

Professional Development Implications of Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes Toward English Language Learners

Stuart A. Karabenick and Phyllis A. Clemens Noda
Eastern Michigan University

Abstract

Research-based professional development is essential for districts and teachers across the nation that face the challenge of providing a quality education for increasingly diverse student populations. In this study, the researchers surveyed 729 teachers in one midwestern suburban district recently impacted by high numbers of immigrant and refugee English language learners (ELLs) about the teachers' beliefs, attitudes, practices, and needs related to ELLs. Results focused on: (a) overall trends and typical responses and (b) differences between teachers with more positive attitudes versus those with less positive attitudes toward having ELLs in their classes. In general, teachers held positive attitudes toward ELLs, bilingual education, and bilingualism; however, there was considerable variability, with sizeable proportions of teachers holding less supportive beliefs, attitudes, and practices. Teachers more accepting of ELLs in their classes were more likely to believe that an ELL's first language proficiency promotes school performance and does not impede learning a second language; bilingualism and bilingual education are beneficial; ELLs should be tested in their first language; lack of fluency in the second language does not imply lack of comprehension; and ELLs do not consume additional teacher time or district resources. Results also showed that teachers with more favorable attitudes toward ELLs tended to take a mastery versus a performance (or competitive) approach to instruction, and had a higher self-efficacy for teaching ELLs. Based on the results of this study, the authors discuss implications for professional development.

Introduction

Rising enrollments of linguistically and culturally diverse immigrant and refugee students present local district administrators and teachers with what

many perceive as insuperable challenges to the delivery of quality instruction, the attainment of acceptable levels of progress in academic and English-language achievement, and the No Child Left Behind Act's (2002) mandatory documentation of adequate yearly progress across all student populations. With state and federal funds in short supply, hiring additional certified or endorsed bilingual and/or English as a Second Language (ESL) instructional staff is not a tenable solution for many districts. Rather, training and professional development programs are more realistic options for meeting the needs of English language learners (ELLs) because they can provide teachers with requisite knowledge and skills. Because considerable variation exists among districts, and teachers within them, comprehensive information is essential to target areas of greatest need. In this paper, we describe our collaboration with a district to meet the needs of a recent influx of refugee and immigrant ELL students and the teachers who serve them in the regular classroom setting.

The present study focused on teachers from two perspectives. The first involved districtwide assessment of teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and practices on ELL-related issues such as whether instruction in English rather than students' home language is detrimental to learning. The second examined differences between teachers who were more versus less accepting of ELLs in their classes (i.e., attitudes toward ELLs). This analysis is predicated on the assumption that, in addition to the skills and multicultural competencies (e.g., Dilg, 1999; Liston & Zeichner, 1996) required to provide quality instruction for an increasingly diverse student population, teachers' attitudes toward ELLs and bilingual education (Brisk, 1998) are equally important. Attitudes are important because they affect teachers' motivation to engage with their students, which can, in turn, translate into higher student motivation and performance. Furthermore, teachers' attitudes toward ELLs can also affect teachers' receptivity to professional development efforts to improve ELL-related capabilities and to dispel unwarranted beliefs about language and cognition that, unchallenged, can impede attempting new instructional practices that are more conducive to ELL student success.

Although some research has focused on this issue (e.g., Knudson, 1998; Rueda & García, 1996; for a review, see Moore, 1999), to date, no multivariate study has assessed both the distribution of teacher attitudes in typical school systems and the constellation of associated beliefs that characterize teachers more accepting, versus those less accepting, of ELL students in their classrooms. In addition to assessing teachers' attitudes and beliefs, we elicited information regarding their perceived needs for professional development to target issues that required professional development and training, and to provide a baseline for determining the effectiveness of interventions.

Methodology

Profile of the District and ELL Population

Set in the heart of the world's automobile capital, the district serves 15,000 students across two counties, with nearly one third of that population identified as limited English proficient. For over half a century, the district has successfully served a number of small cities, with special program outreach to surrounding school districts. The district is home to working-class families from widely diverse ethnic backgrounds who hold skilled and unskilled jobs in the auto industry and in surrounding businesses. Once the stronghold of suburban out-migrations of second- and third-generation Poles, Italians, and other European immigrant groups, the district is now host to a new wave of refugee and immigrant students who present both new challenges and new opportunities to teachers, administrators, English-monolingual students, and the community.

Portions of the district attract a large and steadily increasing population that speaks Arabic and Chaldean (a dialect of Aramaic), a growing number of Albanians, an array of other nationalities from the Balkans and Eastern Europe, and growing enclaves of students from Southeast Asia, China, and India. Concentrated along a narrow 10-by-3-mile corridor, the ELL students are an admixture of recent immigrants, those who have arrived during the past year, others who have been here for several or more years, and a significant number who count as first generation. Many Arab, Chaldean, and Albanian American students are preliterate in their home language, with little or no histories of prior schooling. Although the majority of the newly arrived ELLs commence their formal education in the district, there are significant numbers of transfers from schools in the adjacent metropolitan area who arrive in the district with below-grade-level literacy and learning skills.

Over half (55%) of the ELLs qualified for free and/or reduced lunch, and the district administrators reported that many ELLs experience acculturation-related difficulties as they adjust to a new country and new schooling experiences. Many secondary-level ELLs find the formal school environment threatening and are under tremendous pressure to learn to speak, write, and read English fluently in order to succeed in a competitive society and, more immediately, to evidence progress on high-stakes state tests required by the No Child Left Behind legislation (2002). District data indicate that significant numbers of middle school and high school ELLs fail several or more subjects each year.

ELLs' parents, whose educational levels average eighth grade or less and who have limited English proficiency, often are unable to assist their children with homework and to develop fundamental literacy skills. Most ELLs have little exposure to spoken English or access to English print materials at home.

Profile of Participants

Data were obtained from 729 teachers in the district, which accounts for 98% of the entire population of teachers in the district's three high schools, seven middle schools, and 16 elementary schools. The median number of teachers in the high schools was 68, at middle schools 37, and at elementary schools 21. Most teachers had been in the classroom for more than 20 years (45%) or fewer than 5 years (30%). Eighty-eight percent of the teachers had had ELLs in their classes at some time (including current classes); they estimated, on average, that 16% of their students had been classified as ELLs. For the survey year, 74% had some ELLs in their classes, with ELLs comprising 14% of students, on average. These distributions were very positively skewed, with most classes having few ELLs and a small proportion having larger numbers. Eighteen percent of the teachers reported some degree of fluency in languages other than English, primarily Spanish, French, and German. In addition, 5% ($N = 35$) of the teachers in the sample indicated that they had ESL or bilingual credentials or training.

Procedure

Initiated by the district's request for technical assistance in formulating a substantive and relevant professional development program for regular teachers with ELL populations, the study progressed through three phases: (a) identification of research-based conceptual frameworks; (b) refinement of individual survey items; and (c) piloting and psychometric refinement of the final version. Together with the district superintendent, the authors created a survey development team, which consisted of the district's curriculum directors, principals from schools with high concentrations of ELLs, and the district's research and evaluation consultant. Input was also sought from human resources, the district's director of professional development, and other administrators familiar with and responsible for ELLs.

Development of Teacher Survey

Based on the professional literature and the survey development team's combined 150 person years of experience in education, the team identified knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that impact regular and bilingual classroom teachers' delivery of quality educational services to ELL students in regular and bilingual settings. These included:

1. Teacher efficacy: general and ESL
2. Approaches to teaching: mastery versus performance
3. Second language learning
4. Relationship between language and academic skills
5. Bilingual bicultural education
6. Assessment of ELLs
7. ELLs and collaborative instructional approaches

8. ELLs and classroom resources and time on instructional tasks
9. Interactions between ELL and non-ELL students in the classroom
10. Teacher beliefs about ELLs' parents
11. School climate for ELLs
12. Teacher attitudes toward ELLs
13. General sociocultural attitudes
14. Bilingual resources

Seventy-eight items or statements were generated within these 14 conceptual areas, calling for teacher-respondents to indicate their degree of agreement using a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1, for “strongly disagree,” to 5, for “strongly agree”). The instrument also included an open-ended portion calling for the prioritizing of needs and comments by teachers. Importantly, some statements included alternative wording to accommodate teachers who had no experience with ELL students, allowing them to project what they would do, or what conditions would be like, if they had ELL students in their classes. Introductory instructions provided the rationale for the alternative wording and stressed the value of information provided by those teachers.

In addition to responding to these statements, teacher-respondents were given the opportunity to indicate the following: (a) type of assistance in the form of skill development and information they thought would help them improve their ability to teach ELLs; (b) if they currently had ELL students in their classes or had prior experience teaching ELLs; and (c) type and/or nature of credentials related to teaching ELLs. Further, teachers were asked to estimate the current proportion of ELL students in their classrooms, estimate their proficiency levels in languages other than English, and add comments and suggestions about teaching students with limited English proficiency.

In addition to ensuring the comprehensive nature of the survey, the development team placed considerable emphasis on securing the confidentiality of the respondents. Completed surveys were returned to the external consultants in a manner that, to the extent possible, contributed to teacher confidentiality. Data entry, storage, and management was, and will continue to be, conducted independently of the district. All individual information is and will remain available only to, and be the property of, the external consultant team. Only aggregate data are reported, and only to the extent required to meet district professional development needs. For analysis purposes, respondents generated a code (with a 94% compliance rate) that permitted matching individual surveys administered at different times. Respondents also were asked to identify their school, grade range taught, and years of experience.

Where appropriate, exploratory factor analysis and estimates of internal consistency (Cronbach's α) were used to derive scales (described subsequently), which were constructed by averaging the responses to individual items (i.e., unit weighting) that had salient (i.e., $> .5$) factor loadings.

Items were reverse coded where appropriate so that higher values represent more agreement and less disagreement. In general, mean scale values close to 3.0 indicate either that most responses were in the “neither agree nor disagree” range or similar proportions of agree and disagree. Values greater or less than 3.0 suggest more or less aggregate agreement, respectively.

Findings and Implications for Professional Development

Teacher Attitudes Toward ELL Students

Generally, teachers in this district held favorable attitudes toward having ELL students in their classes. Specifically, 70% agreed that ELL students would be a welcome addition to their classroom, although less than half (43%) indicated that they would like to have ELL students in their classroom. Likewise, 51% disagreed with the statement that they would rather not have ELL students in their classes, and 53% disagreed that they preferred not to admit ELL students to their classes. However, despite these generally favorable attitudes, a substantial number of teachers were either uncertain or had unfavorable attitudes. Because responses to these statements were very consistent with one another, they were combined to produce a scale of attitudes toward ELL students that has adequate reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .77$). The scale mean of 3.5 reflects the proportions described above. The standard deviation of .80 also indicates considerable variability. Descriptive statistics for ELL attitudes and other dimensions assessed are shown in Table 1. Also shown are relationships (Pearson r) between ELL attitudes and those dimensions.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between Teachers’ Attitudes Toward English Language Learners (ELLs) and ELL-Related Beliefs

ELL attitude and belief scales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i> <
Teacher attitude toward ELLs	3.5	.80		
Language, learning, and assessment				
First language (L1) does not impede second language (L2)	3.5	.72	.24	.0001
L1 proficiency promotes school performance	3.4	.85	.13	.001
Performance not indicative of comprehension	3.2	.91	.12	.001
Students should be tested in native language	3.2	.90	.12	.001

Note. Likert scale coding: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Table 1 (cont.)

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between Teachers' Attitudes Toward English Language Learners (ELLs) and ELL-Related Beliefs

ELL attitude and belief scales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i> <
Bilingual education and bilingualism				
Bilingual education	2.7	.85	-.16	.0001
Bilingualism beneficial	3.7	.83	.24	.0001
ELL student resource use				
ELLs use more resources	2.7	.91	-.21	.0001
ELLs more socially problematic	3.2	.72	-.29	.0001
Perceived support				
Perceived building receptivity	3.2	.62	.30	.0001
Perceived district support of English as a Second Language and bilingual education	3.1	.71	.28	.0001
ELLs' parents				
Learning English and involvement	2.5	.64	.16	.0001
Culture				
General beliefs about cultural differences	3.4	.61	.39	.00001
Self-efficacy				
General self-efficacy	4.2	.50	.18	.001
ELL self-efficacy	3.4	.70	.57	.00001
Classroom goal structure				
Mastery approach to instruction	4.1	.59	.21	.0001
Performance approach to instruction	2.6	.72	-.16	.001

Note. Likert scale coding: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Beliefs About Second Language Acquisition

Most district teacher-respondents (80%) considered it possible to be equally proficient in more than one language. However, slightly more than half (52%) believed that the use of a first language (L1) at home interferes with learning a second language (L2), whereas 29% did not believe this and 23% were unsure. Sixty-five percent of the teachers, however, did not believe that learning in one's L1 interferes with learning in an L2; a small proportion (16%, or 118) did agree, and approximately the same proportion (19%) neither agreed nor disagreed. These items comprised a scale (L1 does not impede L2), and the correlation of .24 ($p < .0001$) indicates, as expected, that teachers with more positive attitudes toward ELL students were more likely to believe that L1 is not an impediment.

Thus, whereas most teachers believed it was possible to be equally proficient in two languages, they expressed ambivalence with respect to the effect of L1 usage in the home on the speed and efficiency with which ELL learners acquired an L2. This apparent inconsistency in thinking prompts the question, "Why would teachers believe that use of the native language in the home interferes with L2 acquisition if, in fact, teachers truly believe it is possible to be equally proficient in two languages?" This ambivalence signaled a need to offer professional development sessions that incorporated second language acquisition theory, complete with examples of successful techniques to build bridges between the home (L1) and second or majority language (L2).

On items designed to elicit attitudes toward preferred methodologies for second language acquisition, teachers' responses evidenced a predisposition toward an immersion approach (e.g., the item: "The more students are exposed to English, the more they will learn"). This may reveal an emphasis on the acquisition of behavioral interpersonal communicative skills, rather than the use of students' L1 as a means of developing academic cognitive skills.

This set of responses again underscored the need for clarification of the transitional model of bilingual education, which uses the L1 and English as vehicles of instruction in all content areas required for the completion of a grade, ensuring that the ELL student acquires academic competence and language proficiency at the level that will ensure his or her ability to compete fairly with English-monolingual peers.

Relationship Between Language Literacy and Academic Skills

Sixty-six percent of the teachers believed that if ELL students develop literacy in their L1, it will facilitate the development of reading and writing in English; 12% disagreed; and 22% were unsure. However, fewer teachers (42%) agreed that ELL students would do better in school if they learned to read and write in their L1; 27% believed that they would not do better; and 32% were unsure. When we combined responses to these items (to create a scale called

L1 proficiency promotes school performance), we found a small but significant correlation ($r = .13, p < .001$), revealing a trend that teachers with more positive attitudes toward ELLs perceived that students' usage of their L1 did not interfere with their acquisition of English or their academic performance.

Over half of the teachers (55%) disagreed with the statement that non-native English-speaking students' inability to express themselves in English indicates failure to understand; however, 22% agreed and 23% were uncertain. Thirty-five percent of the respondents agreed that ELL students' English-language fluency is strongly related to how well they can understand concepts in such subjects as math and science, whereas 41% disagreed and 23% were unsure. Twenty-seven percent of the teachers believed that nearly fluent English speakers have little difficulty with higher order thinking in such language-dependent subjects as literature and social studies, whereas 39% disagreed and 34% were unsure. Responses to these items formed a consistent scale (performance not indicative of comprehension) that had a small but significant correlation ($r = .12, p < .001$) such that, as expected, teachers with more positive attitudes toward ELLs were more likely to believe in the independence of oral language production and cognitive skills.

Results point to teachers' apparent lack of knowledge and, hence, understanding of the relationship between L1 and L2 in the mastery of academic content. This affirms teachers' responses on items of the survey related to second language acquisition, further documenting that many district teachers may be unable to distinguish between oral communication proficiencies and cognitive academic-language capabilities. This finding underscored the need to offer solid theoretical foundations in second language acquisition and its relationship to successful academic skills development and achievement among ELL students.

Assessment of ELL Students

Although 82% of the teacher-respondents indicated that some ways of assessing abilities and academic performance may be inappropriate for ELL students, they were uncertain as to whether ELLs should be tested in English or their L1. As a group, 45% of the teachers indicated a preference for testing in English, 27% of the respondents did not prefer testing in English, and 28% were uncertain. When the statement was reworded to read, "ELL students should be tested in their native language," teachers' responses further substantiated their preferences for which language should be used for testing students; 42% disagreed; 31% agreed; and 26% were uncertain. These two items formed an adequately reliable scale (students should be tested in the native language), which had a low but significant correlation ($r = .12, p < .001$) with teachers' ELL attitudes: More positive attitudes were associated with beliefs that ELL students should be tested in their L1.

In addition to providing teachers and the district's bilingual and ESL specialists with state of the art tools for assessing the content-area achievement of ELL students in both L1 and English, results pointed to the district's need to review its assessment and placement procedures for ELL students and promulgate these procedures to its teaching personnel. As a first step toward establishing a procedure for assessing the academic achievement of ELLs during the transition period in their acquisition of L2, the district proceeded to review and/or adapt currently existing measures of academic achievement available in over 20 languages.

Bilingual Education and Bilingualism

Forty-five percent of the district's teachers did not believe that ELL students are retained too long in bilingual and ESL classrooms at the expense of their English acquisition, while a significant number were unsure (36%), and 19% ($n = 136$) agreed that the ELL students had been retained too long. While nearly one fourth (23%) of the teachers believed that the research is conclusive about the benefits of bilingual education, most were either uncertain (53%) or believed that the research is inconclusive (24%). In other words, this issue remains unresolved for a large number of teachers. Most teachers (74%) disagreed that bilingual education means instruction primarily in students' native language, with little instruction in English; only 11% agreed, and 14% were uncertain. Many of the teachers (49%) were uncertain about whether bilingual education is far more costly than English-language instruction, whereas 29% agreed that it is and 22% disagreed. Although responses to these items were not very consistent (Cronbach's $\alpha = .34$), they were nevertheless combined into a scale that reflected unwarranted beliefs about bilingual education (e.g., it is ineffective, more costly, more time consuming, and deleterious to academic progress of non-ELL learners), which correlated inversely with attitudes toward ELL students ($r = -.16, p < .0001$). Thus, as expected, teachers with more positive ELL attitudes were less likely to hold the previously cited "popular" but negative beliefs about bilingual education. The mean of 2.7 also indicates that in general, as indicated by the proportions presented above, teachers disagreed with these negative beliefs.

There is little doubt that teachers in this district were certain about the advantages of bilingualism. Specifically, most (75%) recognized that a higher level of bilingualism has practical, career-related advantages, with only 5% disagreeing and 20% uncertain. Consistently, 52% believed that higher levels of bilingualism can result in the development of greater knowledge and mental skills, yet a large proportion (36%) were uncertain, and only 12% (84 respondents) disagreed. When combined (Cronbach $\alpha = .48$), the scale (bilingualism beneficial) correlated with ELL attitudes ($r = .24, p < .0001$): More positive attitudes toward ELLs were associated with beliefs in the benefits of bilingualism.

These results provide evidence that the district teacher population would benefit from substantive, research-based information, which, in turn, would optimize their interface with the district's bilingual and ESL services. In sum, teachers' apparent need for information was evidenced by their misinterpretation of the definition of bilingual education and its implications for the instruction of ELL students, and overestimation of the costs of bilingual and ESL education. Further indicating a need for information was teachers' ambivalence about the research-based demonstration of the value and benefits of bilingual education and bilingualism, which stood in marked contrast to their own widely held beliefs that bilingualism can contribute to the development of higher order thinking, mental capabilities, and success in the world of work. This apparent information gap could be remedied by intensive, substantive professional development, which takes into account the legal, social, political, and pedagogical dimensions of bilingual education.

ELLs, Classroom Resources, Time, and Sociability

Like any student with "special needs," ELL students are often described as requiring additional classroom resources in the form of more instructional attention or time required for teachers to resolve conflicts between ELL and non-ELL students. Thus, teachers were asked about resources and whether their interactions with ELL students were different than those they had with non-ELL students. Consistency would suggest that more positive teacher attitudes would be associated with beliefs that ELL students interacted with teachers in ways similar to those of non-ELL students. Alternatively, it is possible that teachers with more positive attitudes toward ELL learners would sustain their level of acceptance of ELLs in their regular classrooms, even if those ELL students required more of their time and effort, in which case no relationship would be found.

Sixty-six percent of the teachers believed that ELL students take up more of their time than non-ELL students (16% disagreed and 18% were uncertain). Consistently, 58% disagreed with a statement that they spend no more time with ELL students than with non-ELL students (30% agreed and 12% were uncertain). However, it is important to note that only 34% believed that the time and resource differential would be at the expense of non-ELL students (38% disagreed, 28% were uncertain). This is consistent with the fact that 66% of the teachers believed that ELL students require no more classroom and other school resources than do non-ELL students. Interestingly, these beliefs did not depend on whether teachers have had ELL students in their classes or on the proportion of students in their classes who were ELLs. A scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .46$) based on these items (with appropriate reversals for consistency) correlated significantly ($r = -.21, p < .0001$) such that teachers with more positive attitudes toward ELL students were less likely to believe that ELLs require more resources than their non-ELL peers.

In general, most teachers believed that there are (or would be) good relations between ELL and non-ELL students. Specifically, 61% agreed that there is (or would be) little conflict between these student groups, 61% agreed that ELL students were not much different than non-ELL students when it comes to socializing, and 62% disagreed that ELL students would have a difficult time relating to other students in their classes. However, they were very mixed about whether conflict did (or would) arise between ELL and non-ELL students, although more (46%) believed there would not be conflict (with 24% believing there would be conflict and 30% uncertain). Consistent with beliefs about classroom resources, teachers with more positive attitudes toward ELL students were less likely to believe that ELLs in their classes had a more difficult time socially than non-ELL students ($r = -.29, p < .0001$).

Empowered with instructional strategies and additional in-class resources (tutors, materials, information), regular teachers may be able to effectively meet the needs of ELL students in the mainstream classroom at little or no additional cost in time or resources, or loss of service to non-ELL students. Nevertheless, one third of the teachers indicated that ELL students did absorb more time and resources than their English-monolingual peers, which suggested that the district's professional development content should address this issue in greater depth.

Furthermore, although it generally appears that ELL and mainstream students experience little inter-ethnic tension or conflict, teachers observed a trend toward the development of enclaves or cliques in which ELL students tended to spend more time interacting with one another compared to their interactions with mainstream peers. While this may be a function of comfort levels for both ELL and mainstream students, this phenomenon may also reflect a fear or lack of understanding of the "other," pointing to a need to provide technical assistance beyond workshops and other professional development experiences, to teach strategies for incorporating the resources of parents and ethnic community-based organizations into instructional planning and activities. The findings also suggest that technical assistance should be directed toward guiding teachers in locating resources and materials that promote positive intercultural interactions and provide opportunities to optimize cultural and linguistic exchanges across diverse groups of students.

Beliefs about Building and District Support for ELLs

Forty-six percent of the teachers indicated that ELL students in their buildings are not, or would not, be viewed as problems by other teachers or building administrators; however, 30% did believe that the ELL students are viewed less favorably by building administrators and their fellow teachers, with 24% indicating they were uncertain of the school's perceptions related to ELL students. Just over two thirds (68%) of the teachers thought that ELL students' parents are or would be welcomed as valuable contributors to their

school's learning community by the other teachers and school administrators. Thirteen percent thought they would not be welcomed, and 19% were uncertain. The two-item scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .46$) correlated ($r = .30, p < .0001$) such that teachers with more positive ELL attitudes were more likely to perceive their buildings as more receptive to ELL students and their parents.

Teachers responded to several statements about their perceptions of district support for ELL students and bilingual education. There was clear evidence that teachers believed the school (52% agreed, 10% disagreed) and district administration (45% agreed, 20% disagreed) fully supported the concept of bilingual and ESL education for ELL students. There also was consensus, however, that insufficient resources were provided, with 45% disagreeing (25% agreeing) that the district's bilingual and ESL services supported instructional needs, and 45% disagreeing (25% agreeing) that the program regularly made resources and materials available for use in their classrooms. Teachers' consistent responses to statements about support (Cronbach's $\alpha = .69$) moderately correlated to the derived scale, indicating that more positive teacher attitudes toward ELLs were associated with greater perceived support from teacher colleagues and building administrators ($r = .28, p < .0001$). The results from this portion of the survey may point to a need for enhanced visibility and accessibility to resources and support services in the forms of a bilingual and ESL resource center; stepped-up field based technical assistance to classroom teachers; and intensification of "push-in" rather than pull-out tutorials in which bilingual and ESL teachers and tutors at all levels work with teachers in the classrooms to support the academic progress of ELL students.

It would be expected that teachers with more positive attitudes toward ELL students would perceive that the district provided sufficient resources to assist in the instruction of ELL students. We also would expect that the more positive their attitudes toward ELL students, the more frequently teachers would view their buildings as offering a positive, supportive environment for ELLs and acknowledge the contributions of diverse languages and cultures to the mainstream school setting. Conversely, more negative teacher attitudes would be expected to positively correlate with the degree to which the respondents perceived their fellow teachers or administrators as unwelcoming, with a perception of ELL students as problems who should not receive special consideration. In one recent study (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2002), teachers' perceptions of administrative support was linked to their teaching self-efficacy. Support for this speculation is indicated by the significant correlations between teachers' attitudes toward ELL students and their perceptions of receptivity in their buildings ($r = .30$) and district support of ESL and bilingual education ($r = .28$).

Beliefs about ELL Students' Parents

Most teachers (76%) did not believe that ELL students' parents who do not speak English after having been in America for a long time are probably incapable of ever mastering English (11% did believe that, and 12% were uncertain). A majority (58%) believed that continuing to speak their L1 and not English was an indication that parents wanted to preserve their L1, although 19% disagreed and 23% were uncertain. The issue of preserving native languages versus learning English elicited somewhat mixed responses. More teachers did (42%) than did not (17%) think that parents believed it was more important for their children to learn English than to maintain their L1; however, a large proportion (40%) were uncertain. There was more agreement on parental involvement, with 62% of the teachers believing that parents of ELL students are not as involved in the schools as are parents of non-ELL students; 13% believed they are, and 25% were uncertain. The latter three items scaled, although with very low internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .31$). Despite this, the scale correlated with ELL attitudes ($r = .16, p < .0001$), suggesting that teachers with more positive attitudes toward ELL students were more likely to believe that ELLs' parents want their children to learn English and are just as involved as parents of non-ELL students.

The need for teachers to acquire more knowledge related to the use of the home language and its effect on school achievement in academic content areas, again, surfaces as an area for potential discussion, as well as a need for more teachers to understand the elements of second language acquisition. There also appears to be a pressing need to explore strategies to increase parent involvement among the ELL populations at the classroom, local building, and district levels.

Beliefs About the Broader Cultural Context

In addition to the classroom and school contexts are those beliefs about the broader social and cultural context in which instruction of ELL students is embedded, such as whether teachers believe cultural differences enrich the lives of community members, engender conflict and tension, or create barriers to social harmony, and even differences in how much teachers believe parents of ELL students support their children. There is every reason to predict consistency between teachers' attitudes toward ELL students in their classes and their views of the community's cultural landscape. A series of items elicited teachers' general beliefs about culture. Teachers overwhelmingly (89%) agreed that cultural differences enrich the lives of community members. Consistently, a majority (62%) also disagreed that people from different cultures inevitably have difficulty living together in harmony, although 18% agreed with this statement. The least consensus was expressed in response to the question of whether cultural and ethnic differences are a barrier to the ability of families to work and socialize together, with 42% in agreement and 35% disagreeing.

Responses to these items were only moderately consistent (Cronbach's $\alpha = .35$), despite which the derived scale evidenced a moderately high correlation ($r = .39, p < .00001$) with ELL attitudes: Teachers with more positive attitudes toward ELLs were more likely to believe that culture is enriching and not divisive.

Although most teachers agreed that diversity enriches the lives of community members and that people of different cultures can live together harmoniously, there was ambivalence in their beliefs that people of different cultures can work and socialize together. Does this seeming discrepancy indicate that teachers may accept, even applaud, the concept of diversity yet have reservations about the day-to-day living out of diversity in the workplace and in the community? Ambivalence also surfaced with regard to teachers' perceptions about the degrees of parental support and care for children across cultures. In this latter regard, it cannot be determined whether the respondents believed that the ethnolinguistic minority groups were perceived as evidencing greater or lesser support or care toward their children than the mainstream culture. This response may be linked to teachers' responses that indicated 62% of the teachers believed parents of ELL students were less involved in the schools than parents of regular students; that is, teachers may equate "caring and support" with parental involvement in the schools.

Teachers' seeming acceptance of diversity in the community and school may actually represent their recognition of the inevitability of demographic changes wrought by urban out-migrations and immigrations, rather than a true acknowledgment of the opportunities that new members of the district bring to the community. Systematic districtwide training and activities cannot be quick fixes; rather, the results suggest that cross-cultural and intercultural dialogues and colloquia that go beyond surface expressions of acceptance such as festivals, foods, folk dances, and fashions would be required. Rather, these activities must be grounded in the "deeper" elements of the cultures' loci of control and impulsivity; child socialization practices; family structure; gender roles; and norms and values, which are expressed through the arts, customs, rites of passage, and religious observances.

Teachers' ELL Efficacy

In addition to beliefs about ELL students, their parents, and the broader community, we assessed teachers' beliefs about themselves in relation to ELL students, namely the teachers' capacity to promote learning (i.e., efficacy), which is considered a critical determinant of teacher motivation (e.g., Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Based on models of attitudes and behavioral prediction (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991), teachers' confidence in their instructional capabilities should be highly related to their attitudes, as well as behavior, toward ELL students. Evidence suggests that efficacy beliefs account for positive performance and other behaviors, even when controlling for actual abilities (e.g., more confident teachers

approach instruction anticipating success and the flood of positive emotions it engenders). In contrast, those who believe themselves less capable anticipate failure and its negative consequences.

While a substantial body of research exists on the efficacy for teaching students in general (e.g., Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), there is little that focuses on ELL students. Because their targets are highly similar, we would expect that teachers' attitudes toward ELL students would be related to their sense of efficacy toward teaching all students (general efficacy). The relationship should be stronger, however, when restricting efficacy to ELL students (ELL efficacy). In other words, teachers' attitudes toward ELL students should be more closely associated with efficacy beliefs when they refer to the same group of students. We developed an efficacy scale specifically addressing teachers' efficacy with respect to ELL students to test these predictions.

Because teachers' responses to the five items measuring general teacher efficacy were highly consistent (Cronbach's $\alpha = .60$), a scale was created by averaging responses to those items. The resulting scale had $M = 4.2$ and $SD = .50$. Results indicate that teachers were quite confident in their ability to conduct their classes in ways that help students understand the material, teach their assigned content areas, teach learning strategies to help students master the material, and themselves master what is expected of them.

The six teacher efficacy items related to the teaching of ELL students also were highly scalable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$), with $M = 3.4$ and $SD = .70$. We can conclude that teachers were moderately confident in their ability to adapt their instruction so that ELL students could understand the material and help ELLs succeed in their classes, and teachers believed themselves prepared to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students. However, there was considerable variability, and thus many teachers scored in the lower reaches of our ELL efficacy scale.

As expected, teachers believed themselves significantly less able to teach ELL students than to teach students in general ($t [725] = 31.4, p < .00001$, effect size = 1.2). Also, as expected, there were differences in the strength of associations between teachers' ELL attitudes and efficacy. The correlation between teachers' attitudes and general efficacy was significant but not very strong ($r = .18, p < .001$). It was much stronger between ELL attitudes and the more specific ELL efficacy measure ($r = .57, p < .00001$). Thus, teachers with more positive ELL attitudes also were more likely to believe they were capable of providing quality instruction for ELL students.

Approaches to Teaching: Mastery and Performance Goals

We also considered it important to assess teachers' achievement goals, because of their current dominance in the conceptual framework on school motivation. This approach (e.g., Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001; Midgley,

2002; Nicholls, 1984) differentiates between teachers' focus on mastery versus performance. Mastery goals stress involvement in tasks and individual improvement. By contrast, performance goals focus on students' abilities, which are made more salient by inter-student comparisons. Considerable research suggests that a focus on mastery goals is more conducive to the development of intrinsic interest and long-term motivation, whereas a stress on performance goals (especially when they emphasize the avoidance of failure) is linked to poorer performance and negative emotions (Midgley, 2002). ELL students are more likely than non-ELLs to suffer from interpersonal comparisons and competition because of language and cultural differences. Therefore, ELLs are more likely to thrive in classrooms that are more mastery focused and less performance focused. The present study examined whether teachers with more positive attitudes toward ELL students stressed the more beneficial (i.e., mastery) goals for achievement.

Four mastery goal items formed an internally consistent scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .67$), with $M = 4.6$ and $SD = .59$. Most teachers, therefore, reported that they made a special effort to give students work that is creative and imaginative; that they wanted them to understand the material and to enjoy learning; and that they gave them work that had meaning in their everyday lives. To the extent that these responses reflect their actual teaching practices, it would appear that teachers were attempting to create learning conditions that, based on research, are highly conducive to regular and ELL student achievement. Five performance goal items were also scalable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .69$), with $M = 2.6$ and $SD = .72$. Teachers favoring mastery-oriented techniques were less likely to display the work of high-achieving students as examples; give special privileges to students who were high achievers; help students compare themselves to others; or encourage students to compete with each other academically. Teachers' attitudes toward ELLs were, as expected, positively correlated with mastery approaches to learning ($r = .21, p < .0001$) and negatively correlated to performance approaches ($r = -.16, p < .001$). In other words, teachers with more positive attitudes toward ELL students in their classes were more likely to report approaches to teaching consistent with mastery learning.

The high degree of focus on mastery and much lower emphasis on performance-oriented teaching suggests that, generally, this district's teachers were creating classroom environments conducive to learning by all students. Because of the very high levels of existing mastery-oriented teaching, further increases in mastery orientation as a function of professional development programs would be unlikely. It is possible, however, that by highlighting for teachers the potentially detrimental implications of social comparisons for ELL students, an even lower level of performance orientation could be achieved.

Relationships to ELL Student Contact, Grade, and Experience

As shown in Table 2, the more contact teachers have had, or currently have, with ELL students in their classes, the more positive their attitudes toward having ELLs in their classes. The strongest association with attitudes is whether or not teachers currently have any ELL students in their classes ($r = .19, p < .001$). There also was a tendency for teachers in the lower grades and for those with less experience either in the present school system or in any school system to have more positive attitudes. Thus, less experienced teachers in elementary schools had more positive attitudes than did more experienced teachers of high school students.

Table 2

Correlations Between Teachers' Attitudes Toward English Language Learners (ELLs), Contact with ELL Students, Grade Level, and Teaching Longevity

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Teacher had ELLs in class at some time (percentage)	88	33	.12	.001
Estimate of ELLs in all classes (percentage)	16	20	.13	.001
Teacher has ELLs in class now (percentage)	74	44	.19	.001
Estimate of ELLs in class now (percentage)	14	20	.11	.01
Grade classification ^a	2.7	1.1	-.13	.0001
Years taught in any school district ^b	3.2	1.7	-.09	.01
Years taught in current school district ^b	2.9	1.9	-.09	.01

Note. Likert scale coding: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

^aGrade classification: 1 = K-2, 2 = 3-5, 3 = 6-8, 4 = 9-12.

^bYear classification: 1 = 1-5, 2 = 6-10, 3 = 11-15, 4 = 16-20, 5 = 20+.

Summary and Conclusion

In general, this comprehensive survey revealed a responsive district climate, ready for the institution of systematic professional development for its teachers of ELL students. The results also provided the framework upon which the district built the restructuring of its service delivery to ELL students

and the expansion of its outreach to the populations of ELL parents and community-based organizations. Although the majority of the teachers across the district's 26 schools expressed a relatively positive interest in serving ELL students in the regular classroom, their responses also pointed to a pervasive need for intensive professional development and training to equip them with the content knowledge and instructional skills to ensure quality instructional practices, and to enhance their levels of confidence in teaching ELL students. By incorporating cultural awareness and second language theory into districtwide professional development institutes, the researchers and district leadership reinforced the majority of teachers' positive disposition toward ELL students, while exerting a concerted effort to reach that 30% who indicated less than receptive responses toward that population.

While the majority of district teachers were very confident in their ability to teach most students, they were significantly less confident in teaching ELL students—a trend that clearly pointed to the need to focus training on building skills, expanding resources, and enhancing teachers' sense of efficacy and confidence, and, therefore, motivation to work with the ELL student population. Evident gaps in teacher knowledge of second language acquisition and learning, as well as the history, foundations, research, and pedagogy of bilingual education and instructional techniques in English as a second language, underscored the need to add those content considerations into comprehensive professional development offerings. The district responded to its teachers' reported sense of inefficacy in teaching ELL students by generating a series of building and cross-district grade-level trainings aimed at enhancing instructional strategies and approaches for working with ELL students; focus groups to more clearly identify specific needs; and customized grade-level trainings in reading, language arts, assessment, and parental involvement. Instructional strategies and curriculum adaptation sessions built on the majority of teachers' reported preference for mastery learning, a learning climate especially beneficial for ELL students.

Based on teachers' responses crediting their exposure to ELL students as contributive to their increased levels of positive acceptance and willingness to include them in the mainstream classrooms, the district proceeded with confidence to restructure its instructional models for serving ELL students through a combination of magnet and inclusion models. District confidence in the reconfiguration of its service delivery also was supported by the majority of teachers' beliefs that although ELL students might require additional instructional time, instruction of non-ELL students would not be adversely affected.

Teachers' responses pointed to a need for updated information on assessment tools and procedures used to identify and place ELLs eligible for services; thus, the district implemented a "nuts-and-bolts" series of training sessions. This training was designed to empower teachers with the skills to

support the district's newly adopted ELL assessment policies and to responsibly use assessment results to adapt content-area curriculum and instructional strategies to meet the needs of ELLs. The district also elected to participate in the combined onsite and online professional development offerings of Project LEP-Tnet (a Title VII/Title III Teachers and Personnel Training project sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education) to ensure continuity, quality, and consistency in the delivery of training. At this writing, more than 400 teachers have participated in the combined distance and onsite offerings.

District teachers reported that, on the whole, ELL students relate well to other students, socialize in ways similar to those of regular students, and do not experience unduly conflicted interactions; however, they expressed concern over the emergence of ethnic cliques, which could serve to isolate ELL students from their peers. This concern was echoed by a focus group of district administrators and the superintendent, who, together with identified community leaders, initiated the formation of a currently active districtwide Advisory Council, whose membership includes community-based ethnic organizations, civic agencies, and parents. The Advisory Council supports outreach, mentoring, and engagement of ELL students with their majority-culture peers.

District teachers' ambivalence in their characterization of their school environment for ELL students and their parents was interpreted by district leadership as a call for building-level training focused on parental involvement and engagement. The district and individual buildings identified and implemented activities and programs that would allow parents of ELL students to contribute their "funds of knowledge" to the school community. Strategies for increasing the involvement of parents of ELL students in the schools have been set into motion, including, but not limited to, the use of interpreters at meetings, the publication of bilingual notices and informational bulletins, and the expansion of liaison activity of bilingual staff in schools of high ELL concentrations.

More than a year after the district sought our help, and the subsequent development and administration of the survey tool, positive change has taken hold. Besides the launch of multiple, needs-responsive models of districtwide professional development and in-service training initiatives, the district has restructured its service delivery to ELL students, refined its assessment and placement procedures, and thrown open its doors to the ELL parents and community.

References

- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Brisk, M. E. (1998). *Bilingual education: From compensatory to quality schooling*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Dilg, M. (1999). *Race and culture in the classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Guskey, T. R., & Passaro, P. D. (1994). Teacher efficacy: A study of construct dimensions. *American Educational Research Journal*, 31, 627–643.
- Knudson, R. E. (1998). *The relationship between pre-service teachers' beliefs and practices during literacy instruction for non-native speakers of English*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED418074)
- Liston, D. P., & Zeichner, K. M. (1996). *Culture and teaching: Reflective teaching and the social conditions of schooling*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Midgley, C., Ed. (2002). *Goals, goal structures, and patterns of adaptive learning*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Midgley, C., Kaplan, A., & Middleton, M. (2001). Performance-approach goals: Good for what, for whom, under what circumstances, and at what cost? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93, 77–86.
- Moore, C. (1999). *Teacher thinking and student diversity*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED429947)
- Nicholls, J. (1984). Achievement motivation: Conceptions of ability, subjective experience, task choice, and performance. *Psychological Review*, 91, 328–346.
- No Child Left Behind Act, Pub. L. No. 107–110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2002).
- Rueda, R., & García, E. (1996). Teachers' perspectives on literacy assessment and instruction with language-minority students: A comparative study. *The Elementary School Journal*, 96, 311–332.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, A. W. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 783–805.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, A. W. (2002, April). *The influence of resources and support on teachers' efficacy beliefs*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.
- Zimbardo, P. G., & Leippe, M. R. (1991). *The psychology of attitude change and social influence*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

