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Beyond Teaching English: Embracing a Holistic Approach to Supporting English Learner Students and Their Families

This study describes the ways 1 elementary school is attempting to address the needs of its English learner students and their families, the majority of whom are Latinx, through a multi-pronged approach that includes targeted academic instruction, the adoption of schoolwide values and behavioral expectations, a significant family-community outreach program, and teacher professional development in trauma-sensitive schooling and instruction. The authors share analyses and findings from data gathered through classroom and school event observations, separate focus groups of students and parents, interviews with key stakeholders, questionnaires from school personnel and parents, and publicly available school-level data. Implications for educators are shared with the goal of creating spaces and contexts where English learner students and their families succeed and indeed thrive.

Latinxs are now the largest minority group in the United States, comprising 25% of the school-aged population, a significant increase from approximately 8% in 1980 (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010; Murphy, Guzman, & Torres, 2014), and are expected to comprise more than one third of the PK-12 population by 2050 (Murphy et al., 2014; Wildsmith, Alvira-Hammond, & Guzman, 2016). As a group, the academic performance of Latinx students, especially those who are also English learners (ELs), consistently falls far below that of white and Asian students (Murphy et al., 2014; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, & Medicine/NASEM, 2017), and the achievement gap between Latinx ELs and their peers continues to grow (Good et al., 2010; NASEM, 2017). Although “measures of school achievement are generally social constructs that can marginalize non-dominant communities” (Salas, Jones, Perez, Fitchett, & Kissau, 2013, p. 19), such findings are troubling and must be considered in order to sensitively address

and break the cycle of persistent underachievement of Latinxs. Because the US's school population comprises students from a rich array of countries and languages, school teachers, administrators, and teacher educators must be better equipped to establish healthy and supportive school environments where students' diverse assets are embraced and where challenges can be addressed in culturally responsive ways.

In this study we describe support efforts designed to better meet the needs of EL students and their families at a Title I elementary school that is taking a holistic and multipronged approach to addressing the perceived and identified needs of its primarily Latinx students and families.

Theoretical Framework

We draw upon the ever-expanding research base on the effective and equitable instruction of immigrant students and English learners (Gándara, 2017; Good et al., 2010; Moschkovich, 2017; Murphy et al., 2014; NAS-EM, 2017; Quinn, Lee, & Valdés, 2017; Salas et al., 2013; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009; Thomas & Collier, 1996; Valdés, Menken, & Castro, 2015). We situate our work within a theoretical frame in which schooling is seen as part of a larger social construction, where success and failure for individual students and groups of students are the result of specific policies and practices enacted at various levels—from the most micro interactions of the classroom—to the more macro factors at the school, in the community, and at the school district, state, national, and international levels. This study is further framed by the literature on academic achievement, specifically as it relates to and intersects with students of color. The work of Boykin and Noguera (2011) on the “achievement/opportunity to learn gap” and that of Ladson-Billings (2006) on the “educational debt” owed to students placed at risk within our educational systems are of particular relevance.

Our work is further informed by emerging research in the area of trauma and the relationship between childhood trauma and other factors such as health (both physical and mental) and cognition. Much of the work on trauma-informed schooling (Mendelson, Tandon, O'Brennan, Leaf, & Ialongo, 2015; Oehlberg, 2008; Perry, 2009, 2016; Walkley & Cox, 2013) and the work of the focal school emphasizes building an environment where faculty and staff are responsive to the impact of trauma on students and their families and involves establishing and maintaining meaningful and equitable partnerships with families (Allen, 2007; Delgado Gaitan, 2005; 2012). Finally, we draw on the work by Crosby (2015), whose work builds on that of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and others who adopt an ecological perspective on trauma, allowing for a “whole child” approach through analysis across multiple contexts.

Three central questions were addressed in this research:

1. What are the greatest challenges to Latinx ELs' overall success?
2. What forms of support does the focal school provide to Latinx ELs to ensure their overall success?
3. What forms of support do school personnel, students, and families *wish* were provided for ELs to positively impact their success?

Research Methodology

The focal school is a Southern California Title 1 public elementary school in which approximately 57% of the students speak English as an additional language and 78% are considered socioeconomically disadvantaged. The school enrolls approximately 400 students—77% of whom classify themselves as Latinx, 18% as white, 2% as Asian, and 1% as African American. Many Latinx students are US born, whereas others are immigrants, some of whom are recently arrived “newcomers” with interrupted formal schooling. By listening carefully to students and their families and attentively observing challenges to their academic success, school personnel at the focal school (led by the community liaison) have crafted a variety of programs and interventions aimed at providing holistic support. Using a multipronged approach, the focal school has implemented, among other initiatives, several schoolwide values- and behavioral-expectations programs, targeted extended-day academic instruction, a significant family-community outreach initiative, and professional learning for educators in the area of trauma-sensitive instruction, with the goal of creating spaces and contexts where students and their families succeed and thrive.

In order to “search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126), data were collected from numerous sources to increase reliability and trustworthiness. In order to investigate policies, practices, and interactions at both the macro and more micro levels at the focal school, data were gathered in total for a little more than a year, from the spring of 2016 through the summer of 2017. However, data were intensively gathered in person at the school during a three-month period through classroom and school event observations; separate focus groups of students and parents; interviews with teachers, administrators, and other support providers; questionnaires from school staff and parents; survey data from parents of ELs; as well as publicly available school-level data. This methodological triangulation, “the use of multiple methods to study a single problem” (Patton, 1990, p. 187), provided numerous lenses through which we examined the focal school’s collaborative effort to provide effective instruction and support to students and families.

The process of data analysis consisted of initially reading and sorting data from questionnaires and field notes taken during interviews and focus group sessions by each of the three main research questions. Once sorted, each research question was reread and the newly combined data

were grouped according to themes among the data. Codes—“repetitions in explanations and meanings ascribed to events” (Holt-Reynolds, 1992, p. 328)—were used to sort, synthesize, and conceptualize the data. The codes were tested against the data and were dropped, refined, or retained. For those codes that were preserved, data addressing or illustrating a given theme were included. It was during this process of “identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data” (Patton, 1990, p. 381) through content analysis that patterns began to emerge.

Findings

The findings of this study are organized in terms of each of the three research questions below. We define *success* in this study not only by achievement on standardized test scores, but by a more holistic ability to function and thrive in and out of the classroom as measured by relevant qualitative response data.

Question 1: What Are the Greatest Challenges to Latinx ELs’ Overall Success?

We found that in general, Latinx ELs at the focal school face numerous challenges to their success, which stem from cultural, linguistic, economic, social-emotional, and/or legal issues, where often these are linked and overlap. Specifically, academic success is intertwined with and impacted by many factors, which originate both within and outside of school.

Because 78% of the school population is economically disadvantaged, many students experience physical challenges related to food insecurity, inadequate housing, and/or crowded living conditions. Because of the high cost of housing, multiple families often share the same home, resulting in a lack of privacy and frequent interpersonal disputes. Many of the families live in fear of deportation, and some struggle with substance-abuse issues or experience domestic violence. These factors contribute to students’ stress and trauma and negatively impact students’ physical, cognitive, and emotional health and well-being. The school principal stated that she typically has to call local law enforcement authorities or child protective services at least once a week. On our first visit to the school, our meeting was interrupted by a teacher who said she needed to speak to the principal urgently about one such matter.

The community liaison, Maria, described some of the social-emotional challenges faced by the Latinx ELs as a “deep emotional hunger” resulting from linguistic challenges, cultural unfamiliarity, and/or loneliness. Maria, an immigrant from Central America, explained that parents at the focal school often come to the US first to get a job while the children stay with relatives in their native country. Then, often years later, the children are brought to the US—strangers to the new country, to a new culture, and

to some degree, to their own parents. She explained that the tables can turn quickly, as the child learns English and acculturates to US dominant culture, which can limit communication and emotional connectivity between parent and child, and thus deepening parents' grief over the loss of traditional values and cultural deprivation (Good et al., 2010; Parea, 2004). Separation from their primary caregivers is one source of trauma for many Latinx students at the focal school. This was confirmed by the district mental health specialist working with the school staff and students on trauma-sensitive schooling.

Parents' challenges were found to be numerous as well. Maria perceived that many Latinx EL parents lack confidence and the perceived social capital to confront teachers, to "speak school," and to "understand its unwritten codes" (Rodriguez-Castro, Salas, & Murray, 2016, p. 15). She explained that they often fear English-speaking institutions and "leave teaching to the teachers" instead of speaking up and advocating for their children. This may also be due in part to cultural differences regarding how the teacher is perceived and the appropriate role of the parent in schooling. Additionally, Rodriguez-Castro et al. (2016) offer that though parents want to advocate for their children, some remain distant out of respect for the teacher, while Good et al. (2010) assert that Latinx parents feel that their voices are silenced and that they lack power to effect change for their children.

The data revealed that the majority of ELs also face academic challenges by being several years below grade level in English reading while still being expected to meet grade-level academic standards across all subjects. One fourth-grade teacher explained,

I have seen firsthand incredibly gifted students receive grades that did not reflect their true ability. For example, reading and writing are so heavily embedded in math that even if the child has a strong math background, they are not able to decipher the language in the problem and therefore are unable to solve the problem. That would make one think that they did not know the math, but really it is the language that is impacting the opportunity for them to show what they know and learned. As the students get older, I see a direct correlation with those students struggling academically in math, reading, and writing, and their language level.

Teachers also reported that EL students struggle to decipher directions, make meaning of texts, and write in structured, cohesive ways. They were also critical of the current English Language Development (ELD) curriculum, which is heavily focused on speaking and listening and lacks the rigorous writing and reading components needed to advance students past the intermediate level.

Some respondents thought the education of ELs could be improved, particularly by integrating ELD strategies across all content areas and teaching content with language objectives. To that end, the focal school recently restructured its schedule to provide multitiered systems of support (MTSS) for all students through a number of pull-out programs, particularly targeting ELs who needed intensive math or language instruction. Though MTSS was helpful, Maria thought that constantly moving from room to room too closely mirrored the transitory lives of many of the families, adding to the instability and chaos some already experienced. Academic challenges for ELs extended to Common Core online testing in which they not only faced linguistic demands, but also technological challenges in working with and manipulating electronic tools with which they are often less familiar than many of their more affluent and/or English-speaking peers. One teacher, frustrated at observing this, told us she tells students to “just click” in cases where some EL students understand very few of the test items.

From Maria’s perspective, some teachers at the school “teach to the middle” because they have a limited understanding of the unique challenges faced by ELs and struggle with how to meet their linguistic, academic, and emotional needs. She commented that sometimes monolingual teachers have a limited understanding of second language acquisition, assuming that because ELs are conversant on the playground, they should be able to comprehend more academic content. Maria believes that some instructional issues stem from some teachers’ limited understanding of the cultural alienation Latinx newcomer families may experience and the powerful effects of poverty. Similarly, Good et al. (2010) found that monolingual English-speaking teachers often lack understanding of or devalue Latinx culture, which can result in lower academic expectations, slowed academic progress, and limited ability to engender connectedness and care. The following comment by Maria reflects what she sees as a lack of understanding by teachers regarding poverty:

I hear teacher comments about the way the families living in poverty spend money, often making expensive purchases on the latest gadget or on name-brand clothes. Teachers don’t understand the nature of poverty and how families in poverty might “live by default,” focusing on the present, not necessarily the future.

The principal of the focal school added:

Students from poverty often deal with abuse, domestic violence, et cetera. The teachers need to understand that those students’ brains develop differently. They have learned a “fight or flight” response and implement survival strategies. They often aren’t intrinsically motivated be-

cause they are busy surviving. These students' needs place an emotional toll on teachers. Teachers must build relationships with these students and avoid punitive or harsh punishment.

Question 2: What Forms of Support Does the Focal School Provide to ELs to Ensure Their Overall Success?

Because families with children at the focal school face numerous challenges that impede their success, school personnel, including primarily the principal and the school-community liaison, have worked diligently and intentionally to address the multifaceted and pressing needs of the students and their families using an ecological holistic approach. We found evidence that the school is trying to intentionally address the physical, socio-emotional, and academic needs of its students and families through multiple means, which we describe briefly.

The majority of students qualify for and receive free or reduced-cost breakfast and lunch at school. The focal school is situated within a larger, more affluent area, which Maria describes as “a very giving community.” Families in need are connected with social agencies that provide food, clothing, and medical assistance. At the beginning of the school year, families are given a list of school supplies they could buy, but they are not required to provide their own; faith-based groups often donate these supplies to the school.

Academic support at the focal school is provided during school by way of small-group targeted instruction, cooperative learning, and academic language-development instruction; and after school through homework clubs, online programs, and evening tutoring programs provided by community agencies. Special transition programs are offered, such as a three-week program for parents and children before the start of kindergarten and a newcomers' program for students new to the country. During this program, newcomers take a guided walk around the neighborhood, becoming familiar with street names and signs, house numbers, and the spatial organization of neighborhoods. They also tour the school, including the bathrooms, where they are shown how to operate hand dryers and are given expectations for using lights, water, and other resources. As few as three newcomer students meet with the newcomer teacher in a safe, comfortable environment to engage in interesting language-rich projects. In our observations, we watched as the newcomer teacher coaxed a student to return to her mainstream classroom, where she understood very little and often felt lost. Previously, this student had hidden in the restroom after her newcomer class rather than return to her assigned mainstream classroom.

The school also devotes numerous resources to parent education, providing adult English as a second language (ESL) classes, parenting classes, and a class on navigating the school system. Maria reported that about 70

parents come to ESL classes and when they do not come, she “hunts them down.” She encourages them to “remember your dreams and why you came here in the first place” and emphasizes the critical role of learning English in achieving their dreams. This focus on attaining English proficiency is shared by 81% of the 139 EL parent respondents to the English Language Development Program needs-assessment survey, who agreed that it is a “family priority” to help their child learn the English language. Maria also encourages parents of EL students to join the English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) to represent the needs of their children at the school and district level. As a result, 66% of ELD needs-assessment survey respondents indicated they attended at least one ELAC meeting during the academic year.

Special Saturday programs for Spanish-speaking parents are offered throughout the year to inspire and empower parents to support their child’s academic success and cultivate interest in postsecondary education. Two hundred Spanish-speaking parents attended the most recent conference titled “Imagine: Science, the Path to Knowledge,” participating in hands-on workshops taught in Spanish on topics such as pH balance, mapping the night sky, and the digestive system. The keynote speakers were immigrants themselves and spoke honestly about their own childhoods and the importance of education as a means of breaking the cycle of poverty. The prior year’s parent conference, titled “De Colores,” included multiple hands-on fine arts workshops for parents. Parents were greeted by a mariachi band, participated in native Latin dances highlighting their “funds of knowledge,” and heard from a Latinx district superintendent about the importance of education, including the arts and promoting a college-going mentality. Parents also listened to a harpist who was an immigrant from Venezuela. After his performance, he spoke about the importance of the arts and explained how children can participate in school music programs without having to rent or buy instruments.

By the end of the 2015-2016 academic year, despite the numerous efforts and initiatives being implemented at and beyond the school to support bilingual students and families, the focal school saw no gains in student academic achievement as measured by standardized tests. Therefore, during the second academic year of our data collection, the principal determined that the school needed to directly address what she perceived as students’ biggest learning-related issue—the stressors and trauma students (and families) had and continued to experience. Many students and their families live in a constant state of vigilance because of economic stressors, the current political discourse igniting fear of deportation, as well as other stressors. This can tax the stress response systems, which can in turn lead to structural and functional changes in the brain, which can impact learning and behavior (Aber & Palmer, 1999; Craig, 2016; McInerney & McKlindon, 2014; Perry, 2016; Souers & Hall, 2016). Not only do children living in chronic stress often

find it challenging to pay attention and process new information, they may also face interpersonal challenges, which can result in social withdrawal or aggression (McInerney & McKlindon, 2014; Perry, 2016). Because teachers and administrators often respond to such misbehavior with punitive measures, children can become retraumatized, continuing the “cycle of trauma” (McInerney & McKlindon, 2014). Therefore, the principal decided to adopt a trauma-informed approach to schooling to assist the school community in understanding how living in chronic stress (exacerbated by poverty) and trauma impact learning and affect behavior. The district hired a mental health services provider who held workshops with the staff, teaching them about the physiological and behavioral effects of trauma and about mindfulness and cognitive behavioral therapy. Specific strategies were shared regarding how to avoid triggering a fight-or-flight response in students; how to create a calm, supportive learning environment; how to implement more positive and effective discipline practices; and so forth. The mental health expert noted that in addition to other causes of trauma, many of the EL students are struggling with attachment issues because of disruptions with primary caregivers, triggering behaviors that are often (mis)interpreted as defiance or disrespect.

The focal school has also made a concerted and significant effort to address emotional and behavioral issues in proactive and positive ways through the adoption and implementation of several programs. Conflict-resolution skills are taught through the use of “Kelso’s Choice” (kelsoschoice.com), which provides children with healthy problem-solving options and peace-making skills to solve “small” problems on their own. Additionally, the focal school is a “Leader in Me” Lighthouse school infusing “The 7 Habits of Happy Kids” throughout the school (theleaderinme.org). These habits are:

1. Be proactive;
2. Begin with the end in mind;
3. Work first, then play;
4. Think win-win;
5. Listen before you talk;
6. Creatively cooperate to problem solve; and
7. Cultivate life balance.

Not only are the seven habits painted on the school’s exterior walls, but they are infused into the curriculum such as by having students identify which habits were exhibited by US presidents or how characters in a novel cooperated to solve a problem (habit 6). Student learning is exhibited at the annual Leadership Day, during which students welcome guests with a handshake, sing the “Seven Habits” song, act out skits exhibiting the habits in action,

and give classroom tours that display projects integrating the seven habits. The language of the seven habits is infused throughout classroom instruction, problem solving, and decision making schoolwide to help students develop to their full potential personally and interpersonally.

In response to what she perceived as students' "emotional hunger," Maria created several relationship-building programs. One innovative program is the Latina Mother-Daughter Bonding Clinic designed to create opportunities for healthy conversation and shared experiences to foster greater support of one another. Mothers and daughters meet regularly to participate in a collaborative activity or craft, interact with a guest speaker, and discuss relevant topics such as acculturation, the focus on materialism in the dominant culture, generational differences between experiences of mothers and daughters, and the importance of education. Another relationship-building program is the "Lunch Bunch," in which students join Maria for lunch and informally learn about science (her area of expertise), providing science instruction and emotional support in the form of affection, attention, and caring. Additionally, two graduate students studying social work at a nearby university come twice a week to offer student support and work closely with the school counselor. After attending a conference on the brain and mindfulness, Maria also organized a mindfulness workshop for EL parents, at which they learned from an expert on trauma and learning. Concerned that the parents might not find the material relevant or helpful, Maria was pleasantly surprised by the positive feedback on the workshop. She also noted that of the approximately 100 parents who attended, most walked in the rain to attend the workshop. Overall, parents of EL students are pleased with the way the focal school is meeting their child's needs. Specifically, 83% of ELD needs-assessment survey respondents indicated they were pleased with the academic instruction, 9% were not, and 8% declined to answer.

As awareness of the impact of trauma on students increased, school staff and administration began to realize that trauma not only affects students, but also the teachers who serve them and that teacher self-care is essential for teachers and students to thrive. Explaining the scope of his work, one fourth-grade teacher reported, "I am called upon to act as a police officer, a peace maker, a counselor, a health clerk, and occasionally a therapist." Teachers can develop "compassion fatigue" or "secondary traumatic stress" by being exposed to trauma through the children with whom they work. The school staff committed to a two-year professional-development plan for teacher self-care and wellness, believing that the focus on teacher wellness should and would extend to students as well. The principal explained:

We did one session of Trauma-Informed Teaching. It was helpful but daunting at the same time. It gave teachers some relief, validation, and strategies. However, incorporating professional development (PD) into

an already busy teacher schedule made it daunting. In reflecting, I came to the conclusion that the greatest need that needed to be tackled first was self-care. I worked with the Curriculum and Instruction director to pull together a two-year ongoing PD for our teachers and office staff. It revolves around self-care, getting to know ourselves, communication, and support. Our first session was very beneficial and I hope that the continuing PD increases camaraderie, compassion, and extends to students.

Question 3. What Forms of Support Do School Personnel, Students, and Families Wish Were Provided for ELs?

Interestingly, when fourth- and fifth-grade EL students were interviewed, their responses indicated a belief that it was their own responsibility to help themselves, to learn more, and to do well, which they expressed in terms of trying harder, listening more carefully, doing homework, and behaving responsibly. They did not mention teachers, parents, or others as responsible for assisting or helping them, but rather that they could and should help themselves. However, when asked what they wished their teachers would do differently, many expressed responses such as “listen to me,” and “know how I am feeling.” The findings indicate that students desire a stronger affective relationship with their teachers, but they do not seem to hold teachers responsible for their academic outcomes.

The focus group session comprising 23 parents of EL students yielded mixed responses. Regarding academics, many parents expressed a desire to know more about both what is taught to their children as well as how it is taught—perhaps in the form of joint parent-child tutoring sessions—so that parents can learn how to tutor their children and offer them greater academic support. General consensus among the parents was that they desired more academic support for their children before or after school, but not during the school day, which often disrupted instructional continuity. Parents also expressed concerns over their child’s frustration, discouragement, and low academic self-esteem as well as some teachers’ apparent apathy, disinterest, or lack of enthusiasm. Items on parents’ wish lists were that the teachers would listen more intently, take an interest in their child, smile more, punish less, raise expectations, and offer encouragement. Though some EL parents expressed frustration, others were grateful for the services offered by the school and were irritated by parents who did not read school notices, attend school events, or actively participate in their child’s education. One aggravated mother stated in Spanish that “there is no reason not to know what is going on” and suggested “if they don’t come, fine them!”

The data collected from teachers revealed a desire for a more engaging, rigorous ELD curriculum that strengthens ELs’ academic writing and reading, not just speaking and listening. Some respondents thought a focus on

listening skills too often replaced the productive language skills of writing and speaking and that ELs need to use more academic language in class. Better tools to measure and communicate student progress, faculty freedom to differentiate instruction, and faculty professional learning in the areas of language development and trauma-informed instruction were listed as teachers' desired areas for future growth.

School personnel at the focal school offered a variety of ideas to improve student support, many requiring funding. "What do I wish for?" pondered the ELD facilitator. "I wish our families had more money so that parents wouldn't have to work multiple jobs and could be home more to just talk to their kids about the world and reinforce their learning." She explained the tremendous "baggage" her students carry and her own powerlessness to bring about change. Though a counselor is available 1.5 days a week at the focal school, the increased demand for individual counseling makes the current counselor availability clearly insufficient. Funding is needed to finance other tutoring, homework clubs, and/or support programs. Furthermore, Maria must demonstrate that enough parents and students attend programs to prevent elimination of funding, which has happened in the past.

Maria had perhaps the most extensive response to the question of what she wished could be offered to students and families. Regarding academics, she wished for extra support staff, a lower student-teacher ratio, and greater flexibility to use nontraditional teaching strategies that support learning and the construction of meaning. Indicating discipline and classroom management as the school's greatest challenge, Maria wished that the school would adopt a more positive and effective discipline model based on individual self-control and choice. She desired teacher professional development in the areas of poverty, cultural sensitivity, building relationships with families, harnessing students' funds of knowledge, discovery learning, and teacher self-care. Maria wished for expanded parent outreach that would include more academic support and ESL classes for parents (with enrichment activities for students in child care), more guest speakers, more field excursions, greater exposure to the community, and the cultivation of a college-going culture for students and parents. She added that she "could continue this list to a no-ending point."

As a former district ELD coordinator, the current principal of the focal school contended that delayed redesignation of ELs contributes to the creation of long-term English learners (LTELs). Because the language and content demands continue to intensify in middle and high school (and the achievement gap widens), it is even more difficult for older students to be redesignated than it is for younger students. Furthermore, ELD students are often denied access to college-prep courses, causing them to fall even further behind and often to give up. Therefore, her desire is for ELs to develop the English proficiency needed to be redesignated during elementary school

where there is more support and a larger safety net for students. The issue of LTELs is significant and the principal studies students' grades and progress carefully, looking for patterns. The principal also expressed a desire, if funding were available, to provide "more counselors, on-site therapy (family and individual), on-site physicians, and so much more."

Discussion and Implications

This study reveals challenges to Latinx EL student success and describes systems of support provided by the focal school for Latinx ELs and their families, which are numerous, innovative, and varied, spanning the classroom, the school, and the community. The findings reinforce the need for teachers not only to use effective pedagogical approaches to teach all students rigorous content to high levels of multiple literacies while promoting academic language development, but also to consider a multipronged, holistic approach to educating Latinx ELs. The focal school's needs-based approach of listening first and implementing programs second provides an exemplar of how schools can sensitively and holistically support Latinx EL students and families. Transition and acculturation programs, parent support and instruction, schoolwide conflict resolution and leadership curriculum, community/relationship building, and a trauma-informed approach are noteworthy efforts that extend beyond academic instruction and equip students with skills for success that expand beyond the school walls. Respondent group suggestions to provide more support in the area of parent outreach and education, funding for additional counselors, tutoring before or after school, more enrichment activities, and lower student-teacher ratios can further improve support to Latinx students and families.

An important implication of this research is the pressing need for teacher professional learning in the areas of cultural sensitivity, compassion fatigue, positive (not punitive) discipline, and second language acquisition. Further, school personnel would do well to consider instructional models that allow for individualized, targeted academic instruction, with greater stability and less movement from room to room during the school day. These findings also highlight the importance of preparing trauma-sensitive teachers who have deep sociocultural understanding and who advocate for equity for ELs, economically challenged students, and others historically placed at risk within our educational systems and schools. Further research is needed in order to better understand and therefore address the relationship of trauma to language development and cognition/learning as well as how schools can best mitigate the effects of trauma and prevent further traumatizing of students. Recent interest and professional learning in the area of trauma-informed schooling at the focal and other schools have the potential to diminish negative impacts on students and families and create conducive

learning environments with greater successes, higher achievement levels, and stronger outcomes among students. The findings also underscore the importance of educator self-care as an important corequisite in the process of caring for and meeting the needs of students and their families.

Although the education of ELs and students who speak a primary language other than English remains contentious and complicated in the US, individual schools, administrators, teachers, community liaisons, parents, researchers, and others continue to work for the equitable and effective education of these and all students. Further research into the focal school and other schools is needed in order to more clearly document and understand the processes through which schools can and do transform themselves as institutions and the lives of those involved with them, as well as how schools reproduce current inequitable social systems, such as subtractive schooling processes (Valenzuela, 1999), the creation of long-term English learners, and perpetuating the “achievement/opportunity to learn gap.”

Minimally, school systems, administrators, and teachers in classrooms need to recognize the ways in which they limit opportunities for students, including failure to develop high levels of multiple literacies among students, and consequences of such. Additionally, it is important for educators and educational systems to recognize the ways schools and teachers inadvertently retraumatize students through discipline and other practices, even in seemingly innocuous ways such as through participation structures and expectations for classroom interaction. Rather, schools and teachers need to work toward increasing opportunity, access, efficacy, engagement, and achievement for ELs by listening to and taking seriously the input from students, parents, and those who work most closely with them, including bilingual family-community-school liaisons. As the number of Latinx students in the US continues to grow, so should our understanding of their needs and the best practices to address them, including effective family engagement.

Authors

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