Exploring Teachers' Perceptions of an English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards Professional Development Workshop

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Abstract

This study examines the perceptions of 49 educators participating in a three-day English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards professional development (PD) workshop to assist K-12 in-service teachers in responding to the dual challenge for English Learners: learning academic English while simultaneously using academic English to learn subject matter content. To date, there has been little attention to evaluating educators' experiences and their perceptions in relation to ELP standards PD. This study's analysis employed a mixed methods design consisting of pre- and post-surveys as well as semi-structured interviews. Survey findings indicated participants learned and comprehended the standards, were able to retain knowledge, and shared knowledge with colleagues. Interview results conveyed themes of increased awareness, time constraints, isolation, collaboration, and accountability. The findings suggest ongoing job-embedded training and intentional collaboration time is necessary for content and English as a Second Language teachers so they may work together on the alignment of content area standards in relation to ELP standards.

Keywords: English Language Proficiency, Standards, Professional Development, Teachers' Perceptions

This study focused on one of the 'New Latino South' states (Wainer, 2006), as documented by the rapid immigration trends and increased enrollment of English Learners (ELs) in Arkansas, increasing from 6,717 to 33,745, over 400%, between school year (SY) 1997-98 and SY 2012-2013 (McFarland et al., 2018). Arkansas is one of the top ten fastest-growing EL states in the nation (Horsford & Sampson, 2013; McFarland et al., 2018). Nationwide, many teachers completed pre-service before the dramatic increase in EL enrollment, and have reported feeling a lack of preparation for teaching ELs (Corell, 2016). This is not surprising since recent surveys (U.S.

Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012) show 55% of public school teachers across the nation find themselves teaching ELs and fewer than a third have had any significant training in how to support ELs (Quintero & Hansen, 2017).

Because most ELs receive content instruction in grade-level classrooms, virtually every PK-12 teacher needs to know how to teach ELs (Samson & Collins, 2012). An important tool for addressing the lack of teacher training is professional development (PD). For this reason, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) adopted a specially designed PD program that focuses on ELP (English Language Proficiency) standards that specifically addresses the need for suitable content instruction for ELs. This PD program was provided throughout the state for district teams of ESL teachers, content teachers, and administrators in the summer of 2016. The aim of our study was to examine how participating educators perceived the impact of the PD and explore the key issues and challenges surrounding the implementation of the ELP standards. The current study also includes recommendations for effective PD for educators of ELs.

It is important to mention that even though ELP standards have been in existence for several years, there is little empirical research about PD on ELP standards or for that matter evaluating educators' perceived effectiveness or experiences of PD in relation to ELP standards in classroom instruction. Even after an exhaustive literature review, only a few publications were found. These included a research report from World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) on its PD program, CLIMBS, and its respective implementation (Molle, 2014), and one doctoral dissertation researching educators' perceptions on the amount and quality of Texas' ELP Assessment System training (Moreno-Recio, 2018). No other references were found on evaluation of PD for the ELP standards.

Literature Review

The Standards Movement and English Learners

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin, along with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 and U.S. Supreme Court case of *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), set the stage for the legal obligation of U.S. school districts to take appropriate measures to provide students of limited English proficiency (LEP) with meaningful educational programing and services (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 1999). In other words, ELs would now be legally entitled to receive appropriate language assistance so they may become proficient in English and be able to participate equally in the standard instructional program. Programs and services for ELs would be required to have sufficient resources and be implemented effectively; and this included providing highly qualified teachers, support staff, and appropriate instructional materials (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 1999). In the same year as *Lau v. Nichols*, Congress also passed the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) which put the responsibility more at the state level and mandated state educational agencies (SEAs) to work with their respective public school districts to overcome language barriers and ensure all schools were equipped to provide LEP students equal participation in their instructional programs (Equal Educational Opportunities Act, 1974).

Moving forward to the 1990's, as content area curriculum frameworks started to emerge, English as a Second Language (ESL) programs also began developing content-based lessons to assist teachers with integrating scaffolding techniques, visuals, graphic organizers, and strategic grouping to increase interactions using content specific vocabulary (Short, 2017). In public school classrooms, both mainstream and ESL teachers implemented an approach known as sheltered instruction; however, PD was lacking. Few states had the requirement of specific college

coursework in second language acquisition or methods (McGraner & Saenz, 2009). In 1997, the first U.S. national ELP standards, entitled *ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students* (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 1997), were designed to promote the vision of effective education for the growing EL population.

In 2001, with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the federal government recognized the need for language standards to assist ELs in developing English proficiency, and thus mandated that each state develop and implement ELP standards (Fenner & Segota, 2012). The creation of the initial WIDA ELP Standards in 2004 was the first iteration of language standards interwoven with academic content (Bailey & Huang, 2011). As states started adopting WIDA's standards and joining the consortium, it slowly grew from three member states to over 40 states, territories and federal agencies, and now has continued to add more than 400 international schools located around the world (WIDA, 2020).

The introduction of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010 instigated a debate about the lack of consideration to the increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse student populations (Coleman & Goldenburg, 2012), but as DelliCarpini and Alonso (2013) state these standards provided "no specific guidelines for the education of ELs or other nontraditional populations" (p. 91). Educational reform then presented the idea of standardizing academic content, language, and assessment (Bush et al., 2017), and the federal government advised states to develop or adopt ELP standards that were linked to content area standards (Menken et al., 2014).) The Arkansas State Board of Education adopted the ELP standards on March 20, 2014 (Arkansas Department of Education, 2016), the current version of which is available in (Arkansas Department of Education, 2018)

Fifteen years later, NCLB was replaced by a reauthorized version of ESEA known as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and it required each state to set long-term goals and report on English language proficiency in the Title I section of the law (CCSSO, 2016). All states were now required to create and adopt ELP standards that served as the basis for their ELP tests, which must be administered annually to document EL progress. These standards and assessments would furthermore need to ensure all students, especially those underserved and attending the lowest-performing schools, be prepared to succeed in college and the workforce (Brenchley, 2015). As a response, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) was re-commissioned and this time worked collaboratively alongside others to develop and launch a new set of 10 ELP standards, each organized into five domains, for grades K-12 (Rutherford-Quach, 2015). These standards focused on language functions, classifying them as critical language, knowledge about language and skills using language, and importantly, fostered collaboration between ESL/ELD and content area teachers.

In 2012, CCSSO began working with the then 11 member states of the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) consortium to help facilitate the adoption of the new ELP standards (Rutherford-Quach, 2015). While New York, California, Texas and Arizona remain independent, ELPA21 and WIDA together align and unify the vast number of U.S. states and territories. Arkansas, notably as one of the founding members of WIDA, is now a member of ELPA21. WIDA and ELPA21 do provide and support multifaceted PD opportunities for educators to learn about their respective standards and corresponding assessment tools used to monitor student achievement, but the fact remains, there is still a growing need for states and school districts to provide their own educators with purposeful ELP PD and to evaluate the effectiveness of the PD they provide.

The Need for English Language Proficiency Standards Professional Development

One of the most important implications of the adoption of the ELP standards and assessments is the need to provide teachers with continuous and purposeful PD. Teachers must have a deeper understanding of content and mastery of instructional strategies to assist ELs in their academic achievement (Santos et al., 2012). However, this brings many challenges; teachers must fully comprehend the significance of ELP assessments, their alignment with ELP standards and curriculum, and the measurement of language requirements in content-area classes and tests (Bailey & Carroll, 2015). According to G. L. Williamson et al. (2014), PD needs to address challenges in all three areas: content curriculum, language, and assessments.

As schools are increasingly more diverse, the need for PD for teachers working with ELs also increases (McGriff & Protacio, 2015). Even with specific academic language skills as a part of the Common Core Reading and corresponding ELP standards, many teachers are still unclear as to how to apply the ELP standards in classroom practice. To begin to answer this need, especially given that there are multiple content standards in each content area, and each has different language uses and norms, Lee (2018) posed the question: "How do the ELP standards reflect the language used to engage in various disciplinary practices?"

PD specifically targeted to ELP standards will help answer this question and ensure the language needs of ELs are met in all subjects (van Lier & Walqui, 2012). ESSA, as referenced above, does reinforce the need for ELP standards to align with content area standards so that all ELs attain the necessary levels of achievement (Hakuta, 2017), but teachers still need help in addressing their struggles with these practices (Martorell et al., 2016). PD that increases the quality of instruction and provides support for ELs is critical to closing the achievement gap (Lesaux & Gamez, 2012). PD is clearly needed, and the responsibility for implementing it and its method of presentation and evaluation must be examined further.

Theoretical Framework: Sociocultural Learning Theory

Sociocultural Learning Theory provides the overarching framework for this study asserting that learning occurs through social interaction between people from various levels of skills and knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978), and PD which includes both cognitive and social perspectives plays an influential role in teachers learning how to teach (Borko, 2004). Johnson (2009) explains that from a sociocultural perspective the fundamental goal of *teachers as learners of teaching*, in the context of participating in formal or informal learning activities and experiences, is the development of intellectual and psychological tools which then lend to making profound and meaningful changes to pedagogy and perspectives of teaching.

The sociocultural lens is important to the field of ESL teaching and learning because it is grounded in second language (L2) research which "describes L2 teacher learning as socially negotiated and contingent on knowledge of self, students, subject matter, curricula, and setting" (Johnson, 2006, p. 239.) In this study, the Sociocultural Learning Theory was represented by teachers in teams from their respective districts (social aspect) participating in three PD modules, and attempting tasks and activities together utilizing PD materials (cognitive aspect). Teachers, in their teams, were first encouraged to reflect on and then discuss the ideas presented. Then, they were asked to think about ways they could bring the training back to their school districts to share with fellow educators. Indirectly, this study also incorporated a social constructivist perspective, whereby the optimal learning climate included learners constructing meaning where new knowledge was created and integrated into existing knowledge. The instructional design of the ELP PD applied the principles of collaborative practice because the participants worked in cooperative learning teams solving

authentic problems in collective activities, or what Lave & Wenger (1991) have termed a *community of practice*.

It has been established that social constructivist PD broadens social learning theory by working with adult learners who need to be self-directed, display a readiness to learn when they have a perceived need, and desire immediate application of new skills and knowledge (Merriam, 2001). Pontz (2003) highlights additional conditions of education for adults: clarity of goals, adequate levels of challenge, capitalization on previous knowledge, sustainability over time, organizational support, and alignment of achievement with the goals set.

Methodology

This study focused on perceived learning and application of learning from a facilitated three-day ELP standards PD workshop. The purpose of the PD was to prepare professional learning teams of Arkansas educators with an operational understanding of the ELP standards and the ability to apply their learning in their respective schools and districts.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to answer the following research questions:

1) What is the perceived impact of ELP standards PD on the knowledge level and implementation of the ELP standards by participants in school districts in Arkansas?

2) What are the key issues and challenges surrounding the implementation of the ELP standards in Arkansas schools and districts?

Mixed Methods Design

This research study utilized an explanatory sequential, mixed methods design, starting with quantitative results and blending in qualitative methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The method was selected to see if results found in the quantitative Likert scale survey were explained by participants' qualitative interviews and open-ended question data. The first quantitative phase included matched surveys followed by data analysis. Open-ended questions introduced a qualitative component at the end of each survey. Finally, there was a sampling strategy with a semi-structured interview protocol for the qualitative phase and further data analysis. According to Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009), the mixed analysis of qualitative data enables researchers to situate emergent themes and authenticate interpretations.

ELP Standards Regional Trainings in Arkansas

In 2012, ELPA21 was granted funding to develop ELP standards and a technology-enhanced summative ELP assessment. The Arkansas State Board of Education officially adopted the ELP standards in 2014, and field tested the ELPA21 English Language Proficiency Assessment the following year. Even though ELPA21 had been in existence for four years, the latest version of its ELP standards was still in progress and the consortium continued to struggle with the complexities of alignment between ELP standards and content standards (Lee, 2018). This created additional challenges and confusion on the part of teachers as they tried to utilize the standards in lesson planning and classroom instruction.

In 2016, after the mandate of the ELPA21 assessment for the state, the ADE organized statewide PD for educators to provide knowledge and skills about how to operationalize the standards in classroom practice. The goals for this PD were prescribed in the ADE Commissioner's memo from the Arkansas Department of Education (2016), to prepare professional learning teams of educators with an operational understanding of the ELP standards and a clear sense of methods for delivering

PD focused on the transition to the new ELP standards into their curriculum in their schools and districts.

Types and Characteristics of Professional Development Design and Delivery

There are three main types of PD as classified by Houle (1996): 1) self-directed learning, 2) formal PD programs, and 3) organizational strategies. This study falls into the latter as it is defined as "a systematically planned change effort for the purpose of developing and implementing action strategies for organizational improvement" (Caffarella, 1994, p. 93). This type of PD has the purpose of organizational development to effect organizational change rather than individual change. For this study, the ADE systematically provided PD for district teams throughout the state.

In 2001, Garet et al. surveyed teachers who had participated in Eisenhower Professional Development Program activities to determine the PD characteristics that affected teacher outcomes. The five key characteristics identified in their study and validated by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) that contributed to effective PD were: 1) Duration, sustained over time, including number of contact hours and span of time (e.g., days, weeks, months, years, etc.); 2) Cohort participation by teachers who share a commonality such as grade level, school, subject area, professional learning communities, etc.; 3) Focus on content, student learning styles, active learning; 4) Planning for application of learning; and 5) Alignment with standards.

Using the five characteristics of effective PD identified by Garet et al. (2001) and validated by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) to examine the design of this particular PD, the researchers found that the PD under examination met all five criteria. In regards to the first characteristic, duration, the PD had an initial span of three days comprising 18 contact hours. While the PD was not structured for participants to apply the information to their classrooms and then come back together to discuss successes and challenges in application of the new knowledge and skills, there was a follow-up component. The "Ask the Coaches," Criterion 1, was the tool designed to provide feedback and support to teachers as they utilized the ELP standards throughout the academic year. Therefore, the PD spanned more than the three face-to-face days of the initial PD, meeting the first criteria for effective PD. Criterion 2 for effective PD, collectivist participation, existed as teachers were in school and/or district teams. Criterion 3, a focus on content, student learning styles and active learning was part of the training. The PD focused on the ELP standards content, with active learning, as participants designed a lesson utilizing the standards, and reflected in small groups, and adult learning styles were applied to the PD. Criterion 4, planning for application of learning was included in the PD as teams worked on applying the standards to a lesson that was part of their curriculum. Criterion 5, alignment with standards was the focal point of the PD since the primary purpose of the PD was to prepare teachers to utilize the standards when planning lessons for ELs the following year.

The PD structure observed in the training program met the characteristics recommended in the literature (Garet et al., 2001) and created a learning community by inviting teams of educators and administrators from various school districts. It modelled meaningful strategies that could be useful in classroom lesson planning providing teachers an opportunity to build on their knowledge of the ELP standards. The three-day workshop was divided into three modules with a daily agenda, readings, facilitation guide, and scaffolds. Recognizing teachers as learners, the training employed a gradual release model utilizing focused instruction, guided instruction, collaborative learning structures and independent learning experiences (Fisher & Frey, 2014). See links and titles of modules below.

Module 1: Reformulating Our Practice (http://www.arkansaselp.org/module1)

Module 2: Aligning Instruction to the ELP Standards (http://www.arkansaselp.org/module2)

Module 3: Deep Dive into Argumentation and Student Discourse (http://www.arkansaselp.org/module3)

Participants

One hundred and ninety-eight educators (teachers and administrators) participated in the training, and 49, one male and 48 females, completed both pre- and post surveys. Participants who voluntarily completed both the pre- and post surveys included in the data set consisted of 19 classroom teachers (10 elementary and nine secondary), 20 ESL teachers (10 elementary and 10 secondary), six ESL administrators/ESL specialists, and four other licensed educators. Also, the data set includes six educators who participated in either video-conferencing or face-to-face interviews. The number of years of educational experience of participants ranged from zero to 50. Eight (16.67%) participants were in the early stages of their career having less than four years of experience, 10 (20.83%) had four to nine years of experience, eight (16.67%) had 10-14 years of experience, and 22 (45.83%) had 15 or more years of experience. It was recommended that participant teams include administrators, classroom teachers with and without specialized ESL training, and ESL school specialists.

Data Collection Procedures

Quantitative Instruments

The study used two instruments: (1) a 13-item pre-survey, and (2) an 11-item post survey. Some questions relating to timing, materials, planning and learning environment of the actual training were not included in the post-survey which was administered one year later without additional intervening training. The post survey focused on knowledge, comprehension and application of the ELP standards. An outside training agency provided the state department of education with the pre- and post survey questions associated with the ELP Training. This agency utilizes researchers that are certified in "What Works Clearinghouse Standards" and ensures the evaluation meets these standards. The survey was developed after the agency crafted the learning outcomes associated with each workshop module. The prompts were designed to measure teacher understanding of core concepts related to the ELP standards, as well as their comfort in leading staff learning upon their return to their school communities, a critical factor in the success of a train the trainer model.

After the three-day workshop, participants completed an evaluation survey consisting of 13 Likert-type items and five open-ended questions. Of these, the researchers used six of the Likert-type items relating to educators' perceptions of their understanding and use of the standards in their teaching and with colleagues from the pre-survey. These six items correlate with eight similar Likert items in the post survey to determine teacher perceived growth from the PD workshop (Table 2). The surveys used in this study were designed by the PD training organization as non-standardized tools used to gather participants' feedback with content validity only for this specific purpose.

Quantitative Data Collection

As shown in Table 1 below, the administration of the pre-survey was at the end of the three-day workshop, and the completion of the post survey was one year later. For the post survey, there were multiple emails sent with a link to the survey. The surveys in combination with the participants' interviews were the tools used to make inferences. The 49 post surveys received from participants matched their corresponding pre-surveys creating a sample of 49-paired surveys from 198 educators who participated in the PD. This was a convenience sample.

Table 1. Data collection process.

Instrument	Question Type	Collected
Pre-Survey	Likert Scale & Open-ended	At end of training
Post-Survey	Likert Scale & Open-ended	One year after training
Interviews	Open-ended	6-9 months after training

Quantitative Data Analysis

Since question 1 was the same on both the 2016 and 2017 survey, descriptive statistics plus paired t-tests were run along with Cohen's d which is shown in the Table 2 below. There was a statistically significant increase in participants' rating of their knowledge of the ELP standards from prior to PD to one year after the PD. The percentage of participants who rated items as agreed or strongly agreed and disagreed or strongly disagreed are shown in Table 3 for five questions on the survey at the end of the training and seven questions on the survey a year after the training.

Quantitative Results

Tables 2 and 3 compare only those 49 participants who submitted pre- and post surveys in 2016 and 2017, respectively.

Table 2. Comparison of "Rate your knowledge of the ELP Standards."

	2016 Pre			2017 Post					
Survey questions	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	t-value	p	Cohen's d
1a. Prior to the ELP Standards Training, how would you rate your knowledge of standards?	2.16	1.07	49						
1b. At this point in time, how would you rate your understanding of the ELP standards?				3.42	0.73	49	6.83	<.000	1.37

Table 3. Participants' pre- and post-responses to professional development.

	2016 Pre		2017 Post	
	Agreed or Strongly Agreed	Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed	Agreed or Strongly Agreed	Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed
2. Ability to explain shifts in teaching and learning for English learners	83.67%	6.12%	91.84%	0.00%
3. Ability to explain purpose of standards	87.76%	4.08%	97.96%	0.00%
4a. Ability to analyze tasks to determine which standards to apply	87.76%	4.08%		
4b. I have analyzed tasks to determine which standards to apply			71.43%	8.16%
4c. Helped at least one colleague analyze tasks to determine which standards to apply			65.31%	14.29%
5a. Ability to apply descriptors to assess language, analytical practices, and concepts	81.63%	2.04%		
5b. I have applied descriptors to assess language, analytical practices, and concepts			61.22%	6.12%
5c. Helped at least one colleague apply descriptors to assess language, analytical practices, and concepts			55.10%	18.37%
6. Ability to use "Ask the Coaches" tool	75.51%	8.16%		
6b. I have utilized the "Ask the Coaches" tool			8.16%	69.39%

Discussion of Quantitative Results

This section answers research question 1: *What is the perceived impact of ELP standards PD on the knowledge level and implementation of the ELP standards by participants in school districts in Arkansas?* In rating their knowledge of the ELP standards prior to the training and one year after the training, there was a statistically significant increase (Table 2). This implies that the participants learned and were able to retain their learning one year after the PD.

Since the remaining pre- and post-survey questions and response choices were not identical, a descriptive analysis of responses to survey questions 2 through 6 was completed. Participants reported an increase in comprehension of the ELP standards in questions 2 and 3 where participants rated their ability to explain the purpose of the standards and the shifts in teaching and learning for ELs.

The responses to survey questions 4a, 4b, and 4c, indicate that the majority of the respondents of both surveys believed they could analyze tasks to apply ELP standards at the end of the training and then went on in the following year to analyze their own teaching tasks or assisted a colleague in analyzing tasks to determine which standards to apply. However, one year later, not as many actually analyzed the classroom tasks to determine applicable ELP standards as those who reported the ability to do so. When looking at responses as to how many participants assisted a colleague in analyzing classroom tasks to determine appropriate ELP standards, the number again drops slightly. Yet even with those drops, 65.31% of the sample who responded to both the pre- and post survey *Agreed* or *Strongly agreed* that they helped a colleague apply the ELP standards to classroom tasks.

While 71.43% of survey participants perceived that they had applied what they learned, the survey responses indicated their beliefs in the ability to apply what they learned exceeded their actual application of learning (87.7%) when they were back in the schools. It is not unusual for participants to report a higher level of *ability* to apply what they have learned than what they actually report applying when asked after a significant time lapse such as one year. Kennedy (2016) labeled this the *"problem of enactment"* defined as "a phenomenon in which teachers can learn and espouse one idea, yet continue enacting a different idea, out of habit, without even noticing the contradiction" (p. 947). Zeichner et al. (2012) also emphasizes the need to enact newly learned practices in the environment in which they will be utilized. While teachers used the ELP standards during the three-day training, they did not apply the standards in the complex school settings in which they teach until months later.

Based on this information, it is the authors' hypothesis that the participants increased their awareness of the complexity of analyzing classroom tasks once they were back in the classroom. Given the range of various language proficiency levels addressed in the classroom, some participants might need further practice in order to apply the analysis to their classroom. They were aware of the need to utilize the standards after analyzing classroom tasks; however, they did not perceive that they were proficient at synthesis of classroom tasks with the standards. Designing lessons utilizing what they learned about classroom tasks and the ELP standards requires a level of proficiency they did not believe they possessed after the PD.

As a follow up support, an "Ask the Coaches" (online community) was presented during the PD. At the end of the three-day workshop, 75.51% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had the ability to utilize "Ask the Coaches." However, one year later, only 8.16% agreed that they had utilized the "Ask the Coaches" tool. Therefore, for the vast majority of participants, there was minimal to no utilization of the follow up support via technology. Reasons for not utilizing the tool are highlighted in the qualitative discussion below.

Qualitative Instruments

Six open-ended questions were included in the pre-survey, and two of these six questions were included in the post survey. The outside PD organization developed the pre and post survey questions. A semi-structured interview protocol was another instrument used to collect qualitative data (Appendix A). The first researcher, who had attended the PD training, developed the interview questions in collaboration with ADE, and consultation from an expert in the field of qualitative research provided feedback. The interview protocol also included statements of confidentiality, consent, options to withdraw, and the use of the results.

Interview Data Collection

The educational cooperatives, where the training took place, were marked into six zones. Three participants from each of the six educational cooperatives were randomly selected to be interviewed. Based on convenience, six interviews were conducted: three from Zone A, two from Zone B, and one from Zone D. With the interviewees' signed permission, the six interviews were audio-recorded via videoconferencing or at face-to-face sessions, lasting approximately 45 minutes each. To ensure confidentiality, each interviewee received an assigned number. Table 4 below reflects the interviewees' position, years of experience, and district size.

Table 4. Interviewee position, years of experience, and district size.

Interview	Position	Years of Experience	District Size
1	Secondary Literacy Facilitator	6	1,000
2	Elementary ESL Teacher	1	15,400
3	Secondary Art	10	1,000
4	District ESL Specialist	20+	21,500
5	Middle School ESL	14	4.200
6	Secondary Academic Facilitator	11	1,950

Qualitative Data Analysis

The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, coded, and analyzed. Open coding was the process used to generate categories and themes from the narratives. The data analysis involved reading the transcripts multiple times using colors for coding. Some descriptors of units of data were single words and phrases. The examination employed a constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and Charmaz' Grounded Theory (2009). From the initial codes, five themes emerged from the data: awareness, time, collaboration, isolation, and accountability. The following narratives include examples of the participants' voices.

Qualitative Results

Open-ended Questions Discussion

This section answers research question 2: *What are the key issues and challenges surrounding the implementation of the ELP standards in Arkansas schools and districts?* Table 5 below provides the data for the qualitative survey results. In the 2016 pre-survey, there were six open-ended questions. The 2017 post survey included only two open-ended questions. Both surveys asked, "*What additional support do you need to implement what you learned?* In 2016, 30.61% responded to review and follow-up, 26.53% said support of teachers and administrators, and 20.41% said time.

In 2017, 20.41% of the participants responded there was a need for a refresher/follow up, 16.33% said practice/review/modelling, and 14.29% said time. The comparison of the pre- and post comments indicate that follow-up training and time were educators' concerns.

The second question *"How will you apply what you learned at your work?"* was included only in the 2016 pre-survey. On that survey, 46.94% of the participants indicated they would assist classroom teachers, 26.53% said integration of the standards into lesson planning, and 26.53% said practice strategies. While there was no similar open ended question on the post survey, there were two Likert Scale questions on the post survey that related to the open ended question number two on the pre-survey. On the post survey *"I have helped at least one colleague in my school or district analyze classroom tasks to determine which ELP Standards apply."* 42.86% (23) marked *Agree* or *Strongly agree* and on *"I have applied the proficiency level descriptors to formatively assess language, analytical practices and/or class concepts to my lessons."* 32.65% (16) marked "Agree" or "Strongly agree" These Likert scale items were compared to the open ended question 2 on the presurvey. Participants who marked "Agree" or "Strongly agree" to these two questions are listed in table five to show the percentage who applied their learning according to the post survey. Approximately the same number of teachers who planned to assist other classroom teachers reported they did so. Additionally, more participants reported they applied the standards to their lessons than reported they would in the pre-survey.

For the 2016 initial survey question, *"How can the workshop be designed to follow-up learning?"* Sharing best practices was reported by 22.45%, review and reflection was requested by 22.45%, and additional follow-up was mentioned by 20.41%. For the fourth open-ended question in the initial survey, *"If you were not satisfied with any part of the workshop, please explain why?"* there were limited responses. Only 6.12% of the participants indicated that there was too much discussion and 4.08% stated that the training could have been longer.

Answers to the open-ended question regarding what further training participants would like resulted in the following results. Common answers included the request for model lessons, designing lessons using ELP standards, and "designing lessons" in the post survey. Follow-up to the PD was a request, and pre- and post survey comments reflected this need as did interview responses.

The question, *"What type of other professional development related to the ELP standards would you like to see offered?"* was included in both the initial survey and the follow-up survey one year later. In the 2016 pre-survey, twenty participants (10.10%) responded to this question. Nine participants (18.37%) requested additional training in modelling of strategies, three participants (6.12%) mentioned training for additional content teachers, and three participants (6.12%) requested a breakdown of the standards. In the post survey, twice as many participants, 40, responded to this question. Fourteen participants (28.57%) requested teacher/administrator training, seven participants (14.29%) requested updates, refreshers, or reminders, model lessons, and specific information on which standards to use. The results of the open-ended survey questions indicate that participants reported the need for *additional follow-up training* along with *support from teachers and administrators*.

Qualitative Open-ended Survey Results

Table 5. English language proficiency post survey items

1. What additional support do you need to implement what you learned?					
Pre	Review/follow up/training	None	Support of teachers/ administrators	Time	
	30.61% (15)	28.57% (14)	26.53% (13)	20.41% (10)	
Post	Refresh/follow up	Practice/revise w/Model	None	Time	Workshops for content teachers
	20.41% (10)	16.33% (8)	16.33% (8)	14.29% (7)	12.24% (6)
2. How will you apply what you learned at your work?					
Pre	Assist classroom teachers	Practice strategies	Lesson planning		
	46.94% (23)	26.53% (13)	26.53% (13)		
Post	Helped classroom teachers analyze		Incorporated standards in my lesson planning		
	42.86% (21)		32.65% (16)		
3. How can the workshop be designed to follow-up learning?					
Pre		Share best-practices	Review/reflect	Follow up	
		22.45% (11)	22.45% (11)	20.41% (10)	
4. If you weren't satisfied with any part of the workshop, please explain why.					
Pre		Best workshop ever	Too much discussion	Could have been longer	
		10.20% (5)	6.12% (3)	4.08% (2)	
5. What type of other professional development related to the ELP standards would you like to see offered?					
Pre	Model strategies	Not sure	Training for all content teachers	Breakdown of standards	
	18.37% (9)	10.20% (5)	6.12% (3)	6.12% (3)	
Post	Teacher/administrator training	Updates/ refreshers/ Reminders	Model lessons	Which standards to use	Not sure
	28.57% (14)	14.29% (7)	14.29% (7)	14.29% (7)	10.20% (5)

n=49

Interview Findings

Through the educators' voices, five themes emerged from the interviews: heightened awareness, time constraints, isolation, collaboration, and accountability. Below are a few examples of the educators' voices in these thematic categories:

Theme 1. Heightened awareness. Participants expressed becoming more familiar (aware) of the ELP standards and moved to the next level of learning, "*We looked at the ELPA21 testing placement scores to see what that looks like, and then see how we could take that, and help transition the ELP standards into that next*" (Interview #2). This narrative reflects how Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) mediated the learning, as determined by independent problem solving in collaboration with more capable peers.

Theme 2: Time constraints. Teachers have a limited amount of time within the school day to attend PD. Competing demands of lesson planning, assessment of student learning, implementing more than one new initiative, student/parent conferences, and conferring with other educators are just a few of the demands on teachers' time. There may also be competition between teachers' individual priorities and organizational priorities (Hökkä, 2012). One participant stated, *"And there is the EL Achieve curriculum. Yes…and we have I believe 40 teachers that are going through … classroom teachers that are going through Constructing Meaning*" (Interview #2). While teachers must take responsibility for their own PD, teacher learning is strongly affected by the school environment. (DiPaola & Hoy, 2014).

Themes 3 and 4: Isolation vs. collaboration. In the themes of isolation and collaboration, Minick (1987) indicates Vygotsky's work stresses the importance of situating individuals within specific social systems of interactions. The participants' narratives document the theme of isolation and lack of needed social interactions. One participant stated, "*ESOL is kind of an island. We have our own curriculum"* (Interview #2)*.* Another interviewee said,

I'm actually one of the people that's kind of left out of that, because of scheduling problems. And because I can either meet the PLC or I could teach how to co-teach a class. You know. They can't make it work with the tightness of the schedule. I'm not blaming any person. It's the problem in the system (Interview #5).

Conversely, all of the interviewees indicated that further discussion and collaboration took place with colleagues after the ELP Training as noted by Interview #6, "*I attend all of the team meetings. When I work with them, I start at the beginning by previewing the lesson and breaking it down… more the "use" of the language."*

Theme 5. Accountability. While the participants expressed that there was a need for increased accountability, there was still no widespread implementation. Interviewee #6 expressed, *"There is no weight behind it. We don't get a lot of support. There is no widespread implementation. We discussed asking principals, but that idea got shot down."* While increased accountability for ELs' success was a hopeful result from the standards, lack of resources and skills often prevented implementation of ELP standards (Laguardia & Goldman, 2007). As Interviewee #2 stated below,

The ELP Standards is… in my opinion are kind of a bridge for those EL learners to be able to still… a way for them to… for us to hold our teachers accountable, ourselves accountable, and the classrooms, to make sure those kiddos are getting the correct standards…. so it acts as a bridge to the Common Core curriculum.

Discussion

Highlighting the triangulation of data, both the quantitative and qualitative findings addressed the theme of collaboration between ESL and content area teachers. It was clear from responses to survey questions 5 and 7 that the participants had shared ELP standards learning with colleagues. Collaborative practices might offer opportunities for expanding the ESL curriculum (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010; Rushton, 2008). In both surveys and interviews, participants perceived a heightened awareness in knowledge and skill development regarding ELP standards. In addition, there was a perceived benefit of using ELP standards in lesson planning.

The theme of isolation, however, conflicted with collaboration. This finding correlates with the research on the challenges ESL teachers face within school community professional relationships (Bell & Baecher, 2012). There are collaborative systems in place in some districts, yet in other districts, ESL teachers may be separated or not be included in mainstream school practices (McCluskey & Garcia, 2012).

Another common finding was the participants' perceptions of low accountability. The challenge has been for states to work with school districts to develop reasonable plans for accountability beyond ELP test scores. Given the increased pressure to address ELP standards, it is a suggestion that the structures already in place to collaborate with colleagues in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) could be a vehicle to integrate ELP standards into district curriculum.

One part of a PD theory of action consists of a strategy for helping teachers enact new ideas as part of their own ongoing systems of practice within their school districts. Content area teachers face a dual challenge since the curriculum must be accessible in a way that provides ELs with the necessary content and also address linguistic needs. Meeting this challenge requires collaboration between mainstream and ESL teachers. As Johnson (2009) states, this sociocultural perspective provides a *theory of mind* which speaks intrinsically to the relationship between cognitive and social interaction and how it develops out of context and situations of collaborative learning activity.

This study was limited to the perceptions of a small and select group of educators in a one-year timeframe. Only 49 of the 198 participants completed the post survey, a small percentage (24.75%). Based on the research by Joyce & Calhoun (2010), the responses were most likely from "active consumers" or "gourmet omnivores" who were invested in the training. These educators look for opportunities to learn and to integrate new learning within their current schema. Together the two groups comprise approximately 30% of educators.

Relying on participant surveys and interviews resulted in data based on perceptions rather than observed changes. Additionally, pre- and post survey items were not an exact match. The participants' ability to use their knowledge with "I can" statements were compared to action statements, "I have." Due to the specialized nature of the three-day workshop and the unique group of district team participants who attended, the results of this study may not be generalizable to other types of PD.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The first recommendation is to *provide ongoing, job-embedded professional development* at the school level, so educators not only gain a greater awareness of the standards, but also discuss ways in which collaborative endeavors could integrate the ELP standards into lesson planning, instruction, and assessment. The second recommendation is to *provide time for grade level teams to work together* in meetings discussing and analyzing the standards-based curriculum to incorporate the ELP standards into lesson planning with specific tasks. This collaboration will allow content and language goals to be articulated at the developmental stage, and at the appropriate EL proficiency level. The third recommendation is to *provide intentional ways for the ESL educator to be in a position of inclusion* within school structures, incorporating collaborative opportunities and reducing the feelings of isolation, as expressed by the educators in this study.

At the school level, the PLC model (DuFour et al., 2005) would be a promising practice to utilize for ELP standards integration at the district or school level. School-based initiatives may contribute to the overarching goals of improving student outcomes in the era of government-imposed accountability (Mausethagen, 2013). School district PD situated within the schools may be more effective than PD offered by external organizations. Promoting PD structures utilizing the Sociocultural Learning Theory is also recommended for teachers working with ELs. Social interactions increase when people are interacting with others they know well. In addition, this type of PD would be most sensitive to the needs and goals of the participating teachers (Eun, 2008).

At the state or policy level, experts should continue to share ideas through presentations or various group-based activities and discussions. The interactions that occur among individuals leading PD

programs and the teachers participating in the PD is significant. Technology-facilitated opportunities for PD and coaching could address the needs of all school communities, but would be particularly beneficial for rural school districts. However, the fact that none of the participants in this training reported using the online resource, "Ask the Coach," points to the need for a different presentation of technology-facilitated follow-up opportunities and/or more support.

In terms of additional research, the findings suggest that effective PD must encompass a variety of factors: content-focused training, collaborative relationships, coaching and expert support, feedback, reflection, and adequate duration. Because the population of ELs continues to increase (Romo et al., 2018), educators at all levels need to collaborate and take part in the conversations about best practices for ELs in the U.S. educational system. According to Lee (2018), alignment between ELP standards and content standards will only be possible through an ongoing dialogue and sharing of expertise between the field of ESL education and content areas in research, policy, and practice.

The current landscape surrounding ELP standards-based reforms and PD clearly offers both challenges and opportunities for educators, policy-makers, and researchers. The authors support PD models which are based on sociocultural theory and include PLCs that incorporate standards-based training along with second language acquisition, so educators have a deeper understanding of second language acquisition, instruction, and assessment. The challenge and the opportunity, therefore, is to use the structural and systemic supports already in place to address PD for ELP standards, thereby increasing educators' capacity to meet the academic language and literacy needs of ELs.

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Appendix A. ELP Standards Interview Protocol Guide

Participant: _____ Date: _____ Beginning Time: _____ Ending Time: _____

As you know, we have been studying the impact of the Regional ELP Standards Workshop on district implementation in order to learn more about the experiences of districts who have participated in the training. Today, I will ask you some general questions related to your training. Everything you say will be held in strict confidence, and your name will not be used in any way. Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?

1. Could you please tell me why you decided to apply to the ELP Standards Workshop?

2. What was the beneficial part of the training for you?

3. As a result of the ELP Standards Workshop, do you feel as if your personal practice in your school district has changed this year? If so, please explain.

4. How are the ELP Standards different from content area standards?

5. Could you please discuss your school district's ELP Standards Implementation Plan.

6. What have been the successes and the challenges?

7. What have you learned about the instructional shifts needed for the ELP Standards?

8. How has your school district implemented these instructional shifts?

9. What have you learned about Student Discourse and Argumentation standards?

10. How has your district implemented Student Discourse and Argumentation?

11. If you were offered additional training or support implementing the ELP Standards in your school district, what might that be for you?

This section is for specific questions from survey responses.

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