

SLIFE Students and Teacher Preparedness: A Collaborative Website

SLIFE STUDENTS AND TEACHER PREPAREDNESS

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Teaching.

Hamline University

St. Paul, Minnesota

December 2019

(Project Collaboration with Mackenzie Burkstrand)

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Hamline University 2019
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Abstract

This project aims to solve the issue that many English Language Learner Teachers face when it comes to their English Language Learners. Many immigrant students also come from a home where the language usually spoken is one other than English, or who speak a language other than English but also have experienced interrupted schooling, also known as SLIFE students (MN Department of Education, 2019). Using the works of EL methodology to best prepare teachers through the practices of the Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP), along with culturally relevant ideas to approach vocabulary and assessment instruction used by Beck and Gottlieb to provide ideas and resources for teachers. The goal for this project is to create a virtual platform, in the form of a website, in order to support teachers of English learners with interrupted formal education and to answer the question, *“what are the necessary tools to provide to teachers to help them in preparation for teaching students with interrupted formal education at the primary level?”* Creating this type of platform will enhance teacher education and resources by doing two things: provide them with access to resources that can best help improve their students' learning and provide educational tips and information on how to best serve the needs of SLIFE learners at the elementary through secondary levels.

CHAPTER 1

**TEACHING ENGLISH STUDENTS WITH LIMITED AND INTERRUPTED
FORMAL EDUCATION**

Introduction

The number of teachers in Minnesota has heightened steadily since 2010. The number of general education teachers increased from 56,790 in the 2009-10 school year to 60,090 in the 2015-16 school year, meaning a 5.8 percent increase during the past seven school years (Casselluis, Ed. D., B., Nguyen, H., & Onstad, N. (2017, Fall). With every incoming teacher there is a necessary understanding each must have of their unique student base often consisting of but not limited to; students with special abilities, students with cognitive learning issues, and English Language Learners (ELL) students. As of 2019 The Minnesota Department of Education reports having 70,432 English Language learners within Minnesota Public Schools alone, this means that there is a substantial amount of students each year that require the support of English Language Services and require general teachers to be knowledgeable in order to support their needs throughout the school year.

The need for resources for general education teachers in the area of English Language Curriculum is paramount, especially for those students with limited or interrupted schooling prior to receiving language learning support. It can be difficult to know where to begin in the support of students learning English as their second language when they are lacking skills that other English Learners have already acquired; such as, background knowledge, phonemic awareness in English, grammar concepts, social constructs and simple cultural school norms (DeCapua & Marshall, H, 2011). Educators need a comprehensive set of resources to help guide

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them through the unique differentiation they will need to promote in their lessons as they consider these students.

This capstone seeks to provide a collection of materials and resources in response to the question, *“what are the necessary tools to provide to teachers to help them in preparation for teaching students with interrupted formal education at the primary level?”* The materials include; an intake guide for new teachers and their Students with Limited and or Interrupted Schooling, a guide on how this relates to the WIDA standards and a how to guide for Academic and Social language. Following the guides there will be leveled materials created by collaborating with other teachers that coincide with WIDA standards to help alleviate the need for inappropriately leveled reading and writing materials for each grade level.

In my experience in working in the public-school system at varying levels, I have encountered many instances in which there is a lack of general materials to help bridge the gap of knowledge that SLIFE students encounter. When working in a sheltered setting with SLIFE students, I was able to notice how much better I could reach the students when the materials I created were appropriately geared towards the student age appropriate needs. Students became more engaged as I found subject matter that suited their interests while still addressed the areas where they lacked prior knowledge.

In noticing these changes in my students, I brought it to my peers who were also EL teachers. As we learned more about the issues surrounding the lack of immediate resources for SLIFE I spoke more with some professors at Hamline, one professor in particular encouraged me to explore this topic further. One of my colleagues was equally interested in finding a means to support our SLIFE students with education for educators as we did not feel supported in this area when we were new to teaching. In this we noticed, by scouring the internet and asking around

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that we needed to solve the issue of creating a space where educators feel they can get access to ideas, discussions, materials, and solutions. My colleague, Mackenzie Burkstrand and I decided that this type of project would be a huge undertaking for one person. We chose to request to collaborate on the issue in order to be able to provide the most information possible at varying levels. Each of us, then being able to focus our attention on different aspects of the project.

One major component where I will direct my attention will be the on-boarding process and steps that teachers need to take in order to best acclimate a SLIFE student into their classroom. As we know, “for SLIFE to engage in the classroom successfully, they need to adapt or transition from their preferences to the expectations of mainstream education” (DeCapua, M. & Marshall, L. 2011). Meaning that we need to be prepared as educators to meet the needs prior to them being in the classroom. The approaches we, as educators take should be calculated and based in research so that we are best equipped to serve the students specific base of need to learn in the mainstream educational system.

There are many studies on best practices for SLIFE students and separately many best practices for ELL students such as the Andrea DeCapua and Helaine W. Marshall’s *Guide to Reaching ELLs at Risk: Instruction for Students With Limited or Interrupted Formal Education* and studies such as, *Seeking Best Practices And Meeting The Needs Of The English Language Learners* but there is a need for more relevant resources including but not limited to reading and writing materials at all levels for SLIFE students. Using the process of identifying the levels needed as set forth by the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment by the University of Wisconsin Madison at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research. From the developed levels in the four domains of reading, writing, listening and speaking, there are six levels of proficiency with number six being proficient. With these as a guide, a set of materials can be developed for

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the six levels within their separate domains commonly referred to as WIDA standards. This type of information can then be used by educators as a guide to fortifying lessons for SLIFE learners as often there is a great lack of research and more specifically appropriate reading and writing materials that can be used for students who often have varying gap knowledge (New York State Department of Education. 2011). Minnesota is fortunate to be a state where we take part in the WIDA Consortium and have a basis for assessment and lesson standards. Therefore, this site will be referenced often in the project and will be provided in the collection of links.

Another major component of this project will be to create a virtual and highly visual place for educators to find information about the “on-boarding” process of receiving a student with substantial gap knowledge. This will aid in teacher preparedness and help to absorb many of the initial issues that teachers face when creating lesson plans to include differentiation for SLIFE students. The idea is to make it a process where teachers can also locate the necessary information to provide to students and families so that they can best guide their children in drawing on a base of prior knowledge to add to the student’s areas of lacking knowledge.

This project will seek to modify and create content that educators can use as resources so that they can have a place to access materials that are based on the WIDA standards that help them to quickly identify areas where they can support their lessons for SLIFE students. In a similar way this project will seek to provide mention of Newcomers so that EL Educators can access materials to help them best support their students at lower levels with age appropriate reading and writing materials.

WIDA standards will be used as 37 states currently participate in the consortium across the United States and not only in Minnesota. The consortium ensures that proficiency standards and assessments for ELL grade K-12 students are reliable and valid based on proficiency in four

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domains. The four domains are reading, writing, speaking and listening. The standards are also organized by grade clusters with levels to aid teachers in knowing the abilities of their EL students called CAN Do Descriptors. These standards were established in 2003 from a grant provided by the U.S Department of Education to the Wisconsin Department of Instruction created in order to provide a basis for assessment that would ensure compliance with the 2001 *No Child Left Behind Act* (WIDA, 2018). With the standards teachers have a way to gauge effective assessments and teaching to allow more regulation for the practice of teaching English as the target language. Therefore, in this project the resources will be aligned to these standards to make the resources more efficient and effective tools for educators.

Approaches to Training

Teaching English as a Second language is common to many educators. with the influx of students coming to the United States from all over the world, it is assumed that many will not have English upon their arrival. From personal experience, as an educator who has worked with EL students in formal and informal settings, I find the more challenging part of English Language instruction comes when a student arrives with interrupted formal schooling as this often impedes the student's ability to access the content along with having little to no experience with the English language. Having been a language student with interrupted schooling myself, I can see both sides of the issue. There were many times when as a student I became frustrated by my lack of ability to understand, wishing that I had the key that others held to access the content.

From my experiences working with EL students, I have observed this frustration in them as well and have set out to make a change in the world of pedagogy to enable teachers a way to provide their students with the skills necessary to access difficult or challenging content. My personal experiences as an English learner, my experiences as an English Learner teacher along

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with the observations and experiences of my peer teachers helped to inform some of the need for a cohesive place where teachers can access the tools necessary to help their SLIFE students. In proving a need for a lack in materials it can often be difficult to find resources that support a lack of material. We more often find research supporting the need for materials and we found there are less materials for SLIFE because it is hard “to know what you don’t know” as they say.

Taking into consideration the need based on personal experiences and observations, by myself and my peer teacher, Mackenzie Burkstrand who has encountered similar experiences in working with EL SLIFE students. She too found that working with middle schoolers there was a limited bank of resources for our language students that were meaningful and pertinent to their current age levels and interests. Together, we hope to create a website that is one large site where teachers can go to find any and all necessary information for SLIFE learners.

The reasons for teacher training programs are to help teachers to create a process of self-reflection and refinement of their practice in order to enhance and grow their knowledge in specific areas of teaching (Gardner, M., & Darling-Hammond, L. 2017). With the influx of immigrants to the United States as a whole, it is necessary for mainstream teachers to be prepared when working with students of different cultures and languages who will seek to learn English as their target language. The information on how to work with SLIFE students and where to find resources can often become a necessity for teachers who are already taxed with meeting many specific and varying needs at one time, therefore the need for this website is to be desired by teachers who do not have the time to create their own resources.

There is more than one reason for obtaining information on SLIFE students and often for teachers they include personal and professional development. Personal Development includes obtaining outside influences for personal gain to sharpen personal skill areas or skills that need to

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be developed. Professional Development involves gaining information from other sources for professional gain and not necessarily involves any other intrinsic motivation for learning and growth.

We hope to promote both reasons for visiting our site both to aid in professional development of teachers and to aid in their personal development. Teacher preparation programs such as the program at Hamline University requires that all education students take at least one course that involves teaching English Language learners however many programs do not share this same requirement. Therefore, we hope this website will help educators to access the necessary information to teach their ELL students and moreover their SLIFE students. We want all educators' generalists and specialists to feel as if this resource can be a great asset to their classrooms. The curriculum can be accessed to either be used in conjunction with the lesson or as a stand-alone lesson depending on the requirements of the school.

The site can also be used in lieu of teacher training for professional development as it is in accordance to WIDA standards it can be used as a place to start for new teacher training. New teachers can use our leveled reading and writing to create dynamic lessons for their SLIFE students that have age appropriate materials for their students.

In the next chapter, a review of the literature that will be surveyed for the project will be discussed. The connections to the standards both statewide and nationally will be discussed as well.

Summary

Later, in chapters two and three, the idea of teacher preparedness and ideas for necessary knowledge pertaining to the levels for SLIFE students will be addressed. In order to best assist students in their learning there is a process of best practice that should be used when receiving

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new to country and SLIFE students. In some cases, students who are SLIFE students will be educated in the United States for a time then return to their home country then reenter the United States and continue schooling. They will then have gaps in their knowledge that differ from those students who have interrupted schooling in their home country before coming to the United States. Knowing the differences in the way to handle the student's individual needs is just one example of ways that we as teachers need to prepare for our unique student needs. The next chapter will also address the standards that will be used to align the materials and curriculum with a nationwide standard so that teachers do not have to spend time ensuring alignment and can focus on the lessons themselves.

Finally, the end of chapter two chapter will address the four domains that are targeted as they provide a structure for which assessment can be used to measure student growth. The domains and structure are leveled and can help teachers ensure that they are keeping their SLIFE students on track for success. The website will provide all the crucial tools for educators to help their SLIFE students adapt to their classroom lessons.

CHAPTER 2

SLIFE CONSIDERATIONS

A Survey of Literature

As Second Language Learners with Interrupted or Limited Formal Education represent a somewhat smaller proportion of English Learners, which estimated to be between 10%- 20% of ELs (Advocates for Children of New York, 2010; de Velazco & Fix, 2000), their difficulties in learning can easily overwhelm educators. As this population struggles, there becomes a desperate need for more materials and more literature that is relevant and engaging for SLIFE students. This need comes from the influx of students coming to the United States who are lacking formal instruction but also who need learning interventions that are cognitively in line with their development.

In seeking to provide answers to the question, *“what are the necessary tools to provide to teachers to help them in preparation for teaching students with interrupted formal education at the primary level?”*, I will provide a brief review of the literature which provides different perspectives, historical context, ideals for new teachers and how to guides. It is necessary to have the materials for SLIFE students aligned with State Standards so that teachers do not have to work to adapt the material but can access information that they know will adhere to the guidelines provided by the state.

The framework for the standards and the data that accompanies SLIFE learners will be a necessary guide for the justification of the project. This will then lead to the concentration on best practices for language acquisition based on the surveyed research. To further understanding of the setting that is necessary to help teachers make SLIFE students more seamlessly integrated into the classroom, we must cover the subject of classroom culture also referred to as classroom

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climate. The next section will address professional and personal teacher development ideas and finally the chapter will summarize with parent involvement strategies.

Framework: State Standards and Statistics on SLIFE Education

It is important to provide readers seeking knowledge on the subject of EL and SLIFE students the background necessary to build the case for their participation in the preparation of their students (Francis, D. & Rivera, M, 2006). The average mainstream teacher will encounter ELL students on a regular basis and their understanding of where their students are coming from and how it affects them as a teacher is imperative. The texts that will be studied include the need for teachers and their role in the public-school system. The how to guide will look at the reasons that cause SLIFE students to lag in concepts necessary to graduate against not only their English-speaking peers but also how they lag behind other English Learners as they do not often have smooth lines of transition from one country to the next in their learning processes (Custodio, B. & O'Loughlin, J, 2017). It was also observed that many students with limited formal education drop out because of cultural dissonance. Also, when providing a western focused and culturally insensitive curriculum to ELs, even in a sheltered environment, it does not come close to engaging the dominant and immediate needs of SLIFE students (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011).

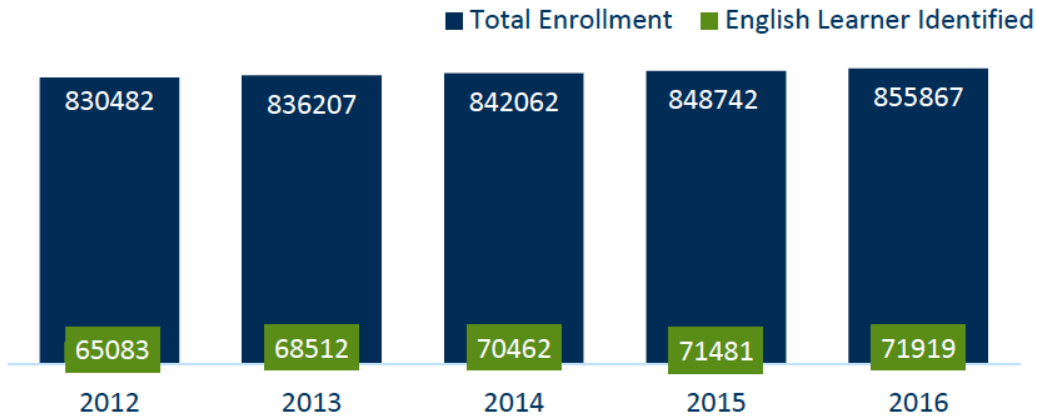
Further statistics will be analyzed so that readers can observe the need for continued support with EL and moreover SLIFE students, as there is a growing demographic in schools across the country this year, 2019. The Minnesota Department of Education says that there are 70,432 English Language learners within Minnesota Public Schools. The number of Identified ELL students continues to rise at a faster rate than total enrollment for the state. See Chart 1

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below.

Chart 1: Total K-12 and English Learner Enrollment in Minnesota Public Schools, 2012-2016

The number of identified English learners has continued to rise at a faster rate than total enrollment.



This graph represents a large growing population of ELs as more refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers come to the U.S. each year. As the population increases, so is the need for teacher's competency in State Standards. One way to educate teachers is through professional development. The idea of equipping professionals in the field of education seems simple but out of necessity it has been approached for general EL Learners and not as specifically addressed with SLIFE students at the Primary Level. Therefore, this project will seek not only to increase awareness of the need for educators to be knowledgeable about the specific needs of the SLIFE students, but also how to tackle the daunting and overwhelming task of approaching the standards with curriculum specific ideas and scaffolds.

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SLIFE Best Practice for Language Acquisition

Although EL service as a whole is much newer than many student services, there are many leading experts who clearly define the best ways in which to help students acquire both social and academic language. For example, *The Practical Guidelines for the Education of English Language Learner* helps define many ways literacy is learned in the regular EL learners. In conjunction with the insights from DeCapua and Marshall's work in *Reaching ELLs at Risk: Instruction for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education, Preventing School Failure*, the knowledge of how to take teaching from basic scaffolded instruction to the process of culturally relevant and scaffolded instruction will be ascertained in this rationale. These works have helped to define the field of best practices for Language Acquisition.

It can be difficult for teachers to navigate how and what to introduce to a SLIFE student and therefore it is necessary to provide information to teachers on the best practices for language acquisition in areas such as vocabulary. The use of Dr. Isabel L. Beck's Model for Vocabulary Instruction will be demonstrated for teachers to acquire the specific skills on how to best implement this practice with their students. There are also practices that have not worked for SLIFE students these case studies will be discussed and observed.

One example being, in a recent study conducted by a University of Hamline student, Kristina Herman Hill, she spent time in a local classroom where she observed a sheltered SLIFE student who was a refugee from Burma. This student was considered to be bright by her teachers. He had interrupted schooling as a result of her years of living in a refugee camp and when she was enrolled in the 11th grade, she was only at a third-grade reading level. Her teachers took the mainstream curriculum and modified it to meet the comprehension level for the student. This student was expected to continue learning at her regular 11th grade level with slightly altered

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materials and was not given the proper scaffolds to correctly reach language acquisition (Herman Hill, 2015). From examples such as this, we learn the importance in the structure and implementation of literacy skills.

Teachers Understanding MALP

One of these approaches is The Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP). MALP is a method created by Andrea DeCapua and Helaine W. Marshall that is designed to guide SLIFE students to transition towards a western approach to learning. Other approaches such as the distinction between social and academic language, known as BICS and CALP, developed by Jim Cummins will be necessary to involve so that teachers know how to build each of these language skills. Considerations for these approaches will be referenced within the project to promote best practice.

This case study MALP, also brings up the classroom environment in which the SLIFE student experienced many assimilation tactics that very likely affected the student's ability to acquire literacy. This, along with other considerations such as the stages of language acquisition, will be used in compilation for the creation of a comprehensive guide that teachers can use in creating the most informative best practice models for their student's success. Teacher's will need a basic understanding of the practice so there will be a definition provided.

Classroom Culture

There is a delicate balance to the way in which teachers aid in the process of integrating a new student into the classroom. teacher must first consider the background of the student, his or her prior knowledge, the student's culture, and home and target language in order to make the most educated decisions about the unique attributes each student holds in order to help them feel included (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). The development of a specific classroom culture can

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change the way a SLIFE student interacts with their education throughout their academic career. Focusing on the needs of English Learners within the mainstream classroom can help to highlight the needs of these students with a comparison of sheltered instruction. The discussion of the best environment for SLIFE students will be addressed throughout the chapter on classroom culture.

The need for students to feel comfortable in a classroom environment is essential for the learner to feel safe enough to take risks when learning the language (Bostad, Cwikla & Kienzle, 2015). This may not seem necessary, but to a student of an age level that is higher than that of their ability, they become very conscious of their personal skills and this is when they retreat into themselves and refrain from participating which can hinder their learning process.

To further SLIFE learning we will also look into best practices involving specific techniques to enhance learning with things such as technology as Nan Li makes apparent that technology can provide multiple portrayals of an idea or topic. The use of technology can make it possible to explain abstract concepts to students in multiple facets (Li, 2013). Other strategies on how to prepare for a classroom of SLIFE learners will come from The New York State Department of Education (2011). Guidelines for educating limited English proficient students with interrupted formal education. These guidelines approach the subjects of cultural awareness and placement options which will greatly aid teachers in approaching the task of placing and being cognizant of their student needs. The guidelines also approach the subject of parent involvement which will come later in the review as an essential item in ensuring SLIFE student success.

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Teacher Preparation for EL Students Personal and Professional Development

It is easy to feel helpless in teaching when there are so many different and specific needs for each student. The process that can be daunting can be alleviated with access to information that seeks to explain SLIFE student behaviors and age appropriate cognition. The task of teaching language needs to be unpacked for educators so that they can provide the best possible education to all learners.

In the following literature, the idea of preparation and how to become more informed will be discussed while referring to best practices and specific instructional topics for teachers who are promoting language in diverse classes. Later in this chapter we will delve into the specific teaching practices that teachers can take in approaching instruction for SLIFE learners. The preparation of teachers is not only for their personal gain and the gain of their students but also so teachers can act as advocates and stewards of information in their schools which can then be brought to administrators, and district representatives (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2013).

Vocabulary Instruction. Dr. Isabel Beck, (2008) another leader in the field of teaching English Language Learners (ELLs) speaks to the idea of having a model to promote the reception of vocabulary in ELLs. This model is widely recognized to aid SLIFE learners with the introduction of other scaffolds such as visuals and etymological explanations. It can take SLIFE learners more time to become familiar with the concepts that regular ELs face and therefore simple additions to pre-existing models can be used to make teaching the concept of vocabulary more potable for SLIFE learners. Beck, chooses a type of scaffold that enhances the visuals, phenomes while classifying words. The three-tiered-approach breaks down the level of difficulty and build prior knowledge for the student to create a frame of reference in their minds so that he or she might build on or add other concepts to the words that they learn.

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Teachers can use Beck's approach as a means to help students create a mind-map that enhances the connections they make to specific words that teachers draw out of dense texts. The practice of pulling out vocabulary words for ELL students is not new in the field but the unique structure that Beck provides gives a sound basis for students to learn even the most difficult of words. If they can master more difficult words they then have access to the content which is the main goal for employing different tactics to gain ELs understanding of a concept (Richards-Tutor, Aceves & Reese, 2016). Furthermore, targeted vocabulary instruction is highly necessary for ELs, but it will not allow them enough of the instruction to access the content alone. Direct instruction will only account for about 20% of the number of words students must learn to keep the pace required by academic texts; as it can be time intensive (Coyne, McCoach, & Kapp, 2007).

Pragmatic Instruction. Teachers have to determine the type of high-quality instruction that they will need to prepare so that their SLIFE students become proficient in literacy and numeracy (Cummins, 1999). The type of discernment a student needs in order to understand the context of meaning for specific language use is called Pragmatics. "Pragmatics acts as the basis for all language interactions and contact. It is a key feature to the understanding of language and the responses that follow this. Therefore, without the function of Pragmatics, there would be very little understanding of intention and meaning (*All About Linguistics*, 2019). Cummins discusses the need for explicit instruction of both Informal language which he refers to as "social language" inside and outside of the classroom; He also engages in conversation with teachers about the extreme need for EL students to access and control the use of formal or "academic" language. These two types of language function as a branch of pragmatics, help students to understand and become better acclimated to the English-speaking world. This process of teachers

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learning the difference between the two types of language is imperative to their students so that the students have that basis of control on the usage of the language in different contexts (Cummings, 1999).

Assessment Instruction. Teachers will also face the task of building programming based on the state specific standards. With the use of WIDA and Margo Gottlieb's ideas on assessment we will discuss ways to build this type of measurement and the reasons to use standard measures. Making an assessment can be a large task or a small task depending on the scope of what the teacher is attempting to measure. The reason we use assessment with ELs is to simply measure growth. The issue that we face as teachers is how can we provide educational equity based on a diverse set of learners that promotes access and fairness in all aspects of the assessment's design? This concept of equity is highly stressed by Margot Gottlieb. Her research design model for allowing ELs access is explained in her work, *Assessing English language learners: bridges to educational equity*.

When designing an assessment for ELs according to Gottlieb, we have to consider underlying bias we have. This could be anything from assuming that all students know what baseball is, to assuming that all students have read the works of Dr. Seuss and in particular if they know the book, *Green Eggs and Ham*. We have to delicately approach the subjects while considering student's background knowledge as we aim to assess students on the specific knowledge that they have at hand. If the teacher assumes that a student is familiar with the book *Green Eggs and Ham*, then proceeds to ask questions about rhyming words, it may be inhibiting their EL students who understand the concept of rhyming but do not know the book from demonstrating their knowledge of the requested targeted concept. SLIFE students might also be able to rhyme in their native language but might not have the ability to do so in the L2 thus

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preventing them from demonstrating that they understand the concepts of rhyming just not in the capacity at which they were asked to produce the language by the teacher who did not consider the student's background or prior knowledge. EL teachers must consider the background knowledge that their students have and in being knowledgeable about this concept can often help other mainstream teachers understand the caution that should be taken in creating other mainstream assessments that might inhibit EL students from demonstrating their knowledge. This leads to a common and current issue on the lack of existing research that promotes the equitable success of SLIFE students in the mainstream classroom.

As many researchers seek to promote the introduction of culturally relevant or culturally responsive teaching along with the concepts of the presented MALP instructional approaches. There is still a need for more specific and more quickly accessible information for educators pertaining to the education of SLIFE students in their classroom. In deciding on an area of focus for the Capstone, my partner and I really wanted to find an area where information was lacking, an area where we can fully contribute to education for teachers and students with a topic that is becoming more and more relevant in the English Learner community. Thankfully, Minnesota is a state that seeks to include the SLIFE population in their professional development opportunities. With the current research we are fortunate to have thanks to the Minnesota Department of Education, our Capstone project will include information that surrounds the current and local research.

Professional Development Opportunities. In Minnesota alone, there are a number of conferences and seminars that specifically address the needs of EL learners. Many of these conferences often focus on the other types of ELs such as SLIFE and Migratory Students. These informational settings are opportunities for teachers to enhance their comprehension of these EL

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Subgroups. Some of the local conferences include MinneTESOL, ELL Education National Conference, WIDA Consortium conferences and Webinars and more that can be found listed on the Minnesota Department of Education website. The conferences provide a way for educators to connect with other educators in the respective field, with local and national curriculums created for ELs and SLIFE students. They also seek to give practical instructional tips that can be used in a current classroom. These invaluable conferences make it possible to share researched backed ideas with local educators. This idea is much like our goal to find a way to share information beyond local forums at a larger level to allow all educators access to materials for teaching SLIFE no matter where they are in the world.

Parent Involvement and Growth for SLIFE

Learning happens inside the classroom but it also happens where we are in our everyday lives. The necessity for parent involvement is that all children spend a significant of informal learning time typically with their parents and in doing so there are ways that parents can get involved to help make their child's acquisition of English and integration into a culture an easier transition. In many ways, the involvement of my parents in my education contributed greatly to my personal success. This is not often something that teachers remember to consider in their practices at it seems to be outside of the school and therefore not their place. The consideration for parent involvement with respect to the idea that parents are not always able to be involved in their child's direct and formal education is recognized. In order to help these parents who may not feel they have the time, ability, or place we will provide this non-treating environment of a translatable, free resource in the form of a website to allow them to feel included in their child's education.

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A very important question that arises for many parents is, “*How can I tell if my child is learning English?*”, In this project we will strive to provide answers on how growth is shown in EL/ SLIFE students so that parents can be part of their learner’s education. Parents are often forgotten when it comes to education as teachers are the usual source for information.

In the project, we hope to also empower parents to get involved with their child’s learning. For me, my parents’ involvement in my education was the apex of my success. Even though parents themselves are often learning along with their students, the information we will provide will be translatable or easily translated so that they can fully participate in their children’s learning. Reviewing some successful cases such as that of Rabinow and Muhlfeld, we will dive into the needs that parents have from educators and vice versa to help establish a guide for both parties to have and maintain successful relationships that will help their students. When conducting or planning a parent cooperative meeting, information night, workshop or other event involving parents, many schools need to consider quite a few culturally sensitive and relevant factors that we do not always consider naturally (NYSED, 2007).

Therefore, many lists and guidelines will be reviewed in this text to get a sense of what to consider and why to consider certain nuances of culture when planning these events. It will also be necessary to discuss the state requirements for information that parents have access to or should receive upon their students qualifying for EL and SLIFE services. As parents and caregivers provide the majority of the “education” that their children receive outside of the classroom, ensuring that they are equipped with as many tools as possible will be beneficial to student success (Pendergast & Bahr 2005).

In conclusion, the literature surveyed will bring constructive ideas to carry over into the methodology of how we will use research from other authors to inform the action research that

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will take place over the course of the project of building a website of tangible materials for educators. The materials we hope will enable teachers and parents to become more effective in sharing their knowledge with their students and others. In my search to answer the question, *“what are the necessary tools to provide to teachers to help them in preparation for teaching students with interrupted formal education at the primary level?”* The next Chapter will outline the details of the project that my partner and I will complete over the course of the next semester. Where my partner and I will discuss the need for the project that we have chosen using researched methods to help fill in the gap that we have determined by the lack of current resources for teachers who need more tools to best educate SLIFE students.

Chapter three will use the research gained from the literature surveyed in order to demonstrate the need, usage and purpose for the creation of a website. The major issue being that there is a current lack of quickly accessible information to teachers, parents and administrators on how to teach the very unique population of students know as SLIFE. The chapter will give way to not only the rationale for creation but also the amount and scope of the project. The timeline we initially planned and the final outcome of the process in creating a cohesive website.

CHAPTER 3

BACKGROUND FOR CREATING A WEBSITE

Introduction to the Project

The problem educators are faced with today is the issue of how to teach students with interrupted or limited formal education. Educators today are already tasked with comprehending and assessing the needs for so many other areas of specialized care (Francis & Rivera, 2006). These areas include but are not limited to special education services, speech learning services, English language services and more; this list in itself is a very large undertaking.

The experience that my partner and I both hold, is that there is a disparaging amount of resources available to new teachers in particular when it comes to student with interrupted or limited formal education. Our peers and fellow teachers agreed that there was not enough information to help them learn how to work with SLIFE. It is our goal to create and research a number of materials that we can implore to teachers who are lacking support in this area over the course of the 2019 Fall semester. It is said that more than 40% of students in school have experienced trauma (Hall, Souers, & Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2017) we know that many of these students involved in this statistic are SLIFE students.

My partner, Mackenzie Burkstrand and I experienced a lack of resources and solutions as new teachers, we felt wholly unprepared and ill-equipped to help meet the needs of these children. We know the importance of working with these students and we want to seek to help other educators feel supported by our resource in order to help them at all stages of their careers. In order to help new teachers and teachers who need more support in supporting their classrooms with these particular students we will answer the question; *“what are the necessary tools to provide to teachers to help them in preparation for teaching students with interrupted formal*

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education at the primary level”? Mackenzie will focus on the upper levels (middle school and high school) and I will focus on the primary levels (kindergarten through fifth grade) and on teacher preparedness. We will add to the site a slew of teacher resources and research that can help to define terms, make lists for teacher preparation of best practices and help promote the personal and professional development of new teachers in the specialized area of SLIFE learners.

Chapter Three will give the details of the project which we are setting out to complete over the course of the next semester. Our project is a website that will be an all-encompassing resource for teachers and hopefully parents and families as well. We want to make a positive impact on our community of fellow educators so that they feel supported where we lacked support in our initial teaching careers. We want to make it possible for teachers to feel they have a free and easy access to a resource that can supplement a lot of the hard work in lesson planning to include a substructure for them. Chapter three will name the intended audience; the setting for the research, including the theories and framework, discuss the duration of the project, and finally, it will give the reasons for the necessity of creating the website.

Intended Audience

My partner Mackenzie Burkstrand and I will work together on the common goal of initially outlining a type of template to create a website that will define the supports that aid in helping teachers providing resources for mainstream teachers to use best practices with SLIFE students. The intended audience for this research will primarily focus on the promotion of new teacher growth but it will also encompass the needs that other teachers who lack resources will find particularly useful. The intended audience is also for the families of SLIFE learners as we will include a section of further information to help them become connected and involved in their children’s learning. I will work on a template that can provide the framework for creating a

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teacher site based on a personal case study where I will seek to compile a list of ways to involve families of SLIFE, I will also create and compile “quick tips” and lists for educators so they know where to start. My partner Mackenzie will work on a similar template for teachers but will address resources for the upper grade levels. We will seek to find resources that we can test over the course of the semester. We plan to have enough time to try out the links and only list the sources that we find useful for the SLIFE population.

Setting of Case Study and Research Collection

The focus on primary school material collection, best practices and methods done by myself, will be conducted in a Public Charter Classical School. In this school there is a population of 35% EL students and a certain portion of ELs with SLIFE backgrounds. This school will work as a place where data will be gathered on language growth of students participating in the program as well as having informal teacher surveys conducted to see what fellow teachers know about the population of SLIFE.

The construct of using different perspectives will be key in this research to create a well-rounded view of what students need from teachers, what teachers need from other teachers and what other information that has already been created to be the best practice for teaching SLIFE students. The perspectives will come from not only my own research but also from Mackenzie’s observations and research using MALP framework along with classroom environment to create the website materials. I will focus on the teacher preparedness aspect and create materials and test them with my colleagues in order to see what works for them and what does not work for them in terms of ease in incorporating into their everyday lessons.

Theories and Framework

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Along with MALP framework, the work of Bostad, Cwikla & Kienzle will look at the classroom culture necessary to best promote the learning of English for SLIFE students. We will then turn to teacher preparedness and the professional and self-development required for teachers to have when teaching SLIFE students the majority of this work will come from the work done by Gottlieb and Beck who support the EL language acquisition through systematic methods and within those methods they make suggestions for scaffolds that will be adopted to come up with the structure for creating lesson plans that teachers can download directly from our website.

John W. Cresswell states that you can help, “unshackle the constraints of irrational and unjust structures” through the use of Transformative Framework (Cresswell, 2018). In many ways it is an injustice to the children in the U.S.A. who are coming here with interrupted or limited formal education to have teachers with limited resources to help them. As teachers are the ones who ultimately unlock the language barrier and help SLIFE students to reach the content necessary to become what is considered as educated in the U.S., it is crucial that we combat the constraints of the lack of resources for SLIFE students and ensure that justice for their learning in the mainstream classroom and in the sheltered classroom are accomplished through our research leading to the website that will be full of substantial resources for educators. This task is not a small task and therefore requires time to gather research, conduct research and create content.

Length of Time and Other Channels

The Length of time for the project will span from August 2019 to December 2019. We plan to have a five to six-month timeline in order to get our site functioning for public use. With the goal of creating a functional website that is open for free public access including a collaborative space for sharing information by the end of December 2019. The ultimate goal is to

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have the site ready in November with only final and minimal edits so that there is time to reflect and make necessary changes before the final early December goal. The site will focus on the areas of teacher preparedness and strategies for curriculum at both primary and secondary levels. My portion of the research will include an aforementioned area for teachers which will and will include space for teacher input on the collaboration page for lesson planning. As the majority of the research will be qualitative data collected will come from the demographics of students in relation to the demographics across the state of Minnesota with a focus on Public Schools. The research will also include observations from a Public Charter school with several EL SLIFE students. The case study of classroom observations will take place from September to November, so that there is ample time to provide conclusive observations and to share and compare notes with my partner Mackenzie. Over the time we will also collect resources and ask peers and colleagues to test the resources we find as well.

For the other channels we hope that his working site will be one that can be added to as we glean new information from other researchers and teachers. We want to continue to add research and information to the site such as family resources but this work may have to come after the initial goal of getting primary and secondary curriculum as well as creating a teacher preparedness section. We want to focus on the pieces of the website that will directly aid in giving resources to teachers. We will include things like checklists and multimedia links to provide information that is quickly digested and easily shared. There will be other components that will be discussed as time goes on about adding in community contributions as well as finding other links to resources that teachers might need to visit other websites for further understanding. We want to make our website a detailed place to gain different aspects of knowledge, understanding that we may not hold all of the answers and leading to the reason we

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have chosen to present our information in this format. We also want a space for teachers to collaborate through sharing lesson plans and have a space to ask questions this feature will be added in late October after we determine where the teacher guides and lesson plans should be added. We anticipate this to be a site that will continue on after the Capstone project and know that we will not be able to provide everything we wish for such as a discussion section and curriculum. However, we will create space so the other components can be added at a date later than our anticipated December 5th deadline.

Rationale

Websites often encompass work of the authors and contributors but they are also able to provide information from other complete sources (D'Ambra, 2019). This is one aspect of why we felt that it was necessary to use a website format. We can link our sources to other sources (although we mentioned are limited) with the hope that in the future we continue to gain more information in this particular field of research with our transformative approach. We have also chosen to use the form of a website for our presentation because it will be a free and accessible guide that all teachers will have access to in order to educate the public. It is also a means to communicate so there is the possibility that we could have an area on the site in the future for educators to share resources with each other. Another reason that we chose a website is because it is fluid. Meaning that we can add information and we can allow the natural changes that occur in best practice to be updated as more information in the field is gained. We can also easily link and include other tested sources that are supportive of the ELL field in general.

As I have shared, going into my teaching career I felt that there was an alarming lack of resources that surrounded the area of supporting lesson planning and teacher development in relation to SLIFE students. When you search the internet for sources there are few and far

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between that target just SLIFE learning. Many of my colleagues in fact, did not know what a SLIFE student was and that was true at varying levels of their careers. This sentiment was held by my partner in this project going into her career. The lack of teacher awareness is where I hope to focus my efforts in finding a tangible solution for solving the informational gap. We then decided that some type of action had to be done so that other teachers did not feel like they were undereducated in the field of SLIFE learners. Our approach to justice for these students is to create a means for research to meet qualitative information in order to provide a truly well-rounded view on helping SLIFE students gain the means of having the most equitable chance at acquiring the English language and to further their understanding of content. The website can help to easily spread information and provides a way to access it from anywhere being another reason for this type of presentation. We want to empower educators and in this age we all can regularly access information via the Web.

Summary

The main idea of our research is simply to help teachers. We want this to be done through the channel of a website that is free and public for everyone to access. The goal of doing this is supported by many well-known researchers in the field of ELs and more specifically on SLIFE learners. The purpose of making the website is to seek social justice for the often marginalized group of students who need support. The group of students is growing year by year and teachers need to have easy to use and ready to go materials as they are already overwhelmed by regular curriculums and other specialized services. The idea has come from the lack of information currently available and can be easily rectified by compiling the contributions of other authors and other teachers by taking personally captured data to organize a perspective that is balanced and used to help teachers. The teachers who then help SLIFE students to be able to unlock the

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missing information they need (language) to access the content they are required to learn for their education in the United States in either a mainstream or sheltered classroom.

The choice to use a website comes from the idea that we can have an ever-evolving space where information can be added as time goes on and as the field develops. We want to one day include the contributions of resources through having educators share their successes one day in the future. We also want to include a space for discussion and collaboration with either a “drop box” for lessons and or a comment spaces for educators to converse. The goal of the current focus however is to focus on the aspect of teacher preparedness and primary resources that can be used at short notice. Furthermore, my partner will have the goal of working on secondary sources that can be used in the sheltered SLIFE classroom setting.

In summary, this project will ultimately promote justice for the underserved SLIFE community and empower teachers to better serve their SLIFE students. We hope that we can use the platform to inform and serve administrators and families alike. The best we can do as educators is to help our fellow educators with the knowledge we have from our research, experiences and findings. We hope to create a project that goes beyond the Capstone and is used for years to come by the public as a credible knowledge reserve for teaching and learning.

The question of how to support new teachers and the materials necessary in order to support their teaching of SLIFE students will be discussed thoroughly in Chapter 4 as my partner and I will share the process of the process of creating our collaborative website and the process that we used to determine the tools teachers need to educate SLIFE students. We will seek to inform the public using feedback from other teachers and outside editors so that our site is based on information others deem informational as well.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of the website is meant to include a collection of useful resources in order to better equip teachers with the knowledge of how to teach their SLIFE students using primary through secondary resources for quick and easy access. I kept my focus on parent involvement, teacher preparedness and research-based planning. While my partner focused on MALP, secondary sources and Trauma Informed pedagogy. We wanted to create a site that was all encompassing but knew we could not cover as much ground individually. We wanted to display different angles of who would interact with our site. We thought about our demographic as teachers, families and administrators. We wanted to include quick and easy solutions for teachers to learn more about and to access content for SLIFE students.

We knew that using local information from other educators, research, personal learning experiences and field experience would poise us to take a unique approach in creating a site that is from teachers and for teachers. We took many ideas about how to provide this information to the public and in the end the best way we could do this was through the option to let educators share their ideas whilst we (my partner and I) act as curators of the information. The results are a set of checklists, multimedia functions, document collaboration spaces and articles that help to promote researched backed ideas for working with SLIFE students.

In creating the site, we encountered hurdles that were manageable but did affect our timeline. We used discretion when posting certain information to maintain a level of brevity, readability and clarity to the site. This made it so we had less overall content but it lets our perspective viewers gain the knowledge they need without getting too lost in educational jargon.

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We chose to directly address our specific audiences in certain respects such as saying, “Dear families”. This choice was purposefully driven to connect with our different audiences on different pages. We had to make decisions to only add the things we felt were absolutely necessary for educators to know as there is a lot of information out there but our goal was to gather and present it in the best way possible. The editing in short became a large portion of our project. This leads into some of the other challenges and limitations that we overcame.

Limitations

My partner and I originally set out to create a set of content that included curriculum and leveled reading resources. Unfortunately, the creation of curriculum from the ground up takes quite a bit of time and we knew full well that even with two people we could not complete an entire curriculum set on our own. That is how we came up with the idea of creating a website with a place for others to share their curriculum.

The site we hope in the future will contain elements of standards-based curriculum but as we discussed the possibility, we realized that we wanted sources that are proven to work and building and testing an entire set of curricula was not within the scope of this project. Our next brainstorm was that, the best place to find such resources are from teachers themselves who have tried different resources with students and proven with a measure of their success or failure. This is why instead of creating it all ourselves and not having a way to test if the curriculum is successful we were able to add in a section of the site to include a file share with Google Docs so that teachers can share their SLIFE resources in a collaborative space. We specifically did not include Elementary SLIFE lessons in this area for one reason. The use of the sites we included do a lot of the necessary skill building and it is not as common to have SLIFE students in elementary that cannot use regular ELL material. Lev Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal

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Development (1926) is something we considered in our research when making this decision because students at the lower levels are often more able to pick up language and have better opportunities to access more language at the lower levels, therefore many of the tips and leveled works can be used by the lower grades.

The idea of allowing teachers to share makes it so our site continues its intended purpose of enabling access to the most current information on how to teach SLIFE. We also learned over this project that it can be difficult to work with a partner but it also is an incredible experience to be able to bounce ideas off of each other and form what were once just ideas into fully formed and useable information. The product of working with my partner has been a wonderful experience because we both bring such unique perspectives to the table. We each have different backgrounds in where we have worked and how we grew up so we are each coming with different ideas about how learning for English Learners work but we do hold in common our background in the teaching program at Hamline.

Another limitation that we experienced was the hope we had to provide translated materials for parents. However, this takes time and monetary resources. As the website is fully functioning and something we hope to use beyond the capstone, we hope to be able to add this function once we have shared materials and curriculum from other teachers. With my background in translation, I can provide some languages but we would need to reach out to other sources for certain translations to add to the parent page. For the meantime we have included a page where parents can see a list of websites that will help their children learn English. The sites and ideas are linked so that they can go directly to the sites.

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Results

Our site is a working domain that we purchased we own the name *Teaching SLIFE MN* we plan to publish the site and have it working once we have completed the Capstone. We have also created a working email connected to the site with integrated Google Docs so that our visitors can interact through uploading lesson plans. We also have a question and comment section where we can choose to respond questions or we can keep as an open forum for users to respond to each other. We anticipate the site to be seen by families as mentioned, so we included a lot of helpful places where families could look up information on how they can feel included in their children's education. Most importantly we made it possible for educators to reach the Minnesota content based and research backed information that they need to be prepared to teach and grow their EL populations.

The process in creating the website taught me the importance of planning and the details that we hoped to include being sometimes more difficult than we once perceived. I discovered through the process as well that I really enjoy the planning and organization of creating a website. The creation of pages in relation to "parent" pages was a new process to me. We had to determine which information made sense to "drill into" other information so the pages would be linked and cohesive. The process also helped me learn how to co-plan with my partner. As a teacher, I have not had much opportunity for planning with other teachers. This part of EL planning is highly necessary because EL teachers are often optimizing or restructuring other teacher's plans to make them supportive to the EL population. I was thrilled to have a like-minded person who was just as excited about the topic to plan out the site with and fine tune it into a resource that is functional and can be used right now.

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On the journey to improve teacher resources I learned a lot about myself as a teacher and the kinds of materials that I need in advance to be successful. I learned that many materials are still necessary and in time I would love to continue to grow the site to include low level texts for higher grade levels. This being because of the information I learned about relevancy and engagement for older students from working with my partner and seeing the value in her end of the project as well. I learned a lot about how we see more SLIFE in the upper grades and they often have more gap knowledge that is not easily filled with quick solutions. I learned about how knowing one's class is critical in solving their individual needs in learning to unlock the content.

As a scholar, I found myself being even more interested in the way that we teach the lower level grammar and linguistic features to higher level students and how it can be difficult to ensure that they are grasping the concepts without lowering the content down so low that they are no longer engaged. This made me ponder doing an engagement study for ELs as a whole. As I observed many of my students enjoying the lessons that I found readily available but as the levels grew it was harder and harder to find relevant topics for older learners. This said, I hope to continue as we created the collaboration space for other teachers and as we learn more from our user base. If we could grow the site into a series of practical and leveled curriculum that is where my interest lies for future research. I have recently solidified this sentiment amongst other teachers who are still seeking relevant leveled texts for their older students. I hope to continue the work of solving the question of, *“what are the necessary tools to provide to teachers to help them in preparation for teaching students with interrupted formal education?”* and extend it to the higher level by creating or curating low-level older student texts for better student engagement.

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Uses for the Site

As stated, we hope to continue to build this site and make it a resource available to the public. We see it as a space for collaboration and a space to ask questions to not only us as the curators but also to other educators. We will have a discussion board available so that teachers feel they can use each other as experts. Along with the space for teachers to share their lesson plans and curriculum, the discussion or comments will be enabled to let them gather and share ideas in the online space. We will maintain and act as guides for site postings as we want to keep a level of truth and organization to the content. The main use I see the information I contributed is for new teachers or teachers who are new to English Language Learners.

Conclusion

To summarize this experience, we created a website that to enhance English Learner Students Education for those with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education with research backed ideas and techniques. The website is a collection of not only our research but also a collection of hand selected and tested sites that by my partner and I have found to work for students. We were very specific about the types of outside websites and ideas that worked in teaching SLIFE and we were careful to not select other sites that proved to be bulky and unbacked by research.

The site is a working cultivation of many other resources and sites that provide readily available materials to SLIFE teachers, administration and others involved in SLIFE. In this Capstone, we accomplished the goal of curating and creating materials to educate others while determining the types of materials necessary to teach SLIFE at both the primary and the secondary levels. I plan to always continue learning as I hope this site will contribute to the continuation of research that surrounds the field of SLIFE. I plan to evolve our site with new

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information as I collaborate with other educators and as new research presents itself to the SLIFE community.

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