EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE EXPERIENCES OF ENGLISH LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL: INTERVIEWS FROM FOUR NORTHWEST SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Currently, 22% of students in the Unites States K-12 public school system speak a language other than English at home. Moreover, 14% of students qualify for special education services. There is growing concern that although English learners (ELs) are the fastest growing student population in the United States, the current education system is not meeting these students' needs, as they also tend to be the lowest performing. Among ELs, 14.7% have also been identified with disabilities.

English learner students with disabilities (ELSWDs) face significant challenges with regard to accessing appropriate educational services. Wide variation exists across schools, districts, and states in how ELSWDs are identified and served. There is a need to consider how teachers, schools, and districts provide services for ELSWDs and to assess whether these services appropriately meet ELSWDs' linguistic and disability related needs.

This qualitative study examined educators' perceptions of the experience of ELSWDs in four Northwest school. While this study identified positive aspects of educators' perceptions related to serving ELSWDs, the study's findings also shed

light on a sense of isolation, confusion, and powerlessness educators' feel in their efforts to serve ELSWDs.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Currently, 22% of students in the Unites States K-12 public school system speak a language other than English at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Among these English learners (ELs), 14.7% also have been identified with disabilities (US Department of Education, 2017). Moreover, 14% of all K-12 public school students qualify for special education services (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018). English learner students with disabilities (ELSWDs) face significant challenges with regard to accessing appropriate educational services. Wide variation exists across schools, districts, and states in how ELSWDs are identified and served. For example, in a 2015 study, Thompson found that more than 30% of students who were considered Long Term English Learners (LTELs) also qualified for special education services in Los Angeles Unified School District (Thompson, 2017). In the state of California, 41% of K-12 public school students are classified as ELs or Fluent English Proficient[1] (FEP) and 31% of special education students are ELs (Butterfield, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Teachers, administrators, and education specialists struggle with the most effective ways to meet the needs of ELSWDs. ELs are more likely to be tracked in low-level classes (Umansky, 2016). Moreover, in a recent study conducted by Kangas (2018), ELSWDs were automatically placed in classrooms with other students with disabilities. Such educational placements may have potentially detrimental effects on

[1] Students who are fluent-English-proficient are the students whose primary language is other than English and who have met the district criteria for determining proficiency in English (i.e., those students who were identified as FEP on initial identification and students redesignated from limited-English-proficient [LEP] or English learner [EL] to FEP). (R30-LC) California Department of Education, 2018.

secondary ELSWDs, including reduced access to more rigorous content, exclusion from grade level core curricular instruction, lower teacher expectations, social stigma, and less qualified and less experienced teachers (Blanchard & Muller, 2015; Dabach, 2015; Gandara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003; Robinson-Cimpian et al., 2016; Thompson, 2015). This study examined how educators perceive the educational experience of ELSWDs in four Northwest school districts. My research question is: What are educators' perceptions of the educational experience of ELSWDs?

Research Problem

There is growing concern that although ELs are the fastest growing student population in the United States, the current education system is not meeting these students' needs, as they are also the lowest performing (Slama, 2014; Capps, Fiz, Murray, Ost, Passel, & Herwantoro, 2005). Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (CRA, 1964) prohibits discrimination on the basis of "race, color, and national origin" in any federally funded program. In order to follow the CRA, school districts are required to successfully educate all students, including those who are learning English. In addition, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 2006) promises a free and appropriate education (FAPE) for students with disabilities. ELSWDs are entitled to services that address their learning needs as English learners *and also as* students with disabilities (SWDs). Moreover, education agencies are required to provide such services to support students in learning grade level curriculum, while also developing their English proficiency.

Although the process for special education identification and EL identification are set in federal law, there are significant differences in how these policies are implemented

(Umansky, Thompson, & Diaz, 2017). It is important to examine such variation in policy implementation as the preparation students receive at the secondary level defines their viability in higher education and future professional realms (Callahan, Wilkinson, Muller, & Frisco, 2009; Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt, & Chen, 2002). There has been significant research on what services are provided, and how such services are implemented, for students with disabilities. There has also been research on what services are provided, and how such services are implemented, for students learning English. There is limited research, however, on the implementation of services for ELSWDs. Given this lack of research, how best to meet the diverse educational needs of ELSWDs remains unclear, making it a critical area for researchers to examine. This study provides an examination of the complicated balancing act that school and district personnel encounter with regard to providing EL and special education services to ELSWDs in a set school day or week.

Disproportionality

The question of whether students of linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds are disproportionately represented in special education has been a topic of contention among researchers, practitioners, and policy makers for several decades (Artiles, 2011). Disproportionality refers to "the extent to which membership in a given group affects the probability of being placed in a specific disability category" (Gage et al., 2013, p. 124). Research findings are inconsistent with regard to disproportionality for culturally diverse students, including ELs, suggesting that biased practices, as well as lack of appropriate teacher training, impact the referral and identification process for ELs in special education (Gage et al., 2013). For example, researchers have found that disproportionality in special education identification exists among students who are Black,

Latino/a, English Language Learners (ELs) and immigrants (Artiles, Harry, Reschly, & Chinn, 2002).

The disproportionate numbers of EL students in special education varies significantly with regard to over-representation and under-representation by school, district, state, and grade level (Gadsen, Davis, & Artiles, 2009; Umansky, et al., 2017; Cheatham et al., 2014; Maxwell & Shah, 2012). Prior research has found that over-identification occurs more frequently in districts with small numbers of English language learners (fewer than 99 EL students), and under-identification occurs more frequently in districts with larger EL populations (Maxwell & Shah, 2012). Samson and Lesaux (2009) analyzed data from the nationally representative Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort. They found that in kindergarten and first grade, students of language and minority (LM) backgrounds were under-represented in special education, relative to the total student population; however, they found that by third grade, LM students were over-represented in special education and more likely to be identified for special education services in upper elementary school years.

In contrast, Morgan et al. (2017) found that holding gender, EL status, poverty exposure, and academic achievement constant, racial and ethnic minority students were regularly less likely than White students to be identified with disabilities. Such underidentification was evident in all three educational levels: elementary, middle, and high school. Moreover, such underidentification was also clear across racially diverse groups and specific disabilities, and throughout the achievement distribution. In another study, Morgan et al. (2015) found that racial- and ethnic-minority students were less likely to be identified as having (a) learning disabilities, (b) speech or language impairments, (c)

intellectual disabilities, (d) health impairments, or (e) emotional disturbances. Furthermore, they found that language-minority students were less likely to be identified as having (a) learning disabilities or (b) speech or language impairments.

The research on disproportionality, both over-representation or under-representation of EL students in special education, spans several decades (Chu & Flores, 2011). Some theories have shifted, while others have maintained deep roots in how diagnosing disabilities in ELs continues to be biased and discriminatory. Diagnosis of English learners with disabilities can be difficult without proper training, as many education professionals may mistake common characteristics in language development, related to pronunciation, syntax, or semantics, as signs of a learning disability (Chu & Flores, 2011). Thus, there is a strong argument that what presents as a language deficit may in fact be a learning disability and vice versa (Sullivan, 2011; Dray & Wisneski, 2011).

How Disproportionality Impacts Students

ELs in special education tend to be under-represented in most disability categories yet tend to be far over-represented in certain disability categories at middle and high school levels (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2005). For instance, likelihood of EL students receiving special education services increases with grade level (Umansky et al., 2017). Although substantial research has been conducted in the realm of over-representation of racially and linguistically diverse students, a significant disparity remains regarding identification practices. Yoon (2015) argued that due to assessment practices and teachers' responses to such assessments, special education labels may yield confines, such as a sense of exclusion due to race and class divisions that separate students.

The danger of incorrectly identifying students as EL when in fact they actually need disability services, and vice versa, involves potentially harmful consequences for students. Moreover, dual classifications (EL/SPED) can have negative repercussions as well. It can be especially difficult for ELSWDs to exit ELD and/or special education services; English learners tend to remain trapped in self-contained classrooms throughout their school years (Artiles & Trent, 1994; NCES, 2013). EL students who receive special education services are also significantly less likely to be exited from EL services than their non-special education peers (Artiles, 2010; Umansky et al., 2017). Research has suggested that it can take seven to ten years for ELs to become proficient in academic English, during which time many are also misdiagnosed as having a learning disability (Cummins, 2002; Collier, 2004; Fernandez & Inserra, 2013; Sullivan, 2011).

Literature Review

Although there has been a plethora of research regarding disproportionality in rates of EL students referred to special education, there is minimal research on how services are provided to ELSWDs. Prior research has predominantly examined variation in the referral rates and practices for ELSWDs (Kangas, 2014). Notwithstanding the research conducted on referral rates and processes, empirical research is needed that investigates how educators holistically address the educational needs of EL students after referral for special education services (Kangas, 2014). Kangas (2014) asserts, "Specifically, it remains unknown not only to what extent but also how educators provide instruction and services that target the many complex and demanding needs of ELs with disabilities" (p. 279). In this literature review, I will discuss English learner instructional services, special education instructional services, and how ELSWDs are served in the public school system. I will then address

some challenges associated with implementing both English language instruction and special education services for ELSWDs.

English Learner Instructional Services

English learner instructional services are essential for students learning English. Such services may be implemented in the general education classroom or may exist outside the general education academic mainstream, such as in a self-contained, English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Development (ELD) classroom (Callahan et al., 2009). The rulings from *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) and *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981) mandate the provision of language instruction in U.S. public schools using ESL instruction or ELD. Both rulings mandate school systems take "affirmative steps" to teach English to students not yet fluent in the language, while also ensuring access to the general curriculum (Callahan et al., 2009). Local education agencies (LEAs) are provided with supplemental federal funding for the special services of ELs. Under *Lau*, schools must recognize students who require language support services by having parents complete a Home Language Survey (HLS). If the parents state that they speak a language other than English at home, the student must then take an English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessment (ELPA 21, 2018). The student is classified EL if they score below the standard English proficiency criteria.

Callahan et al. (2009) contend, "At the secondary level, ESL programs have two purposes: to develop language and literacy and to make academic content more accessible" (p. 358). ESL instruction is intended to help students acquire the English literacy skills essential to compete academically and live in an English-dominant society (Callahan et al., 2009; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Sacarcella, 2002). Specifically Designed Academic

Instruction in English (SDAIE) or Sheltered English coursework is intended to enable access to necessary academic content and college preparatory coursework while students acquire English literacy skills (Callahan et al., 2009; Chamot & O'Malley, 1996). Although federal and state requirements mandate the provision of language development in public schools using approaches to learn English, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, the provision of ESL programs and policies are mostly locally defined, varying by state, district, and school (Callahan et al., 2009; Rivera, Vincent, Hafner, & LaCelle-Peterson, 1997; Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Stephenson, Pendzick, & Sapru, 2003).

EL students are served in various ways, depending on student needs, school resources, and district philosophies. Callahan et al. (2009) assert, "Programmatic differences exacerbate the tension that already exists between meeting both the academic and linguistic needs of immigrant linguistic minority students" (p. 357). Ideally, course placement is based on academic preparation; however, in reality, other factors often are considered (Callahan et al. Hallinan, 1998; Lucas & Good, 2001; Oakes, 1985). Constraints in the secondary scheduling process may lead to EL students being more likely placed at an academic disadvantage (Callahan et al., 2009; Harklau, 1994b, 1999). In school districts with few immigrant students, there may be a shortage of teachers qualified to teach EL students (Callahan et al., 2009; Schwartz & Stiefel, 2004). Moreover, in schools with fewer EL students, course offerings may be slim due to the limited resources available for a relatively small population, thus EL students may experience academic marginalization (Callahan et al., 2009). Research suggests that a lack of well-articulated ESL instruction has fueled the permanency of Limited English

Proficient (LEP) status for many immigrant adolescents (Callahan et al., 2009; Scarcella, 1996).

Linguistic minority students traditionally score lower than native English-speaking students on standardized assessments (Callahan et al., 2009; Abedi & Lord, 2001), are more apt to drop out of high school (Callahan et al., 2009; Watt & Roessingh, 1994), and are less likely to persist in higher education (Callahan et al., 2009; Klein, Bugarin, Beltranena, & McArthur, 2004). Contrary to much current research in recent decades, many researchers and educators have argued that the most effective methods involve the notion that students must learn English prior to being able to succeed in their academic coursework (Callahan et al., 2009; Callahan, 2005; Harklau, 1994a; Minicucci & Olsen, 1993). There has been ongoing debate regarding the reasoning behind English learners' poor academic performance; whether poor performance is a result of inadequate academic preparation or simply the product of limited English proficiency is unclear from the prior research (Callahan et al., 2009; Lam, 1993).

Research has shown that the most successful programs for EL students at the secondary level prioritize access to academic content (Callahan et al., 2009; Crandall, Bernache, & Prager, 1998; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Walqui, 2000), which in turn forecasts students' writing test scores (Callahan et al., Wang, 1998). Moreover, with regard to EL students who do not qualify for special education, completion of math and science coursework is a robust predictor of college enrollment (Callahan et al., 2009; Adelman, 1999). Students who enroll in more advanced math and science coursework, with better access to academic content, show stronger gains in achievement as measured by subject-specific test scores than students placed in less advanced coursework

(Callahan et al., 2009; Thompson, 2017). In efforts to determine barriers to enrollment and successful completion of secondary math courses for students classified as ever English learners (ever ELs), Thompson (2017) found that half of all students across six California districts, including ever ELs, repeated a math course between 8th and 10th grades, with scant substantiation of further learning during students' second time in the course. Clearly, if placement in ESL services restricts students' exposure to academic content, then the cumulative effects may be compounded (Callahan et al., 2009).

In their study on the effect of placement in ESL on academic progress and how it varies across school environments, Callahan, Wilkinson, Muller, and Frisco (2009) found that ESL placement results in higher levels of academic functioning; yet in schools with few immigrants, the effect is the opposite. EL students placed in ESL performed at lower levels than their mainstreamed peers (Callahan et al, 2009). Moreover, the preference given to English acquisition over academic preparation, along with inevitable limitations in ensuring the delivery of linguistic services required by law may impede students' access to either more rigorous academic coursework or the academic preparation needed for entry into higher education (Callahan, 2009). In the following section, I will discuss special education instructional services and how special education students are served in the public school system.

Special Education Instructional Services

Special education instructional services are intended to support students with disabilities in an inclusive environment whenever possible. Fourteen percent of all public school students receive special education services, accounting for 6.5 million students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Two federal laws protect the rights of students

with disabilities. The 2004 *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA, 2004; Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004) mandates a free and appropriate public education to eligible students with disabilities throughout the nation and safeguards special education and related services to those children (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004). In 2015, IDEA was amended through Public Law 114-95 as the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA, 2015). ESSA warrants that improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of national policy to ensure opportunity and inclusion for individuals with disabilities. Under IDEA, students have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), but if they receive services under the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, they have a 504 Plan (named differently in some states) (Vocational Rehabilitation Act, 1973).

Each student who qualifies for special education has legal paperwork, a special education team, and is guaranteed the right to a free and appropriate education (FAPE), which includes being educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) (Sutton, 2014). Either an IEP or 504 Plan provides details of special education services, including supports, accommodations, and modifications to best serve the needs of the student. A special education team requires specific representation from a special education teacher, general education teacher, administrator, parent, and sometimes other specialists (Sutton, 2014). The LRE compels the special education student to spend the maximum amount of time possible with non-disabled peers and it is the special education team's responsibility to make this possible (Sutton, 2014). Depending on the student's disability, the LRE may vary from a self-contained classroom setting to full inclusion in the general education

setting. Approximately 95% of students with disabilities receive at least part of their education in the general education classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Tensions exist between the core policy of standards-based education and accountability under ESEA and entitlement to a FAPE, the expectations that underlie IDEA (McLaughlin, 2010). McLaughlin (2010) asserts that the challenges faced by educators in aligning Title I/ESEA and IDEA stem from differing understandings of what constitutes educational equity. Specifically, educators struggle with how best to treat students justly, while also holding them to universal standards (McLaughlin, 2010). Wilson, Kim, & Michaels (2011) note that this "standardized, one-size-fits-all approach" (Mihalas, Morse, Allsopp, & McHatton, 2009, p. 109) may not always mesh with the individual educational and support needs of students with disabilities (Browder et al., 2006; Goodman, Hazelkorn, Bucholz, Duffy, & Kita, 2011). Moreover, Wilson et al. (2011) caution that NCLB's push for "highly qualified teachers," especially at the secondary level, to exclusively have knowledge of content rather than pedagogy overlooks the key premises of effective pedagogy (Boudah, Schumacher, & Deshler, 1997; Mihalas et al., 2009).

The significant increase of students with disabilities being served in general education classrooms exhibits the significant impact of IDEA's requirements on current educational practice (Bull & Reedy, 2007; McLaughlin, 2011). At the secondary level, co-teaching is one of the most commonly suggested models for meeting the individual educational needs of students with disabilities in an inclusive environment (Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; McLaughlin, 2011; Murawski, 2006; Zigmnod & Magiera, 2001). In the

following section, I will discuss instructional services as they pertain specifically to English learner students with disabilities.

Instructional Services for ELSWDs

Significant challenges may exist in EL and SPED instructional service delivery for ELSWDs. Stemming from an ethical responsibility to understand the referral process in order to ensure ELs are not disproportionally represented in special education, Kangas (2014) examined the types of services English learners with disabilities receive (see below), as well as the policies that guide implementation of such services.

Klinger, Boelé, Linan-Thompson, and Rodriguez (2014) identified several essential components that benefit English learners with disabilities: 1) culturally and linguistically responsive educators, 2) culturally and linguistically responsive and appropriate instruction, 3) an encouraging learning atmosphere, 4) help with language acquisition and support with home language, 5) support in the general education classroom with accessing appropriate curriculum, and 6) intensive research-based interventions designed to help improve academic and possibly behavioral skills in specific areas. Significant barriers exist with regard to providing these essential components, including lack of professional training in cultural and linguistic inclusion practices (Langdon, 2002; Samson & Collins, 2012), time and willingness on the part of educators to collaborate (Kangas, 2018), as well as philosophical differences on how best to serve ELSWDs (Fernandez & Inserra, 2013; Hart, 2009; Kangas, 2017).

Providing services to English learners with disabilities is laden with difficulties and concessions (Kangas, 2017). In her study on the intersection of special education and dual language education, Kangas (2017) found that access of English learners with

special needs to bilingual and academic support was significantly restricted. In her earlier ethnographic case study, Kangas (2014) found that special education services often trump ELD services. The study's findings indicated that ELD and disability related services are often "in tension with one another" due to scheduling challenges, school culture, lack of teacher expertise, and ELD program models (Kangas, 2014, p. 287).

Taking into consideration lack of expertise, Kangas (2014) noted that although many participating practitioners held advanced degrees, most had not received formal ESL training. However, both teachers and paraprofessionals received professional training in disability-related topics (Kangas, 2014). When teachers and paraprofessionals are not armed with effective ELD teaching strategies, special education strategies tend to take precedence due to the power of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and accountability concerns on the part of teachers and administrators (Kangas, 2017). Regarding school culture, when schools have a deep understanding of disabilities, teachers are encouraged to provide necessary accommodations and modifications as delineated by the student's IEP. For example, in Kangas' study, the school setting was also the site of the district's autism program, thus there existed a strong school culture regarding serving students with disabilities (Kangas, 2014). According to Kangas (2017), such a robust school culture may also be significantly impacted by personal ideologies on the part of educational practitioners.

Pertaining to ESL/ELD program models that serve ELSWDs, schools may use both push-in and pull-out models. The intention of the push-in model is to encourage inclusion, depending on students' educational needs, yet at times the pull-out model is most appropriate (Kangas, 2014). Kangas (2014) found that push-in ESL provided little

learning opportunity for ESL instruction for students receiving both ESL and special education services, eventually producing a battle in services delivery, creating a hierarchy of services. Kangas (2014) asserts, "When one service is prioritized over the other-—regardless of the service—ELSWDs' needs are not being fully met" (p. 300).

Regarding scheduling challenges, Kangas (2014) found that for ELSWDs, the amount of ELD instructional time was significantly lower than the state recommended guidelines. EL students with significant disabilities may be scheduled for ELD, speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, reading intervention, among other services, several times a week, thus coordination of services and specialists makes inclusion in the general education curriculum challenging. Because scheduling can create barriers to ELSWDs receiving sufficient ELD instruction *and* special education services, and given that many practitioners are not adequately trained in ELD, special education and ELD practitioners often end up operating independently, resigned to function in silos. When ELSWDs are served by compartmentalizing their needs into discrete needs, Kangas (2017) argues a cycle of fragmentation occurs, which ultimately leads to a lack of teacher effectiveness. Referring to this as the "specialist trap," Kangas (2018) stresses that the divide and conquer approach does not work well; the special education teacher and the ELD teacher must work together in order to best serve ELSWDs.

Some school districts, as well as some states, have made increasing efforts to combat such a disunity by requiring general education teachers to be ESOL endorsed. For example, in Arizona, all classroom teachers, supervisors, and administrators must have a bilingual, ESL or structured English immersion endorsement, and in California, all teachers with one or more ELs in their classroom must have an English learner certificate

or authorization (Education Commission of the States, 2014). In addition, several states, including New Mexico, New York, and Texas, require general education teachers to engage in professional development training in EL strategies (Education Commission of the States, 2014).

Gap in Literature

There is a need to consider how teachers, schools, and school districts provide services for ELSWDs and to assess whether these services appropriately meet ELSWDs' linguistic and disability related needs (Kangas, 2014). Based on the gaps found in this review, this qualitative study examines educators' perceptions of the educational experiences of ELSWDs at the secondary level in four Northwest school districts.

CHAPTER II

METHODS

This study sought to answer the following research question:

What are educators' perceptions of the educational experience of ELSWDs?

Given that much of the research on ELSWDs has been quantitative in nature, this study contributes to filling a literature gap with regard to the scant qualitative research on ELSWDs and the need to better understand how educators perceive ELSWDs' experiences. Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe how qualitative data such as interviews can deepen the understanding of the perceptions the participants have about a phenomenon. With these goals in mind, the data examined for my study come from a larger qualitative study, *Understanding Reclassification Practices for English Learners with Disabilities,* led by principal investigator, Dr. Karen Thompson.

Extant data from Dr. Thompson's study are used to understand educators' perceptions about ELSWDs' experiences in four Northwest school districts. As part of a larger study, my analysis uses a subset of the interviews conducted, as shown in Table 1. By exploring how educators perceive the educational experiences of ELSWDs, this study has the potential to inform the design of special education and English language instruction policies and practices that can lead to improved educational opportunities and outcomes, especially for ELSWDs.

Table 1

Data Sources by Research Questions

Item Category	Teacher/Staff Interview Protocol	District Staff/Administrator/ Specialist Interview Protocol
RQ: What are educators' perceptions of the educational experience of ELSWDs?	Section 3	Section 3

Sample and Setting

This study utilized data from the four school districts in the Northwestern United States included in Thompson's study. The four districts and ELSWDs were identified purposefully for Thompson's study. Convenience sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was an important consideration in the sampling plan, as previously established relationships with teachers and administrators provided a foundation to easily identify appropriate participants, including teachers, education specialists, and administrators. Data and prior work with the districts indicated that they vary considerably in size, location, and student population, which lends to greater generalizability of findings. For my study, as shown in Table 2, the sample included 13 educators. Although student data were not included in this subset of the larger study, Table 3 provides demographic data on six students included in the larger study to help contextualize the educators' responses.

Table 2 provides demographics information about the four school districts. Because this study's focus is on educators' perceptions of the educational experience of

ELSWDs in four fairly different school districts, whether the EL and special education student population is high, moderate, or low is also included for each district to provide context for the educators' comments. Table 2

Participants by School District

Participant	*Participant's Position*	*District A Suburban Medium EL student pop.*	*District B Urban High EL student pop.*	*District C Small City Low EL student pop.*	*District D Rural High EL student pop.*
Educator 1	ESOL Teacher				X
Educator 2	ESOL Teacher				X
Educator 3	ESOL Teacher			X	
Educator 4	ESOL Teacher	X			
Educator 5	ESOL Teacher	X			
Educator 6	ESOL Teacher			X	
Educator 7	ELD Coordinator			X	
Educator 8	LPC				X
Educator 9	SPED Teacher		X		
Educator 10	SPED Teacher	X			
Educator 11	District Administrator		X		
Educator 12	District Administrator		X		
Educator 13	School Administrator			X	

Note. The Oregon Office of Rural Health (ORH) defines rural as any geographic area that is ten miles or more from a population center of 40,000 people or more. Frontier counties are those with six or fewer people per square mile. Of Oregon's 36 counties, 10 are designated by ORH as frontier.

Table 3

Student Educational Services

Student Participant	Grade	SPED Designation	SPED Services	EL Status	EL Services
Student 1	8	Primary: CD	• SPED Math • SPED Reading	EL	ELD
Student 2	8	Primary: SLD	• SPED Math • SPED Reading	EL	ELD
Student 3	10	Primary: CD	• Study class support	RFEP 2016	EL Monitoring (year 3)
Student 4	11	Primary: CD	• SPED Communication 1x/wk./30 min • SPED Math • SPED Reading • SPED Transition services • SPED Study Skills	RFEP 2019	EL Monitoring (year 1)
Student 5	11	Primary: CD	• SPED Communication 4.5 hrs./yr. • SPED Writing • SPED Transition services • SPED Study Skills	RFEP 2018	EL Monitoring (year 1)
Student 6	11	Primary: SLD	• SPED Math • SPED Reading • SPED Writing • SPED Transition services • SPED Study Skills	RFEP 2019	EL Monitoring (year 1)

Note. Communication Disorder (CD), English Language Development (ELD), English Learner (EL), Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP), Special Education (SPED), Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

For Thompson's study, a main contact was identified within each district, or at each school, depending on the district's size. This individual served as the key contact for recruiting participants within that district. The research team then worked with the district to contact participants to invite them to take part in the study and participate in an interview once consent was obtained.

Procedures

Although the research team continued to collect data for a longer period of time, and included interviews with students and families, my study focused on data collected through interviews with 13 educators between the months of November, 2018 through February, 2019.

Interviews

To better understand their perceptions of how ELSWDs are served, the research team conducted semi-structured interviews with school and district personnel, including teachers, education specialists, and administrators. For analysis purposes, all interviews were recorded, transcribed, and stored in a password required secure cloud-based location. The primary purpose of the school and district personnel interviews used for this subset of the study was to understand their perceptions of ELSWDs' experiences. Signed consent forms were required of all school and district personnel who opted to participate in the study's interviews.

Interview questions asked participants about their roles and responsibilities in relation to the school or district. The teacher, education specialist, and administrator interview protocol asked questions that addressed the following areas (see Appendices A and B):

- The school/district's service delivery model for ELD instruction
- The school/district's service delivery model for special education
- Interactions between school/district personnel and ELSWDs and parents
- Strategies, techniques, or interventions that have been used to serve ELSWDs
- ELSWDs' strengths and weaknesses
- Challenges in providing services for ELSWDs
- Challenges regarding communication and collaboration among SPED/EL personnel

Data Analysis

Qualitative approaches enable the researcher to depict authentically the lived experiences of people (Onwuegbuzie, Leech & Collins, 2010). In my study, this was accomplished through using Thompson's interview data to capture educators' perceptions. Coding qualitative data can be approached multiple ways, such as creating a code list a priori or using grounded theory and letting the codes emerge from the data. In my study, I used a blend of two qualitative data analysis techniques: constant comparison analysis and classical content analysis. Constant comparison analysis involves establishing basic descriptive categories early on to use in the coding process, which enables the researcher to prioritize information in the analysis and interpretation stage related to the pre-established categories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I established a priori descriptive categories through transcribing the interviews (see below). After coding is completed, the researcher counts the number of times each code is employed to identify which codes are used most often and which might be the most salient themes (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

I coupled constant comparison analysis with classical content analysis, an unassuming technique that allows researchers to analyze fairly unstructured data in view of the significances, symbolic virtues, and meaningful contents they have and the forthcoming functions they reveal in the lives of the data's sources (Krippendorff, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My use of classical content analysis enabled me to come up with additional codes and themes that emerged from my analysis of the educator interviews. Creswell and Creswell (2018) delineate six steps that I followed to analyze the interview data. First, Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest that the researcher must organize and prepare the data for analysis. This first step is meant to give the researcher a general overview of the data to be able to reflect on the meaning from a broad perspective. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest, "the traditional approach in the social sciences is to allow the codes to emerge during the data analysis" (p. 199). The first step of my analysis was to transcribe the audio recordings of the thirteen educator interviews. During the transcription process, preliminary themes began to emerge as I gained a holistic sense of the interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This detailed process enabled me to see and absorb the contents of each interview through an additional layer, very early in the data analysis process, in addition to then reviewing each transcript. I transcribed interviews as they were completed, and added to my preliminary themes as I transcribed each interview.

Creswell and Creswell's (2018) second step is for the researcher to ponder the overall meaning of the data before coding specific passages. During this step, I read through the complete set of thirteen transcripts and reviewed my initial list of possible themes that I had created while transcribing the interviews. This second step resulted in the initial list of 52 themes to be reduced to nine themes.

With regard to themes, one was about collaboration among educators. This theme included challenges or barriers to collaborating, such as making decisions regarding IEPs and reclassification, collaborating to support ELSWDs in the transition from middle school to high school, lack of time to collaborate, and too heavy caseloads to collaborate. One theme was about the lack of congruity between the strategic planning on how best to meet ELSWDs' needs and the actual implementation of such plans. Such involved the challenges associated with having an understanding with what is best for ELSWDs, yet at the same time, being restricted from accomplishing this. One theme was about educators' inability to effectively differentiate educational programming for ELSWDs. Although ELSWDs were receiving special education services and were also receiving, or had received, EL services, educators expressed concern that such services were not differentiated in order to best meet the individual needs of ELSWDs. Another theme was about teaching models. Educators were perplexed about what teaching models were most effective for ELSWDs, moreover the models varied among settings.

Another theme was about educators' views on professional development, specifically with regard to how best to serve ELSWDs. Worries ranged from lack of preparation to work with ELSWDs, as well as lack of sufficient opportunities for professional trainings. Another theme was about educators' unease regarding ELSWDs' access to the traditional high school diploma. ELSWDs' enrollment in both special education courses and ELD may cause challenges in scheduling, credit accrual, and access to electives. Another theme was about appropriate secondary educational services for ELSWDs, such as which general education courses and which special education courses are most appropriate, as well as how long ELSWDs should be enrolled in ELD. A final

theme was about educational expertise with regard to the two realms of special education and ELD, and when deference to one department's expertise is necessary.

Creswell and Creswell's (2018) third step is to code passages from the data, the process of organizing data into chunks or thematic categories and labeling those categories (Creswell, 2014). As interviews were conducted and transcribed, I established emerging themes (steps 1 and 2) under each of the nine broad themes, at which point I reevaluated all general themes in order to determine if such were primary themes or rather simply themes that struck me as interesting, yet not actually a theme throughout all educator interviews. I then created a compilation of preliminary codes, before I began coding the interviews. I used many of these initial codes in my analysis, and also added additional codes while coding the interviews to capture ideas which directly correlated with my research questions but had not been anticipated in my original list of codes. As seen in Appendix C, codes were related to the experiences of ELSWDs at the secondary level, educator perceptions of ELSWD's experiences. Some of the codes included *disability*, *language*, *level of difficulty*, *electives*, and *stigma*. Other codes captured educators' perceptions of the challenges involved with serving ELSWDs, such as *professional training*, *access*, *best practices*, *teaching models*, *student needs*, *challenges*, and *collaboration*.

Creswell and Creswell's (2018) fourth step of the qualitative analysis process is to generate categories from the coded data, using specific evidence from the coded passages that show connections in the data. During this step, codes were consolidated into coding categories. Such was developed by expanding themes that were most significant and consolidating themes that weren't as significant as initially deemed, through line by line coding. I then coded for details, solidifying and evaluating the initial themes to construct

a more complete set of themes. This process resulted in 101 codes being discarded, 137 being consolidated so that my data were organized under six categories. Next, I condensed the original nine general themes to six themes.

Creswell and Creswell's (2018) fifth step of qualitative data analysis is to organize o the categories of coded passages from Step 4 into themes (from my initial two steps) to answer the research questions. For my study, this step involved my evaluating the initial themes to construct a more complete set of themes in order to devise coding categories. Such included six themes: 1) access to opportunity, 2) challenges in providing appropriate services for ELSWDs, 3) the importance of collaboration among English Language Development (ELD) and Special Education (SPED) educators, 4) a strong intention of providing help and support to ELSWDs, 5) the importance of meeting ELSWDs' needs, and 6) issues related to scheduling and adequate time. After looking for such sub-themes under the six themes, a codebook was created (Appendix C).

Creswell and Creswell (2018) note the final step in qualitative data analysis is to interpret the data. This step allows the researcher to depict meaning from the qualitative data and compare the findings with prior literature or other data sources. In the following chapters, I first present the findings (Chapter 3) and then link these findings back to the literature reviewed (Chapter 4) to ultimately draw implications for practice and future research.

CHAPTER III: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I will present the findings from the data gathered through interviews with thirteen educators from four Northwest school districts, organized by research question. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings. In Chapter 5, I will analyze these findings and explore the extent to which they confirm, extend, or contradict prior research.

Educators' Perceptions of ELSWDs' Experiences

Study findings indicate that participants across all four school districts feel there are significant concerns regarding how ELSWDs are served. Six common themes emerged throughout the interviews: 1) access to opportunity, 2) challenges in providing appropriate services for ELSWDs, 3) the importance of collaboration among English Language Development (ELD) and Special Education (SPED) educators, 4) a strong intention of providing help and support to ELSWDs, 5) the importance of meeting ELSWDs' needs, and 6) issues related to scheduling and adequate time.

Access to Opportunity: A Sense of Catch-22

Theme #1 revealed a sense of frustration regarding students' access to educational opportunities on the part of educators. Seven out of the 13 educators interviewed noted that access to specific coursework, mainstream peers, and appropriate services are challenges for ELSWDs. Four opportunity access challenges emerged from the interviews consistently: legal concerns, access to writing instruction, access to elective courses, and access to high school graduation. It was noted in the interviews that the longer students are dually classified as EL/SPED, the longer they may face barriers to

accessing certain opportunities. For example, Educator 4 (ESOL Teacher, District A) shared:

> These are long term kids. They've been in ESOL since kindergarten… they've just been trucking along. Maybe not having all the access to all the classes they should have because of all of these identifications. I think that's my biggest concern. We're doing a disservice to them. On the one hand, you want them to have all the services they can, but on the other hand if it's getting in the way of them accessing the regular curriculum, then it's illegal and kind of immoral too.

Educator 12 (District Administrator, District C) questioned the well-being of the ELSWDs, in addition to whether EL/SPED services provided are most appropriate or even necessary:

> …. Well, is this class helping them and is it making them able to have access to other things they're needing in life, which may be just as vitally important… Or not progressing because they've been in the same class with the same teacher for a while, things like that, 'why am I here again?'… Are we teaching the same concepts to this kid, is it redundant and boring for them, do they need something different instructionally…? Maybe have access to make them happier too, a balance, you know the health of the kid and their well-being.

Access Challenges Related to Writing Instruction.

Throughout all 13 educator interviews, the term "writing" was mentioned on 102 occasions. Six out of 13 educators expressed significant concern about ELSWDs' lack of

access to adequate writing instruction. As Educator 4 (ESOL Teacher, District A) noted, "I was concerned that these kids don't have access to writing. It always kind of goes back to that lack of access. It's got to be addressed but like three years ago." Writing class (as opposed to Language Arts) is deemed a non-required course in all four school districts. A key unintended consequence of long term dually classified students receiving both EL and SPED services is that they may not have the opportunity to ever take a writing class during their entire secondary school career. Both ESOL and SPED teachers asserted that without a strong foundation in writing, middle school ELSWDs will not be adequately prepared for the rigors of high school writing and high school ELSWDs will struggle during their high school years. In reaction to Student 1 not receiving writing instruction through a general education eighth grade language arts class, Educator 9 (SPED Teacher, District B) expressed frustration:

> …. I want him to have that rigorous getting ready for high school writing practice, which he's not getting in my class because we are covering lagging skills…. For him to come out of there [general education programming] for my class [special education language arts], lose writing instruction, it's just sending him on a different arc.

On a similar note regarding potential unintended consequences of working to meet ELSWDs' needs, one educator stressed the importance of prioritizing rigorous writing instruction as opposed to keeping the student in special education class. Educator 10 (SPED Teacher, District A) pondered about how best to serve a recently exited 11th grader:

> So, I'm thinking about putting him out of my class because he's basically just using it as a homework class. He should be practicing writing because he needs to do that and he is and so our district has kids pulled out of writing to be in special ed.

Access Challenges Related to Elective Courses.

Educators used the term, "electives" 31 times in the interviews conducted for this study. Seven of 13 educators expressed unease and frustration regarding ELSWDs' access to opportunity, specifically elective courses. Various elective courses were mentioned, including culinary arts, technology, art, Spanish, and writing. Educator 10 (SPED Teacher, District A) elucidated another aspect of the challenge regarding providing appropriate EL/SPED services and meeting student needs at the risk of negatively impacting ELSWDs' educational experiences:

> Most of our dually identified kids do not have PE or electives, which is also an issue…. We have conversations about that in terms of again if they're dually identified then they have typically one special ed. class and one ELD class. So, it decreases their opportunities to explore art or choir or band or design or other things that it could be that spark at the secondary level that makes a big difference for them…. It's a lot of intervention… Those kids don't get writing. Or if, their parents insist on writing, then they don't have access to an elective. And if they're dual-identified, then they have learning strategies, and my ESOL class, and there's no time for AVID, there's no time for technology, and that's not fair… You just hope and pray that you have a teacher who thinks about

> those kinds of things…. If there was a conversation about whether they should continue it with ELL, if a parent was asking me, if I say anything I might say, well you might want to look to see what kind of supports he'll get in ELL next year because that might benefit you as opposed to the elective you're losing…. Is the best pulling him out for my classes, giving him a dumbed-down version? I don't know for him, it's necessarily the best fit... The more he's getting pulled out, the less he's getting that academic vocabulary he's sponging up….

Educator 10 (SPED Teacher, District A) believed his special education language arts course was essentially a simplified version of secondary language arts; a special education course with a lower level of difficulty than the general education language arts course.

Seven out of 13 educators mentioned a concern that students, parents and family members were unaware of the potential repercussions of a lack of access to electives/core curriculum. One educator described a parent's frustrations with their child continuing to remain in ELD for years. Regarding his middle school learning strategies class, Educator 9 (SPED Teacher, District B) voiced his unease:

> [The course is] made up of probably 80% ELL kids and you know, some of them have really strong learning disabilities. I think they'll stay, they won't even test out of ELL, you know it all so oftentimes historically we end up having this conversation, parents start asking me… You know that he's been in ELL since kindergarten and they see that they're losing electives because of ELL support and SPED support, those kids don't have

> anything. So, I'm taking the writing and the ELL's taking their elective so they have nothing and then they start, especially eighth-graders, they start thinking about forecasting for high school and when they go to high school and take ELL, they only get two electives in high school. So that would take both of them. So, parents start to wonder why is my kid, you know still in this level.

Access Challenges Related to Graduation.

Although both special education and ELD courses are typically considered electives in all four districts, and ELSWDs do not typically receive language arts credit for their special education language arts course prior to junior year in high school, only four of the eight high school educators expressed concern about course credits in relation to ELSWDs graduating from high school. The most significant concern about access challenges to graduation was noted by Educator 8 (LPC, District D) noted, "Many times, where our students are deficient is in English Language Arts credits." In addition, Educator 4 (ESOL Teacher, District A) felt that parents have an interest in access:

> Well, I think that both (parents) want him to have full access to curriculum that's going to help him as he moves forward in high school. While I do my best in ESL to supplement as much as I can, he's not with the general population. And he should be. And I can't say for sure that's their reasoning, but I suspect it is.

Educator 12 (District Administrator, District C) also expressed concern about incoming ELSWDs and the need for sufficient credits to graduate high school in four years:

> Because up until then (middle school), it's kind of more of a support program. But high school is all about graduation […] being in a class called ELD is not a credit class… You need to get your credits… We're also talking about ways to rethink how we provide ELD, and are there ways that we can provide ELD using our ELP standards within the framework of a language arts class. Because then it's not, 'I need to get out.'

Another educator addressed the potential downside of ELSWDs' having both of their electives determined by their dual classifications, and in turn influencing their chances of graduating high school in four years. An additional educator conveyed apprehension regarding how long some ELSWDs might need to accrue credits for graduation and the risks related to having dual classifications, such as needing five years to graduate high school.

Challenges in Providing Appropriate Services for ELSWDs

Theme #2 involves educators' perceptions related to legal concerns and how such might undermine educators' intentions of providing appropriate services for ELSWDs. Educators also noted the threat of litigation that clouds decisions at the secondary level. The sense of apprehension regarding legal concerns was noted by Educator 5 (ESOL Teacher, District A): "I feel like much of the time the special education process is reducing the risk of lawsuits. It's not enhancing efficacy of teaching or increase success of students. And that's a challenge." Educator 11 (District Administrator, District B) also expressed concern regarding failing to provide appropriate services for ELSWDs and the legal ramifications that may be associated with such oversights:

> We feel… It's not in their best interest to say, 'Oh, this service doesn't really work for you anymore'… But what we want to be careful of is we don't want to say, 'Oh, well these services no longer apply.' Because the student has a right to those services just the same as anybody else. It's just, how are the services going to look for that student?

For Educator 4 (ESOL Teacher, District A), the concern regarding access to opportunity, as well as the question of appropriate EL/SPED services and legal apprehensions were paramount.

> Here, our schedule is so tight that the kids that are in special ed. and ESOL don't do electives, and they don't get writing. So, they are pulled out of the writing class -- they have ESL class…. But it's just so unfair and it's so wrong to keep them from that class…. Anyway, what that does is it leads me always try to help these dual-identified kids move on and gain access to the curriculum their peers are getting, because as much as I can do with them, being in with their peers and seeing kids that are really great writers and readers, I feel like it will only help these kids move forward faster. Not that we don't have that in here, but it's important for them to be part of the general curriculum. I guess that's my big frustration overall, is that they don't have access.

Educator 9 (SPED Teacher, District B) mentioned another challenge related to a concern about ELSWDs access to specific academic content and possible legal repercussions:

> That's a battle I've been fighting within our school and our district for a while. Any kids who, since they made writing an elective, any kid who

> has an IEP is taken out of writing. And so, then they come to this class which might be supported Reading, Writing, or Math during any given day and losing that daily writing instruction…. So, I think it's not the best solution … I think it's just a lawsuit waiting to happen.

Interestingly, in contrast with other educators' efforts to prevent lawsuits with regard to EL and SPED mandated services, Educator 9 (SPED Teacher, District B) refers to current practices within the district that may very well be opening the district to a lawsuit. Given that ELSWDs are expected to receive writing instruction through ELA, prevented from taking formal writing instruction, prompts a dire need for district accountability.

The Importance of Collaboration among ELD and SPED Educators

Theme #3 was about the importance of teacher collaboration in serving ELSWDs, as well as the challenges inherent in collaboration among ELD, SPED, and general educators. The term "collaboration" was used on 32 occasions by educators during the study's interviews. Furthermore, educators used the term "together" on 27 occasions. Both terms were used in reference to the perception that ELD, SPED, and general educators need to communicate, collaborate, and work together to best provide services to ELSWDs. Eleven out of the 13 educators stressed the importance of collaboration among educators and also cited challenges related to successful collaboration: lack of an established collaboration structure within the school and district, lack of time, and lack of professional training.

Eleven educators specifically referenced a need for more collaboration. For example, Educator 12 (District Administrator, District C) pondered, "Systematically, going forward, how are we going to make sure our ELL department and our SPED K-12

are on the same page? It would be pretty good." Frustrated that he does not get replies from Student 4's teachers, but thinks teachers are overworked, Educator 6 (ESOL Teacher, District C) stressed how busy content teachers are due to their number of classes, as well as large class size. In another example, Educator 1 (ESOL Teacher, District D) shared some hopeful thoughts regarding solutions to the collaboration challenge:

> That's basically what teachers do; you help each other. I think there's got to be a little more engrained thinking of that to be more regular. I think that's true across the nation, and not just the district, across the state…. Having more accountability for the content teachers in terms of sheltered instruction, and having the true collaboration rather than working in silos …. It's not all a Special Ed. teacher fixing it later… However, it's again how to put that everyday implementation of a strategic plan into effect. I think that's an area where we can make more improvement, in terms of regular collaboration.

While collaboration among EL and special education educators proved to be challenging, some educators shared how they attempted to break the collaboration barriers between the two worlds. For example, Educator 10 (SPED Teacher, District A) shared helpful techniques for working with ELSWDs in the general education classroom:

> I attempt to encourage the teachers in the Gen. Ed. classes that I push into, to be more respectful, both of the processing speed… Helping the teachers recognize that students are translating and interpreting information all the

time. And to be cognizant of that… Just slow down the process, that everybody gets a chance to answer questions.

Another educator mentioned that further knowledge about language acquisition would fuel more educator collaboration. Although there was no mention of special education certification by any of the 21 participants, three educators, all English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers, addressed the importance of the ESOL endorsement with regard to educators working with ELSWDs. Overall, the ESOL endorsement seemed to carry a positive connotation; it was considered an asset to educators, especially special education teachers. Educator 5 (ESOL Teacher, District A) asserted:

> I think from the get go, there needs to be more professional development, again, with the ELD and with the SPED teachers, because I think we need to understand each other's roles. But I also think in general, the core teachers need to know about language acquisition, because they don't…. So, I think language acquisition should be a part of our general training and valued as part of our training…

"High risk" students.

Many educators shared that some collaboration existed, however such collaboration was minimal and solely for ELSWDs who they considered to be "high risk," which they defined as students "not getting much work done in class" or students "being off-task and disruptive in class." Educator 10 (SPED Teacher, District A) shared ways in which the lack of collaboration could be improved:

> We started recognizing that there was a real need for more collaboration between SPED and ELD teachers. So, we were identifying dual identified students that also have the greatest amount of at risk behavior…. I think at least once a month if the Gen Ed., ELD and SPED met together and at least talked about identified individual students that were the high flyers. I think that might be beneficial.

Minimal communication.

In addition to an overall lack in collaboration between ELD and special education departments, several educators mentioned how communication was limited between educators, as well as departments. For example, one educator shared how a special education teacher previously attempted to establish a monthly meeting between all secondary special education teachers, yet such a form of communication proved impossible due to scheduling issues. The middle school educators weren't able to meet until 2:30, while the high school educators were finished with their professional development time by 2:30. The concern was that most educators typically don't have the freedom or flexibility to meet during school hours. Educator 10 (SPED Teacher, District A) brought up a critical barrier to vertical collaboration among ELD and SPED educators:

> There's not very much communication between the varied levels. So, I don't really know what the elementary teachers are doing… There's very little communication between the middle school and the high school…. So, there's not cohesiveness between the levels… I don't have any communication with the high school teachers.

Experts, silos, and sides.

Educators expressed concern regarding a sense of divisiveness between ELD and SPED departments. Overall, both valued each other's professional training, expertise, and varied perspectives and considered dialogue between the two to be helpful and illuminating. For instance, Educator 5 (ESOL Teacher, District A) described a sense of confusion regarding how best to utilize professionals' training, knowledge, and expertise:

> Who's the expert? Is it ELD teachers or do we bring in SPED people and start to explore a little bit more around that area? The differences between language and learning, you know, how do you distinguish it? I honestly wonder about that as well. Like, I feel like… a lot of people saying ELD and SPED need to work closer together. I don't know what that looks like… I'm not an expert in what learning issues are, so how can I distinguish between something that I only have one perspective on? I think just that background knowledge between the two fields is helpful to have that dialogue…. It's a long process and it's a lot of work.

However, in addition to training and expertise, the question of when to value one professional's expertise over another's, as well as a fear of a silo effect, emerged throughout many educators' interviews. For example, Educator 11 (District Administrator, District B) gave this analogy regarding the silo dilemma:

> We all work in our own silo, our educational silos. So, our ELL folks go, 'We've got this magic fairy dust, this specialized thing we do over here that's just for us only', and the special ed. world goes, 'We've got our own version of the magic fairy dust that we sprinkle, it's only for us to work

> with these kids', but the truth is you guys, it's a lot of the same things you're doing. So, let's not think in terms of, 'It only works here' or 'It only works over here', but let's think in terms of where are those best connections.

For instance, one educator spoke about the importance of having patience, extending wait time, and rephrasing instructions, in order for ELs and SPED students, as well as ELSWDs, to process information in class. Another asserted that an instructional assistant's help and support with test-taking and writing revisions can benefit both ELs and SPED students, as well as ELSWDs.

In addition to silos, each department working separately, rather than in conjunction, the notion of "different worlds" and "different sides" emerged from the data. Educator 12 (District Administrator, District C) questioned, "We have these two separate worlds, we have our ELL world, we have our special ed. world, and then there's kind of two silos of teachers, how can we bring them together?" Meshing the knowledge and expertise of ELD educators and SPED educators has proven challenging to several participants. For example, Educator 5 (ESOL Teacher, District A) explained:

> It can become like pushing against sides, because there's the SPED perspective and our perspective and … I don't know what happens in a SPED classroom. They don't know what happens in a language classroom. So, until there's more awareness of language acquisition and learning disabilities and how they may interfere with each other or interact with each other, then it's hard for me to say "no, that's a learning issue not a language issue "and them to agree with it.

The data suggest that the greatest lack of collaboration or connection between educators exists at the high school level. Many educators complained that collaboration is significantly less likely at the middle school level compared to the elementary school level, yet nearly non-existent at the high school level. For example, Educator 11 (District Administrator, District B) explained:

> What we found was for however disconnected the worlds are at the elementary level in terms of siloed programs, as we went up through the levels, we found that those two worlds of English learner world and the special ed. world were even more disconnected at the high school…. But again, two worlds that don't talk to each other. Actually, to be honest, at the high school it's three worlds, because it's Special Ed. Department, ESL Department, and then a whole separate 'department' which is testing.

This sense of disconnection, the idea of two different worlds, EL and special education, was pervasive among educators. However, Educator 11 (District Administrator, District B) touched on an additional element unstated by other educators, the formidable realm of assessment, or testing. While educators occasionally mentioned testing with regard to classification for EL or SPED services, the omnipresence of standardized testing was only mentioned by one educator.

Intention of Providing Help and Support to ELSWDs

Theme #4 revealed that educators ultimately have the positive intention of helping and supporting ELSWDs. Ten of the 13 educators referred to a strong intention to help and support ELSWDs succeed in their educational experience. In reference to providing

appropriate services to best meet the needs of ELSWDs, the terms “help” or “support” were used 105 times and 77 times, respectively in reference to students, whether with regard to disabilities or English or homework or general education coursework. Many participants eluded to how educator help and support influence classroom dynamics. Thirteen of the 20 participants asserted that ELSWDs needed a significant amount of educator help and support as part of their educational experience. For the ELSWDs, the matter of *how* appropriate services are provided emerged. Educator 5 (ESOL Teacher, District A) noted:

> So, wait time’s been a big thing that I've learned about and that I attempt to encourage the teachers in the gen. ed. classes that I push into, to be more respectful. Both of the processing speed that somebody has and the fact that many of them are translating from their original language… So, helping the students understand more about their own learning styles and helping the teachers recognize that students are translating and interpreting information all the time.

Furthermore, educators spoke about the difficulty in finding the right balance of help and support, in efforts to avoid giving “too much help” and enabling ELSWDs. Educator 10 (SPED Teacher, District A) describes a dilemma concerning the use of an Instructional Assistant (IA):

> Sometimes teachers feel like, that she gives them too much help. She's not feeding them answers. But sometimes I think, it’s the risk in my job too, if you're more focused on the kids’ learning and sometimes maybe a little less on the you know, how much support they’re getting so I think

> sometimes maybe she gives them too much support… But it's a hard argument because I've had to debate with teachers in the past… But sometimes like I said, with the example on the test if I could just rephrase this question, I know you could get it right and that's not what happens in the classroom… So, she typically develops relationships with kids like in sixth grade…. Kids get used to having her support. So sometimes I'll say, you know, you don't need to go see Miss for as much as you used to, trying to wean them off of her. Yeah, the least restrictive, the least amount of supports.

Educator 1 (ESOL Teacher, District D) also had some reservations about lack of independence for this student, noting "I don't know what level of her support made the differences, but I think Dad felt… that maybe he was getting too much help." The special education teacher noted a similar concern:

> He was getting help from the IA that we have in science, which is where I would be most worried about, but his dad asked that he not receive that support anymore because he can handle it… There might be a little truth to that.

The Importance of Meeting ELSWDs' Needs

Theme #5 revealed that educators viewed the needs of ELSWDs to be paramount, yet admitted that challenges existed with regard to meeting ELSWDs' complex needs. The term "need" in relation to services for ELSWDs was mentioned on 83 occasions by educators. Ten of 13 educators noted significant challenges regarding meeting the needs of ELSWDs due to the complexity of ELSWDs' needs, services, and the demands of

actually implementing appropriate services, in terms of student need, educator expertise, and educational law. For example, Educator 4 (ESOL Teacher, District A) said, "I have a special concern for kids that are dual-identified, and I feel like they don't always get, because of the complexity – they don't always get what they need to get."

Doing what's best for kids.

Six of the thirteen educators used language that referred to doing what's *best for kids*, as well as the consequences of *not* doing *what's best for kids*. There was regular mention of angst and confusion regarding what the term "best" actually looks like, in terms of access to opportunity and providing the most appropriate services in order to meet the complex needs of ELSWDs. For example, several times during the interview process, Educator 8 (LPC, District D) raised the question, "What's in the best interest of the students?" Interviewees felt the answer to such a question was not well-defined. Rather, there exists various concerns regarding struggles in truly knowing, as well as effectively implementing what's best for kids. Educator 1 (ESOL Teacher, District D) expressed a desire to assess each ELSWDs' educational experience individually, noting, "The complexity of social, emotional, and socio-political background that the kids bring into their educational experience can sometimes cause us to look more at what the best situation for the student would be." All six educators who spoke about what's best for kids eluded to a lack of clarity regarding how to actually provide what's best for kids. Educator 4 (ESOL Teacher, District A) described the "what's best for kids" dilemma:

> Everybody wants the best for the students, and we would just like a clearer way of determining which services, if we have to choose. And maybe we don't have to choose, I don't know. Which services are best? Yet, these

kids need access to the general ed. curriculum all the time. And ESL should not prevent that from happening.

Perceptions of teaching models that support ELSWDs' needs.

Fourteen references to specific teaching models were made by educators, in reference to how best to meet ELSWDs' needs. For example, for a student who really benefits from exposure to typical peers, they might also really benefit from their SPED teacher pushing in, rather than pulling them out, away from their typical peers. Such teaching models varied from the most restrictive model, the self-contained classroom, such as special education classes for Language Arts, math, or students with significant behavioral issues, to the least restrictive model, such as full inclusion in the general education classroom, with ELD and/or SPED services provided to ELSWDs among their typical secondary peers. Participants experienced various teaching models, including co-teaching, team teaching, pull-out (in which the educator removes a student from a general education classroom in order to provide ELD/SPED services in a self-contained classroom), and push-in (in which the educator provides ELD/SPED services in a general education classroom through consult hours).

With regard to the amount of support a student was receiving from the educational assistant, Educator 1 (ESOL Teacher, District D) also had some reservations:

> I don't know what level of her support made the differences but I think Dad felt, and the teacher didn't say that his case, that the dad felt that maybe he was getting too much help.… And so, she's supposed to she supports the entire class. She's got a schedule where she goes from class to class to class, but she doesn't discriminate so she'll help kids whether on

> IEP or ELL or not and teachers will send them to her […] I think that really was dad's push and maybe Student 1 can do more than we're letting him do.

Furthermore, Educator 1 (ESOL Teacher, District D) mentioned a need to address variation in teaching models in order to better meet the needs of ELSWDs:

> But in terms of team-teaching or co-teaching, that's an area that we can look to improve… For all intents and purposes, it's how to compartmentalize the special needs for language acquisition and also provide the needs in terms of special seating assignments, proximity to the teacher, sharing notes. That's one of the biggest conversations this year among the specialists and content teachers.

Also, three teachers talked about models such as co-teaching and team teaching. For example, Educator 4 (ESOL Teacher, District A) stated:

> Trying to choose my words carefully. I would want a model like that to work. I really do in my heart. I'm just not sure that we've had enough, or know enough about it -- the two of us -- professional development wise to make it successful.

Co-teaching was not always viewed as the ideal. For instance, Educator 8 (LPC, District D) expressed confidence in the self-contained special education classroom:

> So, students that are special ed. who are on an IEP, do have an additional class called a Skilled Mastery Class. They have one period a day, and we have a masterful teacher -- a *jack of all trades* who knows how to support in reading, writing, and math. We kind of hit the jackpot there. Students

do have that. So, if they're having difficulty in their content classes, they can get support there.

In addition to teaching models, Educator 10 (SPED Teacher, District A) noted serious concern about placement choices and a desire to know more about the needs of ELSWDs prior to making critical decisions:

> What are the things to be looking for to be more accurately assessing what the students' needs are, including coming up from the elementary level? I think middle school we catch things that maybe were done with good intention at the earlier levels, but maybe not being the best support for those students. So, they're putting them in the communication classes, when what they really need is more emphasis on language acquisition… I think we're missing some of those years of opportunity. So better education awareness throughout the system and from the whole, the cohesiveness of elementary through secondary. There's not a lot of it my experience.

Nearly all of the study's educators demonstrated a clear understanding of the various teaching models used with regard to providing services for ELSWDs. Nevertheless, one educator demonstrated a lack of familiarity with some teaching models; the educator was not clear about the differences between Student 6 taking the Tutorial class and remaining in the general education classroom and receiving special education consult hours. There was a disconnect regarding how special education consult hours in the general education classroom is less restrictive than the more restrictive

placement in the self-contained Tutorial class due to greater educator involvement and support, in addition to the removal of Student 6 from a class their typical peers.

Three educators expressed concern about the impact different teaching models have on ELSWDs, as well as the effectiveness of certain teaching models based on specific needs of ELSWDs due to their type of disability. For example, Educator 12 (District Administrator, District C) raised an important question regarding teaching models and meeting the complex needs of ELSWDs:

> What does it look like for our students in special education and you know, if they have an LD or a CD? Does that meet their need or do we need more collaboration with the special education teacher? Can we still get those needs met differently, that can still count as ELL? Those are the things, probably even at the middle school level, the models change a lot by then and then also kids are moving around to classes and they want more time anyway. That's what I would kind of want.

One teacher shared that the co-teaching model seemed somewhat self-defeating given the student was not receiving the services they actually needed. Regarding co-teaching with general education teachers, Educator 10 (SPED Teacher, District A) stated:

> [ELD teachers] don't like it for partly, because it is a buy-in on both sides… I'm treated like, I feel like an assistant, but also because some of the kids aren't getting what they need out of it and it's, I know at one school, they ended up pulling the kids out anyway for an additional period… But it feels a little bit like putting the cart before the horse. When we talk about coteaching, I feel like we need a whole, like intensive

> training on how that works, and the whole school needs to buy into it because you can't just work with the teacher you like, you know what I mean? Like it needs to be a culture in the school environment I think, before you can say you have it.

The question of which teaching models serve ELSWDs best was a topic touched on by many educators. But more important, several educators felt unclear how to implement specific teaching models, even if there was one model deemed the most effective, or *the* teaching model designated by their district. There was consistent reference to more training and professional development opportunities, not only regarding which teaching models to utilize to best benefit ELSWDs, but also how to implement the models in the day to day secondary school setting.

Challenges to differentiation.

All students who qualify for special education services receive an IEP. Per federal law, these plans are intended to be designed with the individual student in mind; such individualization is based on the student's unique educational needs. One of the most pressing concerns for educator participants was whether ELSWDs' individual learning needs were being met by the EL/SPED services provided to them. For example, with regard to ELD and general education classes, Educator 10 (SPED Teacher, District A) stated, "I don't see a ton of differentiation… unless they're doing fewer concepts that are expected of the student, which is really a modification, not a differentiation, I don't see a lot of differentiation." Moreover, Educator 7 (ELD Coordinator, District C) said, "For some ELL teachers, the caseloads are so heavy, it's a nightmare to differentiate instruction… 30 students in a class, 180 on your caseload. You barely learn the names of

all the students, then they finish and you have a new set."

In stark contrast, Educator 10 (SPED Teacher, District A) described his experience with the self-contained special education class, which have become uncommon in efforts to implement full inclusion models:

> So, with my students I tend to have relatively small classes of 6 to 10 students and one class I only have four students in that class and two of them are dual identified. So, we do a lot of differentiation where I'm attempting to meet their needs with specific accommodations for them and I'm doing a lot more with language acquisition kinds of strategies and I was before we focus on both academic and content oriented and vocab development. So, my first goal is to meet the needs of their IEP. So regardless of what that is if it's a lot of the students have reading, writing, and math goals.

Such a marked contrast between the opportunity to differentiate teaching styles and learning approaches is inevitable regarding smaller self-contained special education classrooms and larger mainstream or general education classrooms. The possibility of being able to focus on IEP goals, LEP goals, and core curriculum content is much more feasible with smaller class sizes, fewer distractions, and increased opportunity for one-on-one help and support.

Issues Related to Scheduling and Adequate Time

Theme #6 showed that educators were concerned about how scheduling challenges and time constraints impact their ability to meet the needs of ELSWDs. Study findings revealed that the term "time" was mentioned 38 times by educators. Twelve out

of 13 educators talked about time being a prominent factor with regard to how best to provide services to ELSWDs. Educators voiced frustration about two specific aspects of time. First, the lack of time for educator collaboration was most noteworthy. For example, regarding discussions that involve ELD, SPED, and gen ed. educators, as well as parents and specialists, Educator 11 (District Administrator, District B) said, "You have to really be willing to go, to invest a lot of time and resources…. Which in reality, public school sometimes […] that's hard." Educator 8 (LPC, District D) emphasized the number of educator responsibilities, saying, "I think some of the difficulty is that there are so many items on the docket. Finding time to be able to get to everything at a depth that is supporting students." Educator 13 (School Administrator, District C) also affirmed the lack of time, noting, "Getting all the right people in the right place at the right time is a challenge."

Second, the lack of time for appropriate course scheduling for ELSWDs was also of concern. As previously mentioned, Educator 10 (SPED Teacher, District A) described how a prevailing lack of communication among educators was the result of scheduling challenges and time demands. The data showed no evidence of educators' unwillingness to collaborate; rather there was strong emphasis on systemic barriers that educators struggled to pass in order to find sufficient time to collaborate. For example, Educator 3 (ESOL Teacher, District C) elucidated, "It's more just, if someone hasn't responded, it's that they didn't have time or it just got lost in their email. I haven't had anyone *not* wanting to respond, or *not* engaging in the conversation." Moreover, the notion that educators face barriers to collaborating was a revelation for one administrator. Educator 12 (District Administrator, District C) depicted a recent meeting experience:

> When we finally got the special education and ELL staff together for longer periods of time, not just an after school type meeting, we were able to kind of digest, think and process…. I think that was eye opening, like 'Oh, they just have limited time with each other'… To coordinate, like oh you're doing this, this makes sense, I have a question about this and maybe flesh some of that out doing best by the kid, so I think that's a big thing.

One educator found a solution, albeit not ideal, to the communication challenge due to educators' limited time and conflicting schedules, which seemed to be working. Educator 1 (ESOL Teacher, District D) explained "It's hard to integrate us. So, I tend to do a lot of walking around the halls and talking to people at lunch or interrupting some of those meetings… It's just easier to go and talk to people constantly."

Pertaining to the impact of course scheduling challenges and the limited time available for ELSWDs to experience certain course opportunities due to dual classifications, Educator 4 (ESOL Teacher, District A) described frustration with district administration:

> I just don't always feel that those thoughts [forecasting for next year] are taken into consideration necessarily, or maybe they're taken into consideration and they just can't act on them. So, then it's back to 'well we just can't figure out how to get these kids into writing *and* ESL, *and* the learning strategies class for the special ed. requirement'… Then we're just back to the same old schedule next fall. So that's kind of how the cycle has been going since I've been here…. It's just this sort of tough

scheduling thing. But make the schedule fit the kids or the kids fit the schedule? And I'm always on the side of the kids. I don't really know what needs to be done in the schedule to make things work for these kids, but something.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This final chapter includes a discussion of the study results as well as study limitations and implications. Future research recommendations are made, followed by the study conclusion. The purpose of this study was to investigate how educators perceive the experiences of ELSWDs in four Northwest school districts. By analyzing semi-structured interviews, this qualitative study strove to explore perceptions of educators regarding the educational services ELSWDs receive. My dissertation study involved examining extant data, which included transcripts from 13 interviews with educators, including three administrators, one counselor, and nine teachers (six ESOL teachers and three SPED teachers).

Discussion

The findings closely align with several themes that emerged in the literature review. The interviews revealed the importance of six themes, as detailed in chapter three: *access to opportunity*, *challenges in providing appropriate services for ELSWDs*, *the importance of collaboration among English Language Development (ELD) and Special Education (SPED) educators*, *a strong intention of providing help and support to ELSWDs*, *the importance of meeting ELSWDs' needs*, and *issues related to scheduling and adequate time*. In this section, I will discuss how the findings relate to the prior research included in the literature review.

First, the findings supported the importance ELSWDs' *access to opportunity*, including legally mandated EL/SPED services, course electives, writing instruction, and high school graduation. For instance, as mentioned in the literature review, Specifically

Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) is intended to enable access to necessary academic content and college preparatory coursework while students acquire English literacy skills; however, EL services may exist entirely outside the general education academic mainstream (Callahan et al., 2009; Chamot & O'Malley, 1996). The preference given to English acquisition over academic preparation, along with inevitable limitations in ensuring the delivery of linguistic services required by law may impede students' access to either more rigorous academic coursework or the academic preparation needed for entry into higher education (Callahan et al., 2009). This idea was echoed by several educators included in my dissertation, who expressed concerns regarding access to electives course, such as Spanish, art, technology and culinary skills. Moreover, educators expressed significant concerns regarding ELD and special education classes taking the place of PE, Language Arts, and formal writing instruction, courses required for high school graduation with a standard diploma.

Second, the findings reinforced the significance of how daunting and complex the *challenges in providing appropriate services for ELSWDs* are for educators. All educator participants confirmed that difficult decisions and concessions are inevitable with regard to providing services for ELSWDs. This finding aligns with Kangas' (2014) assertion that in providing services for ELSWDs, EL services and special education services tend to be "in tension with one another" due to scheduling challenges, school culture, lack of educator expertise, and ELD program models. Although none of the educators included in my dissertation mentioned school culture as a factor in service provision challenges, many expressed feelings of not being trained sufficiently or guided enough by their districts with regard to how best to provide services to ELSWDs.

Third, the findings from my dissertation support the finding in the literature review about the *importance of collaboration among ELD and SPED teachers*. For instance, the literature pointed to the perils involved with lack of educator collaboration, including potential failure to collaborate to support ELSWDs with multifarious needs and lack of time to effectively collaborate across departments (EL, SPED, and GEN ED). Kangas (2018) referred to this as the "specialist trap," whereby ELSWDs are served by compartmentalizing their needs into discrete needs (Kangas, 2017). However, the findings from this study did not support the notion that a lack of willingness, as well as philosophical differences on the part of educators was a barrier to collaboration, as prior research had found (Fernandez & Inserra, 2013; Hart, 2009; Kangas, 2017; Kangas, 2018).

Also, while the literature implied that co-teaching is one of the most commonly suggested models for meeting the individual educational needs of students with disabilities in an inclusive environment (Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; McLaughlin, 2011; Murawski, 2006; Zigmond & Magiera, 2001), most educator participants in my dissertation study deemed the co-teaching model to be ineffective, unrealistic, and premature, given that study participants did not feel they had received appropriate co-teaching training. Sentiments included frustration and confusion regarding which teaching models to utilize and which models are most effective for ELSWDs, such as pull-out, push-in, and co-teaching.

Fourth, the findings from my dissertation adhered to cautions put forth by Wilson et al. (2011) that NCLB's past push for "highly qualified teachers," especially at the secondary level, to exclusively have knowledge of content rather than pedagogy,

overlooks the key premises of effective pedagogy. All educator participants whose interviews I analyzed articulated *a strong intention of providing help and support to ELSWDs*. However, several also shared a solid resignation that educators were deprived of valuable guidance from their districts and state, as well as professional training regarding best practices for serving ELSWDs.

Fifth, consistent with the literature review, the findings from this study reinforced *the importance of meeting ELSWDs' needs* by identifying effective instructional models, such as push-in, pull-out, and co-teaching models. Several educators observed that the push-in model provided little learning opportunity for ESLWDs, eventually producing a battle in service delivery (Kangas, 2014), as well as disheartened and unfulfilled educators. As the literature claimed, educator participants stressed that a "standardized one-size-fits-all approach" is not effective, pragmatic, nor pedagogically sound. The findings revealed a clear and consistent struggle for educators regarding how best to meet the needs of ELSWDs, without compromising one educational service over another.

Last, the findings supported the literature review regarding *issues related to scheduling and adequate time*. Educators included in my study emphasized grave concerns regarding course scheduling challenges and related repercussions, as well as repeatedly reporting not having enough time to collaborate with each other. The demands of the master schedule and the lack of collaboration time aligns with findings from the prior research about how the silo effect is perpetuated (Kangas, 2017; Kangas, 2018; Sutton, 2014). As the prior literature stressed, educators included in my study were adamant that constraints in the secondary school scheduling process could lead to EL students being more likely to be placed at an academic disadvantage, given that students

may not have time in their course schedule to take courses like writing, PE, general education Language Arts, and electives that may potentially spark interest in future professional arenas (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; Kim & Helphenstine, 2017). Before delving into suggestions for implications, a description of the study limitations are presented to put into perspective the conclusions and suggestions made later in this chapter.

Validity Threats and Limitations

In this section, I discuss the potential threats to validity for this study. Qualitative validity addresses whether a study's findings are clear and precise from the researcher's viewpoint, as well as the participant's and the reader's (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). In order to minimize validity threats in this qualitative study, the research team avoided asking leading questions during interviews and minimized bias when reporting and analyzing findings (Babbie, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Generalizability

An important limitation that must be acknowledged is the potential lack of generalizability. This is of concern due to the small sample size. Participation in this study was voluntary. Such participants may not represent all educators who serve ELSWDs. Also, as with any self-reporting, there is the possibility that participants may not respond truthfully or will lack the detail needed to fully comprehend the questions.

This study was conducted in four school districts in the Northwestern United States, therefore generalizability may also be limited due to the significant variation in how states and districts serve ELSWDs. Furthermore, because this study was cross-sectional, the results may be time-bound and not generalizable to ELSWDs in years to come. This is especially important because school and district circumstances, protocols, and policies can

change significantly from year to year.

Researcher Bias

Creswell (2014) argues that acknowledgement of researcher bias is necessary in qualitative research. Creswell and Creswell (2018) assert, "Good qualitative research contains comments by the researchers about how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background, such as their gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic origin" (p. 200-201). Researcher bias poses a threat to the reliability of my study (Babbie, 2012) in that I am an educator. Some level of subjectivity may be inevitable given that I have been an educator for over 20 years and nearly half of my years as an educator was devoted to the field of special education. My experience with students, particularly special education students, English learners, ELSWDs, as well as classroom dynamics and special education policy, may reduce a sense of neutrality. Thus, one aspect of this study that helps to counter potential bias is that I did not conduct the interviews, which allowed my sole focus on transcripts and analysis to be paramount. Furthermore, coding with an established codebook reduces biased interpretation of the study's findings by maintaining an established list of codes to employ. Consistent with the precepts of valid, open research, I am reporting the data in a manner that allows readers to make their own judgements.

As discussed earlier, researcher bias was reduced by using a qualitative codebook to code data using as many categories as possible (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) observe the importance of member checking, defined as "an ongoing dialogue regarding my interpretations of the informant's reality and meanings will insure the truth value of the data" (p. 208). In order to prevent such potential misinterpretation,

I conducted frequent member checks with the research team and fellow colleagues, as well as peer reviews of the data interpretation with fellow researchers.

Limitations

As a qualitative study, causal relationships cannot be inferred (Babbie, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This qualitative study bore several key findings regarding educators' perceptions of the educational experience of ELSWDs. Nonetheless, there were some limitations to the execution of this study. First, since the aim of this research was exploratory, the study helped provide insights that can inform future research, but as with any exploratory study, there were constraints. Although Thompson's study included classroom and meeting observations, document analysis, and interviews, my study solely utilized a subset of the study's interviews as extant data. Second, the small sample size of participants limits the transferability of the study's results. While Thompson's study included students and parents, my study focused solely on the perceptions of educators.

Implications for Future Research

The overarching purpose of this dissertation study was twofold: first to improve understanding of educators' perceptions of the experiences of ELSWDs. My study described the perceptions of educators in four Northwest school districts, collected during the 2018-2019 school year. Future multi-site research should be conducted to compare perceptions across several districts and across multiple states.

Given that minimal research exists on how best to serve ELSWDs, future research is needed to increase educators' awareness, knowledge, and access to resources with regard to English language acquisition and meeting the needs of EL student with disabilities. Future research also is needed to evaluate whether states should require an

ESOL endorsement for all general education teachers and administrators, assess the benefits of increased professional development training in English language acquisition strategies for all educators, especially general education teachers and special education teachers, and the impacts of providing a greater opportunity for collaboration among ELD, SPED, and general education teachers. Although some states (e.g., New Mexico, New York, and Texas) are encouraging or requiring ESOL endorsement for general education teachers and administrators, research is needed to assess the impacts of such policies.

Another future research suggestion would be to conduct a longitudinal study to investigate the perceptions of ELSWDs and their parents over the span of time they are receiving services, which for some ELSWDs can be their entire educational experience. Specifically, a longitudinal study of students' complete high school trajectory would be particularly helpful given the challenges many students face regarding graduating in four years with a standard high school diploma. A longitudinal study would help to identify the points at which obtaining coursework and EL/SPED support are most prominent, so that districts are better able to tailor educational services to increase positive perceptions regarding the educational experience of ELSWDs. In addition, the interviews analyzed for this study were focused specifically on programmatic issues, not instructional strategies. More research is needed on instructional strategies, especially with regard to identifying best practices for ELSWDs.

Dissemination of Study Findings

I plan to disseminate findings from my study through publication of a scholarly article, which will involve the following steps:

- First, I will select a fitting journal for submissions of an article which aligns with my topic of study, such as *Journal of Special Education, Journal of Learning Disabilities, Exceptional Children, Educational Researcher, American Educational Research Journal, Education and Treatment of Children, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis,* and *American Educational Research Journal*. These journals all published articles included in my literature review, making them good candidates for an article based on my dissertation findings.
- Second, I will review the submission guidelines for each journal deemed a potential fit with my study findings. I will review the articles from recent editions of the journals in order to better tailor my submission based on the relative space dedicated to theoretical framework, study methods, findings, and implications. Having reviewed a wide range of articles for my literature review, I understand I will have to mold my scholarly article in different ways to meet the standards and concentrations of specific journals.
- Third, based on reviewing expectations for journal submissions, I will determine how many articles to submit. I envision submitting three articles: one focused on the qualitative findings regarding educators'

perceptions of the educational experience of ELSWDs, focused on education policy and practice with regard to ELSWDs.

- Last, I will submit articles for publication. These publications will enhance my career trajectory in academic affairs following completion of my doctorate.

APPENDIX A

TEACHER/STAFF INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Project Title: Understanding Reclassification Practices for English Learners with Disabilities
Study Number: 8525

TEACHER/STAFF INTERVIEW

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of students with disabilities who are also classified as English learners. During this interview, which will last about 60 minutes, I'll ask you some questions about your experiences with the instructional services and potential reclassification process for _____ (name of student).

Do you have any questions?

Note: The interview questions asked to a particular interviewee will be tailored to that particular individual, using this list of questions as a guide.

Introductory questions:
Initial interview
Tell me about your role and responsibilities.

Tell me about your history working with XXX student.

- Probes:
    - How long have you been working this student?
    - What courses have you taught this student?
    - Tell me what this student is like (personality, disposition, interests, dislikes, etc.)

Academic questions:
Initial interview
What are this student's academic strengths or interests? What does this student enjoy most in school? Why do you think the student enjoys that?

What are this student's academic weaknesses? What aspects of school are difficult for this student? Why do you think the student enjoys that?

Questions about student XXX's *education* services:
Initial interview

(For the general education teacher): Tell me about the general education instruction student XXX receives.

- *Probes:*
    - Tell me about the school/district's service delivery model for English language development instruction
    - Student progress in each applicable content area
    - Strategies or techniques or interventions that have been used to help student XXX
    - What has worked well in teaching student XXX?
    - What have been the challenges in teaching student XXX?

(For the special education teacher): Tell me about the special education instruction student XXX receives.

- *Probes:*
    - Content area goals on IEP
    - Hours in special education services
    - Special education service delivery model
    - Student progress toward goals
    - Strategies or techniques or interventions that have been used to help student XXX
    - What has worked well in teaching student XXX?
    - What have been the challenges in teaching student XXX?
    - (If the special education teacher is involved in decision-making or instruction related to English-language development instruction: ask follow-up questions related to the school/district's service delivery model for English language development instruction)

(For the ELD teacher): Tell me about the English language development instruction that student XXX receives.

- *Probes:*
    - Tell me about the school/district's service delivery model for English language development instruction.
    - Strengths and weaknesses in English (listening, speaking, reading, writing)
    - Student progress toward second language acquisition targets
    - Strategies or techniques or interventions that have been used to help student XXX
    - What has worked well in teaching student XXX?
    - What have been the challenges in teaching student XXX?

(All): Tell me about how you *communicate* or *collaborate* with other teachers or service providers for student XXX (general ed. teacher, special ed. teacher, ELD teacher, other service providers)

- *Probes:*
    - How regularly do you communicate with _____ teacher/service providers?

- How would you describe the setting for communication/collaboration? (formal group meeting, informal conversation, etc.)
- What do you discuss?
- How do you share information about student XXX's progress?
- How do you follow up on discussion topics?
- Challenges in collaboration (e.g., scheduling and other logistics, different areas of expertise)
- Aspects of collaboration or communication that are going well

[After having examined students' school records and conducting observations, I imagine asking teachers or service providers for more details about information I obtained from their records and from observing.]

Reclassification policies for students <u>with disabilities</u>
Initial interview

(All): There has been considerable concern among educators across the country regarding appropriate policies and practices for reclassifying English learner students **with disabilities**. Tell me what you know about your school/district's policies for reclassifying students with disabilities

- *Probes*:
  - Possible differences in reclassification policy based on disability type
  - Possible differences at elementary, middle school, and high school levels

(All): Tell me about conversations that have taken place at the <u>school</u> level regarding reclassification *policies* for English learner students **with disabilities**. (for example, conversations among teachers or between teachers and school administrators)

- *Probe:*
  - Tell me about any conversations that you know of that have taken place at the <u>district</u> level regarding reclassification policies for English learner students **with disabilities**. (like conversations between your school leaders and district administrators)

Reclassification meeting for student XXX
Initial interview for cases in which students are candidates for reclassification during initial data collection phase; Follow-up interview for cases in which students are candidates for reclassification during later phases of data collection

<u>Referral</u>

Tell me how you were involved in the referral of student XXX for reclassification

- *Probes:*
  - What do you remember?
  - Who initiated the referral?
  - (if applicable) When did you first realize you needed to make a referral?
  - (if applicable) What data did you draw from in making this referral decision?
  - Did you interact with the student? How?
  - Which other teachers did you communicate with? How?

- Did you interact with the student's parents? How?
- What type of paperwork is involved?
- How do you think the referral process went?
  - Is there anything that you would improve?
  - Is there any part of the referral process that went particularly well?

Meeting preparation

Tell me how you're preparing for student XXX's reclassification meeting**…** walk me through your involvement

- *Probes*:
  - What evidence are you preparing for the meeting?
  - How are you collaborating with other staff to prepare?
  - Who is leading preparation for the meeting?
  - Who will attend the meeting?
  - Have you interacted with the parents? How?
  - Have you interacted with the students? How?
  - What do you know about evidence that will be discussed at the meeting?

Meeting debrief

Tell me about your recent involvement in student XXX's reclassification meeting… walk me through your involvement

- *Probes*:
  - What do you remember?
  - Who attended the meeting?
  - Were parents involved? How?
  - Were students involved? How?
  - Who led the meeting?
  - What was your role at the meeting?
  - What evidence was discussed at the meeting?
  - How were decisions made at the meeting?
  - Was the decision clear? Why or why not?
  - How did you feel about the decision?
  - Discuss and challenges or concerns that popped up at the meeting.
  - What went well at the meeting?
  - What needed improvement?

Student progress and monitoring following reclassification meeting

Final follow-up interview

(All): Tell me about your involvement in student XXX's instruction or service provision since the reclassification meeting. What's happened after the meeting?

- *Probes*:
  - What has been your role in student XXX's continued services or instruction?
  - Changes in ELD and content-area course placement, special education service delivery models, peer composition of classes, other services?
  - Challenges in scheduling for ELD and special education services?

- Monitoring after reclassification?
- Have you interacted with the parents? How?
- Have you interacted with student XXX? How?
- How have you collaborated or communicated with other teachers or service providers since the reclassification meeting?
- How do you think student XXX has been doing overall since the meeting?
- What do services or instruction or other support do you think student XXX needs now?
- What has gone well since the reclassification meeting?
- What needs improvement?

(All): Tell me about how you have *communicated* or *collaborated* with other teachers or service providers for student XXX (general ed. teacher, special ed. teacher, ELD teacher, other service providers) since the reclassification meeting

- *Probes:*
  - How regularly do you communicate with _____ teacher/service providers?
  - How would you describe the setting for communication/collaboration? (formal group meeting, informal conversation, etc.)
  - What do you discuss?
  - How do you share information about student XXX's progress?
  - How do you follow up on discussion topics?
  - Challenges in collaboration (e.g., scheduling and other logistics, different areas of expertise)
  - Aspects of collaboration or communication that are going well

[After having examined students' school records and conducting observations, I imagine asking teachers or service providers for more details about information I obtained from their records and from observing.]

District reclassification policies for ELSWDs: Moving forward (for interviewees in all roles):
Final follow-up interview

What concerns do you have about the reclassification process for student XXX? What has gone well? What changes would you like to see?

What concerns do you have about instruction/service provision for student XXX since the reclassification meeting? What has gone well? What changes would you like to see?

What concerns do you have about monitoring for student XXX since the reclassification meeting? What has gone well? What changes would you like to see?

What concerns do you have about collaborating or communicating with other teachers or service providers who work with student XXX? What has gone well? What changes would you like to see?

Any final words on your thoughts about this process for reclassification for English learners with disabilities?

APPENDIX B

DISTRICT STAFF/ADMINISTRATOR/SPECIALIST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Project Title: Understanding Reclassification Practices for English Learners with Disabilities
Study Number: 8525

DISTRICT STAFF/ADMINISTRATOR/SPECIALIST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. The purpose of this study is to understand the exiting or reclassification process in your school/district for English learner students who have also been identified with disabilities. During this interview, which will last about 60 minutes, I'll ask you some questions about your experiences with reclassification processes and instructional services and for these dually identified students.

Note: The interview questions asked to a particular interviewee will be tailored to that particular individual, using this list of questions as a guide.

Do you have any questions?

Background and Role (for interviewees in all roles):

How long have you worked in the district/school?

What is your role in the district/school?

What different positions have you held? (Probe for specific work related to English learners and/or special education.)

What is your current role in working with English learner students with disabilities?

District reclassification policies (in general- *not* specifically for ELSWDs)

All: Tell me about your district's current reclassification policies for *all* ELs (not necessarily ELSWDs)

- *Probe*:
    - Follow-up questions based on review of the district's Title III plan outlining their reclassification policies.
    - Follow-up questions about the district/school's service delivery model for English language development instruction

(If applicable): What variation do you see, if any, in how individuals at different schools have implemented the district's reclassification policies? What reasons do you think explain this variation (if variation exists)?

Reclassification policies for students with disabilities: Communication

All: There has been considerable concern among educators across the country regarding appropriate policies and practices for reclassifying English learner students **with disabilities**. Tell me what you know about your school/district's policies for reclassifying students with disabilities

- *Probes*:
    - Possible differences in reclassification policy based on disability type
    - Possible differences at elementary, middle school, and high school levels

For school-based staff: Tell me about conversations that have taken place at the school level regarding reclassification *policies* for English learner students **with disabilities**. (for example, conversations among teachers or between teachers and school administrators)

- *Probe:*
    - Tell me about any conversations that you know of that have taken place at the district level regarding reclassification policies for English learner students **with disabilities**. (like conversations between your school leaders and district administrators)

For district-level staff: Tell me about conversations that have taken place at the district level regarding reclassification *policies* for English learner students **with disabilities**.

- *Probes:*
    - Tell me about any conversations that you know of that have taken place at the school level regarding reclassification policies for English learner students **with disabilities**. (like conversations you have had with school administrators)
    - Tell me about any conversations that you know of that have taken place at the state level regarding reclassification policies for English learner students **with disabilities**.

All: How has your school/district worked to build *collaboration* among special education and English learner teachers and administrators, particularly in making exiting decisions for English learners with disabilities?

- *Probes*:
    - Challenges in collaboration (e.g., scheduling and other logistics, different areas of expertise)
    - Aspects of collaboration or communication among ELD and SPED staff that are going well

Reclassification meetings and implications for ELSWDs

If applicable: Tell me about the last time you referred an English learner with a disability for reclassification (or were involved in the referral)

- *Probes:*
    - What do you remember?
    - When did you first realize you needed to do this?
    - What data did you draw from in making this referral decision?
    - Did you interact with the student? How?
    - Which other teachers did you communicate with? How?

    - Did you interact with the student's parents? How?
    - What type of paperwork is involved?
    - How do you think the referral process went?
        - Is there anything that you would improve?
        - Is there any part of the referral process that went particularly well?

If applicable: Tell me about the last time you were involved in a reclassification meeting for a student **with a disability…** walk me through your involvement

- *Probes*:
    - What do you remember?
    - Who planned the meeting?
    - How did you collaborate with other staff to plan reclassification meetings?
    - Who attended the meeting?
    - Were parents involved? How?
    - Were students involved? How?
    - Who led the meeting?
    - What was your role at the meeting?
    - What evidence was discussed at the meeting?
    - How were decisions made at the meeting?
    - Was the decision clear? Why or why not?
    - How did you feel about the decision?
    - Discuss and challenges or concerns that popped up at the meeting.
    - What went well at the meeting?
    - What needed improvement?

If applicable: Tell me about the last time you worked with a student <u>with a disability</u> in your district/school who was considered for reclassification. What happened after the meeting?

- *Probes*:
    - What was the student's grade level?
    - What was your role in student XXX's services or instruction following the meeting?
    - Changes in ELD and content-area course placement, special education service delivery models, peer composition of classes, other services?
    - Challenges in scheduling for ELD and special education services?
    - Monitoring after reclassification?
    - How did you interact with the parents following the meeting?
    - How did you interact with the students following the meeting?
    - How did you collaborate or communicate with other teachers or service providers following the reclassification meeting?
    - Overall, how did the student do in the months following the meeting?
    - What has gone well since the reclassification meeting?
    - What needs improvement?

District reclassification policies for ELSWDs: Moving forward (for interviewees in all roles):

Have your school's/district's reclassification process for ELs with disabilities evolved in the last few school years? How? (Probe for types of evidence considered and whether some students were promoted or retained.)

Has anything changed in your school/district about the changes in settings and services that students with disabilities may experience when reclassified?

Has anything changed about your monitoring process for students with disabilities who have been reclassified?

What concerns do you have about current reclassification policies and practices for ELs who also have disabilities? What aspects of this process could you and your colleagues improve?

What do you consider to be the strengths in your current reclassification policies and practices for ELs who also have disabilities?

Any final words on your thoughts about this process for reclassification for English learners with disabilities?

APPENDIX C

CODEBOOK

Code Map: Interviews

First Iteration: Broad themes from transcriptions

Themes

- Access to electives
- Access to GEN ED Curriculum
- Access to technology
- Access to writing instruction
- Career inspiring electives (EL and SPED take precedence as mandatory v. electives)
- Challenges in meeting students' needs/appropriate EL/SPED Services
- Challenging transitions (ES to MS, MS to HS, HS to graduation)
- Co-teaching models
- Collaboration Barriers: SPED/ELD/GEN ED
- Collaboration in IEP/reclassification meetings
- Collaboration: school culture
- Consistency
- Course credits
- Course scheduling
- Demanding workload/caseload
- Demographics
- Effective differentiation/barriers to individualization
- EL services
- ELD teaching models
- ELPA preparation
- ELPA score
- Experts: educators & parents
- Formal structure v. informal structure for collaboration/lack of streamlined approach
- Lack of access
- Lack of access to general education curriculum (writing and electives)
- Lack of effective differentiation for ELSWDs
- Lack of exposure to general education curriculum
- Lack of exposure to rigorous writing instruction
- Lack of exposure to typical peers
- Lack of opportunity
- Lack of time
- Lack of time
- Modified diploma

- Open communication
- Plan vs. everyday implementation.
- Professional development
- Professional development
- Pull-out teaching model
- Push-in teaching model
- Reducing effectiveness of services
- Sides ("us" v. "them")
- SPED services
- SPED teaching models
- Student well-being
- Teacher experience
- Teacher preparation
- Teachers' perspectives of EL services
- Teachers' perspectives of SPED Services
- Team teaching model
- Unintended consequences
- Variation in ELs in schools dictates policy
- Varying schedules (HS, MS, ES) for specialists and teachers to collaborate

Second Iteration: Revised themes from transcriptions

Themes

- Access to opportunity (writing, electives, graduation)
- Challenges or barriers to collaboration among ELD and SPED educators
- Difficulty with differentiating and individualizing services for ELSWDs
- Intention of providing help and support to ELSWDs
- Importance of meeting ELSWDs' needs
- Confusion about which teaching models are most effective for ELSWDs
- Lack of congruity between ELD/SPED strategic planning on how best to meet ELSWDs' needs and implementation
- Issues related to scheduling and adequate time
- Educators' concerns about need for professional development/training regarding serving ELSWDs

Third Iteration: Codes for revised themes from transcriptions

Codes for access to opportunity (writing, electives, graduation)

- Access
- Advocating
- Bias
- Consequences
- Credits
- Disservice
- Easy

- ELD
- Electives
- Exposure
- Gap
- General curriculum
- General education
- Hard
- Logistics
- Separate
- Special education class
- Typical peers
- Unfair
- Writing

Codes for challenges or barriers to collaboration among ELD and SPED educators

- Bias
- Caseload
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Connection
- Coordination
- Disconnected
- Endorsement
- Expertise
- Interdisciplinary
- Perspective
- Plan
- Process
- Professional development
- Questions
- Relationships
- Sides
- Silos
- Strategies
- Talk
- Teamwork
- Together
- Trust

Codes for difficulty with differentiating and individualizing services for ELSWDs

- Abilities
- Accommodations
- Advocating

- Appropriate
- Best interest
- Consistency
- Disservice
- Funding
- Issue
- Law
- Legal
- Modifications
- Policy
- Procedures
- Standards

Codes for a strong intention of providing help and support to ELSWDs

- Accommodations
- Advocating
- Best interest
- Best practice
- Concern
- Customization
- Differentiation
- Help
- Intentions
- Monitoring
- Strategies
- Support
- Well-being
- Whole student

Codes for the importance of meeting ELSWDs' needs

- Abilities
- Accommodations
- Advocating
- Appropriate
- Consistency
- Disability
- Easy
- Endorsement
- Gap
- Hard
- Help
- Language acquisition
- Language needs

- Needs
- Professional development
- Severity
- Support

Codes for confusion about which teaching models are most effective for ELSWDs

- Best practice
- Class size
- Consequences
- Help
- Teaching models: pull-out, push-in, team teach, co-teach

Codes for lack of congruity between ELD/SPED strategic planning on how best to meet ELSWDs' needs and implementation

- Best interest
- Best practice
- Caseload
- Complex
- Concern
- Coordination
- Customization
- Differentiation
- Disconnected
- Endorsement
- Logistics
- Overwhelmed
- Overworked
- Professional development
- Relationships
- Schedule
- Sides
- Silos
- Structure
- System
- Time
- Training

Codes for issues related to scheduling and adequate time

- Caseload
- Complex
- Coordination
- Disconnected
- Logistics

- Overwhelmed
- Overworked
- Schedule
- Structure
- System
- Time

Codes for educators' concerns about need for professional development/training regarding serving ELSWDs

- Endorsement
- Funding
- Professional development
- Strategies
- Structure
- System
- Time
- Time
- Training

Fourth Iteration: Categories generated from coded data

- Access to opportunity
- Challenges in providing appropriate services for ELSWDs
- Importance of collaboration among ELD and SPED educators
- Strong intention of providing help and support to ELWDs
- Importance of meeting ELSWDs' needs
- Issues related to scheduling and adequate time

Fifth Iteration: Matching themes to codes

Theme 1: Access to opportunity

- Access to EL/SPED services
- Access to writing instruction
- Access to elective courses
- Access to high school graduation.

Theme 2: Challenges in providing appropriate services for ELSWDs

- Abilities
- Accommodations
- Appropriate
- Best interest
- Best practice
- Class size
- Consequences
- Consistency

- Disservice
- Funding
- Help
- Issue
- Law
- Legal
- Modifications
- Policy
- Procedures
- Standards
- Teaching models: pull-out, push-in, team teach, co-teach

Theme 3: The importance of collaboration among ELD and SPED educators

- Bias
- Caseload
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Connection
- Coordination
- Disconnected
- Endorsement
- Expertise
- Interdisciplinary
- Perspective
- Plan
- Process
- Professional development
- Questions
- Relationships
- Sides
- Silos
- Strategies
- Talk
- Teamwork
- Together
- Trust

Theme 4: A strong intention of providing help and support to ELSWDs

- Accommodations
- Advocating
- Best interest
- Best practice
- Concern

- Customization
- Differentiation
- Help
- Intentions
- Monitoring
- Strategies
- Support
- Well-being
- Whole student

Theme 5: The importance of meeting ELSWDs' needs

- Abilities
- Accommodations
- Advocating
- Appropriate
- Consistency
- Disability
- Easy
- Endorsement
- Gap
- Hard
- Help
- Language acquisition
- Language needs
- Needs
- Professional development
- Severity
- Support

Theme 6: Issues related to scheduling and adequate time

- Caseload
- Complex
- Coordination
- Disconnected
- Logistics
- Overwhelmed
- Overworked
- Schedule
- Structure
- System
- Time

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