

**TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS  
IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS:  
*Gaps in Preparation and Support***

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## **Abstract**

Across the nation, nearly all teachers can expect to have EL students in their classrooms. The challenges of teaching ELs students are particularly acute in the nation's secondary schools. There is evidence to suggest that the lack of preparation to teach ELs is generally weak, but even more so for secondary teachers. We analyze data from a survey distributed among secondary teachers in a large urban school district to examine how well prepared they feel to teach ELs. Without special preparation, even good teachers may find it difficult to meet the needs of ELs, and many secondary EL teachers note that the preparation and support they most want and need is the least available to them. The study also points out that the resources to assist these teachers may be in greater supply than is apparent.

## **Introduction**

Over 60 million people in the U.S. do not speak English at home. One third of that population is concentrated in California and Texas, though increasingly these individuals are found in the Midwest, the “New South,” and areas once thought of as linguistically homogeneous (Ryan, 2013). In fact, virtually all of the growth in the school age population in the United States can be attributed to children of immigrants (Batalova & McHugh, 2010).

Nowhere is the proliferation of non-English speakers more apparent than in the nation’s public schools. In California alone, more than 40% of all public school students speak a language other than English at home (CA Department of Education (CDE), 2014). In California, as in Texas and portions of many other states, nearly all teachers can expect to have English Language Learners (ELs) in their classrooms over the course of their careers. Preparing teachers for an increasingly diverse classroom has been teacher education's "central challenge" for the past several decades (Rueda & Stillman, 2012).

This challenge is particularly acute in the nation’s secondary schools where teachers are often unable to spend enough time with individual students and their families to develop meaningful relationships with them (Hill & Chao, 2009). Moreover, there is great variability in the language and academic skills students bring to the classroom. ELs are a particularly vulnerable population at the secondary level as the academic and linguistic demands are greater at this level, and there is very limited time to acquire needed skills. ELs at the secondary level can be roughly divided into two groups: "Long-Term English Learners" (LT-ELs) and more recent immigrants into the country. LT-ELs are commonly defined as those students who have been in U.S. schools for seven years or

more and have not made sufficient progress to reclassify as English proficient (Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010). In California, 59% of secondary school ELs are LT-ELs (Olsen, 2010). LT-ELs struggle academically. They may have strong social (oral) language, but weak academic language and significant deficits in reading and writing. Many are “stuck” at intermediate levels of English proficiency seemingly unable to make a full transition toward reclassification (Olsen, 2010). Recent immigrants have been in U.S. schools for shorter periods of time and may not have even a modest level of conversational proficiency in English. Often, they suffer from interrupted education, but may also be academically advanced. This variability is one of the great challenges for teachers of ELs at the secondary level (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly & Driscoll, 2005).

The complexity of the middle and high school curriculum makes the transition from primary grades difficult. Secondary school materials include a large amount of content-specific vocabulary, assume extensive background and cultural knowledge, and expect highly complex reading and writing skills (Cho & Reich, 2008). In their study of social studies high school teachers in Virginia, Cho and Reich (2008) describe how simple demonstrations or explanations among mainstream English students become a difficult task for teachers of ELs. High school texts are rich with discipline-specific words such as *act* and *bill* that ELs are less likely to encounter in their daily lives, and usually coming from immigrant families, may have little context to help understand. The way subjects like social studies are traditionally taught in high school, as culturally specific abstractions, gives teachers few opportunities to make meaningful connections between materials and students’ own lives and to benefit from students’ bilingualism (Cho & Reich, 2008; Menken & Kleyn, 2010).

With the advent of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), being implemented in most states, secondary teachers face the challenge of supporting EL students in meeting academic expectations that require increasingly demanding use of language and literacy in English (Bunch, 2013). Yet, even with the less demanding standards previously in place, ELs suffer from substantial academic achievement gaps. Nearly three times as many ELs (69%) scored “below basic” on the 8th grade National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) math exam in 2015 compared to the national average (29%).<sup>1</sup> ELs are twice as likely to drop out of school as their peers who are either native English speakers or former ELs (Callahan, 2013). Students who have exited English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, whether they are still classified as EL or not, often transition into low-track, non-college-preparatory English classrooms, where the conditions may be equally problematic and where teachers are even less prepared to instruct them (Leki, Cumming & Silva, 2008 cited in Bunch, 2013; Robinson, 2011; Estrada, 2014).

This study examines how secondary school teachers, particularly novice teachers, are being prepared for the challenging task of teaching ELs. We focus on secondary teachers because there are data to suggest that the lack of preparation to teach ELs is weak across the grades, but particularly acute at the secondary level (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010; Harper & de Jong, 2009; McGraner & Saenz, 2009; Reeves, 2006). A study of California schools found that at the elementary level 20% of ELs attended schools with 2.5 or fewer fully authorized EL teachers per 100 ELs.<sup>2</sup> In middle and high

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<sup>1</sup> Results from NAEP 2015, retrieved from NAEP Data Explorer: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/>

<sup>2</sup> Teachers holding a BCLAD or CLAD certification. Data is from 1999 CBEDS and 2000 Language Census.

schools, however, the scarcity of fully authorized teachers was more pronounced: 38% and 31% of ELs attended middle and high schools, respectively, with fewer than 2.5 fully authorized EL teachers per 100 EL students (Gándara et al, 2003). Moreover, teachers in mainstream secondary classrooms often cannot devote sufficient time for language development in addition to teaching the content, and often lack the training to do so (Reeves, 2006; Henze & Lucas, 1993).

Despite the importance of knowing how secondary teachers are prepared and supported to teach EL students, the research evidence on this topic is thin (Reeves, 2006). This study attempts to fill this gap. We use data from a survey administered to middle and high school teachers in a large urban school district to explore the challenges faced by teachers of ELs at the secondary level. The district serves a large population of ELs. Analysis of survey responses helps us better understand whether teachers feel prepared and supported by school district policies to face these challenges, as well as the areas of preparation that are of greatest concern for them. Findings from this study add to the literature on teachers of ELs in secondary schools as well as policies that school districts could undertake to better support these teachers in their daily practice.

The article is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the conceptual framework guiding this paper. Section 3 describes prior literature. Section 4 describes the research questions, method and data used. Section 5 presents a descriptive analysis of survey responses. Section 6 presents a correlational analysis of the determinants of preparedness and other constructs. Section 7 discusses our main results and implications.

## **Conceptual Framework: Teacher Preparedness and Self-Efficacy Beliefs**

Our study is grounded in three main theories: sociocultural theory, self-efficacy and preparedness, and culturally relevant teaching. The sociocultural perspective on teaching and learning posits that the social and cultural context shapes relationships in the classroom and affects the child's development (Vygotsky, 1978; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). In this view, the relationship between teacher and student will be shaped by the broader social system in which the learning is happening. In turn, this social interaction will play a fundamental role in what and how students learn (Vygotsky, 1978).

The self-efficacy framework was first influenced by the early work of Bandura (1977) who suggested that self-efficacy is a cognitive process in which people construct beliefs about their capacity to perform at a given level of attainment. These beliefs shape individuals' level of effort, resilience, and level of stress in coping with demanding situations (Bandura, 1997).

Education researchers took the concept of self-efficacy and applied it to teaching (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Teacher efficacy was defined as "the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance" (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly & Zellman, 1977, p. 137; Rotter, 1966) or as "teachers' belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated" (Guskey & Passaro, 1994, p. 4). Teacher efficacy appraisals are context specific (Bandura 1977; 1997). A teacher may feel competent to teach mathematics, but not to teach science. Or they may feel competent to teach a certain kind of student, such as a gifted student or an English Language Learner (EL). Teacher appraisals of self-efficacy also vary over time. Novice teachers usually experience a

decrease in self-efficacy beliefs relative to their pre-service experiences. This, however, is directly related to the level of support received during these first few years in the classroom (Hoy & Spero, 2005)

Teacher efficacy has to do with self-perception of competence and it does not measure actual competence. Work by RAND and other researchers, however, provided some empirical backing for the importance of teacher self-efficacy. Their work found that teacher efficacy was empirically related to teacher behavior in the classroom and student achievement using a variety of items and efficacy scales (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly & Zellman, 1977; Gumbo & Dembo, 1984; Armor et al., 1976; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Moore & Esselman, 1992; Ross, 1992 in Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998). In this paper we operationalize self-efficacy by investigating teacher preparedness. Studies conducted in the early 1990s (Raudenbush, Rowen & Cheong, 1992) found that whether a teacher felt "well-prepared" or "less than very well prepared" was significantly related to teachers' sense of self-efficacy or teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy 1998).

Third, our framework draws from theories around culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000).<sup>3</sup> The complex and rich intersection between school and family/community practices requires that teachers become “cultural brokers” (Gay, 1993). Culturally responsive teaching is often called for when teaching students of color. To be culturally compatible and relevant, teachers of ELs must have cultural competencies that make them more attuned to students' own experiences. This way, teachers are able to bring the

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<sup>3</sup> Also referred to as culturally congruent instruction (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981), culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994), or culturally compatible instruction (Jordan, 1985; Vogt, Jordan & Tharp, 1987).



diversity of students' and families' "funds of knowledge" into the learning/ teaching process (Butvilofsky et al., 2012) and understand their own cultural, class, and linguistic identities (Pray & Marx, 2010).

Most public school teachers, however, come from middle-class, Anglo-American backgrounds (Castro, 2010) and do not share ELs background and experiences. Teachers may be unable or unprepared to incorporate the unique set of experiences, knowledge and values that EL students bring to the classroom. As Valenzuela (1999) notes in her important work about schooling for U.S. Mexican youth, teachers often find themselves, consciously or unconsciously, reproducing deficit-views about minority students and stripping them of their social and cultural resources (Valenzuela, 1999). Frequently, white teaching candidates fail to recognize the pervasiveness of racial inequity, hold deficit views and lower expectations for students of color, and lack a sense of themselves as cultural beings (Sleeter, 2008). In doing so, teachers place students at risk for academic failure (Valenzuela, 1999).

### **Previous Literature**

In this paper we use a survey to measure teacher self-efficacy, preparedness and perceptions about challenges and resources that can help them become better teachers. To design this survey, we draw on the literature on teacher efficacy and teacher effectiveness. In the former, we reviewed literature that explores what teachers perceive makes them better teachers. In the latter, we review studies that look at the outcomes of teaching (i.e. student learning) as measures of actual teacher efficacy.

Good teachers of ELs share many skills and abilities with good teachers in general. In his review of what is known and not yet known about effective EL instruction,

Goldenberg (2013) found that instructional practices that define good teaching in general, such as setting clear goals, effective modeling of skills, strategies and procedures, and frequent formative assessments to gauge progress, also define good teaching for ELs.

However, good teaching of ELs also requires some specialized knowledge and skills (De Jong & Harper, 2005; Loeb, Soland & Fox, 2014; Master, Loeb, Withney, & Wyckoff, 2012; Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Goldenberg, 2008, 2013). These include designating language and content objectives for each lesson, building English vocabulary, promoting productive interaction among ELs and English native speakers, and using the primary language for support of reading instruction (Goldenberg, 2008, 2013).

Teachers who are effective teaching ELs, have knowledge of language uses, forms, and mechanics as well as the ability to teach these (Fillmore & Wong, 2005). Effective EL teachers' language skills (in the students' primary language) may also influence their teaching. Loeb, Soland & Fox (2014), using data from Florida, found that good teachers tend to be effective with EL and non-EL populations, but teachers who are fluent in students' home language will tend to be more effective with ELs.

Measures of culturally responsive teaching are difficult to come by.<sup>4</sup> We know, however, that there are aspects of culturally relevant teaching that are important elements of effective teaching of ELs. The ability to communicate and engage with students and their families becomes an important element in culturally responsive teaching (Hopkins, 2013; Maxwell-Jolly & Gándara, 2012; Moll, 1992).

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<sup>4</sup> An exception is Siwatu's (2006) *Culturally Responsive Teaching Efficacy Scale*. The scale measures several competencies found in the literature to be relevant when teaching students of color.

Positive, asset-oriented attitudes and a positive disposition toward teaching ELs have also been found to predict better teaching and learning outcomes for EL students. Attitudes are manifested in what teachers think about ELs native languages, about students' language ability (or lack of demonstrated ability in English), or about minority students in general. Negative teacher attitudes toward ELs' native languages may produce teacher behavior that can lead to, or at least sustain, teachers having negative attitudes toward the students themselves, which in turn affects their achievement (August & Hakuta, 1997; Cummins, 2000). Research indicates that teachers' attitudes toward language may influence their evaluation of student performance and achievement (August & Hakuta, 1997; Cummins, 2000; Gonzalez & Darling-Hammond 2000).

The bulk of the research on the teaching of ELs assumes a largely English-only context in which students are being instructed primarily in English with English acquisition as the goal. More limited research has been conducted in bilingual environments where the pedagogy and the goals may be different and where outcomes may also vary accordingly (Gándara et al., 2009).

### **Own Preparedness and its Relationship with Teaching Competence**

The preceding section describes a number of competencies expected of teachers of EL students that go beyond the standard requirements for teaching English speaking students (Gándara et al, 2012; Goldenberg, 2013). These competencies are evident in teachers of ELs who are culturally responsive, promote positive teacher-student relationships in the classroom, and engage with students' families and experiences.

Relatively little research, however, has been conducted to determine if most teachers of ELs know how to use these instructional strategies, or have ever been provided

training in using them. Part of the problem lies in the difficulty to gauge how much teachers know about teaching ELs, or how they demonstrate these abilities in the classroom.

Collecting primary data through classroom observations or portfolios is a useful tool to better measure teacher competency. Survey data, however, can also provide useful information, at a fraction of the cost. Previous research has found that how well teachers feel prepared to teach students and face the challenges of day-to-day teaching is related to teachers' feelings of self-efficacy and competence (Raudenbush, Rowen & Cheong, 1992; Housego, 1990; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2012).

In addition, how well prepared teachers feel has been linked to greater mobility and general satisfaction with teaching as a career (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). Teachers' perceptions may also depend on individual differences and contextual differences, such as the kind of school in which teachers teach, or the kinds of supports available to teachers (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). These contextual factors may shape teacher perceptions of their preparedness and should be taken into account when constructing indices based on teacher self-ratings.

### **Research Questions and Data**

This study's main objective is to examine the challenges faced by teachers of ELs at the secondary level and to determine whether teachers feel prepared and supported to meet these challenges. The research asks the following four questions: (1) What are the top challenges secondary teachers face when teaching ELs? (2) How well prepared are these teachers to face these challenges? (3) What kinds of in-service support and professional development are most helpful for secondary teachers of ELs? Are they

receiving this kind of support in their district? And, (4) do answers to these questions vary by teacher seniority and classroom conditions?

To answer these questions we designed the *English Learner Teacher Preparation Survey*, based on an extensive review of the literature, to be answered by teachers in a large urban school district. One-quarter of the students in this district are designated as English Learners, the vast majority of which are Spanish speaking. The majority of the district's students are Latino (74%) and qualify for free and reduced-price lunch (FRLP) (76%) (CDE, 2014).

District officials sent Title III coordinators in all elementary, middle, and high schools in the district an email containing an introductory message and a survey link. Coordinators then emailed this link to all teachers in their schools. District officials met with Title III secondary school coaches at one coaches' meeting in January 2015 to promote survey participation.<sup>5</sup> The survey was open from November 2014 to February 2015. District policy, however, disallows researchers from knowing which schools specifically received the survey and therefore it was not possible to follow up to encourage participation.

The survey elicits information that allows researchers to generate indicators of (1) teachers' working context (school characteristics, etc.), (2) teachers' individual characteristics, (3) preparedness constructs based on teacher self-ratings of preparation, knowledge, and skills, (4) challenges constructs based on teacher self-ratings of the

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<sup>5</sup> Title III coordinators oversee "Title III Coaches" who are EL-support staff paid for by Title III federal funds. In this district, Title III coaches are assigned to schools designated as "Program Improvement" (i.e. low-performing). There are currently 80 secondary school coaches, and 67 elementary school coaches in the district assigned to serve at least one school (source: "Title III Access to Core Instructional Coach" Presentation by A. Noos, Office of Curriculum, Instruction and School Support, District (available at: [http://www.belvederemiddle.org/Teacher\\_Resource/13-Title\\_III\\_Coach/Title%20III%20Coach.pptx](http://www.belvederemiddle.org/Teacher_Resource/13-Title_III_Coach/Title%20III%20Coach.pptx)).

challenges they encounter in their teaching, (5) support indicators, including professional development, pre-service training, school principal and district support.

When the survey was closed in mid February 2015, 329 middle and high school teachers had answered it.<sup>6</sup> We consider this a convenience sample, given that the district did not make known to us the exact number of teachers who received the survey link. The survey was designed to be confidential, and teachers were not asked to provide their school's name, except voluntarily. A total of 154 secondary teachers volunteered this information, which allowed us to observe that they came from 56 different middle and high schools across the district.

## **Results**

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of survey respondents. Because we use a convenience sample, it may not be necessarily statistically representative of the larger population of secondary teachers of ELs in the district. However, as shown in Table 1, many of the respondents' characteristics are similar to district averages for all secondary teachers.

In our sample, most respondents are female and have over 4 years of seniority. Only about 10% are novice teachers (3 years or less teaching in the district). Relative to district averages for all secondary teachers our sample contains slightly more novice teachers, and more veteran teachers (over 16 years seniority). Most teachers in this sample, as is the case in district in general, are White, followed by Latino, other races, and African-American. Except for the case of Latino/Hispanic teachers, our sample mirrors district averages for secondary teachers quite closely in terms of race/ethnicity of

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<sup>6</sup> Elementary school teachers also took the survey, but we do not analyze their responses in this paper.

respondents. In the case of Latino/Hispanic teachers, our sample is overrepresented in this group, relative to district teachers. This is to be expected, given that the district sample includes all teachers, and not just those teaching ELs (although the majority have ELs in their classrooms).

**Table 1. Teacher Demographic Characteristics**

	<b>Sample- Middle and High School (%)</b>	<b>District - Secondary* (%)</b>
<i>Teacher Seniority (N=304)</i>		
Teacher has <3 years seniority	10.53	7.24
Teacher has between 4-15 years seniority**	49.67	63.39
Teacher has 16+ years seniority**	39.80	29.37
<i>Teacher Gender (N=234)</i>		
Female	62.39	50.79
Male	37.61	49.21
<i>Teacher Race/Ethnicity (N=227)</i>		
Latino/Hispanic	37.89	27.33
African-American	9.69	10.63
White	40.09	44.78
Other	12.33	17.27
<i>Teacher speaks another language (N=230)</i>		
...this other language is Spanish	68.26	n.a.
...of those speaking Spanish this % is highly proficient (speak, read, write) (self-report)	70.06	n.a.
	82.05	n.a.
<i>Teacher Certification (EL specific)</i>		
BCLAD (N=28)	8.51	n.a.
CLAD (N=131)	39.82	n.a.
EL authorization (N=67)	20.36	n.a.
<i>Main credential obtained from</i>		
CSU (N=127)	54.27	n.a.
UC (N=14)	5.98	n.a.
Non-profit university (private) (N=28)	11.97	n.a.
For-profit university (private) (N=14)	5.98	n.a.
District program or other (N=51)	21.8	n.a.
<i>Distance from school (N=233)</i>		
Teacher lives within 4 miles of their school	14.16	n.a.
Teacher lives between 5 & 20 miles away from their school	66.96	n.a.
Teachers live more than 21 miles away from their school	18.88	n.a.

Source for district data: Human Resources Division, K-12 Classroom Teachers and Certificated Administrators 2014-15.

\*The district averages are slightly overestimated because secondary includes continuation senior high school, span schools, etc.

\*\*Between 4-15 years, district proportion estimated using one-fifth of C1 for 15 years of seniority. For 16+ estimated using four-fifths of C1 for 16-19 years of seniority, then C2, C3 & C4. Denominator=7,809 teachers (those with experience information).



Close to 70% of teachers in the survey sample reported speaking another language, with Spanish being the language most spoken by this group. Of those who reported speaking Spanish, 82% mentioned that they considered themselves fully proficient (reading, writing, speaking). It is this number of multilinguals and Spanish speakers that suggests our sample consists disproportionately of teachers who are likely to have personal experience with being an EL, and perhaps special interest in English learner populations, as tends to be the case with those teachers who work with EL students.

As for teacher certification, the vast majority of survey respondents had a Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development (CLAD) credential, followed by an EL authorization.<sup>7</sup> We did not find recent published data on the number and proportion of district teachers teaching ELs by certification type, however a report by Hayes & Salazar (2001), found that 50% of teachers in Structured English Immersion classrooms had either a BCLAD (Bilingual-Cross-cultural, Language and Academic Development) credential or a CLAD. Our numbers roughly match those proportions.<sup>8</sup> Lastly, most teachers in our sample earned their main teacher credential from a California State University campus, followed by a district or other program.

Table 2 shows EL-relevant characteristics of classrooms and schools where survey respondents work. These include the proportion of EL students in the classroom and how English Language Development (ELD) instruction is delivered. Most teachers

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<sup>7</sup> This includes those answering that they had the following credentials “Teaching English Learners” or “Serving English Learners.”

<sup>8</sup> That study had a much higher proportion of BCLAD teachers relative to CLADs. Our study has a much higher proportion of CLADs relative to BCLADs, which is likely the result of the rapid decline of bilingual programs post Proposition 227 in the late 1990s.

who responded to the survey mentioned that more than half of their students were ELs.<sup>9</sup> About one-third of teachers reported that they used a mainstream English program to teach ELs. A daily in-class ELD lesson was most often reported to be the way EL students received explicit ELD instruction.

**Table 2. EL-Relevant Characteristics of Survey Respondents' Classrooms**

	%
<i>EL Class concentration (N=306)</i>	
Teachers' class has more than 51% of Els	60.13
Teachers class has between 25-50% of Els	19.61
Teachers class has fewer than 25% of Els	16.99
<i>Program used to teach Els (N=298)</i>	
Mainstream English	33.22
Dual-two way immersion	11.74
Other	55.04
<i>Students receive explicit ELD in my school via... (N=295)</i>	
Daily in-class ELD lesson	54.58
Via content in Class	26.44
Pull-out ELD lesson	2.37
Other/Not sure	16.61

### Teacher Assessment of Challenges and Own-Preparedness

Our first two research questions focused on the top challenges faced by secondary teachers of EL students, and how prepared they felt to deal with these challenges.

As Table 3 shows, "addressing the needs of ELs with multiple levels of English proficiency in the classroom" was the most often-cited challenge reported by secondary teachers in the survey. This finding underscores a particular difficulty of teaching ELs, and one area where EL-specific instruction differs from "just good teaching." As described in Goldenberg (2013), one of the most important findings of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth (August & Shanahan, 2006), was that the effects of direct reading instruction on ELs reading comprehension varied by

<sup>9</sup> Teachers were asked to refer to the class or period where they had more ELs in the classroom.

English proficiency level. While students with higher levels of English proficiency were able to benefit from strategies that are effective with non-ELs, e.g., instructional conversations, ELs with lower levels of proficiency were not (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2007).

The second most cited challenge when teaching ELs mentioned by our respondents was the perception that parents were not able to help out with schoolwork or support learning at home. The relationship between parental engagement and student outcomes has been well established (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2007; Desimone, 1999). There is ample literature to suggest, however, that many parents of ELs engage with schools in a way that differs from traditional conceptions of parental engagement, such as helping with homework or attending school events (Wasell, Hawrylak & Scantlebury, 2015; Zárate, 2007; Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Valdés, 1996). Parents of EL students are often perceived to be out of touch with their children's schooling because they engage in a different way than non-EL families with school (Valdés, 1996), and probably lack experience with American schools themselves. This limits their ability to provide "academic socialization" an effective form of parental involvement that helps students navigate middle and high school (Hill & Tyson, 2009)

Because many parents of ELs do not have even a complete K-12 education, and many were raised in another country, this is an area that necessitates fluid communication between parents and schools. In the case of EL families, there is research to suggest that immigrant and non-English speaking parents feel isolated from schools and do not feel schools and teachers are responsive to their needs (Ramirez, 2003; Good, Masewicks & Vogel, 2010). The fact that teachers report challenges related to EL families' not

supporting learning at home, suggests this is a topic of concern for teachers, particularly novice teachers who feel even more acutely than veteran teachers that this is a problem in their classroom.

**Table 3. Challenges faced by EL-Teachers**

Challenges*	Overall	Novice		Middle/Veteran		
	Challeng.**	Not Very Challeng.	Challeng.	Not Very Challeng.	Challeng.	
Addressing needs of ELs with multiple levels of English proficiency	72.32	27.68	62.96	37.04	73.66	26.34
Addressing learning needs of ELs and non ELs in the same classroom	64.44	35.56	61.54	38.46	65.02	34.98
Finding enough time to teach content to ELs and non-ELs	58.05	41.95	56.00	44.00	58.50	41.50
Finding enough time to conduct assessments of ELs for academic monitoring purposes	60.90	39.10	79.17	20.83	59.34	40.66
Finding enough time for language development	58.21	41.79	61.54	38.46	58.09	41.91
Interacting with or meeting parents of ELs	57.25	42.75	65.38	34.62	56.61	43.39
Parents not being able to help out with school work or support learning at home	73.23	26.77	80.77	19.23	72.72	27.28
Not being able to speak the parents' language	47.39	52.61	46.15	53.85	47.72	52.28
Not enough in-class support staff	55.76	44.24	69.23	30.77	54.55	45.46
Not receiving useful professional development to address EL needs	40.07	59.93	46.15	53.85	39.58	60.42
Having adequate instructional materials	48.33	51.67	50.00	50.00	48.35	51.65

\*Survey Question: Please indicate to what extent you find the following aspects of teaching English Learners to be challenging.

\*\*Responses: "Challenging" includes challenging and very challenging. "Not very challenging" includes somewhat challenging and not very challenging.

There were other notable differences by seniority. Novice teachers felt much more than veteran teachers that finding enough time for assessing and monitoring academic progress was a challenge. Novice teachers also reported that not having enough in-class support staff was a challenge when teaching ELs, much more so than veteran teachers.

This could well reflect a learning curve teachers face when first teaching ELs: across all questions, novice teachers felt more challenged than more experienced teachers.

A second research question asked how well prepared teachers felt to face these challenges. Table 4 shows teacher ratings regarding their own preparation in five aspects of teaching for ELs. The area that teachers felt least prepared for was teaching ELD standards under common core: close to 40% mentioned that their preparation needed improvement. In general, novice teachers felt less prepared across the board. A significant proportion (close to 30% or more) felt unprepared to teach oral ELD or teach ELD standards under common core. This is an important finding given that the CCSS are being implemented in this and many other districts and states serving EL students across the nation. To meet the demands for the CCSS, ELs and their teachers will need a great deal of support (Goldenberg, 2013). Given these findings, many teachers do not feel quite ready to face this challenge. Teachers also felt unprepared in their pedagogical skills and strategies to teach content to EL students. This is another area where implementation of the CCSS will pose additional trials.

### **Own-Preparedness Rating**

Own preparedness rating	Overall		Novice		Middle/Veteran	
	Needs Improv.	Adequate/ Good/ Excellent	Needs Improv.	Adequate /Good/ Excellent	Needs Improv.	Adequate/ Good/ Excellent
Pedagogy and Strategies for teaching content to EL students	20.75	79.25	31.81	68.19	19.63	80.37
Oral English Language Development	19.09	80.91	40.91	59.09	16.89	83.11
English reading/writing Primary Language	17.50	82.50	27.27	72.73	16.51	83.49
reading/writing Teaching ELD standards with	36.71	63.29	40.91	59.09	36.28	63.72
Common Core	37.71	62.29	54.55	45.46	35.98	64.02

## **Pre-Service Preparation**

When asked to rate their pre-service preparation most teachers reported that it had not prepared them well to meet the challenges they encountered when teaching ELs (see Table 5). Over 70% answered that pre-service preparation had not prepared them well to design formative assessments to monitor language development. This is surprising given how important formative assessment appears to be to improve EL academic and language proficiency (Goldenberg, 2013; Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011). A large proportion of teachers, over 70% also felt their pre-service experience did not prepare them well to engage with parents of EL students, one of the most frequently cited challenges faced by teachers of ELs. Similarly, close to 70% mentioned that they had not been trained to tailor instruction to ELs with multiple levels of English proficiency, or to organize instruction to meet the needs of ELs and non-ELs in the same class. Both of these skills are often mentioned in the research as highly important for effective EL teaching (Goldenberg, 2013; Calderón, Slavin & Sanchez, 2011; de Jong & Harper, 2005) and are mentioned by sample teachers as some of the top challenges they face in their teaching.

**Table 5. Teachers' Ratings on Pre-Service Preparation**

How pre-service Prepared me for...	Overall		Novice		Middle/Veteran	
	Well*	Not Well**	Well	Not Well	Well	Not Well
Applying specific pedagogical strategies to teach Els	47.35	52.65	52.00	48.00	46.64	53.36
Tailoring instruction to Els with multiple levels of English proficiency	32.58	67.42	44.00	56.00	31.09	68.91
Organizing instruction to meet needs of Els and Non-Els in same class	34.73	65.27	36.00	64.00	34.32	65.68
Designing formative assessments to monitor language development	27.59	72.41	16.00	84.00	28.51	71.49
Using formative assessments to inform your teaching	42.75	57.25	48.00	52.00	41.95	58.05
Conceptualizing speaking an L2 (another language) as an asset	53.41	46.59	60.00	40.00	52.52	47.48
Engaging with parents of EL students	29.89	70.11	36.00	64.00	28.94	71.06

\*Includes well and very well responses. \*\*Includes somewhat well and not very well responses

To try to understand how steep was the learning curve for teachers and what kind of support strategies hold special promise, we asked teachers what had helped them the most initially in their career, in terms of being equipped to teach both content and language, organize classroom instruction so that it was possible to tailor and differentiate, and use and design formative assessments. Results are shown in Table 6. Most teachers responded that obtaining an additional credential (“continuing education”) had been most helpful. Only a minority of teachers (fewer than 30%) rated pre-service preparation as having prepared them well for becoming an effective EL teacher.

**Table 6. Types of preparation by teachers' rating of effectiveness**

How well did the following prepare you to be an effective EL teacher*	Very well/Well	Somewhat well/Not well at all
Internship (pre-service)	30.3	69.7
Pre-service preparation program	29.24	70.76
Induction	29.21	70.79
Professional Development	37.7	62.3
Continuing education (i.e. additional credential course)	50.95	49.05

\*Question: Ideally, a teacher of ELs should feel well equipped to teach both content and language, and organize classroom instruction so that it is possible to differentiate instruction for all students. In addition, teachers of ELs should ideally feel well prepared to design and use assessments to monitor language development and inform their practice. How well do you think the following prepared you to do all of this? (Very well, well, somewhat well, not well at all).

### **Professional Development and Other Types of Support**

Given that overall pre-service programs had failed to prepare these teachers adequately for the challenges of teaching EL students, it was especially important to find out how they rated the professional development and other in-service supports. The survey asked teachers to think back to the first time they taught EL students and report what they found most helpful in dealing with the challenges they encountered. Teachers could mark up to three responses.

Table 7 shows that the most frequently mentioned option was “observing other teachers of ELs,” followed closely by “having a mentor or coach support me.” Over 40% of teachers chose at least one of these options. This is consistent with other surveys of teachers’ needs (Imbimbo & Silvernail, 1999; Anderson & Radencich, 2001), and supports the benefits of mentoring and coaching for improving teacher practice (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Marsh, McCombs & Martorell, 2010; Lockwood, McCombs & Marsh, 2010; Blazar & Kraft, 2015). Having a paraprofessional support in the classroom and district provided professional development were two other activities that teachers



mentioned would have been helpful as they began teaching ELs. Interestingly, principal support was the lowest rated option.

**Table 7. Activities that would have been initially helpful for teachers of ELs**

	%
District provided PD workshops or seminars	38.0
Non District provided PD workshops or seminars	18.0
Principal support	12.0
Paraprofessional support in the classroom (resource teachers, aides, volunteers)	39.0
Observing other teachers of ELs	43.0
Having a mentor or coach support me	42.0
Taking part in a Professional Learning Community	20.0
None of the above	9.0
Other	9.0

Note: teachers could mark up to three choices

We asked teachers about the number of hours of EL-specific professional development they had received in the past year. On average, teachers reported receiving 17 hours of PD, but there was wide variation around the mean. Around 39% had received fewer than 8 hours during the past year, while only 20% reported receiving more than 25 hours.<sup>10</sup>

When asked about PD effectiveness, there were several areas where the majority of teachers felt PD was weak (see Table 8). 71% of teachers mentioned that PD had only been marginally useful for learning to communicate with families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds – something that had been very challenging for teachers (See Table 3), and that teachers perceive pre-service preparation did not train them well to do (see Table 5).

<sup>10</sup> Results not shown, but available upon request.

**Table 8. Weaknesses of PD as Perceived by Teachers**

Area of PD*	% responding PD was only somewhat or not effective
Strategies and tools for teaching content to Els	50.65
Teaching academic English skills to Els	56.83
Learning how to use ELD curriculum and supplemental material	64.63
Learning how to develop and use formative (ongoing) assessments	66.81
Understanding the developmental stages of 2nd language learning	58.04
Communicating with families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds	70.85

\*Question: Think back to the past three years. How would you rate the effectiveness of all of the Professional Development you have taken in terms of helping you become a better teacher for EL students. If you have received no professional development in the past three years, please leave blank.

Similarly, teachers did not feel PD had been particularly effective to train them to design and use formative assessments – another area that had been challenging for teachers and that they felt had been a weakness in their pre-service preparation. Lastly, teachers perceived PD had not been very effective to train them to use the ELD curriculum and supplemental material.

### **Bilingual Teachers and Challenges/Preparedness to Engage With Families of ELs**

The previous results suggesting a lack of pre-service preparation and in-service training to help teachers engage with families of EL students, led us to question whether these perceived gaps were also reported by teachers who had been trained to teach in bilingual settings. Bilingual teachers, because they are proficient in the primary language spoken by students and their families and have undergone a certification program that would be sensitive to these needs, seemed particularly poised to effectively engage with students' parents. Although some researchers contend that not speaking Spanish is not necessarily an insurmountable barrier for parents of Els (Zárate, 2007). For example, Hopkins (2013) has shown that parents of ELs are more likely to share important information with the teacher who can speak to them in their own language. In our survey,

there was an almost even split between teachers who said not speaking the parents' language was a challenge they faced in their teaching (47%) and those who did not think this was a challenge (53%). These results could be explained by the fact that in this sample 68% of the teachers who answered the survey spoke another language, with the majority of these teachers speaking Spanish (see Table 1).

To further explore this question, we correlated teacher certification to indicators of family engagement, controlling for teacher demographic characteristics (including speaking another language) and seniority. Results are shown in Table 9. Negative coefficients suggest teachers feel less challenged, and that their pre-service programs prepared them better. Positive coefficients suggest the opposite. Results indicate that BCLAD middle and high school teachers find interacting and engaging with parents much less challenging than teachers with other kinds of EL-authorizations. In addition, teachers with a BCLAD are less likely to report that it is challenging for them that parents of EL students don't help out with schoolwork or support learning at home. BCLAD teachers also are more likely to report that their pre-service program prepared them well to engage with parents of EL students, than teachers with other kinds of certifications.

**Table 9. Challenges and Preparedness to Engage EL parents, by type of certification.**

	BCLAD	CLAD	EL- Authorization
Challenge: Interacting or meeting parents of Els	-0.657**	-0.053	-0.128
Challenge: Parents not being able to help out with schoolwork or support learning	-0.461**	0.013	-0.011
Challenge: Not being able to speak the parents' language	-0.886**	0.049	-0.361**
How well pre-service prepared: To Engage with parents of EL students	-0.401**	0.245**	-0.229*

\*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.10. N is between 261-269 for all models.

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. All models include a constant, and controls for White, Female, Novice teacher, and speaking another language. Scale of these questions is 1-5. Challenge questions go from 1: Not challenging, 5: Very challenging. Preparedness questions go from: 1-Very Well, 5-Not very well at all

## Coaches

Because coaching seemed to be a preferred alternative for teacher support, we asked teachers whether they had received any support and training through the coaches funded by Title III funds at their school. Funds from Title III are intended to support programs that target ELs and seek to improve their language and academic proficiency. In LASUD, many schools have elected to hire coaches with these funds to support EL teachers. In this sample, 75% of teachers reported being in a Title III school. As can be seen in Table 10, only 28% reported not receiving any coaching in the current school year.<sup>11</sup> The proportion of teachers not receiving coaching was surprisingly higher among novice relative to more veteran teachers, 33% vs. 27%, respectively. Of those that did

<sup>11</sup> The survey was administered in the late winter/early spring, so it is possible that they could have still received coaching in the remainder of the year.

receive coaching, 62% rated it as effective or very effective. This finding did not appear to vary by teacher seniority.

**Table 10. Coaching Indicators**

	Yes	No*
My school is a Title III school	75.00	25.00
I received coaching		
All teachers	71.98	28.02
Novice teachers	66.67	33.33
Middle/Veteran Teachers	72.51	27.49
	Not effective/Somewhat effective	Effective/ Very effective
Coach effectiveness		
All teachers	37.72	62.28
Novice teachers	35.71	64.29
Middle/Veteran Teachers	37.91	62.09

\*The "No" response for the Title III question includes those answering "I don't know."

One of the most disconcerting findings in this survey was that teachers reported not having enough time to engage in activities that they see as being most helpful in dealing with the challenges of teaching ELs and becoming more effective teachers (See Table 11). For example, while observing other teachers was a top ranked choice of most helpful supports for EL teachers, 85% mentioned not having enough time built into their regular day (teaching duties) to engage in this activity. Similarly, the vast majority of teachers reported not having enough time to design formative assessments to monitor progress among ELs (82%), analyzing and using the results of formative assessments (79%), and receiving coaching, mentoring and other support (75%). Even in schools with Title III coaches, the vast majority of teachers (73%) reported not having enough time to be mentored and coached.

**Table 11. Reports of Time Devoted to Important EL-related Activities**

Do you have enough time to...	No time at all/Some time not enough	Just about enough time/More than enough
Plan for instruction	64.08	35.92
Design formative assessments for EL students	82.45	17.55
Analyze and use results from formative assessments to inform my practice	78.69	21.31
Talk to other teachers about challenges I am dealing with related to ELs	76.54	23.46
Receive coaching, mentoring, or other support	75.00	25.00
Observe another teachers' class (in-person or via video)	85.12	14.88

### **Determinants of Preparedness and Other Constructs**

The previous descriptive analysis looked at various challenges, own-preparedness and various activities undertaken by teachers and school districts independently of one another. However, various factors could interact to predict whether teachers feel prepared, challenged, and supported to teach EL students.

The analysis in this section explores the determinants of how well prepared teachers feel to teach ELs. In particular, we study how characteristics of teachers and schools predict whether teachers feel competent in their job, whether they face more or fewer challenges, whether they feel their pre-service preparation trained them well, and whether they report having enough time for EL-relevant activities.

To conduct this analysis we developed four constructs using teacher responses on Likert-type scales to related questions. Responses were combined into a single factor using polychoric data reduction techniques. These techniques are similar to principal component factor analysis, but are more suitable for Likert-scale type responses (Kolenikov & Angeles, 2009).

The four constructs are: (a) competency, (b) pre-service preparedness, (c) challenges, and (d) time. The “competence” construct combines teachers’ responses to their own preparedness regarding various aspects of teaching ELs: pedagogy and teaching strategies, oral English development, reading/writing, primary language reading/writing and teaching ELD standards with common core.

The “challenges” construct combined teacher responses to questions regarding the challenges faced by EL teachers such as addressing the needs of ELs with multiple levels of English proficiency in the classroom, or finding enough time to conduct formative assessments of ELs for academic monitoring. The “pre-service preparation” construct combined teacher responses to how well they felt their pre-service teacher preparation program prepared them for certain activities. These included tailoring instruction and applying specific pedagogical strategies to teach ELs. Lastly, the “time” construct combined teacher responses to questions about the time they had to engage in important activities associated in the literature with effective teaching of ELs, such as planning for instruction, receiving coaching or mentoring, or analyzing and using data from formative assessments.<sup>12</sup> To relate the constructs to various teacher characteristics we use multiple regression analysis.

### **Relationship Between Preparedness and Challenge Constructs and Certification**

For this sample of teachers, having an EL-authorization (BCLAD, CLAD or an authorization to teach or serve English Learners<sup>13</sup>) is related to higher ratings of teachers’

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<sup>12</sup> A list of all the questions included in each construct can be found in the Appendix.

<sup>13</sup> These are authorizations that individuals with other kinds of credentials (i.e. single or multiple subject) obtain to be authorized to teach ELs. They can be earned by university interns, district interns (alternative routes), or other kinds of provisional or short-term permits. For a full description see <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/credentials/leaflets/cl622.pdf> of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing in California.

own preparedness to teach ELs (see Table 12). In addition, teachers with EL authorizations are less likely to report feeling very challenged in the classroom than teachers that do not have these authorizations. There are no significant differences by certification status in terms of how well teachers think their pre-service program prepared them to meet these challenges.

**Table 12. Determinants Analysis – Results**

	Preparedness (1)			(4)	Challenging		Pre-service Preparation		
	(1)	(2)	(3)		(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
ELcert	0.674**	0.558**	0.515**	-1.222**	-0.642**	-0.639**	-0.062	-0.013	-0.018
Novice		-0.603**	-0.519*		0.316	0.310		0.250	0.262
white		0.334*	0.290		0.432**	0.436**		-0.173	-0.177
female		0.425**	0.341*		-0.379*	-0.372*		0.199	0.188
High ELclass			0.761**			-0.057			0.100
N	236	224	224	329	227	227	255	220	220
R-squared	0.050	0.105	0.173	0.127	0.073	0.073	0.000	0.009	0.010

\*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.10

Note: Model includes constant (not shown). Preparedness does not include primary language reading/writing

All of these coefficients dropped in magnitude when seniority and demographic teacher characteristics were included, but they retained the same sign and statistical significance. In general, novice teachers felt less prepared to teach ELs than more senior teachers. There were no significant differences in terms of the challenge and pre-service preparation constructs. Teachers in classrooms (periods) with high concentrations of ELs reported feeling more prepared than teachers with lower concentrations. There were no significant differences in terms of the challenge and pre-service preparation constructs for teachers with varying levels of EL classroom composition.

Table 13 shows results from a similar analysis that looked separately at each type of EL credential. Results suggest that teachers with EL authorizations felt more prepared



than those with other kinds of EL credentials (Column 1). This relationship held even when including teacher demographic characteristics (Column 2), such as seniority.

Teachers with a BCLAD were more likely to report that teaching ELs was less challenging than teachers with other kinds of EL authorizations (Column 3).

Lastly, teachers with a CLAD were more likely to report that their pre-service preparation prepared them less well for the challenges of teaching ELs, but the significance went away once teacher demographic characteristics were included in the model. In the case of teachers with EL authorizations the reverse was true: they were more likely to say their pre-service program prepared them well relative to teachers with other kinds of certification. There were no significant differences for teachers with a BCLAD in these constructs. This could be due to the small numbers of teachers with this credential (N=28). In other research (Author(s), 2005), we have also concluded that teachers do not necessarily know what they don't know. In other words, teachers with the highest level of preparation (e.g., bilingually credentialed) may be more critical of both their own preparation and the quality of programming provided by their school, while teachers with lesser preparation (e.g., general EL authorization) may be less critical because their standards are not as well informed.

**Table 13. Relationship of Types of Certification with Competency-Related Constructs**

	Preparedness (1)		Challenging		Pre-service Preparation	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
bclad	0.330	0.324	-1.479**	-1.183**	0.440	0.393
clad	0.477**	0.344*	-0.734**	-0.235	-0.339*	-0.333
ELauth	0.564**	0.530**	-0.598**	-0.432*	0.531**	0.604**
Novice		-0.585*		0.310		0.273
white		0.339*		0.315		-0.030
female		0.413**		-0.400*		0.181
N	236	224	329	227	255	220
R-squared	0.075	0.126	0.145	0.114	0.039	0.055

\*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.10

Note: Model includes constant (not shown). Preparedness does not include primary language reading/writing

### **Relationship Between Preparedness and Challenge Constructs and Need for Professional Development**

In this last set of analyses, we correlated teachers’ reported need for more PD (the dependent variable) to their scores on the various preparedness and challenge constructs. These models are estimated using logistic regression because the dependent variable is binary. Thus the results are interpreted as odds-ratios.

Results are shown in Table 14. If teachers responded feeling more prepared to teach ELs, their odds of reporting that they needed EL-focused PD were lower (see Column 1). When we included the (self-reported) hours of EL-focused PD taken in the past year, the magnitude of the ratio decreased, meaning even lower odds of needing PD. On average, when controlling for PD hours taken, teachers who feel more prepared are less likely to say that they need more EL-focused PD (Column 2).

**Table 14. Relationship between constructs and need for EL-focused PD**

Dep var: More PD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Preparedness	0.653**	0.549**						
Challenges			1.051	1.197				
Pre-service preparation					0.850	0.762*		
Not enough time for EL-related activities							1.255**	1.262
PD Hours taken (past year-self report)		1.004		0.997		0.996		1.000
N	235	144	240	148	232	145	233	143

\*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.10

Note: Model includes constant (not shown). Preparedness does not include primary language reading/writing

Controlling for hours of PD makes the pre-service preparation construct significant (Column 6). This suggests that teachers who feel their pre-service prepared them better for the challenges of teaching ELs are less likely than those who feel it prepared them less well, to report needing more EL-focused PD.

If teachers responded that they did not have enough time for EL-related activities such as formative assessments, receiving coaching or mentoring, or observing other teachers, they had higher odds of reporting needing more EL-focused PD (see Column 7). This ratio became insignificant though, once the model controlled for PD hours taken in the past year. Taken together these results suggest that PD is perceived by secondary teachers to be a useful way to remedy gaps in training not received during pre-service.

### Discussion and Implications

This paper uses survey responses from a convenience sample of over three hundred middle and high school teachers of ELs attending schools in one large urban school district. While it is impossible to say to what extent these respondents mirror all secondary teachers of EL students, their demographic characteristics are very similar to

all teachers in the district. There were no apparent anomalies. This district serves a large population of ELs. Several key findings emerge from our analysis. First, most secondary teachers surveyed perceived key gaps in their pre-service preparation in terms of helping them face the challenges of teaching ELs. Some areas that secondary teachers of ELs perceive to be missing from their preparation include how to design and apply formative assessments of English proficiency, tailoring instruction to ELs with multiple levels of English proficiency, organizing instruction to meet the needs of ELs and non-ELs in the same class, and engaging with parents of EL students. All of these are skills often mentioned in the research as highly important for effective EL teaching (Goldenberg, 2013; Calderón, Slavin & Sanchez, 2011; de Jong & Harper, 2005).

Second, professional development and in-service support activities organized by the district and school administrators may not be doing enough to remedy weaknesses in teacher preparation as it pertains to teaching ELs. Teachers perceive PD not to be very effective for key aspects related to effective EL teaching (tailoring, differentiation, formative assessments, parent engagement). Moreover, teachers participate the least in those in-service support and professional development activities that teachers report needing most. Teachers report that to improve their teaching of ELs they would benefit from coaching, observing and collaborating with other teachers (PLCs). However, these are also the activities that teachers mention getting the least time for as part of their day-to-day teaching duties.

The lack of preparation or in-service training and support to engage with parents of ELs is particularly troubling given the research that suggests this is an important element in helping EL students succeed (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes,

2007; Desimone, 1999; Wassell et al., 2015; Zarate, 2007). It was noteworthy that close to 70% of survey respondents spoke a language other than English (with most of those speaking Spanish). The fact that these teachers don't seem to be fully utilizing their language skills to better engage with families, or to support ELD instruction, is puzzling. On the other hand, the fact that many of these teachers possess primary language skills could also be better utilized, given research suggesting that Spanish-speaking teachers may be more effective with ELs (Loeb, Soland & Fox, 2014), that primary language can be used as an effective support for ELD instruction (Saunders et al., 2013), and that bilingual instruction appears to yield the best long term gains for English (Umansky & Reardon, 2014; Valentino & Reardon, 2015; Steele et al, 2017).

### **Implications for Pre-service Preparation and In-service Training**

The finding that bilingual teachers (i.e. those with BCLADs) feel less challenged than teachers with other certifications, may point to this training as one that is able to at least fill in some gaps that other teachers suffer through in the beginning of their careers. Although our sample is too small to make any sweeping claims, results suggest that bilingual teachers feel more prepared to engage and interact with parents, and find these activities less challenging than teachers with other certifications. To the extent that this is due to the certification program, and not to some unobserved characteristic that this analysis is not able to capture, bilingual programs may be doing a better job of preparing teachers for EL-specific duties than non-bilingual programs.

Teachers and prospective teachers with skills in languages other than English, particularly those spoken by the majority of students, seem to be a rich, largely untapped

resource for improving EL instruction, as long as they receive the preparation and training to help them succeed.

Since 2002 all teacher credential programs in California have been required to incorporate key knowledge of strategies for teaching ELs within their curriculum. Thus all teachers credentialed in California since that time presumably hold these skills. However, there is considerable evidence that there is great variation among credentialing programs in how well their teacher candidates are prepared (Gándara et al, 2003). Unfortunately, no evaluation of the curricula or effectiveness of the California teacher credential with this “infused” content regarding the instruction of ELs has ever been conducted. We simply do not know how effective the programs are or what are the characteristics of the most effective programs.

The findings of this study add evidence that there is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of the infused credential and to determine the characteristics of those programs that appear to be preparing new teacher candidates most successfully. It also lends further support to the need for all credential and professional development programs to provide greater focus on helping teachers to communicate with and engage with parents of their EL students (Wassell, Hawrylak & Scantelbury, 2015). Finally, teachers appear to be consistent in their descriptions of the kinds of professional development that would help them to strengthen their effectiveness with ELs: coaching, mentoring, and observing other teachers of ELs. It is time for administrators to listen to them. While there is always a challenge in finding time for the kinds of support that teachers say they want and need, administrators need to plan creatively to provide some of that time. Especially in California where English learners generate their own resources

through the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), and where those funds are supposed to be spent specifically for ELs, administrators should be considering spending those funds in a way that makes it possible for teachers at all grade levels to receive the kind of professional development they deem most useful for them – observing other teachers who are skilled in this kind of instruction. A recent report by Californians Together (Harris & Sandoval-González, 2017) demonstrates that schools across the state of California, in particular, have many more resources in the form of BCLAD and other bilingual teachers than may be apparent. Many schools have this expertise among their faculty (although they have been in English only instructional settings) and so do not need to go beyond their own campus to find models of good teaching for ELs. Of course, these teachers should be compensated for their skills and for helping to prepare others, but this is surely a major cost savings over employing outside consultants.

Finally, it is important to remember that people who do not feel competent in their work are more likely to leave those jobs than individuals who feel successful. Teacher turnover is a significant challenge for districts and schools: it costs money to hire and support new teachers. Thus it behooves schools and districts to help teachers feel more accomplished and to find the time for the kind of professional development teachers say they need. In fact it may be much less costly than continually replacing teachers who feel neglected by the system (Darling-Hammond et al., 2015).

### **Caveats**

Our study is limited in that while our sample looks very similar to the average EL teacher in the district, we can't know with full certainty whether our findings hold for all teachers in this district. Our respondents, because they chose to respond to a survey about

EL teachers' needs and challenges, may constitute a “best case scenario” sample. These teachers may have answered the survey because they care more about EL students, or are more concerned about their teaching or the District's support and PD offerings. Even so many of these findings are consistent with prior research—the desire to observe effective teaching practices rather than just read or be lectured about them, the need for personal support through coaching and mentoring, the need for a greater focus on formative assessment to understand how their students are progressing, and the oft mentioned need for teachers to have more time to accomplish all that is expected of them (see Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Another caveat is that our study focuses on one district only, albeit a very important one. Our findings likely have particular relevance for other large, urban districts struggling with how to help and support teachers in their pursuit to improve learning for all ELs.



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