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## Sheltered Secondary SLIFE and Effective Instruction

Mackenzie Burkstrand

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SHELTERED SECONDARY SLIFE AND EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

By

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

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Within the population of English language learners, there is a unique subgroup of students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). These students bring with them unique qualities to school, balancing the need for English language acquisition and learning a new culture. Through this capstone project, I sought to answer the question, *what are the key components to effective instruction to use with students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) at the secondary level?* Throughout this capstone project, the main themes that arose in research were culturally relevant instruction and trauma informed pedagogy. The information I have learned in this project has helped to develop the resource website (<https://teachingslifemn.org/>), as well as enhanced my own teaching practice as I reflect on my teaching strategies and incorporate new learnings from this project.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

The number of English Language Learners (ELLs) enrolling in public schools is continuing to grow. Among this group of students is a subgroup of students with limited or interrupted formal education, referred to as SLIFE. These students are often immigrants, refugees, or migratory workers with varied schooling experiences.

According to the *Minnesota Learning English for Academic Purposes* (LEAPS) act, a SLIFE is a student who

1. Comes from a home where the language usually spoken is other than English, or who usually speaks a language other than English.
2. Enters school in the United States after grade 6.
3. Has at least two years less schooling than the English learner's peers.
4. Functions at least two years below expected grade level in reading.
5. Functions at least two years below expected grade level in mathematics.

(Minnesota Department of Education, 2019, p. 5)

Students who meet the above criteria bring with them a unique set of needs, especially at the secondary level. Standard curriculum for mainstream students is often too difficult and standard accommodations and modifications for non-SLIFE ELLs do not entirely meet the needs of the SLIFE population. There is a gap in research-based curriculum to serve this diverse subgroup of ELLs, and this capstone project seeks to help close this gap.

This capstone project aims to answer the question, *what are the key components to effective instruction to use with students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) at the secondary level?* This chapter describes my background in secondary SLIFE education, the purpose for researching this topic, and a summary of the capstone project.

### **Personal and Professional Background**

During the 2018-2019 academic school year, I worked as a sheltered Language Arts and sheltered Math teacher to middle school SLIFE at a charter school in North Minneapolis, Minnesota. Sheltered instruction is an English Language (EL) teaching method where students are taught grade level content by an EL teacher who provides scaffolded language support at the students' English proficiency level. This type of instruction allows ELLs to develop academic language using the same grade level standards as their peers (Teaching Diverse Learners, 2019). This classroom consisted of twelve Somali American students who fit the state criteria for being identified as SLIFE by Minnesota State Statute 124D.59, Subdivision 2a. Some students were new to the country, having recently resettled from East Africa, while all students had a range of limited or interrupted formal education. Language Arts and Math instruction were provided in 70-minute blocks five days per week in this classroom. This was my first true teaching job where I was the sole instructor responsible for the creation of lessons, choice in materials, assessments of knowledge, and adherence to school and state standards.

Despite being the only instructor for this course, I was not alone in my efforts to teach this class. Working on an EL team of seven other teachers and one EL coordinator,

there were many knowledgeable colleagues with whom to collaborate. The EL coordinator provided significant assistance in regards to instruction methods, best teaching practices, and classroom management. The EL coordinator was always available to be a sounding board to new lesson ideas, provide advice when challenging situations arose, and to provide constructive feedback so I could better my practice. I am thankful to have had her support during my first classroom teaching experience. Another source of support during this time teaching SLIFE was my Hamline University student teaching supervisor. My supervisor was always willing to talk through lesson plan ideas, but most importantly she went above and beyond what was required of her and provided observations and feedback more times than Hamline requires. She was truly invested in helping me become a better teacher, and I learned an immense amount in the semester that she was my guide.

It is also worth noting that my own personal schooling experiences were vastly different from my students'. I went through school as a monolingual, native English speaking student. My mother was a teacher and, as a result, I was encouraged to read and develop my literacy and academic language skills outside of school. Knowing that my schooling experience was different than that of my students, I constantly reflect on the classroom experience I am creating for my students. I seek to view my students and classroom with a holistic view, making sure to fully support students academically and socially.

In addition to my personal school experience, the support and compassion that I was shown while beginning my teaching career has also impacted the ways in which I

work with my own students. During my time student teaching, I was often overwhelmed with the amount of work and all of the teaching practices I was trying to implement as I transitioned from graduate student to middle school teacher. Both my student teaching supervisor and ELL coordinator approached my practice without judgment. Now, in my teaching practice and new teaching role, I remember how it felt to be overwhelmed, anxious, and nervous in a classroom setting. I currently have transitioned to teaching at a high school as a teacher in a program called the language academy, which serves students new to the country and students who are identified as SLIFE. I work to meet my students with compassion and empathy as they work through their own academic challenges of being English learners in a rigorous high school setting. I strive to be an adult they can come to with both academic concerns and celebrations.

During my time as a middle school teacher, I learned about my school and students while developing relationships with students and a passion for helping them close gaps in their education so they could reach grade level proficiency as soon as possible, ultimately opening doors to more college and career choices. Fostering relationships and earning trust between students and myself, I always advocated on their behalf so that they could receive the support they deserved. Learning about their lives and hearing the connections they could make from their unique backgrounds to the learning material was a joy. One of my favorite memories occurred while we were discussing a short, fictional text about a blackout in New York City. While reading about the main character who could finally see stars due to the blackout, I asked if anyone had experienced a blackout before. Expecting to receive stories about blown fuses or

Minnesota summer thunderstorms, I received anecdotes of students playing outside with their friends in Africa, all told with a glimmer in the eyes of students usually unwilling to speak up in class.

That lesson was successful because the content was relevant to their lives and age level, appropriate time to plan an engaging lesson and discussion around the text was available, and students were making real life connections. It is this type of lesson that I hope for teachers to have every day with their SLIFE. However, age appropriate and culturally relevant texts for secondary ELLs are hard to come by. Finding materials that are in their zone of proximal development, but are also relevant to their cultural experiences and age in school is difficult. Additionally, there are specific teaching strategies that are most effective with SLIFE, and this information is not always readily available for teachers.

Teaching middle school SLIFE, I quickly realized the sense of urgency that teachers feel when teaching this population of students. At the middle school level, they are just a year or two away from entering high school, where 9.3% of ELs in Minnesota drop out, according to the English Learner Education in Minnesota Report (2018, p. 25). At the high school level, they have higher education and careers on the horizon. I felt a sense of urgency and passion for developing lessons that would be effective in helping them to become successful students and young adults. Despite the support received from the ELL coordinator and Hamline supervisor, one of the biggest obstacles to achieving these goals was the lack of age appropriate and culturally relevant materials for SLIFE at the secondary level.

Instructing SLIFE brings its own unique set of challenges to the English Language classroom. One major challenge I faced as a sheltered Language Arts and sheltered Math teacher to SLIFE was the lack of age appropriate and culturally relevant teaching materials. My seventh and eighth grade students were all reading at a third grade or lower reading level, but they had no desire to pick up the many children's books that were housed in our shared EL classroom. Yet, if they chose a middle school level chapter book, they would quickly become bored and disinterested out of frustration for not being able to read and comprehend that book. Secondary SLIFE are at a unique point in their education because they are aware that they are academically behind their grade level peers. They are often caught between being motivated to learn and catch up to their peers and not wanting the attached stigma of reading low or beginner leveled books.

For example, while working with two seventh grade students at a first grade reading level, I experienced the difficulty of needing to develop literacy skills with relevant materials. The materials that were available were geared towards elementary students developing literacy skills. My students needed practice, but were not motivated by the childish materials that were at their reading level. Each group time was concluded with read aloud from a chapter book of their choosing. During this read aloud time, the students were engaged and asking thoughtful and meaningful questions about the text. They were much more invested in their chosen literary material because it was relevant to their age and culture and they were able to make connections with their previous background experiences.

Many different strategies were tried to provide interesting and engaging reading materials for the students. Some of these strategies included group read alouds where students could follow along with teacher guidance to stop and explain concepts or vocabulary, printing current event articles at their lexile and interest level, and typing children's books in word documents to appear more mature in content. However, I ultimately felt frustrated at the difficulty in finding materials to use in the classroom. Too much energy was being spent scouring the internet for the right texts, leaving time constraints on the ability to put that energy into an engaging and effective lesson plan to teach with the text. Week after week, feelings of frustration and confusion arose as lessons were not engaging and effective enough yet little to no free resources were available to SLIFE teachers.

Another challenge of working with SLIFE was the lack of preparation for this unique group of students. Although some teacher preparation coursework encouraged teachers to consider this group of students in their classroom, there was no time or resources devoted to this large and growing population of secondary ELs fitting into the SLIFE category at the University or professional development level of the school. This project will aim to provide teaching strategies, general information about the SLIFE population and educational policy, and literature supporting best SLIFE teaching practices in order for teachers to be better prepared for working with SLIFE.

### **Overview of Project**

Research for this capstone project focused on reviewing the current best practices for teaching sheltered SLIFE classes and determining the key components that are

necessary for an effective sheltered secondary SLIFE class. In collaboration with my colleague, we created a website (<https://teachingslifemn.org/>) for SLIFE teachers to access information regarding teaching strategies, ways to prepare for SLIFE in the classroom, and how to incorporate families into the SLIFE school experience. The vision was for this website to have information for new teachers to SLIFE through instructional strategies from researchers in the field. This website provides teachers a place to find best practice teaching strategies, current law and policies affecting SLIFE, ways to engage SLIFE families, and a space to collaborate with other SLIFE educators.

In current literature regarding the needs of SLIFE, there is a lot of research available supporting and emphasizing the importance of teaching foundational literacy skills. The lack of literacy skills that SLIFE students enter school with is a key difference between SLIFE and non-SLIFE ELLs. While teaching foundational literacy skills is an important aspect of SLIFE education, this capstone project will just briefly address this need. The focus of this project is other factors that impact SLIFE, such as trauma, culturally relevant instruction, and additional critical considerations for SLIFE.

This project benefits the SLIFE ELL teachers serve. These students deserve to have culturally relevant, age appropriate instructional strategies that match their needs. By having more research supported teaching strategies available to SLIFE teachers, students will be getting lessons from teachers who have more time to individualize and scaffold each lesson and collaborate with mainstream content teachers. All of this has the potential to result in a better and more relevant academic experience, and help seamlessly transition the students into mainstream classrooms as they progress through school.

This chapter provided an introduction to the research question, *what are the key components to effective instruction to use with students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) at the secondary level?* I provided background information on my experience teaching middle school SLIFE, while also providing a rationale as to why this research is necessary in the EL field. My capstone project aims to provide a website with information regarding teaching strategies for the SLIFE classroom, benefiting teachers, students, and the larger EL community. In chapter two, the literature surrounding SLIFE education best practices is thoroughly discussed and reviewed. Chapter three provides a description of the SLIFE resource website, going into detail the different components of the website and how they benefit teachers in the EL field. The fourth and final chapter concludes the project by discussing the success of the project as well as determining its use in the future.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Introduction

Chapter two of this capstone presents and analyzes current literature in the educational field that impacts the research question, *what are the key components to effective instruction to use with students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) at the secondary level?* The chapter begins with an overview of the Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP) (DeCapua, 2016) and the best strategies for incorporating this into the SLIFE classroom. MALP is an instructional approach designed by Andrea DeCapua and Helaine W. Marshall that seeks to help SLIFE and newcomer students transition from non-traditional ways of learning to the western approach to learning and education. After reviewing the literature on MALP, the impact of trauma on SLIFE is reviewed. Many SLIFE have experienced trauma in their lives, and research shows that there are certain strategies that allow a teacher to be sensitive to the impacts trauma may bring into the classroom.

Next, the impact of the classroom environment on secondary SLIFE learning is discussed. The classroom community is an important space where students need to feel comfortable to learn, take risks, and practice English language skills. Research shows that it is imperative for the teacher to set up a space conducive to community learning and mutual respect for one another. Lastly, other critical considerations that are best practice for instructing SLIFE are analyzed, such as collaboration among teachers and home language support, and how they can be tailored to meet the needs of SLIFE. The first subtopic reviewed is the mutually adaptive learning paradigm (MALP).

## **Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm**

**Introduction.** The mutually adaptive learning paradigm (MALP) is an instructional approach designed to meet the needs of students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). DeCapua and Marshall (2011) created it to solve the issue of SLIFE arriving at school expected to perform in a western style of education, while most often having vastly different and informal experiences with education. This instructional approach seeks to help eliminate the cultural dissonance that SLIFE feel and help them to successfully transition into mainstream content classes at the secondary level.

There are two fundamental principles of MALP; “SLIFE can achieve academically” and “this is only possible through a mutually adaptive approach” (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015, p. 49). The MALP approach is centered on three different components; conditions, processes, and activities. MALP is important to this capstone project because it is the most SLIFE specific approach to EL teaching that is currently researched.

**Who are SLIFE.** Before delving into the literature around MALP, it is important to note the common characteristics of SLIFE. SLIFE are a subpopulation of students qualifying for EL services. As stated in chapter one, these students have limited or interrupted education and are performing at least two grade levels behind their peers. Although not the case for 100% of SLIFE, many identified SLIFE are newcomers, refugees, or come from migratory families according to the English Learner Education in Minnesota Report (2018, p. 4). Newcomers are students who are new to the United States, immigrating from another country. Refugees are students who are forced to leave

their home country due to persecution, war, or natural disaster. Migrant students are those who come from a migratory working family and must move due to economic necessity. Many SLIFE come from cultures that differ greatly from the dominant culture of the United States. Additionally, SLIFE often come to the United States needing intense literacy instruction and accelerated content instruction in order to graduate on time, causing an urgency on behalf of both the student and teacher (Drake, 2017). Because of some of these unique challenges that SLIFE face, the dropout rate for ELLs, and SLIFE in particular, is high. Having little to no literacy and unable to process information in the western way of showing knowledge, SLIFE often dropout before graduating from high school (DeCapua, 2016). Therefore, the stakes are high and incredibly important for SLIFE teachers to have a research-backed instructional framework to successfully help these students navigate the United States school system and ways of learning.

**Culture.** One of the main ideas from the MALP research and instructional method centers around the fact that many SLIFE come from collectivistic cultures and have difficulty navigating the individualistic nature of western education. Cultures can be identified on a spectrum, with one end being collectivistic and the other being individualistic. In a collectivistic culture, members see themselves as interdependent members of a larger group or community. They share responsibilities within their in-group. About 70% of the world's cultures can be classified as collectivistic (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). Individualistic cultures, on the other hand, are comprised of individuals who see themselves separate from any group. They have individual desires and goals (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010). This information is important for SLIFE

considerations in Minnesota because many of the EL students in Minnesota come from cultures that are typically collectivistic. According to the 2018 English Learners in Minnesota report, the top five primary home languages other than English are; Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Karen, and Vietnamese. Many of these languages are spoken in cultures that are highly collectivistic.

Similar to this continuum, cultures can be classified on a continuum of high context and low context cultures. Factors such as orientation to time and space, verbal and nonverbal messages, and social and gender roles help to determine if a culture is more high context or low context. In general, collectivistic cultures are high context while individualistic cultures are low context (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010). All of these differences in cultures are important for a SLIFE educator to understand, because they affect the way SLIFE experience school and education, and therefore teachers must take this information into account when creating a culturally responsive classroom (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010).

Traditionally, culturally responsive teaching has focused on implementing content that is representative of all student backgrounds and experiences (Drake, 2017). However, for SLIFE, teachers must also study and understand the way that cultural differences impact a student's way of learning and experiencing school. Diversity and representation in curriculum materials is important, but educators must not forget about the differences in ways of acquiring knowledge and the educational activities that must be explicitly taught (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015).

In the United States, education is largely based on scientific practices, logic, analyzing, reasoning, and developing literacy skills. Education is viewed from an academic standpoint with very little immediate relevance to the real world. SLIFE, on the other hand, have experienced informal ways of learning that have been reflective of their family and communities. Their learning has always mirrored their daily life practices (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). This type of learning stems from a pragmatic orientation to education, rather than academic orientation. Students with a pragmatic orientation to education need information to be relevant and contextualized to their lives (Drake, 2017). In general, this information about the different ways of viewing life and learning depending on cultural continuums creates a disconnect for SLIFE. Their experiences with learning are on the opposite end of the spectrum from the United States school experience. This challenge of trying to learn language and subject matter content, while the cultural ways of learning are fundamentally different than that of SLIFE experiences with learning, is referred to as cultural dissonance. In order to combat cultural dissonance, the MALP instructional approach recommends a culturally responsive approach to traditional best practices in EL teaching (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015).

**MALP Framework.** The MALP approach to teaching SLIFE is a process of incorporating both sides of the learning paradigm; high context with low context and academic with pragmatic ways of learning. When teachers are able to successfully incorporate both ways of learning into their curriculum, students are able to successfully learn academic ways of learning necessary to be successful in the United States school system while still experiencing high context learning in the classroom (DeCapua &

Marshall, 2010). Teachers who are able to meet their students in the middle see more success for their students (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010).

The MALP approach to SLIFE curriculum includes three main components; conditions, processes, and activities (DeCapua & Marshall 2010). There are two conditions that need to be present for an effective SLIFE classroom. The first is immediate relevance. Teachers of SLIFE should at all times make the content as relevant as possible to the students' lives. This will cater to their pragmatic way of learning. Thematic planning, which is discussed in this chapter, complements this because it is a method of curriculum planning that allows students to build off of real world experiences. The second condition is fostering strong interpersonal relationships. SLIFE are accustomed to the teacher often being similar to a mother figure and part of the in-group community. Learning should be made interpersonal for SLIFE (Hickey, 2015). Teachers who are able to genuinely foster positive relationships and involve family and community members in the SLIFE classroom see more progress and positive learning experiences in their class (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010). This is an important aspect of SLIFE education and is discussed in greater detail in the Classroom Environment section, where the importance of showing care for students is analyzed.

The second component to the MALP approach to teaching SLIFE is the learning processes. SLIFE are often accustomed to oral communication and United States school may be the first time some are interacting with print (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). The successful SLIFE teacher should always combine written with oral communication processes. Additionally, SLIFE are accustomed to shared group responsibility. In the

United States, collaboration is valued, but even during group collaboration projects all individuals have their own responsibilities and grades. Following the MALP approach, teachers should be including shared responsibility learning processes while also teaching students about individual accountability (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). These processes allow the students to successfully transition to mainstream content classrooms.

The third component, activities, refers to the learning activities in the curriculum for students to practice academic ways of thinking. As the cultural paradigm shows, SLIFE are often experienced with relevant and non traditional forms of learning (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). When they arrive in the United States classroom, they are suddenly expected to analyze, categorize, argue, etc. to show knowledge. These western ways of showing knowledge need to be explicitly taught to the culturally diverse SLIFE. The MALP approach recommends that while explicitly teaching these new concepts, make the activity at hand the only new part of the lesson. Teachers should use familiar and relevant language and topics to teach new and unfamiliar academic activities until the students have mastered that activity (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015).

Oftentimes, school districts and schools will create language programs for SLIFE to attend. These programs exist to assist newcomer SLIFE to adjust to the language and content demands and school culture of the United States, as outlined in the MALP approach. While these programs benefit students by giving them six months to two years in a program that supports their language development, criticism can be drawn from the delay it causes in high school graduation. Courses in language programs are often elective credit bearing only, therefore extending the time SLIFE spend in school and

creating social challenges as the age between SLIFE and their grade level peers grows (Hos, 2016). Additionally, these programs further isolate SLIFE from their mainstream peers, placing them in separate programs and classes based on language and culture (Drake, 2017).

**Thematic Planning.** Organizing curriculum units around common themes is an effective starting point for planning and teaching sheltered SLIFE classes that incorporates the MALP framework. SLIFE come to school with limited formal education. However, they also bring a wealth of knowledge and diverse lived experiences. In thematic planning, teachers can use collective and common background knowledge of students as a starting point for organizing thematic units. Students then build off that background knowledge and learn language functions within a familiar content. When teachers plan curriculum with an additive view of student experiences, those experiences can be an excellent starting point for creating a thematic unit (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2001).

Thematic planning fits well with the MALP approach to SLIFE teaching because it follows the principle that SLIFE must learn how to perform academic tasks, such as classify information, using familiar content and vocabulary (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). Once they have mastered a western style academic task or way of thinking, then the teacher can introduce new and unfamiliar content. When teachers organize curriculum around thematic units, content becomes interrelated and vocabulary is repeated in different subjects, allowing more familiarity for students.

Organizing curriculum by thematic units allows for a more relatable and real life view of school. As many SLIFE come from collectivistic cultures with pragmatic experiences in education, they need to see the relevance of what they are learning. When curriculum is organized into thematic units, students no longer learn something in isolation. Rather, they dive deeper into the theme and see how it is related to many different content topics, allowing for a more realistic and authentic learning experience (Shanahan, Robinson, & Schneider, 1995).

**Rationale.** The number of identified ELs is continuing to rise at a faster rate than total enrollment (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). Within the group of identified ELs, there is the growing subpopulation of SLIFE. The state of Minnesota only recently, in 2014, put into law the definition of SLIFE learners. In order to give students identified as SLIFE the high quality, research backed instruction that they are legally entitled to, it is important for educators to continue to research and implement best practice teaching strategies to reach this unique subpopulation of ELs.

**Conclusion.** This section provided information about the MALP instructional approach developed by Andrea DeCapua and Helaine W. Marshall, the different continuums to describe cultural differences between home countries for many SLIFE and the United States were described, as well as how that information affects SLIFE teaching. Additionally, how to implement a MALP approach to teaching and why it is effective for SLIFE learners was discussed, including the thematic unit strategy. Understanding and adapting teaching and learning practices to meet the needs of students from other cultures helps SLIFE learners to successfully transition to mainstream classes. In addition to

differing cultural views and experiences with education, many SLIFE have experienced trauma. Experiencing trauma in childhood or adolescence impacts a student's school experience and attitudes, and therefore is imperative for the SLIFE teacher to understand trauma informed pedagogy and why it is relevant to the SLIFE classroom.

The information presented in this section helps to answer the research question, *what are the key components to effective instruction to use with students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) at the secondary level?* The MALP instructional framework provides important information for teachers to consider when teaching SLIFE from cultures that differ from the dominant school culture of the United States.

### **Trauma Informed Pedagogy**

Trauma informed pedagogy is a set of educational practices that teachers and schools implement in order to serve students who have experienced trauma in their lifetime. Research has shown that experiencing traumatic events has adverse effects on school achievement, and many SLIFE have experienced some form of trauma before coming to school. “Many SLIFE have experienced severe trauma either at home, in camps, or in transit to the United States and suffer physical and psychological aftereffects,” (DeCapua, 2016, p. 230). Knowing students well allows teachers to recognize behaviors that may stem from trauma, allowing teachers to know when to give a referral to a trained professional to help the student acknowledge and work through the trauma. Additionally, there are practices teachers should follow in the classroom to maintain a space that is sensitive to students who are working through trauma and avoid the perpetuation of the cycle of trauma.

**Self regulation.** Over 40% of students attending school have experienced trauma (Hall, Souers, & Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2017). Many of these students are English Language Learners, and SLIFE in particular. Students may come to school having experienced a traumatic event, or they may have experienced repeated trauma over a period of time. This experienced trauma negatively affects the way students interact with their peers and teachers. Often, it results in students not trusting their teachers, because teachers remind them of authority figures who have previously failed to provide protection (McKlindon, 2014). Another common response to past trauma is for students to disengage and respond negatively to other students, due to a

decreased ability to read social cues (McKlindon, 2014). Teachers should approach a trauma impacted student with compassion and understanding and seek to understand the needs of the student. Due to the impaired abilities to read social cues and respond appropriately to stressors, one theme in trauma informed pedagogy is teaching self regulation. Students affected by trauma need direct instruction in physical and emotional regulation. At the secondary level, teachers can help students with physical regulation by offering brain breaks, exercise breaks, mediation and yoga breaks, and heartbeat checks. Teachers can even incorporate these techniques into a thematic unit of study, allowing students to combine academic learning with emotional regulation learning (Brunzell, Waters, & Stokes, 2015).

In addition to physical regulation, students also need time and space to learn emotional regulation skills and learn tools to notice, understand and communicate their feelings (Brunzell, Waters, & Stokes, 2015). Teachers can also play a role in helping students to develop positive, long lasting relationships. As is discussed in the classroom environment section, teacher-student relationships are vital to the effective SLIFE classroom, especially to students who have experienced trauma. These students may have unhealthy attachment styles or lack an ability to trust authority figures.

Students cannot effectively learn when they carry the emotional baggage of experiencing trauma (Medley, 2012). In order to have an effective secondary SLIFE classroom, teachers must be aware of student experiences in order to help students learn tools to regulate emotions and maintain relationships in a positive manner. Some strategies that are suggested for working with trauma impacted students include; give

students choices and ownership over their decisions, informally check in with students regularly, remember anniversaries of traumatic events and reach out to students during that time, connect the student with a peer mentor, and understand that all family systems differ and be inclusive in both content and language around family structures (McKlindon, 2014). Additionally, there are strategies, such as mediation and yoga breaks, that teachers can proactively implement to help students who may have adverse experiences in their past. When teachers know students well and develop strong relationships built on trust and respect, they can better meet the holistic needs of the student. Students who are impacted by trauma often get caught in the cycle of trauma. They may display unwanted behaviors that stem from past trauma, only to be punished and re-traumatized. When this occurs, students become stuck in this cycle due to punishments and consequences that do not take the student's whole life experience into account (McKlindon, 2014).

In addition to instructional strategies that promote physical and emotional regulation, teachers can guide their students in establishing a positive environment for students coping with trauma. Building such a safe community for students is especially important in a language classroom, as language learning can promote a naturally risky environment for many students. However, with intentional classroom management and instructional strategies, the language classroom can become a safe and welcoming environment for all students to learn and process through any trauma or adverse lived experiences. Teachers of trauma impacted students should maintain predictable routines, introduce new tasks slowly, use choral practice, engage students in responses that are not

deemed high risk for the student, and provide ample time for group work to eliminate whole class attention on one student (Medley, 2012). When these practices are utilized in combination with self expression activities regularly provided, students are able to learn in a low risk language learning environment, allowing students to create a school community and reestablish trust among peers and teachers (Medley, 2012).

**Conclusion.** "An estimated two in three children are exposed to traumatic experiences that have the potential to impact brain development, social functioning, and ability to learn and engage in school," (McKlindon, 2014, p. 15). This subsection provided insight into trauma informed pedagogy and how its practices can be used in a SLIFE classroom. Many SLIFE come to school having experienced war, poverty, and constant migration. On top of these experiences they are navigating a cultural dissonance at school, having different experiences with education than what is expected in the western style of learning. In addition to academic knowledge, teachers should help students to cope with trauma by following trauma informed practices.

This section on trauma informed pedagogy assists in answering the question, *what are the key components to effective instruction to use with students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) at the secondary level?* SLIFE have a diverse background of experiences. Many students enter school having experienced trauma, and the information surrounding trauma informed pedagogy helps teachers to have a plan for addressing this trauma in the classroom. In the next section, literature around the importance of the classroom environment is reviewed and analyzed as it relates to the sheltered SLIFE classroom.

### **Classroom Environment**

The classroom environment plays an important role in any secondary SLIFE course. All ELL students, but especially SLIFE, need to have a safe and supportive learning environment where they can take risks in their language learning and feel supported as they learn new ways of learning in the western education system.

Researchers have traditionally undervalued non-academic factors that play a role in a student's success. However, relational and self-regulatory classroom environments are equally important factors to a student's educational success (Leclair, Doll, Osborn & Jones, 2009). In order to establish an environment conducive to student success, there must be respect established among the class for students' languages and cultures.

Additionally, many SLIFE come from cultures where the teacher is considered the second parent (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010). Thus, it is important for teachers of SLIFE to establish a positive and trustworthy relationship with each student. In this subsection, research about response protocols for increasing student responses and engagement, how teachers can include student home culture in classroom management practices, and how local and national language policies can play a role in the classroom environment are discussed.

**Language policy and asset view.** Perhaps the most important aspect of a classroom environment conducive to student learning starts with the teacher's attitude toward culturally and linguistically diverse students. Despite many national, local, and school level policies conveying a negative perception of bilingualism, teachers must approach educating SLIFE from an asset based perspective on their unique backgrounds.

Instead of viewing students from a deficit view - the language skills they do not have, the lack of education they may have, and how far behind they are compared to their peers - it is vital to view SLIFE for all of the assets they bring into the classroom. SLIFE have a wealth of background knowledge and practical educational experiences that must be harnessed in the SLIFE classroom, despite the common belief that SLIFE are empty vessels that need knowledge “poured in,” (Zacarian & Haynes, 2012).

One example of language policy stemming from a deficit viewpoint can be analyzed from the Arizona Department of Education. In November of 2000, the state of Arizona implemented a restrictive language policy, commonly known as Proposition 203 - “English for the Children,” (Fredricks & Warriner, 2016). This policy’s goal was to teach ELLs as rapidly and effectively as possible, with the goal of exiting students from ELL services after one year of intense, sheltered instruction. The policy required ELLs to have four hours of sheltered English Language Development (ELD) instruction each day. Some of the ways in which this policy was practiced in the classroom was through error correction, English-only classrooms, and grammar instruction. The secondary goal of this program was to completely get rid of bilingual education programs that allowed use of student home languages (Fredricks & Warriner, 2016). Longitudinal research studies in the United States have shown that it can take an English language learner “five to ten years to perform to the level of their monolingual English speaking peers on tests administered in English” (Menken, 2013, p. 440). Further, this time is cut down to five to seven years when the student receives home language support and instruction (Menken, 2013). Despite clear research promoting bilingual education programs and home

language support, language deficit policies can be all too common in schools. SLIFE teachers may find themselves navigating deficit views of their students' home languages and cultures. Wright (2015) summarized the two ways schools might view English language learner programs; language-as-resource and language-as-problem orientation. When language is seen as a resource that each student brings to the school community, greater opportunities for success will be available to students as they maintain their home language while acquiring English (Wright, 2015). In order to have a successful sheltered SLIFE classroom, SLIFE teachers need to continue to create an environment where students feel valued for their diverse learning experiences and language abilities.

**Home language development.** Allowing students the time and space to develop their home language skills strengthens their academic abilities and allows them to foster stronger language learning practices (Hickey, 2015). When teachers are able to leverage home language skills, students can transfer the literacy and general learning strategies they acquired in their home language (DeCapua, 2016). Students who are forced to reject their home language, due to social pressures or school language policy, have their academic achievement hindered. Creating a classroom environment that celebrates all languages spoken, and allowing students to use those language skills in the classroom, will impact SLIFE achievement positively. In fact, the loss of “socio-economic ties and supportive networks can lead to school dropout, delinquency, drug use, and gang involvement,” (DeCapua, 2016, p. 231). It is in the best interest of students and the school as a whole for SLIFE teachers to allow and encourage home language use in the classroom and school.

**Culture Share Club.** One example of a teacher harnessing diverse abilities in the classroom for the positive, despite any deficit views outside of the classroom, can be seen through a program called the Culture Share Club. Judith Rance-Roney, an educator from New Jersey, found herself struggling to reach her SLIFE, especially newcomers with limited English abilities (Rance-Roney, 2008). In order to create a classroom environment where SLIFE felt valued and that they had something to contribute, she created a Culture Share Club where SLIFE and non-SLIFE could join. Rance-Roney (2008) developed this program so that students could focus on what they could bring to the classroom, not on what they lacked. This program allowed non-SLIFE to learn about their SLIFE classmates. It also allowed SLIFE to teach the class about their culture and ways of learning, ultimately benefiting the entire class (Rance-Roney, 2008). Similar to this type of program is the Newcomer Booklet. This is an instructional strategy often used to teach SLIFE about classroom procedures and routines. Older students put together a booklet of school routines that were confusing to them when they first arrived. Then, they teach those routines to new SLIFE (Marshall & DeCapua, 2010). This strategy is another example of harnessing student voice and experience to better the experience of SLIFE.

**Intercultural Communication Framework.** In addition to teacher viewpoint of multilingualism, “teachers must care *for* their students, not just *about* them to truly build a learning community” (DeCapua, 2016, p. 229). DeCapua (2016) explained the Intercultural Communication Framework to help teachers understand their students on a deeper level, ultimately helping to get to know students better and provide care. The

Intercultural Communication Framework is based on two foundational principles necessary for teachers to understand their students' backgrounds and needs. The first being to establish and maintain relationships with SLIFE that extend beyond superficial information. This requires teachers to take the time and energy to ask deeper level questions and follow up with students to foster relationships. When successful, this helps to demonstrate teacher care to students, and that results in academic success. The second principle is to "identify and accommodate the priorities of the students and of the United States' formal education" (DeCapua, 2016, p. 230). This is important for SLIFE teachers to understand because before there can be academic success, teachers first need to put in the effort to get to know students and their backgrounds so that there is an environmental feeling of caring and support. This also establishes a better environment for students who are also recovering from previous trauma. When the teacher knows the students well, better individualized support can be given to meet the needs of each student (DeCapua, 2016).

**Person-environment Fit Theory.** Banse and Palacios (2018) have researched an additional component to classroom environment based on the interplay between teacher and student personalities and how it affects academic success. The premise behind their Person-environment Fit Theory is that, "the interplay between environmental characteristics and personal traits produces behaviors," (Banse & Palacios, 2018, p. 645). The best environment for a student to have success is when their personal characteristics match the environmental characteristics. While a teacher cannot change his or her personality to fit each student's unique traits, this theory connects with the Mutually

Adaptive Learning Paradigm and the importance of understanding a student's cultural background and how it affects their education. SLIFE teachers must take the time to learn their students' cultural backgrounds and views of education. With this information, a SLIFE teacher can accommodate the environment to the students' cultural characteristics and carefully guide students to implement aspects of the western education style (Banse & Palacios, 2018).

**Rationale.** When teachers take time to get to know their students they can create intentionally built communities. These classroom communities are vital for students to feel supported and cared for and to foster their academic success. SLIFE teachers will always have to navigate language, immigration, and school policies just to name a few, as deficit views of language continues to dominate the language planning and policy in the United States (Fredricks & Warriner, 2016). Being able to value student experiences and help students to feel welcomed and supportive despite outside factors allows students to feel valued for their experiences and help them to find a supportive academic community in their classroom.

When students feel they belong to a community, it affects their achievement in a positive way. "Strong learning environments lead to student engagement, and subsequently to academic success and school completion (Leclair, Doll, Osborn, & Jones, 2009, p. 569). SLIFE teachers have a responsibility to take this knowledge and create learning environments that foster supportive relationships between both peers and teachers, allowing students the space to achieve academically. When teachers are able to successfully implement the analyzed criteria for a supportive classroom, students are

more engaged. When students are more engaged, their grade point average increases, their test scores improve, and they continue to stay motivated to stay in school (Leclair, Doll, Osborn, & Jones, 2009).

**Conclusion.** There are many factors that contribute to a positive and academically productive learning environment for SLIFE. Research shows it is imperative for teachers of SLIFE to have cultural understanding and foster genuine relationships with SLIFE in order for academic progress to be made. When students feel respected, cared for, and a sense of belonging they are better able to take risks in the classroom and further develop their academic language skills.

This section helped to answer the question, *what are the key components to effective instruction to use with students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) at the secondary level?* An important instructional model for teaching SLIFE is to create a warm and welcoming environment where students can succeed. This section provided research to further show the importance of incorporating effective strategies for creating a positive classroom environment for all students. In addition to classroom environment, there are general best practice teaching strategies for ELs that are beneficial for SLIFE instruction (Henderson, 2019).

### **Other Critical Considerations for SLIFE**

Within this section, the literature around other proven strategies for successfully working with ELLs is discussed. One strategy is starting with the best practice strategies for the general EL population and modifying those to fit the needs of the SLIFE classroom and students. Another strategy involves being intentional about student

responses during classroom speaking and discussing activities. It is important for SLIFE to practice using the academic language they are learning, and even more so important is the way that teachers respond to students. Often, teachers want to praise SLIFE for speaking up, as it takes bravery to do so. However, research shows that teachers should be intentional about giving feedback to the response in order to allow students to grow and be challenged to respond more. Lastly, home language development should be supported and provided to the best of a teacher and school's ability, as this will only help students as they develop English language skills.

**Best practices.** One relatively simple place to start when planning a SLIFE course and teaching strategies for working with SLIFE is best practice for general EL teaching. Mainstream EL strategies, such as language supports, concrete realia and visual aids, scaffolding, and use of native language can all be modified to support SLIFE (Leclair, Doll, Osborn, & Jones, 2009). When teachers, especially new to SLIFE teachers, are planning for a course with SLIFE, they should begin by following best practice for EL and modifying as they learn about the cultural backgrounds and educational experiences of their students.

Another important part of teaching SLIFE involves getting the students talking early and often. Often, teachers do not want to push their new students too far when it comes to speaking out loud. But teachers can become too lenient with the silent period, which negatively impacts academic progress (Leclair, Doll, Osborn, & Jones, 2009). As discussed in the previous section, this often starts with creating a positive and supportive classroom environment where students feel comfortable taking risks and using new

language. Another strategy to remember as a SLIFE teacher is something Mohr and Mohr (2007) call the *Response Protocol*. The Response Protocol is a method for prompting and responding to classroom response during discussions, following the pattern; initiation, response, feedback (Mohr & Mohr, 2007). Mohr and Mohr (2007) stated that ELLs should be expected to participate in classroom discussions, and feedback given to their responses should be scaffolded based on their level of understanding and language ability. Most importantly, instead of praising students for answering or commenting in class, teachers should focus on giving feedback to the response.

**Literacy.** SLIFE enter school with varied experiences with formal education. One thing students have in common is the need for foundational literacy skills. However, this is an area of language development many teachers are unprepared to teach at the secondary level (Hickey, 2015). Most ESL pedagogy operates under the assumption that students have age appropriate literacy preparation in their native language, which is not the case for SLIFE (Decapua, Marshall, & Frydland, 2018). Before students can read and comprehend complex content area texts, they must first learn *how* to read (Custodio & O’Loughlin, 2017). In their book, “Students with Interrupted Formal Education: Bridging Where They are and What They Need” Custodio and O’Loughlin (2017) highlighted a few key strategies for developing literacy skills.

The first strategy is using picture books, a strategy becoming increasingly popular with middle school and secondary teachers. Using culturally relevant picture books can serve as a way for teachers to introduce content area topics and access background knowledge (Custodio & O’Loughlin, 2017). Additionally, using read aloud strategies can

be beneficial for the development of SLIFE literacy skills. Read alouds allow the teacher to model pause and intonation of reading as well as model comprehension strategies for students (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017).

Lastly, reader's theater, a strategy in which students act out important story elements, can serve as a culturally relevant way to develop literacy skills. Using reader's theater allows students who may be at a higher level of oral proficiency than reading to demonstrate understanding and engage critically with written text (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017). When possible, schools should develop and strengthen literacy skills in the students' home language, allowing students to make greater progress in both language's literacy skills (Hickey, 2015).

**Advocacy.** Finally, serving as an advocate to secondary ELLs is a necessary role for a teacher to take on as they assist students through their secondary schooling experience. While this capstone focuses on sheltered instruction, it can not be ignored that students will often move onto mainstream content classrooms after reaching a certain level of language proficiency. Teachers of SLIFE must work to advocate on behalf of SLIFE to ensure they continue to receive scaffolded, supported language instruction in the content areas. As Dávila states, "failure to ensure that secondary students acquire advanced literacy is tantamount to denying them opportunities for full participation in school and later in life," (Menken, 2013, p. 444).

This section supports the capstone question, *what are the key components to effective instruction to use with students with limited or interrupted formal education*

*(SLIFE) at the secondary level?* The evidence based best practices that are necessary for all ELLs should be implemented when teaching SLIFE.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter two of this capstone project reviewed and analyzed the relevant literature related to the capstone question, *what are the key components to effective instruction to use with students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) at the secondary level?* The Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP), trauma informed pedagogy, classroom environment, and other critical considerations for SLIFE were all discussed. The information gained from the literature was used for the capstone project as it relates to the resource [website](#). The best practices for teaching ELL and SLIFE were implemented into a checklist for developing effective secondary sheltered SLIFE instructional practices.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Introduction

Chapter three of this capstone project continues to answer the research question, *what are the key components to effective instruction to use with students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) at the secondary level?* The end product of this capstone project is a [website](#) created in collaboration with a colleague and fellow Hamline University Master of Arts in Education Student. This [website](#) serves as a resource to all teachers who have SLIFE in their classrooms. The [website](#) seeks to begin to close a gap in the resources available to teachers of the unique subgroup of ELs that are SLIFE.

The main research theories that are used in the final product creation are the Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP), trauma informed pedagogy, and best teaching practices for creating learning environments for SLIFE. These theories are essential when planning and implementing teaching strategies for SLIFE because they meet the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The end product of this capstone project is a SLIFE resource [website](#). My contribution to this [website](#) focused on the secondary SLIFE teaching strategies based on MALP and trauma informed pedagogy, while my colleague's contribution focused on teacher preparedness for working with SLIFE and SLIFE family involvement. Chapter three of this capstone provides an in depth description of what is provided on the [website](#) and how EL and mainstream teachers might use the [website](#). Currently, in the EL field there are few free resources like this available to teachers who are new to teaching

SLIFE. This [website](#) will be vital in helping teachers understand the needs of SLIFE and how best to serve them in the sheltered and mainstream classroom.

### **Overview of the Project**

The final product of this capstone project is a free [website](#) with SLIFE teaching resources. This [website](#) was completed in collaboration with a colleague and fellow student in the Hamline Master of Arts in Education Program. My contribution to the [website](#) focused on a checklist for incorporating MALP and trauma informed pedagogy best practices into SLIFE teaching. My colleague contributed a pre-service checklist for teachers getting ready to serve SLIFE in their classrooms as well as strategies for involving families of SLIFE.

This section of chapter three introduced the chapter as well as gave an overview of the research project that seeks to answer the question, *what are the key components to effective instruction to use with students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) at the secondary level?* Next, the major theories that were implemented in the checklist for best teaching practices for SLIFE are reviewed.

### **Research Theories**

SLIFE bring with them a unique set of educational needs to the classroom. Many students come from collectivistic cultures with different, and often informal, experiences with education (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). It is important for SLIFE classrooms to address these differences and help students to make academic gains while learning the western style of educational practices that are necessary to succeed in the United States educational system. One major research theory that guided the [website](#) is the Mutually

Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP), developed by Andrea DeCapua and Helaine Marshall (2015). This learning paradigm is essential to SLIFE education because it is one of the most researched and widely referenced research paradigms in the field that is specifically relevant to SLIFE. The MALP framework takes students' collectivistic cultures and pragmatic experiences with education and interweaves them into a framework that will assist them in learning western styles of learning (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). This information guided my SLIFE teaching checklist as I sought to help teachers understand how to blend a student's home culture and informal learning experiences with that of the school's.

In addition to the MALP framework, research in trauma informed pedagogy was used to create the [website](#) materials. Over 40% of students in school have experienced trauma (Hall, Souers, & Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2017), and many of these students are SLIFE. Trauma affects how a student learns and behaves in school, and thus research in this area is necessary when thinking of best practices for teaching SLIFE. In order for a teacher of SLIFE to have an effective course planned, it is important to take into account classroom changes and emotional and social regulatory lessons that can be used to help students cope with trauma while learning.

Lastly, general best practice for creating a classroom environment that celebrates student diversity and gives students a safe space to practice language was implemented into the framework for successful SLIFE teaching. Arguably the most important part of having an effective classroom, it is necessary for teachers to understand concrete actions that they can take to ensure that SLIFE feel valued and welcomed in the classroom and

school community. Many researchers point to the importance of establishing meaningful relationships with students, and showing that the teacher cares *for* the students, not just about them.

This section of chapter 3 reviewed the three key research areas of SLIFE education that impacted the development of the [website](#) and the teacher support materials that accompany it for teaching SLIFE; the MALP framework, trauma informed pedagogy, and the importance of creating meaningful relationships and establishing positive classroom environments. The next section presents the project format and intended audience.

### **Website and Audience**

The format for the final product of this capstone project is a free [website](#). The reason that my colleague and I have chosen to use a [website](#) is to make the content accessible to as wide an audience as possible. Our hopes are that new teachers, especially teachers who are new to teaching SLIFE, can have a starting point for learning more about the needs of these unique EL students and how best to support them in their academic careers. The [website](#) offers effective teaching strategies as well as links to relevant research and literacy on teaching SLIFE. The information is geared towards EL teachers working with SLIFE, but all teachers who have SLIFE in their classrooms will find the information beneficial.

### **Project Description and Timeline**

This section gives a description of the [website](#) and the different components for SLIFE teachers. Additionally, this section discusses the timeline for completing the [website](#) and determining its future use.

The SLIFE resource [website](#) that was created in collaboration with my colleague has a variety of different resources available to SLIFE teachers. My colleague's contributions to the [website](#) focused on teacher preparedness for working with SLIFE and family resources. My contributions to the [website](#), and those of which I detail here, focused on best practice teaching strategies for sheltered instruction for secondary SLIFE as well as strategies for trauma informed pedagogy. The main resources that are available are a best practice teaching strategies checklist and a trauma informed pedagogy checklist. Because SLIFE teachers are so often creating content from scratch and not using prescriptive curriculum packages, teachers are often at a loss of where to begin with teaching SLIFE. The best practice teaching strategies checklist combines the major research of SLIFE education to include all of the necessary parts to successfully reach SLIFE. It allows for teachers to be reflective of the cultures and languages represented in their classroom and how that affects the ways that they teach and the topics that they study.

When first arriving on the [website](#), readers are sent to the home screen landing page. On this page, there is a description of the mission for the [website](#). There are also three "featured resources" with an image and direct link to the resource. This is provided to allow readers to immediately be sent to the most valuable and relevant information. Lastly, readers can learn about the authors of the [website](#) as well as submit an email to

my colleague and I by using the “contact us” form at the bottom of the landing page.

From there, readers can determine what information they would like to access next by using the menu board across the top of the [website](#).

At the top of the [website](#) is a menu heading that is visible no matter which page of the [website](#) a reader is visiting. The menu options include; Families, Home, Lesson Plans, Links, SLIFE Basics, Teacher Preparation, and Trauma Informed Practices. The Home menu option always brings readers back to the main [website](#) landing page where they can learn about the mission of the [website](#) and the authors. The Families menu option brings readers to a page dedicated to information about families of SLIFE. This page includes information to help teachers involve families in their child’s school experience. It also provides information about community resources that teachers and families of SLIFE may find helpful.

The next menu option, Lesson Plans, brings readers to a page dedicated to sharing lesson plans with teachers in the field. On this page, readers can click on two different buttons; Middle School Lesson Plans and High School Lesson Plans. These buttons automatically direct readers to the Google Drive folders that contain lesson plans and ideas that teachers have used in the past and found to be successful. Also on this page of the [website](#) is a form for teachers to use when they have a new lesson plan to submit to the [website](#). This form sends an email to my colleague and I, so that we may upload the lesson plan to the Google Drive. All lesson plans submitted will be uploaded, and teachers may browse and determine which lesson plans best fit the needs or can best be modified to their SLIFE needs. This page of the [website](#) is important because many

teachers are working with limited time and resources. There needs to be a better, more efficient way for teachers to collaborate across schools and districts.

The Links page on the [website](#) directs readers to a page with an index of links that are useful to SLIFE education. These include curriculum resource links, trauma informed pedagogy sites, state standards and laws pertaining to SLIFE, and many other resources that are relevant to SLIFE education. The next menu option is SLIFE Basics. This section includes an overview of the definitions of SLIFE, a glossary of terms, information about culture and SLIFE, classroom environment, and the checklist for incorporating SLIFE best practices.

The last two pages from the menu that readers can go to are Teacher Preparation and Trauma Informed Practices. The teacher preparation section includes information for teachers to access before the beginning of the school year, as well as for current teacher education students. The information provided allows readers to learn about how to prepare for a SLIFE class. The trauma informed practices section includes information regarding students coming to school with trauma. This section provides a general overview of trauma in schools, as well as providing insight into best practices for incorporating trauma informed practices into the classroom. This page is where the checklist for trauma informed practices is housed.

The [website](#) is completed and available for the public to view and contribute to as of November 2019. It is the hope that teachers have found the resource to be helpful in their teaching and professional development. As teachers begin to use this resource and submit their own resources and examples of effective lesson plans, the [website](#) has

transformed into a community resource where teachers know they can go to for inspiration and lesson plan ideas. Additionally, as more research continues to be published, the [website](#) will be updated as needed so that it is always representing the most relevant and effective instructional approaches.

This section of chapter three provided a description of the different components to the SLIFE resource [website](#). It discussed the best practices checklist and trauma informed practices checklist, further reading, and the community collaboration aspects of the [website](#) that all collaborate to make it an effective resource for SLIFE teachers.

In order to assess this [website](#)'s effectiveness in answering the capstone question, *what are the key components to effective instruction to use with students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) at the secondary level?* I will use self and peer feedback. First, I will detail through the [website](#) and write down all of the ways and parts of the [website](#) that contribute to answering the question. After, I will request feedback from my content evaluator and peer evaluator to gain outside feedback on the [website](#) ability to answer the capstone question.

### **Summary**

Chapter three of this capstone project gave an overview of the SLIFE resource [website](#) that was created in order to help answer the research question, *what are the key components to effective instruction to use with students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) at the secondary level?* The main theories and bodies of research that are impacting the researched based best practices checklist were discussed; the MALP framework, trauma informed pedagogy, and best practices for creating an effective

classroom environment. After, the project was described in detail to include the resources that are available on the [website](#), who the [website](#) is intended for, and how it might be used in the future.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Critical Reflection

#### Introduction

The concluding chapter of this capstone project reviews the effectiveness of the project in its aim to answer the research question, *what are the key components to effective instruction to use with students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) at the secondary level?* The purpose of this capstone project was to provide a resource, in the form of a [website](#), to assist teachers in educating SLIFE.

First, I review challenges I faced while doing this capstone. The biggest challenge I faced was completing the literature review. I also discuss the challenge of creating a [website](#) with little to no background in [website](#) design. After, I review the most impactful research that helped shape the project. The MALP approach to SLIFE education was vital in the creation of the project and many studies cite the work of DeCapua and Marshall.

Next, I discuss the limitations of the capstone project [website](#). This is important for understanding this chapter and the project as a whole, because the site has limitations in the audience that it may reach and the usability of the resources available. Lastly, I discuss future research possibilities and the benefit this project gives to the profession. This section is important because as I learned, there is no substantial research on the education of SLIFE. I review areas that I believe should be researched further. I also review how this project benefits the educational profession, and specifically the EL profession.

## Challenges

Throughout this project, I have learned the complex and long task of completing literature reviews. With so much information available online, I learned the importance of being thorough while searching for relevant information yet staying within my capstone question parameters. Additionally, I learned that research surrounding secondary students with limited or interrupted formal education is still quite limited. There is a large base of research regarding the unique needs of SLIFE; however, there is little in terms of providing concrete strategies for instruction, such as developing basic literacy skills.

Another challenging component to completing this project was designing the [website](#). This is not an area that I have extensive experience in; therefore, I needed to learn the basics of using WordPress to format and design the [website](#) experience I want teachers to have. This is an area I plan to continually develop as I work to update the [website](#) as new research and local and federal SLIFE policies become available.

## MALP

The area of research from my literature review that proved to be the most impactful for this project was Andrea DeCapua and Helaine Marshall's work on the Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (2011). Their work on developing a framework for SLIFE education is a beneficial in depth introduction of how best to approach teaching SLIFE coming from many different cultures, often vastly different of the dominant school culture in the United States. Throughout further reading and developing of the project, I realized that DeCapua and Marshall's MALP (2011) approach to teaching is an underlying approach that can be used with all of the strategies and best

practices that go into an effective secondary SLIFE classroom. The information that they provide through their learning paradigm is essential for teachers to support students from all cultures.

### **Limitations**

This project has limitations in its impact and usability. The [website](#) is mainly geared towards teachers in Minnesota, as it refers to Minnesota standards, SLIFE definitions, and the WIDA consortium used by Minnesota schools. Teachers in other states may find the general information useful; however, they would have to do their own research on their state's standards and policies related to SLIFE education. Additionally, the lesson plan page of the [website](#) is limited in its usage based on reader engagement. This resource is a Google Drive folder containing successful lesson plans that teachers submit to the [website](#). If there are many teachers willing and able to submit their lesson plans and ideas to the folder, it will be a beneficial resource. However, if there are no teachers using this function, this page of the [website](#) will not be relevant.

### **Future Research**

In the future, it would be beneficial for further research to be developed regarding SLIFE literacy development. Throughout my review of current literature, it was clear that there is not one research-backed method for teaching foundational literacy skills to secondary SLIFE. Additionally, further research on how mainstream teachers can best collaborate with sheltered SLIFE courses so that students are engaged in the broader school environment and are being properly prepared for the demands of mainstream content courses should be done. This research would be impactful for helping bridge the

gap between English language teachers and mainstream content teachers at the secondary level.

### **Benefit to the Profession**

This project has the opportunity to greatly influence and benefit the teaching profession. First, it will be useful to teachers who are new to the EL field. Often, as I personally experienced, EL teachers are not adequately prepared to serve the diverse SLIFE learners that are in schools. Searching for SLIFE lesson materials and best practice information can be daunting yet limited in success, especially when teachers need to find information specific to Minnesota. This [website](#) will allow new teachers a landing site to gain insight into SLIFE basics, how they can advocate and prepare best for their students, and how to incorporate best practice strategies into their teaching.

Not only could this site be impactful for new teachers, but it will also serve as an excellent resource to mainstream and co-teachers at the secondary level. This [website](#) will provide user friendly information for mainstream and co-teachers to learn more about the unique needs of their students and work more effectively in collaboration. It appears lately that Minnesota districts are attempting to increase professional development for EL instruction. However, this often does not go as far as developing teachers on strategies for students who are SLIFE. This [website](#) may help to close that gap in education.

Lastly, this [website](#) is beneficial for current EL teachers. The lesson plan section of the [website](#) will be beneficial as current EL teachers look to collaborate and learn from other teachers' successes. They will also find the general information on the [website](#)

useful, as it will be updated in a timely manner as policies are enacted and new research is published. All of this information and collaboration amongst teachers will directly benefit the students we serve. When teachers are more prepared and supported by one another, students benefit.

### **Summary**

This final chapter of the capstone project summarized challenges, key learnings, limitations, future research, and the benefit that this project provides to the education profession. The challenges of completing an effective literature review as well as designing a [website](#) were discussed. The key learnings from the MALP approach to SLIFE teaching was reviewed, as this was the major research used in researching information about SLIFE. Limitations of the project, such as a narrow audience as well as dependence on reader engagement were discussed. Lastly, this chapter provided information about areas of future research as well as the benefit this project provides to the profession.

**APPENDIX A**

Checklist for trauma informed pedagogy

## Trauma Informed Pedagogy

### What is it?

Over 40% of students attending school have experienced trauma (Hall, Souers, & Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2017). Trauma informed pedagogy is a set of educational practices that teachers and schools implement in order to serve students who have experienced trauma in their lifetime.

### How are students impacted by trauma?

- Decreased ability to read social cues (McKlindon, 2014)
- Negative interactions with peers
- Decreased trust of teachers and other adults at school
- Unhealthy attachment tendencies
- Disengaged from the school and classroom community
- Negative and unexpected responses to stressors

### As an educator, what can I do?

- ❑ First and foremost, approach the student with kindness and compassion. Seek to understand the holistic needs of the student.
- ❑ Explicitly teach physical and emotional self regulation skills
  - ❑ Offer brain breaks, exercise breaks, mediation and yoga breaks, and heartbeat checks
  - ❑ Teach tools to notice, understand and communicate feelings (Brunzell, Waters, & Stokes, 2015).
- ❑ Foster strong teacher-student relationships
- ❑ Give students choices and ownership over their decisions
- ❑ Informally check in with students on a regular basis
- ❑ Remember anniversaries of traumatic events and reach out to students during that time
- ❑ Connect the student with a peer mentor
- ❑ Understand all family systems differ; be inclusive in content and language around family structures (McKlindon, 2014)

**APPENDIX B**

Checklist for SLIFE best practices

## Teaching SLIFE

### Classroom Environment

- Honor each student's home language and culture. Whenever possible, allow for home language use and development in the classroom.
- Give students the opportunity to be the expert. Examples: students teach the class about their home country and culture.
- Make learning interpersonal; foster positive relationships with each student and involve family members as much as possible.

### Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

- Learn each student's home language and culture.
- Determine how a student's culture may affect the way they learn and experience school.
- Make learning relevant. Many SLIFE are accustomed to learning that has an immediate impact on their life. Seek to connect each lesson to the students' lives.
- When explicitly teaching new academic skills, use learned vocabulary and content so that the skill is the only new material learned.

### Thematic Planning

- Use students' real life experiences to build units of study.
- When possible, collaborate with other teachers to connect units of study across disciplines.

### EL Best Practices

- Use language supports (sentence starters, word banks, sentence frames)
- Provide concrete realia and visual aids
- Scaffold lessons to meet students where they are at, and provide the appropriate challenge
- Model
- Encourage home language development

**APPENDIX C**

<https://teachingslifemn.org>

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