Job-Embedded Professional Development for Teachers of English Learners: Preventing Literacy Difficulties Through Effective Core Instruction

Linda Cavazos[1], Sylvia Linan-Thompson[2], and Alba Ortiz[3]

Abstract

This mixed methods descriptive study examined the effects of job-embedded professional development (JEPD) in reading on the content knowledge and instructional practice of teachers of English learners (ELs). Four first-grade teachers of ELs at one urban elementary school received JEPD over the course of a year. Results of pre- and posttests of teacher knowledge and classroom observations indicated that teachers' reading content knowledge increased and that they used more evidence-based practices. JEPD shows promise as an approach that accommodates teachers' varying levels of knowledge and experience in preparing them to meet the diverse needs of their students.

To identify and support English Learners (ELs) experiencing reading difficulties, and to increase the likelihood of accurate identification of those with reading disabilities, schools now implement multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) designed to ensure the success of all students (Linan-Thompson & Ortiz, 2009). MTSS is predicated on student access to effective core instruction and differentiated instruction that meet their diverse needs. Yet, 92% of ELs scored below proficient on the 2015 National Assessment of Education Progress, compared with 62% of non-ELs (Kids Count Data Center, 2015). These data are concerning because if core reading instruction is implemented with fidelity by highly trained teachers, 80% of students should meet grade level expectations (McInerney & Elledge, 2013). When they do not, a review of core reading curricula and instructional practices is warranted.

Data on the low-reading achievement of ELs, coupled with teacher reports indicating they need professional development and training specific to ELs (Gallo, Garcia, Pinuelas, & Youngs, 2008; Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005), suggest a critical need for professional development designed to improve core reading instruction for these students. Effective professional development that addresses knowledge gaps and ensures that educators use research-based strategies for instruction is an essential component of school improvement efforts. Although 1-day

[1]American Institutes for Research, Austin, TX, USA
[2]University of Oregon, Eugene, USA
[3]The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA

Corresponding Author:
Sylvia Linan-Thompson, Special Education and Clinical Science, University of Oregon, HEDCO 340, Eugene, OR 97401, USA.
Email: sthomps5@uoregon.edu

professional development workshops may result in new teacher knowledge, they rarely result in instructional changes or improvement of student achievement (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). Moreover, teachers who receive professional development without follow-up support are unlikely to change their instructional practices (Desimone et al., 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Kwang, 2001). In light of this, over the last 15 years, professional development has evolved from "one shot" workshops where teachers are passive recipients of information to models that provide job-embedded professional development (JEPD) and actively involve teachers in learning (Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001).

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of JEPD on the reading content knowledge and instructional practices of first-grade teachers of ELs in a large urban school where the majority of first-grade ELs were performing below grade level in reading. The following questions guided the study:

> **Research Question 1:** How does JEPD in reading contribute to first-grade teachers' content knowledge about reading for English learners?
> **Research Question 2:** How does JEPD in reading influence first-grade teachers' reading instruction for English learners?
> **Research Question 3:** How do teachers of ELs perceive a job-embedded approach to professional development in reading instruction?

JEPD

Desimone (2009) posited that content-focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and active participation are important features of professional development. In addition, professional development that enhances teacher knowledge, changes instructional practice, and improves student outcomes includes *collaboration, coaching*, and a greater allotment of *time* for implementation (Burbank & Kauchak, 2003; Garet et al., 2001; Johnson & Fargo, 2010; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, &

Gallagher, 2007; Porche, Pallante, & Snow, 2012). Professional development with these characteristics is more likely to affect student learning because it is job-embedded, delivered to collaborative teams, and addresses relevant topics (Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001).

Unlike traditional professional development, JEPD involves collaborative decision-making throughout the process and targets specific needs of teachers. Professional learning needs are first identified through analysis of student data, classroom observations, and collaborative planning meetings. JEPD is then situated in the context of schools and classrooms, based on identified needs, provided during teachers' contract hours, and embedded into existing routines and processes. It is offered more frequently and for shorter periods of time (Desimone et al. 2002; Garet et al., 2001) and includes demonstrations, observations, and coaching (Porche et al., 2012). Because it takes place in their classrooms, teachers can immediately address instructional problems and focus on specific instructional needs within their daily work environment.

Model for JEPD

The JEPD model used in this descriptive study included the five attributes of effective professional development, *content-focus, active learning, coherence, duration*, and *collective participation* (Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001). The process began with analysis of reading achievement of ELs in first grade, observation of their teachers' reading instructional practices, and data about teachers' knowledge and skills related to reading instruction for ELs. Figure 1 illustrates the JEPD model. Specifically, the JEPD model used in this study included the following components:

1. Professional development on a topic specific to improving reading instruction for ELs with modeling, demonstration, and guided practice in implementation of instructional strategies.

Figure 1. Job-embedded professional development model.

2. Videotaping of modeled lessons for later review during teacher planning times or professional learning community meetings.

3. Classroom observations conducted the week following PD and focused on teachers' use of newly learned strategies.

4. Oral and written feedback shared with teachers, immediately following the observations or that same day.

5. Coaching using the results of the observation form as a guide, along with identification of strategies and practices teachers implemented successfully and areas for improvement.

By way of illustration, in one JEPD session, the presenter provided an overview of guided reading, an instructional strategy used to improve overall reading skills and comprehension, and to prepare students for independent reading of increasingly complex text (Burkins & Croft, 2010; Ford & Opitz, 2011). The major elements of guided reading were reviewed: small homogeneous groups based on reading level, all students using the same text, modeling reading of the text, providing individual turns to read, repeated readings, and discussion to build oral language development and comprehension of text. The approach was modified to emphasize explicit modeling of all reading strategies and of fluent reading by teachers and oral language development for ELs. The goal of this PD was to ensure that teachers used systematic instruction in phone-

mic awareness and phonics and reading strategies such as making and checking predictions, activating background knowledge, preteaching vocabulary, self-monitoring, and self-correcting (Burkins & Croft, 2010; Ford & Opitz, 2011). Throughout the session, the presenter modeled evidence-based practices included in the classroom observation forms (described in the "Method" section), guided reading strategies that included word work activities (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary), and ample opportunities for ELs to use and develop language. The teachers played the role of students and then roles were reversed so the teachers could practice the strategies with the presenter and each other.

Classroom observations were conducted during which the presenter provided coaching and feedback to improve the quality and effectiveness of implementation. Guided reading strategies were reviewed during teacher planning meetings and additional demonstrations were provided for the group; lessons were modeled in individual teachers' classrooms, as needed. Subsequent teacher planning meetings included the review of videotaped, guided reading lessons provided by the presenter, and support on specific word work strategies used during guided reading.

Professional development sessions were informed by data from ongoing needs assessments and built on previous learning. Time was provided for peer collaboration, planning, and implementation of new knowledge and skills. Observations were conducted and involved follow-up coaching and feedback to

ensure effective implementation of targeted strategies.

Method

This mixed methods, descriptive study examined the effects of JEPD on the reading content knowledge, instructional reading practice, and perceptions of JEPD of four first-grade teachers of ELs. It was part of a larger 4-year model demonstration project investigating Response to Intervention approaches for ELs in kindergarten to third grade. The JEPD study reported here involved 7 months of close collaboration with the participants, the first 3 months preceding the JEPD as part of the larger study and 4 months of JEPD. That study included a team of researchers, with the first author serving as the JEPD presenter and coach.

Site Description

The study site was a large urban school district in central Texas. The participating school served 687 students in prekindergarten through fifth grade. Ninety-three percent of the students received free and reduced-price lunch, 95% were students of color, and 58% were ELs. The school was in its second year of implementation of a two-way dual language program model with the goal of supporting students to become bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate. ELs and native English speakers were in the same class and instruction was provided in Spanish and in English to both groups. At the beginning of the school year, children were assessed in their dominant language. Results of district-required reading assessments, *Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI)* and *El Inventario de Lectura en Español de Tejas* (*Tejas LEE*; Texas Education Agency, 2010), indicated that 68% of first-grade students were performing below grade level. Preliminary classroom observations revealed that teachers of ELs did not teach phonemic awareness or phonics, had difficulty structuring group work, and that students were frequently off task during independent activities. In light of this, project staff, in consulta-

tion with the school principal, identified professional development for first-grade teachers of ELs as a priority for improving student achievement.

Participants

Participants were four first-grade teachers, two Hispanic and two Caucasian female teachers, ranging from 26 to 36 years of age, with 4 to 10 years of teaching experience. All were certified elementary teachers; three held bilingual education endorsements while the fourth had an English as a second language endorsement. Three teachers were fluent in English and Spanish and the fourth teacher was English monolingual. The four teachers comprised two sets of dual language teacher pairs. One teacher in each pair instructed students in Spanish while the other instructed students in English for all but one subject in the school day. Altogether they served a total of 76 first-grade students. Approximately 38 students, 24 Spanish-speaking ELs and 14 non-ELs, were assigned to each pair of teachers. Individual teachers had between 18 and 20 students in their homerooms.

Reading Instruction

Reading instruction for first-grade ELs was provided in Spanish. The reading block was 90 minutes long, with time allocated to read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent practice of spelling, and writing. At the beginning of the study, classroom and planning meeting observations indicated that teachers made limited use of the district's adopted core reading series MacMillan/McGraw-Hill's *Treasures* (Bear, 2007) and *Tesoros* (Duran, et al., 2008). Instead, they selected the skills they were required to teach by reviewing the first-grade curriculum guide and then developed their own literacy curricula. Instruction was typically based on themes (e.g., Family Gatherings, Biographies, Past, and Present) and incorporated a variety of materials, including trade books, library books, Internet resources, and teacher-made materials. Teachers selected English and Spanish

vocabulary words from the texts they used for thematic units, but chose spelling and sight words from the reading basal series. Because of their limited use of the basal, teachers spent most of their planning time each week creating materials or trying to find comparable materials in English and Spanish.

Instruments

Context observation form. A project-created classroom observation form was developed as part of the larger study to get to know the context. It was used to document if and how the five components of reading (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) were addressed during literacy instruction, grouping practices, and time devoted to each literacy area. Observers used a checklist of targeted practices (i.e., use of direct and explicit instruction, activating prior knowledge, modeling, monitoring understanding, guided practice, opportunities for language use, corrective feedback, brisk pacing, and reading content and skills taught) to document practices observed in whole group and small group instruction. Instructional objectives that were explicitly stated for each lesson were recorded anecdotally.

Teacher Knowledge Survey. Teacher Knowledge Survey (Cirino, Pollard-Durodola, Foorman, Carlson, & Francis, 2007), English and Spanish versions, was used as a pre- and posttest measure of participants' content knowledge about teaching reading. The Survey consists of five subtests: phoneme counting, syllable counting, phoneme matching, sound-symbol, and composition. Sample items on this measure included counting the number of phonemes in words (e.g., ring), the number of syllables in *words (e.g., recreational)*, phoneme segmentation of words, and identifying phonetically irregular words. Teachers also identify student errors on a written composition and make annotations on a reading passage read orally by a student.

Observation log. Observation logs were used after every professional development session to

rate implementation of practices from consistent to no use of newly learned instructional practices and evidence-based strategies reviewed during each PD session. These strategies included explaining task, modeling, use of consistent language, providing individual turns, scaffolding, brisk pacing, and corrective feedback. Specific instructional strategies related to the professional development included strategies for teaching phonics and word work activities. In addition, running records of observed practices used for literacy instruction were recorded as field notes during these observations. Copies of these forms were provided to the teachers following observations and were used to provide coaching and feedback to teachers.

Implementation observation form. To determine change in teacher practice, data for the larger study were collected at the beginning and at the end of the study period. The implementation form contained 16 items scaled from 0 to 2 indicating low to high implementation of instructional practices for a maximum score of 32. Sample items on this form included use of model, lead, test strategy (Carnine, Silbert, & Kameenui, 1997), appropriate signals, gestures, and consistent language use.

Interviews. Individual interviews were conducted, using a protocol with 11 guiding questions, to determine teachers' perception of the effect of JEPD on their content knowledge, instructional practices, and overall perceptions of this type of professional learning. Each interview lasted 20 to 30 minutes. For example, participants were asked whether JEPD helped to improve their reading content knowledge and how participating in JEPD changed or modified their beliefs about teaching, learning, and professional development.

Procedures for JEPD

Before commencing JEPD, student data, Teacher Knowledge Survey data, and context observation data were reviewed with teachers. In consultation and collaboration with them, topics for professional development were

identified and JEPD sessions were scheduled. The teachers requested guidance and professional development in the broad areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, guided oral reading, comprehension, academic language, and general effective practices for literacy instruction. A total of seven JEPD sessions were designed around these topics and provided to the participants by the researcher. The sessions were held after school in teacher's classrooms and lasted 2 hours each. Each JEPD session included presentation of reading content and evidence-based instructional strategies to teach the content, with the presenter modeling the strategies. To facilitate implementation, the materials needed by teachers to implement strategies were provided in English and Spanish. Each JEPD session reinforced the previous training.

Observations of teachers' literacy instruction ranging from 30 minutes to 2 hours followed each professional development session. Differentiated coaching was used to provide feedback to individual teachers after observations whereas instructional practices requiring modifications were addressed during coaching sessions. When needed, coaching was provided during collaborative group planning meetings, as, for example, when clarification of practices was requested or as teachers planned future lessons. These meetings were part of the teachers' weekly schedule and were held during the school day. In addition, classroom demonstrations were provided when requested by teachers. Because the teachers video-recorded the lessons, the four teachers were all able to view and discuss the demonstrations during their weekly planning sessions. This helped reinforce the new skills they learned through collaborative reflection.

Data Analysis

T tests were used to determine differences in pre- and post teacher knowledge surveys. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze classroom observation data and data from other instruments. The process for analyzing the qualitative data included the following steps:

1. Data were prepared for analysis (e.g., transcription, sorting, arranging by types).
2. Data were reviewed with notes written in the margins and a line-by-line examination of interview text.
3. Sections of text representing similar ideas were organized into categories using open coding; then grouped, labeled, and color-coded using axial coding (Merriam, 2009).
4. Data were systematically analyzed until themes emerged that were supported by quotations and textual evidence.
5. Relationships between themes and the research questions were displayed in tables, figures, and graphs to establish a holistic picture and patterns (Creswell, 2003).
6. Data were interpreted and conclusions were drawn from the patterns and themes. Implications and findings were reviewed.

Results

Teachers' Content Knowledge

A paired-samples *t* test was conducted to compare teachers' overall pretest and posttest scores on the *Teacher Knowledge Survey–English.* There was a significant difference between the pretest ($M = 68.00$, $SD = 8.12$) and posttest ($M = 89.00$, $SD = 10.30$) scores; $t(4) = 3.98$, $p = .028$. Paired-samples *t* tests were also conducted to compare teachers' pretest and posttest scores on the subtests. There was a significant difference in the pretest and posttest on the sound-symbol subtest scores, pretest ($M = 62.50$, $SD = 15.00$) and posttest ($M = 95.00$, $SD = 5.77$); $t(4) = 6.79$, $p = .007$. See Table 1 for English test results.

All teachers performed better overall on the *Teacher Knowledge Survey–Spanish*, pretest ($M = 87\%$) and posttest ($M = 98\%$). The lowest pretest score was on the composition (i.e., writing) analysis subtest. Paired-samples *t* tests indicate a significant difference in the pretest ($M = 50.33$, $SD = 12.50$) and posttest

Table 1. Pre- and Post Scores on Teacher Knowledge Survey–English.

Subtests	Teacher 1		Teacher 2		Teacher 3		Teacher 4	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Phoneme counting	50	100	67	67	83	100	83	100
Syllable counting	67	100	83	100	100	100	67	100
Phoneme matching	40	100	60	60	80	80	100	100
Sound-symbol	70	100	50	90	50	90	80	100
Composition	75	88	63	50	38	88	75	75
Overall score	63	97	63	74	66	91	80	94

Table 2. Pre- and Post Scores on Teacher Knowledge Survey–Spanish.

Subtests	Teacher 1		Teacher 2		Teacher 3	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Contando fonemas	100	100	100	100	100	100
Contando silabas	100	100	100	100	83	100
Conocimiento de los sonidos	100	100	100	100	100	100
Sonido-letra	90	100	100	100	100	100
Composición	63	100	50	100	38	75
Overall score	89	100	89	100	83	94

($M = 91.67$, $SD = 14.43$; $t(3) = 9.54$, $p = .011$) scores on this subtest. See Table 2 for Spanish test results.

Teacher knowledge surveys indicated that teacher content knowledge of reading in English and Spanish improved during the study. Spanish posttest mean scores on four of five subtests were 100% and 92% on the fifth subtest, indicating greater overall knowledge of Spanish reading; results indicated teachers knew less about teaching English reading than Spanish reading, both before and after JEPD.

Teacher Practice

At the beginning of the study, classroom observations and anecdotal notes made during planning meetings indicated that teachers made limited use of the adopted reading series, instead developing their curricula using a variety of materials, including trade books, library books, Internet resources, and teacher-made materials.

The features of effective instruction that were presented in the initial professional development were reinforced throughout the professional development series and were the focus of classroom observations. Observation logs revealed that JEPD in reading directly influenced teachers' reading instruction for ELs in a number of ways and that multiple features of effective instruction were implemented *consistently*. Consistent use of language was rated as *consistently* evident in all of the observations, indicating that instructional language was comprehensible, not confusing to the student, and enabled the student to recognize the skill being targeted. Explaining the task, providing scaffolds, and providing corrective feedback were rated as *consistently* in 90% of the observations. Providing individual turns was rated as *consistently* in 85% of the observations.

Use of modeling improved from preobservations to postobservations from 16% to 60%; maintaining a brisk pace from 33% to 60%; providing corrective feedback from 50% to 90%; and providing individual turns from 33% to 85%. Anecdotal notes also documented smooth transitions, brisk instructional

pacing, use of gestures, and better use of instructional time with brisk instructional pacing and modeling, features that were not observed consistently in the early observations during the professional development. Individual teacher interviews also revealed that they recognized changes in their instructional practices stemming from the JEPD.

Teacher Perceptions of JEPD

Two of the overarching themes that emerged from the qualitative data analyses that were consistent across all teachers were (a) JEPD is beneficial and (b) teachers have positive perceptions about JEPD. All of the teachers reported positive perceptions of JEPD in reading.

JEPD is beneficial. Teachers reported that the recursive, comprehensive approach of JEPD made it beneficial. In particular, teachers mentioned the benefit of modeling and coaching. Teacher 1 stated, "I want somebody to come in my room, show me how to do it, then we can talk about it, and then I can do it, and they can watch. I mean that's like the best-case scenario." The other teachers echoed this sentiment. Teacher 4 noted the supportive nature of JEPD stating, "It has always been very supportive. I think that was very beneficial." Teachers also identified the impact of JEPD on their practice. For example, Teacher 3 stated, "It's just, the feedback, the coaching, and the modeling; all of that works together to just help me improve as a teacher and help the students in return." She also noted that in addition to being a better teacher generally, she was a better reading teacher.

The fact that JEPD was situated in their classrooms and based on their needs was also important. Teacher 4 explained, "It's been different than any other sort of PD that we have had. It's tailored to what your team needs. It's data driven. It has always been very supportive. I think that was very beneficial."

Teachers have positive perceptions about JEPD. At the end of the year, teachers reflected on the process. All the teachers communicated positive perceptions, stating that they had not

only enjoyed the JEPD but that they learned. Teacher 3 stated, "It's really opened up my eyes to teaching reading and just learning as a teacher." She went on to say, "I would, if I could, have all my PDs in this manner. I think that I would be probably 100 times better at teaching everything."

Teacher 2 recognized that, although JEPD is more time-consuming than traditional PD, the payoff is greater. She stated, "I definitely think all the time that we have taken to do the PD has been totally worth it. . . . You are going to grow."

Understanding the context is important. Participating teachers reported that observations conducted at the beginning of the study provided the observers an understanding of the literacy context for ELs and identified specific needs for professional development. For example, Teacher 2 stated,

> To get a feel of how the teaching is going, what the kids are doing, what type of materials we are using, what programs we are using before helping. I think that is important, watching the whole block and being able to understand what is going on with the group.

JEPD that involves participants in the identification of needs, and considers them in the presentation of content, can increase their motivation and commitment to professional learning (Hawley & Valli, 2000). Stover, Kissel, Haag, and Shoniker (2011) posited that teachers need to have a stake in their learning for meaningful change to occur.

Social Validity

The professional development provided in this study was designed specifically for the teachers of ELs and their identified needs as recommended in the literature (Stover et al., 2011). Teacher interviews indicated that teachers found the relevance of the training suited for their specific needs, contributed to the changes in their practice, and they recognized that this differed from other training they had received. Another overarching theme

that emerged from the data was that understanding the context is important because it helps to ensure relevant training.

Supplemental Intervention

As indicated previously, at the beginning of the study, 68% of first-grade students were performing below expected levels. At the beginning of the next school year, screening data indicated that 40% of first graders were performing below grade level in reading, indicating a need to focus on improving kindergarten literacy instruction. Only 17% of first-grade ELs were below level at mid-year, and none qualified for supplemental intervention by the end of the year. In the participating school, first-grade teachers were responsible for both core and supplemental intervention, suggesting that PD had a positive effect on teachers' instructional practices which, in turn, had a positive impact on reading performance.

Discussion

This study examined the effects of JEPD on teacher knowledge and instructional practices in reading. The JEPD model included extensive supports (i.e., professional learning, observations, coaching, feedback, modeling, and demonstrations) provided in a recursive cycle for a period of 7 months. The first 3 months involved classroom observations of teacher practices, participation in teacher planning sessions, administration of teacher knowledge surveys, and review of teacher and student data. Investing time prior to providing PD helped to develop rapport and build trust with the participants. Teachers commented that a "no judgment" norm placed them at ease allowing them to participate without fear of criticism or judgment.

Engaging participants in mutual selection of topics ensures relevance and enhances teachers' commitment to training (Hawley & Valli, 2000; Stover et al., 2011). Differentiating instruction and providing modeling and demonstrations during the JEPD sessions supported teachers' learning. Teachers benefit

from learning new relevant content, observing its implementation, and implementing it themselves to create changes in instructional practice. Implementation is more likely to occur if follow-up activities are provided such as observations, coaching, demonstrations, and feedback. The JEPD model used in this study was recursive and of long duration, with extensive follow-up support. Taking a comprehensive, customized approach to professional development with follow-up supports increases learning and implementation of newly learned instructional practices.

During the study year, teacher knowledge of reading increased and instructional practices changed. The researcher provided ongoing guidance on systematic instructional planning using district textbooks and supplemental materials, leveled books, and decodable books to teach reading. By the end of the study, teachers had transformed the way they planned and were more systematic and intentional about the materials they used to teach. These findings suggest that JEPD is an effective approach for improving reading instruction provided by teachers of ELs.

Finally, MTSS frameworks are based on the assumption that the majority of students, 80%, are meeting grade level expectations as a result of effective core instruction (McInerney & Elledge, 2013). Unfortunately, this assumption is often violated when students are English Learners, suggesting a need to focus school improvement efforts on ensuring that ELs have equitable access to effective core instruction. When large numbers of students are not on grade level, it is crucial to evaluate the appropriateness of core literacy instruction, both within and across grades. For example, the majority of first graders in this study were performing below grade level at the beginning of the year, suggesting a need to evaluate the effectiveness of kindergarten literacy instruction and/or whether summer loss might explain low achievement. Over time, though, the number of first-grade ELs performing below level and the number requiring supplemental intervention decreased. This suggests that effective core instruction is the

key to preventing learning problems from occurring in the first place.

The factors that contributed to its success can provide guidance for those responsible for professional development aimed at improving the reading instruction for English Learners. In addition, they extend previous findings because of the applicability to teachers of ELs who benefit from JEPD that offers follow-up supports, that promotes collaboration, that is about topics relevant to ELs, and that is differentiated to teachers' individual needs (Desimone et al., 2002; Gallo et al., 2008; Gandara et al., 2005; Garet et al., 2001; Stover et al., 2011).

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research is needed on other groups of teachers of ELs, and in other contexts (additional urban districts, smaller districts) to determine how JEPD supports sustained teacher changes and how participation in JEPD in reading affects long-term student outcomes. Other contexts may include a smaller or larger school or a different type of bilingual program (e.g., one-way dual language). Different contexts provide a different set of instructional challenges for the providers of JEPD. It is important to study sustained instructional change over a longer period of time beyond an academic year. Additional research is needed with a larger sample size to assess the benefits of JEPD and follow-up supports with more participants.

Limitations

Although this research illuminates the potential benefits of providing JEPD and offers an example of JEPD in reading for teachers of ELs at one elementary school, there were several limitations. A control group would have strengthened our study findings. Without a control group, the differences between pre- and posttests and observations attributed to the JEPD can only be inferred. Furthermore, the small sample size allowed for extensive individualized attention for the teachers and

additional follow-up support. About 235 hours of JEPD support was devoted to this research study, made possible by federal grant funding. This level of intensity and duration may be cost prohibitive in another setting.

Summary

In the current study, time was committed to differentiating the instruction for the teachers and resulted in individual and group growth. The JEPD model was recursive, of a long duration, with extensive follow-up support. Allowing time to build relationships, get to know the context, and to provide ongoing professional development must be part of the design of professional development, not incidental. Taking a comprehensive, customized approach to professional development with follow-up supports, through embedded participation increased learning and implementation of newly learned instructional practices. The differentiation of instruction and demonstrations during the JEPD sessions supported teachers' learning. During the study year, teacher knowledge of reading and instructional practices changed. These findings suggest that JEPD may be an effective approach for improving teacher content knowledge and instructional practices in the area of reading. In addition, they extend previous findings because of the applicability to teachers of ELs who benefit from JEPD that offers follow-up supports, that promotes collaboration, that is about topics relevant to ELs, and that is differentiated to teachers' individual needs (Desimone et al., 2002; Gallo et al., 2008; Gandara et al., 2005; Garet et al., 2001; Stover et al., 2011).

Meeting the diverse needs of ELs with varying levels of language and achievement in the native language and English, or of other special populations, can be challenging. JEPD that includes a content-focus, active learning, coherence, duration, collective participation of collaborative grade level teams (Desimone, 2009), with follow-up support such as observations, coaching, feedback, and demonstrations (Porche et al., 2012) provides the supportive conditions necessary for success in

improving teacher practice and student outcomes (Gandara et al., 2005; Stover et al., 2011). The JEPD model presented is an effective model for improving teacher content knowledge and instructional practice, and one that teachers find beneficial.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Author Biographies

Linda Cavazos, PhD, is a senior consultant at American Institutes for Research. She conducts research and provides technical assistance to states and districts in the broad area of special education. She has extensive experience preparing teachers to effectively provide academic interventions to culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Sylvia Linan-Thompson is an associate professor at the University of Oregon in the Department of Special Education and Clinical Science and is associated with the Center on Teaching and Learning. Her research and teaching focuses on the reading and writing development of English learners with and without literacy difficulties and effective implementation of MTSS.

Alba Ortiz is professor emerita, Department of Special Education, University of Texas at Austin. Her research focuses on Multi-tiered Systems of Support for English Learners with language and learning disabilities.