

# The Efficacy of Florida's Approach to In-Service English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Teacher Training Programs

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The issue of school achievement among k-12 English language learners (ELLs) has grown in recent years to become one that policy makers and school officials can hardly afford to ignore. A range of indicators including graduation rates, and Florida's High stakes test the FCAT, attests to this general trend. English language learners in Florida are overwhelmingly mainstreamed in content classes and it has become the responsibility of teachers to provide a comprehensible and meaningful education to those not proficient in English. This study attempts to determine whether district training sessions in Florida are adequately covering state-mandated content areas for the ESOL endorsement; it asks to what extent secondary school in-service teachers agree or disagree that they received the appropriate amount of instruction; and seeks to ascertain whether the trainings being studied will prepare them to educate the myriad of English language learners who are mainstreamed into their classrooms each year.

Keywords: English language learner, School achievement, Policy, ESOL, In-service teachers.

The issue of school achievement among k-12 English language learners (ELLs) has grown in recent years to become one that policy makers and school officials can hardly afford to ignore. A range of indicators including graduation rates, and Florida's High stakes test the FCAT, attests to this general trend. As of the school year 2006/07, the total number of English language learners in Florida's public schools was 234,934. This is approximately 9% of the state's total school population. The majority of these children could be found in just five counties, accounting for close to 70% of the entire English language learner population in the state (Florida Department of Education, 2005-06). Worrying to many is the fact that this very sizeable group has one of the highest grade retention rates (children who are held back a grade) in the nation for secondary level students (Kindler, 2002).

As mentioned, English language learners do not appear to be faring well on Florida's high stakes accountability measures. In 2006, only a quarter of the English language learner population in grades 3 and 10 received a passing score on the reading section of the 2006 Florida Comprehensive assessment Test (FCAT) (Florida Department of Education, 2006). Perhaps most troubling, in some districts reading scores for English language learners actually fell from prior years (Florida Department of Education, 2006). In 2006 the statewide reading passing rate for the general student population was 75% for third graders and only 32% for 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Furthermore, almost all groups with the exception of students with

disabilities have made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) at least once since 2002-2003. English language learners in Florida have never made AYP since that time (Florida Department of Education, 2006). (AYP is a state-wide accountability measure mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001).

Given these trends, one would assume that Florida would be taking an aggressive approach to addressing this achievement gap via its compensatory programs aimed at providing English language learners a comprehensible education. These programs are comprised mainly of providing English instruction to ELLs part of the day in ESOL classes. They also train regular content teachers in ESOL methods to work with the large numbers of English language learners that are mainstreamed in their classes throughout the school year. These types of programs are not unique to the state and can be found in various forms from California to Massachusetts. The proliferation of these models over the past twenty years has not occurred without criticism from some notable scholars (Cummins, 2001; Gandara, P., Maxwell-Jolly, J., & Driscoll, A., 2005). Cummins (2001) claims, for example, that despite the myriad of compensatory programs and the hiring of additional bilingual aides and remedial personnel, Hispanic drop-out rates among Mexican American and mainland Puerto Rican students remains between 40 and 50 percent. Hispanic students in places such as Texas continue to be overrepresented in special education classes.

Here in Florida it would appear that shortcomings exist regarding these compensatory programs as well. English language learners in Florida are overwhelmingly mainstreamed in content classes, (MacDonald, 2004), and it has become the responsibility of teachers to provide a comprehensible and meaningful education to those not proficient in English. If the district in-service training many teachers receive is not sufficiently preparing instructors to manage the thousands of mainstreamed ELLs placed in their classrooms year after year, then the entire system must be called into question. This study indicates that the ESOL in-service teacher training programs which can be found in counties across the state are in dire need of reform and require a complete re-evaluation of present practices and approaches.

### Purpose of Study

This study attempts to determine whether district training sessions in Florida are adequately covering state-mandated content areas for the ESOL endorsement. The study also asks to what extent secondary school in-service teachers agree or disagree that they received the appropriate amount of instruction. Finally, the study seeks to ascertain whether the trainings being studied will prepare them to educate the myriad of English language learners who are mainstreamed into their classrooms each year.

The following research questions were addressed in the study. First, to what extent do the ESOL in-service district training sessions adequately cover the five main content areas the state requires be included in training programs? Second, how do secondary teachers perceive the coverage, depth, and utility of in-service district training sessions?

### Background to Florida's Consent Decree

How Florida arrived at this troubling situation is a rather complex question as it appears the vast majority of its English language learners are struggling to succeed. Florida's story, however, should not be viewed within the parameters of the state in and of itself; much

of Florida's approach to teaching its English language learners relies on an English-only model which corresponds to a national trend. This trend that states have turned to in the wake of the demise of the bilingual education movement began approximately twenty years ago (San Miguel, 2004). In August of 1990, the State of Florida signed a consent decree as a settlement of a lawsuit filed by a coalition of eight minority rights advocacy groups. The consent decree created, in effect, the formalized framework which districts across the state use to offer instruction to their English language learner populations.

Among other mandates, the decree requires basic ESOL teachers or primary and secondary English and Language Arts instructors to obtain an ESOL endorsement in which they complete 300 in-service points or 15 college semester hours. Teachers of mathematics, social studies, science, computer literacy and, as of 2003, administrators and guidance counselors, must take an ESOL training course called Empowerment. This course is equivalent to 60 in-service points or three college-semester hours (Florida Department of Education, 2006).

Essentially the Empowerment course is planned and conducted by local Florida school districts for in-service teachers. It is designed to be an overview of five separate ESOL classes. In the Empowerment course, typical ESOL strategies, methods and issues are compressed into a broad framework that is meant to summarize many important aspects of second language acquisition. The five major areas required to be covered in district in-service settings or at the pre-service level in colleges according to the consent decree are: a.) ESOL curriculum and materials development, b.) cross cultural communication and understanding, c.) applied linguistics, d.) methods of teaching ESOL, and e.) testing and evaluation (Florida Department of Education, 2006).

There have been several attempts to evaluate the training and preparation of teachers and district personnel in charge of English language learners in Florida. One example was looking at whether teachers were documenting ESOL strategies and if bilingual aids were present in classrooms when 15 or more ELLs were present (Office of Multicultural Student Language Education, 1998). Yet, much of how we understand the process in which the in-service district training sessions are conducted is shrouded in relative obscurity. There has been no empirical study which focuses on the district training.

In fact, there have been concerns raised about how these trainings were designed and are conducted today. In an interview at the University of South Florida, Peter Roos, a lawyer who has argued U.S. Supreme Court cases on educational rights for language minority children, contends that part of the problem with the training of personnel as outlined in the Decree is the notion that teachers who do not receive the full 300 hours of training are somehow viewed as being fully credentialed in ESOL. They are taking just 60 hours - the one Empowerment course. Additionally, Roos questioned the viability of courses which offer fewer than 300 hours, believing that there is a real question as to whether they are taught by faculty who have a specialization in ESOL methods. He also worried that there is no meaningful training of the trainers themselves (Roos, 2004). He indicated that Florida needs to develop a system to check whether educators who have been trained have learned what they were supposed to have learned.

With so much riding on teachers to use what they learned in district training sessions, it seems almost commonsense to assume that more attention would be given to the training

sessions themselves. However, to date there has been no study evaluating the in-service training teachers receive to earn their ESOL endorsement.

#### Review of the Related Literature

There appears to be little or no literature that specifically addresses the training of in-service teachers for the ESOL endorsement. However, there is a sizeable amount of related research on the policies of bilingual education reforms, best pedagogy practices for ELLs and challenges confronting teacher preparations for instructing ELLs. For instance, there is a consensus among some researchers that professional training programs for teachers are in need of an overhaul (Clair, 1998; Garcia, 1992; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990). Specifically, scholars point to a variety of issues that plague district training programs. For example, rather than encouraging follow-up sessions to continue the learning experience of participants and provide them with guided practice (Bird & Warren, 1985; Little, 1981), districts tend to favor the one-size-fits-all, and one-shot workshop models over other effective models which may better suit their particular (district) populations (Meskill, 2005). Furthermore, many districts do not train teachers specifically through their subject area content adequately enough. Instead they choose training that offers broad, generalized practices, and behaviors that do not furnish the specifics as to how to teach populations such as English language learners through one's content area (Gonzalez, 2000).

Regular content teachers face formidable challenges to provide worthwhile and comprehensible lessons to English language learners in mainstream classes. For example, Gandara, et al. (2005) surveyed approximately 5,300 educators throughout 22 school districts in California in 2004. They found that two of the most important issues instructors face are not having enough time to plan appropriate lessons for English language learners and having to teach English language learners who lack basic writing and reading skills even in their first language. Other concerns can be found in the literature as well, such as not receiving adequate support from ESOL aids and instructors in terms of planning and carrying out lessons, and lacking knowledge of, or access to, appropriate instructional materials. Combined, these challenges adversely affect instructors' chances of planning and teaching adequate lessons (Penfield, 1987).

Sadly, teachers may believe they are on their own in terms of overcoming these types of problems and finding ways to address them satisfactorily. Penfield (1987), surveyed 162 teachers in large urban school districts in New Jersey using an open-ended qualitative approach and found that respondents admitted to having little to no training in how to instruct English language learners. She attributed these views to a lack of decent in-service training and the failure of ESL teachers to assist them in classroom situations.

One of the main themes emerging from the literature on district in-service training programs is the notion that school districts tend to take a piecemeal approach to training. In this regard school officials are often more reactive rather than proactive in implementing policies (Floden, 1987). Part of the problem is that school districts are often loosely-coupled systems that can inadvertently act to thwart attempts at real reform (Weick, 1976). For instance the State of Florida has a regulated system that establishes relatively rigid criteria for how district professional ESOL in-service training programs are to be run. Yet school

districts are allowed to implement these directives according to their local circumstance. It is within this loosely-coupled system that districts can bend and shape policy to their liking.

Furthermore, policy makers including district officials and even principals at school sites are street-level bureaucrats who often resolve conflicts by consciously bending their directives to be more responsive to their own local realities (Haynes and Licata, 1992). It is precisely this type of creative insubordination within the context of a loosely-coupled system that may be a critical factor in allowing inadequate training programs to exist and continue.

#### Characteristics of Sound Professional In-Service Teacher Training Practices

There are a variety of best practices used in district training programs that scholars have referenced in the literature. According to Iatarola & Fruchter, (2004), a hallmark of high-performing districts, is their ability to offer a number of professional development programs that are differentiated and flexible (Carla Meskill, 2005). Another important characteristic of successful in-service district training programs is the understanding that teachers become actively involved in the process of learning through collaborating with other teachers (Bird, & Warren, 1985; Clair, 1998; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990). This collaboration among teachers is seen as a critical component because it contributes to increased feelings of ownership. Collaboration also contributes to an enhanced capacity for handling complex problems and more and better opportunities to learn from each other's shared knowledge that is accumulated in the day-to-day experiences of teaching (Clair, 1998).

There is literature which identifies a few effective professional development training programs that specifically target teachers of English language learners. Tellez & Waxman (2005), point to three promising programs found in Arizona and California. The Balderas Elementary School in Fresno Unified School District focuses on working with teachers to develop hands-on content based instruction using ESL methods and emphasizes cross-cultural awareness strategies (United States Department of Education, 1995). The "Funds of Knowledge for Teaching" (FKT) project in Arizona is sponsored by the Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology (BARA) and the College of Education at the University of Arizona. These entities work closely with mostly elementary school instructors to provide training that emphasizes teachers gaining an ethnographic perspective of students and their families (United States Department of Education, 1995). Finally, the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE) has formed a partnership with the Starlight Elementary School in Watsonville, California, where they work closely with staff and administrators to provide professional development opportunities (Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence, 2008).

What makes these three programs successful to some observers is the fact that they contain many of the characteristics that scholars argue professional development training programs need. The importance of collaboration and follow-up training, and the ability to be flexible and offer differentiated instruction, seem to be present in these three programs. Perhaps most importantly, local policy makers are active and show a vested interest in guiding these schools with assistance and resources.

### Method

This study of district ESOL in-service training for teachers in Florida consisted of three phases. Phase I involved non-participant observations of in-service ESOL professional teacher training programs in three Florida districts with relatively high proportions of English language learners. Three sections (one in each district) were observed, totaling 30 class sessions or ten class sessions per section. ("Sections" refer to training classes which include a total of 12 class sessions.)

During class observations, the researcher utilized a rubric of 30 indicators developed from state guidelines to score the degree of trainer coverage. The researcher also took field notes during the observations. Phase II of the study entailed conducting a survey in which participants rated the trainers' coverage. The scale used in the observation rubric and survey was identical and had an equal number of indicators. Finally Phase III involved interviews of 10 participants using a closed-response interview protocol. The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed and analyzed for themes.

#### Selection of Participants

In Phase I, purposive non-probability homogeneous sampling was used to select districts that could be accessed and that also had a relatively high proportion of English language learners within Florida. The trainings chosen for the study are referred to as Empowerment classes. Those educators who took part in the Empowerment training fall within the state's definition of Category II content teachers who are required to take 60 hours of in-service ESOL credits. These instructors include social studies, mathematics, science, and computer literacy teachers, as well as guidance counselors and administrators. The Empowerment courses also included elementary and English and language arts teachers as the Empowerment course is considered one of the five courses they must take to obtain the 300-hour ESOL endorsement.

In Phase II, participants were asked to complete a survey at the conclusion of each of the three sections that were observed. The sample population for the survey was 21 for district 1 (n=21), 16 for district 2 (n=16), and 13 for district 3 (n=13), or a total of 50 surveys collected (n=50).

In Phase III of the study, only educators who participated in the three observed in-service ESOL training programs were eligible. The researcher again used purposive non-probability sampling to choose 10 participants to be studied (n=10). There were three interviewees from districts 1 and 3 and 4 interviewees from district 2.

#### Quantitative and Qualitative Instruments

The researcher developed the standardized coding instrument used in the rubric with input from two professionals in the field of second language acquisition. Also cross referenced were Florida's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Competencies and Skills, 11<sup>th</sup> Ed., the Florida Performance Standards for Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages and the textbook *Empowering ESOL Teachers: An Overview Volume I and II* which districts provide in-service teachers in the 60 hour - Category II Empowerment training sessions. In

order to check for content and construct validity, feedback was obtained from two experts in the field as to what should be retained, omitted, or modified.

The purpose of the observational rubric in Phase I was to determine the extent of variation between content area topics and general overall coverage by the trainer. This was determined based on a rating scale developed by the researcher that ranged from 0 - 5, where 0 indicated no coverage and 5 indicated full and complete treatment of a specific or general topic. The score of 3 was chosen to represent satisfactory coverage and was used to determine whether both specific content areas and district training sessions as a whole were accomplished satisfactorily. The criteria that were used to develop the standardized coding instrument along with a significant amount of time in consultation with experts knowledgeable in the field helped inform the researcher's judgment when assigning scores to particular indicators.

The purpose of the survey in Phase II was to produce another set of scores that were independent of in-class observations. The survey, like the observational rubric, contained 30 indicators; overall mean scores per area were calculated in a similar fashion. There was an average of six indicators included for each content area. For example the content area cross-cultural awareness contained a total of six indicators as did methods, while applied linguistics contained seven indicators and assessment had five. Each of the 30 indicators was scored individually. The interview protocol contained 12 standardized closed-ended questions that were formatted to allow insights that the quantified phases might not have obtained.

Field notes were also gathered in the qualitative phase of the study (Phase I - observations). The field notes were used to record accurately any descriptive observations of the training. They were also used to include as much reflective data as possible in order to record any feelings, hunches, possible problems and ideas related to the trainings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

### Summary of Results

In Phase I, the descriptive data from the observational rubric produced very low scores indicating generally brief or cursory coverage for all five coverage areas, with the exception of cross-cultural awareness which had an overall mean score of 2.4, approximating satisfactory treatment (see Table 1).

Table 1. Rubric Mean Scores per District and across all Three Districts

Coverage area	District 1	District 2	District 3	Total
Cross-cultural Awareness	2.7	2.3	2.2	2.4
Applied linguistics	1.6	1.6	2.1	1.8
Curriculum	1.0	1.2	0.8	1.0
Methods	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.4
Assessment	0.8	1.0	0.0	0.6

Total	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.4
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Note. Maximum score = 5.0

The field notes in Phase I produced a number of overarching themes, one of which was the notion that trainers were not following-up on their points and followed a "check-it-off" mentality in their rush to accomplish tasks. Another was that trainings did not provide participants with tangible, realistic methods or strategies that could be used in classroom settings. There also appeared to be an overemphasis on cross-cultural awareness. Other themes observed were the lack of seriousness and personal involvement on the part of participants and the widespread practice (across all three districts) of shaving off in-class instruction time by separating hours into out-of-class assignments and then later completing them in class. One final theme taken from the field notes in Phase I was the priority trainers put on making sure participants were prepared for possible audits from state officials.

Phase II produced survey data that was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The results showed that participants scored the coverage by trainers in the trainings much higher than the reviewer did on the observational rubric. However, participant responses on the survey mirrored the rubric's findings which scored the area cross-cultural awareness higher than the other four areas (see Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of Survey and Rubric Mean Scores across all Three Districts

Coverage area	Rubric means	Survey Means
Cross-cultural awareness	2.4	3.8
Applied linguistics	1.8	3.232
Curriculum	1.0	2.928
Methods	1.4	3.2
Assessment	0.6	
Total	1.4	

Note. Maximum score = 5.0

To see if the emphasis on cross-cultural awareness was statistically significant, dependent measures t-tests were conducted on difference scores between all pair-wise comparisons of the five areas. The results showed that of the five areas, only cross-cultural awareness was statistically significant. A Bonferroni adjustment was conducted resulting in the same conclusion.

Table 3. Comparison of Pair-wise Differences across Coverage Areas

Numbered differences	Coverage areas	t scores	Pr > t
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1	cross-cultural awareness and applied linguistics	6.5	<.0001
2	cross-cultural awareness and curriculum	5.8	<.0001
3	cross-cultural awareness and methods	8.4	<.0001
4	cross-cultural awareness and assessment	6.4	<.0001
5	applied linguistics and curriculum	-0.8	0.44
6	applied linguistics and methods	1.6	0.11
7	applied linguistics and assessment	2.2	0.03
8	curriculum and methods	3.0	0.004
9	curriculum and assessment	2.8	0.006
10	assessment and methods	-1.2	0.23

Note:  $P < .0001$  is statistically significant. All significant pair-wise comparisons were checked to verify which variable had the higher mean value. In all four cases of statistical significance, Cross-cultural awareness had the higher value.

In Phase III, responses on the interviews confirmed that cross-cultural awareness was the most emphasized of all five areas. Additionally, many participants felt the trainings to be redundant. They indicated that the trainings were not specific enough in terms of what they needed to know in realistic classroom-type settings. As a result, they stated that much of their experience in these trainings was "a waste of time." Respondents in the interviews also said they wanted instruction to be geared toward their content areas and grade levels. Some respondents lamented over the behavior of their peers and resented trying while others came and went as they pleased.

### Discussion

An obvious discrepancy in the study must be how the observational rubric produced such low scores when fifty participants who attended the trainings scored the same sessions considerably higher. It may be a question of informed judgment versus uninformed judgment and the influence of two confounding variables: social desirability response and the observer effect (Phillips & Clancy, 1972; Zegiob Arnold, & Forehand, 1975).

Prior to conducting the study, training manuals and textbooks used in the trainings were accessed, such as the Florida's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Competencies and Skills. 11<sup>th</sup> Ed., and the Florida Performance Standards for Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages. Participants in the sessions were not privy to this knowledge prior to taking the courses and were ignorant as to what fundamental subjects were to be included in the classes.

Another possible explanation for the high scores participants provided in light of the trainer's presence in the room may be attributed to the phenomenon known as "social desirability response bias" (Phillips & Clancy, 1972). It is possible that there were participants who sought social approval in their actions and gave favorable scores as a result; this is particularly possible considering the trainers were standing in the room watching them as they scored the survey (observer effect) (Zegib Arnold, & Forehand, 1975).

Finally, the overall lack of engagement among participants throughout the training sessions may have contributed to the skewed findings on the survey. In fact, several surveys had the same score on every indicator. Involvement in a class that is perceived to be meaningful would likely result in participants taking the time to accurately judge the efficacy of the course. Likewise, participants who find their experience to be a waste of time probably would be less likely to carefully consider their judgments.

### Practicality and Usefulness of Trainings

Findings revealed several participating teachers expressed frustrations over the trainings' impracticality, and lack of usefulness. Much of the problem lies in the fact that many of the activities witnessed in these classes only scratched the surface of meaningful ways to teach second language acquisition. While certain simulation games such as Bafa Bafa were used effectively, other games such as Create a Culture failed to offer any meaningful type of instructional experience. Participants wrote on posterboard things like, "everyone must drink cosmopolitans at 12:00 and nap at 1:00." Trainers seemed to find these types of responses amusing and simply moved on to the next activity after the presenters had finished going down their lists.

The trouble with the activities used in the trainings was not so much that they are meaningless tasks or should not have been used. Rather, the problem is in how much time and emphasis trainers placed on implementing them. With little time to address difficult topics related to second language acquisition such as how to differentiate instruction, these activities stole time from other objectives of the course.

While these games occupied large segments of session time, much more time was devoted to having groups read chunks of text and then presenting to the class the main points of their readings. This type of "jigsaw" instruction was used in every district and in every class. Much of what participants were asked to read was theoretical and required little hands-on participation. It seems far-fetched to expect that teachers would somehow be able to turn the difficult theories and concepts they briefly read in the training materials into structured lesson plans they could use in their classrooms. The third most common activity used in these trainings, beyond games and reading text in class, was teacher lecturing using Powerpoint slides. Participants were left to absorb information passively with the expectation that they would incorporate the information into their classroom lesson plans.

Finally some participants in the interviews said that the materials were outdated. The trainers agreed as much in conversations held with them by the researcher. Most of the materials used in the three districts were created around 1990, when the Empowerment courses were created in the wake of the consent decree. A review of the textbooks used in each district studied confirms this. Instructional materials have not been substantively updated in almost two decades.

### Over Emphasis on Cross-Cultural Awareness

Of the five areas the state requires when districts teach the Empowerment courses, cross-cultural awareness received the most attention. It dominated time as shown by a variety of measurements used in this study. Moreover, the treatment of cross-cultural awareness was largely superficial. For instance, trainers discussed how various cultures differed in grooming, gestures, health and family ties, but never attempted to teach participants how to take these understandings and tailor them to create lesson plans that take advantage of diverse student backgrounds. Moll (1992) and Sleeter (2005) have written extensively on the importance of using student backgrounds to create thematic units and other types of authentic assessment to evaluate performance and build on background knowledge, yet none of these ideas ever were discussed.

### No Meaningful Accountability

In all three districts training sessions, teachers often arrived late and left early. In District 1, teachers came 40-45 minutes late on more than one occasion. There was a sign-in sheet in every district, but participants were able to arrive and sign it at any time during the class. On three occasions, participants signed in and stayed for about fifteen minutes and then left. Many arrived 30 to 45 minutes late, signed in and sat down. Many teachers were also frequently off-task as they spent time talking among each other and grading their own students' classwork. Others browsed the web on their laptops in the back of the class.

One might justifiably argue that instances such as these were a reflection of the trainers' failure to impose sound classroom management practices rather than a fundamental flaw in how the trainings were designed. Nevertheless, there appeared to be no mechanism for trainers to hold teachers accountable for their actions other than a checklist, which was used to determine whether participants had satisfactorily completed the course.

The checklists partly contributed to a lack of accountability because inevitably the checklist left latitude for teachers to complete tasks at any time with little worry that their participation on any day would matter. There was never a graded quiz or any type of high stakes assessment held at any time during the sessions; nor was there a consequence for turning in work late. They simply needed to have everything approved by the end of the class.

## Recommendations

Group teachers by subject area and grade levels.

There is a plethora of literature that deals with content-based instruction for teaching English language learners, and districts should design courses which take advantage of these resources. By grouping instructors together regardless of grade level or content they teach, trainers are limited to having their training curriculum based on methods and strategies that inevitably lack specificity.

The state needs to play an active role in monitoring compliance.

State officials should monitor district ESOL teacher training programs by auditing the training sessions. For instance, the state should look into how districts are choosing their trainers. It was not clear what the criteria were for individuals to become trainers. One of the trainers observed was an assistant principal at the time and a fluent Spanish speaker. However, he indicated that he had no training in ESOL pedagogy beyond what the district provided him prior to conducting the training. This was confirmed by the ESOL coordinator for the trainers' particular area. She indicated that she had trained him personally, but it was unclear how comprehensive the training was. To avoid these types of circumstances, trainers should be chosen based on a set of prescribed qualifications and be state approved. If these qualifications already exist, then it is the state's responsibility to ensure districts are complying with them. Furthermore, there should be a system to evaluate the trainers. A system should be implemented much like that used in universities where students/participants are given evaluation forms to judge trainer/teacher efficacy. Without such a system, trainer competency is judged solely by their immediate superiors, who may not be in the position to make objective judgments.

Beyond the scope of the trainings per se, the state could include an ESOL modification category in the Florida Performance Measurement System (FPMS). FPMS is a rubric principals use to evaluate all Florida teachers during the year. Adding ESOL skills to the FPMS would give principals a way to determine if teachers were modifying their lessons if ELLs were present in the room. It would also send the message to teachers that the principal can hold them accountable for not having a modification system. A companion to the tool for principals would be a formalized system that allows district ESOL professionals to observe teachers in content classes to evaluate their use of ESOL pedagogy. It is unclear whether ESOL district supervisors monitor instructional practices for ESOL modification, but ESOL experts could supplement the observations of principals and assistant principals.

#### Creating a new model.

Curriculum for the ESOL training courses should emphasize the critical aspects of instruction which teachers desperately need. A curriculum and materials course is an essential component that cannot and should not be diluted. Teachers need concrete tools they can apply in the classroom. Teachers should have 60 hours of instruction in curriculum and materials as well as another 60 hours in methods. Within this 120 hour framework, trainers should incorporate the other three areas where appropriate. It strikes me as odd that cross-cultural awareness is taught separately. Curriculum modified for English language learners is cross-culturally sensitive.

Incentives or rewards should be offered to teachers who complete the 120 hours.

Currently, teachers who take the Empowerment course are offered nothing. Districts should offer teachers a stipend for taking the 120 course and college credit for participation. The State of Florida used to have a system in which universities partnered with districts to assist in training, and teachers were provided stipends as well as college credit for participation in training classes. After the consent decree was signed in Florida, universities initially delivered ESOL in-service training classes in most districts. For instance, the University of South Florida operated a program during that period called MERIT, or

Multicultural Educational Resources, Information and Training. The program screened trainers, provided syllabi, and helped districts with training and development. The university also assisted in training teachers through an intensive two-week institute held during the summers, where they received stipends for participation. Over time, the district which had partnered with the University of South Florida transferred responsibility of running the trainings to district personnel who had completed them previously. This trend would recur throughout the state (Evans, personal communication, July10, 2008).

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to determine the overall efficacy of Florida's approach to ESOL in-service teacher training programs. Using a mixed methods approach, three separate district training classes were observed over a five-month period and teacher participants were interviewed for their perceptions. The overall results paint a negative picture of how these trainings were conceived, designed and conducted.

A number of themes emerged from the data which serve to answer the original research questions. Findings show that only the area "cross-cultural awareness" received a satisfactory treatment and, if anything, may have been overemphasized. Teachers' perceptions of the coverage, depth, and utility of in-service district training sessions were almost overwhelmingly negative. The teachers interviewed expressed dismay that there was lack of follow-up on topics raised in the courses, which was reinforced by a check-it-off mentality that pervaded the sessions. There was a sense that the trainings were not realistic or what teachers needed in regards to practical application.

Furthermore, findings from observations and interview responses indicate a lack of teacher accountability in these trainings. Many participants would leave early, arrive late, talk loudly and be off task. It is recommended that the state consider auditing the training sessions. It is also suggested that the state consider creating a way for principals to record ESOL lesson modifications on the FPMS. ESOL administrators should do spontaneous walk-throughs with a resulting observation record. The final recommendation is to replace Empowerment courses with a 120 hour curriculum / material methods course, which would incorporate the other three areas (linguistics, cross-cultural awareness and assessment). To get teachers involved and participating meaningfully, districts should communicate with teachers why they should take such classes and offer financial and professional incentives and college credit.

For close to 20 years now, the state has used ESOL teacher training programs as a way to justify its policy of mainstreaming children. Yet, year after year, too many of these children fall through the cracks of the system. If the trainings fail to adequately prepare teachers, as they appear to be doing, then the state must reevaluate its support for these programs and begin anew. This should include a concerted effort to create professional development programs that serve the purpose for which they were originally intended. If teachers are to continue shouldering much of the burden of instructing ELLs in their classrooms, then the state and districts must ensure they are doing everything possible to make their professional ESOL training programs both effective and meaningful.

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