

Summer 8-13-2015

Implementation of WIDA Standards: A Cross-Case Analysis of Twelve Public School Districts in Minnesota

Ashley Elizabeth Karlsson
Hamline University, akarlsson01@hamline.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_all



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Karlsson, Ashley Elizabeth, "Implementation of WIDA Standards: A Cross-Case Analysis of Twelve Public School Districts in Minnesota" (2015). *School of Education Student Capstone Theses and Dissertations*. 210.
https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_all/210

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Education at DigitalCommons@Hamline. It has been accepted for inclusion in School of Education Student Capstone Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Hamline. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@hamline.edu, lterveer01@hamline.edu.

IMPLEMENTATION OF WIDA STANDARDS:
A CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS OF TWELVE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS
IN MINNESOTA

by

Ashley Karlsson

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in English as a Second Language

Hamline University

St. Paul, Minnesota

August 2015

Primary Advisor: Amy Hewett-Olatunde
Secondary Advisor: Kathryn Heinze
Peer Reviewer: Angela Froemming

“As anyone knows who has worked in the field,
implementation of new practice is the biggest challenge of all.”

Hollin & McMurrin (as cited in Fixsen & Blase, 2009)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Academic Standards.....	2
Standards-Based Instruction.....	4
Implementation.....	5
Role and Background of the Researcher.....	5
Guiding Questions.....	6
Summary.....	6
Chapter Overviews.....	7
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
Evolution of Academic Standards.....	8
Nature of Language Standards.....	12
Connecting Content and Language Standards.....	13
Implementation Science.....	15
Implementing WIDA Standards.....	18
The Gap in Research.....	21
Research Questions.....	22
Summary.....	22

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	23
Overview of the Chapter	23
Qualitative Research Paradigm	23
Data Collection Technique	24
Participants	25
Procedure	27
Data Analysis	28
Verification of Data	29
Ethics	29
Conclusion	30
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	31
EL Programming	31
Student Demographics	32
Implementation Basics	32
WIDA Assessments	34
Interim and Additional Assessments	36
Can Do Descriptors and Name Charts	38
Model Performance Indicators	39
Sources of Training on WIDA Framework	42
Audience for WIDA Training	44
Implementation Teams and Committees	47
Research Question Revisited	48

Conclusion.....	49
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	50
Notable Findings.....	50
Limitations.....	56
Implications for Teachers and Administrators.....	57
Suggestions for Future Study.....	59
Dissemination of Results.....	60
Reflection.....	60
REFERENCES.....	61
APPENDIX A: Guiding Questions for Model Performance Indicators.....	66
APPENDIX B: Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy.....	68
APPENDIX C: WIDA Standards in Minnesota Law.....	70
APPENDIX D: Interview Questions	72

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 2.1 Language Proficiency Levels from WIDA	13
TABLE 3.1 Participant Characteristics.....	27
TABLE 4.1 Sample Progression of Trainings for WIDA Standards Implementation.....	45

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 2.1 Stages of Implementation.....	16
FIGURE 2.2 Implementation Drivers.....	17

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The field of education is no stranger to controversy. In recent years, there has been a great deal of discussion about the release and adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) by many states. The CCSS are academic standards for language arts and mathematics that outline the knowledge and skills students should have by the end of each grade level. They are lauded by many for their role in preparing students to be college and career ready and ensuring that all students have access to instruction that is rigorous and relevant, regardless of geographic, linguistic or socioeconomic situations. However, the rise of the CCSS has also brought with it a wave of criticism and protest against national academic standards. For some, national academic standards represent another unwanted extension of the federal government. For others, the CCSS are synonymous with standardization that drives instruction further away from student needs.

In the shadows of this debate, another set of standards has quietly gained prominence across the nation. WIDA, formally known as World-class Instructional Design and Assessment, has created standards for English Language Development (ELD) that are now used in 35 U.S. states (WIDA, 2012). Although these standards have not been subjected to the intense scrutiny and condemnation of the CCSS, the adoption of these ELD standards, hereafter referred to as WIDA Standards, has not been without challenges. Many teachers and administrators have questions about the WIDA Standards

and their use in schools. Implementation of WIDA Standards is required in the states that have adopted them, but there has been limited guidance as to what implementation looks like on a practical level. This chapter introduces some of the key ideas and issues associated with the WIDA Standards and their implementation in member states of the WIDA Consortium.

Academic Standards

For the purposes of this paper, academic standards will be broken down into two categories: content standards and language standards. These two types of standards are similar in that they both promote the skills and knowledge students will need to be successful, but there are also some significant differences discussed below.

Content Standards

Academic content standards are developed by an educational agency to serve as a guide for instruction across many content areas including language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. There are also standards that have been developed for physical education, art and other elective course areas. Sets of content standards have been developed by state educational agencies and national content organizations for years. In recent years, locally-developed standards have been replaced by nationally-developed standards. All grade levels from Kindergarten through 12th grade have content standards to address academic development across content areas. Sets of content standards have also been developed for early childhood and adult education programs as well as teacher education programs. Oftentimes, each set of content area standards is further broken

down into benchmarks that describe in more detail the knowledge and skills students are required to master.

Language Standards

Academic language standards are best described as a set of standards designed to guide the development of language skills for students learning English as an additional language. Standards for English language development have been in use for well over a decade (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, 1997). WIDA Standards, however, represent a clear departure from existing content and language standards. The WIDA Standards framework is transformative in nature. It is not a set of stand-alone benchmarks but rather a set of models to be adapted and integrated with academic content standards. As such, the implementation of these standards into curriculum, assessment and instructional planning requires a distinct set of efforts and strategies (WIDA, 2012).

Although use of standards in education is nothing new, the WIDA Standards framework is quite different from the content and language standards to which many educators have become accustomed. Instead of being broken down into a set of immutable benchmarks, the WIDA Standards are fleshed out in strands of Model Performance Indicators (MPIs). MPIs are leveled organizers that show teachers and students how language proficiency can progress with appropriate supports. Guiding questions for customizing MPIs for any given context can be seen in Appendix A. Expanded strands of MPIs include variable language scaffolding for a given topic and language domain within the standards matrix (WIDA, 2012). These expanded strands also include connections to state content standards like the CCSS as well as cognitive

functions that define the level of engagement for the given task. These cognitive functions exemplify many of the skills from Bloom's taxonomy, including applying, evaluating, analyzing and remembering. A more complete list of the cognitive functions in Bloom's revised taxonomy can be found in Appendix B.

Standards-Based Instruction

As an EL teacher in the public school environment, I have found that the rise of national standards has brought standards-based education to the forefront of instructional planning. Standards-based instruction refers to the practice of using academic standards to guide instruction within the classroom. Standards-based instruction is praised for increasing rigor and establishing high expectations for all students while at the same time criticized for shifting focus away from students' individual needs. When it comes to academic content standards, the process of shifting to standards-based instruction is relatively straightforward.

The process of incorporating transformative language standards into instruction, however, is much more demanding. A cursory library search can uncover a great deal of research available to guide implementation of standards-based instruction in content areas. Unfortunately, there are far fewer resources available to guide the implementation of WIDA Standards. My experience has shown that this situation is exacerbated by the fact that much of the research and guidance that has been made available is often untapped by teachers and districts because of constraints on time and funding. Without a solid understanding of what is involved in the implementation of WIDA Standards, the entire implementation process can be delayed or derailed. In order for any degree of

implementation to be achieved, it is necessary that both teachers and administrators are aware of the implementation process and the strategies that work within that process.

Implementation

It is safe to say that almost all educators have lived through the implementation of a new policy, practice or intervention multiple times in their careers. The process by which a new practice is implemented within an organization has become a field of study in and of itself. According to National Implementation Research Network (NIRN), implementation science can be best described as “the art and science of incorporating innovations into typical human service settings to benefit children, families, adults, and communities” (Fixsen & Blase, 2009, p.1). The field of implementation science seeks to understand how interventions are introduced and carried out in a variety of settings. Within this study, I have drawn from the theories and ideas espoused by implementation science to better understand and evaluate which aspects of WIDA Standards implementation have been most and least effective.

Role and Background of the Researcher

As a current English Language (EL) teacher, I have a vested interest in the language development and academic success of my students. I believe WIDA Standards can be used to support English learners’ language development and achievement in the content classroom. In my own practice, I have taught in several districts in the state of Minnesota, each of which had various levels of WIDA Standards implementation. In the early years of my teaching career, I worked in a small, rural district where implementation of WIDA Standards was not a high priority. I observed that the lack of

implementation was related in part to a lack of understanding regarding what was involved in the implementation process. As a smaller district, there were also limits on the human and fiscal resources necessary to move forward in the implementation process. In my current position in a large urban district, I have observed that while the size and resources of a large district can effectively address some of the challenges of WIDA Standards implementation, there are other challenges that arise. Larger districts may have difficulty achieving consistency with implementation across multiple schools and the adoption and implementation of new interventions may take longer to achieve.

Guiding Questions

The perceived lack of consistency with implementation practices across districts in Minnesota raises a number of significant questions that were used to guide this research. These questions include:

- (1) What are districts doing to implement WIDA Standards?
- (2) What actions or strategies have been most effective in the process of implementing WIDA Standards?
- (3) What actions or strategies have been least effective in the process of implementing WIDA Standards?

Summary

Shifting practice from curriculum-driven instruction to standards-based instruction can be challenging even when working with academic content standards. Incorporating a set of transformative language development standards is even more challenging. I believe WIDA Standards have great potential to frame conversations

around EL programming. My hope is that this research will provide a starting point for districts of varying sizes to move forward with implementation by learning from the successes and challenges of others around the state. In this study, I have focused on the steps and strategies that districts have used to effectively implement WIDA Standards, along with the many challenges they have faced. This chapter discussed the basics of academic standards, including the similarities and differences between content standards and language standards. Standards-based instruction was addressed along with information on the growing field of implementation science. This chapter concluded with a reflection on the role and background of the researcher and a list of the questions that will guide my inquiry throughout this study.

Chapter Overviews

In Chapter One, I introduced my research by presenting background information and establishing the need for this study. Key terms and issues were discussed along with my background as a researcher and my assumptions about the standards implementation process. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature relevant to standards-based education, language standards and implementation science. Chapter Three includes a description of the research design and methodology that guides this study. Chapter Four presents the results of this study. Chapter Five reviews the data collected and discusses the limitations of the study along with making recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to identify and evaluate the actions that have been taken by districts with diverse demographics to implement WIDA Standards in the state of Minnesota. This chapter discusses the evolution of content and language standards, the nature of language standards, the connection between content and language standards, major theories in implementation science, and issues related to the implementation of WIDA Standards. At present, there is a significant gap between the academic achievement of English learners and the achievement of language proficient students (Echevarria, Short & Powers, 2006). The achievement gap between socio-economic classes can also be examined through the lens of language. As Hirsch (2003) writes, “It is now well accepted that the chief cause of achievement gap between socio-economic groups is a language gap” (p.22). This language gap carries across content areas. Support for language development needs to happen not only in language classrooms but also in the content classes themselves. Understanding the development and use of both content and language standards is helpful for establishing the educational context in which this achievement gap must be closed.

Evolution of Academic Standards

The goal of standards in education has been to establish high expectations for student learning and to serve as a guide for curriculum and assessment planning

(Echevarria et al., 2006). In order to better understand the divergent nature of WIDA Standards, it is first necessary to examine the structure and evolution of traditional academic standards in other content areas.

Content Standards

The standards movement began in 1989 at the National Governors Association. After this summit, federal legislation was enacted to support the need for national educational goals. Later in that same year, the National Council of Teacher of Mathematics (NCTM) released the first set of content standards developed by a national professional organization (Gomez, 2000). In the following years, a number of other professional organizations followed suit to develop standards for their own respective content areas (Echevarria et al., 2006). The standards themselves are not intended to be a curriculum, but are instead designed as a tool to inform curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Pearson & Hiebert, 2013).

The standards movement has recently regained momentum with the development of the CCSS for English Language Arts and Mathematics in 2010 and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) in 2011. There is no doubt that the implementation of the CCSS and NGSS has greatly influenced teaching and learning across the nation. The effectiveness of these standards, however, depends on how they are actually implemented. Before these standards were developed, some had argued that the variability of curriculum and assessment policies within the United States could potentially lead to inequity for students and teachers (Pearson & Hiebert, 2013). The CCSS and NGSS were developed in part to respond to these concerns about inequity.

Unfortunately, there is historic precedent for well-intentioned educational initiatives that have actually widened the achievement gap, like the school voucher system. Although content standards including the CCSS and NGSS have been designed for all students, critics argue that they do not adequately address the needs of a growing English learner population (Bailey & Huang, 2011).

Language Standards

Before the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the use of language standards was not required. Some states, like California, had developed their own language standards. Other states made use of language standards developed by national organizations like Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). The TESOL standards, originally published in 1997, were significant in identifying three major goals for language development. The major goals identified by TESOL were:

- (1) using English to communicate in social settings,
- (2) using English to achieve academically in all content areas, and
- (3) using English in socially and culturally appropriate ways (TESOL, 1997).

Each goal included three standards that further supported the goals. The nine original TESOL standards, however, were rather abstract and not particularly useful in designing curriculum and assessment (Bailey & Huang, 2011).

In 2001, the NCLB Act made ELD standards a requirement for all states (NCLB, 2001). Title III of Public Law 107-110 made funding for ELD programs dependent on standards-based language assessments. One of the significant contributions of NCLB to the field of ELD was the disaggregation of student scores by subgroup. Student test

scores on state and national assessments were now required to be reported by subgroup. This disaggregation has drawn a spotlight to the achievement gap that exists between native English speakers and non-native English learners. Federal law also requires states to report information specific to English learners based on Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs). These AMAOs include progress in language development, English proficiency attainment, and reading and math proficiency attainment.

Because of growing accountability concerns in education, the success of English learners has become a significant concern for EL teachers, content teachers and administrators. In 2004, a multi-state consortium developed the first set of language standards designed to be implemented in coordination with content standards (Bailey & Huang, 2011). The WIDA Consortium developed the standards through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Initially referred to as English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards in 2004, the standards were revised in 2007 and expanded in 2012 with a new designation as English Language Development (ELD) Standards. As of 2014, 35 U.S. states have adopted WIDA Standards.

WIDA Standards were codified into Minnesota law by Minnesota Rule, part 3501.1200, subparts 1-6 (MDE, n.d.). The complete standards as listed in state statute can be found in Appendix C. Of the 35 states that have adopted WIDA Standards, 34 are considered full members of the consortium, including Minnesota. These states have implemented a full range of WIDA products, including Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for

ELLs), a language proficiency test designed to meet the assessment requirements of NCLB. WIDA Standards serve as a blueprint for the ACCESS for ELLs. Prior to NCLB, language proficiency assessments had very low predicative validity in terms of student success on content area assessments (Butler, Stevens, & Castellon as cited in Bailey & Huang, 2011).

Nature of Language Standards

There are several key features of language standards. One fundamental difference between content standards and language standards is that content standards represent an expectation of mastery. WIDA Standards, in contrast, are developmental in nature (Lee, 2012). WIDA Standards themselves are built into strands of MPIs that indicate what students should know and be expected to do with varying levels of support at multiple points throughout their language development.

Second, WIDA Standards focus explicitly on academic language. Academic language refers to the language that students need to access instruction and demonstrate learning in a typical classroom setting. Language standards designed pre-NCLB aligned only to standards in English Language Arts. After NCLB, the understanding of academic language was expanded and WIDA Standards were designed to align not only with language arts, but also with mathematics, science and social studies (Llosa, 2011).

The complexity of WIDA Standards makes it difficult for teachers to use the standards effectively in their instruction and assessment (Bailey & Huang, 2011).

Although there are concerns about the clarity and internal coherence of WIDA Standards, such standards provide a common language for discussing English Language

development (Llosa, 2011). One aspect of that common language is WIDA's language proficiency levels. WIDA organizes language proficiency in six levels, as seen in Table 2.1. Since Level Six represents the highest level of language proficiency on par with native English speakers, language descriptors and MPIs are typically written only for Levels One through Five (WIDA, 2012).

Table 2.1

Language Proficiency Levels from WIDA

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Entering	Emerging	Developing	Expanding	Bridging	Reaching

Connecting Content and Language Standards

Connections between content standards and language standards were largely disregarded in the early part of the standards-based education movement (Bailey & Huang, 2011). However, it is now clear that connecting language proficiency standards with content standards is essential for the success of English learners. Language and content are closely connected and can be taught simultaneously because the goals are complementary (Hakuta, Santos & Fang, 2013; American Federation of Teachers, 2010). Academic success in content areas requires learning the language of that content area. Hakuta et al. (2013) argue that in order to develop content knowledge, it is important for the language demands of each content area to be made explicit. All students, including

both native and nonnative English speakers, need to be supported in the development of discipline specific language (Lee, Quinn & Valdes, 2013). Although many teachers would agree that connections should be made between content and language instruction, accomplishing this in real and practical ways is much more difficult. Most EL teachers are not trained specifically in the content and disciplinary language of the content classroom. Likewise, most content teachers are not trained to address the linguistic needs of English learners (Lee, 2012).

Making connections between language and content requires collaboration at all levels (Hakuta et al., 2013). Language is often viewed as something that must be taught, and this responsibility falls primarily to EL teachers (Lee et al., 2013). Although the importance of direct and explicit language instruction has been clearly demonstrated (Hollingsworth & Ybarra, 2013), the nature of language development necessitates an understanding of how language can be acquired through meaningful interactions with language proficient teachers and peers. Teachers using content standards need to know how to include students in classroom discourse, regardless of English proficiency. Participating in classroom discourse helps English learners to develop content knowledge along with language skills (Lee et al., 2013). In light of the challenges and opportunities offered by content standards like the CCSS and NGSS, some have argued that language learning should move away from a focus on form and more towards a focus on meaningful communication (Hakuta et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2013).

Implementation Science

In many disciplines, there are major gaps between what is best practice and what is practiced in the field (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, and Wallace, 2005). For many years, research in human services, including education, has been focused on identifying evidence-based practices to improve service (Fixsen & Blase, 2009). When research is completed, the findings are handed over to policy makers and practitioners. Traditionally, when the research findings change hands, the responsibility to implement those findings also shifts to those in the field. This is problematic in many ways. Without a blueprint for implementation, practitioners are left to their own devices to make sense of new knowledge in a reality that is often complex and variable. This is where implementation science comes in. The field of implementation science is a relatively new field that has arisen to address the issues inherent in implementation. Implementation science acknowledges that research into new policies and practices is essential for enhancing educational opportunities, but also recognizes that theories alone are not sufficient to affect desired changes (Fixsen & Blase, 2009).

Implementation Frameworks

The success of implementation depends on establishing the infrastructure necessary for implementation and using effective implementation strategies. There are two major frameworks within implementation science that form the blueprint for successful implementation.

Stages of implementation. The first framework delineates the stages of implementation. The National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) has identified

six stages of implementation: exploration, installation, initial implementation, full implementation, innovation, and sustainability. These stages are not linear and can impact each other in significant ways. Implementation science recognizes that the stages of implementation can take multiple years. Figure 2.1 below illustrates the first four stages of implementation and the major goals of each stage. The final two stages, innovation and sustainability, reflect the importance of ongoing work in the implementation process.

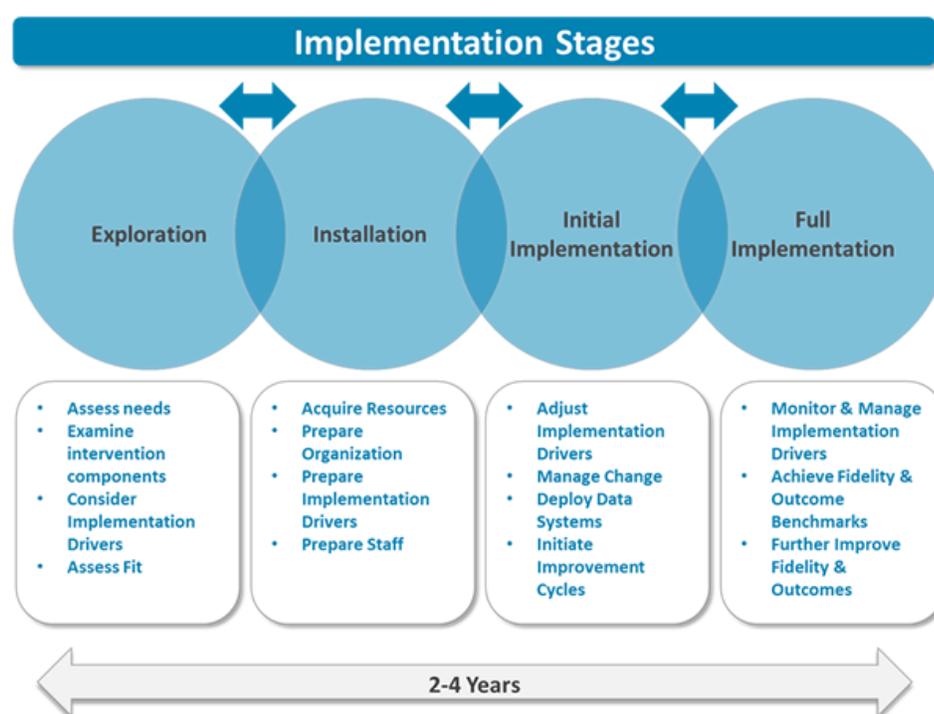


Figure 2.1. Stages of Implementation. Adapted from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, *FPG Child Development Institute*. Copyright 2013 by the National Implementation Research Network.

Implementation drivers. The second major framework within implementation science involves the core components of implementation, also known as *implementation drivers*, shown in Figure 2.2. These drivers are organized into three categories: competency

drivers, leadership drivers, and organization drivers. These drivers encompass many different components that need to be considered during the implementation process. These components include staff selection, pre-service and in-service training, ongoing coaching and consultation, staff performance evaluation, decision support data systems, facilitative administrative supports, and system interventions (Fixsen & Blase, 2009).

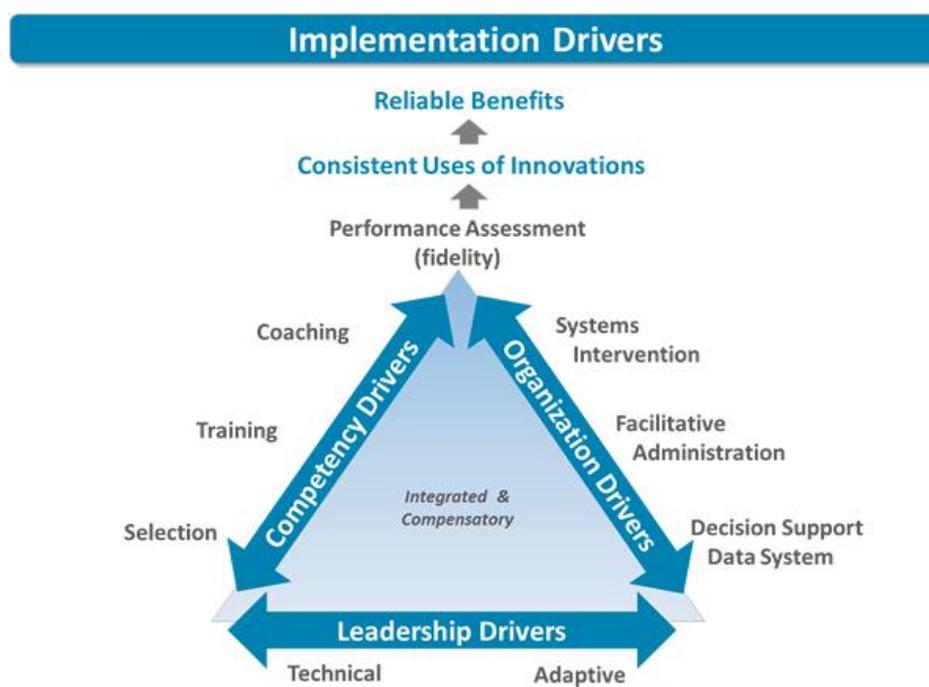


Figure 2.2. Implementation drivers. Adapted from the National Implementation Research Network, *Active Implementation Hub*. Copyright 2013 by the National Implementation Research Network.

ELD Standards as Educational Intervention

There are many evidence-based practices and interventions in education that have the potential to affect positive changes for teachers and students. The ELD standards are one example of an intervention that has potential to dramatically influence educational opportunities for English learners. Although there have been calls to improve the quantity

and quality of research into WIDA Standards, such actions will not necessarily correspond to improved implementation (Fixsen & Blase, 2009). Awareness and understanding of WIDA Standards is a necessary component of the implementation process, but it is not sufficient. Effective implementation needs to be guided by a framework that accounts for the variable nature of EL programming and the realities of other limitations within the school system. Throughout this research the idea of implementation will be used with the meaning assigned by Fixsen et al. (2005) who define implementation as “a specific set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions” (p. 5). In this case, the activity or program being put into practice are the WIDA Standards.

Implementing WIDA Standards

NCLB required states to adopt language development standards but it did not require states to report how those standards were being implemented. The goal of this paper is to identify effective practices in standards implementation. Current research has proposed several strategies for the implementation of language development standards. Lee (2012) asserts that implementing WIDA Standards requires aligning standards with curriculum and assessment and using standards-based assessment data to inform instructional changes. Student scores on language development assessments should be used to guide instruction and differentiation within the content classroom (Lee, 2012). In order for WIDA Standards implementation to be successful, structural and organizational systems need to be established and teachers need to receive ongoing support to build capacity and skills (Westerlund, 2014).

WIDA Standards are designed for anyone who works with English learners, including both content teachers and EL teachers. A curriculum based on standards may support collaboration between EL and mainstream teachers (Martin-Beltran & Peercy, 2012). For implementation efforts to be successful, collaboration efforts should be supported in a systematic and ongoing way. On their own, content teachers may not have the time to attend to both content and language standards (Llosa, 2011). Likewise, EL staff cannot meet all the language development needs of English learners (Lee, 2012). It is only by working together that EL teachers and content teachers will be able to successfully implement WIDA Standards. Cloud (2000) also adds that in order for language development standards to be implemented in classrooms, such standards should be integrated into teacher education programs.

Implementation of WIDA Standards is complicated by a variety of factors. First, federal reporting requirements tend to take priority over district-level implementation practices (Lee, 2012). In an era of high-stakes accountability, the urgency of immediate compliance with federal mandates makes the development of long-term implementation strategies more difficult to initiate and sustain. According to NIRN, the implementation process may take two to four years and sustaining that implementation should be an ongoing endeavor. Secondly, teachers do not always interpret standards consistently (Llosa, 2011). WIDA Standards represent an important step in creating a shared language for EL practitioners, but if teachers do not have the time or motivation to learn and understand this new language, communication can easily break down. A recent

case study by Westerlund (2014, p.138) found that “the ambiguous nature of WIDA ELD Standards leads to different definitions of standards practices.”

Finally, there is significant variation in program models for English learners across the country (Gomez, 2000). Similar variation can be found even at the state level. Some Minnesota districts serve large populations of English learners while others serve extremely small populations. Some districts serve a relatively homogeneous language population, while other districts may serve students from many language backgrounds. English learners may come from diverse socio-economic situations and may have varied levels of prior schooling, including students with limited or interrupted formal education (Jesness, 2004). Lee (2012) explains that small districts may lack the funds and the human capital necessary to support district-wide initiatives related to English learners. Lee (2012) also comments that districts who serve small numbers of English learners may not be adequately prepared to implement WIDA Standards. The responsibility for instructing and assessing learners with WIDA Standards is complicated by the arrangement of EL instruction in each particular educational setting (Llosa, 2011).

As a result of these challenges, some districts may need external support in implementing WIDA Standards (Lee, 2012). MDE has created a guidance document that clearly outlines the basic stages of implementation science and offers suggestions for identifying which components of implementation are already in place in a given school (MDE, n.d.). However, the highly dynamic and context dependent nature of implementation limits the scope of recommendations that can be offered.

The Gap in Research

As this chapter demonstrates, standards are an undeniable component of teaching and learning in the United States. A great deal of research and funding has been invested in the development of both content and language standards, but more studies are needed on the nature of post-NCLB language standards. While content standards form the backbone of the standards-based instruction movement, research committed to the role and implementation of language standards is sparse. Although alignment studies have been conducted between content and language standards, these studies tend to focus more on identifying the language demands of specific content areas and less on practical, system-wide policies to inform instruction and assessment. There has been little research on the role of WIDA Standards in classroom assessment (Llosa, 2011).

Although most EL educators would agree on the importance of using language standards throughout instruction and assessment, there is no clear model for what that looks like in the school setting. This challenge is compounded by the fact that the demographics of English learners can be vastly different across school settings. The diversity of educational settings into which WIDA Standards must be implemented demands more case studies like Westerlund's (2014) which identified the challenges of implementation in a specific school setting. There is an evident need for research on how districts support the implementation of new interventions in ELD programs, especially across districts and schools that use varied program models (Coleman, 2006). The use of language development standards is an important element of ELD programming. The above review has demonstrated that a gap exists at present in the field of education

research regarding how to effectively implement language standards in diverse educational settings to support language development and content learning at the classroom, school and district levels.

Research Questions

This study aims to discover what strategies have been most effective for the implementation of WIDA Standards and what can be learned from the implementation processes of other districts. The overriding question that guides this research is:

(1) What are school districts doing to implement WIDA Standards?

Additional sub-questions include:

(2) What actions or strategies have been most effective in the process of implementing WIDA Standards?

(3) What actions or strategies have been least effective in the process of implementing WIDA Standards?

Summary

This chapter reviewed relevant literature related to the evolution of language and content standards, the nature of language standards and the connection between content and language standards. Major theories in implementation science were addressed along with specific strategies and challenges related to the implementation of WIDA Standards. Chapter Three introduces the methods used in this research, including a justification of the research paradigm and details on the methods used for data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter focuses on the research methodology of the study. A description of the research paradigm is presented along with rationale and description of the research design. Second, the protocols for data collection are presented with specific information on study participants and collection procedures. Finally, the methodology for data analysis is described along with the steps that will be taken to verify the data and maintain ethical standards. The data was collected to answer the question, “What are school districts doing to implement WIDA Standards?”

Qualitative Research Paradigm

In order to best address the holistic and contextualized nature of WIDA Standards implementation, this research is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research addresses the study and interpretation of experiences in a particular setting (Merriam, 2009). A qualitative research paradigm posits that reality can only be studied holistically. One of the essential characteristics of qualitative research is that it is inductive in nature. This means that researchers use the data they have collected to inform their own theoretical understandings. The purpose of qualitative research, therefore, is to interpret information within a particular context (McKay, 2006).

There are many factors that may influence the implementation of language standards in a classroom, school, or district. These factors include the demographics of the English learner population, knowledge and familiarity with WIDA Standards, structures for professional development, as well as time and resources to invest in the implementation process. Each of these factors must be taken into account when determining the effectiveness of implementation strategies. Because of uncertainties regarding exactly what steps have been taken by districts, the research questions identified for this study were well-suited to be addressed through a methodology that is flexible in nature. One of the major characteristics of qualitative research is that it is flexible and responsive in the research process. Qualitative researchers use the data they have collected to build hypotheses and theories. These theories can in turn influence the direction of the study (Merriam, 2009).

Data Collection Technique

In order to study the implementation process, it was necessary to collect data on how EL teachers and coordinators have used WIDA Standards in their schools and districts. This data was collected through in-person interviews. Interviews are considered an effective method to gather data on a holistic level because they allow participants to express their thoughts and ideas in a way that is more natural than surveys or questionnaires. The purpose of interviewing is not to test hypotheses but rather to understand human experiences (Seidman, 2013). Interviewing is a way for humans to make sense of their experiences in different contexts. The interviews for this study began with descriptive questions to gather demographic details related to English learner

populations and programming at each district. Each interview also included open-ended questions to elicit information about implementation steps and strategies in each district. Because interview participants had to consent to be a part of this study, this research is subject to a certain degree of self-selection (Seidman, 2013). The interview questions used in this study can be found in Appendix D.

Participants

There were a total of twelve participants in this study. All participants were EL teachers or coordinators from public schools in Minnesota. For the purposes of this research, the study sought a convenience sample of typical cases, and the number of participants was purposefully limited to allow for evolution in the research design (McKay, 2006). Participant selection relied in part on network sampling. Network sampling refers to locating a few key participants and asking each of those participants for references for additional participants (Merriam, 2009). Participants were initially recruited through my own personal knowledge of the EL community and later through professional recommendations from others in the field of EL education. Since the purpose of this research was to explore the depth and breadth of standards implementation in diverse school settings, interview participants were selected with multiple characteristics in mind.

Geographic Setting

First, interview participants were selected from diverse geographic locations. Of the twelve interview participants, two were from urban settings, four were from first ring suburbs, four were from second ring suburbs and two were from rural settings. First ring

suburbs were defined as communities which immediately border the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Second ring suburbs were defined as communities which do not share a border with Minneapolis and St. Paul, but are still part of the greater metro region.

English Learner Population

The size of English learner population within each district was also a distinguishing factor for selection. Three participants came from low incidence districts, where the population of English learners was less than 5 percent, seven participants represented middle incidence districts with populations of English learners between 5 and 20 percent, and two participants were from high incidence districts with populations of English learners over 20 percent. Participants were asked to provide a general estimate of the English learner population served in their school or district. That information was verified with publically available data from MDE.

Participant Roles

Finally, participants were identified as either EL teachers or EL coordinators. Although the line between EL teacher and EL coordinator is often blurry, it was important to make a distinction between those working in the classroom day-to-day, and those working in a more programmatic capacity. Interviewing members of each group recognizes and acknowledges the potentially diverse experiences at the program level and at the classroom level. For identification purposes, anyone who worked directly with students for part of their day (apart from assessment) was considered an EL teacher. Of the twelve total participants, six were EL coordinators and six were EL teachers, although

all of those classified as EL teachers also had some degree of leadership or coordination requirements in their position.

Table 3.1

Participant Characteristics

		Geographic Setting			
		Rural	Second Ring Suburb	First Ring Suburb	Urban
Population of English Learners	Low (< 5%)	Participant 6 Participant 10	Participant 2		
	Mid (5% - 20%)		<i>Participant 1</i> <i>Participant 3</i> <i>Participant 9</i>	Participant 4 <i>Participant 7</i> <i>Participant 11</i> <i>Participant 12</i>	
	High (> 20%)				Participant 5 Participant 8

Note. Italics denote EL Coordinators.

Procedure

Before beginning participant interviews, pilot interviews were conducted with two EL teachers and two EL coordinators. The pilot interviews were conducted prior to administration of the research interviews to ensure that the intended interview questions would elicit answers relating directly to the research question. As a result of these pilot interviews, the wording on several questions was clarified and explanatory text and examples were added to the interview script.

Network sampling was then used to identify participants who were willing to discuss what they have done to implement WIDA Standards within their schools.

Interview participants were contacted individually to assess their interest and availability and to set up interview times. During each of the scheduled interview times, participants were informed about the purpose and objective of the study. Participants were made aware of their rights as human subject participants, and written consent was obtained before proceeding with the interview. The interview itself was semi-structured, including a script with standardized definitions and a mix of more and less structured questions. Using a semi-structured interview yielded essential information on program descriptions while also gathering data on unknown elements of WIDA Standards implementation.

Each interview began by establishing some of the basic definitions for terms used throughout the interview. In the interview questions, the phrase “WIDA Standards” was used to refer broadly to the framework of tools and strategies used by WIDA to identify and address student needs, including the Can Do Descriptors, MPIs and Performance Definitions. In addition, the term “implementation” was used to refer to the process of putting all of those tools into practice in the school setting. Initial interview questions were used to gather demographic information from participants while later questions were more flexible and exploratory in nature. Research notes were taken during each interview, and all interviews were audio recorded. After each interview concluded, each recording was then fully transcribed.

Data Analysis

After the interview responses were transcribed, the transcriptions and corresponding notes were analyzed using cross-case analysis coding. Interview transcriptions were closely examined to develop an initial set of themes. The categories

identified within each interview were synthesized with regard to the demographics of the particular districts being discussed. As analysis progressed, additional categories were developed to accommodate data that did not fit into the initial categorization.

The issue of reliability is a consistent concern with qualitative interviewing. Reliability in this study was achieved through a thorough and comprehensive description of the participants and procedure of the study. In-depth examination of participant experiences allowed me to make connections between participants in distinct settings. Thorough analysis and description of results has also made it possible for the reader to make their own connections to participant experiences (Seidman, 2013).

Verification of Data

In order to achieve internal validity in a qualitative research study, it is important for researchers to record and analyze all data carefully. To ensure the dependability and consistency of the data, the data collection procedure was followed conscientiously. The external validity of this study does bear the burden of selection effects. Because this study used a limited pool of participants, the degree to which any conclusions can be applied to other contexts may be restricted. The twelve participants selected for this study were able to speak to their own challenges and successes with implementation, but the dynamic nature of ELD programming and the diversity of educational contexts in which WIDA Standards implementation is occurring places some limits on further application.

Ethics

The nature of qualitative research requires that ethical considerations be given high priority. This study recognizes the professional codes and federal regulations

surrounding human subject research, and employed multiple safeguards to protect participant rights. First, approval for human subject research was obtained from Hamline University, the university sponsoring this research. Research objectives were shared with all participants, and informed consent was obtained before each interview. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Participant identities and the identities of the school districts they represent were kept anonymous and confidential. Audio recordings, transcriptions and any notes taken during the interview have been secured in a locked environment and will be destroyed after one year. The conclusions drawn from this research will be published and shared with other interested professionals as well as being shared directly with the study participants.

Conclusion

This chapter described the methodology used for data collection and analysis. The cross-case analysis in this study is qualitative and exploratory in nature with a focus on building meaningful theory. Purposeful, network sampling was used to identify teachers and coordinators who have implemented WIDA Standards in their schools. Consenting participants were interviewed and the results of those semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analyzed for thematic patterns. This chapter also discussed the issues of reliability, validity and ethics as they relate to this research. The next chapter presents the results of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

EL Programming

Each interview for this study began with basic questions on student demographics and EL programming. All districts reported using some degree of mixed programming including pull-out or sheltered classes just for English learners along with co-teaching or collaborative push-in models. Pull-out instruction, also referred to in some districts as stand-alone instruction, tended to be the principal means of service in districts with smaller populations of English learners. Districts with larger populations of English learners varied in their service models, including several with strong co-teaching programs in mainstream classes, and others with well-developed sheltered instruction courses specific to English learners.

None of the participants reported a singular service model in their district. In fact, many participants reported differences in programming at their elementary schools and secondary schools as well as differences based on each individual school's English learner population. Because all districts used a hybrid model of service delivery and because service models often varied considerably within district schools, information gathered regarding district program models could not be used as a descriptive variable in identifying and analyzing trends in the implementation of WIDA Standards.

Student Demographics

Initial interview questions also asked participants to consider the diversity of their English learner population including the percentage of Long Term English Learners (LTELs) and the percentage of Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). All participants reported having LTELs in their EL programs, and over half reported having at least a few students who would be considered SLIFE, ranging from recent refugees with limited education to migrant students with interrupted formal education. Although data collected on the numbers of LTELs and SLIFE in various districts did spark insightful conversations, it also illustrated the fact that there is not a universally-known or agreed upon definition for those two groups of students and that official identification of these students within a district can be quite challenging. As a result, most of the data collected on student demographics was generalized and not constructive for identifying clear data trends.

Implementation Basics

After discussing initial demographic data, the interview questions moved on to the basics of WIDA Standards implementation, including the individuals or groups responsible for implementation and the timeline for implementation. All twelve participants reported varying levels of implementation in their districts. The three participants from low incidence schools reported that there was no timeline or plan in place for implementation. Participants in mid to high incidence districts reported varying

attempts at implementation, ranging from very minimal to rather extensive implementation.

Participant Responses: Challenges with Implementation

The following set of quotations, taken from interview transcripts, illustrates some of the challenges with the implementation process.

Participant 1. “The fact that [EL teachers] know that there are standards is really good. We’re just at a real beginning stage with it. [...] I think it’s going to be a slow process.”

Participant 2. “I would be curious to know what implementation means and looks like in other districts. Are there things being done besides writing up an indeterminable list of MPIs? Is there like a middle ground somewhere?”

Participant 4. “I haven’t found [WIDA Standards] so useful over the years. It’s not that it’s not useful, but it’s not as comprehensive. It’s basically like, here’s a really nice framework, now spend a hundred hours creating your own standards, and who has time for that?”

Participant 5. “I feel like in my district the implementation of WIDA has been very minimal. [...] We haven’t really talked about it. It kind of gets ignored.”

Participant 6. “We had a lot of questions, like, ‘How are we going to do this?’ and ‘Where do we even start?’ and ‘When?’ And, ‘Do we have to bring in a trainer?’ And we got absolutely nowhere.”

Participant 7. “I think our rollout of the WIDA Standards [...] was initially pretty systematic. It has sort of gone in different directions since then, and in some ways, in a different direction than we had intended.”

Participant 9. “No matter what timeline you put together, what really happens will always look different because there’s real life and there are other initiatives from the federal government and state and from your own district that will have to balance.”

WIDA Assessments

One of the clearest patterns that emerged from the interviews was that almost all districts had some initial engagement with WIDA when Minnesota first joined the WIDA Consortium in 2011. For most districts, that first year was all about assessment. Teachers were trained in administering the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) used to screen incoming students who may be English learners and the ACCESS for ELLs assessment, given annually to measure the language proficiency growth of English learners from Kindergarten through 12th grade. That first year also included a general introduction to WIDA’s proficiency levels and the Can Do descriptors associated with each level. Many districts reported sending teachers and coordinators to a two-day training that was focused specifically on the basics of WIDA.

Since assessment is a key part of the WIDA framework, the interview also included questions on how WIDA assessments were being used by districts, especially in relation to the implementation process. All districts reported having used the W-APT for initial screening purposes; however, some participants reported having moved away from the W-APT in favor of alternative assessments or identification methods. Four of the twelve participants reported adopting WIDA’s MODEL assessment as an initial identification measurement for incoming Kindergarten students. In describing why they did not like the W-APT, participants reported that it is not accurate, underestimates some

students and is not sensitive enough to the low literacy skills of SLIFE students. The MODEL was reported as being much more developmentally appropriate for younger students, which is why several districts have switched from the W-APT to the MODEL in recent years. The cost of the MODEL, however, was reported as a prohibitive factor in its expansion to additional grade levels or in its adoption in new districts.

Having completed these interviews during the end of the state ACCESS for ELLs testing window, many participants shared strong feelings, both positive and negative, about the ACCESS for ELLs and its corresponding data. One of the main themes that emerged from these discussions is that the ACCESS for ELLs takes a great deal of time to administer and the data being drawn from these tests is not being used to its full potential.

Participant Responses: ACCESS for ELLs

Participants reported that ACCESS for ELLs results were used for multiple purposes including class placement and clustering of students, reporting progress to families, communicating with content teachers, identifying students for special services, and exiting students from EL programming. The following comments illustrate how the ACCESS for ELLs is used across multiple districts.

Participant 1. “We definitely do the ACCESS for all of our kids and that goes really well. We use ACCESS information actually to put kids in the right kind of program, to cluster them in certain ways.”

Participant 2. “I feel like the ACCESS scores have been of somewhat limited value. [...] Like, we receive the report and we don't get any training on how to interpret the

data. The district assessment coordinator never looks at it. So it's just kind of there, and I feel like there's probably more that could be done with it than what is being done.”

Participant 5. “I feel like for the amount of time we spend doing the ACCESS, we don't get enough information out of it. It doesn't provide us with enough data we can actually use. It would be better to take it earlier in the year or something so we could actually get that data back and we then say, ‘Okay, here is what the student is missing’ and maybe, ‘Here's how we can change instruction’, but that never happens with ACCESS data.”

Participant 7. “[ACCESS] is not high stakes for schools, so they can choose whether to care or not.”

Participant 8. “As much as I hate the ACCESS test, I love being able to see their scores and see how they've grown every single year.”

Participant 11. “We still need to do a better job interpreting the ACCESS and the growth of the kids. We still have work to do around that.”

Interim and Additional Assessments

Although most participants saw the ACCESS as a good measure of communicating students' language development with parents, they also discussed the desire to have more than one reliable measure of reporting that growth. As such, some districts have begun implementing interim assessments to measure students' language development throughout the year. One district reported using the MODEL as an interim assessment for secondary students, while other districts reported having created their own

formative assessments for productive domains using WIDA rubrics for Speaking and Writing.

Some participants appropriated mainstream assessments for their own purposes, including using Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) Reading and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Reading assessments to assess English learners' literacy. In addition to MCAs and MAP testing, other assessments used to measure students' academic or literacy growth include Fountas and Pinnell, the Optional Local Purpose Assessment (OLPA), FastBridge, originally titled Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST), American College Test (ACT), and ACT Compass. Although concerns were raised regarding the cultural biases of these tests and whether or not scores from these tests accurately reflect student language, participants also spoke to the difficult balance between desiring additional data on student growth and not wanting to burden English learners with additional assessments. As one participant said, "We test these kids so much. The English Learners are the most tested kids in the district for sure."

Although many participants expressed disappointment in how data from ACCESS was currently being used, there was a burgeoning hope that computerized testing being introduced with ACCESS 2.0 might be able to speed up the turnaround between test administration and the availability of scores. The hope was that more timely ACCESS score data could be used to impact instructional practices more immediately in the school setting. This also depends, however, on teachers and administrators receiving the requisite training needed to interpret and understand score reports.

Can Do Descriptors and Name Charts

One of the reported benefits of the ACCESS test is being able to group students according to language proficiency level more reliably. Participants recognized the value in using ACCESS results to differentiate instruction both in stand-alone ELD classes and in inclusive mainstream classes. Towards that goal, many participants reported using the Can Do Descriptors as a tool to help both EL teachers and mainstream content teachers better understand student abilities and needs. WIDA's Name Charts, which include space to write in student names alongside Can Do Descriptors were also identified by many participants as a helpful tool for communicating information on student abilities at a classroom level. Although some districts reported that the Can Do Descriptors and Name Charts have provided a meaningful place to begin conversations about differentiation, many districts also expressed doubt over the extent to which these resources were actually being used in the classroom setting.

Participant Responses: Can Do Descriptors

The comments below illustrate the range of implementation of the Can Do Descriptors across multiple school settings.

Participant 1. "The Can Do's, they [EL teachers] have been doing that since day one. They feel like they can go to teachers and explain to them, 'This is what a student can do'."

Participant 2. "As far as the Can Do Descriptors go, one year I did make copies of those and send those out to teachers at the beginning of the year [...] But I only did it the

one year because I feel like they got set aside or tossed in the trash and nobody really used them or looked at them anyway.”

Participant 4. “I do think Can Do Descriptors have helped people in this building, but I think it’s something they get and then put aside.”

Participant 7. “[Can Do Descriptors] is more of a framework. Unlike some districts that are really digging into that and applying it to particular classes, for us, it is more of a guiding document.”

Participant 12. “We have used mainly the Can Do Descriptors as a jumping off point for conversations with EL teachers, but also for mainstream teachers.”

Model Performance Indicators

The foundation of the WIDA Standards framework is differentiating instruction and assessment based on student ability. Once student levels are identified and student abilities at those levels are understood, the next step is to begin the process of transforming content area standards into MPIs. MPIs are the backbone of the WIDA Standards Framework, but they were also reported by participants as the most problematic aspect of the entire framework. Use of MPIs in the districts interviewed ranged from no use at all to extensive writing and integration efforts tied to other Minnesota state standards. Efforts to write MPIs did have some correspondance to the incidence of the English learner population within each district. Although teachers at all three low incidence schools were knowledgeable about MPIs and the process of writing an MPI, they reported that no work was being done to systematically write MPIs within the district. Teachers and coordinators at districts with mid to high incidence populations

of English learners reported varying degrees of success related to implementation of MPIs.

Participant Responses: Challenges with MPIs

Many participants spoke at great length regarding the challenges related to MPI writing and their use in the classroom. The following interview comments highlight some of those challenges.

Participant 1. “MPI writing is really stressful for my teachers. They’re worried about that.”

Participant 2. “There is an infinite number of MPIs that could be written, so to write out any of them to me feels a little pointless, because they’re not necessarily the same ones, or really unlikely that they’re going to be the same ones I would use next year with a different group of students or with the same group of students moving on to something new. [...] I know that some districts were going through the effort of writing down different MPIs that go with all the content standards. I think that is enormously time consuming and not even remotely realistic for a [limited staff].”

Participant 5. “I don’t know much about using the MPIs, just because I haven’t had much exposure to it and it kind of gets ignored [...] From what I’ve seen it’s complicated [...] and there’s a lot of pieces to it. You have to know how they all fit together and it seems like once you know how to use them they can be very effective, but we’re nowhere near that.”

Participant 8. “The District has an MPI team, so they’re paying for that and whether it’s being used in classes, it’s hard to say. I’m not using them. I attempt to, but like I said,

in the end, it just gets [to be] too much, with how much we have to do. [...] Doing a generic MPI that is supposed to be accessible to everyone in the district is unrealistic.”

Participant 12. “We did a fair amount of work in MPI writing. What we wound up seeing is that it wasn’t necessarily used. What we found is it is a really good framework for talking about tiering the instruction, but whether or not it’s gone into practice, I’m not going to say that that’s been the case.”

Participant Responses: Successes with MPIs

In spite of the challenges, some participants did identify successes related to MPI writing. These successes were largely centered on the use of MPIs as a tool for supporting instruction that is tiered, or differentiated, for students at different proficiency levels.

Participant 7. “Really what the MPI process is and what the standards are about is what the students experience during the day.”

Participant 9. “They’re not perfect [...] but they’re a start.”

Participant 12. “We’ve noticed it has been a good place for conversation about what mediating or differentiating instruction would look like. So while the teachers may not actually write MPIs for their lessons or units, it has named supports and language expectations for us in our conversations. It sort of brought those conversations up.”

Questions Regarding MPIs

The process of writing MPIs raised a number of questions about the process of transforming content standards. Are MPIs intended to be written for all content standards or are they intended primarily as a practice tool for establishing leveled differentiation

into the mindset of EL and content teachers? If MPIs are intended to be written across curriculum, how is that endeavor to be accomplished at low-incidence districts where one teacher may work across multiple content and grade levels or even across multiple schools? Does the value of transformative standards come from the end product or from the process of creating that product?

Sources of Training on WIDA Framework

One of the struggles identified by several participants was a lack of appropriate training to engage in the MPI writing process, or in the standards implementation process in general. There were four primary sources of training identified by participants: consultants/trainers, conferences, professional networking, and district trainings.

Consultants and Trainers

The use of consultants or trainers was identified by several districts as a way to train teachers in the basics of the WIDA framework. Some consultants were hired directly from WIDA. Other sources of consultants or trainers include the Metro Educational Cooperative Service Unit (Metro ECSU) or the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL). In addition to supporting districts in understanding WIDA resources, outside consultants also provided guidance in programming decisions and in instructional practices including co-teaching and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). Participants identified several challenges in working with consultants. The most widespread being the cost. In addition to the cost, participants also reported that some WIDA trainers were disconnected from the classroom and unable to provide training that was in touch with teacher needs.

Conferences

Within Minnesota, conferences have been a primary source of training for many districts and their teachers. Prior to fall of 2014, Minnesota had both a fall and spring conference for EL teachers, sponsored by MinneTESOL and by MDE respectively. In fall of 2014, those conferences were combined into a single conference now known as the Minnesota English Learner Education Conference (MELED). For participants in low-incidence districts, these conferences were the primary source of their training and education in WIDA. In larger, urban districts with their own district-sponsored EL trainings, attendance at EL conferences is based largely on teacher initiative. Several mid-incidence suburban schools also reported sending EL teachers or administrators to national WIDA or TESOL conferences.

Professional Networking

Several participants also identified professional networks or advisory groups as an invaluable source of education related to WIDA implementation. A number of districts reported being involved with advisory groups or cross-district professional networks. These networks provide participants with an opportunity to discuss how EL programming varies across districts and how districts are using WIDA assessments and resources.

District Trainings

In districts with larger English learner populations, district leaders facilitated on-site trainings for their EL teachers and other staff. In districts with low-incidence populations, participants did not report district-led trainings with a focus on English learners. Several participants did mention, however, that new provisions in Minnesota's Learning for

English Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPs) Act may make such trainings more common even in districts with lower English learner populations. The LEAPs Act, passed in 2014, includes requirements for improved teacher preparation and professional development related to English learners.

Audience for WIDA Training

The interview questions also sought to ascertain the audiences receiving targeted training in standards implementation work. Participants were asked about training specific to EL teachers, content teachers, associate educators and administrators.

EL Teachers

Interview participants reported varied levels of training for EL teachers. In some districts, EL teachers receive minimal training on WIDA Standards. There was no correlation between amount of training offered to EL teachers and the size of the English learner population. Likewise, there was no correlation with the geographic location of the district. Training for EL teachers seems to depend greatly on EL leadership and district priorities. All EL teachers receive yearly training in ACCESS administration, although this learning is often self-directed. Many participants made mention of a two-day training hosted by WIDA soon after Minnesota joined the WIDA Consortium. Follow-up after this training varied greatly from district to district. Some districts do hold on-going training for their EL teachers, although the focus is not always on WIDA.

In districts that have maintained a strong focus on WIDA implementation, the progression of training went from understanding proficiency levels and test administration to using the Can Do Descriptors and Name Charts and finally to

understanding the MPIs and transforming their own district content standards into written MPIs. This progression did not happen within a single year, but rather over multiple years. In other districts, the push towards collaboration with content teachers has been accompanied by a reduction in the amount of professional development offered specifically for EL teachers. As a result, some EL teachers have limited knowledge of WIDA beyond proficiency levels and test administration.

Table 4.1

Sample Progression of Trainings for WIDA Standards Implementation

Year One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training EL Teachers in Administration of WIDA Assessments: ACCESS for ELLs and W-APT and/or MODEL • Training EL Teachers, Administrators and Office Staff to Understand Student Levels and Score Reports 	Ongoing Analysis of WIDA Score Reports	Ongoing Efforts to Differentiate Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment for English Learners
Year Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training EL Teachers to Understand and Use Can Do Descriptors and Name Charts • Training Some Content Teachers to Understand and Use Can Do Descriptors and Name Charts 		
Year Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training EL Teachers to Understand and Use MPIs • Training Some Content Teachers to Understand and Use MPIs 		

Content Teachers

Exposure to WIDA for content teachers was reported at a much smaller range. Only five participants reported some degree of training for content teachers. For those districts, training was often limited to a general overview of WIDA levels and Can Do Descriptors. Although some schools have provided this general overview to their entire staff, for most, content teacher training in WIDA has been held only for those in co-teaching partnerships or for those who voluntarily elect to come. A sample progression for trainings related to WIDA Standards implementation for both EL teachers and content teachers can be found in Table 4.1.

Associate Educators

In some districts, associate educators, educational assistants or paraprofessionals assist EL teachers in providing service and support to English learners. Interview questions sought to ascertain to what degree these individuals have been trained to understand WIDA and its use in differentiating support based on levels. Results of the interview revealed that the use of associate educators in programs varies from district to district. Many districts do not use associate educators in their EL programming. Those that do use associate educators do not often provide training. Only one participant reported having associate educators that had been trained in understanding WIDA levels and Can Do Descriptors.

Administrators

Most participants felt that exposure was the best way to describe administrative knowledge of WIDA Standards. Because the ACCESS test is a required test, the use of

ACCESS data has been a natural starting point for communicating information about WIDA to administrators. Some districts have brought administrators together to analyze WIDA scores with EL teachers, but that type of intentional dialogue was often isolated. In spite of limited training, participants reported that administrators were generally supportive of EL programs.

Early Childhood Educators

In addition to WIDA's K-12 ELD standards, there is also a specific set of language development standards for children from two and a half to five and a half years of age. Although Early Childhood educators were not specifically addressed in questions, several districts did mention Early Childhood as an audience of specific, targeted training related to WIDA Standards.

Implementation Teams and Committees

Implementation science has demonstrated that leadership is one of the key drivers in the implementation process. During the interview, each participant was asked who was responsible for overseeing and guiding the implementation process for WIDA Standards. Although the districts which reported the highest degree of implementation did have clear teams or committees dedicated to WIDA Standards work, having a committee or a team was itself not a sufficient predictor of progress in the implementation process.

Research Questions Revisited

There were three main questions this study sought to address. The first was, "What are districts doing to implement the ELD standards?" This research has shown, first and foremost, that most districts do not have formal implementation plans. EL

teachers and coordinators have introduced elements of WIDA Standards into their practice in a relatively predictable manner. Training in WIDA assessments like ACCESS and W-APT is followed by an introduction to Can Do Descriptors and Name Charts. For some districts, familiarization with WIDA levels and assessments remains the extent of implementation. For others, implementation moved on to the transformation of content standards through the intentional creation of MPIs.

The second major research question was, “What actions or strategies have been most effective in the process of implementing the ELD standards?” Districts that reported the highest degree of implementation were able to articulate intentional steps in their roll-out of WIDA. These districts often formed committees or brought in consultants to deliver training around WIDA in a more purposeful way. Progress in implementation also seemed to be correlated to a specific mindset whereby WIDA was viewed as a scaffold for differentiation. When viewed as a guide for enhancing practice and communicating student needs with content teachers and administrators, the sometimes overwhelming scope of the WIDA Standards seemed to become more manageable.

The third and final research question was, “What actions or strategies have been least effective in the process of implementing the ELD standards?” Implementation seemed to be derailed by a number of different factors in different districts. In all of the districts with low incidence English learner populations, implementation did not progress beyond the basics of WIDA. This could be attributable to a lack of resources, both fiscal and human. Low incidence districts do not typically have access to Title III funds given to districts to support EL programming unless they formed a consortium, and even then,

staffing numbers were often prohibitive for creating written MPIs on a scale that would benefit all learners. In districts with higher numbers of English learners, implementation was least successful when districts prioritized other initiatives over WIDA or when training was not tailored or presented in such a way to be relevant to the daily needs of teachers.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the results of my research into WIDA Standards. Participant interviews provided a significant body of data that reflected a variety of attitudes and practices related to WIDA Standards implementation. Although districts with lower incidence English learner populations tended to report more limited efforts and success with implementation, districts with higher incidence populations did not always report success in the implementation process. The heterogeneous nature of EL programming, including program service models, student demographics and program leadership all made it difficult to compare implementation efforts across districts. The following chapter will summarize the major findings of this research along with implications for those involved in implementation work. The limitations of this study will be identified along with recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The motivation to conduct this research was based on my own observations of the struggles to implement WIDA Standards in across different school settings. Chapter One introduced the differences between content and language standards and set the stage for investigating the complexities involved with implementing transformative language standards. Chapter Two presented a review of key literature related to the evaluation of language standards and the growing field of implementation science. Chapter Three identified the qualitative research paradigm and described the methods of my study. Chapter Four described the results of my research through an analysis of participant interviews. The fifth and final chapter presents some of the most notable findings of my research along with limitations and recommendations for future study.

Notable Findings

It is clear from this research that the implementation of WIDA Standards varies considerably across districts and even within districts. Although the incidence of English learner populations is somewhat correlated to implementation efforts, the success of implementation seems to be more connected to factors that were not studied in this research, including staff buy-in and program leadership. In spite of the difficulty in quantifying the success of WIDA Standards implementation, this research has highlighted an important gap in statewide implementation efforts.

Just as teachers can become isolated in their own classrooms, so too can districts become isolated in their own understandings of what WIDA Standards are and how to effectively use them in supporting student needs. The major conclusions of this research address that gap by initiating dialogue on what the implementation of WIDA Standards means for districts in Minnesota, the role that assessment plays alongside performance definitions, and how all of this work can be connected to state content standards through curriculum integration and training.

Defining ELD Standards

The greatest consensus across interviews was that WIDA Standards really are not like standards at all. Content standards like the CCSS and NGSS are specific to certain content areas and well-defined. There is also a strong tendency to assign responsibility for standards to the department under which they fall. This does not work with WIDA Standards. Although WIDA Standards are designed to support English learners, they are not designed to be used solely in stand-alone ELD classes. In fact, WIDA Standards are designed to be used across content areas, not isolated in EL classes. In the general educational understanding, using the phrase “ELD Standards” is a misnomer, placing responsibility for the standards only on EL teachers when the scope of the WIDA framework extends to all content teachers within a school. Based on participant comments during research interviews, WIDA Standards should be viewed less as standards and more as a framework.

Implementation

Even though implementation of WIDA Standards is required in Minnesota, there has been limited guidance for what that process looks like in specific district settings. As discussed earlier, MDE did produce a set of guidelines for implementation, but these guidelines are relatively general and do not take into account the diverse factors that can impact the effectiveness of implementation, including student demographics, English learner populations, program staffing and other initiatives in place. MDE's identification of multiple audiences for the implementation framework and self-evaluation lends flexibility to the implementation process. That flexibility, however, creates ambiguity surrounding who should be responsible for guiding implementation.

Assessment

Assessments are an essential part of the WIDA Standards framework because they provide a way to reliably determine student levels. Those levels are important for communicating student abilities and needs to parents and content teachers. For most districts, understanding the assessment components of WIDA was often the first step in the implementation process. In addition to being trained to administer WIDA assessments, EL staff must also be trained to interpret student score reports. Ideally, this training should be expanded to include administrators and office staff as well because student levels are an essential component of student placement. School administrators and office staff should have a broad understanding of the EL program model in use and how that affects incoming student placement, staffing and program funding. More

research is also needed to determine whether or not the ACCESS for ELLs assessment has greater predictive validity related to academic achievement across all content areas.

Can Do Descriptors

In the multi-faceted WIDA Standards framework, the Can Do Descriptors seem to be the most accessible for EL teachers, content teachers and administrators alike. For districts seeking to begin intentional implementation of WIDA Standards, training both EL teachers and content teachers to use Can Do Descriptors is an important step in that process. After WIDA assessments have been used to determine student levels, the Can Do Descriptors, along with the WIDA Name Charts, provide a straightforward way for teachers in all subject areas to understand student abilities. The Can Do Descriptors allow teachers to see clearly what students need to work towards to reach the next level of proficiency.

For lower-incidence districts that have had limited success implementing the Can Do Descriptors, training should focus on Can Do Descriptors as a means of communicating results to teachers and parents. In order for teachers to be able to effectively differentiate instruction and assessment for English learners, teachers must first understand what level students are at. Differentiation should be happening across all content areas, not just in dedicated EL classes. As such, school administrators must make it a priority to give EL teachers time to gather and analyze student scores as well as time to communicate these results with content teachers.

Model Performance Indicators

The use of MPIs is the most controversial element of WIDA Standards implementation. Many districts have not even embarked on training related to MPIs because of the perceived cost involved in comprehensive writing efforts. Other districts have chosen to view MPIs more as a model for differentiation and not as a necessary component of the implementation process. For the districts that have undertaken writing efforts, the actual use of those MPIs at the classroom level is still open to question. Based on this research, it is unclear whether or not writing MPIs aligned to district curriculum has a quantitative impact on student achievement. Because of this and because of observable uncertainty in the implementation process, it is therefore up to each district to decide for themselves whether MPIs are to be used only as guides for differentiation or whether MPIs will be written and aligned with curriculum across grade levels and content areas.

Training

Training is a key component of successful implementation efforts. With all of the initiatives happening in a given district, staff development time is often at a premium. For implementation of WIDA Standards to be sustainable, some of this development time must be set aside for understanding the needs of English learners and how those needs can be addressed through appropriate differentiation. There also needs to be a balance of training for EL teachers and content teachers. In both rural and urban districts, EL teachers are often paired with content teams for professional development. In many ways, this pairing makes sense. Language acquisition strategies should be embedded in

curriculum across all content areas. This type of intentional, cross-curricular collaboration is necessary in creating a robust instructional program that supports students. This combined staff development, however, should not be done at the expense of dedicated professional development specific for EL teachers. The WIDA Standards framework is grounded in second language acquisition theory and provides EL teachers with an opportunity to be experts in the school community. In addition to combined training with content teachers, districts should ensure that EL teachers are receiving the specialized training they need to be able to support content teachers and administrators in their understanding of WIDA Standards.

Role of EL Teacher

A final notable finding of this study was the significance of implementing WIDA Standards in relation to the role of the EL teacher. With the diversity of program models for English learners, some EL teachers have found themselves in less than ideal professional situations. When EL teachers are relegated to the back of the classroom in co-teaching partnerships or isolated as an interventionist, the expertise of our profession is lost. In spite of the challenges involved in implementation, WIDA Standards give a voice to EL professionals. As one participant succinctly reported, WIDA Standards offer EL teachers a “pathway to professionalism.” If districts become more intentional about how they use WIDA resources, EL teachers will become leaders in their school communities. The role of an EL teacher will expand beyond supporting students in language classes and content classes to supporting other teachers and administrators in

understanding and addressing the needs of English learners through a school-wide system of supports.

Limitations

As with all research studies, there are certain limitations to the research and succeeding results of this study. To begin with, although the participants involved in this study did represent districts from a variety of geographic locations, student demographics, and incidence of English learners, the sample size is still relatively small considering there are over 300 public school districts in the state of Minnesota. These districts include over 2,400 individual schools, each of which has its own unique culture, climate and leadership which can dramatically affect the implementation process.

Additionally, in speaking with both EL teachers and coordinators, it is clear that one individual cannot always provide sufficient detail on all aspects of implementation within a district. EL teachers can provide great insight into how WIDA is being used on a daily basis in the classroom, but do not always know the timeline for implementation the district has in mind. EL coordinators were able to identify more concretely the steps that were taken to introduce WIDA to staff, but were not always able to speak to exactly what was happening in classrooms. Speaking to a different individual within the same district could yield a much different perspective about what is working with WIDA and what is not.

Finally, although the semi-structured nature of the interview yielded a wealth of data around EL programming and the use of WIDA Standards in participant districts, the scope of this research made it difficult to dive more deeply into the specific factors that

affected implementation. My research was able to identify the degree to which WIDA Standards were being used in different districts and identify several key factors that influenced implementation but a concrete analysis of exactly how each factor impacted the implementation process would require deeper knowledge of each district's program framework along with a more structured interview that would allow for more symmetrical comparison of program efforts.

Implications for Teachers and Administrators

The results of this study suggest that additional conversations need to be had between and within districts. First, discussions within districts must take place to determine if WIDA Standards will be used solely to support an asset-based mindset for differentiation, if the standards will be used to guide intensive MPI writing aligned to district curriculum or if implementation will fall somewhere between those extremes. Without any precise requirements for implementation within a specific district, these extremes represent the conceivable boundaries in which implementation is both necessarily compliant and within the capacity of local educational agencies.

Secondly, it would also be advisable for teachers and administrators to begin conversations with other districts to share implementation strategies and successes. Through this research, it has become clear that many districts have questions about how to best implement WIDA and take advantage of its many resources. Opening lines of communication with other districts will help to establish a network that can be called upon to answer those questions without unnecessary reinvention. Professional networking

will also help to establish a culture of collective learning whereby resources are shared and best practices can be generated and communicated across districts.

Successful implementation of WIDA Standards also necessitates that districts understand the basics of the implementation process. According to implementation science, successful implementation of any intervention goes through multiple stages and depends on multiple drivers. Although implementation efforts had been initiated at most of the districts interviewed, those efforts often stagnated and districts became stuck in the first three stages of implementation. For those that did not progress to full implementation, the stagnation can be attributable in large part to a lack of effective implementation drivers. When those implementation drivers are missing, it is easy for implementation work to break down. Participants identified competency drivers like training and coaching as an essential but often neglected aspect of WIDA implementation. A two-day workshop with no follow-up is not adequate to create sustainable change in the school environment. To fully support the academic language development of English learners, teachers and other staff need training and coaching that is on-going with immediate and practical classroom applications. Leadership drivers were also frequently reported as absent. Clearly dedicated leadership is necessary to make the organizational changes necessary to support implementation. For comprehensive integration of WIDA standards across content areas, leadership for WIDA Standards implementation should include content teacher and administrators in addition to EL teachers and coordinators.

Implementation of WIDA Standards needs to be done with intentionality. If districts want to create an environment that is both appropriately scaffolded and rigorous for our English learners it is imperative that they recognize the role WIDA can play in accomplishing those goals. With great diversity in the roles of EL teachers across districts, WIDA creates a pathway for professionalism. It standardizes language across classrooms and schools and lends clarity to the complex field of language acquisition. It is no longer enough to know about WIDA Standards; EL teachers and administrators must also go to work intentionally implementing the standards in their local setting.

Suggestions for Future Study

One of the significant findings of this study was that low incidence schools have predictably low levels of WIDA implementation. A future study might do a case analysis of a low incidence school. A case analysis would allow the researcher to delve more deeply into the specific factors that set the stage for successful implementation in such schools. Additional research could focus on how perspectives on implementation vary within a district, involving interviews that expand beyond just EL teachers and coordinators to include content teachers and administrators as well, much like Westerlund's (2014) case study of a charter school. WIDA Standards are not designed to be used in isolation within EL programs; including the perspectives of those outside of the EL program could provide a more objective measure of how implementation functions across subject areas.

Dissemination of Results

One of the major goals of this research was to identify effective strategies for the implementation of WIDA Standards. My hope is that the results and findings of this study will guide EL teachers and coordinators who find themselves and their districts at various stages of the implementation process. The results of this study will be shared with each of the interview participants. A presentation proposal will be submitted for upcoming local EL conferences, and I also plan on submitting a written review of research findings to the local professional journal.

Reflection

As teachers, we are often so busy with our own classrooms, schools and districts that we miss out on the opportunity to learn from others about what is working and what is not working. Unsuccessful efforts are duplicated unnecessarily and opportunities for additional growth are lost to lack of knowledge. I truly enjoyed this research because it offered me a window into the lives and practices of EL teachers and coordinators across the state of Minnesota. I heard amazing stories of progress and growth in EL programming in the face of a multitude of equally important, attention-seeking initiatives. My sincerest gratitude goes out to the twelve individuals who so graciously shared their stories and perspectives with me. I wish my research would have been able to identify more concretely the steps needed for successful implementation of WIDA Standards, but I am hopeful that my findings will open a much-needed dialogue of how we can work across districts to meet the needs of English learners in our state.

REFERENCES

- American Federation of Teachers. (2010). Making standards work for English language learners. *American Teacher*, 95(3), 10.
- Bailey, A. L., & Huang, B. H. (2011). Do current English language development/proficiency standards reflect the English needed for success in school? *Language Testing*, 28(3), 343-365. doi:10.1177/0265532211404187
- Cloud, N. (2000). Incorporating ESL Standards into teacher education programs: Ideas for teacher education. In M.A. Snow (Ed.), *Implementing the ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students through teacher education* (pp. 1-32). Alexandria, VA: TESOL.
- Coleman, R. (2006). *The role of school districts in the selection and support of English language development programs and approaches*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (304975045).
- Echevarria, J., Short, D., & Powers, K. (2006). School reform and standards-based education: A model for English-language learners. *Journal of Educational Research*, 99(4), 195-210. doi:10.3200/JOER.99.4.195-211
- Fixsen, D. L., & Blase, K. A. (2009). *Implementation: The missing link between research and practice*. (NIRN Implementation Brief No. 1). Retrieved from National Implementation Research Network website: <http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/>

implementation/missing-link-between-research-and-practice

Fixsen, D.L., Naoom, S.F., Blase, K.A., Friedman, R.M. & Wallace, F. (2005).

Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature. (FMHI Publication #231).

Retrieved from National Implementation Research Network website:

<http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/implementation-resources-synthesis-literature>

Gomez, E. (2000). A history of the ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students. In M.A. Snow

(Ed.), *Implementing the ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students through teacher education* (pp. 49-74). Alexandria, VA: TESOL.

Hakuta, K., Santos, M., & Fang, Z. (2013). Challenges and opportunities for language

learning in the context of the CCSS and the NGSS. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 56(6), 451–454. doi:10.1002/JAAL.164

Heer, R. (2012). *A Model of learning objectives*. Retrieved from Center for Excellence

in Learning and Teaching, Iowa State University Website: [http:// www.celt.iastate.edu/pdfs-docs/teaching/RevisedBloomsHandout.pdf](http://www.celt.iastate.edu/pdfs-docs/teaching/RevisedBloomsHandout.pdf)

Hirsch, E. D. Jr. (2003). Reading comprehension requires knowledge of words and of the

world: Scientific insights into the fourth-grade slump and stagnant reading comprehension. *American Educator*, 27(1), 10-13, 16-22, 28-29, 48.

Hollingsworth, J. & Ybarra, S. (2013). *Explicit direct instruction for English learners*.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Iowa State University of Science and Technology. (2015). [Table of Cognitive Process

and Knowledge Dimensions]. *Bloom's Revised Taxonomy*. Retrieved from

<http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching-resources/effective-practice/revised-blooms-taxonomy/blooms-model-text/>

Jesness, J. (2004). *Teaching English language learners: A quick-start guide for the new teacher*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Karlsson, A.K. (2015). [Transcripts of interviews with participants 1-12]. Unpublished raw data.

Lee, N. (2012). *District readiness to implement standards-based reform for English language learners a decade after the No Child Left Behind Act (2001)*. (WCER Working Paper No. 2012-4). Retrieved from University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin Center for Education Research website: <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/publications/workingpapers/papers.php#W12>

Lee, O., Quinn, H., & Valdés, G. (2013). Science and language for English language learners in relation to Next Generation Science Standards and with implications for Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics. *Educational Researcher*, 42(4), 223-233. doi:10.3102/0013189X13480524

Llosa, L. (2011). Standards-based classroom assessments of English proficiency: A review of issues, current developments, and future directions for research. *Language Testing*, 28(3), 367-382. doi:10.1177/0265532211404188

Martin-Beltrán, M., & Peercy, M. M. (2012). How can ESOL and mainstream teachers make the best of a standards-based curriculum in order to collaborate? *TESOL Journal*, 3(3), 425-444. doi:10.1002/tesj.23

- McKay, S. L. (2006). *Researching second language classrooms*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Minnesota Department of Education (n.d.). *English language development standards implementation: A stage-based features document for district leaders engaged in academic content standards and English language development standards implementation and curriculum development*. Retrieved from <https://wida.us/membership/states/Minnesota.aspx>
- National Implementation Research Network. (2013). [Illustration of Implementation Drivers]. *Active Implementation Hub*. Retrieved from <http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/book/export/html/134>
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Public Law 107–110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2002). Retrieved from U.S. Department of Education website: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>
- Pearson, P. D., & Hiebert, E. H. (2013). Understanding the Common Core State Standards. In L. M. Morrow, K. K. Wixson, & T. Shanahan (Eds.), *Teaching with the Common Core Standards for English language arts grades 3-5*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. (4th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. (1997). *ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (2013). [Illustration of Implementation Stages]. *FPG Child Development Institute*. Retrieved from <http://sisep.fpg.unc.edu/guidebook/level-one/stages-implementation>

Westerlund, R.A. (2014). *Lost in translation: A descriptive case study of a K-5 urban charter school implementing WIDA English Language Development Standards*. (Doctoral dissertation). Bethel University, St. Paul, MN.

WIDA. (2012). *Amplification of the English language development standards: Kindergarten – Grade 12*. Retrieved from WIDA website: <http://www.wida.us/get.aspx?id=540>

APPENDIX A

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR MODEL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Appendix A

Guiding Questions for Model Performance Indicators

GRADE: _____

ELD STANDARD:	EXAMPLE TOPIC: What is one of the topics addressed in the selected content standard(s)?
----------------------	---

CONNECTION: Which state content standards, including the Common Core, form the basis of related lessons or a unit of study? What are the essential concepts and skills embedded in the content standards? What is the language associated with these grade-level concepts and skills?

EXAMPLE CONTEXT FOR LANGUAGE USE: What is the purpose of the content work, task, or product? What roles or identities do the students assume? What register is required of the task? What are the genres of text types with which the students are interacting?

COGNITIVE FUNCTION: What is the level of cognitive engagement for the given task? Does the level of cognitive engagement match or exceed that of the content standards?						
Language Domain(s): How will learners process and use language?	Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Emerging	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging	Level 6 - Reaching
	<p>A Strand of Model Performance Indicators:</p> <p>What language are the students expected to process or produce at each level of proficiency?</p> <p>Which language functions reflect the cognitive function at each level of proficiency?</p> <p>Which instructional supports (sensory, graphic, and interactive) are necessary for students to access content?</p>					
TOPIC-RELATED LANGUAGE: With which grade-level words and expressions will all students interact?						

Adapted from *Amplification of the English Language Development Standards Kindergarten – Grade 12*, p. 15. Copyright 2012 by WIDA.

APPENDIX B

BLOOM'S REVISED TAXONOMY

Appendix B

Bloom's Revised Taxonomy

		The Knowledge Dimension			
		Factual	Conceptual	Procedural	Metacognitive
The Cognitive Process Dimension	Create	Generate	Assemble	Design	Create
	Evaluate	Check	Determine	Judge	Reflect
	Analyze	Select	Differentiate	Integrate	Deconstruct
	Apply	Respond	Provide	Carry out	Use
	Understand	Summarize	Classify	Clarify	Predict
	Remember	List	Recognize	Recall	Identify

Adapted from *Bloom's Revised Taxonomy*. Copyright 2012 by Iowa State University of Science and Technology.

APPENDIX C

WIDA STANDARDS IN MINNESOTA LAW

Appendix C

WIDA Standards in Minnesota Law

MINNESOTA RULE 3501.1200 ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Subpart 1. Application.

English learners will meet the language development standards in subparts 2 through 6.

Subpart 2. Social and instructional language.

English learners communicate for social and instructional purposes within the school setting.

Subpart 3. The language of *language arts*.

English learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of language arts.

Subpart 4. The language of *mathematics*.

English learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of mathematics.

Subpart 5. The language of *science*.

English learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of science.

Subpart 6. The language of *social studies*.

English learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of social studies.

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Appendix D

Interview Questions

For the purposes of this interview, the term “WIDA Standards” will refer to the entire standards framework, including the Can-Do descriptors, performance definitions and the transformative system of Model Performance Indicators (MPIs) that can be used across all content areas.

Demographic Questions

1. How would you describe your school/district’s EL Program?
2. Does your school/district have a program framework? If so, describe it.
3. What teaching models are used? (*pull-out, inclusion, co-teaching*)
4. Of the school/districts’ total population, approximately what percentage are English learners?
5. What are the student demographics in your EL Program? (*overall language proficiency levels, language groups, time in country, SLIFE, LTELs*)

Implementation of WIDA Standards

For the purposes of this interview, the term “implementation” will be used to refer to the process of putting the WIDA Standards into use in the school setting.

6. What has the implementation of WIDA standards looked like in your school/district?
7. Is there an individual or group of individuals responsible for overseeing the WIDA implementation process?

8. Have specific departments or content areas been included in the implementation process? Specific grade levels?
9. What has been the timeline of the implementation process?
10. Think about everything that has been involved in the implementation of WIDA Standards. Have there been additional costs associated with implementation? How have those costs been funded?

Curriculum and Assessment Connections across Content Areas

11. Is your school/district involved in the development or modification of curriculum based on WIDA Standards?
12. How is WIDA assessment information used in your school or district? (*W-APT, ACCESS, MODEL*)
13. Do you use additional assessment measures to document students' language proficiency growth?
14. Have you developed local assessments aligned with WIDA Standards?

WIDA Standards and Professional Development Activities

15. What training has been provided to those participating in WIDA implementation process in your school or district? (*for ESL teachers, content teachers, paraprofessionals/associate educators, and/or administrators*)
16. How have WIDA Standards been incorporated into building/district-sponsored professional development?
17. Are professional development sources outside of the district used to build capacity for WIDA Standards implementation?

Effectiveness of Implementation Strategies

18. What would you like to see happen with regards to WIDA Standards implementation?
19. What would an ideal EL Program look like in your school/district?
20. Do you know any other educators who have been involved in the implementation of WIDA Standards in their school or district?