – Level 2. Levels 3 and 4 – *(reads*

> *aloud what he highlighted in the document).* I highlighted "high comprehension" in Level 4 because this is something I'm trying to get all kids to do. My ELLs. I don't even know who my ELLs are to be honest. They're just my kids.

In this discursive excerpt, Brian tried to draw on the discourse of the document describing the different levels of English language proficiency, but struggled to reconcile the descriptions with what he observed about the students in his class. While Brian recognized that half of his class could be described by the English language proficiency levels, he also admitted that he did not know who his EL students were, thinking of them as "just my kids." Instructionally, Brian highlighted what he was "trying to get all kids to do," regardless of level of English language proficiency. This discursive excerpt shows how Brian used the discourse to articulate a struggle with separating out unique understandings of language development and instruction that would apply specifically to EL students versus the rest of his class. Similar to Brian, the first grade teachers continued to identify new tensions in teaching and learning EL students by juxtaposing new EL-related discourse with how these first grade teachers typically described and understood their students in general.

Teacher Leader/Teacher negotiation of meaning: Discourse as a primary tool.

Throughout the ELL studio, Robin and the first grade teachers structured their conversations around not only the physical EL research document, but in relation to other physical documents meant to develop connections between the research laid out in the EL research document and the teachers' EL students. For example, Robin had the teachers focus on two or three of their EL students and highlight on a levels of English language proficiency document and/or the Rigby oral language assessment rubric both what their focal students are already doing and what they might need to learn. In the discourse excerpt below, Lisa shared with the group what she has highlighted and the difficulties she encountered with the process of looking at the proficiency

level descriptors and thinking about one of her focal EL students.

> Lisa: I'm having a hard time. It's perplexing to me. [My ELL student] came in as level 1 from testing last year. I've seen some growth, but to me, he's all over the place. He can write complete sentences and write a whole story, but he might not be able to read it to you. He can read text really well, but cannot tell you what it was about. Academic language is really low. He had a harder time - sometimes he uses one word and sometimes he uses a short phrase. I wish I had a video of a day in the life of the classroom to see what is he using more of. Now that I know him a lot better – but I don't stop to think about how much vocabulary he uses in a sentence before he gets across his meaning. Perplexing.
>
> Robin: You can't assess his first language, because he is not a native Spanish speaker.
>
> Lisa: How much does he really know or can he fake really well? He can imitate really well. "He cut." He knows what cutting in line is. Tries to tattle on other kids. He tries to ask questions too, but it's a one-word or short phrase so I don't always understand what he means.
>
> Robin: Do you do the retell in F&P? Some people are going to try and use the F&P retell as an oral language sample to score on Rigby.
>
> Lisa: I just did character and setting in class. Draw a picture. I told the students to draw and write the characters' name. He wrote the word "label," "label," "label."
> Robin: That's a really academic word.
>
> Lisa: It boggles my mind. He can do this over here, but he can't do this. 'Well who's this?' He says, 'label.' … I am constantly like "I don't really know where he's at. I don't know how to take him to the next place."
> Caitlin: But if you took the written part away and told him, "Tell me about the story?"
>
> Lisa: He can't do that.
>
> Robin: He might still be so much of a beginner that he still doesn't have basic social vocabulary yet.
>
> Lisa: And sometimes he can seem to do some high-functioning things.

In the above discursive exchange, Lisa drew upon multiple discursive resources to try and make sense of her EL student: level of English language proficiency, academic language, language and reading assessments, and her own knowledge and observations of the EL student in her class. She simultaneously used these discourses to try to understand her EL student's language learning, but emphasized her difficulty with making coherent meaning of what she had

highlighted to gain a stronger understanding of where her student lay in his language development to inform her instruction.

Robin also drew upon multiple discourses to try to help Lisa make sense of the contradictions she had identified between the EL documents and her observations of her EL student in class. In helping Lisa figure out ways to learn more about what might be going on with her EL student, Robin drew upon discourses related to assessment that combined both EL specific assessments, such as native language assessments and the Rigby oral language rubric, assessments more familiar to Lisa, such as the Fountas & Pinelle reading assessment. Robin leveraged her knowledge of other teachers' use of those assessments with their EL students to validate the suggestion she had made about which assessments to use.

Notably, Lisa used the discourse and attention to language development in trying to make sense of her EL student, prompted by the language proficiency document and Robin's introduction of EL-related language into the discourse, such as academic language – the "really academic word" of "label" – and BICS – suggesting that Lisa's student might be still need "basic social vocabulary." Through interaction with Robin, then, Lisa was beginning to use EL-specific discourses to inform or problematize her understanding of her EL student's learning and progress. Therefore, although Robin and the teachers used the physical EL-related documents to support connections between classroom and research, it was the participants' discourse where teacher learning occurred.

Case #2: Broadening the scope of EL knowledge through discourse with the Sixth Grade Team

In the case of the sixth grade ELL studio, the discursive resources that Robin and the

sixth grade teachers drew upon to construct meaning around EL students, learning, and instruction, were in many ways similar to the first grade case above. As with the first grade, Robin's work with the sixth grade aligned with where she believed the sixth grade teachers to be along her continuum of learning around EL issues. The sixth grade teachers were in their second year of working with EL students within the context of the mainstream classroom, while two of the three teachers had had some experience working with EL students and knowledge through GLAD training, although Robin acknowledges that this is not enough. As a result, Robin focused on building and broadening this workable knowledge base around the sixth grade team's EL students and EL instruction, but more specifically what Robin termed "sheltered instruction" where the primary focus was on accessing and learning content. Unlike the discourse of the first grade ELL studio, however, the discourse between Robin and the teachers in the sixth grade ELL studio attended to a broader array of EL-related issues that went both deeper into knowledge about EL students and broadened the scope of EL instruction and what it means to teach EL students.

Robin's role in the discourse: Teacher leader as expert and facilitator. Robin drew upon discourses related to knowledge of the EL research, the EL research document, and her own experiences as a former classroom teachers, a former teacher of EL students, and her current work with other teachers. In doing so, Robin continued to take on the role of expert, providing the sixth grade teachers with access to different types of information, not only from the EL-related research, but EL instructional practice through her own experiences as a classroom teacher of EL students, a GLAD trainer, and an EL instructional coach for other teachers and grade levels in the district.

Robin's advocacy, however, was more prevalent in her discourse with the sixth grade

teachers than with the first grade teachers. Sometimes, for example, Robin wove counter examples into the discourse to challenge perceptions of EL students or instruction. At one point in the ELL studio, the teachers discussed challenges relating to supporting native language development and EL parent involvement, drawing upon more traditional discourses of how the parents can't help their students with the homework, etc. to negotiate a more deficit view of EL parents. Robin challenged these discourses by providing a counter-example of how another elementary school in the district created after school "language clubs," where parents taught their native languages. Robin explained that these language clubs "has had the effect of rais[ing] the status of these languages in the school." By introducing this example into the sixth grade teachers discussions, Robin provided a counter-example that showed an asset view of EL parents and families and how this asset view was not only reified through the formation of language clubs taught by the parents, but reinforced an asset view of the native languages of the EL students.

Despite taking on these roles of expert and advocate in the discourse, Robin also monitored her own participation in the discourse. She facilitated more discussion among the sixth grade teachers, intervening to pose an occasional question to facilitate the discussion, share expertise, or advocate. In this way, Robin recognized some of the expertise the sixth grade teachers already brought with them in working and talking closely with the teachers' EL students. Her facilitation allowed the teachers more time to work out in their discursive interactions, connections between the information in the EL research document in light of their own experiences, classrooms, and knowledge of their EL students. As a result, the sixth grade teachers began to utilize a broader range of discourses based in their own developing knowledge of and experiences with their EL students.

Sixth grade teachers' discursive resources and moves: The problematic case of EL students at a "Level 3." The discourse the sixth grade teachers utilized in discussions on EL-related topics such as second language acquisition, English language proficiency levels, the importance of developing the native languages of EL students, and bilingual education originated in the teachers' summarization of information read in the EL research document. The teachers' summaries often served as launching points for the teachers' reflections upon their own practice and understandings of their EL students. Frequently after summarizing a section of the EL document, the teachers would follow up with a comment of "Makes me think of [student's name]" or "It makes me think of [student's name] and [student's name] who can…" Through this discourse, the sixth grade teachers began to more intimately negotiate research with their knowledge of EL students and classroom contexts. As Robin explained in a debrief interview of the ELL studio,

> [A]s we were reading about second language acquisition in that first section, they kept bringing up specific kids in their classrooms. So I really think that makes it real to them and it makes the information stick and it's connecting what they know to the research and the information they're learning about second language acquisition. And then, I just think it makes it more effective if people are thinking about real kids and what would work and... this is what this kid is like…So their connection to what they were learning to their specific kids.

Robin emphasized here the importance of grounding the research and information about EL-related topics such as second language acquisition in the "real kids" with whom the teachers are working to facilitate teacher learning and changes in instructional practices.

Moreover, the sixth grade teachers began to leverage different discourses around EL research and instructional practice to both identify tensions in working with EL students and work out potential solutions. For example, throughout the sixth grade ELL studio, the teachers kept returning to discussing their EL students who had attained more advanced levels of English

language proficiency, marked by scoring a Level 3 on the state's language proficiency exam. The case of Level 3 EL students, while threaded through the discussion of many EL-related topics, revolved around two major threads: the problem of Level 3 EL students staying at that level for many years and not exiting EL services, if at all, and a tension around the sixth grade teachers' need to attend to their Level 3's specific English language development needs.

While Robin had initially drawn the teachers' attention to the problem of EL students stalling at Level 3, the sixth grade teachers continued to work with the ideas they had discussed with Robin within the context of talking about other EL-related topics. At one point towards the end of the ELL studio, however, the six grade teachers leveraged the information they had worked out in the previous discourse to make connections between intentional English language development instruction, serving Level 3 EL students, and their own work with their EL students. In the discursive excerpt below, the teachers discussed what they had highlighted in the "Guidelines for ELD [English Language Development] Instruction" section of the EL research document:

> Lindsey: Something that jumped out was the "intentionality" of strategies. Look at the pattern of use of the strategies and how you need to be more intentional in posting language objectives, calling out attention to errors, revisiting, learning, group work.
>
> Jenna: I agree. Intentionality.
>
> Lindsey: Post language objectives to get the content objectives.
>
> Stacy: I forget because I have two Level 3s, and I fold them in with the rest of the class. I forget they need continued language and vocabulary development. So I need to remember my ELL Levels 3s are still learning and growing.
>
> …
>
> Principal *(to Jenna)*: How many ELLs are in your class?
>
> Jenna: 7 or 8 ELLs.
>
> Principal *(still talking to Jenna)*: When you assess the work of those children, do you reflect

on their performance? Do you think back on 'does ELL level have impact on that?

Jenna: Oh, yeah. We've just been talking about that. In writing, with some students I'm very critical and give lots of feedback and corrections to make. But with my ELL kids, it's more of 'Oh! This is wonderful. This is great.' I need to be more systematic and critical in teaching writing.

Stacy: Because we're so concerned with not hurting their feelings and creating a safe environment. But we need to do more to by systematic in teaching writing. Explicitly addressing errors.

In the above discursive excerpt, the teachers drew on several discursive resources to bring together what they had been talking about throughout the EL studio in relation to their Level 3 students and instruction. Lindsey started off the conversation with her focus on "intentionality" of instruction that focused on English language development, drawing upon both the EL research document and earlier discussions about how the teachers needed to be more intentional in their instruction of the English language and structuring turn and talks. The other teachers agreed and revoiced important parts of what Lindsey has shared. Stacy immediately connected this intentionality to the specific EL student in her class, recognizing her own tendency to "fold in" her EL students with the rest of the class, and her own need to remember that her Level 3 El students "need continued language and vocabulary development" and "are still learning and growing."

The teachers continued to deepen this language instruction intentionality piece in the second piece of the discursive exchange when the principal asked about the EL students' language proficiency level on academic performance. Jenna drew upon the discourse earlier in the ELL studio where Robin and the teachers had talked about giving differential feedback to EL students and non-EL students. She tied that to her conclusion that she needed to be "more systematic and critical in teaching writing." Stacy, also drawing upon earlier discourse from the

group, the ELL research document, and general discourse around "creating a safe environment" for EL students, reinforced what Jenna's tension in EL instruction: overemphasizing a "safe environment" such that the teachers were not really attending to helping the EL students to become better writers by "explicitly addressing errors." Through repeated intertwining of discourses of EL research and teacher knowledge of their classrooms and students, the sixth grade teachers were able to identify a tension in EL instruction and possible resolutions directly related to their own instruction of their EL students.

Teacher leader/teacher negotiation of meaning: Discourse as an in-the-moment advocacy tool. While both Robin and the teacher leaders drew upon discourse as a tool to construct knowledge on EL students, learning, and instruction, they also frequently used discourse to surface or challenge assumptions. In one telling example, while summarizing a portion of the EL research document for the rest of the group, Jenna read a quote and stated,

> Jenna: Part of this, I didn't understand. 'Social entitlement.' What do they mean by that?"
>
> Robin: It goes back to equity and that Jim Cummins quote…(*flips through the EL document)*
>
> Jenna: The [Cummins] quote I thought was very good.
>
> Robin: Jim Cummins is very big on equity. He brings out that the type of instruction for kids in high poverty schools is skill and drill, intervention. With no social studies or science compared to those in high-income schools. *(Reading from the research document)* "Understand that education is a social entitlement achieved only when we provide equitable educational opportunities with high expectations for all students." So they're talking about high versus low income schools and different educational opportunities.
>
> Jenna: Yeah, this quote really resonated with me and it's hard to remember that. I have a newcomer student and I'm realizing that I don't have high expectations as I should. Part of that is the learning curve and –
>
> Robin *(finishing Jenna's sentence)*: -- you don't know where to start.

In the above exchange, Jenna and Robin worked together to construct an understanding of instruction and educational equity for EL students. They both drew upon the discourse of the EL document to work out their understandings. Jenna posed a question about the concept of "social entitlement" from her reading while Robin connected this concept to educational equity for EL students, drawing upon discourse provided by well-known scholar Jim Cummins in the EL research document, and her own discursive interpretation of Cummins'. Jenna then tried to make sense of this quote from the document in her own reflective discourse on newcomer students and high expectations. Through this intertwining, then, of scholarly discourse, self-reflective talk, and discourse mediated by Robin's expertise, Jenna was able to begin to connect this concept of educational equity with her own work with EL students in the classroom, and problematize knowing how to improve her EL instruction.

Case #3: Co-constructing integrated EL knowledge through discourse with the Third Grade Team

In this last case, the discourse between Robin and the third grade teachers show a marked difference from both the first and sixth grade ELL studios both in discussing nuances in EL students and instruction and the discourse taking on a more co-constructed structure. Through their discursive interactions, Robin and the teachers deepened their EL knowledge, such as in re-examining the instructional practice of recasting EL student responses, and delved into more demanding areas of the teachers' EL knowledge and instruction, such as defining and attending to explicit English language development instruction.

In general, the ELL studio served as a forum for discussing specific problems of practice or EL issues related to the topics. Unlike other ELL studios, less time was spent here on

"learning" the content of the EL issues and building a common language around which to talk about EL students, learning, and instruction. More time was spent in this ELL studio on how these various topics played out in terms of the third grade teachers' knowledge and experiences with their EL students, their classroom contexts, their school contexts, and their instruction. The topics discussed and the structure of the ELL studio provided a frame and framework for discussing these issues relevant to the teachers and the education they were providing for their EL students, as well as addressing larger structural and societal issues.

Robin's role in the discourse: Teacher leader as collaborator and facilitator. Robin continued to differentiate her facilitation for the third grade team dependent upon her own knowledge of and past experiences of working with those teachers. The third grade team was highly experienced and highly trained in working with EL students. Recognizing the teachers' high level of experience and expertise, Robin downplayed her role as "expert" in the discourse. Instead, she took on more of a facilitator in the evolving discourse of the third grade teachers by providing an initial framework through the EL research document, posing questions to help the teachers reflect on their own classrooms, students, and school; listening and affirming teachers' responses; and providing possible alternative explanations drawing upon discourses from her expertise, interpretations of the research, and her own experiences teaching EL students and working with other teachers (and administrators) on working with their own EL students.

More often, however, Robin took on the role of collaborator with the third grade teachers, posing more inquiry related questions that did not have a definitive answer or that she also was grappling with, building on or problematizing the teachers' ideas and interpretations, and active listening. In fact the discourse of the third grade ELL studio was dominated by the third grade teachers' talk. In one particularly telling thread in the discourse, Robin actively positioned the

third grade teachers as researchers in deepening and refining their EL instruction focused on explicit English language development (ELD) instruction. From the beginning of the ELL studio, Robin set up ELD instruction as an evolving problem of practice both in the research and for the teachers to work out in their instruction, framing the ELD instruction work as more of uncharted territory. Before having the EL teachers read the short section devoted to ELD instruction in the EL research document, Robin asked, "So, the big question is how do we do this, right?...And how we do this is not answered in here *(holding up the EL research document)*, but there's some guidelines in here."

Continuing with this positioning, Robin later identified her own "aha" from the ELL research document.

> Mine is…*(reading her highlights from the ELL document)* "There's currently limited research on K-12 ELD instruction and existing research does not provide sufficient bases for determining the most effective methods of ELD instruction.[4] *(Looking and speaking to the teachers)* So you're off the hook. We're figuring this out together. Nobody's doing it right (Third grade ELL studio, 12/8/2011).

Here, Robin appropriates the discourse of prominent scholars Saunders and Goldenberg through the EL research document to position the teachers (as well as herself) as legitimate inquirers and active participants into developing quality ELD instruction.

Even the discourse of the EL document itself reinforces this positioning teachers as active creators of EL instructional knowledge, not just consumers. In a section titled "Academic Instruction in a Second Language – Research Summary," the fourth bulleted point reads,

> **Implement sheltered strategies in classrooms and evaluate their effectiveness in terms of concrete student outcomes**. Formal research is underway to evaluate the effects of various sheltered strategies. However, educators themselves must help lead the way. There is simply no time to wait until researchers address all of the important

[4] This part of the ELL research document references Saunders, W. & Goldenberg, C. (2010). Research to guide English language development instruction. In F. Ong (Ed.), *Improving education for English learners: Research-based approaches.* Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.

> issues regarding sheltered instruction (English language learners: The Essentials document, p. 10, bolded in original).

Robin's appropriation of discourse in both oral and written forms, then, empowered the teachers to begin exploring and innovating instructional changes that could potentially support their EL students' content and language learning.

Third grade teachers' discursive resources and moves: Integrating and leveraging multiple discourses. Throughout the ELL studio, the third grade teachers drew upon and intertwined multiple discourses, appropriating ideas and language from the EL research document and each other. These discourses, in turn, were constantly negotiated with discourse stemming from their own experiences and knowledge of their students, and the teachers' assessment of their school as a context for EL student learning. The teachers used knowledge about their own EL students, EL expertise, and classroom and school contexts to leverage different arguments and discuss different tensions in negotiating quality EL instruction and the concepts and tensions outlined in the EL research document.

As a result, the third grade teachers' conversations were not neatly segmented into discreet topics of EL students, assessment, instruction, and research/theory. With each topic, these experienced teachers wove elements of the other areas to justify, explain, etc. as they made meaning together, posed questions or problems, and discussed their actions or viewpoints. This resulted in deeper and more nuanced conversations, as the group grappled with information from the ELL research document in light of their own professional experiences and work with EL students. The talk around EL instruction was discussed in multiple ways, but always basing itself in and coming back to the learning of the third grade teachers' EL students and their classroom and school contexts.

Teacher leader/teacher interaction: Problematizing the new math curriculum and academic language instruction. Robin's discursive role as collaborator and facilitator, and the third grade teachers' leveraging of multiple forms of discourse worked together in complex ways, allowing the teachers to critically look at and problematize how "good" curriculum and instruction for students in general may fall short for EL students. For example, in the exchange[5] below, the group discussed the challenges their EL students faced in learning and using academic language in light of their piloting some of the new district math curriculum that was to be fully implemented next year. Jack, one of the third grade teachers, in particular, centered the discussion on academic language, curriculum, and EL instruction on challenges his EL students experienced with story problems, a key part of the new math curriculum.

Jack: So it's a combination of that academic language…And all the math vocabulary. Which they kinda know, but then it's strung together in such a way that's just – just – totally…it's like a mean trick. *(laughter from the group)* Because, like they know these [questions…
Michelle *(interrupting)*: [For us and them.
…
Jack: Aaand. I don't even – you know, it's like – wow. It's so many levels that you'd have to peel back to get to the meaning of what that story problem is telling you [and
Robin *(agreeing)*: [Mm-hmm.
and what you need to find out…And it's formulated in so many different ways. So tryin' to kinda get [through all those levels.
Robin: [And they don't do any practice with that [before?
Jack: [Oh, we do.
Michelle: Not much. But even—
[Jack: But not very much the way it's structured.
[Michelle: But we've injected more…but it's still been really hard.
Jack: Soo, not the way – yeah. The way the – curriculum is structured, no. But we're learning now by chapter 4 --
Robin: Mm-hmm.
Jack: --that we've gotta build this in way earlier in the chapter. Because all a sudden *(adopting a*

[5] This exchange has been edited for space considerations. I took out much of what I had judged to be extraneous discursive turns, such as "Ums…" or "Ohs…" or other very short side conversation comments not related to the central topic. While not unproblematic, the focus of this particular discourse analysis was not specifically at the grammatical and word or sentence level, but the topic and interaction level between particular interlocutors. Therefore, I paid careful attention to taking out those discursive turns that had little bearing on the analysis.

pseudo-surprised, high voice), "Oh! You know how to subtract now. Oh, here's some story problems."

Robin: Hm.

Jack: And then they're like, "multi-step?" At least 2, 3 step story problems that they just…

Robin: Right.

Jack: Throws them for a loop. Even if they can subtract. There's no way they're gonna be

Robin: How do you break that down?

successful on that test. No way.

Robin: Mm-hmm.

…

Jack: Yeah. How can I support my kids…(pauses and lets out a long sigh)…my ELLs, you know. *(pauses and lets out another sigh)* when you're <u>combining</u> so many different --

Robin: Mm-hmm.

Michelle: Right.

Jack: -- levels of thinking. You're <u>combining</u> math and grammar…

Gwen: It's the cognitive demand.

Jack: ….and reading. And vocabulary.

…

Jack: So...I've – I spent a lot of time this week just drawing pictures and – and linking one sentence with a part of a picture. The next sentence a little bit more information with another picture. The next sentence with a picture. And then another picture that shows *(softens and lowers his voice)* "Ooo! This is the picture we don't really have complete yet. This is what we need to know." *(returning to his normal voice)* <u>But</u>, after 5 minutes of <u>that</u>, they're already <u>done</u>! They're done. Taking 'em through the multiple 5 steps of how to solve a story problem –

Gwen: Mm-hm.

…

Jack: They're already like rolling their eyes and goin'(*in pseudo-exasperated kid voice*), "Oh my gawd!"

(laughter from the group)

Michelle *(to Jack)*: This is not just you.

Jack *(still in his kid voice)*: "But we did all that just to subtract that from that?"

(more laughter from the group)

…

Jack: But it's like, *(adopting a teacher voice)* "You guys, this is the level of detail that you actually need to go through. This is the process you need to do."

In the exchange above, Jack and his fellow third grade teachers brought out the challenges in using the new math curriculum with their EL students. Jack in particular worked to understand and problematize the implementation of the new math curriculum, drawing upon and

integrating ways of talking about math learning and instruction, literacy, and what Robin and the teachers had just been discussing about academic language. For example, he pinpointed the challenges of math academic language as not simply vocabulary but the structure of the language and "levels" of language that needed to be "peel[ed] back" in order to understand the meaning of the story problem and what it was asking the students to do. In addition, Jack grounded his critique in appropriating discourses of a teacher - "Ooo! This is the picture we don't really have complete yet. This is what we need to know" – and his EL students - "But we did all that just to subtract that from that?" Jack used these discourses of "teacher" and students to drive home the tension between teaching the curriculum the way it is "supposed" to be taught and how the EL students were responding to it. In drawing upon multiple discourses related to math instruction, academic language, and those grounded in his classroom, Jack identified more specifically what was difficult about the curriculum for his EL students.

Throughout the exchange, the other teachers drew on discourses of agreement and similar experiences in teaching the curriculum to their EL students, offering occasional responses to emphasize Jack's points. Robin, as the teacher leader, listened attentively to the teachers, validating their responses with "Mm-hms" and "Right"s to agree or show empathy with the teachers as a fellow teacher collaborator. In this exchange, Robin only asked one question, "And they don't do any practice with that before?" In this simple question, Robin prompted Jack and the teachers toward thinking about how they might (or have already) adjusted their math instruction for their EL students, facilitating the conversation forward towards addressing the integrated nature of academic language with math and literacy and what they knew about good instruction for EL students. By leveraging these various discourses, then, simple discussions of academic language deepened to identify the "what" of academic language, and its challenges

within the current parameters of the teachers' instructional practice – navigating new curriculum, the EL students in their class, and the integration of language learning, content learning, and literacy. In other words, through their discursive interactions with each other, facilitated by Robin, the teachers used the focus on academic language as a way to identify and discuss the specific challenges associated with EL students in deeper, more nuanced ways.

Discussion

Through the discourse between Robin as the teacher leader and teachers at varying levels of knowledge and experiences working with EL students, we are able to see what the teachers know about EL students, what is negotiated as "essential" for EL student instruction, and "who is warranted to produce knowledge" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) about EL students and how best to meet their learning and educational needs. For teachers who are at the beginning of working with EL students, this may entail building a foundation of EL-related knowledge in relation to the specific students in the teachers' class. For more experienced teachers of EL students, this may evolve to deeper and more critical ways of looking at instructional practice for EL students.

EL professional knowledge: A space where research meets practice

What knowledge was seen as "essential" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) for the teaching of EL students was an interplay between the EL teacher leader's plan for what to focus on in the professional development sessions and what the teachers took up through their discourse. The discourse between the EL teacher leader and the teachers was marked by a constant negotiation between EL research and theory – through interaction with the EL research document, and Robin's expertise and experiences and the teachers' work grounded in their classroom contexts

(Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). For the teachers, their prior knowledge and classrooms served both as a filter and a place upon which to build, when negotiating what they needed to learn to teach EL students. As the discourse unfolded between Robin and the teachers, a complex continuum of teacher professional learning on EL students, learning, and instruction emerged, mediated by both what was engineered by the teacher leader and what teachers chose to take up in their discourse.

The first grade teachers, for example, were in their first year of teaching EL students in their mainstream classrooms and felt the immediacy of learning to work with these new culturally and linguistically diverse students who now made up a large portion of their classrooms. As a result, Robin focused on building a common language and knowledge base through which to talk about the teachers' EL students and EL students in general. At this beginning stage, Robin and the teachers negotiated an EL professional knowledge that was based heavily on topics directly related to "knowing" EL students, such as EL student backgrounds, levels of English language proficiency, and oral language proficiency and assessments. This also aligned with Robin's vision of EL instruction centered on the teachers' knowing their EL students, particularly for mainstream classroom teachers at the beginning of their work with EL students.

The sixth grade teachers, in contrast, had already begun to establish a foundation of EL-related knowledge. They also began to take up in their discourse the uniqueness and challenges for EL students in the sixth grade both in terms of academic language development and access to more linguistically demanding content. As a result, the sixth grade ELL studio interactions helped the teachers to broaden and integrate their EL professional knowledge to include attention to topics such as education equity for EL students, native language instruction

and the role of bilingual parents and families. The teachers began to negotiate this information not only in their personal classroom spaces, but in their school contexts as well, such as supporting bilingual parents and creating dual immersion programs. Robin, while still engineering the structure of the ELL studio, created space for the sixth grade teachers to process tensions and work out connections through their talk. She also began to marshal her own experiences with teachers across the district and her own professional knowledge to more openly challenge the teachers' assumptions and advocate for certain ways of approaching EL instruction.

Robin and the EL-experienced third grade teachers, however, revised and deepened their EL professional knowledge through co-construction of knowledge and critically identifying problems of EL instructional practice. Under Robin's facilitation, the third grade teachers expertly weaved together different discourses of EL theory and practice, grounded in both their classroom and school contexts. In fact, the third grade teachers often worked to make sense of their EL instruction within what the teachers identified as an often problematic school context that afforded or limited opportunities to provide EL students with focused, equitable education.

EL professional knowledge, then, was not a fixed entity, but one that progressed along an teacher experiential continuum mediated by the teachers' experiences and the reality of their classrooms. As teachers moved along this continuum, they shifted in their discourse from thinking of EL-related knowledge as discrete categories, such as "second language acquisition," "levels of English language proficiency," and "EL instruction," on the beginning end, to a more critical examination and integration of these discrete categories under a vision of equitable teaching and learning for EL students, on the more experienced end.

Leveraging discursive tools and resources for construction of EL professional knowledge

What the teachers knew about teaching EL students then was socially constructed and socially negotiated through their professional relationships (Coburn & Stein, 2006). Constructing the EL work consisted of an ongoing negotiation of meaning as Robin and the teachers engaged with one another and responded to the changing conditions of their work with EL students. For both the first and sixth grade teachers, "these changing conditions" meant their recently blended classroom that now included EL students. These teachers were not only developing their identities as "ELL teachers," but learning what it meant to take ownership for the learning of the EL students in their classrooms. For the third grade teachers, "changing conditions" meant revisiting what they had already known to be "good EL instruction" and refining or expanding their instruction to include explicit English language development instruction and negotiating academic language development with the demands of new curricula.

Use of physical tools. In constructing their EL professional knowledge, Robin and the teachers used multiple tools to help them make sense of the EL-related issues they addressed in the ELL studio. Some of these tools were physical tools with which the teachers actively engaged through reading, highlighting, and discussing. The EL research document, for example, served as the central organizing and guiding tool for the ELL studio discussions at Willow River Elementary School. As a tool, EL research document provided a common way of talking about different EL-related topics rooted in research and the interpretation of that research. The document, as will be discussed below, provided a discursive resource upon which both Robin and the teachers drew to validate, challenge, or refute their claims in their discussions. Other physical tools included student data, the computerized database system, curriculum materials, assessment tools, and the levels of English language proficiency descriptors. These tools

provided a key resource through which to engage in deeper understandings of their EL students' academic and language learning progress, and their educational and personal backgrounds.

Discourse as a primary tool. The primary tool for making sense of EL students, learning, and instruction, however, was the use of discourse. Within the public space of the grade level ELL studios, the teachers' instructional practices were mediated socially and through the use of discursive resources to generate and negotiate the content of their own EL professional knowledge. This collective sense-making process (Coburn, 2001) often centered on tensions that arose for the teachers as they negotiated multiple sources of information: EL-research, classroom and teaching experiences, and knowledge of the teachers' EL students. Discourse centered on these tensions were productive teacher learning and development sites (Wardekker, 2010) for establishing, modifying, or deepening parts of the teachers' EL professional knowledge. For example, one main tension for the sixth grade team revolved around recognizing that their Level 3 EL students, while at an advanced level of English language proficiency, still needed support with their English language development. Instructionally, this tension was between instruction that focused on access to content and instruction that focused on teaching the English language. In identifying and working out this tension, however, the sixth grade team began to draw upon the discourse from the EL research document, from Robin and from each other, becoming clearer on the problem and coming up with potential solutions.

Teacher discursive resources. At all grade levels, the teachers drew upon multiple discursive resources to make sense of EL-related issues. When confronted with new or complex information, however, the teachers often drew heavily discourses related to previous experiences, backgrounds, training and prior knowledge, not all specific to EL students, learning, and instruction. All of the teachers drew upon discourses stemming from their "practitioner

knowledge" (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002) to "bring a new sense of meaning and significance to their work" (Johnson, 2006).

The extent to which the teachers leveraged other discursive resources in their learning, however, often depended upon the experience level of the teachers in working with EL-related concepts, EL instruction, and EL students. For example, the discursive resources the first grade team drew upon to make sense of EL-related concepts and students were very closely tied to their general education students and classrooms. In working with the language proficiency levels, for example, the first grade teachers discussed how the proficiency level descriptors applied to all of their students, not yet leveraging them for EL student learning. In this way, the first grade teachers may have folded EL-specific learning into their general knowledge in an attempt to reconcile seeing EL students as "something extra" they needed to now address.

In contrast, the third grade team, with their depth of EL experiences, knowledge, and training, leveraged these sources of discourse to make sense of EL-related concepts in a more integrated way. For example, in making sense of academic language and how to support EL student at multiple levels simultaneously, the teachers drew upon: their knowledge and experiences with their EL students, negotiating EL and content instruction, each other's discourse, Robin's contributions to the conversation, and the language of the EL research document. The third grade team arguably had the most diverse set of discursive resources to draw from given that they were experienced, well-trained teachers of EL students who had a history of working well together on EL-related issues and with Robin.

Teacher leader discursive resources. Similar to the teachers with whom she worked, Robin also drew upon her own EL teaching and professional experiences, prior knowledge and professional training centered around EL students, learning, and instruction. She leveraged these

experiences in different ways, however: to advocate a particular point of view, challenge what was discussed, to support what was written in the EL research document, affirm a claim, or inform the teachers of something new. Robin also differentiated these discursive resources depending upon where she knew and saw her teachers to be in their learning around EL students and learning. With the first grade, at the beginning of the learning around EL issues, Robin heavily relied on the EL research document, her own EL professional knowledge, and her experiences as a teacher and a GLAD trainer to inform the teachers, clarify concepts, and only sprinkled in advocacy type statements. She opened up her repertoire of resources with the sixth grade as they were able to broaden the scope of their work with EL students. Here, Robin gave more space for the teachers to bring up and work out through the discourse their own understandings. She still drew upon the research document and her own knowledge of other research, but released more of that responsibility to the sixth grade teachers to draw upon in their own discourse. Her use of language to challenge teacher assumptions and advocating for particular ways of interpreting EL student data or experiences with EL students, however, became more prominent with the sixth grade teachers. With the experienced third grade teachers, however, Robin relied mostly on posing clarifying or reflective questions to the teachers as they worked through different EL issues. Most of Robin's discursive contributions came in the form of affirmations of what the teachers discuss or an occasional comment to share something she had observed in another classroom or school.

With all of the teachers, however, Robin also drew upon her "boundary crossing" (Swinnerton, 2007) work and experiences as a district-level "EL teacher leader" working with several teachers, schools, and principals to share information about what others were doing in their instruction, to start building a common vision of teaching EL students across the district,

and to put the teachers' work with EL students within the broader context of how it fits district initiatives, such as the literacy frameworks and the collaboration between the EL and literacy departments.

Limitations of discursive resources and the fringes of the EL professional knowledge discourse. The discursive resources Robin and the teachers are able to draw upon, however, are bounded both by the limits of their own experiences and internalized knowledge, but also the limits of how both researchers and practitioners have been able to talk about the complexity of certain issues regarding EL students, learning, and instruction. For example, most of the discursive constructions of EL students in Robin and the teachers' dialogue focused on stages of second language acquisition, student data, and assessments, with some information regarding previous schooling and native languages. While Robin and the teachers were able to talk productively about EL students through these lenses, discussions around the cultural and linguistic diversity of EL students as strengths and how to leverage that information in instruction was peripherally discussed, yet not centralized into the central discourse of EL instruction. Culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2002) and leveraging EL students' funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzales, 1992) remained on the periphery of Robin and the teachers' EL professional knowledge discourse.

Another area that had not entered fully into the discourse of Robin and the teachers was an awareness of what Lucas and Grinberg (2008) call, "the sociopolitical dimension of language." This dimension is critical for mainstream classroom teachers of EL students as it is "a prerequisite for understanding linguistic diversity and avoiding erroneous assumptions about students' language abilities and uses." Lucas and Grinberg (2008) advocate for a "sociolinguistic consciousness" that shows the relationships between language variation, the privileging of one

language variation over another, and power, rather than deriving from linguistic factors.

Particularly in the sixth and third grade ELL studios, Robin and the teachers focused on getting EL students to learn academic language which represents one such "language variation." Much of the discourse of academic language, however, puts the language of school in a privileged position and how to get EL students to speak "correctly" or have examples of EL students speaking incorrectly and recasting or giving corrective feedback. Missing from this discourse is a discussion of code-switching (Reyes, 2004) or register and the benefits of working with EL students to recognize the connections between language variation and contexts of speaking.

Role of the teacher leader in the learning and instructional change process

Robin, as the teacher leader, played a central role in both engineering and supporting how the teachers made sense of EL students, learning, and instruction with each other.

"Engineering" the direction of change. Most prominently, Robin engineered the direction of teacher learning and EL instructional change and developing the teachers' EL professional knowledge landscape in multiple ways. Some of these included the creation of the guiding EL research document and structuring the teachers' work with it in the ELL studios, her differentiated facilitation of the teachers' conversations, and creating new spaces in which to foster ongoing professional development around EL issues, such as instructional coaching or grade-level observations of a classroom teaching skilled in teaching EL students.

Robin's initial engineering of the EL instructional work was based upon a clear, yet still developing vision for the teaching of EL students and of teacher professional learning around EL instruction.

> [H]ow I think what's an effective way to teach ELL kids, so…GLAD strategies and sheltered instruction and what I'm finding now through the research…sheltered instruction isn't enough... I think in the past traditional ELL/ESL instruction was completely out of context…and that didn't work. The pendulum swung to let's…give them sheltered instruction and we'll teach them language through content. That hasn't really worked either right, because we haven't closed any gaps. Now recent research is saying we need explicit systemic ELD instruction – this is my action research is about - in addition to sheltered instruction…We need both and how do we do the systemic explicit ELD instruction in Gen Ed classrooms? What should that look like?

The vision that Robin articulated here focused on both access to content through "sheltered instruction" (Echevarria et al., 2008) and an explicit focus on teaching English academic language. She used these areas to not only help structure the EL research document, but to help her differentiate which areas to focus on with which group of teachers.

Robin had developed a vision of a continuum of teacher professional learning around EL-related issues and modified, or differentiated how she worked with the teachers, both in the structure of the ELL studio and in the facilitation of the teachers' conversations. This continuum placed the focus for teachers at the beginning of their learning on getting to know EL students, basics of second language acquisition, and sheltered instruction. As the teachers moved along this continuum, the instruction gradually shifted to deeper sheltered instructional methods and explicit ELD instruction. The focus on advocacy and understanding sociopolitical aspects of teaching EL students, although not explicitly addressed nor developed, generally tended to increase along this continuum of teacher professional learning.

Robin's initial engineering, however, changed as the teachers entered into the discourse with their own experiences, challenges, and problems. She differentiated, or adjusted, her facilitation throughout the discourse as she listened to the teachers and as the teachers brought up issues from their classroom contexts and negotiated them with the information in the document.

She explained her thinking in one debrief interview of the third and sixth grade ELL studios,

> I was hoping to get to one place with both [grade levels] and then we ended up in a little bit of a different place with both of them, but that's because of how things went…I think you just have to be flexible and see what teachers are talking about and what they need and… and [that's] okay because that's what they need.

Even though Robin had a clear vision of what she wanted to accomplish for each grade level, she shifted her facilitation according to what and how the teachers were making sense of the concepts, making adjustments as needed.

Drawing upon expertise: Managing meaning and introducing new information into the discourse. Throughout all of the ELL studios, Robin consistently drew upon her EL expertise, knowledge of research, and experiences as a former classroom teacher of EL students. In addition to using this expertise to engineer the EL professional knowledge landscape, she used this expertise in-the-moment during the ELL studio conversations to help reframe concepts in comprehensible ways, add more information to support understanding of a particular topic, or challenge a particular point of view or statement. Robin also leveraged her experiences as a professional developer, instructional coach, and district teacher leader. She frequently shared what she had seen other teachers do in her work with them and provided alternative ways of approaching work with EL students to help the ELL studio teachers understand issues and concepts, and work out solutions to problems.

Robin's expertise, however, was not a fixed entity. She saw her own continued professional learning as part of her job, and worked to keep abreast of EL-related research through webinars, reading books and articles, and conducting her own action research projects to delve deeper into her work with teachers and EL learning and instruction. In these ways, as a teacher leader, Robin was also a consumer, interpreter, and user of research, which she leveraged

to provide the teachers with access to new information related to the teaching and learning of EL students.

Conclusion

Scholars continue to draw attention to the little empirical research on preparing mainstream classroom teachers to work with EL students (August & Hakuta, 1997; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Zeichner, 2005), particularly in the professional learning literature. Coupled with a growing body of research on teacher leadership, this article examined the discursive interactions between teacher leaders and teachers in an attempt to shed some light on how the work of EL-focused teacher leaders with teachers could help build the capacity of mainstream classroom teachers experiencing a shift in the demographics of the students in their classrooms. Several points have been made in this article that may add to our growing understanding of professional teacher learning with regard to the teaching and learning of EL students.

For example, while scholars have pointed out areas of EL-specific knowledge that are needed to support strong EL instruction, only recently has this knowledge begun to be differentiated for mainstream classroom teachers (e.g. Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). The findings in this article showed how, while attempting to cover a wide range of issues related to EL student learning and instruction, some areas of EL-specific knowledge may be more pertinent to mainstream classroom teachers at differing levels of EL-expertise. While not definitive by any means, these findings allude to a need to examine not only what EL-specific knowledge mainstream classroom teachers may need, but how that knowledge may be differentiated and continually broadened and deepened along a continuum of teacher professional learning.

In addition, the findings in this study showed that discursive resources that both the

teacher leaders and teachers drew upon were based both in research and the teachers' classroom and school contexts. As co-constructors of EL professional knowledge, the teachers in particular played an active role in not only using theory through working with the research, but in producing theory as well, "in their own right, for their own means, and as appropriate for their own instructional contexts (Johnson, 2006, p. 240). These findings add to the positioning of teachers as "knowers" whose "practitioner knowledge" (Hiebert et al., 2002) has "the potential to infuse the traditional knowledge base of teaching with insider knowledge that includes the complex and multilayered understandings that teachers possess as natives to their work settings" (Johnson, 2006, p. 241).

Through the discourse between teacher leader and teachers, we have seen the complexity of trying to negotiate what is "essential" for teaching EL students and to take ownership for some production of that knowledge rooted in the teachers' classrooms, the EL students in those classrooms, and previous training or experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Discursively constructed EL professional knowledge between teacher leader and teachers may hold potential in examining one "critical challenge" for teacher education[6] – "creating public spaces that make visible how…teachers make sense of and use the disciplinary knowledge that has informed and will continue to inform [EL-related] teacher education" (Johnson, 2006, p. 241).

Finally, this article points to the need for a teacher leader with EL-specific expertise to guide the EL instructional work and to help teachers negotiate their mainstream classroom settings with more explicit attention to EL students. The focal teacher leader in this article, as an active participant in the meaning making process of the teachers, needed to access a strong

[6] In her paper, Johnson (2006) refers to second language teachers specifically. These public spaces for negotiating meaning around EL students, learning, and instruction, however, are of paramount importance for mainstream classroom teachers, as they begin to assume primary responsibility for the learning and achievement of their EL students.

knowledge and experiential base related to the teaching and learning of EL students to not only organize and differentiate the teachers' professional learning work, but to question, intervene, advocate, and inform on issues that related specifically to EL students. This is particularly important in the current context where EL instruction is seen as "just good teaching" (deJong & Harper, 2008) and current preparation of mainstream classroom teachers to teach EL students remains woefully inadequate (deJong & Harper, 2005).

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Article 3

Teacher Agency and Improving EL Instruction:

Leveraging Work with EL-focused Teacher Leaders through Problems of Practice

Providing quality instruction for exponentially growing numbers of English learner (EL) students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009) in United States public schools continues to challenge educators. As schools and districts move towards integrating EL students into mainstream elementary classrooms, many classroom teachers find themselves unprepared to work with these culturally and linguistically diverse students. These teachers often struggle with both assuming greater responsibility for the teaching and learning of their EL students (deJong & Harper, 2005) and addressing the instructional challenges associated with providing rigorous instruction that attends to the academic and language learning needs of their EL students' (Gándara et al., 2005).

Professional development is often cited as a key component to facilitating teachers' learning and changes in instructional practices for EL students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Despite calls for stronger, more targeted professional development opportunities for mainstream classroom teachers to improve their instruction for EL students, however, there remains a need to better understand how teachers learn the complexity of working with these culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms. There is surprisingly little empirical research literature on preparing teachers to teach EL students, and even less on preparing mainstream classroom teachers (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008).

Many schools and districts, particularly at the elementary school level, have developed teacher leadership roles to build the EL instructional capacity of their teachers, despite the lack

of research on how work with a teacher leader prepares and supports a teacher to work with the EL students in her classroom and how that learning may or may not be taken up in the teacher's instructional practice. In this article, I attempt to unpack the process of teacher professional learning to teach EL students and how work with a teacher leader might influence the teacher's classroom practice for her EL students - *what* understandings are constructed regarding the teaching and learning of EL students; *how* teachers and teacher leaders construct this knowledge through their work together, and *how* this may influence, or not, changes in instructional practice. More specifically, I examine the following: *Through work (direct or indirect) with the teacher leader, what knowledge and practices do mainstream classroom teachers take up with regard to EL students, learning, and instruction? How do teachers leverage this information or the work done with the teacher leader in their classrooms?*

I suggest that more in-depth understandings of the connections between the work of EL-focused teacher leaders and teachers' EL instructional practice are needed if the field is to recognize the value, successes, and difficulties of employing teacher leadership as a viable means of improving instruction and EL student learning outcomes.

In what follows, I begin with a review of the literature on teacher leadership and EL instruction within which I set this article, followed by a conceptual framework for examining the work of EL-focused teacher leaders and teachers and potential influences on instructional practice. I then present the learning and EL instructional practice of three contrasting cases of mainstream classroom teachers at different grade levels with varying levels of experience teaching and working with EL students. I analyze what and how each teacher leverages her work with the EL teacher leader (or not) to influence (or not) changes in instructional practice for their EL students. The article concludes with implications for structuring the work of EL teacher

leaders to support changes in teachers' instruction of their EL students.

Literature Review

Many schools and districts have adopted teacher leadership models to facilitate teacher professional learning and promote instructional change. Teacher leaders are typically former teachers, who have taken on roles as instructional leaders in their schools and districts to guide, support, and direct teacher learning for "continued instructional improvement" (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008, p.1) that results positively in student learning and achievement (Elmore, 2000). Teacher leaders may take on many administrative and managerial duties such as overseeing teachers' instruction, professional development, implementation of curriculum, and availability of instructional resources, while facilitating instructional collaboration between teachers and becoming knowledgeable about subject matter and teaching strategies (Mangin, 2007). The main focus of the teacher leadership, however, resides in the work with teachers and their instruction.

Teacher leaders may facilitate changes in teachers' instructional practices by fostering teachers' reflective practices related to their instruction, underlying assumptions and beliefs (Garmston et al., 1993), and supporting teachers in changing or adopting specific forms of instruction or approaches (e.g., Batt, 2010; Penner-Williams & Worthen, 2010). The work itself remains embedded within the context of the teacher's classroom and instructional practice (Gallucci et al., 2010; Knight, 2006; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). The potential for instructional change in this form of professional development lies in the focus on "ongoing and context-specific instructional improvement" (Mangin, 2007, p. 322); learning, reflection (Liston & Zeichner, 1996; Shulman, 1987), and feedback, (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995); and the promotion of deeper engagement in the teaching work by helping teachers to negotiate what

they are understand and learn with classroom practices.

The role of teacher leaders in building instructional capacity, however, is a complex, often ill-defined one (Taylor, 2008) both in practice and in the developing research literature around teacher leadership and instructional change. The research inadequately addresses, both in theoretical grounding and empirical investigation (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), the learning process of the teacher as (s)he works with the teacher leader (e.g., Gallucci et al., 2010), and *how* and *what* understandings and meanings develop in the teacher leaders' work that influence teacher professional learning and instructional evolution - critical to making significant changes in the teaching and learning of EL students.

Why a Focus on Teacher Leadership and EL Instruction?

The empirical research on teacher leadership is still growing, but has already shown the strong potential teacher leaders have for supporting teachers in their instruction and mobilizing resources for teacher learning and educational reform (Stoelinga, 2008). This research, however, has typically focused on content areas such as math and literacy (e.g., Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; Marsh et al., 2008), and less on instruction in these areas in relation to the specific students whom these teachers serve.

A few empirical studies have shown that teacher leadership focused on instruction of EL students strongly influences mainstream classroom teacher pedagogy to incorporate productive instructional practices or approaches for EL students (Batt, 2010; Penner-Williams & Worthen, 2010; Teemant, 2010). These few studies, however, focused primarily on the outcomes of the relationship between teacher leadership and classroom instruction, with a basic, yet inadequate understanding of the work of the teacher leaders and mainstream classroom teachers to achieve

those instructional change outcomes. It is important to understand not only the outcomes, but processes of teacher leadership and teacher professional learning as many mainstream classroom teachers continue to struggle with how to meet the language and content learning needs of their EL students (Gándara et al., 2005), due in part to the challenge of providing quality instruction for these students.

The complexity of instruction for EL students. Scholars point to the complexity of teaching diverse groups of EL students within the mainstream classroom that vary not only by language and culture, but multiple, interrelated factors such as levels of English language proficiency and literacy, native language schooling, socioeconomic status, and life experiences in the students' home countries and immigration (Enright, 2011; Gándara et al., 2005; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). A substantial portion of the research draws attention to ways for EL students to access rigorous, grade-level appropriate curriculum and develop academic language in English simultaneously (Collier & Thomas, 2007; Cummins, 2000; deJong & Harper, 2005; Echevarria et al., 2008; Gibbons, 2002; Short, 2002) to provide EL students with learning opportunities on par with those of their native English speaking peers.

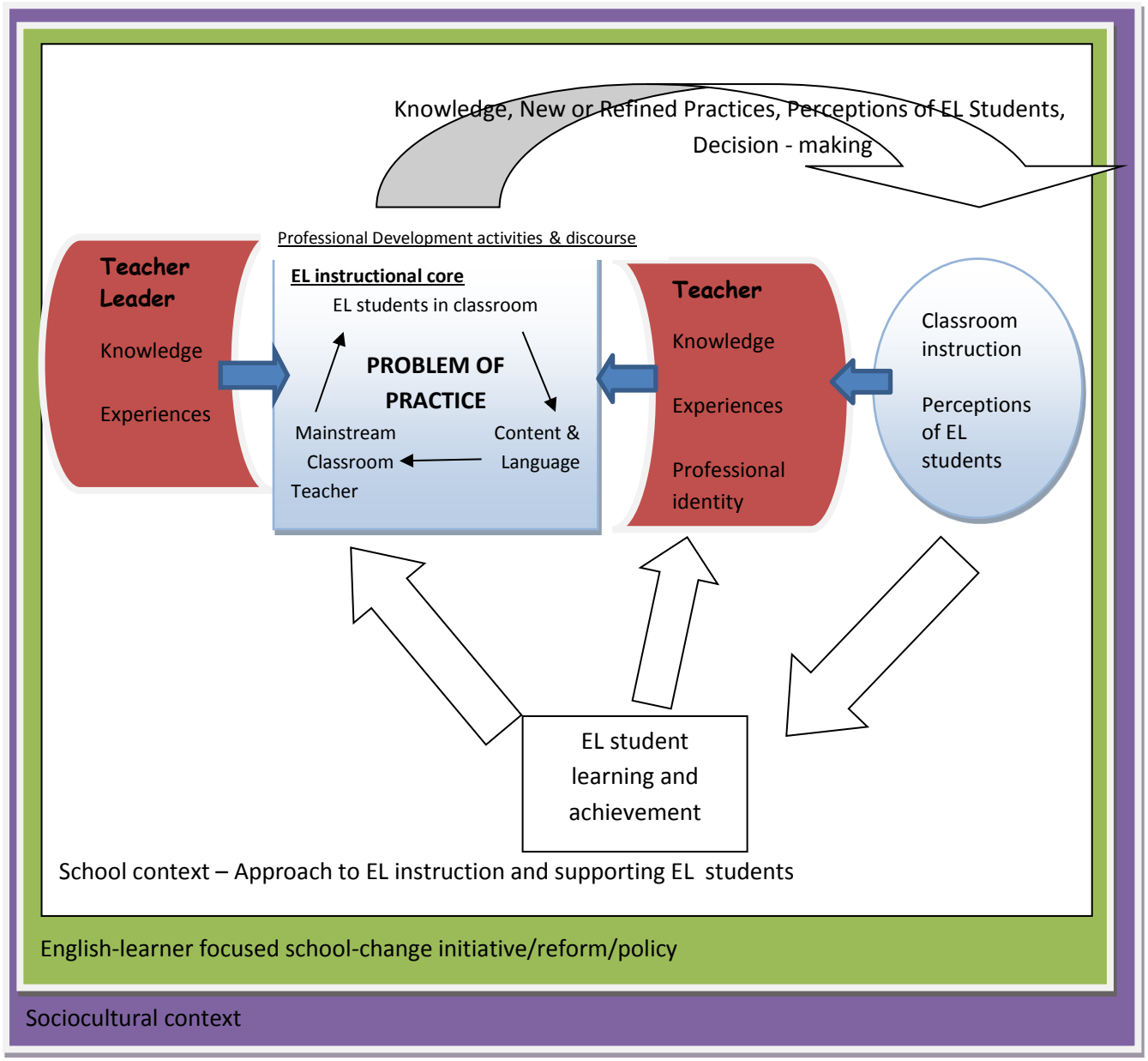
Therefore, there is a particular need for teachers to develop an understanding of the English language demands of the academic curriculum and how to appropriately scaffold learning for EL students so that the students can participate successfully in academic tasks and develop their academic and linguistic competencies (deJong & Harper, 2005; Lucas et al., 2008). *How* teachers leverage multiple forms of *what* knowledge, instructional approaches, and practices to the benefit of the particular EL students in their classrooms remains unclear, particularly for teachers already in the field learning to work with the changing demographics in their classrooms. In the next section, I present and detail a framework for conceptualizing teacher

professional learning through work with an EL-focused teacher leader and potential changes in EL instructional practice, followed by the methodology through which I addressed my research questions.

Conceptual Framework

In this article, teacher professional learning is conceptualized and rooted in Vygotskian (1978) ideas of learning that is socially constructed and mediated by physical or psychological tools. Within this perspective, learning is a continual *process* that relies on "social interchange" (Ellis et al., 2010, p. 4) between the teachers and the EL teacher leaders. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3. Teacher Leader/Teacher Work



At the center of the social interchange between EL teacher leaders and teachers, around which all dynamic, goal- and meaning- oriented discussions and activity (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) occur, is the EL instructional core. The "instructional core" (Cohen et al., 2003; Elmore, 2004) consists of complex relationships between teachers, their students and knowledge of the content being taught. Although not originally defined for EL students specifically, in this study, the "EL" instructional core is conceptualized as knowledge of both content and language; how teachers understand the nature of this knowledge; the EL students' role in their learning own learning process, the teacher's relationships with their EL students, and how these ideas manifest in teaching and classwork. The EL instructional core, however, is dynamic, defined, and re-defined within the interactions of teacher leader and teacher as new information becomes available and previously known information is questioned, validated, or discarded.

Within this EL instructional core, instructional change begins with addressing a concrete problem of EL teaching and learning or a "problem of practice" (Horn & Warren Little, 2010) related to the teaching and learning of the EL students in the teacher's classroom. Through interaction and discourse with the teacher leader, the teacher becomes clear about her problem of practice and subsequent professional development activities with the teacher leader are structured around solving this problem of practice. This attendance to the teacher's EL problem of practice is not bounded, however, but evolves over time as the teacher leader and teacher work together. Continued learning through these "specific instances of practice" gradually becomes incorporated into the teacher's larger "frameworks for teaching" and "conceptions of their work" (Horn & Warren Little, 2010).

The negotiation of meaning between teacher leader and teachers

Situating teacher learning within the discourse and actions of teacher leader/teacher interactions allows for the *negotiation* of meaning around EL student learning and instruction between *both* the teacher leader and teacher. In this framework, cognition and expertise related to learning and instruction of EL students, is "distributed *socially*, through other people in collaborative efforts to complete complex tasks" (Spillane et al., 2004, p. 9, emphasis in original). This framework recognizes the expertise both the EL teacher leader and mainstream classroom teacher may bring to the interaction. For example, the teacher leader may bring EL-related expertise, such as knowledge of research and theory, and experiences teaching and working with EL students. In this way, she may play an important role in providing more access to new information related to EL student learning and instruction, facilitating the learning of the teachers (Tellez & Waxman, 2005).

The mainstream classroom teacher(s) may bring "practitioner knowledge" (Hiebert et al., 2002), in addition to any previous training, exposure, or experiences working with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Practitioner knowledge is rooted in the teacher's knowledge of her own students and reflection upon the work that she does with those students in the context of her classroom, often "integrated and organized around problems of practice" (Hiebert et al., 2002, p. 8). Learning, then, may occur through the use, challenging, and/or integration of the complexity of knowledge and experiences that teacher leader and teacher bring to the interaction.

The EL teacher leader's role, then, is to work with teachers focused on problems of practice within the EL instructional core, although how teacher leaders work with teachers around this instructional core varies. Teacher leaders' work with teachers may involve multiple activities such as examining EL student achievement data, instructional coaching, observations

of classroom teaching, demonstrations of model practices, co-teaching, and cycles that include pre- and post-conferences with practitioners (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Throughout these activities, instructional coaches engage teachers in dialogue about their instruction and the learning of their EL students (Knight, 2006). These dialogues, in conjunction with the professional development activities outlined above, "shape opportunities for teacher learning" through an "in-depth examination of problems of practice (Horn & Warren Little, 2010, p. 183).

During this dialogic process, then, social negotiation results in gradually transforming practices through ongoing negotiation of meaning as EL teacher leader and mainstream classroom teacher engage with one another and respond to the changing conditions (Coburn, 2001; Gallucci et al., 2010) of the teacher's EL students and classroom context.

The interactions between EL teacher leaders and mainstream classroom teachers are complex, however, mediated by the participants' ideologies, worldviews, and experiences (Fairclough, 1992b) as well as each participant's professional identity and discursive construction of her/his and each other's professional roles; general and EL-specific background experiences and teaching knowledge (van Dijk, 2009). All of which may influence not only the meaning that is negotiated between EL teacher leaders and teachers, but how and what the teachers take up in their instructional practice.

The social situations of teacher development: Nested classroom, school, and district contexts for learning

The work and interactions between EL teacher leaders and the mainstream classroom teachers with whom they work are most immediately embedded in the teachers' classrooms and schools. These contexts represent "social situations of development" whereby the mainstream

classroom teacher (and the EL teacher leader to some extent) "experience opportunities for action in an activity in a specific setting" (Ellis, Edwards, & Smagorinsky, 2010, p. 5). In other words, the opportunities for instructional change actions occurs within the "specific setting" of the teachers' classrooms and schools, depending upon the cultural practices and tools made available to the teachers in those contexts, such as current approaches to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students, the presence (or absence) of norms of collaboration, as well as tools such as talk (or discourse), curriculum, student data. Teacher leaders and teachers "take on the cultural practices that are valued in the social situations of their development…and employ them to shape that social interaction" (Ellis et al., 2010, p. 4).

A Brief Summary

This conceptual framework, then, is based in the social nature of teacher professional learning where "mind is revealed in action on the world," (Edwards, 2005a, p. 53) or where the teacher's learning around EL students and instruction is revealed through the work she may do with the teacher leader through discourse and professional development activities. This learning is reified through the changes in instruction or that occur in the teacher's instructional practice. The work of teacher leaders and leaders on EL student learning and instruction is cyclical, however, as they continually return to the same problem of practice or as new ones evolve, work to understand the problems of practice, negotiate understandings of the problem, EL students and instruction in light of new information, develop potential solutions and then reflect together on them.

Although the teaching of EL students, professional learning, and school and district initiatives may involve multiple activities, it is the discursive construction of EL students,

learning, and instruction (Horn, 2007) in conversations about problems of practice, and the visions constructed for these groups of students that mediate what knowledge may be taken up or marginalized in a teacher's instructional practices. Thus, a mainstream classroom teacher may transform the instruction of her EL students through "increasingly informed actions" (Edwards, 2005a, p. 53) influenced by her work with the EL-focused teacher leader. In the next section, I lay out the research methodology through which I began this investigation.

Study Design

This research for this article comes out of a larger, yearlong qualitative, comparative case study of two district-level EL-focused teacher leaders and the grade level teams and teachers with whom they worked. Overall, the study aimed to better understand the process of teacher professional learning to teach EL students through work with a teacher leader, and the potential of teacher leadership for affecting positive changes in teachers' instructional practice for EL students. The study specifically examined the practices and discourse of EL teacher leaders and the mainstream classroom teachers with whom they worked as both parties constructed understandings of the teaching and learning of EL students.

Selection of sites and participants

In this study, I was interested in examining how EL teacher leaders might influence changes in teacher professional learning and instruction. Therefore, I chose to focus on the EL teacher leader work in settings that were in the process of adapting to the growing numbers of EL students in the district and schools. In order to obtain "information-rich" (Patton, 2002, p. 230) cases of EL-focused teacher leadership, in light of the transition described above, I purposefully selected (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002) Horizon School District in

which to conduct my study. Horizon served high percentages of diverse populations of EL students and employed teacher leadership as a main component to supporting teachers' instruction and work with their EL students. In addition, this school district was only a few years into the process of shifting its schools toward a more focused approach to working with EL students. The EL district teacher leaders were incredibly active in fostering this shift through the spearheading of EL-focused initiatives and through their work with teachers, principals, and other district departments.

Within Horizon, I selected two elementary schools, highly impacted with growing numbers of diverse EL students (García et al., 2009), with whom the focal district EL teacher leaders worked. These elementary schools were had also experienced a demographic shift in the numbers and diversity of EL students attending their schools, had recently integrated all of their EL students into mainstream classrooms, and therefore had their teachers had different levels of EL expertise and experiences working with EL students. Each school, however, represented two different school contexts for approaching instruction of EL students. Chestnut Elementary, for example, was moving toward a more school wide focus on EL students and instruction, while Willow River focused on "good instruction for all students" regardless of EL designation. These types of settings provided rich contexts within which to explore how the EL teacher leaders interacted with teachers at different levels of their EL knowledge and experience, set within different approaches and levels of focus on EL students.

The focal EL teacher leaders. Two district level EL-focused teacher leaders – Robin and Beth – were selected based upon multiple factors. Both teacher leaders had a high level of expertise both had in EL instruction and working with EL students, a strong commitment and

passion for the equitable education of EL students, and clear visions of what mainstream classroom teachers should learn and attend to in their instruction of EL students. Robin and Beth showed a continued vigilance towards their own professional development and took it upon themselves to read and stay current with EL-related research through webinars, attending conferences, books, and articles. In addition, both teacher leaders were highly reflective upon their own work with teachers, schools, and the district, and what the research afforded teachers and teacher leaders in terms of EL students, learning, and instruction. Meeting these criteria provides rich information and potentially strong examples of how teacher leaders with solid EL expertise were able to work with teachers at varying levels of EL experience.

Robin and Beth also provided a good contrast with each other, as both had varying levels of experience working with teachers and in the district. Robin was an experienced professional developer, instructional coach, and teacher leader with many years in the Horizon School District. This was Beth's first year, however, in the district. While she had had experience as a GLAD trainer, this was the first teacher leader position and at the district level. Through these contrasting factors, I was able to explore how these differing levels of experience influenced how each chose to work with her teachers.

I chose to focus on teacher leaders at the district level because their position allowed me to explore their specific work and conversations with teachers, and set that within both the context of other EL- or non-EL- specific work occurring in the schools and district and the other interactions the EL teacher leaders had with other key educators in the school system, such as principals and other district department personnel.

In one of the focal schools, however, Robin worked in conjunction with a school-based EL teacher leader, Maggie, to provide professional development for the mainstream classroom

teachers. Maggie held an EL endorsement[7] and had been a high school EL teacher for many years, but had transitioned to elementary school when she became an EL teacher leader. While very knowledgeable in EL-related issues Maggie had just begun that year to try shifting her role from managing EL services at Willow River to focusing more on providing professional development support. Because Robin's work was connected to Maggie's, with Maggie continuing the professional development work with Willow River's mainstream classroom teachers, I included Maggie in the study.

The focal mainstream classroom teachers. After observing a first round of grade level professional development sessions with varying grade levels at each school site, led by the focal EL teacher leaders, three mainstream classroom teachers – Michelle, Lindsey, and Nadia - were selected from a pool of possible participants, supplemented by information from the focal EL teacher leaders, utilizing a maximum variation approach, (Merriam, 2009). These teachers differed by grade level taught and school context, representing three different levels of EL-related experience and expertise: beginning, mid-career, and experienced. These teachers were also highly reflective and articulate about their own learning processes.

Michelle, a 3rd grade teacher, was an experienced classroom and EL teacher of fourteen years, spending a large portion of her time teaching at Willow River Elementary. She had also received much training in EL instruction, particularly through the Guided Language Acquisition Development (GLAD) training, a popular approach to teaching EL students notable for its multiplicity of strategies. Michelle also had her Master's degree in math and had just received her National Board Certification (in literacy) scoring high marks for the EL portion of the exam. Michelle was committed to the education of her EL students, and was continuously reflecting

[7] The state's certification for teaching English learner students.

upon and working upon how to better serve the needs of her EL students within her mainstream third grade classroom, with a focused attention on English oral language development.

Lindsey, a sixth grade teacher, was just entering the middle of her career, having taught for four years. This was her second year at Willow River Elementary, and her second year of working with EL students within her mainstream classroom. Lindsey had undergone some EL training consisting of a class in her pre-service teacher preparation program, some GLAD training, and some support from Robin last year. She was continuing to work out how instruction of her EL students was unique from "just good teaching."

Nadia, the third teacher participant and also a sixth grade teacher, was in her first year of teaching at Chestnut Elementary. She had had some EL instructional training woven into the coursework in her pre-service teacher preparation program, but stated that the information was very dense and rapidly presented. Nadia also had a Math endorsement and often cited her work with her math cooperating teacher as the most influential on Nadia's teaching. Notably, Nadia came from a multicultural and multi-lingual background. She was a former EL student who went through the public school system and still considered herself a learner of English. Nadia often talked about how she leveraged these experiences in her teaching, which will be discussed later in the article.

The variation in participants outlined above allowed me to compare and contrast how factors such as professional identity, background, and previous knowledge and experiences influenced the way these teacher leaders and teachers approached and addressed EL student learning and instruction with each other, in the teachers' learning process, and the teachers' instruction of their EL students.

Data Sources and Data Collection Approaches

To gain an in-depth understanding of the interactions of the EL teachers and the mainstream classroom teachers and influences on EL instructional practice, I employed ethnographic methods (Wolcott, 1978/1988/1997) of research. This approach allowed me to provide "thick" (Geertz, 1973) descriptions that could hold important insights (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) about teacher leadership and teacher learning processes that may be useful in other similar school and district contexts that are utilizing teacher leadership as a way to build EL instructional capacity and improve the quality of EL instruction. Therefore, data came from multiple ethnographic sources: interviews, classroom observations, teacher leader/teacher meeting observations, and pertinent documents to document the process and content of the teacher-leader/teacher work, teacher learning, and instructional practice. These data collection strategies, described in more detail below, were employed over the course of eight months of a school year to explore the potential evolution of the work and discourse between the teacher leaders and their teachers on the teaching and learning of EL students and changes in EL instructional practice.

A central component of this data collection strategy was records of the discourse and activities of the teacher-leader and teacher as they interacted throughout the eight months. I wrote detailed field notes for all observations and transcribed audio-recordings for most of the meetings and activities, where participant permission was granted. These meetings varied from grade-level professional development sessions to individual instructional coaching sessions.

I then followed the focal mainstream classroom teachers into their classrooms semi-monthly to observe their classroom practice, many observations occurring soon after their meetings with the EL teacher leaders. If there was a particular instructional focus from the meeting, I observed the lesson or time period related to that focus. For example, if the EL teacher

leader and teacher focused on reading/language arts work with ELs, then I observed during the reading/language arts period of the instructional day. Detailed field notes paid particular attention to the teacher's instruction and interactions with the EL students. When the teacher leader was in the classroom at the same time of my classroom observation, I recorded the type of role that she played and how she interacted with the teacher.

Throughout the eight months, I frequently interviewed each participant through semi-structured and open-ended interviews (Patton, 2002) to gain perspective and insights into the learning and decisions the participants made regarding the teaching and learning of the teacher's EL students; reflections on how work with the teacher-leader may have influenced (or not) the teacher's planning and execution of instruction and interactions with her EL students; and what the participants took away from the teacher leader/teacher interaction. Interviews were also conducted with each principal of the focal teachers' schools and each district EL director/coordinator to gain an understanding of the school and district contexts (exs: demographics, history, mission, community, programs) and initiatives related to the education of EL students.

All observation and interview data were triangulated (Merriam, 2009) with documents to improve the validity of the findings, and to provide more information about the teacher leader/teacher work in relation to the school and district contexts. These documents included, but were not limited to, documents made or used during the teacher leader/teacher meetings, the school and district's curricular, instructional, and professional development plans, programs, and approaches to EL instruction and learning.

Data Analysis

As scholars have called attention to the need to more clearly understand the connections

between teacher instructional leadership and classroom practice, (e.g. Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), I sought to not only understand these processes in my focal cases, but to seek to build a theory (Charmaz, 2001) about how a teacher's learning and instruction for EL students evolves in relation to the work with a teacher leader. Although I did not conduct a pure grounded theory approach to data analysis, I relied on this approach's inductive strategies (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

All interview, observation, document, and discourse data went through successive rounds of iteratively selective, focused coding schemes (Charmaz, 2001; Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994) according to themes that emerged from the data. In particular, I focused on codes reflecting the problems of practice that had emerged from the teacher leader/teacher professional development meeting observation and transcription data. These problems of practice were coded topically such as "small group instruction" or "oral language development" or "explicit English language instruction." The interview (initial and debrief) and classroom observation data were then coded using these problem-of-practice codes for both triangulation and to see the persistence, if any, of discussing or addressing the problems of practice through the teacher leader/teacher work together and the teacher's instruction.

I used the constant comparison method (Merriam, 2009) to analyze segments of data alongside each other in order to seek confirming or disconfirming evidence. For example, I used the segments of data from the third grade ELL studio in which Michelle identifies and discusses with the group her problem of practice related to oral language development of a small group of her EL students. I then compared that segment with others related to Michelle's instruction of her small group, subsequent professional development sessions, and Michelle's debriefs of her instruction of the small group throughout the year. In this way, I began to form a preliminary

look at connections between the professional development and teacher leader/teacher work with Michelle's instruction around that problem of practice. If the problem of practice did not persist or continue to be addressed in the classroom observations or debriefs, I looked for evidence as to why this might happen through interviews with the teacher participants, the teacher leaders, and the principals. I continued a similar process with the other identified problems of practice: comparing data, categories, and patterns that emerged and developed during the analysis (Charmaz, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and looking for continuities or discontinuities of the problems of practice in all sets of data.

In structuring my analysis around identified problems of practice, I was able to begin to construct an understanding of what EL-related knowledge the mainstream classroom teachers negotiated with the EL teacher leaders and how the teachers leveraged (or not) this information in their classroom practice. In what follows, I describe these understandings through the cases of each mainstream classroom teacher below.

Findings

All of the focal mainstream classroom teachers cited the importance of working with the EL teacher leaders in learning about the teaching and learning of EL students. How each teacher chose to leverage what EL-related information in their instructional practice, however, differed in complex ways, depending upon the mainstream teacher's classroom and school contexts, clearly articulated and specified EL-related problems of practice, and understanding of the role and expertise of the EL teacher leaders.

Case #1: Michelle – Actively leveraging the work with teacher leaders to change instruction

Michelle, as an experienced and successful teacher of EL students, took initiative to

structure her own learning around specific problems of practice within her classroom. As she already had a strong instructional, experience, and knowledge base with which to work, Michelle focused on refining her instruction and addressing specific problems of practice in working with her EL students. She repeatedly referenced Robin, and sometimes Maggie, however, when talking about what she had learned about in terms of explicit ELD instruction and how she worked that information into her practice.

Framing and defining a problem of practice: small group oral language development. What defined Michelle's learning process in this study was her focus on a specific problem of practice in her work with a specific set of EL students in her classroom. She both consciously and unconsciously structured and made connections in her learning all related to one point of her practice – working with a small group of struggling EL students on their language development. Although almost half of Michelle's class was composed of EL students, she chose to focus on this small group who needed extra support.

Robin and Maggie played integral roles in both indirectly and directly influencing how Michelle framed and defined her work with her small EL group. Michelle, for example, credited both Robin and Maggie for initially focusing her on the oral language development of her EL students, Michelle's focus for the year. She explained that her project GLAD work and discussions with Robin over the summer on the relationship between oral language and literacy, in conjunction with a handout on oral language from Maggie at the beginning of the school year, spurred her to "Okay, I'm going to just try stuff with the kids." For Michelle, "It was another reminder that we have to keep elevating their language, their oral language, or they aren't going to be able to reach a certain level of understanding in their reading." This repeated message of oral language and literacy from both EL teacher leaders helped identify something new to

Michelle, and spurred her to focus more specifically on the oral language development of a small group of her struggling EL students.

Work with the EL teacher leaders and her colleagues in the third grade level professional development "ELL studio," however, helped Michelle strengthen her understanding of her work with her small group of EL students as language development: getting her students to talk, use and practice language forms and functions, and develop academic language. Michelle stated that she had heard some of the information presented in the ELL studio before, but it wasn't until that ELL studio with her colleagues and the teacher leaders that she was able to negotiate what she had previously heard about academic language forms, function, and structure with her own students and instruction. Michelle explained,

> The [ELL studio] meeting…was the first time I had really heard about ELL stuff that wasn't GLAD or wasn't just kind of on the curriculum…I had heard about trying to emphasize sentence frames…that there's a lot more to language development than just vocabulary with sentence structures and grammar. Then when I went to that meeting it felt like it was exactly where I was at as far as evaluating where kids are and where they need to move and how we can move them and what's working and what's not in our district. I would say ELL, that was definitely, even in maybe the last three years, probably ELL-wise that was the most significant learning for me.

Michelle suggests here that although she had heard about ELD instruction before and academic language, that the timing of this focus and work aligned with where "she was at" in her work with her EL students resulting in "the most significant learning" she has had in the past three years. It was this alignment of EL concepts and her work with her students that impacted her learning and compelled her into shifting from a pure vocabulary focus to a broader understanding and implementation of academic language focus. Thus, Michelle's learning process shifted from "awareness" to "alignment" between her sense of "readiness" for EL instructional change and ELD focus of the ELL studio to "action" in changing Michelle's work with her ELD group.

Through negotiation of Michelle's learning and reflection on her work with her small EL group, the problem of practice became even more refined and clearly defined in the ELL studio. She realized that she needed to be more intentional in helping her EL students to develop targeted forms of English and that her students needed to talk more to develop their oral language. Therefore, Michelle refined her problem of practice to focus on designing intentional ELD instruction and language forms and functions, as opposed to just content vocabulary, moving from a general framing of the problem of practice as "oral language development" to a more specific one of ELD instruction using sentence frames.

The specificity of Michelle's problem of practice strengthened her investment in adjusting her instruction of her small EL group. As she explained,

> I had just said I want more design in my little ELD group, and what I meant by that is I want it to feel like I knew what I was doing…What's appealing about this is that it's a very narrow thing that they can practice, a very specific chore or job. So I think by the end of the year I would like to have an idea of more whole group oral practice…"

Michelle pointed to the specificity of the ELD instruction goal as "appealing" for her, as she could work with her specific EL students on particular language forms and functions. Thus the task of improving her instruction began with something concrete and manageable. Michelle also saw potential of expanding what she worked on with her small EL group to "whole group oral practice." Michelle, then, had set both a specific goal of intentional ELD instruction for her EL students and expanded it to include its contribution to improvement of her oral language instruction in general.

Leveraging the EL teacher leader as a resource for continued learning. The changes in Michelle's instruction evolved throughout the course of the year in her work with her small ELD group, and involved a cycle of: work with the teacher leader, teaching, reflecting, and work

with the teacher leader. This professional development cycle aligned with both Michelle's inquiry oriented learning process and how Michelle leveraged her work with the EL teacher leaders in her instruction. Michelle's learning process, for example, was a complex one that was embedded in her instructional practice, her experiences working with EL students, particularly through GLAD, and the metacognition of her own learning process. Michelle preferred to "try it even if I'm not gonna do it right…and then I'll ask questions or figure it out later or kind of problem solve."

When Michelle returned to her classroom after the ELL studio, she had a clear goal in mind - her small ELD group instruction - and a concrete way to try to structure her small group learning through the use of the Frames for Fluency curriculum, suggested by Robin. At first, true to her wanting to try things out to learn, Michelle took Robin's suggestion literally and directly implemented the Frames of Fluency curriculum using the materials and following the structure of the curriculum. As she continued to use the curriculum, however, Michelle began to identify more problems of practice related to getting the students to talk more and engage with the curriculum. She also noticed that the curriculum language frames and content were unrelated to the rest of what the students were learning in the classroom.

Within her learning cycle, then, Michelle called upon Maggie to help her problem solve. At Michelle's invitation, Maggie observed Michelle teach her small EL group, followed by a debrief session where Maggie shared her observations and made some suggestions for increasing the amount of student-to-student talk. This resulted in Michelle restructuring how she paired the students and her use of more engaging content than what the Frames of Fluency curriculum provided. Part of this success was the alignment of Maggie's approach to supporting teachers, how she engaged with Michelle during the debrief session, and the purpose that Michelle had

established for Maggie's support.

The other part, however, lay with Michelle's clear understanding of how to leverage Maggie's strengths to gain support. Michelle explained,

> I know Maggie's strength to be articulating things – to see what is going on and name it, and then also another strength is to generate ideas – to bring a lot of information to the table. I knew she could give me some feedback and help me process things. I just wanted her to show me where things were going wrong; and to suggest different ways of running the group.

Michelle's assessment of Maggie's strengths came out during the debrief session where Maggie spent much of the session paraphrasing or revoicing Michelle's reflections on her EL students' learning and engagement in the small group and posing questions for information, clarification to facilitate that reflection. With Michelle's prompting, Maggie also framed alternative suggestions for pairing up the students to facilitate talk and changing up the content around which to structure the language in terms of what Maggie saw the students and Michelle saying and doing during the small group or what Michelle had hoped would happen. Their conversation, then, consisted of negotiation of meaning between Maggie and Michelle of both the problem of practice and potential solutions. Michelle explained,

> [The debrief session with Maggie] was very useful. She point out some obvious needs (like not getting interrupted) and seating arrangements and maybe changing group size. She also listened to me while I thought out loud about the problems which helped me clarify what I thought was wrong and where I wanted to go forward. I realized that I needed to be more clear about the objective of the group – to have a mini lesson structure in the small group. This actually fits with all of my small groups…

The negotiation of meaning between Michelle and Maggie on Michelle's small ELD group instruction was successful as described above because Michelle was able to leverage Maggie in a way that was useful to Michelle – as a sounding board, as a listener, and making concrete suggestions rooted in what Michelle had been talking about and what Maggie had observed.

The success of the debrief was also rooted in the alignment between Michelle's purpose in working with Maggie and Maggie's approach in working with experienced teachers such as Michelle, who had a clear problem of practice or focus on which to work. Maggie saw the ownership and responsibility of the teacher's learning to reside within the teacher herself, positioning her role as working *with* the teacher and allowing the teacher to drive the conversation instead of simply telling Michelle what to do. This approach worked well for teachers like Michelle, because Michelle was an experienced teacher who had a clearly defined problem of practice to address and a clear idea of how she wanted to utilize her work with Maggie.

Therefore, changes in Michelle's instruction were intimately connected with her work with the EL teacher leaders and opportunities for professional development that were aligned with Michelle's learning style, where she was in her learning about EL students and instruction, and what she had been attempting to do in her classroom, thus facilitating changes in her practice.

Case #2: Lindsey – Limiting the work of EL teacher leaders

In contrast to Michelle who actively utilized her EL teacher leaders to support her in addressing specific EL related problems of practice, Lindsey did not leverage her work with the teacher leaders in consistent and ongoing ways. Through a complex relationship between a lack of a specific problem of practice, perceptions of the need for support, teacher leader "EL expertise," and a misalignment with Maggie's approach to working with teachers, I observed little change in Lindsey's instructional practice in relation to the work that was done in the EL professional development sessions in which she participated.

The ELL studio: Searching for a problem of practice. Lindsey, unlike Michelle, did not enter the ELL studio with a problem of practice to address in relation to a specific group of

students. Instead, the ELL studio served as a place to explore potential problematic areas for the sixth grade teachers to address with their EL students, such as the stagnation of EL students at intermediate levels of English language proficiency, represented in the district by a Level 3 score on the state's language proficiency test. Lindsey (and the other sixth grade teachers) consistently made connections between the EL students in their classroom and the EL concepts they were discussing.

When it came time to set workable goals for EL instructional improvement and change, Lindsey, along with her sixth grade colleagues, set her goals on addressing "sentence patterns" in writing and to "give more intentional corrective feedback in writing and conversation." These goals, however, were not set in relation to a clear problem of practice specific to the EL students in Lindsey's classroom. Instead, Lindsey set general goals for instructional improvement that were based upon the general conversations about the need for explicit correction of English language form errors, and ELD instruction, in relation to Level 3 EL students – the profile of EL students in her classroom. As will be seen shortly, the lack of tension and immediacy of a specified problem of practice with the particular EL students in Lindsey's class that connected "student" to "instruction," contributed to a general instructional goal that was not sustainably implemented or built upon throughout the rest of the year.

Leveraging the teacher leader (or not): Need, conceptions of "EL student," and misalignment with Maggie's role. When Robin and Maggie, as the EL teacher leaders, structured and provided guided professional development opportunities, Lindsey actively engaged in work and reflection by asking questions and participating in the discourse. For example, after the sixth grade ELL studio, Maggie arranged for the sixth grade teachers to observe Michelle, known as a teacher who was highly effective with her EL students and

considered a GLAD expert. Michelle modeled and demonstrated the use of a sentence patterning chart (SPC), a GLAD strategy identified by Lindsey and her colleagues as something they would like to try to strengthen the writing of their EL students. Lindsey watched Michelle and her students intently and constantly wrote notes on what she saw. In the short debrief session run by Maggie, Lindsey identified many specifics of Michelle's instruction that she wanted to incorporate and try, but also "kept thinking about how I can relate this to sixth grade."

Lindsey then tried out the SPC in her classroom, explaining that her impetus was not only her general goal for improving her instruction of her EL students, but seeing Michelle use it successfully with her students. During her self-reflection on the SPC lesson, Lindsey wrestled with many issues: how well she had adapted the SPC to meet the needs of her students, using the SPC with small groups as intervention or continuing to modify it for the whole class, or whether continuing to incorporate the SPC into her instruction would be valuable. She, however, did not have anyone to help her reflect on the practice in a way that would facilitate the integration of the SPC into her overall instruction. In fact, this was the only time that Lindsey had used the SPC, admitting later in the year that she had not tried it again. Therefore, while Lindsey saw the potential of incorporating a particular EL-related instructional practice into her repertoire, she did not continue to take it up in her practice. While she had tried out the practice, she did not access Maggie's support for Lindsey's reflection on her practice and Lindsey's progress toward the generally stated "writing instruction" problem of practice identified in the ELL studio.

In general, Lindsey did not actively seek out continued support from either Robin or Maggie the rest of the year for support in her EL instruction. Without this continued guidance, Lindsey's instruction did not change for her Level 3 EL students. Why Lindsey did not leverage either EL teacher leader for support was related to complex relationships among whom she

considered to be an "EL student" that warranted help with Lindsey's instruction, her understanding of Maggie's role and perception of expertise, and a misalignment with Maggie's teacher-initiated approach to working with teachers.

"Need" and the "EL student." One impetus for Lindsey's leveraging help from a teacher leader was related to her ideas of what she needed help with and who she considered to be an EL student. Lindsey explained that she seeks out support for her instruction of EL students when she feels like

> "I don't know what I'm doing."…For example a kid that I have no idea what to do with. Or a kid who is…just really low and sticks out as, "Okay, this person just isn't getting language or understanding anything I'm saying." Something that I'm not able to do myself, which I feel like with my limited training and hopefully common sense that I wouldn't be able to do on my own. Or just some fresh ideas. But again, that's good talk because sometimes I probably – with this one kid, why he hasn't grown, but I didn't seek – reach out. But I feel like I do have a lot of tools in my belt. It's just getting the time to do it and thinking about it.

What spurs Lindsey to seek out assistance was her sense of not knowing what to do with a particular student who is "low" or that stands out as someone needing language support. For Lindsey, without a pressing "need," such as working with EL students at more beginning levels of English language proficiency, improvement of her EL instruction was more a matter of having time to use the tools she already had for EL instruction and reflecting on their use.

Last year, Lindsey had newcomer EL students and EL students at more beginning levels of English language proficiency – Level 1 and Level 2 – in her class. She identified her need to learn to work with her EL students, defined by these lower levels of English language proficiency, taking advantage of an opportunity to work with Robin and actively seeking her help throughout the year. In addition, the professional development work that Lindsey both needed and welcomed last year was directly tied to a specific problem of practice of learning to establish a foundation of English skills with her newcomer EL students. Robin facilitated

Lindsey's learning by structuring learning opportunities with regular biweekly meetings, providing several days of in-class observations of GLAD instruction of other teachers in the building, and having Lindsey participate in an action research project Robin was doing in supporting teachers of newcomer students. These consistent and regular learning opportunities with Robin not only supported Lindsey's instruction in the moment, but were reflected even this year with Lindsey's extensive use of charts, turn and talks, and pictorials - showing possible potential for long-term changes in instruction.

This year, however, all of Lindsey's EL students were at an intermediate/advanced level of English language proficiency – Level 3. She explained the difficulty with learning to teach Level 3 EL students.

> 'Cause that's really a challenge because you forget that they're not normal native speakers 'cause they talk like it. Their work is decent…there's no obvious…except they're low readers. And some of them are really struggling with sentences. But again that doesn't make them stick out form my regular lower struggling learners. I want to just get stronger in instruction in Level Threes, I think.

While Lindsey expressed a desire to "get strong in instruction in Level Threes," this conflicted with her challenge in recognizing the learning needs of Level 3 EL students as different from her "regular lower struggling learners." She admitted later in the year that she was starting "to mush, which is good and bad, ELLs with my low learners or my low readers" without distinguishing how the literacy learning needs of her EL students might be different from those of her struggling students. At the end of the year, Lindsey reflected that while she didn't seek out continued support with her EL instruction of her Level 3 students, "I think that if I had had level ones or two this year, I could definitely see myself going to Robin and even really anybody in the district that I know." Here again, she associated her (in)decision to seek out support from an EL teacher leader, with the level of English language proficiency of her students.

Further complicating Lindsey's association of her EL instructional learning needs with EL students at lower levels of English language proficiency, was her conception of EL instruction as "just good teaching strategies, in general," where "the ELL strategies apply to everybody, but especially struggling students…" Lindsey frequently talked about how her instruction for her Level 3 students was enveloped in the main instruction of the rest of the class, "I think that if I had other, like a Level 2 or 1, [my literacy instruction] would be a little different. But for these [Level 3] kids, they're able to – what's the word? Just receive usually like what I want them to know." Therefore Lindsey did not see a need to seek out additional support for her instruction of Level 3 students as she did not see her instruction of them as all that different from what she was already doing – despite what they had talked about in the sixth grade ELL studio in relation to academic language and explicit English language development instruction.

Conceptions of an "EL expert," seeking out assistance, and misalignment with the EL teacher leader's approach. In addition, Lindsey did not seek out support from Maggie, her most immediate resource, because of a misalignment between Maggie's shifting role into providing professional development, Maggie's approach to working with the teachers, and Lindsey's understanding of how to leverage Maggie's role and expertise. Unlike Michelle, who understood Maggie's strengths and had a clear role for utilizing Maggie in processing Michelle's instruction, Lindsey was unclear as to what Maggie's role was, or how to leverage Maggie's expertise. In Lindsey's last interview at the end of the school year, she shared,

> I don't think I realized Maggie's role…I don't think I knew or if she was able to do what the ideal [EL teacher leader] could do… Now that I'm like, oh that makes sense that she's probably way more involved behind the scenes getting the logistics of the programs and our counts, so I probably don't see what she does, but I do know that when I asked her a question she would put resources in my box. I think she was more that. I guess the role that I see the [EL teacher leader] is just being a go-to person and a support. Resources.

Although Maggie had been attempting to transition her role to one of more professional development support, Lindsey was unaware of this role. She saw Maggie's role more of gathering resources and program development instead of an expert to help strengthen and grow Lindsey's EL instruction. Therefore, even though Maggie offered her support to Lindsey a couple of times during the year, Lindsey did not have a good idea of how to draw upon Maggie for professional development support. A misalignment occurred between Maggie's approach of letting the teachers come to her for support, and Lindsey not knowing how to leverage Maggie for support, missing a potential opportunity for Lindsey to continue to strengthen her EL instruction for her Level 3 students.

Case #3: Nadia – Utilizing "Whomever was thrown at me"

Nadia, a sixth grade teacher, presented yet another contrasting case of leveraging work with EL teacher leaders to improve EL instruction. In her first year of teaching, Nadia was just beginning to learn not only how to navigate her own classroom, but her school and supports for professional development as well. Nadia's work with EL instruction and working with teacher leaders on EL students, learning, and instruction, then, was set within a context of her first year of establishing her own pedagogy. What Nadia took up in the instruction of her EL students, then, was heavily dependent upon the initiation and follow-through of the EL teacher leaders, within a focused school context of EL literacy improvement and specified through a particular problem of practice with the specific EL students in Nadia's class.

Finding the problem of practice: Following the lead of the EL teacher leader.

Nadia's EL professional learning was set within the context of Chestnut Elementary's movement towards a more school wide focus on the teaching and learning of EL students. Beth, the district

EL teacher leader, collaborated closely with Becca, the principal, and Krista, the district literacy specialist, to focus improving EL instruction specifically in the area of literacy based upon the achievement data and general observations. This school context provided ongoing, structured opportunities for Nadia to work with Beth (and Krista) and made space for Nadia to define a clear problem of practice specific to the EL students in her class through her interactions with Beth and Krista.

Through both Beth and Krista's facilitation, Nadia and her sixth grade teacher colleague established a focus on small group guided reading instruction. Although half of Nadia's class consisted of EL students, again with prompting from the teacher leaders, Nadia chose to focus on one small group of EL students who were struggling with their reading skills, but ranged in levels of English language proficiency. This focus on guided reading provided a concrete practice through which Nadia was able to learn both about the guided reading and literacy instruction for EL students.

Similar to Michelle, through her interactions with the teacher leaders, Nadia was able to more specifically pinpoint problems of practice she could work on with her small EL guided reading group. This increased not only her initial investment in changing her EL literacy instruction, but provided an impetus to continue to revisit her practice with the teacher leaders to refine it. For example, in the first EL/literacy professional development meeting, Nadia specified a goal for her guided reading instruction that was both related to literacy learning and English language development.

> There were some questions that Krista used that I wanna use all the time because they seem like they would work for everything…And getting the student to do a lot more of the talking. So I want to really try to get [the students] to do the discovering and questioning… and prompt a little bit more out of them but to try and get them to discuss it.

Nadia cited Krista's example as a source for what Nadia chose to focus on in her guided reading group: using questioning to facilitate more student talking, discussion and student discovery in their learning. This focus on questioning and oral language development also directly related to Nadia's overall student-centered focus, established in her work with a math coach in her pre-service program. Thus, although Nadia specifically identified problems of practice within the literacy goal of guided reading instruction for her EL students, it was also in service to her larger focus on student-centered instruction. She explained her reasoning,

> And when teachers do too much of the work and too much of the thinking, then the kids do a lot less, and then they can also get bored or get distracted or off-task. So I'd like to have a shift towards them thinking, them being more active in their learning. So [my EL guided reading instruction] has to do with yesterday, reminding of what I do believe in and also what I did believe in that I sometimes forget to incorporate.

Nadia's discussions with Krista and Beth around getting the students to do the work and thinking in literacy, as well as the work of reifying that philosophy through the planning of a guided reading lesson, reminded Nadia of her student-centered approach to instruction. This work and understanding was then further reified through Nadia's structure and her implementation of the guided reading lesson plan with her guided reading group of EL students.

As Nadia continued to work with Beth, however, she was increasingly able to refine her problems of practice related to guided reading and her EL students through which Nadia could improve her EL reading instruction. For example, after observing Beth conduct a guided reading lesson with Nadia's EL students and debriefing, Nadia identified a problem of practice related to a deeper purpose of getting her EL students "motivated" about reading so that they took on a more active role in their literacy learning. Nadia and Beth, for example, talked about the stigma the EL students felt about being "called to the back table" for guided reading instruction and how the EL students would actively avoid gathering for the guided reading lesson. Nadia explained to

Beth,

> Or they don't say anything and they sneak to their desk and they get out a book and they pretend I don't see them…So it's this whole like – they don't wanna do it!...I guess I kinda understand…They might feel like they stand out as the kids that don't read well 'cause one of the kids said, "yeah, 'cause we can't read."

Nadia defines her problem of practice here not just in terms of motivating her EL students to read, but in minimizing the stigma of standing out as "kids who can't read" when they are called to the back table. This clarity of Nadia's evolving problem of practice, still rooted in her EL guided reading instruction and focus on student ownership and independence in learning, created a launching point for Beth's suggestions of classroom management procedures, such as the T-graph for social skills, a GLAD strategy for both language development and facilitating positive and productive student interactions. Nadia then took up a modified form of the T-graph in her instructional practice for the rest of the school year.

Defining specific problems of practice with a central instructional focus, such as guided reading, in relation to the specific EL students in the teacher's classroom, then, facilitated Nadia's investment in improving her instruction for EL students. Similar to Michelle, but unlike Lindsey, Nadia's problems of practice were workable, aligned with where Nadia was in her professional learning, and directly connected to her knowledge of where her EL students were in their learning and where she wanted to them to be, leading to direct changes in Nadia's instructional practice.

Leveraging the EL teacher leaders to change instruction: utilizing whom was given.

Nadia actively leveraged her work with the teacher leaders in her instruction when those opportunities were presented to her. As she stated, "I've just been using whoever is available and pushed towards me." The nature of Nadia's work with the teacher leaders, rooted in Nadia's instructional practice and specific EL students in her classroom, resulted in evolving Nadia's

literacy practices and her literacy practices with EL students in particular.

One key feature of that work was that it was rooted in Nadia's classroom, current instruction, and specific EL students. For example, in one EL/Literacy professional development, Krista guided the teachers through planning a guided reading lesson that the teachers were to try out in their classrooms after the professional development session. Through the planning process, Krista guided the teachers in their learning of important literacy instruction concepts related to having students take ownership of their literacy learning, engaging students in text, and the importance of EL student talk for both learning and oral language development, which is tied to literacy learning.

Subsequent professional development work and meetings continued to build on the literacy/oral language focus through guided reading and evolved with each meeting, but always rooted in the teachers' instruction and students. This grounding not only helped Nadia to focus on specific aspects of one part of her literacy practice, but allowed her to directly implement something new (i.e. guided reading) and change her literacy practice. The day after the EL and literacy professional development, for example, Nadia immediately tried out the guided reading lesson. This continued focus on instruction was facilitated by Beth's guided reading lesson demonstration and facilitation of the teachers' observation of each other's guided reading groups and related debrief sessions. Thus the intertwined nature of information about EL and literacy instruction and the practice itself facilitated changes in the teachers' instruction.

In addition to the ongoing, cohesive, and focused nature of the work with Beth and Krista, these opportunities afforded Nadia some agency in negotiating what she was learning about guided reading and oral language development with what she already had in place in her classroom that was working well or was developing in her instructional practice, such as EL

instruction. These connections were instrumental in Nadia continuing to develop and work with her EL guided reading group. For example, after observing Beth teach a guided reading lesson to Nadia's small group of EL students and debriefing with Beth, Nadia reflected,

> It was good to see that she was having them do the [picture walk] but with a partner 'cause I do that a lot as well…and so it was nice to find a connection between what she does and what I do. So that way it's not like, "Oh, gosh. Everything I do is completely different. I'm - " you know, to change a lot of things. So it's more just kind of, "I do a lot of this," and see how I can change some things that she does that I can incorporate."

Nadia had already initially tried out guided reading with her small group of struggling EL students after the EL and literacy professional development. However, Nadia's connections of what she saw Beth do in the lesson demonstration with Nadia's own practice made continuing with guided reading more feasible and manageable. Beth's lesson demonstration also supported Nadia's building of her guided reading practice for EL students indirectly, in that Nadia identified things that Beth did not incorporate into her instruction that Nadia would have for her EL students such as using more visuals and posting the learning focus of the lesson on the white board.

The role of EL teacher leaders and learning how learning how to leverage them.

While Nadia did leverage her work with Beth in her EL instructional practice, however, the work was all initiated by the EL teacher leader. Nadia mentioned that she only worked with Beth "when she approached me or when I was told to work with her." A couple of months after working with Nadia, Beth discontinued her work with Nadia, feeling like she was "pushing" too hard to work with Nadia, and sensing that Nadia needed some space to work out some things in her instruction. Nadia, on the other hand, continued to have questions about her guided reading

instruction for her EL students, but was both reluctant and uncertain in approaching Beth, once Beth had stopped contacting her.

> I only see [the teacher leaders] during PDs. I didn't think I could contact Beth. So I don't have her contact info and I don't think to email her if I have a question. Because I'm not quite clear about it – a resource to me… If that was really an access for me to have consistent communication with her about how to do certain things. So that wasn't openly invited for me. Maybe it's something that I did have an option, but I don't know. And so then I just – I mean it's tough when people say that they're spread out between how many schools and how they're so busy, it makes you not want to ask them anything.

Nadia did not contact Beth as she did not feel invited to contact Beth. In addition, it was not clear to Nadia that she could use Beth as a resource nor *how* to draw upon Beth as a resource. Despite continuing questions Nadia had regarding EL guided reading, then, she did not continue to receive support from the EL teacher leader that had already influenced Nadia's instruction.

Discussion

Each of the cases laid out above illustrated how the mainstream classroom teachers leveraged or did not leverage their work with an EL teacher leader to change or incorporate new learning about the teaching and learning of EL students into their instruction. These findings suggest that leveraging the teacher leader to change EL instruction practice involved many factors including, but not limited to: a clearly articulated problem of practice; work centered on the teachers' classrooms and the specific EL students in their classrooms, and relational agency, or knowing whom to draw upon for what.

A clearly articulated problem of practice with specific EL student in the teachers' classrooms. In all of the cases, Beth or Robin, as the teacher leaders, initiated a process of self-reflection for the teachers in the first set of grade level ELL studios, as they worked through EL-related concepts in light of the research, the teachers classrooms, and the data and knowledge the

teachers had or developed about their EL students. Through this guided, but flexible process, the teachers set goals to make changes to their instruction for their EL students. The extent to which the teachers reified these instructional goals, however, varied according to the specificity of the goal and how tied it was to the specific EL students in the teachers' classrooms.

For Michelle, already a strong and experienced teacher of EL students, this involved the specific work she had started in her classroom with specific struggling EL students to develop their oral language. This focus carried Michelle throughout the year as her work to strengthen these students' oral language development and facilitate student-to-student talk evolved. Michelle leveraged her work with both Robin and Maggie in support of this specific focus with this specific group of EL students in Michelle's classroom. Through this work of refining her practice, Michelle continued to deepen her understanding of the connection between oral language and literacy development and what is meant by explicit English language development instruction.

Nadia, also in her work with Beth (and eventually Krista), held a similarly specified problem of practice related to implementing guided reading instruction for a small group of struggling EL students. As opposed to Michelle, who focused on explicit language instruction, Nadia's work centered on embedding oral language development into her guided reading instruction. Beth and Krista, the teacher leaders, structured all of Nadia's professional development sessions in service to the goal of strengthening literacy instruction through guided reading practice. The ongoing nature of these professional development sessions supported Nadia's development and incorporation of guided reading for her EL students. Through this focus and Nadia's direct implementation of whatever had been planned or discussed with the teacher leaders, she strengthened her knowledge of not only the practice of guided reading, but

how to structure it to engage her EL students in text, attend to specific language structures, strategies to manage both the small group and whole class behavior and learning, and move her EL students towards independence in reading.

In both Michelle's and Nadia's cases, a clearly articulated problem of practice gave them an impetus to change their instruction in "a determined direction" " (Leont'ev, 1978, p. 62), albeit in different ways. Michelle, as an experienced teacher of EL students, had intentionally leveraged her work with Robin and Maggie to refine her EL instruction through a specific problem of practice. As a veteran teacher, Michelle had well established practices that were productive for EL students and was able to focus her instruction in more nuanced ways. Nadia, however, as a new teacher, leveraged her work with Beth and Krista on a specific problem of practice, guided reading, through which to build her repertoire of instructional practice – both EL-focused and in general. She was able to extrapolate some of what she put into place for her EL guided reading group, in other areas of instruction as well, such as more incorporation of directed pair and small group work. Thus, both Michelle and Nadia came together with their respective teacher leaders to interpret a problem of practice, specific enough to address in concrete ways, but general enough through which to learn and reify larger concepts.

In contrast to Michelle and Nadia who focused on a specific aspect of their instruction, Lindsey's "problem of practice" only carried limited and temporary change in her instructional practice. Similar to Michelle and Nadia, Lindsey had set goals for their instruction in the first ELL studio with Robin and Maggie. One of the goals was to implement the Sentence Patterning Chart (SPC), in service to a larger general goal of improving the sixth grade teachers' writing instruction. However, this goal was set without Nadia's specific EL students in mind within a structure she had set up in her classroom, as with Michelle and Nadia's small reading groups.

The SPC goal was just in service to the general writing instruction for Level 3 EL students. Maggie set up an opportunity for Lindsey and the sixth grade teachers to observe Michelle use the SPC, and Lindsey was inspired to try it out in her classroom. She did not continue with the practice, however, uncertain as to how to process how well it went on her own or how it might specifically address the issues her EL students were having in their writing.

What compounded Lindsey's general writing instructional goal was her perception of EL instruction as "just good teaching" and her consideration of which EL students warranted changes in her instructional practice. Lindsey consistently saw EL students at lower levels of English language proficiency as warranting "obvious" modifications to her instruction. What few EL students Lindsey had in her classroom were all at more advanced levels of English language proficiency, Level 3. In the ELL studio, Lindsey, her colleagues, and the teacher leaders discussed at length the importance of explicit English language development instruction and the tendency for EL students to plateau at Level 3. Lindsey even noticed this plateau pattern in examining the history of her EL students' English language proficiency scores. However, when it came to talk of setting instructional goals, no connection was made between any potential areas of learning and instruction specific to the EL students in Lindsey's class, but more of a general "EL" focus on "improving writing."

When returning to her classroom, Lindsey continued to fold her Level 3 students into the rest of the class without explicit attention to their English language development and how that may influence the progress, or lack thereof, in her class. Thus, while Lindsey did try out the strategy of the SPC, its specific purpose for the learning of the EL students in her classroom eluded her, and she did not continue to work with it nor continue to seek assistance for work with her EL students.

The findings from these three cases imply that professional learning of EL students and instruction was successful in the cases where the mainstream classroom teachers sought to understand how what they were learning was connected to their specific problem of practice with the specific EL students in their classrooms. Grounding teacher EL professional learning in the teachers' classrooms and focusing instructional change efforts on clearly defined problems of practice in relation to the teachers' specific EL students, then, may facilitate teachers' changes in instructional practice. This learning may be in service of instructional refinement for more experienced teachers, or in service of extrapolating to other areas of instruction for more beginning teachers. The work of teacher leaders is instrumental in supporting the teachers' efforts to reflect on their practice, identify and clarify specific problems of practice, and then provide ongoing assistance to help the teachers evolve their practice as they implement possible solutions and revisit the problem. A focus on specific problems of practice (Horn & Warren Little, 2010) with specific EL students may not only build the teachers' capacity to work with EL students, but sustain changes in instructional practice over time.

Relational agency - Leveraging work with a teacher leader for EL instructional change

In all three cases, the teachers also utilized professional social networks (Coburn & Russell, 2008) to develop, refine, and learn about EL students, learning, and instruction, engaging in "collective sense making" with their colleagues (Coburn, 2001). The EL teacher leaders comprised a key part of the mainstream classroom teachers' social networks, playing an important role in facilitating the teachers' learning through these social networks by, for example, introducing new information about EL students, learning, and instruction into the teacher's social networks through grade level specific and school wide professional development sessions. How and to what extent the teachers' leveraged Robin and Beth to change practice and

deepen their learning of the teaching and learning of EL students in their classrooms depended upon many factors such as: how established were the teachers' relationships with the teacher leaders and in what capacity; the teacher's capacity to leverage these relationships to support continued learning and its reification into practice; and the teachers' perceptions of the teacher leaders' expertise in EL learning and instruction.

One major influence in how and to what extent the teachers' leveraged their work with the EL-focused teacher leaders in their instruction was the teachers' capacity to recognize their teacher leaders as resources for EL instruction and how to access those resources, a concept that Anne Edwards (2005b) termed "relational agency" in her work on professional learning and organizational change. Relational agency recognizes that expertise is distributed among different actors in a social network (Spillane et al., 2004), and can be defined as

> a capacity to work with others to transform [instruction] by recognizing and accessing the resources that others bring to bear as they interpret and respond to the object. It is a capacity which involves recognizing that another person may be a resource and that work needs to be done to elicit, recognize and negotiate the use of that resource in order to align oneself in joint action on the objective. It offers an enhanced version of personal agency and as a capacity it can be learnt (Edwards, 2005b, p. 172).

In the cases of the teachers in this study, each teacher had a different level of relational agency enabling or constraining their ability to draw upon and work with the expertise of their teacher leaders in service to their EL instruction.

Perceptions of EL teacher leader expertise. One key aspect in the teachers' capacity to recognize the potential resource of an EL focused teacher leader was their perceptions of the teacher leader's expertise in relation to their own. These perceptions of expertise were rooted in the relationships they had established through initial and previous work with the teacher leaders.

All three mainstream classroom teachers worked with Robin or Beth at the beginning of the year through their grade level ELL studios. In these studios, and through previous work with Robin in the case of Michelle and Lindsey, both Robin and Beth established credibility and expertise through their facilitation, collaboration with the teachers, and negotiation of meaning of research and practice focused on EL students, learning, and instruction.

Maggie, however, worked to establish her credibility as a professional development resource as her role shifted from previous logistical support. While Maggie supported the ELL studio facilitation and participated by contributing EL-specific knowledge and validating teachers' responses, Robin took on the bulk of the facilitation and guiding of the work. Maggie, however, was left to conduct the follow up professional development throughout the rest of the year with the Willow River teachers.

Michelle had an already established professional relationship with Maggie, built through years working together at the same school. Combined with a specific problem of practice that Michelle needed support to address, Michelle initiated continued work with Maggie to help improve Michelle's small EL group instruction and provide more opportunities for her EL students to talk. The type of support Michelle wanted was, in turn, aligned with a clear idea of Maggie's expertise – articulating what she sees, generating ideas, and helping Michelle to process and make changes to her instruction, which Michelle immediately and continually developed. Therefore, Michelle's high level of relational agency, both in recognizing that Maggie was a resource and knowing how to leverage Maggie's expertise, facilitated the changes Michelle made to her small group EL instruction.

In contrast, Lindsey, also at Willow River Elementary, did not actively seek out Maggie's help and support to continue her learning and reification of that learning into practice. Some of

this was related to an unclear problem of practice, as discussed in the previous section. However, for Lindsey, "expertise" was very tied to experience teaching in the classroom. The previous year, when Robin had worked with Lindsey on her instruction of newcomer EL students, Robin's expertise was clear to Lindsey. Robin was a former classroom and EL teacher and an experienced GLAD trainer and professional developer. Her work with Lindsey helped facilitate the changes Lindsey was making to her instruction in support of her newcomer EL students. Lindsey's changes in instructional practice continued to show up the following year (i.e. the year of this study) where Lindsey continued to incorporate GLAD and other EL strategies into her daily teaching. Thus, Lindsey established a place for Robin in Lindsey's professional social network as an expert to which Lindsey could go for support in her EL instruction.

With Maggie taking over the follow up professional development after the ELL studios, however, Lindsey's access to an EL expert shifted theoretically to Maggie. Maggie's expertise, while in teaching EL students at the secondary level, was not apparent to Lindsey. Lindsey, who was only in her second year of having EL students in her classroom, had only been in contact with Maggie the previous year when needing material resources working with her EL students or when Maggie had connected Lindsey and Robin to support Lindsey's instruction of her newcomer EL students.

Therefore, Lindsey had only known Maggie in the capacity of managing materials and logistics, not instruction in the classroom. She was unclear about Maggie's shifting role to that of providing more professional development support and did not actively see Maggie as expert on EL instruction upon which she could draw for support with EL instruction. For example, although Maggie had offered to observe the teachers or debrief with the teachers after they had had time to try out SPC the strategy, Lindsey did not take her up on her offer. After Lindsey tried

out the SPC, she remained uncertain as to how it went or where to go next, and so she did not continue to pursue using the SPC in her instruction. Thus, Lindsey's low level of relational agency did not recognize Maggie as an "expert," nor did Lindsey know how to draw upon Maggie's expertise, missing an opportunity for continued learning and a potentially beneficial change to instruction.

Nadia, as a first year teacher, also had a low level of relational agency. She was just beginning to establish her professional social network and build relationships with other teachers, teacher leaders, and Beth, who was also in her first year of being a district teacher leader. Like Lindsey, Nadia was not entirely clear about Beth's role nor that Beth could be a resource for Nadia to call on for support with her EL instruction. Unlike Lindsey, however, Nadia's low level of relational agency was counteracted, in part, by the school and grade level contexts of improving literacy instruction for EL students, and the continued initiation and follow up professional development by Beth. Nadia, then, was able to leverage whomever was made available to her to support her EL literacy instruction, namely Beth and Krista. This work resulted in the incorporation of guided reading into Nadia's literacy instruction, and more emphasis on questioning to facilitate student-to-student talk for her EL students. Nevertheless, although Nadia's work with Beth (and Krista) resulted in changes in Nadia's EL and literacy instruction, once Beth stopped pursuing working and meeting with Nadia, Nadia did not pursue further work with Beth.

Through Michelle, Lindsey, and Nadia's cases, then, we see an added layer to the complexity of why and how mainstream classroom teachers leveraged (or not) their work with an EL teacher leader based in the teachers' understanding of how teacher leaders might be seen as "resources to turbocharge" (Edwards, 2005b, p. 171) changes in EL instructional practice and

enable the teachers to align their actions with those of the teachers leaders in collaborative work.

Conclusions and Implications

Michelle, Lindsey, and Nadia's case studies revealed an interaction of factors such as focused problems of practice and relational agency, that influenced how these teachers leveraged work with a teacher leader (or not) to improve their instructional practice for EL students. The findings discussed above hold many implications for how we construct the work of teacher leaders around improving the instruction of mainstream classroom teachers for EL students, and how we think of structuring teacher professional development opportunities with teacher leaders that is ongoing and embedded within the teachers' classrooms (Stoelinga & Mangin, 2010).

Learning to teach EL students and work with the increased cultural and linguistic diversity with the mainstream classroom is a complex task. The mainstream classroom teachers and EL teacher leaders consistently worked not only to define and address this complexity, but were engaged in a process of figuring out how to leverage each other's experiences and expertise for the benefit of their EL students.

Placing specific problems of practice related to the teachers' EL students at the center

The EL teacher leaders attempted to train the teachers what to look for with their EL students through student data, interactions with students, and the teachers' experiences with the students. The EL teacher leaders also laid out different areas for the teachers to pay attention to in their instruction of EL students such as providing opportunities for oral language development or explicit English language development instruction. One defining characteristic of having this

work influence the teachers' instructional practice, however, was having a clearly defined problem of practice with the specific EL students in the teachers' classrooms. Although the teachers connected EL related concepts with their own classroom contexts, instructional change occurred as the teachers attempted to reify these concepts, with teacher leader support, through working on a problem of practice related to the specific EL students in their classrooms.

This may hold implications in how teacher professional learning is structured around EL students, learning, and instruction. A focus on specific problems of EL instructional practice (Horn & Warren Little, 2010) with specific EL students, for example, may provide not only a way for the teachers to address the immediacy of that particular problem, but may also serve as a gateway for building the teachers' general capacity in working with EL students.

Further investigation of problems of practice as a tool for instructional change may also be warranted. What constitutes a "rich" problem of EL practice that would spur and sustain changes in EL instructional practice and how a teacher may work with his/her EL students? How might the school and district contexts influence what problems of EL instructional practice are identified and how they are addressed? How might we leverage problems of EL instructional practice specific to the EL students in teachers' classrooms to deepen the teachers' learning and understanding of their culturally and linguistic diverse students, and how best to instruct them? How might we support teachers in "seeking out patterns" in their instruction of EL students to identify rich problems of practice through which to build their capacity and to leverage their "environmental resources" (Edwards, 2005a, p. 50) such as EL teacher leaders? Johnson (2006) calls for "a reclaiming of professional development for teachers, by teachers" (p. 250). Part of the process in taking responsibility for one's professional development may lie partially in

training teachers what to look for in their own EL instruction to identify problems of practice through which to improve.

Developing relational agency

Relational agency may also hold promise in building the teacher's capacity to leverage EL teacher leaders to more productively support the teacher's EL instruction. Developing strong relational agency may strengthen "collaborative practice [which] involves resourceful use of the expertise of others and aligning one's professional practice with that of others when working on the problem space" (Edwards, 2005b, p. 178). Michelle, who had a high level of relational agency, was able to identify a specific problem of practice with her own EL students and leverage her teacher leader to support her instructional changes. This capacity, however, can and may need to be *developed* or "nurtured" to support teachers' abilities in "interpreting and approaching problems, for contesting interpretations, for reading the environment, for drawing on the resources there, for being a resource for others, for focusing on the core objects of the professions whether it is children's learning or social inclusion. (Edwards, 2005b, p. 179). Developing relational agency might include attention to clarifying the roles of EL-focused teacher leaders and communicating that information, the creation of spaces and time to develop professional relationships centered on EL students and instruction, and a school wide focus on EL learning and instruction.

Many questions around relational agency also may warrant further investigation. For example, how might the concept of relational agency help us to better understand the role of teachers in constructing their professional learning support system for EL instruction? What role *does* relational agency play, if any, in strengthening collaboration among teacher leaders and

teachers or others? Answers to these questions may begin to point us toward a more robust theory of where relational agency fits, if at all, in a teacher's professional learning trajectory and how she constructs and learns through her professional social networks.

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