

A Culture of Collaboration: Meeting the Instructional Needs of Adolescent English Language Learners

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This article details a study that focused on the supports that enabled an English language learner (ELL) facilitator to contribute to a culture of collaboration between the English as a Second Language (ESL) and Language Arts Departments to more effectively meet the instructional needs of ELLs in one culturally and linguistically diverse high school. Findings emphasize the importance of (1) a supportive leadership context for inclusion of ELLs and the ELL facilitator's work, (2) schoolwide supports for ELLs, and (3) collaboration and influence of the literacy team. The article describes the contributions of the ELL facilitator to the culture of collaboration between the ESL and Language Arts Departments, analyzes the structures and organization of the school context that contributed to this collaborative work to meet the instructional needs of ELLs, and discusses the importance of these findings for both research and practice.

doi: 10.1002/tesj.24

An increasing number of students whose primary language is not English are populating high school classrooms in the United States. These second language learners bring with them a set of special needs for teaching and learning, especially for mainstream content area teachers, who may have little or no specialized training for meeting these needs. Although there is not yet extensive empirical work focused on how mainstream content teachers typically teach English language learners (ELLs) or how they learn to more effectively teach these students in mainstream classrooms, scholars have begun to address the importance of

linguistic knowledge for mainstream classroom teachers (Fillmore & Snow, 2000; Harper & de Jong, 2004; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Walqui, 2000). These scholars argue, mainly on theoretical grounds, that teachers need to provide rigorous, content-rich academic coursework integrated with language development strategies to meet the instructional needs of ELLs.

This push for mainstream teachers to teach high-level content to all students, including all levels of ELLs, creates a challenging instructional environment. Most mainstream teachers have little professional preparation for teaching content to ELLs, let alone the linguistic knowledge to effectively meet the academic language development demands that these students require. English as a second language (ESL) teachers are often called upon to be the experts in their buildings (Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010) and charged with the task of meeting the instructional needs of ELLs both in their ESL classes and in mainstream classes. This leadership responsibility of ESL teachers can include developing capacity in mainstream teachers to more effectively meet the instructional needs of ELLs in content classrooms.

The role of teacher leadership in developing teacher capacity has the potential to influence mainstream teacher practice in a way that is authentic, embedded in the culture and context of the school, and ongoing (Cobb, McClain, Lamberg, & Dean, 2003). This article details a study that focused on the supports that enabled an ELL facilitator¹ to contribute to a culture of collaboration between the ESL and Language Arts Departments to meet the instructional needs of ELLs in an inclusive high school setting. This analysis highlights the ELL facilitator's ability to enact teacher leadership through her advocacy for ELLs in the mainstream and her content expertise in second language acquisition within a collaborative school culture. Building on recent research that highlights the potential of collaboration between ESL teachers and mainstream teachers to contribute to both the development of teacher leadership and improved student

¹ This school district had a cadre of ELL facilitators, typically ESL teachers who had 0.3 release time from their full-time ESL teaching positions to work with mainstream teachers on improving instruction for ELLs.

learning (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010), this analysis focuses on the following research questions:

1. What supports enable the ELL facilitator to contribute to the development of a culture of collaboration in order to meet the instructional needs of ELLs?
2. How do the structure and organization of the school influence this culture of collaboration?

In this article I describe and analyze the supports for the ELL facilitator's work and the collaboration between the ESL and Language Arts Departments in one high school. I focus on how she enacts leadership to influence the instruction of ELLs in mainstream content classrooms through her collaboration with these two departments. I also analyze the structures and organization of the school that influence this collaborative work. Specifically, I use the way the school uses common structures for instruction across content and classrooms, and how the school is organized to meet the needs of ELLs in the mainstream, to build a framework for understanding collaborative efforts.

FRAMING THE PROBLEM

The approach that I used to analyze this culture of collaboration and the supports that enabled teacher leadership relies on sociocultural learning theories and takes into account the interdependence of individual and social processes (Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa, & Goldsmith, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). In particular, I rely on communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) as a lens for understanding the interactions between the ESL and Language Arts Departments as these teachers develop mutual shared goals within a supportive leadership context. As teachers and leaders engage with one another with the express purpose of more effectively meeting the needs of ELLs in the mainstream, it is possible that they will make changes to the instructional practices used in their classrooms and school-level supports for ELLs. It is through the interactions of the participants and their participation with one another in a community that learning is possible. This learning is influenced by opportunities for the teachers and leaders to engage with one another in the work of more effectively meeting the needs of ELLs through such things as involvement on

a literacy team (with both mainstream language arts and ESL teachers), collaboration and coteaching in the context of mainstream classes, instructional coaching, and whole-staff professional development. Teachers and leaders coming together and working toward the common goal of ELLs learning can exemplify a community of practice.

In addition to this theoretical framing, this analysis draws from three main literature strands: (1) instructional needs of adolescent ELLs; (2) school culture, leadership context, and collaborative work; and (3) teacher leadership.

Instructional Needs of Adolescent ELLs

There is a growing consensus in the literature that the instructional needs of ELLs in mainstream content classrooms are different than the needs of native English speakers, and attempts to meet these differing needs should be based on knowledge of second language acquisition (Achinstein & Athanases, 2009; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Harper & de Jong, 2004; Lucas et al., 2008). Others point out that the needs of secondary ELLs are such that they are engaged in the double-duty work of learning content and language (Walqui, 2006).

Experts in this area argue that the use of scaffolding can enable the learning of content and language in the mainstream classroom (e.g., Walqui, 2006). Scaffolding strategies, such as modeling, bridging, contextualizing, schema building, re-presenting text, and developing metacognition, that are integrated into content classrooms can enable adolescent ELLs' to access high-level content (Walqui, 2006). Drawing on notions of scaffolding can help provide guidance when it comes to the observation of content teaching with ELLs at the high school level as well as contribute to the growing body of knowledge concerning best practices for the instruction of ELLs with the dual goals of learning language and content. In addition, it is important to acknowledge the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy—instruction that draws from and builds on the strengths of the linguistic and cultural diversity that students bring to schools and classrooms (Johns, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995)—as well as linguistically responsive pedagogy (Lucas et al., 2008) that calls attention to the

specific linguistic needs of ELLs and asserts that teaching with a focus on diversity is not enough.

Although there seems to be a growing consensus on what effective teaching for ELLs in content classrooms might look like (e.g., use of scaffolding strategies, culturally responsive pedagogy, focus on linguistic demands), less is known about how this ELL-responsive instruction is enacted in practice with actual mainstream high school teachers. Moreover, there is a lack of nuanced understanding of how content teachers develop their capacity for this type of teaching. Despite this lack of empirical evidence, districts and schools continue to put resources into the implementation of programs and professional development for teachers designed to improve the achievement of ELLs in content classes.

School Culture, Leadership Context, and Collaborative Work

In terms of school culture, there is agreement in the literature on the importance of the leadership context as influential to teachers' collaborative work (Coburn, 2001; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994). In particular, administrators who are able to establish a school culture with a focus on meeting the needs of ELLs can set the stage for teachers' collaborative work to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010). In collaborative school cultures for ELLs, "a collective vision is developed, philosophical beliefs and values are shared, and a common purpose is articulated" (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010, p. 57). It is important to note that principals can act as a supporting context for instructional leadership work with teachers (Mangin, 2007; Taylor, 2008). How teachers in the building perceive teacher leaders can depend on how their roles are communicated to the staff as a whole and how the principal supports their work. This supporting, or constraining, leadership context can influence the collaborative culture in a building.

Collaborative school cultures can lead to improved academic outcomes for ELLs because these environments encourage the ongoing interaction between ESL teachers and mainstream content teachers. Through consistent interaction, these two groups of

teachers have opportunities to share and plan for ELLs' curriculum and assessment (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010). Teacher engagement in a professional learning community is one possible way of encouraging teacher professional learning to meet the needs of ELLs. Current understandings of teacher learning place much emphasis on job-embedded, collaborative professional development opportunities, whether informal or formal, that focus on instructional practice to improve learning outcomes for students (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009).

Research suggests that the collaborative work of teachers that questions traditional teaching methods can contribute to more effective instruction for a diverse student population (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). In most comprehensive high schools today, the stratification of both content teachers and students is the norm. This lack of collaboration across content areas and the tracking of students have the potential to negatively impact linguistic minority students. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) found that teachers in the high schools they studied "responded to nontraditional students by maintaining conventional routines . . . changing little in how they relate to their students or organize their subject instruction" (p. 19). This finding has important implications for the way ELLs, often considered nontraditional because of their need to both learn content and develop English language proficiency, are likely to be taught in high schools. This reality underscores the need to develop teacher instructional capacity to more effectively meet the needs of linguistically diverse students.

Teacher Leadership

Finally, in recent years the proliferation of individuals in schools that have formalized teacher leadership roles with a focus on instructional improvement has grown substantially. Teacher leaders have a potentially powerful role in supporting classroom teachers' learning. In the accountability environment in which schools currently exist, the principal is often called upon to play the role of key instructional leader (Portin, Knapp, Alejano, & Marzolf, 2006). Given the demands of the principalship and the

deep content knowledge required, principals often deem it necessary to reconfigure the instructional leadership work of the school across multiple staff members (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004).

Many schools and districts espouse a theory of action that teacher leaders have the potential to impact teacher practice in classrooms and ultimately student learning (Portin et al., 2006; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teachers with formalized leadership responsibilities are uniquely positioned to maintain connections with teaching and students, while at the same time contributing to the capacity building of teachers and culture in their buildings (Lieberman & Miller, 2004). Lieberman and Miller (2004) suggest that teacher leaders in formal or informal positions can be change agents in the face of accountability and new demands. Teacher leaders can make a difference because they “can lead in reshaping the school day, changing grouping and organizational practices, ensuring more equitable distribution of resources . . . implementing curricula that are sensitive to diverse populations, upholding high standards for all students” (Lieberman & Miller, 2004, p. 12). This implies that tapping into the resource of teacher leadership in schools experiencing an increase in second language learners, particularly when the teacher leader is both an advocate of ELLs and a content expert in second language acquisition and development, can have positive implications for both learning and teaching.

ESL teachers are a potential untapped resource for the mainstream teachers’ learning, if all parties can begin to visualize teachers with specialized expertise as collaborating partners rather than individuals with sole responsibility for “fixing” second language learners. A survey of mainstream teachers in New Jersey who had ELLs in their classrooms but no previous training in how to teach them, revealed that the teachers believed it was the responsibility of ESL teachers to teach ELLs both language skills and subject matter, to enable their success in content classes, even if ELLs were only with the ESL teacher for a small portion of their day (Penfield, 1987). Considering the coursework demands for ELLs in high schools today, it seems unrealistic to expect these students to rely solely on their ESL teacher for support. Penfield (1987) suggests ESL teachers spend more time collaborating,

advising, and consulting with mainstream teachers. Developing school cultures and instructional practices that acknowledge the need for all teachers to take responsibility for ELLs will require a shift in teacher thinking. Having teachers with expertise in the teaching of ELLs take on a formalized leadership position in which they have the potential to influence school culture and classroom practices has the potential to impact ELLs across their school day.

RESEARCH METHODS

The data used in the analysis for this article come from a yearlong qualitative case study of professional learning and the instruction of ELLs in one culturally and linguistically diverse urban high school. Over the 2009–2010 school year, Vista International High School (VIHS) enrolled approximately 325 students. Seventy percent of the students received free and reduced lunch benefits, and 30% of the students were identified as ELLs. The ELL population was linguistically heterogeneous, with the majority speaking Spanish and Amharic.

Using purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002), the research setting was selected for several reasons: (1) it was a district and high school context with increasing linguistic diversity, (2) it was a high school setting with a focus on teacher professional learning, and (3) the school was a transformed high school—it had been converted from a comprehensive high school to three autonomous small schools 4 years prior to data collection. Transformed high schools are often more conducive to ongoing formal and informal interaction among teachers across grade level and department as a result of their size and school culture. In addition, transformed schools frequently rely on teacher leaders as resources to accomplish school improvement goals. Using a transformed high school as a model provided a window into understanding leadership across individuals (Lee & Ready, 2007) and how the leaders of such schools harness leadership from within to meet the needs of their particular student population. Although the transformed high school provided a ripe setting for investigation, it also was a limitation in terms of generalizing findings from this study to a comprehensive high school setting.

I used case study data, including interviews, observations, and documents, to illuminate the culture of collaboration present in this teacher community. Interviews were conducted at three time points across the year with teachers from both the ESL and Language Arts Departments, as well as with Sarah, the ELL facilitator. Sarah had the dual role of ESL classroom teacher (70% of her position) and ELL facilitator (30% of her position). In her role as ELL facilitator, she was involved in guiding and facilitating teacher professional learning to meet the instructional needs of ELLs in mainstream content classes at VIHS. The district's ELL coordinator supervised her work as an ELL facilitator. At the time of data collection, Sarah had 9 years of classroom teaching experience, was one of the founding teachers at VIHS, and was in the process of completing her National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification in English as a New Language. The principal, Bill, was also interviewed at the beginning and end of the school year. I observed numerous literacy team meetings comprising teachers from the ESL and Language Arts Departments, whole-staff meetings, and informal teacher interactions.

The data provided insight into the collaborative work between the ESL and Language Arts Departments, the supports that enabled Sarah to positively contribute to this effort, and the leadership context of the school. Data analysis was iterative, and I used the constant comparative method to help me better understand what I was learning from the field and from participants along the way (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The use of grounded theory guided both my analysis and coding of the data as well as the development of conclusions that explain my findings and ultimately answer my research questions.

FINDINGS

Three important findings that emerged from the data dealt with (1) the importance of a supportive leadership context for inclusion of ELLs and the ELL facilitator's work, (2) schoolwide supports for ELLs, and (3) collaboration and influence of the literacy team.

The Importance of a Supportive Leadership Context for Inclusion of ELLs and the ELL Facilitator's Work

A supportive leadership context for the inclusion of ELLs and Sarah's work as ELL facilitator was evident and contributed to teacher collaboration that focused on meeting the needs of ELLs. The principal stressed his support of an inclusive school culture:

We operate from a philosophy of inclusion. . . . Students who are learning English should be included in classes with all other students and get support that they need to be able to be successful . . . to continue their progress in learning English.

This leadership support for inclusion translated into a broader school culture that was responsive to meeting the needs of ELLs across the school.

ELLs were included as much as possible in mainstream content classes. ESL teachers supported beginning-level ELLs for half of their instructional class time, amounting to two periods a day. These beginning-level students also took a math class (usually Algebra I) and an elective class (usually art, physical education, or a computer class). Intermediate- and advanced-level ELLs, for the most part, took one ESL support class (focused on supporting language arts) and were fully included for the rest of the day in mainstream content classes. This intentional inclusion of ELLs in mainstream classes as much as possible throughout the school day highlighted the supervisory leadership's stance on equity for linguistically diverse students. This framework guided Bill's decision making as principal and influenced his ability to engage teachers at VIHS in meeting the needs of ELLs.

Bill noted that, beyond how an ELL's class schedule was structured, what was most significant was how well teachers knew students:

I think probably the hallmark of how we do our ESL program is that we just know our students really well; our ESL teachers know them extremely well in terms of their academic abilities and challenges and their language abilities.

Close relationships between teachers and students were consistently observed across the school setting. Bill also noted that Sarah, as ELL facilitator, played a role in how content teachers

accessed information about ELLs. He highlighted her instructional coaching work with several of the content teachers, acknowledging her role in moving teacher practice by introducing specific strategies and classroom practices to support and benefit ELLs. Bill was purposeful in how he engaged Sarah in her leadership work across the school. He recognized that her leadership connected to meeting the needs of ELLs and ensured that she was supported in her work. Even before the role of ELL facilitator was created, he counted on Sarah to be a voice, advocate, and resource for meeting ELLs' academic and social needs at the school. Observations of interactions and meetings between Bill and Sarah confirmed this working relationship between the two leaders: one leading as a supervisory leader and the other leading from the teacher ranks. Bill was able to engage Sarah in one community of practice at the supervisory level while guiding and supporting her work in a community of practice at the teacher level.

Bill recognized that many content teachers would not be receiving direct support from Sarah and that she could only do so much with her 30% release time to be ELL facilitator. The decision was made that during Professional Collaboration Time,² on early dismissal Fridays, the focus for professional development would be on ELL and special education inclusion. Bill pointed out, "It isn't quite as good as in-classroom coaching, but it's a start, and I think the limitation is not that teachers aren't interested; it's that we can only get Sarah to do so much."

Bill also shared how he supported Sarah in her work as an ELL facilitator and how they negotiated what her work would be for the 30% of her position:

Sarah and I primarily develop a plan for where that support that she can offer . . . given the limited time that she has available to do that, should best be directed . . . basically teachers primarily in the core content areas, language arts and social studies originally, and now we've branched into science and math as well, where we target that support. So Sarah . . . really develops the plan, and she and I discuss it . . . which teachers

²During the year of data collection, the district moved to early release on Fridays for the high schools. This meant that each Friday afternoon students were dismissed early and schools had the opportunity to have 2 hours of Professional Collaboration Time.

she's going to be working with based on what we think ELLs should be doing and what classes they should be in.

Bill seemed to respect Sarah and her expertise highly, encouraging her to take the lead on developing a service plan for working with content teachers and in content classrooms. The work from Bill's perspective was a highly collaborative process, and this was also evident during data collection.

Bill and Sarah collaborated to meet the needs of ELLs through an inclusion model and supported the content teachers who worked most closely with the majority of the ELLs in the mainstream. It appeared that there was an intentional effort to map services and support to where the greatest need existed. Table 1 is an extracted piece of Sarah's ELL facilitator plan for the 2009–2010 school year. This example illuminates what teacher support looked like at VIHS in this particular year.

Bill saw Sarah as a teacher leader and expert on ELLs within the context of VIHS. He highlighted her ability to work seamlessly with mainstream teachers and with the language arts teachers as a member of the literacy team. In enacting her role as ELL facilitator, Sarah was supported by the principal because he recognized her expertise. As a result, she was able to tailor her role into one that she felt comfortable with, and mainstream teachers accepted her teacher leadership role. These conditions contributed to Sarah's ability to influence collaborative work between the ESL and Language Arts Departments.

Schoolwide Supports for ELLs

There was recognition across staff members that schoolwide supports for ELLs played a role in meeting these students' individual needs. Meeting the variety of individual ELL needs was a focus of the school staff. The supports put in place at VIHS were strategic in that they focused on inclusion and meeting the needs of all learners in the context of mainstream content classrooms. Schoolwide supports for ELLs included (1) common organizational and instructional practices and (2) aligning ESL program design and supports for teachers. These supports emerged from the data as significant to the overall experience for ELLs in this inclusion

TABLE 1. Excerpt From Sarah’s ELL Facilitator Plan for the 2009–2010 School Year

Plan	Plan is being followed as written.	
Implementation		
Coaching	Working with science teachers Liz (Biology) and Matt (Science 1, long-term sub for Katie) on supportive structures and processes; next coaching cycle with Liz will focus on use of academic language to demonstrate thinking/comprehension of science content. Will continue with Matt on supportive structures and general ELL support strategies. When Katie returns from maternity leave in late November, will continue coaching cycles with her, building on last year’s work.	
Coteaching	Work in Hillary’s AP Comp and AP Lit class once weekly to support and collaborate with Hillary and stay current on student progress and challenges, which informs work with some of these ELLs in their P. 1 ESL support class and helps monitor those who have been mainstreamed due to senior schedule.	
Consulting	Available for consultation with mainstream teachers and ESL colleague.	
Ongoing support	Weekly ELL facilitator meetings offer opportunities to consult and confer with colleagues; Liz and Sarah will participate in district-led Science/ESL Study Group to work on collaborative planning for Biology text use and possible ESL scaffolds.	

context. Bill reported that the impact of staff sharing common practices and developing an awareness of what was happening in each other's classrooms contributed to student engagement in content classes and to a positive school culture focused on learning and school in general.

Common organizational and instructional practices. One of the biggest themes that emerged from the data over the course of the school year was the significance of common organizational and instructional practices. Teachers ubiquitously talked about not only the structures and practices that were present at VIHS and in their classrooms, but also the fact that these were helpful for student learning. Many of the participants identified these common structures and practices as significant to ELL success in content classes. It seemed that the longer a teacher was at the school, the more familiarity and comfort he or she seemed to have with these common structures and practices. This impression was corroborated with observations, interviews, and document analysis. Once a teacher had the opportunity to go through a school year and become more familiar with these structures and practices, he or she would be more likely to point to these organizational and instructional features as assets to ELL learning.

I observed myriad common instructional strategies and scaffolds in both ESL and language arts classrooms. I triangulated these observations with teachers' descriptions of practices that were supportive of ELLs: one-on-one conferences with students, modeling instruction, use of the meeting area, gradual release of students for independent practice, personal think time, turn and talk, common reading strategies, and common note-taking strategies.

Aligning ESL program design and supports for teachers. How the ELL program was structured for the 2009–2010 school year, and ultimately ELL class schedules, directly influenced classroom-embedded support for teachers. Resources to support content teachers were funneled toward supporting critical areas and influenced support in language arts.

The literacy team had implemented the use of language arts outcomes as a tool for assessing student growth in language arts, and this program was in its second year of Advanced Placement

(AP) language arts for all. As a result, more ELLs participated in the upper level language arts classes. These intermediate- and advanced-level ELLs did not necessarily have an ESL support class due to their senior year schedules. In an effort to support the AP language arts teacher, Sarah spent part of her ELL facilitator time embedded in two of the AP language arts classes with the highest percentage of ELLs. Her role in these classes was to support both the ELLs and the language arts teacher.

Developing teacher capacity to meet the instructional needs of ELLs in the critical area of AP language arts was strategic. The idea seemed to be that if ELLs were going to be in mainstream language arts classes, those content teachers responsible for teaching the majority of ELLs needed support. The data did not reveal much resistance to this support. In fact, the content teachers receiving the support all reported acceptance of and thankfulness for the additional resources. The collaborative school culture played a role in how teachers perceived support for instruction.

Collaboration and Influence of the Literacy Team

The literacy team was an influential group of teachers at VIHS. From the beginning of VIHS the language arts and ESL teachers comprised this collaborative group. This organization of teachers was intentional, with the goal of meeting ELLs' literacy needs. The fact that the language arts and ESL teachers had remained constant over the past several years further fostered these relationships and led to coordinated efforts in literacy instruction. Bill described the relationship between the language arts and ESL teachers:

What we hoped to accomplish when we first started doing that work of those two teams collaborating was knowing that literacy was the first major need to be met for the ELLs, that we wanted to make sure that the two groups of teachers were working in a coordinated and consistent fashion. . . . It's been a lot more effective . . . [for the ESL teachers] to be working with students in their support classes on . . . things that they're learning in their literature and composition classes. . . . It's not just . . . teaching them how to speak and read and write in English, but . . . teaching them how to do those things using the content . . . [from] their literature and composition classes.

Bill noted that this arrangement was an effective and powerful strategy and had led to some tangible effects for ELLs at the school. The close collaboration between the ESL teachers and language arts teachers enabled the ESL teachers to really support ELLs in the ESL support class in a meaningful way. The ESL support class was not just an add-on, but an authentic support class for the mainstream language arts classes.

In terms of how the literacy team planned, the teachers considered the entire spectrum of literacy classes, from beginning ESL classes to AP language arts classes. It was apparent that the literacy team intentionally scaffolded opportunities in language arts classes to support ELLs, and this contributed to their success. As ELL facilitator, Sarah played an instrumental role in this work by consistently focusing the literacy team's efforts squarely on ELL needs.

One result of the literacy team's coordinated efforts was the fact that so many ELLs were placed in AP language arts. Not only were ELLs taking the AP class, they were passing the class and finding success. Sarah described the overarching design of the ESL program and how that connected to how successful ELLs were in AP language arts:

Our ELLs are very successful in our AP classes. And so it's going to extend beyond what is this powerful teacher doing to differentiate . . . into how are we scaffolding the entire ESL program in our school. And [we] have been doing it for years from each level so that there are common practices and structures and outcomes throughout the LA [language arts] curriculum and across the school that have helped the students to reach that level of comfort in those challenging classes. So it's . . . what is hard for you and what are some strategies you're using that you are carrying with you from other experiences to help you figure out this situation and get help and negotiate the meaning.

When asked directly about student learning and growth in the AP language arts classes, Sarah noted that many of the ELLs had increased confidence in their ability to complete assignments (especially essays) and in their writing abilities. It seemed that the support and ongoing encouragement from teachers contributed to

this boost in confidence and ultimately to student motivation to take control of their own learning. Sarah noted that many of these students were appreciative of and grateful for the push to take on the academic challenge of an AP class and were proud of themselves for what they were accomplishing.

When planning for alignment of vocabulary instruction for the next school year across ESL and language arts, Sarah described the literacy team's thinking and planning:

Talking about editing and conventions work ... a lot of ELL issues of grammar and language and explicitly addressing those in all language arts classes, not just ESL classes. . . . Often during the writing process we focus on revision and then editing is sort of not a focus, but we want to find a way to bring that in more explicitly. And then collaboration time between people who share students or planning common curriculum.

The literacy team was actively engaged in thinking about how to support ELLs in language arts. They engaged in conversations about what the students' academic needs were and how to collaborate to meet those needs. Observations of literacy team meetings confirmed this focus on ELLs. Sarah played an instrumental role in keeping the needs of ELLs in the foreground, consistently focusing and refocusing the conversation to include the language development needs of ELLs throughout the literacy curriculum. In addition, Sarah was embedded in the AP language arts classes on a weekly basis (see Table 1) through her ELL facilitator work. As a result of this collaborative work with Sarah, the AP language arts teacher, Hillary, implemented instructional strategies that she otherwise would not have. Hillary described the strategy of using community reading of the play *Hamlet*:

I see the value of doing a lot more in-class community reading instead of all of the reading at home. So doing just a little more of that, even with the easier plays that we read, we could have done a little more with that [over the school year].

Sarah remained close to the action of teaching and learning in language arts through both of her roles, as ESL teacher and ELL facilitator. Her work in AP language arts as a support teacher was mainly to monitor ELLs in the context of the content class. Being

physically embedded in the content classroom provided Sarah with all kinds of information, including what content ELLs were learning, what their instructional needs were, and what supports would be helpful for ELLs back in the ESL support class.

Regarding her work as an ELL facilitator in the AP language arts classes, Sarah saw her role as consultative. This was based on her assessment that Hillary was already skilled in meeting the needs of ELLs in her content classroom. Sarah described this as follows:

So for Hillary . . . not much coaching really, it's more supporting and consulting as needed. . . . This purpose is to stay current on the class curriculum in areas of student struggle and language issues to address in the ESL support class, because I work with some of those ELLs from those classes in one of my support classes, but also there are a number of students who I need to monitor because they've been mainstreamed but they're still ELLs because we couldn't fit everything in with their senior schedule. And so I wouldn't see them and be able to monitor their language progress otherwise.

In this way, Sarah stayed informed of the curriculum in both of the AP language arts classes (AP Composition and AP Literature) and had an opportunity to check in with ELLs in the context of their language arts classes. She also was able to observe several of the students outside of her ESL support class. Hillary agreed that this second set of eyes in the AP language arts classes was helpful for her instruction:

It was nice during readings. It's like OK, write down a note. So I'd get up and walk around, and Sarah would get up and walk around. It was nice to have—and then we could also tag-team kids, like if they weren't stepping up.

This type of collaboration was confirmed through observations of Hillary and Sarah in the context of the AP language arts classes. Sarah made it a point to make on-the-fly suggestions related to scaffolding instruction or meeting the needs of individual ELLs in the class. Through this collaborative work the teachers were able to better support ELLs in the mainstream.

Ultimately, the literacy team was influential in that they led the work of ELL inclusion at VIHS. The collaboration between the ESL

and language arts teachers heavily influenced the literacy work at the school. As a result, the literacy team was able to come to Professional Collaboration Time, grade-alike advisory teams, or cross-content team meetings with a particular lens and focus on literacy that included a focus on the literacy needs of ELLs. This was in part due to Sarah's teacher leadership and influence on the literacy team. Her classroom-embedded work as an ESL support teacher in language arts classes and her consultative work as an ELL facilitator on the literacy team both played a role in guiding the work of the literacy team members. This collaborative work across the ESL and Language Arts Departments led to scaffolded opportunities in language arts that supported ELLs and contributed to their academic success.

Sarah played an influential role in the literacy team's collaborative work. Her formalized teacher leader role positioned her in a way to infuse a focus on ELL needs within the language arts curriculum. Ongoing communication and collaboration between the ESL teachers and language arts teachers contributed to the instructional scaffolds that enhanced ELL academic success in language arts.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPORTANCE

In this particular high school, the principal's vision of inclusion for ELLs in mainstream content classes set the tone for acceptance of ELLs across the school. This inclusive leadership philosophy was coupled with a strong collaboration between the mainstream language arts teachers and the ESL teachers who formed the literacy team. The literacy team was an influential and respected group. These features were critical to providing effective ELL services and enabled schoolwide academic supports for ELLs, particularly in language arts and ESL classrooms. This culture of collaboration enabled the teachers and leaders at VIHS to work productively with one another to meet the needs of ELLs in the mainstream. The culture of the school was one that placed high value on collaborative work. Problems of practice related to inclusion of ELLs in the mainstream were addressed through collaborative efforts to better understand the needs of particular ELLs and were reinforced by a supportive leadership context

(Mangin, 2007). Using communities of practice as a lens helped to unpack the collaborative work that engaged the teachers and leaders by focusing the analysis on this ELL-focused community at VIHS and highlighted the development of mutual engagement of the participants across the school year.

The ELL facilitator emerged as a critical individual within this culture of collaboration. She seamlessly moved between her collaborative work with the principal, language arts teachers on the literacy team, and other mainstream content teachers. As an ESL teacher with a formalized leadership role as an ELL facilitator, she was situated and supported in a way that enabled her to influence academic supports for ELLs and contribute to the staff's feelings of collective responsibility for meeting the instructional needs of ELLs. Through her positioning as both an ESL teacher and ELL facilitator, she developed into an effective teacher leader as a result of how those at VIHS perceived her contribution and valued her leadership role. She was able to move between multiple communities of practice at VIHS in her work with various groups of teachers (e.g., literacy team, science teachers) and with the principal.

The findings from this study suggest that teacher leaders, such as the ELL facilitator in this school, can act as *institutional agents*—individuals with relatively high institutional status who are in a position to provide institutional and social support, in addition to whatever technical support they may offer (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). The ELL facilitator did so by advocating for the needs of ELLs across the high school; at the same time that she offered specific forms of support for addressing the particular instructional needs of ELLs in content classrooms. This notion of teacher leaders acting as institutional agents augments how we conceptualize teacher leadership and its ability to influence teachers' work in the context of increased accountability and new demands (Lieberman & Miller, 2004)—in this case, the expectation that mainstream content teachers be responsible for the instruction of ELLs in a school and district with a growing ELL population. This advocacy work of an ELL facilitator can encourage the entire school

community to be more intentional in how the needs of ELLs are met outside of the ESL classroom.

Although the transformed high school provided a ripe setting for understanding this particular phenomenon, it was also a limitation in terms of generalizing the findings to a comprehensive high school setting. Specifically, it is possible that in a comprehensive high school setting it might be more challenging for an ELL facilitator to be so effectively positioned. What this study does is provide a glimpse into one particular case, where lessons can be learned concerning what is promising.

As more ELLs enter high school content classrooms, the supports teachers receive that are focused on the instruction of these students will play a role in the outcomes for these learners. This article builds on the existing scholarship on the instructional needs and challenges of teaching secondary ELLs (Gold, 2006; Walqui, 2000) and illuminates the potential of collaboration and supports that enable an ELL facilitator to contribute to meeting the needs of ELLs in high schools. This analysis provides rich data and an example of how collaboration between the ESL and Language Arts Departments, when situated in a supportive school culture and leadership context, can lead to practices that are receptive to the inclusion of ELLs.

Opportunities for ELLs to be successful in high school are often limited (Gold, 2006) as a result of programs and instructional strategies that are incongruous with their needs. The intent of this research is to provide an example of what is possible as schools and districts grapple with how to serve this growing student population.

THE AUTHOR

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