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Appraisal of a Benchmarking Plan Using an Action Research Approach with English Learner Program Teachers and Analysis of Predictive Validity of Spanish Curriculum Based Measures

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

APPRAISAL OF A BENCHMARKING PLAN USING AN ACTION RESEARCH
APPROACH WITH ENGLISH LEARNER PROGRAM TEACHERS AND ANALYSIS
OF PREDICTIVE VALIDITY OF SPANISH CURRICULUM BASED MEASURES

A DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 2015

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ABSTRACT

The small urban school district in this current case study made changes to its benchmarking practices that in turn, directly affected their growing English Learners Program (ELP). With an increasing need prompted by Federal mandates such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) to ensure districts have data that reflects academic progress for bilingual students, this unique issue will be deconstructed. These areas pertain to stakeholder perspectives and appraisal of prior and current data collection practices and analysis of predictive validity from archival benchmark data of bilingual students. The present case study contributes to the research on the predictive validity of Spanish Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) for native Spanish-speaking students in a transitional bilingual education program, by analyzing subsequent progress on high stakes state standardized testing and progression of English Language Proficiency. Unlike previous studies, it incorporates an action research approach using ELP teachers as primary stakeholders in focus groups to shape an understanding and construct knowledge through a collaborative, evaluative inquiry, as well as appraise a benchmarking plan that was developed top-down without their input.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this doctoral action research project is to appraise a district's current benchmarking plan for English Learners,¹ with stakeholders, using an action research approach. How can action research with English Learner Program (ELP) teachers improve current benchmarking practices? How do stakeholders describe the history of the problem, the issue as they currently see it and what are questions for areas of future development? Stakeholder involvement will be used at the onset to gain a deeper understanding of contextual issues. The source of data will include the opinions, ideas and anecdotes expressed within an organizational climate survey, focus groups and a semi-structured interview with the ELP director. In this doctoral action research project, stakeholder opinions and perspectives will be vital to gaining a shared understanding. Secondly, variables that are currently unknown, such as the predictive validity of previously used benchmark assessments will be explored further. Were the district's previous benchmark measures predictive of subsequent English Learner performance on state standardized achievement tests or growth on English language proficiency? Analyzing the predictive validity of the ELP's previous benchmark measures will be pertinent to determining its previous and potential validity for English Learner students

¹Benchmarking is a quick academic screen administered to all students three times a year, while progress monitoring involves frequent data collection using Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) weekly or biweekly to assess a student's rate of improvement towards meeting a goal based on national or local norms.

identified at risk. The emphasis on gathering stakeholder input to construct knowledge and incorporation of qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection will aid in reaching assumptions and taking action specific to the needs of the district's English Learners Program.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Programming

Types of EL programs range for example, from dual bilingual instruction, transitional bilingual education, sheltered English instruction, or pull out ESL. In a transitional bilingual education program, students receive instruction in their native language initially, as English is introduced; it is considered *subtractive* (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005). Conversely, in a dual language bilingual education program, students learn two languages and it is considered an *additive* program (Rhodes et al., 2005). In a sheltered ESL and pullout ESL, students receive modified instruction in English and develop language skills in English (Rhodes et al., 2005).

Program availability may vary depending on factors that will vary from school to school. It is also important to keep in mind that there are different types of ELs, from immigrants to U.S. born (Hudspath-Niemi & Conroy, 2013) with simultaneous or sequential language acquisition (Goldstein, 2004). The type of EL student and type of program varies within the limited research on this topic. When implementing RtI with ELs, Vaughn and Ortiz (2010) state that it is necessary to understand what type of support program ELs are enrolled in, how their native language and English proficiency are assessed and monitored, as well as the core literacy program they receive in their native language and/or English (Hudspath-Niemi & Conroy, 2013).

Research indicates that instructional programs work when opportunities are offered for students to develop proficiency in their first language. Studies that compare bilingual instruction with English-only instruction explain that language-minority students instructed in their native language as well as in English, perform better on measures of English Language Proficiency than language-minority students instructed only in English (August & Shanahan, 2006). Moreover, the use of grade-appropriate measures that match the language of reading instruction was supported by Vaughn and Ortiz (2010) for students in bilingual education programs (Hudspath-Niemi & Conroy, 2013).

English Language Proficiency

Another contributing factor that needs further development in the research is distinguishing the correlation between language proficiency to academic abilities. Current policies and practices are based on “the notion that English language proficiency is commensurate with academic skills and development, but the two are not equivalent and assessments of language proficiency do not necessarily also measure academic facility” (Rivera, Moughamian, Lesaux, & Francis, 2009, p. 5). For example, Garcia cites that the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) “emphasize reading and literacy development in English in ways that are inconsistent with what we understand about English language acquisition” (Garcia, 2009, p. 2). English Learners progress through the stages of second language acquisition, though the length of time (four to seven years) can vary based on affective factors including motivation, first language, language distance and attitude (in closeness to English), access to the language, age of acquisition, personality/learning styles,

peers/role models and quality of instruction, as well as life, educational and personal experiences (Esparza Brown, 2014; Hudspath-Niemi & Conroy, 2013). These factors offer a richer, diverse and more authentic context in understanding our ELs (WIDA Consortium, 2013).

Professional Development

Discerning the difference from language and academic issues is a common difficulty. Implications for professional development include training on native-language and second-language acquisition and language assessment, cultural and linguistic differences on teaching and learning, differentiation, intervention (Ortiz, Robertson, Wilkinson, Liu, McGhee, & Kushner, 2011). Findings across three studies about the role of bilingual education teachers in the referral process recommended adding “periodic language-proficiency assessments (including informal measures) to monitor native and second language development, as well as progress on interventions targeting language growth” (Ortiz et al., 2011, p. 326). Furthermore, additional training on the special education referral process may be beneficial especially for bilingual teachers (Ortiz et al., 2011). Likewise, establishing a system that identifies students at risk using measures pertinent to the EL population may reduce subjective referrals for special education and minimize disproportionality of minorities in special education.

Resources

It is essential that school policies focus on prevention and early intervention, with a focus on ELs. In a study sparked by the over-identification of ELs with reading-related learning disabilities, authors found that bilingual teachers played an important role with prevention and intervention (Ortiz et al., 2011). In order to safeguard against over-

identification, authors recommended resources including administrative leadership, core curriculum effective for ELs, linguistically and culturally diverse screening/assessment/progress monitoring, support from school problem solving teams, interventions targeting language and literacy for ELs, and professional development to develop their role with prevention and intervention (Ortiz et al., 2011). These examples highlight some of the main tenets needed for those who serve our English Learners and may serve as a platform for appraising or developing plans.

Structures

Whether there are adequate structures in place that allow for discussion of data for English Learners is essential for teachers. In an investigation of collaboration, researchers found from their qualitative analysis that training on the act of collaboration, administrative support, working knowledge of the roles of related service staff and culturally and linguistic diverse resources were needed (Roache, Shore, Gouleta, & Obaldia Butkevich, 2010). Furthermore, previous studies by Clair (1993) and Fradd (1992) have called for principals to engage the entire staff in responsibility for ELs, for teachers to understand bilingualism and a transdisciplinary approach leading to collaboration (Roache et al., 2010). Collaborative time also needs to be structured with an understanding of roles.

Additionally, the development of data collection across time is recommended (Ortiz et al., 2011). In a qualitative study of two schools in New York, researchers surmised that schools that were successful at negotiating the requirements of NCLB were those with a knowledgeable principal and staff that valued language education and valued their emergent bilinguals as assets or resources (Koyama & Menken, 2013).

Normative Comparisons

In terms of comparison groups for ELs, it is crucial to analyze “the achievement of the student’s “true peers” (similar language proficiencies, culture and experiential background) to determine whether they are excelling” (Brown & Doolittle, 2008, p. 6). When true peers are showing difficulty, just as in RtI with native English speakers, it is fair to assume this may be indicative of problems within the core instruction. Although comparison to true peers is ideal, the question still remains about “which students will serve as the norm against which all others will be evaluated to identify low achievers” (Garcia, 2009, p. 5)? For example, are typical rates of improvement available for achievement data that is representative of a larger sample of ELs that can be used to make such comparisons or assumptions?

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) acknowledges that the focal point of data collection should be on closing the gap compared to EL peers, rather than native English speaking peers. Conversely, ISBE (2012) cautions against “applying normative data for native English speakers to ELs; If normative measures are used, it is recommended that the data be interpreted in conjunction with a variety of other measures that are culturally and linguistically appropriate” (p. 7). However, these types of culturally and linguistically appropriate measures remain to be endorsed. Further development is needed in identifying the tools and procedures used for measuring student responsiveness to ensure they are indeed valid and useful for ELs.

Curriculum Based Measurement

In order to respond to the district’s specific benchmarking needs, it is important to understand the complexities involved with assessing ELs based on curriculum based

measurement. Curriculum based measurement (CBM) is a commonly used approach to measuring student growth, are sensitive to small changes in growth, are in-expensive, and can be administered frequently to monitor progress (Sandberg & Reschly, 2011). CBMs can be used for norm development, identifying students at risk, predicting performance and assessing students' level and growth in oral reading fluency (Osterman Stokes, 2010). Curriculum based measurement is viewed as an area that can fulfill the role of progress monitoring and in determining how instruction may need to be adjusted (Hager, 2007; Hudspath-Niemi & Conroy, 2013). While benchmarking occurs three times a year, progress monitoring entails more frequent data collection using CBM weekly or biweekly to assess a student's rate of improvement towards meeting a goal based on National or local norms.

CBM is viewed as promising towards objective identification and assessment for ELs (Sandberg & Reschly, 2011). Moreover, Reading-CBM data can also be helpful for educational decision making and may serve as useful data when ruling out/in delays due to limited language proficiency and/or learning disabilities (Sandberg & Reschly, 2011). In particular for bilingual students, using both R-CBM and R-Spanish CBM for students “may prove a valuable practice for assessing language proficiency and the acquisition of English reading skills as the language of instruction shifts in bilingual programming” (Keller-Margulis & Mercer, 2014, p. 689). Monitoring the progress of groups of EL students at benchmarks will contribute to knowledge of expectations rather than comparison to monolingual students (Sandberg & Reschly, 2011).

Reading CBMs and ELs

Very few studies have been published on using CBMs with ELs. Baker and Good (1995) produced the first study to use CBMs with ELs. CBMs were administered over the course of 10 weeks to track the rate of progress between groups of students. Results indicated support for its reliability across language groups, support for reading comprehension for bilingual students, and similar growth rates when comparing bilingual and English second grade students (Sandberg & Reschly, 2011). However this study did not use Spanish CBMs and the bilingual students included in the study were heterogeneous in terms of language proficiency, as some students were proficient in both, not proficient in either or in between (Baker & Good, 1995).

CBMs and Growth Studies

Investigating the relationship between CBMs and growth patterns for bilingual and monolingual students became the next theme within this line of research. In 2006, Ramirez and Shapiro studied the growth of oral reading fluency among general education students in English, bilingual students reading in English and bilingual students reading in Spanish. In first grade the highest performing group was the bilingual students reading in Spanish, followed by the general education students reading in English and lastly, the bilingual students reading in English. However, the second through fifth grade population of general education students reading in English became the highest performing group while the bilingual students reading in English remained outperformed in comparison (Ramirez & Shapiro, 2006).

In 2007, Ramirez and Shapiro further assessed the growth of students in bilingual programs. They used Spanish and English Reading CBMs to compare the growth of

elementary school students in general education compared to the growth of students in bilingual education, and was found to be sensitive to reading growth in both languages for first, second, third and fifth grade. Also, the authors found that the fall benchmark for R-Spanish was predictive of performance in English reading fluency in the spring.

More recently, in 2014, Keller-Margulis and Mercer investigated the relationship between performance on Reading CBM in Spanish to Reading CBM in English for students in bilingual programs. They looked at initial benchmarks and annual growth for ELs in bilingual programs and used parallel process latent growth and quantile regression models to determine the “extent to which initial benchmarks and growth in each language were related on average in the sample (parallel process) and the extent to which these relations were characteristic of students at various reading skill levels” (quantile regression) (p. 677). One limitation was that the makeup of the language proficiency of the ELs was unknown. Moreover, the students in this data set were in a transitional bilingual program, thus the authors cautioned against drawing comparisons to other types of programs for English Learners (Keller-Margulis & Mercer, 2014).

CBMs and Achievement Test Comparisons

Expanding from the notion of analyzing growth patterns among groups of students, researchers began to search for relationships among CBM measures and predictive validity for achievement testing for ELs. In 1997, Moore used R-CBM in Spanish and R-CBM in English for bilingual Hispanic students in this comparison. Results showed a moderate correlation with achievement tests in English; interestingly, “R-CBM in Spanish correlated more highly with the reading achievement measures in English than administered in Spanish” (Sandberg & Reschly, 2011, p. 149). In 2005,

work continued by Wiley and Deno in the area of CBM measures in relation to high-stakes achievement tests, paving the way for predictive validity of these measures for results on high stakes tests among ELs. However, the CBMs used in Wiley and Deno's studies were not Spanish CBMs. In 2009, Muyskens, Betts, Lau, and Marston examined concurrent and predictive validity of CBM for fifth grade ELs as a predictor for performance on state standardized tests using regression analysis and logistic regression models. The study found that CBM was significant in predicting later performance on accountability tests for ELs as a group and among three different language groups, including Spanish. The authors suggested comparing cut scores for ELs and English speaking peers and among ethnicity and language history. Thus, it would be pertinent to continue research in this area with respect to available Spanish CBM measures for students in bilingual programs with native language Spanish instruction.

In 2012, Keller-Margulis, Payan, and Booth's investigation of the validity and technical adequacy of R-Spanish CBM (Aimsweb) measured against the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test found a moderate relationship which yielded preliminary support for R-Spanish (as cited in Keller-Margulis & Mercer, 2014). Further research needs to continue in examining the validity and technical adequacy of the Spanish measures available from Aimsweb Pearson Education products.

CBMs, Achievement Testing, and English Language Proficiency

In 2012, Quirk and Beem conducted a study measuring reading fluency and reading comprehension using CBMs, reading tests (Test of Word Reading Efficiency, Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test) an English Language Proficiency test, and the California English Language Development Test; however all assessments were administered in

English and the EL students received instruction in English. Quirk and Beem's study (2012) showed a significant relationship and effect size between level of English Language Proficiency and level of reading fluency.

In Osterman Stoke's (2010) unpublished dissertation, archival data was used to examine the predictive validity of R-CBM (Maze) on high stakes assessment with EL and general education students as well as the average rate of growth on R-CBM and how it relates to English language proficiency for sixth grade students. The CBM Maze and oral reading fluency measures were examined as EL teachers have challenged the notion that fluency is correlated to comprehension in the same way it is for English. Osterman Stokes found that the initial Fall CBM score, percentage of growth (Fall to Spring) were significant predictors to comprehension. This type of analysis is vital in the field as it is still unclear to what extent CBM is a "measure of English language proficiency than of reading proficiency for bilingual students" (Baker & Good, 1995, p. 4).

Summary

The literature on ELs from programming, language proficiency, to norm comparisons and how it relates to professional development, resources and structures in place serve as relevant context specific to bilingual education. Moreover, the research on CBMs and ELs has evolved over the past nineteen years by examining growth patterns, predicting performance on high stakes state standardized tests and English language proficiency. The gaps that remain in the Spanish CBM literature include limitations due to sample sizes and focus on limited grade levels, variance in types of ELs and programming examined (from general education with English as a Second Language support to bilingual instruction in Spanish and English) and limited assessment practices

in native language proficiency. More information is also needed on how districts are using CBM Reading Spanish data for ELs and how reflective it is for identifying students who may be academically at risk compared to peers.

Problem Identification and Contextual Issues

The English Learners Program expanded in the 2012-2013 school year from a transitional bilingual education program in one school to Pre-kindergarten through third grade transitional bilingual classrooms in all three elementary schools in the district. Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, the Discovery computer-based assessments replaced Aimsweb Curriculum Based Measurement as the benchmark assessments (for Kindergarten through eighth grade) and was given four times a year in reading and math. The Discovery test averages 45-60 minutes to administer and is more diagnostic rather than a quick measure of students' skills. The Discovery test is available in Spanish for math for grades three through eight. ELP teachers were given the discretion of allowing their students to take the math test in Spanish. Conversely, it is not available in Spanish for reading.

The use of the Discovery computer-based benchmark assessment directly impacts students in the English Learners Program. A cutoff score was determined by the ELP department from the previous year's ACCESS (English Language Proficiency) test.² Students with an overall composite score above 3.0 would take the Discovery test this year. A score of 3.0 denotes a student's English language proficiency at Level 3 (out of 6)

²**ACCESS.** Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State (ACCESS) for ELLs is a standards-based, criterion referenced English language proficiency test designed to measure English language learners' social and academic proficiency in English.

in the Developing range. Out of 618 EL students in the district, 528 students scored above 3.0, which is approximately 85% of the EL population. This is important to note since, “prior to attainment of proficiency,³ care should be taken to appropriately interpret ELLs’ scores on any district-wide assessment being used” (ISBE Guidance Document 2012, p. 7).

Previously in 2008-2012, the district used Aimsweb for benchmarking and progress monitoring for all students in reading for Pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. Aimsweb measures available in Spanish, including the Medidas Incrementales de Destrezas Escenciales (MIDE) were used in the district’s pilot Kindergarten bilingual program from 2010-2012. The use of Aimsweb has since been limited to use for progress monitoring students in special education and for students in general education, identified through the problem solving process (based on teacher referral). Data from Aimsweb was previously used to determine which students would benefit from early literacy interventions. However, this system was not evaluated for its effectiveness or utility before it was discontinued.

The 2014-2015 school year marked the fourth consecutive school year without a benchmarking and progress monitoring plan in place for its English Learners. ELP teachers expressed a need for more data and interventions for their students. As an ELP teacher recently stated, “they didn’t want our students to take the test [Discovery] if it wasn’t in their native language because they didn’t want to compare apples to oranges, but now we have no apples!” This sentiment is increasingly shared by ELP program

³Effective January 1, 2014, a student must obtain an overall composite proficiency level of 5.0 as well as a reading proficiency level of 4.2 and a writing proficiency level of 4.2 on the ACCESS for ELLs to be considered English language proficient (ISBE Memo 6/27/13).

representatives during district Discovery data and Response to Intervention committee meetings.

The Discovery benchmark data alone was not sufficient to determine tiers and identify which students were at risk and should receive interventions and progress monitoring, particularly for the ELP population. The lack of benchmark and progress monitoring tools for their Spanish speaking ELP students left stakeholders at an impasse for effectively using data that rules out language barriers. These changes directly affected students in the English Learners program.

The original intention of this case study was to develop a benchmarking and progress monitoring plan in conjunction with ELP teachers. However an administrative decision was made to reinstate the formerly used Aimsweb Reading Spanish and Medidas Incrementales de Destrezas Escenciales (MIDE) measures for benchmarking bilingual kindergarten through second grade students without working through the feedback process with stakeholders. Often times English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and paraprofessionals “are marginalized from other teachers and excluded from discussing systemic decisions regarding their students” (Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010, p. 147). English testing teams were quickly and easily appointed while there was much less initiation, follow through and detailed planning for benchmarking the bilingual Spanish-speaking classes. While the English speaking classes had a designated testing team, the ELP teachers were left to benchmark their own students. Moreover, benchmark administration training for the bilingual teachers was to be held during their preparation period or after-school. ELP teachers also raised concern over the disruption of benchmarking within the classroom compared to the process the English classrooms were

privity to with a team of testers pulling students out of the classroom for a quieter setting. Concerns such as these only further warrant an action research approach and platform for ELP teachers to voice their opinions, feedback and concerns to be heard, shared, and more importantly, remedied.

Theoretical Framework

Action Research With Teachers

Action research consists of research planning, gathering and analyzing data, communicating and taking action. Some models describe these elements as including “a sense of purpose based on a problem, collecting, analyzing and interpreting data and some form of action that the teacher-researcher implements to solve a problem” (Mills, 2003). In its practicality, it can also be geared towards improving practice by developing solutions within a specific context. It also focuses on the need of understanding *how* things are happening, rather than *what* is happening.

Moreover, collaborative action research with teachers facilitates reflection and systematic inquiry to meet the needs of students (Taube, Polnick, & Minor Lane, 2006). This systematic inquiry includes two characteristics; it is carried out by and for the stakeholders taking action and the researcher is in a position to apply or execute the recommendations (Song, Anderson, & Kuvina, 2014). Most importantly, an improved and collaborative school climate results when teachers are empowered as stakeholders (Herner-Patnode, 2009). Thus, action research was chosen for its collaborative and catalytic form.

Research Question 1

The district enacted a plan using Aimsweb CBM benchmark measures in English and Spanish for general education and bilingual Kindergarten through second grade classes. Required information included input from stakeholders on areas for future development on this topic. This begged the following question: How can action research with English Learner Program teachers improve current benchmarking practices? How do stakeholders describe the history of the problem, the issues as they currently see it, and what are areas for future development? Members of the ELP would give their opinions on the challenges of benchmarking, barriers for current implementation and best practices for future development in terms of data collection for English Learners.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND RESULTS: RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Setting

Demographically, the school district contained a Hispanic student population that rose from 77% to 82% from 2010-2014, which has held at over three times the state average from 21% in 2010 to 25% in 2014, per the state Interactive School Report Card. In 2014, the percentage of English Learners climbed from 6% in 2010 to 26% of enrollment in 2014, compared to a state average of 8% in 2010 to 10% in 2014. The percentage of low-income students rose from 77% to 85% of enrollment over the course of four years, while the state averaged 45% in 2010 to 52% in 2014. The district served 943 English Learners in the ELP in 2013-2014; of which, 55 refused services.

The district's English Learners Program (ELP) has Pre-Kindergarten through third grade transitional bilingual education classrooms in all three elementary schools. Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten ELP classrooms are half day and are taught in their native language of Spanish (L1), with English as a Second Language (ESL) component. In first through third grade ELP classrooms, a native language Spanish teacher provides the student with native language instruction in literacy and math, with an ESL component through the content areas of science and social studies. The ELP also has sheltered classrooms for students who need extra language support and instruction in English. Students are serviced by an ESL teacher and are pulled out for science and social studies in fourth through fifth grade; in the middle school they are serviced by ESL teachers in

content areas. The philosophy of the district's ELP is to push students towards being independent readers, writers, speakers, and listeners in Spanish and English.

Participants

ELP teachers were identified as the stakeholder group whose voice was not heard nor solicited before key decisions were made that directly impacted them. Forty ELP teachers and program assistants in the district (grades Pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade) were eligible to participate in the organizational climate survey and/or to sign up for the focus group; while the director of the ELP was a subject in the interview. Five teachers, from two out of the three elementary schools, who served grades 1-5 with various levels of experience, participated in the focus group (see Table 1). These teachers had a range of background experience from serving ESL pull-out, general education, special education, and bilingual education.

Table 1

Focus Group Participants

Participant Pseudonyms	Position	Experience Level
Ms. Ocampo	Director of ELP	10 +
Ms. Robles	Teacher	7-9
Ms. Perales	Teacher	1-3
Mr. Mendez	Teacher	10+
Ms. Larin	Teacher	4-7
Ms. Estrada	Teacher	4-7

Out of the 40 eligible teachers and program assistants, 11 participated in the survey. Demographic information was requested by type of program and grade level served (see Figure 1).

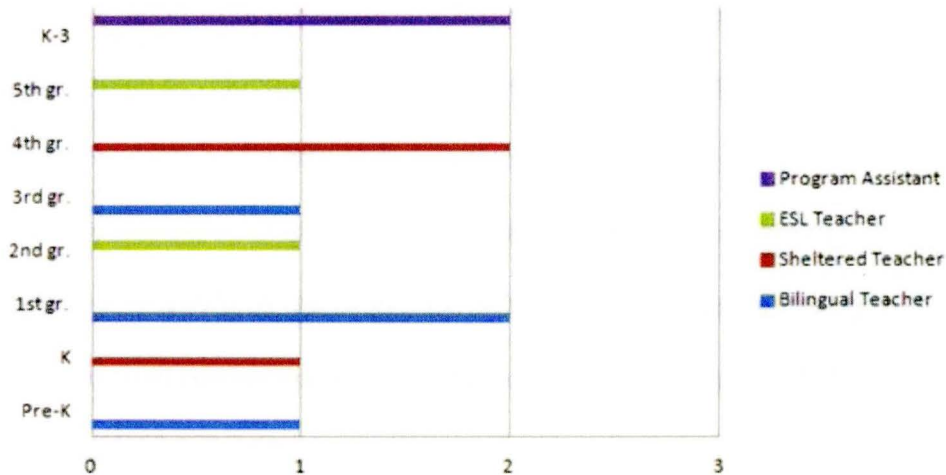


Figure 1. Number of Survey Participants by Grade and Type of Program

Instruments

Existing appraisal instruments and rubrics from the National Center on Response to Intervention and WIDA Consortium's Cultural and Linguistically Responsive RtI² manual were reviewed before incorporating topics and constructing questions within this original organizational climate survey. Topics ranged from benchmarking and progress monitoring practices, data-based decision making, services and resources, role of assessment and response to intervention for English Learners. Recruitment materials, consent forms, focus group, interview and survey questions and research proposal were reviewed by this author's dissertation committee and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Loyola University Chicago.

Organizational Climate Survey

Questions were constructed to mirror research objectives. A set of opening questions allowed participants to rate their knowledge base of benchmarking and progress monitoring practices. The remaining three sections inquired about the amount of professional development, level of involvement and structures in place. The survey questions contained a mix of fact, behavior and opinion questions framed in a variety of multiple choice, stem questions, open-ended responses and ratings. Furthermore, the participants answered questions and rated level of agreement on topics from a retrospective, current and prospective point of view (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; see Appendix A).

Focus Group

The focus group session contained an opening script, six questions, and one exit question (see Appendix B). The opening question required participants to describe the history of response to intervention for English Learners. The second question centered around the participant's experience with benchmarking and progress monitoring. These first two questions were think back type of questions and work to establish a historical context for participants. The next two questions ask for participants' opinions on how they would describe best practices for benchmarking and progress monitoring and where the district should focus technical assistance and professional development. Additionally, the participants were asked to describe any barriers to benchmarking and progress monitoring in the ELP. The last question solicited teachers for ways the district can improve practices with current structures in place. These questions were developed to obtain opinions on past, current and idyllic future practices from stakeholders (see

Appendix B). Finally, the focus group questions were piloted with a mock group before being administered.

Semi-Structured Interview

The semi-structured interview with the ELP director contained informed consent as well as the same focus group questions (see Appendix C). It allowed for a more in-depth interview with the director for a different perspective from the ELP teachers.

Procedure

Design

Consistent with case study design in action research, an organizational climate survey, focus group and a semi-structured interview were used to gather qualitative data. These methods provide qualitative data and were used to gain a deeper understanding about a topic. When focus groups are used to gather information before a program, it is called a needs assessment or a discussion of what it would really take to fix problems within the system (Krueger, 2000).

Organizational Climate Survey

An online survey was first disseminated to 40 ELP teachers and program assistants to gain insight on the issues that may affect data collection (see Appendix A). The online survey was created using the university approved program *Snap* and sent to forty ELP teachers from Pre-K to grade 5, using district email. Eleven teachers and program assistants responded to the survey. Participation consisted of anonymously answering survey questions based on agreement with issues pertaining to data collection practices (see Appendix A). The organizational climate survey is commonly used to

evaluate change initiatives because it can assess a wide variety of knowledge, skills, behaviors, attitudes and opinions (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009).

Focus Group

The use of focus groups in action research can be used as a forum for stakeholders to discuss issues and/or for researchers to elicit opinions or gather more information.

“Educators need the time and space to be able to have difficult discussions to examine their underlying assumptions about the languages, cultures, and experiences that their EL students bring to the school community and how they can integrate these student assets in ways that better prepare all students for our increasingly global world” (Brooks et al., 2010, p. 149).

One of the requisites for using a focus group, pertaining to the unique issue of this school district, “is a need to clarify subtle or complex issues involving multiple variables” (Tiberius, 2001, p. 74). For example, in an article by Brooks et al. (2010), the authors discussed how administrators began by talking about surface level issues in their work with EL students, to a deeper dialogue about power relations in school. Power relations in the context of decision-making, buy-in, and under-represented stakeholder groups, are critical in understanding the unique, contextual and underlying social justice issues in the present study.

Process. An email announcement regarding the purpose of using a focus group on the topic of benchmarking and progress monitoring was sent to all ELP teachers and program assistants for recruitment. This email also contained informed consent content so ELP teachers/program assistants were aware of the purpose of the focus group session. Participants included a convenience sample of five ELP teachers who volunteered to be a

part of a one-hour focus group session on district grounds (see Table 1). Participants were compensated by the school district at the hourly rate for committee work (Teachers: \$31; Program Assistants \$17). Withdrawing during the study did not affect compensation.

The focus group was held on March 17, 2015 for one hour after school at the district's Learning Center. A focus group script was read to all participants introducing this facilitator, giving an overview of the topic, reviewing verbal consent, and reviewing the ground rules; there were no questions from the participants. The first question asked participants to introduce themselves (by their number) and talk about how many years they had worked in the program and their hopes for the program (see Appendix A). Participants confidentially discussed topics related to benchmarking, progress monitoring, and data-based decision making in a focus group moderated by this facilitator. Participants shared their opinions and were believed to be candid and respectful in doing so.

Member checking. Member checking involves having a participant review the accuracy of the report (Creswell, 2005). This is an important step that helps determine if interpretations are fair and representative. An opportunity for member checking was embedded in an exit question, with the intent to gather qualitative information about limitations of this study, further implications or next steps (see Appendix B). In addition, a letter to participants and executive summary which included complete thematic findings was emailed to participants for their review and comments; there were no responses with edits (see Appendix D.).

Transcription and coding. The interview and focus group audio was transcribed by this researcher in the weeks following the sessions. Participant response, including

which participant (number) responded to each question, and the order that the participants responded was part of the focus group and interview transcripts (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008).

A data-driven code approach was used as themes and sub-themes were identified from iterative review of the focus group, interview and open ended survey responses. Themes and sub-themes were coded on the basis of related characteristics, an underlying construct, or a hierarchy (Boyatzis, 1998). Units of coding, was defined as the “raw data”, while the units of analysis was “the entity on which the interpretation will focus” (pp. 62-63). The units of analysis in this study was each participant’s response to questions in the focus group, interview, or survey; while the units of coding was the transcribed raw data that was assigned as a theme or sub theme. Themes were kept as close to the participant’s words and other times it was paraphrased.

The focus group and interview transcript, along with open-ended survey responses were uploaded to an Nvivo10 account for coding purposes. NVivo10 is a qualitative research software that can be used to interpret qualitative data, ranging from: coding of text to cluster analysis of word and coding similarity. NVivo10 was initially used to upload and review responses across questions in the focus group and interview. These questions became re-phrased as topics for the “tree nodes.” Themes were created as “nodes” and sub themes as “child nodes.” NVivo10 allowed for highlighting actual text in the transcripts to link to a particular theme and frequency counts of occurrences.

A qualitative iterative analysis of interconnecting themes was used to analyze this qualitative data across the focus group and semi-structured interview. An iterative analysis infers that the researcher will cycle back and forth between data collection and

analysis, returning for more information to fill in gaps in stories (Creswell, 2005).

Themes were reviewed periodically by this researcher and re-named or re-organized as needed. Moreover, constant comparatives, critical incidents, and key concepts were the analytic frameworks used to summarize complete thematic findings (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

Exclusion. Although the use of a fishbone diagram activity was initially proposed and approved as a follow up activity to the focus group, it was not initiated due to low turnout with the initial focus group and time constraints.

Semi-Structured Interview

The semi-structured interview with the ELP director allowed for qualitative data to be gathered along the same topic, separate from the teachers in the focus group so as to optimize likelihood of obtaining genuine responses. In action research, these examples of generating data are intended as an active intervention (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). The director of the ELP was interviewed using a semi-structured format including questions used in the focus group (see Appendix B).

Results: Research Question 1

Focus Group and Interview Themes

The focus group and interview contained the same questions, so data was analyzed among responses to each question and across both data sources. Additionally, open-ended responses for the organizational climate survey questions were coded and will be reported along with analysis of themes. In part, research question 1 pertains to identifying the history of the problem, the issues as stakeholders currently see it, and areas for future development.

History of RtI for ELs in district. Response to Intervention (RtI) initiatives began in the district in 2008, with a focus on general education. When focus group members were asked to describe the history of RtI for ELs in the district, two main themes emerged in the responses: limited staff support and understanding language versus academic issues (see Figure 2). Within the theme of limited staff support, there were two sub-themes: supporting the ELP in the district and teacher pressures. The theme given for limited staff support related to the amount of available staff designated to provide interventions or special education services in the ELP. For example, Ms. Estrada expressed that

in our classrooms seeing as the only resource or intervention that we have would be a program assistant, and when program assistants are pulled for other odd things to do in the school or for testing, that takes away the consistency of having set interventions with students.

Concurrently, supporting ELP in the district as a sub-theme referred to (bilingual) teachers advocating for EL students. The sub-theme of teacher pressures encompassed the stress of limited time; such as the feeling of taking time away from other students, making sure students had enough time to progress, not having time to meet with other teachers, and not waiting for a district approved solution.

A second theme centered on understanding language versus academic issues, with sub-themes related to referring students and language testing for students using the ACCESS test. The sentiments expressed noted a focus on academic issues for RtI and difficulty finding a balance for determining language development. Being able to discern this difference led to the sub-theme of referring students [for special education

evaluations]. The second issue that was identified was the paradox with how students who often had academic issues were more than likely not to pass the ACCESS language testing. Criticisms included the supports it has taken away from the time intensive test and the exit criteria that are seemingly perceived as unattainable for ELs with special education needs.

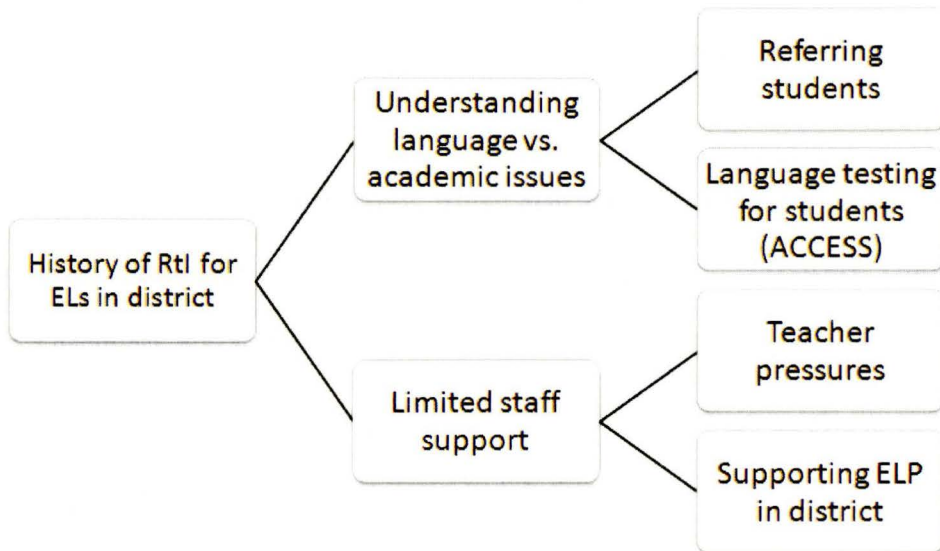


Figure 2. History of RtI for ELs in District Themes

Experience with benchmarking and progress monitoring. In light of the bilingual programs expanding and the new change with benchmarking and progress monitoring in Spanish being re-instated, it was important to gain perspectives on teachers' experience with it. One of the positive themes shared was student growth (see Figure 3). For example, Ms. Estrada commented “the positive thing about it is that I could see their growth and I can actually see what’s working for them and what’s not and I can adjust instruction to meet their needs or to help the growth.” Most teachers seemed

to comment on student growth as validation that their students were making progress and that interventions were working.

One negative aspect that was shared was the limited staff support for benchmarking. Ms. Estrada elaborated,

the negative aspect of that is that there are no bilingual reading specialists or other personnel in the building to help me with the benchmarking, so with a class full of 29, I lose a lot of instruction, especially in the winter time because I'm doing ACCESS as well.

A third theme that was discussed, which also serves as a history context, was that all teachers experienced the change of shifting from Aimsweb to Discovery. Unlike Aimsweb, Discovery was not available in Spanish. Teachers shared their opinion that the cut off score of 3.0 overall on the ACCESS determined by the district left several of their EL students out of the data; while Ms. Estrada felt that the use of the Aimsweb Spanish benchmarking was beneficial. While they expressed not wanting to frustrate students, Ms. Larin felt that taking the benchmark would be nice to have as a baseline or starting point, as well as give students an opportunity to see what was to be expected of them. Additional suggestions included lowering the district ACCESS cut off score to 2.0 and finding ways to benchmark oral language skills and writing.

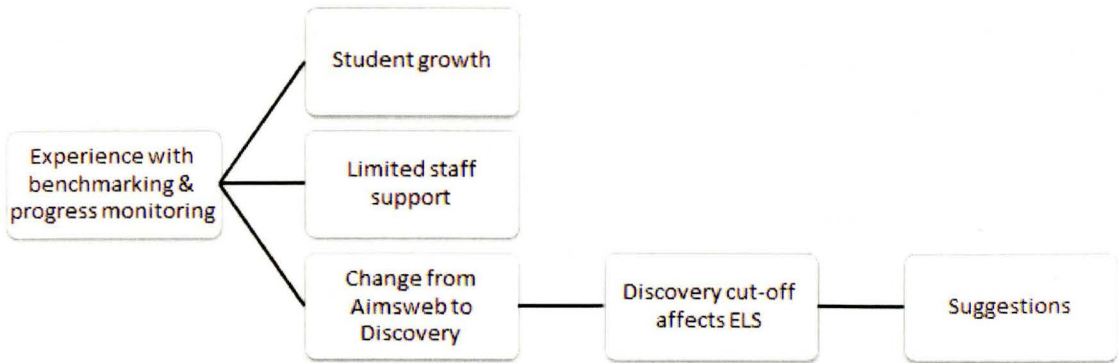


Figure 3. Experience With Benchmarking and Progress Monitoring Themes

Barriers to benchmarking and progress monitoring in Spanish. As the ELP program expanded and more classes are being offered in the native language of Spanish, it was important to discuss current or potential barriers to benchmarking and progress monitoring in Spanish. One major barrier to benchmarking in Spanish was the lack of equivalent assessment(s) in Spanish (see Figure 4). Mr. Mendez, a veteran teacher commented,

being able to read in Spanish is just as important as being able to read in English, so the fact that as a district we haven't found something that's equivalent to the Discovery reading section to help our bilingual students in Spanish, that's a barrier.

No other factors were reported as barriers in the focus group or interview.

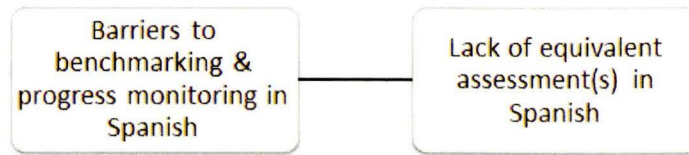


Figure 4. Barriers to Benchmarking and Progress Monitoring in Spanish Themes

Organizational Climate Survey and Interview Themes

The purpose of the organizational climate survey was to get self-ratings on issues pertaining to data collection, such as knowledge base, level of involvement, structures in place and professional development. This aspect focuses in part on current as well as idyllic practices. The organizational climate survey was sent to 40 ELP teachers and program assistants serving three elementary schools in the district. Eleven respondents completed the survey (28% response rate). As the sample size is relatively small, the results should be interpreted with caution.

Knowledge base of benchmarking and progress monitoring. Seven respondents strongly agreed and four respondents agreed that they felt knowledgeable about the purpose of benchmarking and progress monitoring. Furthermore, the definition of benchmarking and progress monitoring was included following the question, which offered a reference for respondents. When asked whether the benchmarking results accurately reflect literacy skills 55% of respondents agreed and 9% strongly agreed, while 18% of respondents disagreed and 18% were neutral (see Figure 5). Data-driven decision making was mostly ranked as neutral (64%), followed by agree (27%) and strongly agree (9%). Decision making was rated as mostly neutral (55%) and in agreement (45%) as being inclusive of all stakeholders. The topic of decision making was

taken from a rating from the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI) and included for self appraisal on decision making practices.

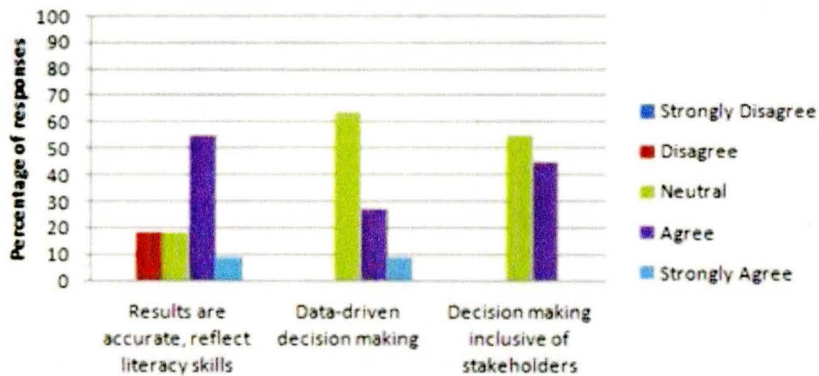


Figure 5. View of Benchmarking and Progress Monitoring, Survey Results

Level of involvement with data collection. During the reinstatement of Aimsweb, there was limited bilingual staff to assist in class-wide administration. Therefore, it was important to ask teachers their preference and rate their confidence level with using Aimsweb. Respondents rated that they agreed (36%), strongly agreed (36%), and were neutral (27%) for preferring involvement in benchmarking their own class (see Figure 6). Interestingly, respondents also felt the same way about having a testing team benchmark their class. Respondents agreed (36%), strongly agreed (36%), and were neutral (27%) towards feeling confident about administering benchmarking with their class (see Figure 7). More respondents agreed (73%) and strongly agreed (27%) towards feeling confident about progress monitoring. While Aimsweb benchmarking was reinstated, progress monitoring has remained an option in the district for students in the problem solving RtI process, which may have accounted for the prevalence of high ratings.

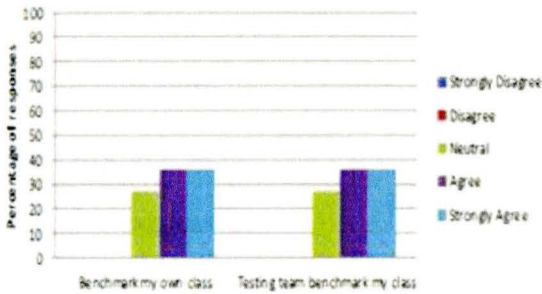


Figure 6. Preferences, Survey Results

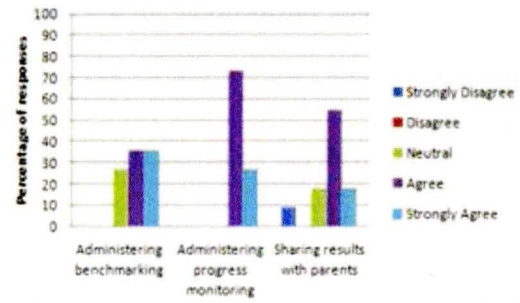


Figure 7. Confidence Levels, Survey Results

Necessary tools, resources, and skills for data collection. Following the topics of knowledge base and level of involvement, the next area to investigate was determining whether teachers felt they had the necessary tools, resources and skills to benchmark and progress monitor their EL students. The majority of respondents (45-64%) felt neutral about having necessary tools/materials, resources and skills; while 27% agreed they did have necessary tools, resources and skills (see Figure 8).

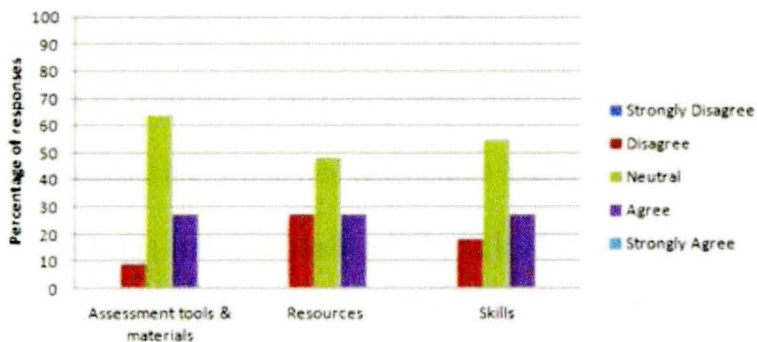


Figure 8. Necessary Tools, Resources and Skills for Benchmarking, Survey Results

This topic was reviewed in the context of an interview with the ELP director Ms. Ocampo. Related sentiments expressed areas that we were lacking, for example, interventions for ELs. Another example that tied into accountability pertained to monitoring progress monitoring implementation (see Figure 9). For instance “they’re doing a good job with all the interventions that they’re giving them but I think we need to

do a better job at making sure those interventions are the appropriate ones and that they're working.” On a similar matter, reviewing cohort data and understanding data sources (such as ACCESS results), or seeing how EL subgroups perform on assessments was also expressed.

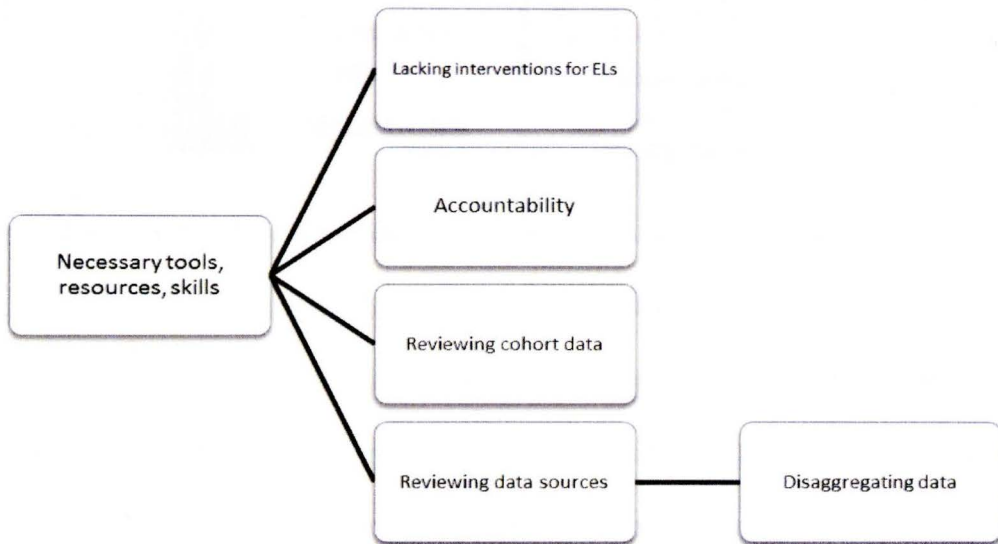


Figure 9. Necessary Tools, Resources and Skills Themes

Participation in training. Ten respondents reported that they participated in training prior to benchmarking, while one respondent had not. The training involved an individual session with this author (scheduled afterschool or during a teacher plan period) reviewing administration and data entry in Aimsweb. When asked what the likelihood of participating in future trainings, only 10% of respondents were a lot less likely to participate in future trainings, while 40% rated no difference (see Figure 10). Forty percent of respondents were somewhat more likely and 10% was a lot more likely to participate in training. Most respondents were satisfied with the amount and quality of training (see Figure 11).

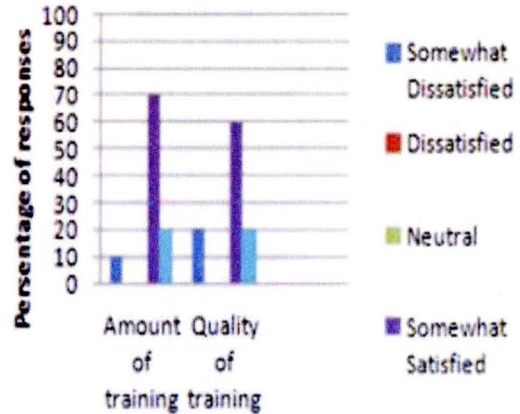
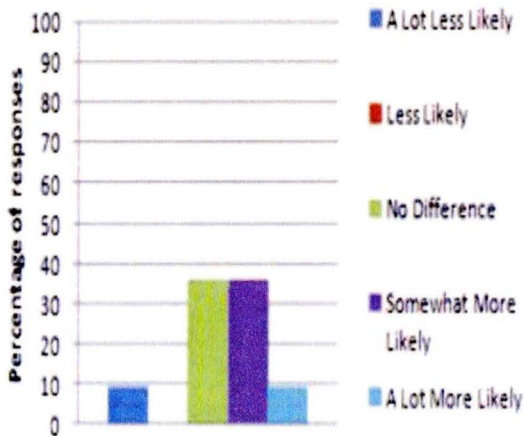


Figure 10. Likelihood of Future Participation Figure 11. Amount and Quality of Training

In terms of offering suggestions for improving the training experience in general, the topic was posed as an open ended response in the survey. Themes formulated as when, who, what and why (see Figure 12). Suggestions for the amount of training (when) listed ongoing training, for new hires and refresher courses, during an Institute Day where there was more flexibility for time. The theme of audience considerations (who) described giving training in small groups and for all staff. The theme of focus of training (what) was based on a suggestion to focus on how to administer benchmarking to the bilingual students, which was a notion expanded during a survey question regarding professional development. Likewise, one suggestion was given by the focus group participant Mr. Mendez to see results of students that have been benchmarked for several years and acknowledge the growth that has been made from students in our district/school as opposed to other students. This target may encourage and motivate teachers to value such a program and its effects on students intervention needs.

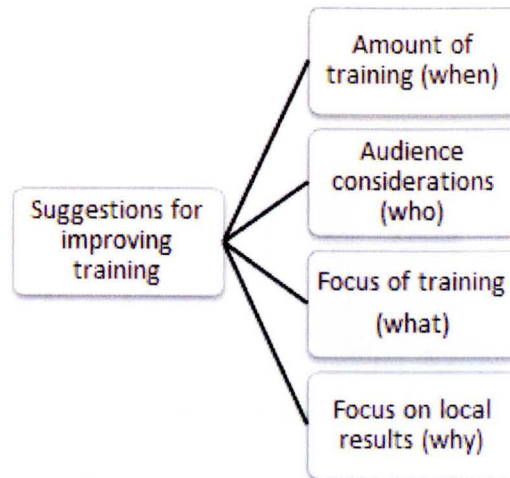


Figure 12. Suggestions for Improving Training, Survey Themes

Professional development. After probing about the amount, quality and likelihood of future participation of training, the focus of future training and professional development was elicited. Overall, professional development on data analysis was rated first, followed by Aimsweb features and data collection (see Figure 13). The highest rated area for focusing training was on reviewing individual results, followed by administering benchmark probes and reviewing class results, and lastly entering data (see Figure 14). Respondents had an opportunity to name another category; two categories were listed: using DIBELS Retelling probe instead of Aimsweb MIDE probes and supporting ELP in the district, of which, “the impression is that the Bilingual/EL staff have strong ties and supports within the department, but not within the school as a whole.” So it appears professional development to familiarize staff with the ELP and strengthen ties within the school was recommended.

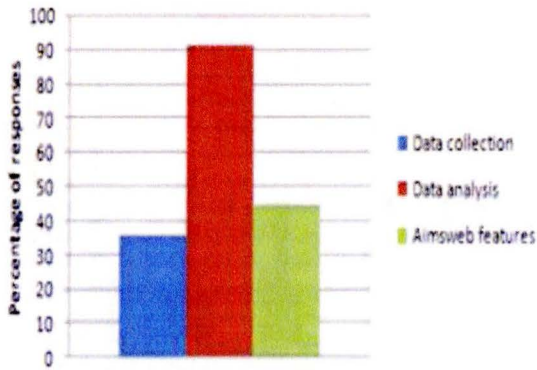


Figure 13. Professional Development

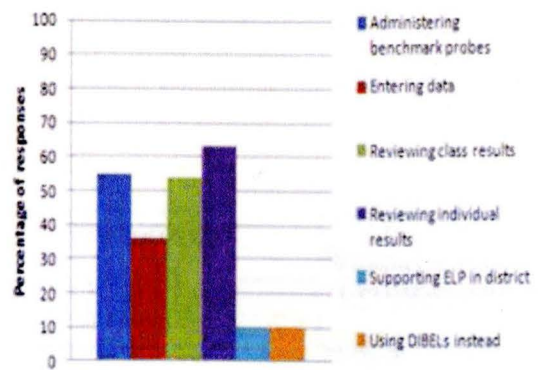


Figure 14. Focus on Training

Structures in place for discussion. In conjunction with data collection, there must be structures in place that allow for discussion of data. About half of the respondents felt neutral (55%) about having structures in place to discuss benchmarking results, while 18% disagreed, and 27% agreed (see Figure 15). A similar trend occurred in the ratings for structures that allow for discussion of student progress of ELs and discussion of ELP teacher concerns. Ratings for structures to ensure implementation accuracy of benchmarking was mostly agree (55%) to neutral (36%). This topic was raised during the interview and one critical incident sub theme that surfaced was the removal of a monthly Wednesday professional development series that was geared towards or for the ELP, which seemed to impact a former structure in place for the ELP (see Figure 16).

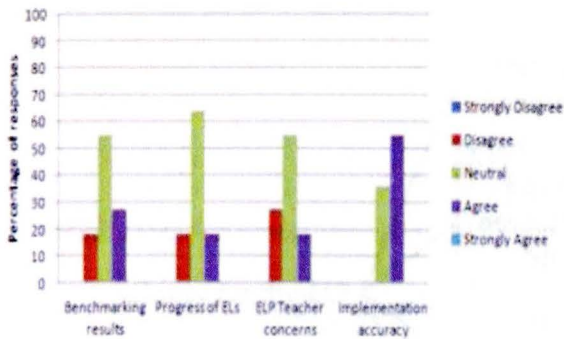


Figure 15. Structures, Survey Results

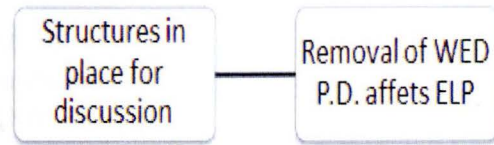


Figure 16. Structures, Interview Theme

Hopes for the ELP. The next section pertains to idyllic future practices, which required interview and focus group participants to describe their hopes for the program, their vision of best practices for data collection and ways to improve current practices. Themes pertaining to hopes for the ELP included instructional accountability, equivalent assessments in Spanish, clarity for the direction of the program, and preparing students (see Figure 17). Instructional accountability, a theme from the interview, encompassed a current practice such as instructional rounds, where administrators conducted classroom observations suggestions. It also included ideas for future practices such as discussions with teachers about their student data and holding principals accountable for instruction and supporting their teachers. Good assessments and disaggregating data was a theme from the interview, while having equivalent assessments in Spanish was relayed as a future hope for the ELP; it was also mentioned as a topic under barriers by focus group members.

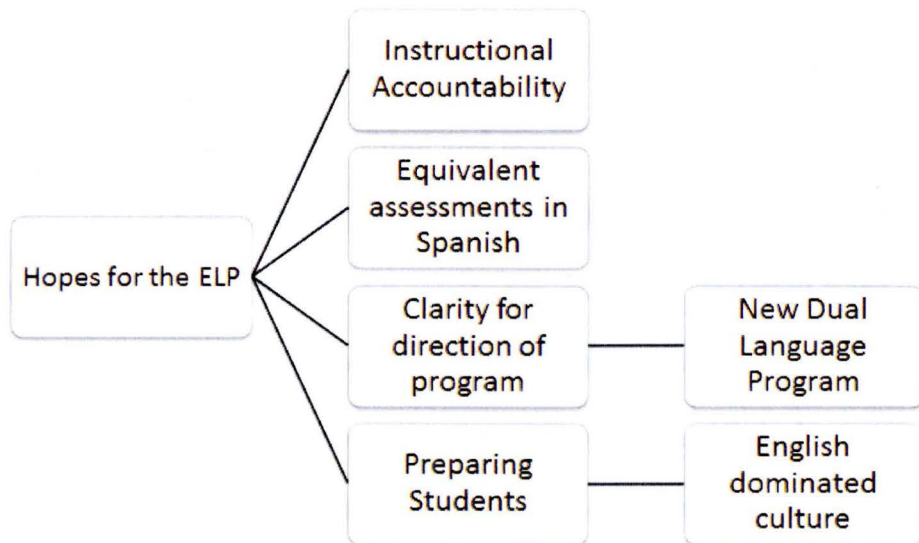


Figure 17. Hopes for the English Learners Program Themes

Clarity for the direction of where the ELP program was headed was raised by four members of the focus group, with 1-10 years of experience, in regards to the overall goal of the program for students with IEPs and for ELs, “because as of right now it’s not really bi-literacy, seeing as our students transition into like an English dominated program.”

Clarity was also tied to the sub-theme of a new dual language program the district is researching. Mr. Mendez, Ms. Robles, Ms. Perales and Ms. Estrada expressed eagerness to devote time to the new program and to learn how it would fit in the district and benefit students.

Preparing students was a theme described in both focus group and interview and expressed by all participants. This theme expressed ensuring the program would benefit students so they could strive and have the right tools, be prepared for benchmark assessments, and become college-ready. Of note was a sub theme that reflected EL

students being able to thrive in an English dominated culture while also noting that currently in the ELP, “students transition into like an English dominated program,” Ms. Estrada.

Best practices for benchmarking and progress monitoring. The first theme listed for ideal best practices was reviewing the data, which was part of ensuring that teachers were looking at the benchmark results and progress monitoring when applicable (see Figure 18). Accountability, a second theme from the interview related to monitoring fidelity of the intervention(s) delivered. Accountability was then linked to two sub themes, teacher involvement and teacher pressures. Teacher involvement in benchmarking and progress monitoring described comments made by participants who preferred to hear their own students read during benchmarking. Continuing progress monitoring that a previous teacher initiated and not feeling a sense of control over who should get progress monitored were the sentiments that described teacher pressures.

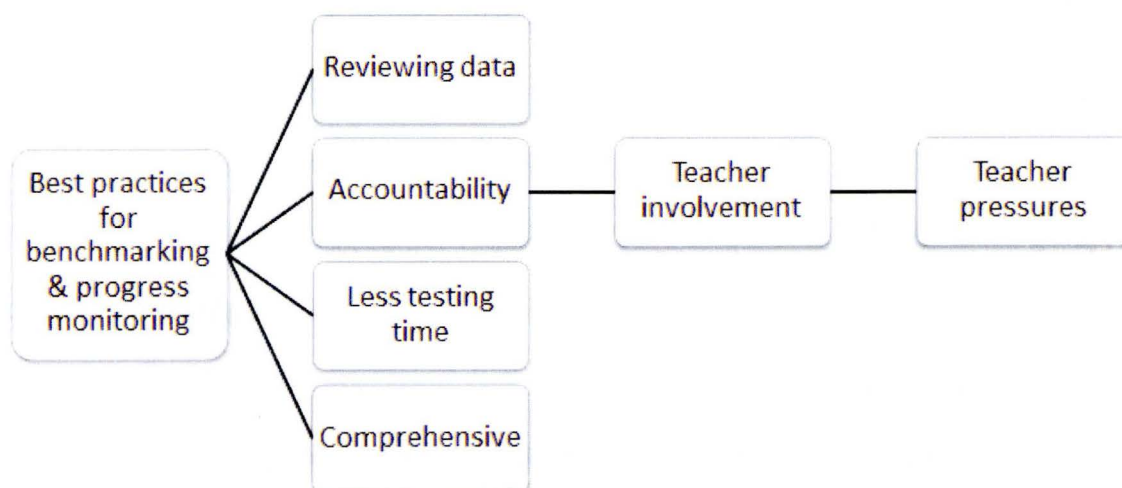


Figure 18. Best Practices for Benchmarking and Progress Monitoring Themes

Two themes that surfaced in the focus groups were less testing time and comprehensive assessments. Ms. Robles commented about wanting “less testing but to test the same things.” Mr. Mendez talked about the district’s decision to omit test #2 of four from the Discovery benchmark assessments, and how they were still able to see growth from test 1 to test 3. On a somewhat contrary note to less testing time, the next theme was comprehensiveness. This was worded by Ms. Larin as assessing “reading, writing, language/speaking and writing, and in a reasonable amount of time, for all of our ELs and possibly in both languages.”

Improving current practices. Finally, the question of how to improve current practice was posed to both focus group members and the interviewee (see Figure 19). Professional development was a theme that expressed a desire to stay on a topic longer. For example, Ms. Larin expressed

we touch on things but then we just move along and instead if we could just concentrate on that for like three meetings in a row. It feels like we don’t have enough time to really look deeply into them all the time to you know, to just use them towards serving our students.

Two sub themes emerged during the discussion of this topic in the focus group, understanding language versus academic issues and the role of ACCESS testing. Understanding the differences between language and academic issues was raised previously by focus group members, while this time it was raised by the interviewee in the context of overcoming the excuse of using language as a barrier to problem solving and trying interventions for ELP students. The role of ACCESS testing and its

implications for students being able to take the Discovery test was concerning to most of the participants. For instance, Ms. Estrada explained

I feel the district really needs to find another tool to assess our ELs that do not qualify for the district wide benchmark now because I do feel like there's just this huge data piece missing that would really help myself and all the other teachers who have these students, you know who cannot get assessed, with figuring out if things are working or if they're doing best practices in the classroom or if there's something else that needs to be done or if there's other resources out there to help us get our students to where they need to be.

Likewise, professional development was linked to another primary theme, collaboration with other general education teachers, but more specifically, collaboration with other bilingual teachers was viewed as important. Mr. Mendez stated,

I think as a district it would be nice for all the EL teachers including the bilingual teachers to actually sit together. There's one thing comparing data with general education teachers in the classroom but if we could compare our Discovery results as EL teachers so we can see how as a district, we're doing and figure out what's going on and discuss what is one teacher doing that another teacher's doing for EL students that could be quite supportive, maybe on like an Institute Day or different day or so forth.

Accountability was a theme expressed during the interview and was similar to previous themes related to instructional accountability. While it was a response to this particular question, it was a noteworthy theme expressed in other questions.



Figure 19. Improving Current Practices Themes

Analytic Framework

An iterative analysis of interconnecting themes was used to analyze this qualitative data across the organizational climate survey, focus groups, and semi-structured interview. The following major themes will be discussed from an analytic framework of constant comparatives, critical incidents, and key concepts (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

Constant Comparatives

Relationships between ideas or concepts, or patterns in the data describe the framework of constant comparatives (Krueger & Casey, 2009). It is typically used to develop a theory or identify patterns or trends as these patterns are arranged in a relationship to each other. Understanding language versus academic issues, strengthening data analysis skills for teachers, collaborating with other district bilingual teachers, and instructional accountability were four major themes that appeared throughout the results as a pattern. These four “constants” describe the developing pattern of “must haves”

identified by the stakeholders mainly in response to questions relating to historical context, professional development, and areas for future development.

Critical Incidents

Important critical events that shaped decisions or actions and emotional forces that surround the incident describe critical incidents (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Critical incidents as a framework can be used to develop a theory, to identify important factors related to success or failure of a program and/or to identify infrequent but important triggering events (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Two critical events described by the stakeholders included the change from Aimsweb to Discovery as the benchmark assessment and removing the Wednesday monthly professional development series for ELP. These events sparked reactions about loss of adequate data for ELs and loss of a structure for collaboration and professional development.

Krueger and Casey (2009) explain this framework as focusing less on patterns and more on the emotional forces that surround the event or the logic and rationale offered by the participants. For example, the stakeholders strongly expressed a need for clarity about the direction of the program, specifically in regards to the new dual language program. This future event identified by stakeholders may represent underlying emotional forces from anxiousness to eagerness as well as power relations, such as transparency within the ELP program.

Although not a critical incident but an inert circumstance perceived by the stakeholders is the lack of an equivalent, or rather, an available assessment in Spanish. Interestingly, no other barriers were named besides this when asked to describe barriers to assessment in Spanish. Although this topic did not produce other responses, it may still

warrant a deeper conversation and exploration about assessment from stakeholder's perspective. These critical incidents reflect infrequent occurrences, but sparked changes in reduction of opportunities to collaborate, diminished data collection and assessment, and uncertainty about a prospective program.

Key Concepts

Factors or core ideas that are of central importance and lead to an understanding of how participants view a topic describe key concepts (Krueger & Casey, 2009). This may include important ideas, experiences, or preferences that illuminate the study. For example, limited ELP staff support to assist with benchmarking and interventions was expressed as central importance and should be noted as such as the levels of support offered and available in the district is not equitable. Contrary to this notion, most teachers that participated in this study preferred involvement with benchmarking their own class. These types of preference will be of importance on a larger scale as the district assesses whether or not to expand benchmarking to other grades and plans for future trainings on Aimsweb MIDE benchmarking administration.

Teacher pressures with problem solving under Response to Intervention (RtI) initiatives reflected experiences teachers shared with feeling pressure to continue interventions and feeling a lack of control for decision making. This type of pressure felt by the ELP teachers is important in understanding perceptions towards RtI initiatives. These key concepts can be used to address problems within the problem solving process.

Discussion and Implications: Research Question 1

The qualitative findings in this case study appear to be supported by implications from previous studies on the role(s) of bilingual education teachers regarding aspects of

collaboration (Ortiz et al., 2011; Roache et al., 2010). Major themes such as aspects of collaboration, topics for professional development and system wide resources for bilingual teachers continue to be discussed in the context of bilingual education.

Opportunities for collaboration, professional development, and resources can ultimately impact service delivery for students (Roache et al., 2010).

The current case study used three qualitative approaches to gather opinions and feedback from a representative sample of stakeholders. Moreover, implications can be surmised from themes when considering resources and structures for staff to facilitate data-based decision making for English Learners. In general, the types of themes gathered from inquiry data via an interview, focus group, and survey may be applicable towards needs assessment purposes or evaluation of a new process. Including a range of stakeholders, from program assistants to a director in the inquiry process through a focus group, survey or interview medium provided different opportunities to share experiences, express concerns and ideas. Thus, rich, qualitative data was gained from questions that illuminated issues and emotions that may not have otherwise been captured using one method, such as using a survey alone.

The focus of problem identification by stakeholders within this project aligns mostly with dialogic and process validity, which involves a generation of new knowledge (Herr & Anderson, 2005). In the future, school districts can benefit from a multi-method inquiry approach to gather the most recent and applicable information. This new knowledge can be used to identify areas to address in future professional development topics or when considering structures for staff to facilitate data-based decision making, identified in an action plan. Although the focus is concentrated on opinions of a minority

of the ELP staff, it serves to increase internal validity in action research based on inferences drawn from a specific context and data. Conversely, due to its limited focus, findings may not be generalized to a larger demographic, thus reducing its external validity or level of transferability. Overall, themes in the present study were similar to themes in recent research germane to bilingual education, which stressed the importance of providing administrative support, training, and time for collaboration, resources, and professional development (Koyama & Menken, 2013; Ortiz et al., 2011; Roache et al., 2010).

Main findings from this case study suggested several areas for improvement. Three main areas were gleaned from the themes to direct considerations for an action plan: structures in place, resources, and professional development topics (see Figure 20). Each area contains suggestions for improvement inspired by the major themes depicted within the analytic framework of constant comparatives, critical incidents, and key concepts. Based on focus group, interview, and survey themes, a structural lack of access to fellow bilingual teachers impeded collaboration. In addition, a lack of bilingual staff support for intervention delivery and benchmarking assistance was attributed to limited personnel and professional resources. Lastly, topics for professional development stressed the need to develop proficiency with understanding differences between language and academic issues for ELs and strengthening data analysis skills for teachers. Findings such as these can aid in developing an action plan for a district. Items within this action plan were partly specific to the district in this study and partly inspired by broader themes supported in the literature on focus groups with teachers, English

language acquisition, structures, professional development and resources in bilingual education (Koyama & Menken, 2013; Ortiz et al., 2011; Roache et al., 2010).

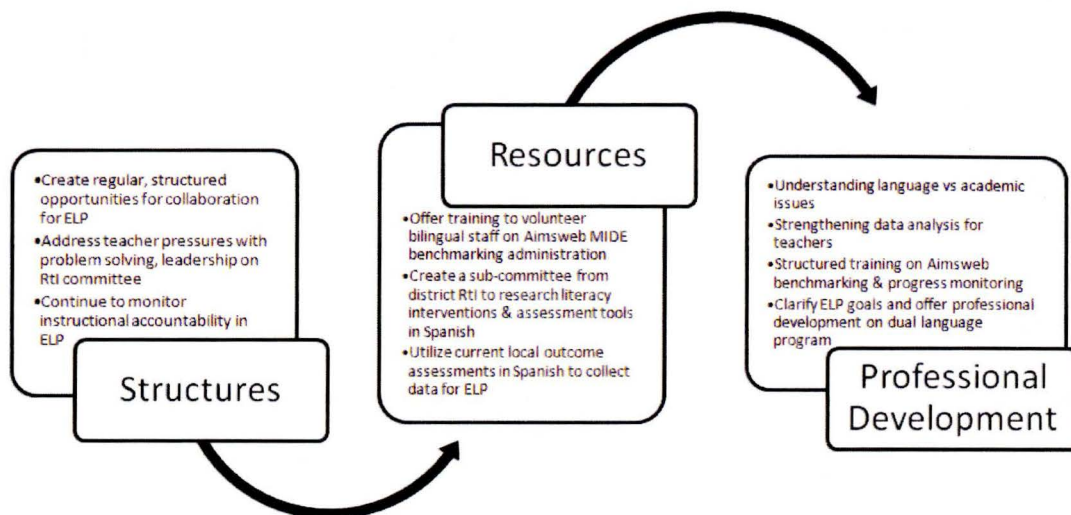


Figure 20. Action Plan

Reflection

A unique aspect of this case study was the dual role of the researcher as bilingual school psychologist turned action researcher within the district. As an action researcher, roles incorporated interpretation of focus group, interview and survey responses, advocating for the ELP, and biographer of the ELP. Interpretation of qualitative themes required impartiality, neutrality, and iterative review. Action researchers are interested in “outcomes that go beyond knowledge generation” (Herr & Anderson, 2005 p. 49). Therefore generating premises for an action plan was important for usefulness and applicability.

In action research meta-learning or “learning about learning” encompasses a cycle of reflection critical within the cycles of action research (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 13). During content reflection, the researcher thinks about the issues and what is

happening. As I have initially described the problem as I know it, I have reflected on the content that I have had familiarity with, as the district's sole bilingual school psychologist. As I acquired data from the stakeholders, much of my own assumptions, such as *assuming teachers would prefer others to benchmark their class*, were challenged. This phenomenon describes a type of premise reflection where underlying assumptions and perspectives are critiqued (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014).

Reflecting *for* action or an anticipatory reflection was used to record thoughts and ideas in preparing for actions, such as rationale for choice of location (Parent Teacher Learning Center on campus), rationale for piloting a focus group with colleagues to rationale for seating arrangements (u-shaped) for the focus group session. Reflection *on* action, such as following an event like the semi-structured interview, was used to record my impressions and reactions following an event. For example, upon transcribing my interview I realized when I read the question I tended to unnecessarily elaborate on the question. This led me to include a power point with the questions posted for the focus group so that I would remain on the script when reading the question and the participants could read it again as they thought of their response.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research: Research Question 1

Organizational Climate Survey

Limitations with the survey related mainly to response rate and neutral reporting. The organizational climate survey was e-mailed to forty ELP teachers and program assistants from a secure approved survey site, however only eleven staff members responded. With a response rate of 28%, it is not possible to know at this point in time how the remaining 72% of the staff members would have responded. It is possible that a

paper version of the survey distributed following an ELP program meeting could have yielded a higher response rate.

In the survey responses, a majority of responses fell in the neutral category. A future version of the survey may omit the neutral option to oblige respondents to rate their agreement or disagreement with each statement, more candidly. Nevertheless, the preponderance of neutral responses serves as a baseline and an opportunity to make major improvements in those areas.

Focus Group

The main limitations for the focus group related to recruitment and number of focus groups. Volunteers for the only focus group session came from two out of three elementary schools. Attempts were made to improve interest in participating and a stipend was offered. It is also unclear to what extent the stipend enticed volunteers to participate more actively or whether there was an inherent aspiration to share perspectives. Although the data was compelling, a limited number of views were obtained representing all three elementary schools in the district. Additionally, the district has one middle school which was excluded in this study. Therefore the opinions about benchmarking and progress monitoring practices for ELs at the middle school, is unknown at this time. Future studies may wish to include the middle school teachers in the focus group and survey.

Semi-Structured Interview

One major limitation with interviewing the director of the English Learners Program was obtaining only one administrator point of view. In the future, it would be prudent to include multiple administrators, such as principals, director of curriculum,

director of special education, assistant superintendent and superintendent, using a medium that would yield the most candid responses.

Summary

Overall themes were coded directly from the data from questions posed under a historical context, current practices and idyllic best practices. Recognizing structures that need to be in place to facilitate collaboration/accountability, ameliorating limited resources, and identifying areas to target for professional development for our ELP program are three components to a proposed action plan. Next steps in this case study about data collection practices include taking a closer look at the archival benchmarking data itself.

CHAPTER IV

METHODS AND RESULTS: RESEARCH QUESTION 2

Were the district's previous benchmark measures, Medidas Incrementales de Destrezas Escenciales (MIDE) predictive of student performance on Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT) and development of English language proficiency? Analyzing previous, current and potential utility of CBMs would be pertinent in this study. A review of archival MIDE data was compared against 2013-2014 ISAT data (categories of Academic Warning, Below Standards, Meets Standards, Exceeds Standards) and ACCESS English Language Proficiency scores, condensed into three categories: Entering-Emerging, Developing-Entering, Bridging-Reaching. Archival data was used to analyze a sample of Aimsweb benchmark MIDE data from the bilingual Kindergarten class during the 2010-2011 school year, with the intention of analyzing the validity of its predictive measures for students identified as at risk.

Data Sources

Archival data was obtained from an Aimsweb historical report. The sample in the present study included students that were assessed using the MIDE measures from a bilingual Kindergarten class during the 2010-2011 school year; ISAT data (Spring 2014) was obtained from access to Illinois Interactive Report Card (IRC) data; ACCESS data was obtained from reviewing district ACCESS records (Spring 2014).

The MIDE data was collected and stored in an archival Aimsweb file for the year 2010-2011. During the 2010-2011 year, Aimsweb National Norms indicated a wide range of Kindergarten students in the Spring National Norm sample (see Table 2 below).

Table 2

MIDE Aimsweb National Norms Kindergarten Data 2010-2011

Test Name	Number of Kindergarteners 10-11 National Norms
MIDE Letter Naming Fluency	27,468
MIDE Letter Sound Fluency	33,485
MIDE Syllable Segmentation Fluency	21,841
MIDE Syllable Reading Fluency	21,830
MIDE Spelling	4,950

Within the MIDE data set, before comparing subsequent progress on ISAT and ACCESS performance, the number of students in each tier ranged across MIDE tests (see Figure 21).

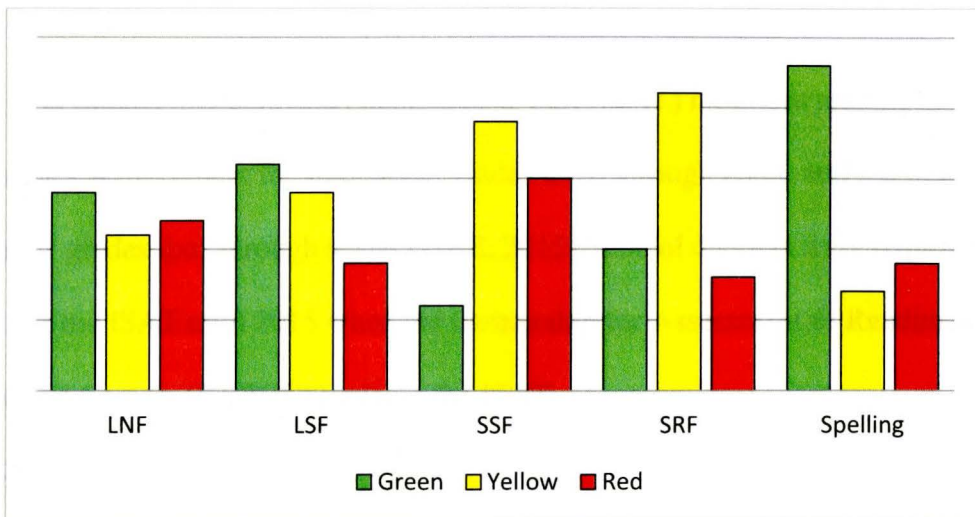


Figure 21. Number of Students Across Tiers in MIDE Spring 2011 Data

Description of Measures

MIDE

The Aimsweb MIDE archival benchmark measures that were used during the 2010-2011 school year included: Letter Naming Fluency, Letter Sound Fluency, Syllable Segmentation Fluency, Syllable Reading Fluency and Spelling; all benchmark measures were timed for one minute each. During benchmarking, students were asked to read the upper and lower case letters row by row for Letter Naming Fluency (LNF). Students were then asked to say the sound for each letter when shown a page with upper and lowercase letters for the Letter Sound Fluency (LSF) probe. Next the students were asked to recite the word that was presented orally, with a clear emphasis on separating each syllable. Then students were shown a page with syllables and asked to read each syllable or individual phoneme. Finally, students were asked to spell syllables or words that were orally presented to them every 20 seconds for two minutes (Magit & Shinn, 2015, retrieved from Aimsweb).

ISAT

The Illinois Standardized Achievement Test (ISAT) measures reading and mathematics achievement for students in grades three through eight, and measures science for grades four through seven (ISBE, 2015). School districts were required to administer the ISAT until 2015 when the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) replaces the ISAT.

ACCESS

Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State (ACCESS) for ELLs is a standards-based, criterion referenced English language proficiency test designed to measure English language learners' social and academic proficiency in English. It “assesses social and instructional English as well as the language associated with language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies within the school context across the four language domains” (ISBE, 2015).

Design

A Chi-square category within-group comparison of (2010-2011) Aimsweb MIDE rankings, ISAT standings (Spring 2014) and ACCESS English language proficiency composite scores (Spring 2014) was used to analyze archival data. A cross tabulation chart was used to show the frequency count across categories. The ISAT cross tabulation table contained four categories: Warning, Below, Meets, and Exceeds; while the ACCESS cross tabulation table contained six categories merged into three: Entering-Emerging, Developing-Expanding, Bridging-Reaching.

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

The students were categorized as tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3 based on their Aimsweb MIDE benchmark scores from the Spring of 2011. Students in the green tier 1 are considered to have performance in the Average range or 50th percentile; students in the yellow tier 2 fall within the 25th percentile; students in the red tier 3 fall within the 10th percentile are considered At Risk and may require more frequent progress monitoring and intervention. The independent variables of Aimsweb MIDE scores were entered by tier and compared against the dependent variables of ISAT results from 2013-2014 and next by ACCESS English language proficiency level composite scores from 2013-2014. A random sample of data was not used due to limited archival data. Student data was coded using a unique system by this researcher to protect confidentiality.

Triangulation

Triangulation involves corroborating evidence from different sources, types of data and different methods or tools for collecting data. For research question 1, three data sources were used, which included an online survey available to Pre-kindergarten through fifth grade ELP teachers and program assistants, a focus group with ELP teachers, and an interview with ELP director. Additionally, for the second research question, three data sources included archival data of previously used benchmarking data, ISAT test results and ACCESS English language proficiency scores. The types of data triangulated ranged from analysis of themes gathered from inquiry data via interviews and focus groups to descriptive statistics and may be applicable for needs assessment purposes or evaluation of a new process.

Results: Research Question 2

Descriptive Statistics

Cross tabulations and chi-square tests can be used to look for relationships between two variables. In this case the relationship between the dependent variables ACCESS English Language Proficiency levels or ISAT rankings were compared against the independent variables, tiers within MIDE Aimsweb measures. These variables are categorical so the data is nominal. Inferential statistics was used to analyze categorical independent and dependent variables from a sample to draw conclusions about an unknown population and whether the relationship among variables is much greater than or less than we would expect for the total population (Creswell, 2005). This type of analysis may aid in answering the question whether and to what extent the MIDE data was predictive of student performance on standardized testing (ISAT) and English language proficiency for Spanish-speaking English Learners.

MIDE and ISAT

Table 3

Letter Naming Fluency and ISAT Ranking

Spring 2011 Kindergarten MIDE Measure: LNF		ISAT ranking, Spring 2014 Third grade year		
Number/percentage of students	Exceeds Standards	Meets Standards	Below Standards	Academic Warning
Tier 1 (Green)	0	1	11	0
Tier 2 (Yellow)	1	2	4	0
Tier 3 (Red)	0	0	7	2

Chi square. A chi-square test was performed and no relationship was found between ISAT ranking and Letter Naming Fluency Aimsweb tiers, $\chi^2(6, N=39) = 11.01$, $p = .09$.

Table 4

Letter Sound Fluency and ISAT Ranking

Spring 2011 Kindergarten MIDE Measure: LSF		ISAT ranking, Spring 2014 Third grade year		
Number/percentage of students	Exceeds Standards	Meets Standards	Below Standards	Academic Warning
Tier 1 (Green)	0	2	10	0
Tier 2 (Yellow)	1	1	8	0
Tier 3 (Red)	0	0	4	2

Chi-square. A chi-square test was performed and no relationship was found between ISAT ranking and Letter Sound Fluency Aimsweb tiers, $\chi^2(6, N=39) = 10.32$, $p = .11$.

Table 5

Syllable Segmentation Fluency and ISAT Ranking

Spring 2011 Kindergarten MIDE Measure: SSF		ISAT ranking, Spring 2014 Third grade year		
Number/percentage of students	Exceeds Standards	Meets Standards	Below Standards	Academic Warning
Tier 1 (Green)	1	0	2	0
Tier 2 (Yellow)	0	1	12	0
Tier 3 (Red)	0	2	8	2

Chi-square. A chi-square test was performed and a very nearly statistical relationship was found between ISAT ranking and Syllable Segmentation Fluency Aimsweb tiers, $x^2(6, N=39) = 12.41, p = .053$.

Table 6

Syllable Reading Fluency and ISAT Ranking

Spring 2011 Kindergarten MIDE Measure: SRF		ISAT ranking, Spring 2014 Third grade year		
Number/percentage of students	Exceeds Standards	Meets Standards	Below Standards	Academic Warning
Tier 1 (Green)	0	2	6	0
Tier 2 (Yellow)	1	1	12	0
Tier 3 (Red)	0	0	4	2

Chi-square. A chi-square test was performed and no relationship was found between ISAT ranking and Syllable Reading Fluency Aimsweb tiers, $x^2(6, N=39) = 10.88, p = .09$.

Table 7

Spelling and ISAT Ranking

Spring 2011 Kindergarten MIDE Measure: Spelling		ISAT ranking, Spring 2014 Third grade year		
Number/percentage of students	Exceeds Standards	Meets Standards	Below Standards	Academic Warning
Tier 1 (Green)	1	3	13	0
Tier 2 (Yellow)	0	0	5	0
Tier 3 (Red)	0	0	4	2

Chi-square. A chi-square test was performed and no relationship was found between ISAT ranking and Spelling Aimsweb tiers, $\chi^2(6, N=39) = 10.33, p = .11$.

MIDE and ACCESS

Table 8

Letter Naming Fluency and ACCESS Rankings

Spring 2011 Kindergarten MIDE Measure: LNF	ACCESS composite, Spring 2014 Third grade year		
	Composite Level 5-6 Bridging- Reaching	Composite Level 3-4 Developing- Expanding	Composite Level 1-2 Entering- Emerging
Tier 1 (Green)	4	6	0
Tier 2 (Yellow)	3	2	0
Tier 3 (Red)	2	5	1

Chi-square. A chi-square test was performed and no relationship was found between ACCESS categories and Letter Naming Fluency Aimsweb tiers, $\chi^2(4, N=39) = 3.16, p = .53$.

Table 9

Letter Sound Fluency and ACCESS Rankings

Spring 2011 Kindergarten MIDE Measure: LSF	ACCESS composite, Spring 2014 Third grade year		
	Composite Level 5-6	Composite Level 3-4	Composite Level 1-2
Number/percentage of students	Bridging- Reaching	Developing- Expanding	Entering- Emerging
Tier 1 (Green)	5	5	0
Tier 2 (Yellow)	2	5	0
Tier 3 (Red)	2	3	1

Chi-square. A chi-square test was performed and no relationship was found between ACCESS categories and Letter Sound Fluency Aimsweb tiers, $\chi^2(4, N=39) = 3.78, p = .44$.

Table 10

Syllable Segmentation Fluency and ACCESS Rankings

Spring 2011 Kindergarten MIDE Measure: SSF	ACCESS composite, Spring 2014 Third grade year		
	Composite Level 5-6	Composite Level 3-4	Composite Level 1-2
Number/percentage of students	Bridging- Reaching	Developing- Expanding	Entering- Emerging
Tier 1 (Green)	1	1	0
Tier 2 (Yellow)	5	7	0
Tier 3 (Red)	3	5	1

Chi-square. A chi-square test was performed and no relationship was found between ACCESS categories and Syllable Segmentation Fluency Aimsweb tiers, $\chi^2(4, N=39) = 1.74, p = .78$.

Table 11

Syllable Reading Fluency and ACCESS Rankings

Spring 2011 Kindergarten MIDE Measure: SRF	ACCESS composite, Spring 2014 Third grade year		
	Composite Level 5-6 Bridging- Reaching	Composite Level 3-4 Developing- Expanding	Composite Level 1-2 Entering-Emerging
Tier 1 (Green)	5	2	0
Tier 2 (Yellow)	3	7	0
Tier 3 (Red)	1	4	1

Chi-square. A chi-square test was performed and no relationship was found between ACCESS categories and Syllable Reading Fluency Aimsweb tiers, $\chi^2(4, N=39) = 7.08, p = .13$.

Table 12

Spelling and ACCESS Rankings

Spring 2011 Kindergarten MIDE Measure: Spelling	ACCESS composite, Spring 2014 Third grade year		
	Composite Level 5-6 Bridging- Reaching	Composite Level 3-4 Developing- Expanding	Composite Level 1-2 Entering- Emerging
Number/percentage of students			
Tier 1 (Green)	6	7	0
Tier 2 (Yellow)	2	2	0
Tier 3 (Red)	1	4	1

Chi-square. A chi-square test was performed and no relationship was found between ACCESS categories and Spelling Aimsweb tiers, $\chi^2(4, N=39) = 4.05, p = .40$.

Discussion: Research Question 2

In this case study, archival data was used to track the frequency of students from their Aimsweb MIDE Spring tiers to their subsequent ISAT and ACCESS levels. The tool used to analyze these relationships was SPSS version 2.0. A common rule of thumb is that all expected frequencies be at least 5 in order for the chi-square test to be considered reliable (Kirkpatrick & Feeney, 2015). The per-cell sample size was less than 5 in most cases. Another general rule is that the sample size should be at least 100 (Albrecht, 2015). Due to the small sample size within the archival data analyzed (N=39), the results of the chi-square should be interpreted with caution.

MIDE Status and Growth Relative to ISAT

The alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical chi-square tests. None of the five Aimsweb measures revealed a statistical significance, except MIDE Syllable Segmentation Fluency (SSF) and ISAT which was very nearly statistically significant at the .05 level approached significance, $X^2(6, N=39) = 12.41, p < .053$. When the probability is .05 or less, you can generalize from a random sample to a population and claim the two variables are associated in the population. However, it must be noted that 10 (83%) out of the 12 cells had counts of less than 5, not assuming the null hypothesis is true. Moreover, the initial number of students in the SSF category before cross tabulation, was skewed with a smaller number of students in the green tier (3); yellow tier (19); and red tier (15). So, with more students in both the yellow and red tier, was it nearly predictive of their later Below Standards standings in ISAT? That remains unproven, therefore, due to the overall small sample size results should be interpreted with caution.

MIDE Status and Growth Relative to ACCESS

The MIDE status compared to subsequent ACCESS levels did not yield significant results, therefore the null hypothesis can be retained and no support was found for an alternative hypothesis. Similar to the MIDE and ISAT comparisons, several cells had frequency counts of less than 5, therefore the results should be interpreted with caution.

The district in this case study had a transitional bilingual education program, a *subtractive* type of program in which students shifted from their native language (Spanish) to English instruction over time. Although the data in this study did not yield significant results due to sample size, it would be prudent to observe students'

performance on English language proficiency, across the array of bilingual programs. Moreover, the sentiments shared in the qualitative data from the teacher's perspectives called for more opportunities to look at EL student growth. Doing so could lead to more discussions about factors that support types of bilingual education programs and teachers.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research: Research Question 2

Sample Size

The archival data used in this study came from two Kindergarten classes, totaling 39 students; of which, 28 students had corresponding data for 2014 ISAT results and 23 students had corresponding data for combined ACCESS categories. "If you have quite a few categories and small frequencies in most of them, you should consider combing some categories if that makes sense for your study. However the danger is that this restructuring will be performed in an arbitrary way that capitalizes on chance and leads to more Type 1 errors than your alpha would suggest" (Cohen, 2008, p. 714). For example, the ISAT cross tabulation table contained four categories: Warning, Below, Meets, and Exceeds; while the ACCESS cross tabulation table contained six categories merged into three: Entering-Emerging, Developing-Expanding, Bridging-Reaching. The ISAT Meets and Exceeds category could have been combined into one category, since the number of frequencies in this cell was no more than one count. Therefore, analyzing relationships among data sets with similar sample sizes should be interpreted with care.

The archival data reflected one set of AM/PM Kindergarten classes from one school in the 2010-2011 school year. The data set that was used was from the Spring benchmarking period, whereas other studies with elementary to middle school students used the data set from the Fall period to compare against subsequent performance on

achievement tests (Osterman Stokes, 2010; Ramirez & Shapiro, 2007). The Spring semester was chosen as the Kindergarten students were presumed to have acquired more exposure and practice with identifying letter names, sounds, syllable reading and segmenting and spelling by the end of the year. This approach may or may not have served as a limitation in this study.

This year, three schools began benchmarking in Aimsweb, which may lead to a larger, adequate sample size to analyze in the future. Furthermore, neighboring districts with similar programs and demographics may wish to compile their data to analyze predictive validity of performance on achievement tests and English language proficiency.

Assessment

The Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) was discontinued after 2014 and replaced with the computer administered, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) in the Spring of 2015. Therefore, future research may need to draw out inferences or correlations with other standardized measures or other types of achievement assessments.

Conclusion

The present case study took an action research approach with ELP teachers as primary stakeholders using qualitative means to appraise a benchmarking plan that was developed top-down without their input. Thus, voices were heard and important insights were acquired from a small subsection of ELP stakeholders. This led to suggestions for ways of improving the infrastructure; resulting in a preliminary action plan, unique to the district. Action research can be used to facilitate reflection and systematic inquiry to meet

the needs of students (Taube et al., 2006). This type of active participation by a range of stakeholders may be beneficial towards increasing buy-in with aspects of data collection. Therefore, it is important that we continue to study the impact action research can have for stakeholders with improving data collection practices for English Learners.

There is an increasing need to ensure that school districts have data that reflects academic progress for ELs. The present case study contributes to research efforts on the predictive validity of Spanish CBMs for native Spanish-speaking students in a bilingual program by analyzing archival data of MIDE-Aimsweb benchmarking for bilingual kindergarten students and their subsequent progress on high stakes state standardized achievement tests and progression of English language proficiency inspired by previous studies (Osterman Stokes, 2010; Ramirez & Shapiro, 2007).

Although the quantitative findings were not statistically significant and did not imply a relationship with subsequent performance, the practice of analyzing patterns in longitudinal performance may serve as a useful practice for growing districts on evaluating performance of English Learners (Osterman Stokes, 2010; Ramirez & Shapiro, 2007). This type of practice of analyzing district data (on achievement or English language proficiency measures), specifically EL student growth, was a sentiment expressed by stakeholders within the survey, focus group and interview responses. These types of discussions about EL student growth, from archival to current data results, were not occurring in the district.

A quantitative and qualitative approach to appraising benchmarking practices, past or present, may serve to provide a more comprehensive picture of the state of the district. For instance, the data itself may tell us where the majority of ELs perform for

curriculum based measures in their native language; while a qualitative inquiry may tell us more about how/if the data is being used by teachers to improve instruction or intervention delivery.

The two aspects of this case study sought to generate knowledge unique to this district in terms of data collection practices, particularly, benchmarking for ELs. When districts continue to collect data without appraising structures to support ELP teachers in professional development, or assess implications for language programming and achievement, we miss valuable opportunities to systematically reflect on the data and data collection practices. It is critical that longitudinal research continues to study the technical adequacy of Spanish CBMs for the growing population of English Learners, as well as the impact action research can have for stakeholders with appraising data collection practices for English Learners.

APPENDIX A
ONLINE SURVEY CONSENT FORM AND QUESTIONS

Online Survey Consent

English Learner Program (ELP) Teachers & Program Assistants

Welcome to the 2014-2015 school year! My name is Sandra Santillan and I am your district bilingual school psychologist. I am currently completing a doctoral program and would like your participation in my doctoral action research project.

I will be disseminating an online survey for ELP teachers and program assistants to gain insight on the issues that may affect data collection. The goal is to have members of the ELP give their opinions on the *challenges* of benchmarking and progress monitoring, barriers for current implementation and best practices for future development in terms of data collection for English Learners. Your input as stakeholders is extremely valuable and reflects the core values of social justice, action research and will aid in reaching assumptions specific to the needs of our district. Action research is a type of research done *with not to* people.

Should you volunteer your participation will consist of answering survey questions rating your level of agreement on issues pertaining to data collection practices.

Completion of this survey may take approximately 5-10 minutes. Although you may not benefit from this experience directly, your participation may benefit the English Learners Program. The research approaches culminate to gain perspectives to better facilitate future benchmarking and progress monitoring practices, as well as appraise prior and existing practices.

No names will be required to be entered by participants and no one will access the survey data other than this researcher. Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person’s everyday use of the Internet. The *Snap* survey software meets Institutional Review Board requirements for secure transmission, database security, server security, IP addresses and backups.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you will not be penalized for refusal to participate. You may choose to terminate your participation from the online survey at any time if you feel uncomfortable. This anonymous survey will be submitted to the researcher, and this researcher will be unable to extract anonymous data from the database should the participant wish it withdrawn.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.
 Sandra Santillan ssantil@luc.edu
 Dr. Pamela Fenning, Faculty Sponsor pfennin@luc.edu

Should you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may also contact: Loyola University Chicago Compliance Manager (773) 508-2689

 By completing the survey below you agree to participate in the research.

I agree I do not agree

Online Survey Questions

The following survey questions pertain to benchmarking practices using Aimsweb measures, not Discovery Benchmark Assessments in Reading and Math.

The following questions are about your knowledge base of benchmarking & progress monitoring. Please mark the response that best fits your opinion.

- 1 I am knowledgeable about the purpose of benchmarking

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Definition of benchmarking: Benchmarking is a quick screen administered three times a year to all students

- 2 I am knowledgeable about the purpose of progress monitoring

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Definition of progress monitoring: Progress monitoring involves frequent data collection using Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) weekly or biweekly to assess a student's rate of improvement towards meeting a goal based on National or local norms

I. Amount of professional development

The following questions are about your participation in professional development.

If you participated in benchmarking K-2, please continue. If not skip to Section III

- 3 I participated in training prior to benchmarking my students [Fact]

Yes	No
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If no (3b-3c):

What prevented you from participating? (May select multiple answers)

- 3b [Behavior/Retrospective]

Time of trainings	Already familiar with Aimsweb	A reading specialist trained me	Not interested	Other: open ended
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If time: What suggestions can you offer to improve the likelihood of participating in training? [Exploratory question/open-ended]

- 3c What is the probability you will participate in future trainings? [Behavior/Prospective]

A lot less likely	Somewhat less likely	No difference	Somewhat more likely	A lot more likely
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If yes:

- 3d Please rate in terms of the amount of training received [Opinion/Retrospective]

- 3e Very Somewhat Somewhat Satisfied Very Satisfied

Dissatisfied Dissatisfied

Please rate the quality of training received (Opinion/Retrospective)

Very Somewhat Very Satisfied
Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Somewhat Satisfied

II. Level of Involvement

The following questions are about your level of involvement with data collection. Please mark the response that best fits your opinion.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

- 4 I feel confident administering benchmarking probes with my class (current)
- 5 I feel confident administering progress monitoring probes with my students (current)
- 6 I feel confident sharing benchmarking results with parents (current)
- 7 I would prefer to be involved with benchmarking my class (prospective)
- 8 I would prefer a testing team benchmark my class (prospective)

III. Structures (Current)

The following questions ask for your opinions on structures in place for data collection. Please mark the response that best fits your opinion.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

- 9 Our district has the necessary **assessment tools and materials** for benchmarking and progress monitoring our ELs
- 10 Our district has the necessary **resources** for benchmarking and progress monitoring our ELs
- 11 Our district has the necessary **skills** for benchmarking and progress monitoring our ELs
- 12 We have structures in place to ensure **implementation accuracy**; e.g. Benchmarking/progress monitoring is done the same way for all students. (NCRTI)
- 13 The benchmarking results are **accurate and reflect** student's early literacy/fluency skills
- 14 Our district has structures in place that allow for **discussion of benchmarking results** of our ELs
- 15 Our district has structures in place that allow for **discussion of student progress** of our ELs
- 16 Our district has structures in place that allow for **discussion of English Learner Program Teacher concerns**
- 17 Decision making for English Learners is **data-driven** (NCRTI)
- 18 Decision making for English Learners involves a broad base of **stakeholders** (NCRTI)

19 Where should we focus our **training**? (May select multiple answers & open ended)
[Prospective]

Administering benchmark probes Entering data Reviewing class results Reviewing individual results Other:

20 Where should we focus our **professional development**? (May select multiple answers & open ended) [Prospective]

Data collection Data analysis Aimsweb features Other:

Demographic Info

Lastly are some demographic questions that will be used for classification purposes only.
Please select the choice that best describes you

I am a

	Sheltered		English		General		
Bilingual	Instruction	ESL	Learner		Education	Related	
Teacher	Teacher	Teacher	Program	Administrator	Teacher	Service	Other
			Assistant				

I work with

Pre-		1st	2nd	3rd		
Kindergarten	Kindergarten	grade	grade	grade	4th grade	5th grade

Is there anything else you would like to add for me to consider?

Thank you for participating! Your participation:

Contributes to limited, emerging research on data-based decision making & early literacy benchmarking and progress monitoring tools for Spanish-speaking ELs
Contributes to the goals of our district's and ELP mission statement
Is inclusive of stakeholders (Pre-K-5 EL teachers and program assistants)
Promotes culture of continuous learning

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP LETTERS, CONSENT FORM, AND QUESTIONS

Focus Group Recruitment Letter

English Learners Program (ELP) Focus Group on Benchmarking and Progress Monitoring

Your opinion matters.

Your voice will be heard.

Dear Pre-K-5th grade ELP teachers and program assistants,

My name is Sandra Santillan and I am your district bilingual school psychologist. As part of my doctoral research project, I will be facilitating focus group sessions with ELP teachers and program assistants to gain insight on the issues that may affect data collection. Your input as stakeholders is extremely valuable and reflects the core values of social justice, action research and will aid in reaching assumptions specific to the needs of our district. Action research is a type of research done *with* not *to* people.

Should you volunteer your participation will consist of attending one to two focus group sessions during the 2014-2015 school year. Each session will be scheduled for an hour and will be held afterschool at an accessible central location such as the Parent Teacher Learning Center (PTLC), district office or classroom. An optimal number of participants per focus group is six to eight people. You must be willing to share your ideas and opinions and maintain respect for your colleagues during this group interview. Participants will be compensated by the school district at the hourly rate for committee work: Teachers \$31; Program Assistants \$17. Refreshments and snacks will be provided.

Preliminary focus groups will be held throughout the month of January to gain insight. Follow up focus group sessions will occur in February and will involve reviewing the themes generated in the preliminary sessions to visually organize themes into a diagram for cause and effect analysis. The goal is to have members of the ELP discuss the *challenges* of benchmarking and progress monitoring, barriers for current implementation and best practices for future development in terms of data collection for English Learners.

The sessions will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes for data collection. Your name will not be used in the final transcription of the focus group and any identifying information will be deleted from the final transcript. Audiotapes will be destroyed once transcribed. No one will read the transcript other than this researcher and all contents of this interview will remain confidential. You may choose to terminate your participation from the focus group at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

If you are interested and would like more information about participating, please click on the link below and submit your contact information by DATE TBD, 2015 (3:15 p.m.). Pending approval of meeting dates, times and location you will receive an email allowing you to RSVP to a date and time most convenient for you. All attempts will be made to accommodate your first choice, however due to the number of optimal participants required, this cannot be guaranteed.

For additional information or if you have questions or concerns, please contact me at (708) 795-2442 extension 106 or email ssantil@luc.edu

Thank you!

Sandra Santillan, Ed.S, NCSP

Doctoral Candidate, Loyola University Chicago

Focus Group Recruitment Link

.....

Yes I am interested and would like more information about participating in the focus groups.

Name: _____

Teacher ___ Program Assistant ___

Grade: _____

Please indicate your first and second choice for focus group sessions. You will receive a confirmation email. All attempts will be made to accommodate your first choice, however due to the number of optimal participants required, this cannot be guaranteed.

_____ Monday, TBD, 2015 at 3:30-4:30 p.m.

_____ Tuesday, TBD 2015 at 3:30-4:30 p.m.

_____ Thursday, TBD 2015 at 3:30-4:30 p.m.

Follow-up Confirmation Email

[Date]

[Name of participant]

Thank you for accepting my invitation to participate in two focus group sessions for the English Learners Program. The first focus group will be held:

[Date]

[Time]

[Address]

[Room #]

The focus group will be small with 6 [to 8] ELP staff members. Refreshments and snacks will be provided. If for whatever reason you won't be able to join us, please call me as soon as possible so someone else may be invited. If you have any questions, please give me a call at (708) 795-2442 ext 106 or (773) 216-0801 after school hours.

Thank you for your interest. I am looking forward to having you in this focus group!

Sincerely,

Sandra Santillan, Ed.S, NCSP

Doctoral Candidate, Loyola University Chicago

Focus Group Consent

Welcome to the 2014-2015 school year! My name is Sandra Santillan and I am your district bilingual school psychologist. I am currently completing a doctoral program and would like your participation in my doctoral action research project.

I will be facilitating focus group sessions with English Learner Program (ELP) teachers and program assistants to gain insight on the issues that may affect data collection. The goal is to have members of the ELP discuss the *challenges* of benchmarking and progress monitoring, barriers for current implementation and best practices for future development in terms of data collection for English Learners. Your input as stakeholders is extremely valuable and reflects the core values of social justice, action research and will aid in reaching assumptions specific to the needs of our district. Action research is a type of research done *with not to* people.

Should you volunteer your participation will consist of attending up to two focus group sessions during the 2014-2015 school year. You must be willing to share your ideas and opinions and maintain respect for your colleagues. Refreshments and snacks will be provided.

Each session will be scheduled for an hour and will be held afterschool at an accessible central location such as the Parent Teacher Learning Center (PTLC), district office or classroom. An optimal number of participants per focus group is six to eight people. Preliminary focus groups will be held throughout Winter 2015 to gain insight. Follow up focus group sessions will occur Spring 2015 and will involve reviewing the themes generated in the preliminary sessions to visually organize themes into a fishbone diagram for cause and effect analysis.

Risks associated with participating in this focus group are minimal and may include uneasiness in discussing topics among colleagues. However, this information may benefit the English Learners Program. The research approaches culminate to gain perspectives to better facilitate future benchmarking and progress monitoring practices, as well as appraise prior and existing practices.

Participants will be compensated by the school district at the hourly rate for committee work: Teachers \$31; Program Assistants \$17. Withdrawing during this study will not affect compensation.

The session will be audio-recorded on a digital voice recorder for transcription purposes for data collection. The transcripts will be password protected and stored in a secure, locked location that only the principal investigator has access to. Your name will not be used in the final transcription of the focus group and any identifying information will be deleted from the final transcript. No one will read the transcript other than this researcher and all contents of this interview will remain confidential. The digital voice recording will be erased on the digital recorder following transcription.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you will not be penalized for refusal to participate. If you currently have a relationship with the researcher or are receiving services from the cooperating research institution, your decision to participate or not will have no affect on the current relationship, or the services you are currently receiving. You may choose to terminate your participation from the focus group at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.
 Sandra Santillan ssantil@luc.edu
 Dr. Pamela Fenning, Faculty Sponsor pfennin@luc.edu

Should you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may also contact: Loyola University Chicago Compliance Manager (773) 508-2689

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information above, have had an opportunity to ask questions and agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this form.

 Name

 Date

Focus Group Script

English Learner Program (ELP) Teachers & Program Assistants

[Collection of informed consents at check-in table with Principal Investigator]

1. Welcome teachers/program assistants! Thank you for taking the time to join this focus group. My name is Sandra Santillan and I am your bilingual school psychologist. [Introduce note-taker.]

2. Overview of topic: We would like to get a better understanding of the ways that you feel assessments and data should be used in relation to English Learners (ELs). I will be facilitating two focus group sessions for ELP teachers and program assistants. The goal of the first focus group is to gain insight. Follow up focus group sessions will involve reviewing the themes generated in the preliminary sessions to visually organize themes into a diagram for cause and effect analysis. The ultimate goal is to have members of the ELP discuss the *challenges* of benchmarking and progress monitoring, barriers for current implementation and best practices for future development in terms of data collection for English Learners.

Your input as stakeholders is extremely valuable and reflects the core values of social justice, action research and will aid in reaching assumptions specific to the needs of our district. Action research is a type of research done *with* not *to* people. Overall findings will be shared with you, the district, and the research community.

3. Verbal review of consent form: Your name will not be used in the final transcription of this interview, and any identifying information will be deleted from the final transcript. No one will read the transcript other than this researcher(s), and all contents of this interview are confidential. You may choose not to answer a question, and/or choose to terminate the interview if you do not feel comfortable.

4. Ground rules: *“There are no right or wrong answers. We expect that you will have different points of view. Please feel free to share if it differs from what others have said. We’re [audio] recording the session because we don’t want to miss any of your comments. No names will be included in any reports. Your comments are confidential, [please honor this and do not discuss other’s comments outside of this focus group.] We have name tents in front of you, to help us remember your names and to help you address each other. Don’t feel like you have to respond to me all the time. If you want to follow up with something someone else said, you want to agree, disagree or give an example, then you may do that [please maintain respect for your colleagues at all times]. I am here to ask questions, listen and make sure everyone has had a chance to share. We’re interested in hearing from each of you so if you’re talking a lot, I may ask you to give others a chance. If you aren’t saying much I may call on you. We just want to make sure*

all of you have a chance to share your ideas. If you have a cell phone please put it on vibrate and if you need to answer please step out to do so. Feel free to get up and get more refreshments if you would like.” (Taken from Krueger & Casey, 2009, p.97)

5. Summary: I will summarize key points with the focus group. *(See final and exit questions)*

Focus Group Questions

Let's begin. Tell us your name, how long you have been working in the ELP and some of your hopes for the ELP. [6-8 min]

1. Can you describe the history of RtI for ELs in our district? [6-8 min]
2. Discussion of themes from survey responses (retrospective/current/prospective).
[6-8 min]
3. What has been your experience with benchmarking and progress monitoring? [6-8 min]
4. What would Best Practices look like to you for benchmarking and progress monitoring? [6-8 min]
5. What are barriers to benchmarking and progress monitoring in Spanish for ELP?
[12-16 min]
6. In what ways can the district improve on current practices to better support and facilitate district-wide implementation of benchmarking and progress monitoring for the ELP? [6-8 min]
7. *Summary: I will summarize key points with the focus group.* [6-8 min]

Final question: Have we missed anything? Is there anything that we should have talked about but didn't? [5 min]

Exit question: This is the first in a series of focus groups like this that I facilitating for the ELP. Do you have any advice for how we can improve? [3 min]

Estimated time: 60-80 minutes

Debriefing-Focus Group

Questions for facilitator and note-taker, taken from Krueger & Casey, 2009, p. 116

- What were the themes?
- What are the most important points that we've learned from the group?
- What was surprising or unexpected?
- What quotes were particularly helpful?
- How was this group similar to or different from earlier groups?
- Does anything need to be changed before the next group

Debriefing Statement/Script for Participants

Thank you for participating!

Your participation is beneficial because it:

- Contributes to limited, emerging research on data-based decision making & early literacy benchmarking and progress monitoring tools for Spanish-speaking ELs
- Is inclusive of stakeholders (Pre-K-5 EL teachers and program assistants)
- Develops a greater sense of accountability & responsibility
- Contributes to the goals of our district's and ELP mission statement
- Promotes culture of continuous learning
- Provides an opportunity to give input on sharing results
- Offers an opportunity for reflection on the process of plan development, limitations, and next steps
- What are the costs of *not* evaluating?

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM AND QUESTIONS

Semi-Structured Interview [with Director of ELP] Consent Form

Welcome to the 2014-2015 school year! My name is Sandra Santillan and I am your district bilingual school psychologist. I am currently completing a doctoral program and would like your participation in my doctoral action research project.

I will be facilitating an individual semi-structured interview to gain insight on the issues that may affect data collection. The goal is to have administrators discuss the *challenges* of benchmarking and progress monitoring, barriers for current implementation and best practices for future development in terms of data collection for English Learners. Your input as a stakeholder is extremely valuable and reflects the core values of social justice, action research and will aid in reaching assumptions specific to the needs of our district. Action research is a type of research done *with* not *to* people.

Should you volunteer your participation will consist of participating in a semi-structured interview during the 2014-2015 school year. You must be willing to share your ideas and opinions.

The interview will be scheduled for an hour and will be held afterschool at an on campus location convenient for you. The interview will be held throughout the months of January and February to gain insight.

Risks associated with participating in this interview are minimal. Although you may not benefit from this experience directly, your participation may benefit the English Learners Program. The research approaches culminate to gain perspectives to better facilitate future benchmarking and progress monitoring practices, as well as appraise prior and existing practices.

Identifying information will be de-identified and recorded as “administrator” for purposes of transcription and analysis of themes.

No one will read the transcript other than this researcher and all contents of this interview will remain confidential. Your participation is completely voluntary and you will not be penalized for refusal to participate. You may choose to terminate your participation from the interview at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sandra Santillan ssantil@luc.edu
Dr. Pamela Fenning, Faculty Sponsor pfennin@luc.edu

Should you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may also contact: Loyola University Chicago Compliance Manager (773) 508-2689

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information above, have had an opportunity to ask questions and agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Name

Date

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for ELP Director

Let's begin. How long you have been working in the ELP and what are some of your hopes for the ELP?

1. Can you describe the history of Response to Intervention for ELs in our district?
2. Discussion of themes from survey responses & focus group responses (retrospective/current/prospective); themes: knowledge base, training, tools, discussion of data driven results, stakeholder concerns.
3. What has been your experience with benchmarking and progress monitoring?
4. What would Best Practices look like to you for benchmarking and progress monitoring?
5. What are barriers to benchmarking and progress monitoring in Spanish for ELP?
6. In what ways can the district improve on current practices to better support and facilitate district-wide implementation of benchmarking and progress monitoring for the ELP?
7. What assessment methods do staff use to measure ELs' content knowledge rather than English language proficiency? Native language proficiency?
8. Are there structures in place that allow for discussion of English Learner Program Teacher concerns?
9. Do we have the necessary assessment tools, resources and skills for systematic data collection and monitoring to ensure appropriate decisions are being made, particularly when students don't respond to the intervention?
10. What are your hopes for the future of data-based decision making for ELs?

APPENDIX D
PARTICIPANT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Participant Executive Summary

Dear participants,

Thank you for your time and participation in this study. Your opinions, ideas and feedback will be shared with the program. Below is a short summary of the findings of my focus group, interview, and survey, which is followed by a more in-depth executive summary.

Summary of findings:

1. Constant Comparatives (Describes patterns in the data, relationships between ideas or concepts)
 - a. Understanding language versus academic issues
 - b. Strengthening data analysis skills for teachers
 - c. Collaboration with other district bilingual teachers
 - d. Instructional accountability
2. Critical Incidents (Important critical events that shaped decisions or actions and emotional forces that surround the incident)
 - a. Change from AIMSweb to Discovery
 - b. Removal of Wednesday monthly professional development
 - c. Clarity for direction of the English Learners program and new Dual Language program
 - d. Lack of equivalent assessment(s) in Spanish
3. Key Concepts (Factors that are of central importance/not critical but moderate importance/core ideas/ understanding how participants view a topic/limited number of important ideas, experiences/preferences that illuminate the study)
 - a. Limited ELP staff support to assist with benchmarking and interventions
 - b. Teacher pressures with problem solving in RtI
 - c. Teachers prefer involvement with benchmarking
 - d. Suggestions for training and professional development

Recommendations and an action plan will be shared with the program director and administrators. Thank you for allowing me to be your voice to facilitate improvements in practices and structures in place to benefit our students.

Please contact me if you would like additional information, have questions, feedback or concerns.

Respectfully,
Sandra Santillan, NCSP
Doctoral Candidate
Loyola University Chicago
ssantil@luc.edu

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Title of Research: Appraisal of a Benchmarking Plan Using an Action Research Approach with English Learner Program (ELP) Teachers & Analysis of Predictive Validity of Spanish Curriculum Based Measures
2. Researcher Contact Information:
 - a. Name: Sandra Santillan
 - b. Email: ssantil@luc.edu
 - c. Institution/Affiliation: Loyola University Chicago
3. Purpose of Research: The district enacted a plan using AIMSweb CBM benchmark measures in English and Spanish for general education and bilingual Kindergarten through second grade classes. Required information included input from stakeholders on areas for future development on this topic.
4. Research Question #1: How can action research with teachers improve current benchmarking and progress monitoring practices? How do stakeholders describe the history of the problem, the issues as they currently see it, and what are areas for future development?
5. How research aligns with district priorities: The district’s English Learners mission statement is “to provide English Language Learners with an opportunity to become fully bilingual and bi-literate. We will foster strong collaboration with staff, students, family and community. We will use a variety of teaching strategies and technology to create an environment that fosters an enthusiasm for learning and prepares students to become lifelong learners.” This research aligns with the mission statement by being inclusive of stakeholders and appraising our data collection practices.
6. Methodology:
 - a. Number of Teachers involved: 5; Administrators: 1, ELP Staff Survey Respondents: 11
 - b. Assessment tools used: Focus Group, Semi-structured interview, Survey
 - c. Method of analysis: Thematic coding directly from data sources
7. Complete Thematic Findings:
 - I. History of the problem
 - A. History of Response to Intervention (RtI) for English Learners (ELs) in district
 1. Limited staff support
 - a. Supporting the English Learners Program (ELP) in the district
 - b. Teacher pressures
 2. Understanding language vs. academic issues
 - a. Language proficiency testing for students (ACCESS)
 - b. Referring students for case studies
 - B. Experience with benchmarking & progress monitoring
 1. Change from AIMSweb to Discovery
 - a. Discovery cut-off affects ELs

- b. Suggestions
 - 2. Limited staff support for benchmarking and interventions
 - 3. Student growth from benchmarking results
 - C. Barriers to benchmarking and progress monitoring in Spanish
 - 1. Lack of equivalent assessment(s) in Spanish
- II. Issues as stakeholders see it
 - A. Knowledge base of benchmarking & progress monitoring
 - 1. Purpose of Benchmarking: 36%; Progress monitoring 64%
 - 2. Results reflect literacy skills: 18% Disagree; 18% Neutral; 55% Agree; 9% Strongly Agree
 - 3. Data driven decision making: 64% Neutral; 27% Agree; 9% Strongly Agree
 - 4. Decision making is inclusive of stakeholders: 55% Neutral; 45% Agree
 - B. Level of involvement with data collection
 - 1. Confident administering benchmarking: 27% Neutral; 36% Agree; 36% Strongly Agree
 - 2. Confident administering progress monitoring: 73% Agree; 27% Strongly Agree
 - 3. Confident sharing results with parents: 9% Strongly Disagree; 18% Neutral; 55% Agree; 18% Strongly Agree
 - 4. Prefer to benchmark my own class: 27% Neutral; 36% Agree; 36% Strongly Agree
 - 5. Prefer testing team benchmarks my own class: 27% Neutral; 36% Agree; 36% Strongly Agree
 - C. Necessary tools, resources and skills for data collection
 - 1. Necessary assessment tools & materials: 9% Disagree; 64% Neutral; 27% Agree
 - 2. Necessary resources: 27% Disagree; 45% Neutral; 27% Agree
 - 3. Necessary skills: 18% Disagree; 55% Neutral; 27% Agree
 - 4. Reviewing data sources (Disaggregating data)
 - 5. Reviewing cohort data
 - 6. Accountability
 - 7. Lacking interventions for ELs
 - D. Participation in training
 - 1. Training prior to benchmarking: 91% Yes; 9% No
 - 2. Likelihood of participating in future trainings: 10% A lot less likely; 40% No difference; 40% Somewhat more likely; 10% A lot more likely
 - 3. Amount of training: 10% Somewhat dissatisfied; 70% Somewhat satisfied; 20% Very satisfied
 - 4. Quality of training: 20% Somewhat dissatisfied; 60% Somewhat satisfied; 20% Very satisfied
 - E. Suggestions for improving training;
 - 1. Ongoing training for new hires, refresher courses
 - 2. Small group training and for all staff
 - 3. Focus on how to administer benchmarking for bilingual students
 - 4. Focus on local results

- F. Professional development
 - 1. Training focus
 - a. Administering benchmark probes: 26%
 - b. Entering data: 17%
 - c. Reviewing class results: 26%
 - d. Reviewing individual results: 30%
 - e. Supporting ELP in district: (open-ended response)
 - f. Using DIBELs instead: (open-ended response)
 - 2. Professional development focus
 - g. Data collection: 21%
 - h. Data analysis: 53%
 - i. AIMSweb features: 26%

- G. Structures in place for discussion of:
 - 1. Benchmarking results: 18% Disagree; 55% Neutral; 27% Agree
 - 2. Progress of ELs: 18% Disagree; 64% Neutral; 18% Agree
 - 3. ELP teacher concerns: 27% Disagree; 55% Neutral; 18% Agree
 - 4. Implementation accuracy: 36% Neutral; 55% Agree
 - 5. Removal of monthly Wed. professional development affects ELP

III. Areas for future development

- A. Hopes for the ELP
 - 1. Preparing students
 - a. English dominated culture
 - 2. Clarity for direction of program
 - a. New Dual Language program
 - 3. Equivalent assessments in Spanish
 - 4. Instructional accountability
- B. Best practices for benchmarking & progress monitoring
 - 1. Comprehensive
 - 2. Less testing time
 - 3. Accountability
 - a. Teacher involvement
 - b. Teacher pressures
 - 4. Reviewing data
- C. Improving current practices
 - 1. Accountability
 - 2. Collaboration
 - 3. Professional development
 - a. Role of ACCESS testing
 - b. Understanding language vs. academic issues

8. Suggestions/Ideas to consider

I. Structures in place:

- Create regular, structured opportunities for collaboration for ELP teachers
- Address teacher pressures associated with problem solving, ensure ELP representatives on school RtI committees, offer mentor(s) or RtI school leader for questions
- Instructional accountability-continue with observational rounds led by administrators; review formalized grade level problem solving process w/documentation of minutes, notes, action items

II. Resources

- Limited staff support with benchmarking and interventions: Offer training to volunteer bilingual staff on benchmarking administration, reach out to local universities for bilingual school psychology interns to assist
- Limited interventions: Create a sub-committee from district RtI committee to research literacy interventions in Spanish
- Assessment(s) in Spanish: Utilize current local outcome assessments in Spanish, research comparable benchmarking assessments available in Spanish via district RtI committee or ELP program members

III. Professional Development topics:

- Understanding language versus academic issues
 - Strengthening data analysis skills for teachers
 - Structured training on AIMSweb benchmarking
 - Clarify ELP goals and offer professional development on prospective dual language program
9. Implications for the district and their focus on increasing student achievement: Recognizing areas to target for professional development for our ELP program, structures that need to be in place to facilitate collaboration/accountability and ameliorating limited resources are three components to a more detailed action plan. These topics relate to addressing the constant comparatives, critical incidents, and key concepts summarized earlier.

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VITA

Sandra Santillan is the oldest of three children to parents Donaciano and Sandra Santillan. She was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois on November 21, 1980. She currently resides in Elmwood Park, Illinois.

Sandra Santillan is a proud product of the Chicago Public Schools system. She studied abroad to Alcala de Henares, Spain for a semester while in college. She graduated from Northeastern Illinois University in 2002 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and minor in English. In 2005 she received her Masters of Education degree in Educational Psychology from Loyola University Chicago. In 2008, she received her Education Specialist degree in School Psychology. In 2015, she earned her Doctorate in Education in the field of School Psychology, with a concentration in Data Based Decision Making and Accountability.

Sandra Santillan has worked in the field of education for the past 13 years. She began her career in the field of education as a prevention specialist for Youth Outreach Services She has worked with pre-kindergarten through high school students for Chicago Public Schools, After School Matters, and the Chicago Public Library. She served as a bilingual Foster Care Caseworker for a Latino social services agency.

Sandra Santillan has served as the sole bilingual school psychologist for Berwyn North district for the last seven years. She is currently a bilingual school psychologist for Palatine. As an English Learner who lost her Spanish at a young age, she is passionate about advocating for the needs of English Learners.

DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

The Doctoral Research Project submitted by Sandra Santillan has been read and approved by the following committee:

Pamela Fenning, Ph.D., Director
Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Amy J. Heineke, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Amy Zaher, Ph.D.
National Louis University

The final copy has been examined by the director of the Doctoral Research Project and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the Doctoral Research Project is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The Doctoral Research Project is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

9/2/15
Date

Pamela A. Fenning
Director's Signature