

UC Berkeley

The CATESOL Journal

Title

Teacher Leadership in Systemic Reform: Opportunities for Graduate Education Programs

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6xr2q4gz>

Journal

The CATESOL Journal, 32(1)

ISSN

1535-0517

Authors

Spies, Tracy

Pollard-Durodola, Sharolyn

Bengochea, Alain

et al.

Publication Date

2021

DOI

10.5070/B5.35923

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Peer reviewed



Teacher Leadership in Systemic Reform: Opportunities for Graduate Education Programs

Nevada has recently taken considerable steps to reform English learner (EL) education across the state with teacher development as a primary focus. Educational reform agendas necessitate that teachers not only rethink their practices but teach in novel ways. It has been argued that teacher development through graduate education and other professional development (PD) avenues are ineffective in shifting instructional practices, highlighting a theory-to-practice gap. Further, it has been postulated that without teachers' participation and leadership in reform, such efforts will fail. This article details a graduate PD model designed specifically to prepare teachers as teacher leaders and address the theory-to-practice gap. Our university enhanced our graduate educator preparation program in English Language Learning (ELL) to build statewide collaborative cohorts of urban and rural teacher leaders prepared to implement and facilitate educational improvements for ELs within their varied educational contexts.

The status of English learner (EL) education in the state of Nevada resembles national demographic trends and achievement outcomes. ELs make up 9% of K-12 students across the nation and 14% of Nevada's school children (Nevada Department of Education, 2019). National demographic trends indicate ELs and their families are increasingly drawn to rural areas (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). Educational leaders in Nevada are tasked with meeting the educational needs of ELs living within two geographical extremes. Nevada is described as one of the most urban and rural states in the US due to the large proportion of residents (i.e., 94%) living in urban areas despite the state's great rural expanse, with approximately 99% of the total acreage categorized as rural; the largest urban counties are separated by 438 miles of desert (Riddel, 2014).

Nevada recently took considerable steps to reform EL education across its urban and rural communities. One specific action was to increase teachers' knowledge of evidence-based practices that support academic language development. Nevada established the English Language Acquisition and Development (ELAD) endorsement, a supplementary license that teachers may add to their standard teaching license (e.g., elementary, secondary, special education). It consists of 12 credits addressing language acquisition theory, methods and curriculum, assessment, and policies and practice. With the aim of increasing teacher knowledge of evidence-based practices to support academic language, Nevada's future goal would be that every teacher candidate seeking an initial teaching license from a Nevada institution of higher education would complete the 12 ELAD credits in order to be endorsed to teach ELs. Additionally, a professional license in ELAD was established. This professional license is reserved for teachers who hold a master's degree, complete the ELAD endorsement, as well as six additional credits in leadership and policy surrounding EL education.

Although this reform issue aims to improve educational outcomes for ELs, researchers argue that new learning through graduate education and professional development (PD) is rarely incorporated into the classroom (Hill, 2007; Sleeter, 2008), highlighting a gap between research theory and practice. Ambiguity of research, coupled with unique variables within individual school contexts, often make the translation of what is learned in the university setting to the K-12 classroom arduous. To provide instructional practices rooted in evidence-based educational reform agendas, teachers are tasked with rethinking their practice and teaching in ways they have never taught before, particularly as it relates to effective practices for ELs (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Spies, Lyons, Huerta, Garza, & Lyons, 2017).

Although improving classroom practices of individual teachers is of critical importance, systematic reform, such as that proposed in Nevada, is best supported through a broad-based team approach of instructional leaders. Collectively, skilled educators can play a compelling role to facilitate lasting change (Broin, 2015; Menter, Czrniak, & Struble, 2014). Classroom teachers are often untapped resources in the educational change process. They hold tremendous potential as change agents in educational reform by working individually and collaboratively towards liberatory practices (Peters & Reid, 2009).

As teacher educators, we ask, “How can graduate education programs close the theory-to-practice gap to shift practices to better support our ELs? How can graduate education develop the necessary knowledge and leadership skills teachers need to play a compelling role in lasting systemic reform?” The purpose of this article is to detail a graduate PD model designed specifically to prepare in-service teachers as teacher leaders and purposefully address the theory-to-practice gap. With the aim to support statewide initiatives to improve EL education, our university enhanced our graduate educator preparation program in English Language Learning (ELL) to build statewide collaborative cohorts of in-service urban and rural teacher leaders prepared to implement and facilitate educational improvements for ELs within their varied educational contexts.

Theoretical Background

We developed a theory of change framework in which the target outcome was the development of teacher leaders prepared to influence and support EL practices at the classroom, school, district, and state levels (see *Figure 1*). This theory of change model encompasses four components: (1) theory-to-practice gap; (2) critical reflection; (3) teacher agency; and (4) teacher leadership. First, it was critical that the evidence-based practices taught in the university classroom were implemented in teachers’ individual classrooms. Critical reflection plays a significant role in closing the theory-to-practice gap. Next it was essential that our teacher leaders developed a strong sense of agency leading to preparedness for teacher leadership.

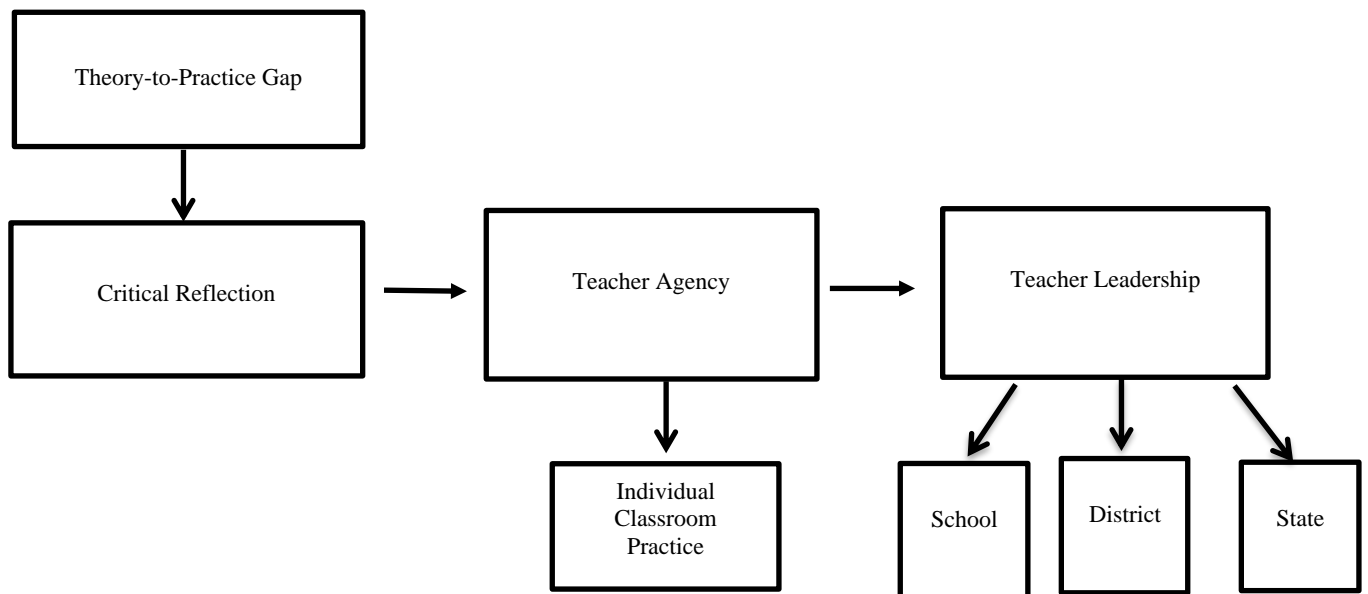


Figure 1. Theory of Change: Teacher Leadership.
Theory-to-Practice Gap

The intent of mandates (e.g., Every Student Succeeds Act) for evidence-based practices (EBPs) is to inform the educational decisions and actions of practitioners as student achievement is closely related to teachers' implementation of EBPs with fidelity (Graves Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010; McIntyre, 2006). Although these practices are directly linked to student success, there is a noticeable gap between the research field and classroom practice (Broekkamp & van Hout-Wolters, 2007; Graves Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010). One barrier to the implementation of EBPs with fidelity is the accessibility of the research to classroom teachers. Hemsley-Brown and Sharp (2003) note that the extensive volume of EBP cited in extant research, coupled with ambiguous reporting often void of application at the classroom level, hinders teachers' implementation of practices.

A second barrier to the implementation of evidence-based practices is the educational context. Teachers often place greater emphasis on longstanding practices in schools and the views and opinions of their colleagues regarding instruction rather than findings derived from research (Hood, 2003). Teachers' personal experiences, collegial knowledge, and the school's culture mediate the decisions teachers make about research-based practices (Ion & Iucu, 2016).

Teacher Beliefs and Practices

Even for teachers with access and support in understanding EBPs, teachers' beliefs and perspectives about their students and learning serve as filters with which they view learning about new practices. Teachers bring to the professional learning environment a well-established belief system characterized by the assumptions they hold about their students and how they learn; their attitude towards students, families, and colleagues; and the values they hold in relation to education and the students they serve (Spies et al., 2017). Some researchers posit that teacher beliefs play a pivotal role in their interpretation of pedagogical knowledge, the conceptualization of teaching tasks, and consequently, their instructional decisions (Bryan, 2003; Han 2012).

Although the nature of the relationship between beliefs and practices is nebulous (i.e., beliefs influence practice versus practice influences beliefs), researchers generally agree that teacher beliefs are an important variable in teacher learning. In fact, several researchers (e.g., Brenffni, 2011; Spies et al., 2017; Vartuli & Rohs, 2009) conclude that continuing education that is void of teacher reflection on their beliefs and practices will be ineffective, particularly with traditionally held beliefs. Unfortunately, teacher reflection is often assumed by teacher educators rather than made explicit (Griffiths, 2000; Saric & Steh, 2017), minimizing its potential in the learning process.

Critical Reflection

Researchers suggest that critical reflection plays a central role in successfully shifting teacher practices (e.g., Taole, 2012; Wetzel, Hoffman, Roach, & Russel, 2018). Ajayi (2011) defines critical reflection as "an educational imagination that allows candidates to look at themselves and their situations with new eyes, and in the process, become conscious of the multiple ways they can interpret, critique, challenge, confront, and reconstruct teaching" (pg. 170). Reflective teaching nurtures teachers' professional development and quality of teaching by examining the impact of their teaching on students (Taole, 2012).

Critical reflection as a component of the learning process is particularly important for in-service teachers as they are embedded in the school context that is shaped by administrative policies and practices. Teachers must learn to reflect upon the tension between their beliefs and practice in relation to the complex social and cultural contexts in which they teach (Ajayi, 2011). As teachers engage in school mandates, they may unconsciously reinforce inequity and systems of power and privilege (Cochran-Smith, 2008).

The purpose of critical reflection in professional learning is for teachers to (a) become aware of how their beliefs and the broader social contexts influence their instructional decisions; (b) challenge misguided influence; and (c) ultimately act. The capacity to act refers to teacher agency. Teacher agency is particularly important in times of extensive reform in order to learn and develop individually and collaboratively (Day, Elliot, & Kingston, 2005).

Teacher Leadership Models that Address Theory-to-Practice Gaps

Educational reform requires teachers shift from recipient of change to initiator of change (Lukacs, 2015; Szeto & Cheng, 2018), thereby necessitating effective leadership within schools through greater teacher agency. Recently, researchers have started to place more emphasis on the importance of teacher leadership as a way to facilitate broader professional learning within the school community (Poekert, et al., 2012).

Teacher leadership is defined as the process by which teachers impact their peers, school administrations, and other educators to improve teaching practices and increase student performance and achievement (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). In other words, teacher leadership incorporates the work of teachers at multiple levels within the educational system (e.g., students, colleagues, administrators) to promote instructional, professional, and organizational development (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). York-Barr & Duke's (2004) teacher leadership theory of change guided the leadership enhancement of our PD program (see *Figure 2*; for a more detailed description of the model, see York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

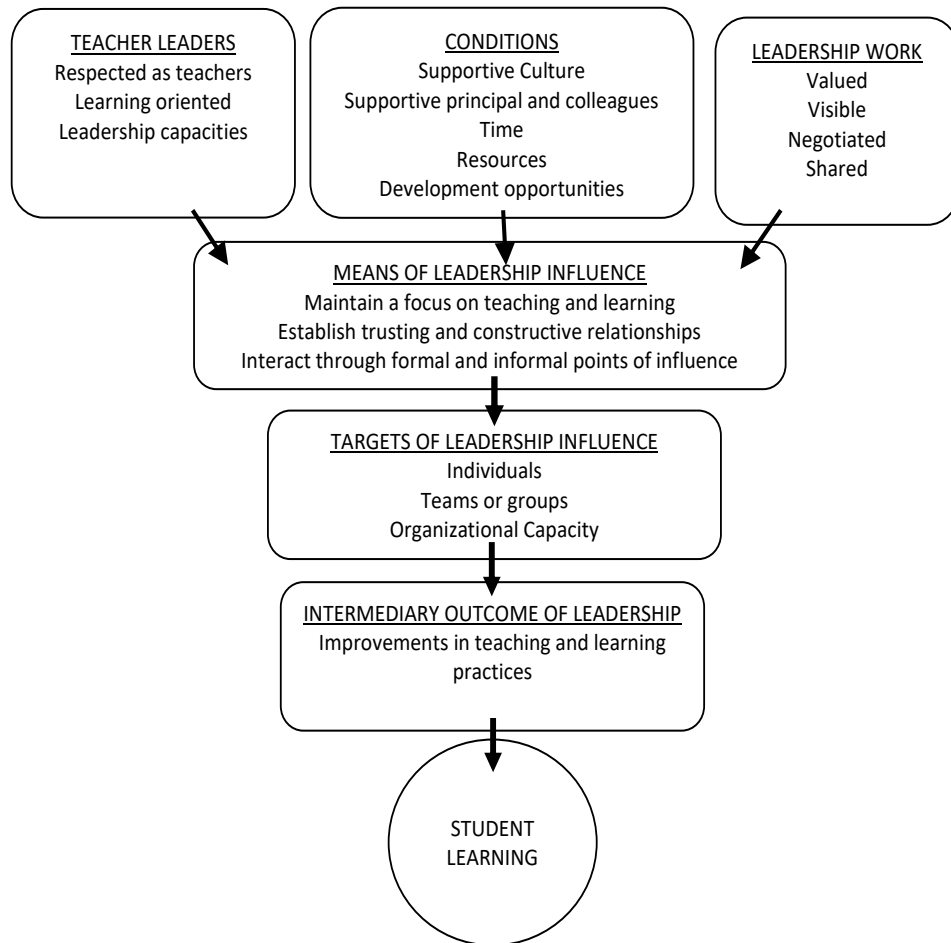


Figure 2. Teacher Leadership Theory of Change (York-Barr & Duke 2004).

An Enhanced Graduate Education Program Model

The overarching intent of the Nevada PD project, funded through the U.S. Department of Education Office of English Acquisition's National Professional Development Program, was to prepare a statewide, collaborative group of urban and rural teachers to serve as teacher leaders to improve educational outcomes for ELs. With critical reflection as our foundation in the development of teacher agency and closing the theory-to-practice gap, we developed a multi-dimensional approach to our graduate education program supporting learners' critical examination of language acquisition for ELs through four different avenues (see *Figure 3*). Our model includes (a) 42 credits of graduate coursework; (b) 10 cycles of instructional coaching (My Teaching Partner, MTP); (c) 48 additional hours of PD conducted by experts in the field (Saturday Advanced Professional Learning Institutes (SAPLI)); and (d) training to become an instructional coach. Our

first cohort consisted of 10 teachers; Nine more have completed the program, with a third cohort scheduled to finish in summer 2021,

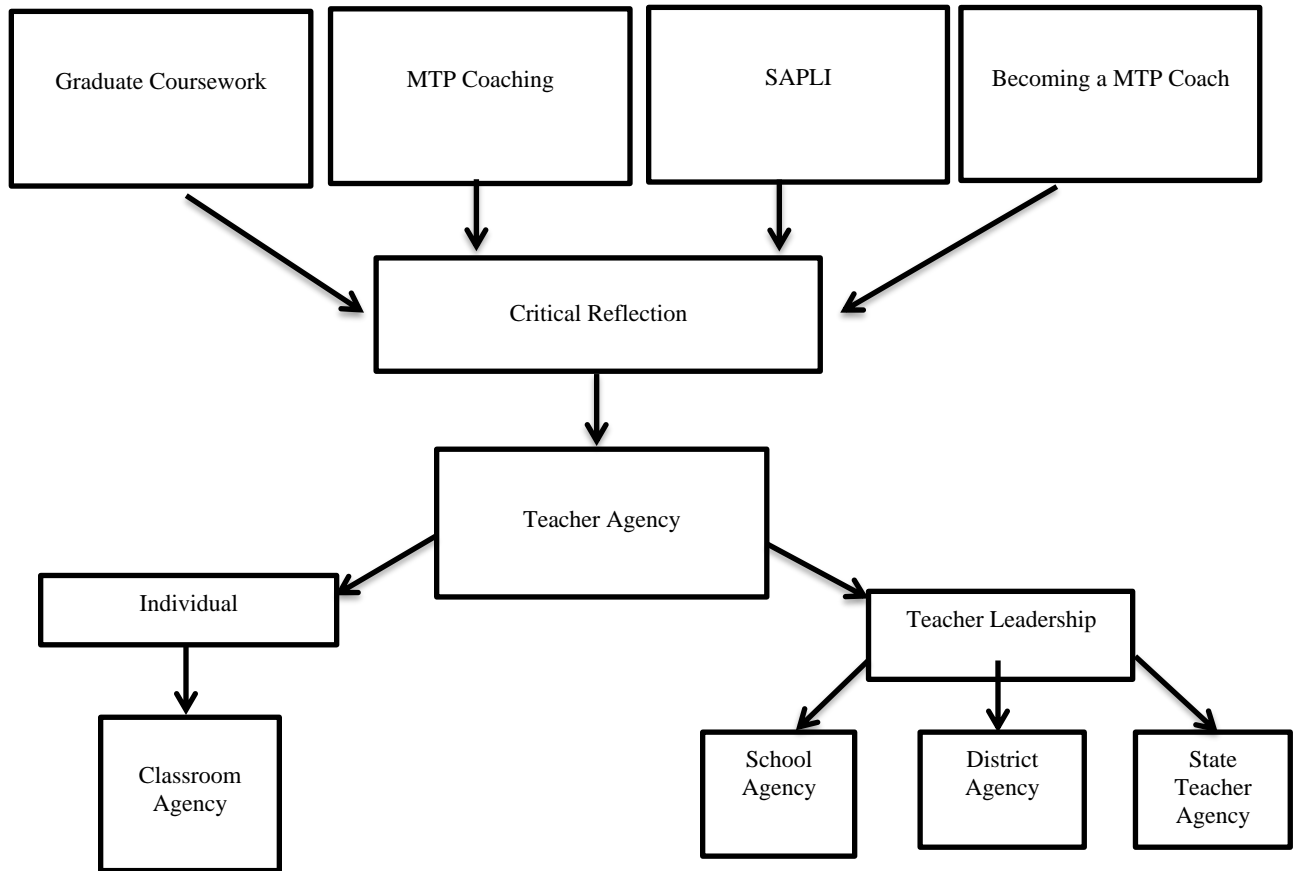


Figure 3. Enhanced Graduate Program Model.

Critical Reflection

In order to develop and engage teachers in critical reflection situated within their individual, as well as broader social, political, and cultural contexts, we utilize Smyth’s 1989 reflection model across our PD program. Smyth (1989) proposes four stages of critical reflection: (1) describing; (2) informing; (3) confronting; and (4) restructuring. In describing, teachers create a narrative of their practice through description of concrete teaching events. In the informing stage, teachers unpack the descriptions of their teaching to uncover the philosophies and principles that inform their instructional decisions and practices. In the third stage, confronting, teachers’ descriptions and informing reflections guide them in an examination of the assumptions underlying their instructional decision making. In the final stage, restructuring, teachers begin to see their instructional decisions and practices within the broader landscape and begin to contest these practices. Critical reflection serves to support teachers’ development of more broadly informed instructional decisions and consequently their actions, promoting teacher agency or the capacity to act within and beyond their classrooms.

Graduate Coursework

Graduate coursework serves as the primary avenue to expose teachers to the knowledge and skills centered around high-quality instruction for ELs. Participants complete a 42-credit Master degree program in

Education in English Language Learning, which includes coursework that provides initial eligibility for an endorsement in ELAD after completing 12 credits in specific coursework. This endorsement then becomes subsumed under the additional 6-credit endorsement, labeled Specialization in ELAD, after students take courses relating to EL educational policy and community advocacy. In the participants' first year, learning experiences are primarily situated within their individual practice. In their second year, participants also examine learning experiences through broader lenses at the school, district, and state level. Table 1 highlights year one of our PD model's program of study, program enhancements, and the major learning experiences of each course. Table 2 displays year two.

Table 1
Enhanced Program of Study and Major Learning Outcomes Year 1

<i>Course Number</i>	<i>Course Name</i>	<i>Individualized Learning Experience</i>
Year One Focus: Individual Practice and Examining Practice within the School		
TESL 750	Linguistic Theory	Teachers conduct a case study examining language aspects of two ELs with varying proficiency and design, implement, and analyze a content- and language-focused lesson, with differentiated supports.
TESL 751	Theory and Practice for Academic English Language Development	Teachers conduct a case study in which they examine and support the academic, cognitive, linguistic, and sociocultural needs of their student.
TESL 752	Methods and Curriculum for Teaching ELs	Teachers develop a curriculum unit focused on instructional design principles for ELs.
TESL 755	Language Acquisition and Development	Teachers design a content- and-language focused thematic unit and highlight recent research in an issues paper, providing a rationale for content-focused instruction and differentiated supports for ELs.
TESL 757	Policies, Critical Issues, and Best Practices for Pre-K, Elementary, and Secondary ELs Practicum	Teachers participate in over 30 hours of individual teaching/coaching feedback sessions.
TESL 759	Policies, Critical Issues, and Best Practices for Pre-K, Elementary, and Secondary ELs Seminar	Teachers implement and reflect on best practices in academic language development.
Year One Program Enhancements		
	Instructional Coaching	Teacher leaders engage in 10 cycles of instructional coaching.

Saturday Advanced Professional Learning Institutes

Teacher leaders learn and implement evidence-based practices surrounding academic language development in the content areas. They work with their principal to analyze campus wide practices

Note: TESL = Teaching English as a Second Language; ELs = English learners.

Table 2
Enhanced Program of Study and Major Learning Outcomes Year 2

<i>Course Number</i>	<i>Course Name</i>	<i>Individualized Learning Experience</i>
Year Two Focus: Practice within the School and District; Instructional Coaching		
TESL 754	Assessment and Evaluation of ELs	Teachers develop and implement a series of assessments to measure students' academic and linguistic development.
TESL 770	TESL Culminating Experience	Teacher leaders develop a series of PD opportunities for their schools based on their learning.
TESL 760	Foundations in Education in Cultural and Linguistic Diversity	Teachers debate on effective program models and report on the current and future state of education for ELs in the state of Nevada. They also reflect on their philosophy and vision for teaching ELs.
TESL 758	Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Program Leadership	Teachers study and leverage community resources to support educational programming of in their classroom and on their campus.
Year Two Program Enhancements		
	Teacher leaders become instructional coaches	Teachers certify on the CLASS instrument and attend training to become an MTP coach. Teacher leaders coach two teachers for 10 coaching cycles and attend bi-monthly group and individual coaching calls.

Note: TESL=Teaching English as a Second Language; ELs=English learners; PD=professional development; CLASS; Classroom Assessment Scoring System; MTP=My Teaching Partner.

Each course engages teachers in at least one critical reflection cycle surrounding the major topics/philosophies of focus. Instructors explicitly teach and scaffold the reflection cycle for teachers. The initial weeks of the course engage teachers in describing and informing their practice. During core learning experiences teachers confront their practice with scaffolds from the instructor, and the final weeks of instruction engage teachers in restructuring their practice. The confronting and restructuring stages of the reflection cycle directly map onto teacher agency as they identify and develop plans to act. *Figure 4* highlights an example of the reflection cycle embedded into the curriculum development course.

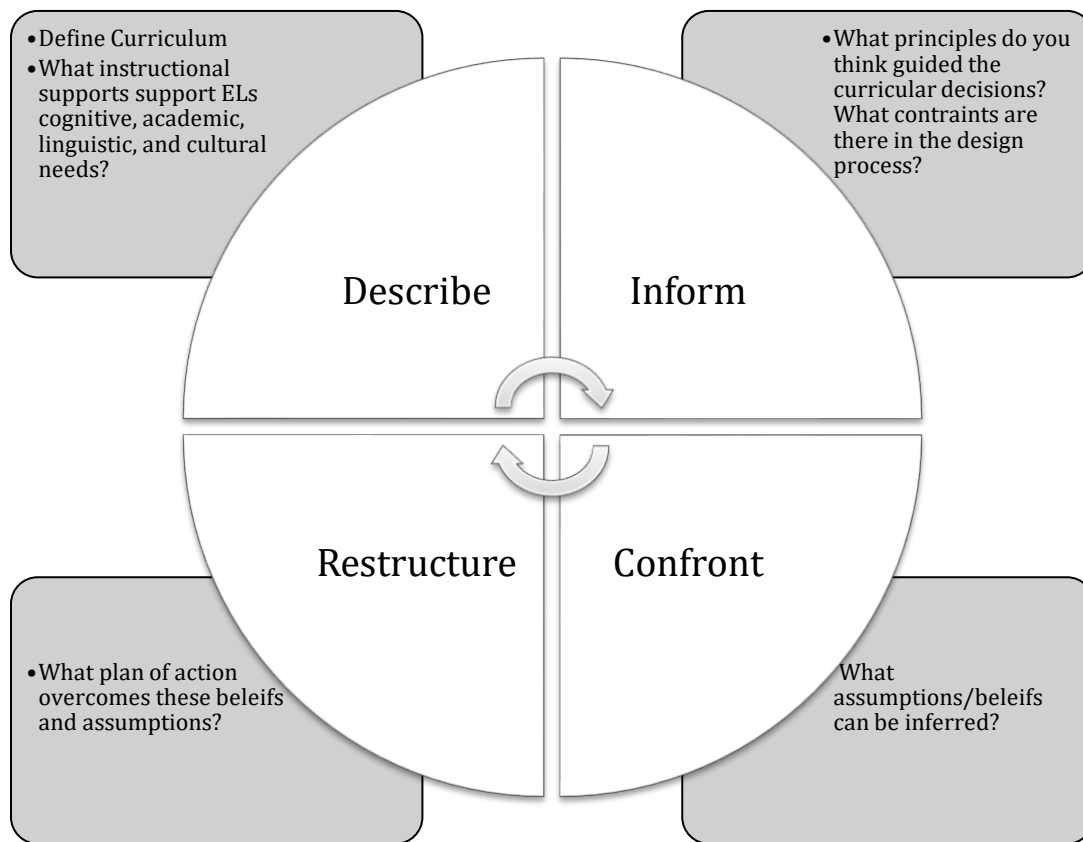


Figure 4. Sample reflection cycle (Smyth, 1989) embedded into curriculum course.

Instructional Coaching

To further bridge the theories learned during graduate coursework to teachers' practice, program faculty engage teachers in a year-long (October-May; 10 cycles), ongoing coaching process. Seeking a research-based coaching model focused on developing teachers' reflection skills, we chose the *My Teaching Partner* (MTP) coaching model developed by the Center for Advanced Teaching and Learning at the University of Virginia. The MTP coaching model provides intensive, one-on-one coaching to teachers based on effective, adult-child interactions outlined in the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008). The focus on adult-child interactions is particularly powerful as it allows us to support teachers where they are in the three broad domains of effective interactions leading to improved educational outcomes: (1) Emotional Support; (2) Classroom Organization; and (3) Instructional Support (Pianta, La Paro & Hamre, 2008).

The MTP coaching model engages teachers in a reflection cycle similar to Smyth (1989), with intensive focus on noticing behaviors, reflecting on the impact of behaviors on students, and planning for future interactions. The asset-based model focuses on the effective interactions teachers are engaging in, and aims to build upon those interactions. This coaching process supports teacher agency by helping teachers identify their own effective interactions and guiding them to make their future instructional decisions based on those interactions.

Saturday Advanced Professional Learning Institute (SAPLI)

In their first year, teacher leaders also attend a series of six advanced professional learning institutes (SAPLI) focused on academic language development within specific content areas. Researchers specializing in academic language development in early literacy, math, science, social studies, special education, and shared book reading deliver a hands-on 8-hour workshop to teacher participants and their principals.

These additional 48 hours of PD serve several functions towards the goal of developing teacher leaders' agency in the field of English language learning. First, the SAPLI sessions directly link back to instruction that is taking place in their graduate coursework, providing students the opportunity to examine learning constructs in multiple contexts and through multiple lenses. Second, the SAPLI sessions give teacher leaders and their principals the opportunity to engage directly with the researchers who developed the instructional practices they are learning. This enables teacher leaders to better understand the role research plays in the adoption of instructional strategies for their practice. Finally, it enables teacher leaders and their principals to further critically reflect on practices as national experts and scholars provide differing viewpoints from various contexts that further support teachers' examination of practice in broader social, political, and cultural contexts. Table 3 highlights the foci of each session.

Table 3
Summary of Content Objectives for the Saturday Advanced Professional Learning Institute

<i>Session Title</i>	<i>Content Objectives</i>
Session 1: Academic Language via Early Childhood Literacy Instruction	Teacher/Leaders develop an understanding of first language development and second language acquisition and how oral language and academic language use specifically (e.g., vocabulary) contribute to early literacy development in orthographic languages (English/Spanish).
Session 2: Academic Language via Mathematics Instruction	Teacher/Leaders develop an understanding of the academic language required to support mathematical learning and discussions around number operations and algebraic thinking.
Session 3: Academic Language via Science Instruction	Teacher/Leaders develop an understanding of scaffolding and other research-based strategies that support and extend scientific discourse and critical thinking.
Session 4: Academic Language via Social Studies Instruction	Teacher/Leaders develop an understanding of the 6 components of effective instruction for diverse learners (big ideas, screening, background knowledge, scaffolding, strategic integration, judicious review) in the context of building academic language during social studies instruction.
Session 5: Academic Language via Early Childhood Special Education Supports	Teacher/Leaders develop an understanding of (a) the bilingual development in children with disabilities and how to distinguish issues associated with second language acquisition from language delays; (b) the potential impact of various disabilities on dual language development including intellectual disabilities and autism; and (c) the importance of providing native language support via schools and family cultural practices to foster academic language use and success.
Session 6: Academic Language via Interactive Content Enriched Book Practices	Teacher/Leaders develop an understanding of how interactive content enriched book reading discussions can build academic language and content knowledge (science, social studies) simultaneously via empirically based instructional design principles (6 components of effective instruction) and language scaffolding practices.

Each SAPLI session includes a pre-session evaluation of their current knowledge and description of their typical practices. During the session, the invited researchers present their research-based interventions and best practices. They also engage teacher leaders in reflective discussions surrounding their beliefs and the contextual factors influencing their instructional decisions around the topic of focus. In a series of culminating activities, teacher leaders apply the knowledge and strategies gained from the session to the development of a new lesson that will be implemented in their classrooms. These activities are linked to their seminar class in which they formally reflect on shifts in their practice and their plans for future action as a result of participating in the session. Table 4 provides an example of the organizational structure, reflection cycle, core reflection questions, and high priority content of a SAPLI session.

Table 4
Example of a SAPLI Session: Preparation, Implementation, and Reflection

<i>Preparation: Pre-SAPLI Experiences</i>	<i>Implementation: Session 1-Academic Language via Early Childhood Literacy</i> <i>Reflection Points Guided by Content Expert</i>	<i>Reflection: Post-SAPLI Experiences to Address the Knowledge-Practice Gap</i>
Survey of Key Language/Literacy Knowledge and Practices for ELs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language Development and Language Samples (Variability in ELs, Essential Language Systems, Multilingualism, Language Milestones for 3-months to 7 years, Language Sampling, Stages of Second Language Acquisition) 	Survey of Key Language/Literacy Knowledge and Practices for ELs.
15-minute Video Vignette of a Typical Literacy Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language to Literacy Connections for English learners (The Connection between Language and Reading/Writing, <i>Chall's</i> Stages of Literacy Development, Second Language Literacy Development, Alphabetic Languages and Transferability, Five Core Areas of Literacy Instruction and Complementary Best Practices, Curricular Alignment to EL Language/Literacy Needs, English and Spanish Connections) 	Develop and implement a literacy lesson keeping in mind the specific needs of EL students and best practices and knowledge gained from the SAPLI Session.
Reflection on the 15-minute Video Lesson that is Shared in the SAPLI Session: a. Step 1/Describe: <i>What did you say and do (practices) to support the cultural, academic, cognitive, and linguistic needs of your English learners?</i> b. Step 2/Inform: <i>What principles guided your selection and implementation of the described practices?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model a Literacy Lesson Planning for Demonstration Lesson Demonstration Lesson with Feedback and Reflection 	Reflection on the New Lesson: a. Step 1/Describe: <i>What did you say and do (practices) to support the cultural, academic, cognitive, and linguistic needs of your English learners?</i> b. Step 2/Inform: <i>What principles guided your selection and implementation of the described practices? Were there barriers that you able to work around? Explain. Were there barriers you were not able to work around? Explain.</i> *c. Step 3/Confront: <i>What do your practices say about your assumptions (accepted as certain or true without necessarily having proof) and beliefs about teaching? What causes you to maintain your theories? What barriers constrain your views about what is possible in teaching (literacy to ELs)?</i> d. Step 4/Restructure: <i>As a result of this critical reflection, do you see your teaching in a different way? Describe what action you will take to change the situation?</i> * The content expert provides feedback on the response to this reflection after reviewing the new video vignette of a literacy lesson. The other reflections are shared in the seminar class.

Embedded Teacher Leadership

The first year of the PD model and MEd program focuses on the development of teacher leaders' individual classroom skills and critical reflection. It also includes activities with their classroom principals via the SAPLI sessions that begin to engage them in understanding the broader educational context. The second year of the program focuses on embedded opportunities for teachers to learn and develop leadership skills related to support and instruction for ELs. Specifically, the PD model engages teacher leaders in developing three primary roles as a(n): (1) curriculum/instructional specialist; (2) classroom supporter; and (3) advocate and partner (Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession, 2009). Table 5 highlights the leadership roles teacher leaders engage in and their corresponding courses.

**Table 5
Teacher Leadership Experiences**

<i>Course</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Teacher Leader Area of Focus</i>	<i>Learning Experience</i>
TESL 752	Methods and Curriculum for Teaching ELs	Advocate/Partner	Teachers evaluate their school curriculum for effective instructional design principles for ELs.
TESL 757	Policies, Critical Issues, and Best Practices for Pre-K, Elementary, and Secondary ELs Practicum	Instructional Specialist	Teachers complete an action research project.
TESL 770	TESL Culminating Experience	Instructional Specialist/ Classroom Support	Teacher leaders develop a series of PD opportunities for their schools.
TESL 760	Foundations in Education in Cultural and Linguistic Diversity	Advocate/Partner Instructional Specialist	Teachers develop statements for key educational stakeholders surrounding EL programming.
TESL 758	Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Program Leadership	Advocate/Partner	Teachers develop a community partnership plan for their school.
Program Enhancements			
Saturday Advanced Professional Learning Institutes		Instructional Specialist/ Advocate	Teachers and their principals examine school-wide practices related to ELs academic language development. Teams engage with expert faculty across the U.S.
Teachers become instructional coaches		Classroom Support	Teacher leaders coach two teachers for 10 coaching cycles.

At the core of developing teachers' leadership capacity in year two is training teachers to become instructional coaches of adult-child interactions through *My Teaching Partner* (Center for Advanced Teaching and Learning, 2009). Teachers attend a three-day training, and coach two teachers through 10 coaching cycles from October to May. Teacher leaders participate in an ongoing cycle of self-reflection as an instructional coach with their MTP expert coach through two group sessions and two one-on-one sessions per month.

Preliminary Outcomes

The enhancement of our graduate program was grounded in a two-fold purpose: (a) to close the theory-to-practice gap to improve instruction and educational outcomes for ELs, and (b) to explicitly develop participants' knowledge and skills to play a compelling leadership role in reform efforts. Our outcome measures center around (a) social validity; (b) participants' self-efficacy; and (c) observed practices. These measures are collected each year and guide ongoing refinement of our program.

Social Validity

Coursework. Students rate their satisfaction with the three components of the enhanced graduate program (i.e., coursework, coaching, and SAPLI). Overall, participants feel the program coursework has impacted their beliefs about ELs and prepared them to better meet their instructional needs. To date, 100% of participants report that the graduate coursework has: (1) shifted their beliefs about ELL students and their instructional needs; (2) prepared them to serve ELLs effectively; (3) enhanced their understanding of the different language components (e.g., phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics) and how to further develop them for ELs across modalities (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing); and (4) enhanced their understanding of how to interpret assessments to understand ELLs' performance and to inform their instruction for ELs.

Coaching. Ninety percent of students completely agree and 10% mostly agree that the coaching process improves their reflection skills related to adult-child interactions. Eighty percent of teachers completely agree and 20% of teachers mostly agree that coaching improves intentionality in their adult-child interactions.

SAPLI sessions. Fifty percent of teachers completely agree and 40% of teachers mostly agree that the opportunities to gain knowledge from experts across the second language acquisition research field is an effective approach to support their teaching.

Leadership. Although many of the participants indicate struggles transitioning into a more formal leadership position through coaching, overwhelmingly, being trained and implementing instructional coaching is critically important to their development. Through focus group discussions, we evaluate the social acceptability of training teacher leaders in a systematic coaching model. We find teachers' perceptions of being trained as an instructional coach center around (a) the power of coaching peer mentees outside of their grade level; (b) the mentees' perceived value of being coached by a colleague in a strengths-based model; and (c) the impact of coaching someone else on their own daily instructional practices and decisions.

Self-Efficacy

Teaching ELs. We also ask participants to rate their self-efficacy using Karabenick & Noda's (2004) self-efficacy survey as well as a researcher developed self-efficacy instrument. The greatest gains in participants' self-efficacy from the initial reporting to the end of their program were in the areas of general self-efficacy (e.g., *I can conduct my classes in ways that help students understand the material; I know how to teach learning strategies to my students that will help them master the material*), working with ELs self-efficacy (e.g., *I am good at helping students who are EL understand the material in my classes; I have the ability to teach students who are English learners learn the material in my class*), and the delivery of explicit vocabulary and written language instruction (e.g., *I am good at teaching a set of vocabulary words intensively across several days; I am good at integrating written language into my instruction*). Data regarding the statistical significance of participants' self-efficacy can be found in Appendix A.

Leadership. Through focus group discussions, we are learning about the impact of training participants as instructional coaches on their self-efficacy as leaders. Some participants express that they have more confidence in a leadership role. Many acknowledge the challenge of separating their roles as friends and colleagues with the instructional coach role. Others hope for more school-level leadership opportunities.

Observed Practices

Instructional practice. We use the CLASS observation tool (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008) to measure shifts in participants' instructional practices. Participants entered the program with scores on the CLASS instrument ranging from mid to high. Sixty percent of participants thus far have increased in the quality and duration of their adult-child interactions. Twenty percent have scores that remain stable, yet in the mid-to-high range. Ten percent have dropped in their scores, yet beginning scores were in the mid-to-high range. Ten percent of scores have dropped to the low-to-mid range.

Leadership. Although participants face many challenges to teach fulltime and complete the requirements of the instructional coaching model, 100% of the participants have thus far met the minimum

requirements for the initial stage of the coaching credential. Seventy-five percent of respondents that have been coached by a project participant indicate the coaching experience was positive and 25% indicate it was very positive.

Lessons Learned and Program Modifications

We evaluate the effectiveness of our enhanced graduate education program through the ongoing collection of social validity, self-efficacy, and observed practice measures. Overall, participants thus far feel that the overall model supports their academic language instruction with ELs. The majority of participants have entered the program with high levels of self-efficacy and through the course of the program self-efficacy improves in a few key areas. Outcomes of observed practices are unexpectedly inconsistent with gains for most participants but not all. In terms of leadership, participants have met the requirements to become credentialed coaches, however, some indicate hesitancy in self-identifying as a leader in the field.

Theory-to-Practice Gap

With the intent to close the theory-to-practice gap, we undertook significant course revision to embed multiple opportunities for participants to learn, practice, and receive ongoing feedback on evidence-based practices (EBPs). Although the practices were connected to theoretical foundations and linked to the empirical literature, we have found that students implement EBPs and can explain some of the literature surrounding the practice; however, after our first cohort, we recognized the importance in further enhancing teacher participants' understanding of theoretical principles guiding their practices.

With this understanding, we further modified our program to explicitly highlight and link theory-to-practice across the three domains of the program (coursework, coaching, Saturday sessions). We developed a "note-catcher" of critical theoretical principles, in which students captured practices across the program as they related to key theories. We further modified our reflection cycle to encourage participants to systematically consider the theory-to-practice link. Saturday session consultants also made explicit the link between theory and practice and framed feedback around theoretical principles.

Leadership

Although we have emerging and guiding models for teacher leadership and each participant engages in the same leadership activities and are mentored on their coaching, participants' experiences have been quite different. The variables impacting their experience are numerous and complex (e.g., self-efficacy, leadership mentoring, mentee enthusiasm for coaching). It is important that early on, participants understand that one can be a leader in the field of EL education in various ways. And while our courses have various leadership activities embedded, our primary focus has been on instructional coaching. Upon reflection, we decided to begin having these discussions and providing differentiated opportunities to participants earlier in the program.

Implications for Graduate Education Programs

The growth rate of the EL student population should no longer be a surprising statistic in the opening paragraphs of journal articles and textbooks. Large populations of ELs have been members of our urban and rural classrooms for many years. While it is easy for us to shift the national blame for ELs' lack of academic progress on varied factors (e.g., lack of funding, teachers, parents, poverty, and policy makers), it is time for each of us to hold ourselves accountable by examining our unique role in improving the educational outcomes for ELs and taking broad-based action.

For graduate education programs, working with licensed, in-service teachers in general education settings, it is essential to narrow the theory-to-practice gap, and ensure that our graduate level experiences have ecological value so student learning is translated into improved instructional practices and decisions in the classroom. We argue that this requires teachers in graduate education to engage in ongoing self-reflection in which they examine their beliefs and practices through multiple lenses (i.e., personal, political, sociocultural) and then take action. We also propose that teachers receive scaffolded support and feedback in analyzing their beliefs and teaching practices.

We also challenge teacher education programs to examine the ways in which they intentionally and systematically train their in-service teachers to be teacher leaders in the field of EL education. We contend that well-trained teacher leaders are an essential piece of the puzzle in systemic improvements in educational

outcomes for our English learners. Graduate education programs can play a compelling role in preparing their teachers to advocate for and shape the education field.

While we challenge graduate education programs to reflect on how they close the theory-to-practice gap and develop teachers as teacher leaders, we would be remiss if we discounted the paucity of research guiding the understanding in the variables that influence shifts in teaching practices and the development of teacher leaders. Teaching is complex, as a multitude of variables interact during teachers' moment-to-moment decisions in the classroom. This is further complicated when teachers' belief systems are confronted with new learning. As professional educators, we must better understand the interaction between these variables and support our teacher leaders in overcoming hurdles to the provision of high-quality education for ELs.

The enhanced graduate PD model supported by our university represents one framework for re-envisioning how to close the theory-to-practice gap that undermines educational reform and quality instruction for ELs. Sculpted by relevant field-based opportunities, systematic critical reflection points, and experiences that promote teacher empowerment, this approach to in-service professional development has the potential to promote a "sociocultural consciousness" (Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner et al., 2005; p. 253) that expands teachers' views of the world and their roles in the classroom and community. Ultimately, such re-envisioning of university graduate level experiences requires the courage to do something new with boldness and a sense of urgency.

Authors

Tracy Spies, an Associate Professor of English Language Learning at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, received her PhD from Texas A&M University in Educational Psychology with an emphasis in Hispanic Bilingual Education. She examines academic language development of bilingual students from both teacher development and student intervention perspectives.

Sharolyn Pollard-Durodola, a Professor of English Language Learning at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, earned her EdD from the University of Houston in Curriculum and Instruction in Second Language Acquisition and Bilingual Education. She investigates the prevention and intervention of language and literacy difficulties among students at risk of academic difficulties.

Alain Bengochea, an Assistant Professor of English Language Learning at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, received his PhD from the University of Miami in Language and Literacy Learning in Multilingual Settings. He examines ways in which emergent bilingual learners' language and literacy development are supported across home, community, and school contexts.

Gloria Carcoba Falomir is a Graduate Assistant for the English Language Learning program and a Doctoral Student in Special Education at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. She investigates effective mathematics interventions for students with learning disabilities and for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Yunying Xu is a Graduate Assistant for the English Language Learning program and a Doctoral Student in Literacy Education. Her research interests include the evaluation of international children's literature and community-based family literacy programs for diverse learners.

References

- Ajayi, L. (2011). Teaching alternative licensed literacy teachers to learn from practice: A critical reflection model. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 38, 169-189.
- Banks, J., Cochran-Smith, M., Moll, L., Richert, A., Zeichner, K., LePage, P., Darling-Hammond, L., Duffy, H., & McDonald, M. (2005). Teaching diverse learners. In Linda Darling-Hammond & John Bransford (Eds.).

- Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do* (232-274). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley and Sons.
- Breffni, L. (2011). Impact of curriculum training on state-funded prekindergarten teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 32*, 176-193. Doi: 10.1080/1090127.2011.572226
- Broekkamp, H., & van Hout-Wolters, B. (2007). The gap between educational research and practice: A literature review, symposium, and questionnaire. *Educational Research and Evaluation, 13*, 203-220. doi: 10.1080/13803610701626127
- Broin, A. (2015). Leading from every seat: Empowering principals to cultivate teacher leadership for school improvement. *New Leaders*. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED556352&site=ehost-live>
- Bryan, L.A. (2003). Nestedness of beliefs: Examining a prospective elementary teacher's belief system about science teaching and learning. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 40*, 835-868. doi: 10.1002/tea.10113
- Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning. (2021). *MyTeachingPartner™*. <https://education.virginia.edu/myteachingpartner>
- Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession. (2009). *Teacher leadership framework*. Retrieved from: <http://cstp-wa.org/teacher-leadership/teacher-leadership-skills-framework/>
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2008). The new teacher education in the United States: Directions forward. *Teachers & Teaching, 14*, 271-282. doi:10.1080/13540600802037678
- Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M. W. (2011). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*, 81-92. doi:10.1177/0031721711109200622
- Day, C., Elliot, B., & Kingston, A. (2005). Reform standards and teacher identity: Challenges of sustaining commitment. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 21*, 563-577. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.03.001
- Every Student Succeeds Act, Pub. L. No. 114-95, § 1177 Stat. (2015).
- Graves Kretlow, A., & Bartholomew, C.C. (2010). Using coaching to improve the fidelity of evidence-based practices: A review of studies. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 33*, 279-299. doi:10.1177/0888406410371643
- Griffiths, V. (2000). The reflective dimension in teacher education. *International Journal of Educational Research, 33*, 539-555. doi: 10.1016/S0883-0355(00)00033-1
- Han, H. S. (2012). Professional development that works: Shifting preschool teachers' beliefs and use of instructional strategies to promote children's peer social competence. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 33*, 251-268. doi: 10.1080/10901027.2012.705804
- Hansen-Thomas, H., Richins, L.G., Kakkar, K., & Okeyo, C. (2016). I do not feel I am properly trained to help them! Rural teachers' perceptions of challenges and needs with English-language learners. *Professional Development in Education, 42*(2), 308-324 <https://www.tandfonline.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1080/19415257.2014.973528>
- Hemsley-Brown, J., & Sharp, C. (2003). The use of research to improve professional practice: A systematic review of the literature. *Oxford Review of Education, 29*, 449-470. doi:10.1080/0305498032000153025
- Hill, H. C. (2007). Learning in the teaching workforce. *The future of children, 17*, 111-127.
- Hood, P. (2003). *Scientific Research and Evidence-Based Practice*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.
- Ion, G., & Iucu, R. (2016). The impact of postgraduate studies on the teachers' practice. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 39*, 602-615. doi:10.1080/02619768.2016.1253674.
- Karabenick, S.A., & Clemons Noda, P.A. (2004). Professional development implications of teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward English Language Learners. *Bilingual Research Journal, 28*, 55-75. doi: 10.1080/15235882.2004.10162612
- Lukacs, K. (2015). 'For me, change is not a choice': The lived experience of a teacher change agent. *American Secondary Education, 44*, 38-44.
- McIntyre, D. (2006). Bridging the gap between research and practice. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 35*, 357-382. doi: 10.1080/03057640500319065
- Mentzer, G.A., Czerniak, C.M., & Struble, J.L. (2014). Utilizing program theory and contribution analysis to evaluate the development of science teacher leaders. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 42*, 100-108. doi:10.1016/j.stueduc.2014.03.003

Nevada Department of Education. (2019, October 1). *Enrollment for Nevada Public Schools: 2019-2020 School Year*. <https://doe.nv.gov/DataCenter/Enrollment/>

Peters, S., & Reid, D. K. (2009). Resistance and discursive practice: promoting advocacy in teacher undergraduate and graduate programmes. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, 25, 551-558. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2009.02.006

Pianta, R.C., La Paro, K.M., & Hamre, B.K. (2008). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System. Manual K-3*. Paul H Brookes Publishing.

Poekert, P. E. (2012). Teacher leadership and professional development: Examining links between two concepts central to school improvement. *Professional Development in Education*, 38, 169-188. doi: 10.1080/19415257.2012.657824

Riddel, M. (2014, May 21). The Nevada five: The quirks of our economy. Retrieved from: <https://www.unlv.edu/news/article/my-nevada-five-quirks-our-economy>

Saric, M., & Steh, B. (2017). Critical reflection in the professional development of teachers: Challenges and possibilities. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 7, 67-85.

Sleeter, C. (2008). An invitation to support diverse students through teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59, 212-219. doi:10.1177/0022487108317019

Smyth, J. (1989). Developing and sustaining critical reflection in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 40, 2-9. doi:10.1177/002248718904000202

Spies, T.G., Lyons, C., Huerta, M., Garza, T., & Reding, C. (2017). Beyond professional development: Factors influencing early childhood educators' beliefs and practices working with dual language learners. *The CATESOL Journal*, 29, 23-50.

Szeto, E., & Cheng, A.Y. (2018). Principal-teacher interaction and teacher leadership development: beginning teachers' perspectives. *International Journal of Leadership in Education Theory and Practice*, 21, 363-379. Doi: 10.1080/13606124.2016.1274785

Taole, M.J. (2012). Reflective experiences of post graduate certificate in education students during teaching practice. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 1-11.

U.S. Department of Education. (2017). *National Center for Education Statistics*. Washington, DC: Author.

Vartuli, S., & Rohs, J. (2009). Early childhood prospective teacher pedagogical belief shifts over time. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 30, 310-327. doi: 10.1080/10901020903320262

Wetzel, M.M., Hoffman, J.V., Roach, A.K., & Russell, K. (2018). Practical knowledge and teacher reflection from a practice-based literacy teacher education program in the first years. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 45, 87-111.

York-Barr, J., & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings from two decades of scholarship. *Review of Educational Research*, 74, 255-316. doi:10.3102/00346543074003255

Appendix A

Statistically significant self-efficacy gains for first cohort

Self-efficacy Component	Year 01		Year 02		t
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	
General self-efficacy	5.10	.455	5.52	.343	3.1942*
EL self-efficacy	5.32	.368	5.66	.422	2.9396*
Written language instruction	4.85	5.53	5.53	.399	3.0166*

* p<.05