

Teacher-led professional development: Changing perception, practice, and outcomes for long-term English learners

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ABSTRACT

This case study explores how teacher-designed and facilitated professional development (PD) that emphasized long-term English learners' (LTELs) needs impacted perception, practice, and outcomes in an urban high school. As part of the multiphase design, the PD sessions were informed by data from teacher interviews, surveys, and LTEL performance outcomes. Thirty teachers and 147 English learners (ELs), 58 of whom were LTELs, then reflected on post-PD changes in practice and perception. Findings indicated that teacher-led PD with emphasis on LTELs impacted teachers' sense of responsibility for LTEL performance on the state's English language proficiency assessment (ELPA) and that ELs took the test more seriously than in previous years. Additionally, LTELs' performance on the ELPA yielded an increase of LTEL reclassification rates post-PD. These findings suggest the critical role teacher-led PD can have on enhancing LTELs' outcomes and the importance of educators perceiving and enacting a shared obligation for the education of ELs.

Keywords: long-term English learners, teacher-led professional development, English language proficiency assessment, reclassification

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INTRODUCTION

Under USA law, English learners (ELs) are entitled to receive English language services in school to enable them to participate in and access grade-level content. Federal and local policies expect ELs to attain English language proficiency (ELP) within a reasonable timeframe of accessing such services. To measure ELP, ELs complete an annual English language proficiency assessment (ELPA). Each state sets criteria for an EL to meet reclassification status, often based on ELPA scores, and allows ELs to exit English language instructional programming and EL identification (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2016). If the reclassification criteria is not met within six years of attending school, ELs are labeled as long-term English learners (LTELs) (Shin, 2020).

The subgroup of LTELs within the broader EL population is expected to increase despite inconsistent metrics to define LTELs (Flores et al., 2015). The increase in LTEL status provokes a two-fold concern. First, reclassification rates based on ELPA results are a key accountability measure under title III of every student succeeds act and impact school ratings (USDOE, 2016). High LTEL rates indicate that a school is inadequately supporting ELs' English development to meet the state's reclassification criteria. Second, equity issues arise when ELs do not reach reclassification because they are more likely to be tracked out

of college preparatory coursework, limiting exposure to academic language and making future reclassification more difficult (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016; Shin, 2020). Conversely, ELs who reach reclassification increase their opportunity to learn (Brooks, 2020). For example, ELs who reclassify by grade ten score higher on standardized tests, graduate, and enroll in post-secondary institutions at higher rates than peers who do not (Carlson & Knowles, 2016).

This mixed methods case study was designed based on need:

- (a) local teachers felt unprepared to support LTELs for the annual ELPA,
- (b) the district-led professional development (PD) sessions addressed ELs but did not specifically address LTELs, and
- (c) the trajectories of LTELs at the research site mirrored national trends of nearing but not meeting the state's reclassification threshold prior to high school graduation.

Framed with the belief that professional learning should be peer-driven and that local practitioners need to be leaders of change (e.g., Hill & Papay, 2022), the case study began with the question: Can teacher-led PD that emphasizes the needs of LTELs impact perception, practice, and ELPA outcomes within a school? To answer this question, we posed the following sub-questions:

1. What do teachers need and want to know to teach their LTELs?

2. How will teacher-led PD that emphasizes the needs of LTELs impact classroom practice?
3. Does the likelihood of reaching reclassification increase for LTELs during an academic year when PD is targeted to meet their needs?

Positionality and Terminology

As current and former teachers of ELs and LTELs, the authors are dedicated to understanding how to best serve students and improve outcomes collaboratively. The first author is a veteran English teacher, who, while completing her teaching English as a second language (TESOL) master's program, conducted this study by designing and leading the PD sessions in her school. The second author is a teacher-education professor who serves as advisor and co-author. The third author, a current PhD in education candidate, worked in the district's research office where the study took place and became a co-author during the revision process. The research team uses "we" throughout this study to reflect the collaborative nature of this project. We refer to the first author as the "teacher-practitioner" to highlight her role in the teacher-led inquiry process.

We prefer the designation "multilingual learner" to recognize language learning as an asset (Calderón et al., 2020), but we use the federal terminology "English learner (EL)" in the context of this study because it relates to identification and reclassification of students based on ELP (USDOE, 2016). We also use the phrase "reach or meet reclassification" rather than "are reclassified" to give ELs agency—not the state—over their performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

We began the inquiry into specific LTEL needs by reviewing the literature on theories of labeling, the impacts of assessment and failure to reach reclassification, the need for building functional literacy, and how targeted, collaborative professional learning might improve outcomes for LTELs.

Essential to conceptualizing the LTEL label is understanding that labels exist in formal categorizations such as gender, race and ethnicity, and in informal social interactions (e.g., troublemaker or scholar). Thus, labels impact how a person navigates systems and relationships (Byfield, 2019). There is no national criteria that labels ELs and LTELs, and therefore, both are subjected to federal and state policies. The intent of EL-labeling is to ensure access to effective language programming and academic success. However, there are formal and informal ramifications to labels. ELs are required to attend English language development classes unless their guardian has waived services, and the allocation of language development time may limit their ability to access advanced-level courses (USDOE, 2016). There are also social biases that impact how teachers perceive and teach ELs (Byfield, 2019). The EL label and associated instruction are often viewed through a lens of "inferiority, inability, and remediation," and teachers perceive ELs to need interventions until they demonstrate language competence on the annual ELPA (Umansky, 2016, p. 717). Therefore, ELs who score just below reclassification criteria could have substantially different educational experiences compared to ELs who reach reclassification benchmarks (Carlson & Knowles, 2016).

LTELs' experiences can be examined through labeling theory, including the intentional and unintentional consequences of labels

(Umansky, 2016) because "[t]he LTEL label is not a description of linguistic and literate abilities, but a product of specific implementation of policy" (Brooks, 2020, p. 10). Many LTELs are USA born, sometimes for generations, and they have seen the community-wide impact of discrimination against those who speak their home language (Freeman & Freeman, 2002; WestEd, 2016). LTELs tend to be perceived by others and view themselves as incapable of academic success (Flores et al., 2015). Early research assumed that students labeled as LTEL lacked literacy skills in both their home language and English (Menken et al., 2012; Olsen, 2012). Thus, LTELs have historically been a marginalized group within the broader EL population.

To lose the LTEL label, an EL must meet reclassification criteria on the annual ELPA. Recent research suggests that LTELs often possess English proficiency in one or more language domains and match their monolingual English peer's performance on district content area assessments (Flores et al., 2015; Shin, 2020). Yet an ELPA cannot measure an EL's full linguistic repertoire, so LTELs are often not recognized for their linguistic strengths (Calderón et al., 2020). One low score in an isolated language domain of the ELPA—an inauthentic measurement of language, reduces the likelihood an EL will reach a state's reclassification benchmark (Shin, 2020; Solano-Flores, 2008). When states frequently adjust their identification and reclassification criteria, LTELs can experience more difficult reclassification benchmarks than those set at their initial identification (Shin, 2020). The moving target of reclassification, the loss of instructional time to take the annual ELPA, and the scheduling constraints imposed by adding English programming are barriers LTELs face when compared to their unlabeled peers. Therefore, the LTEL needs are systemic in addition to linguistic.

Functional literacy examines how people adjust language according to purpose and context and is instructionally critical to support LTELs (Brooks, 2020; Solano-Flores, 2008). Functional literacy challenges the separation of social language and academic language, and the dichotomy has led to instructional dilemmas, such as ensuring comprehensible input while building academic oracy and literacy (Khranova et al., 2022). Though functional literacy is derived from a monolingual English lens (e.g., Ehringhaus, 1990), the concept drove the world-class instructional design and assessment (WIDA) consortium, an ELPA developer, to revise its assessment. Since 2020, WIDA purports to measure proficiency with the expectation that ELs receive instruction across the content areas in all language functions, forms, and features (WIDA, 2020). This assumption has implications for ELs' ELPA outcomes if ELs have limited exposure to grade level content and their respective academic language due to course tracking (Callahan & Shriker, 2016; Carlson & Knowles, 2016). In fact, "lower performance on standardized tests may reflect the lack of proficiency in the language of testing, or the lack of content knowledge and skills, or a combination of the two" (Ardasheva et al., 2012, p. 796). Conversely, evidence suggests that direct instruction on navigating test language can benefit LTELs, who already possess linguistic flexibility (Brooks, 2020). Teachers of ELs must be aware of the language demands of the ELPA to provide students with instruction on how to navigate it. Unfortunately, teachers of LTELs are often novice educators without proper preparation (Olsen, 2012). To combat this knowledge gap, districts must provide targeted professional learning to general educators to support LTELs (WestEd, 2016).

Professional learning is most effective when it involves teacher-to-teacher collaboration (Hill & Papay, 2022), and “an action plan for focused change” (Ravitch & Wirth, 2007, p. 90). Teachers should examine students’ previous ELPA experiences to inform instruction to best address LTEL needs (Brooks, 2020; Solano-Flores, 2008). Whitlock Robles (2010) demonstrated that reclassification rates increased for LTELs when general education and EL teachers used a team approach in language-learning-specific PD. Additionally, teachers who used culturally and linguistically responsive practices to directly prepare ELs for the state’s ELPA had increased scores (Giouroukakis & Honigsfeld, 2010). Therefore, it appears that collaborative professional learning may be an effective measure to bring about change for LTELs.

METHODOLOGY

Inspired by the success of collaborative, teacher-to-teacher professional learning studies (Hill & Papay, 2022; Ravitch & Wirth, 2007; Whitlock Robles, 2010), this research was conducted as a mixed methods case study. Case studies are especially useful in educational research as they give a “practical framework for generalizations and theoretical explanations” within a specific context (Mills et al., 2010). We used a multiphase design to gather and analyze quantitative and qualitative data to develop professional learning and compare and contrast the results at the end of the academic year (Creswell & Creswell, 2019). All participants were informed of the university-approved research project and provided consent.

Research Site and Participants

The research site is an accredited high school located in the Northeastern USA with over 80% of students labeled economically disadvantaged. In the 2021-2022 school year (SY21-22), 365 students were enrolled, 40 percent of which were identified as ELs ($n = 147$). The school lacked a system to identify LTELs, so we used a census approach in the Ellevations, Inc. (2022) information system to analyze data such as years in program, years in USA schools, and general academic history to categorize 58 of 147 active ELs as LTELs (40%). This percentage was consistent with demographics at other sites that comprise existing LTEL research (Brooks, 2020; Menken et al., 2012; Olsen, 2012; Shin, 2020). We also identified a cluster sample of 44 LTELs from the prior year for a quantitative analysis to compare student reclassification rates. At the end of the case study, we used voluntary response sampling through an anonymous student survey to gauge experiences and perceptions across the entire EL population without unethically singling out LTELs.

The participating teachers represented both general and special education teachers across all content areas offered in the building. In SY21-22, 27% of faculty members were certified in TESOL and two literacy coaches provided one-to-one EL support. At the research site, teachers are mandated to participate in weekly and monthly PD, therefore, all 30 teachers in the school participated in the study’s sessions in some way. While scheduling conflicts impacted overall faculty attendance (session one: $n = 30$, session two: $n = 16$, session three: $n = 24$), all teachers received session materials regardless of attendance and participated in at least two out of three sessions.

Procedures and Instrument

Before launching the teacher-led PD, it was important to identify what teachers needed and wanted to know about teaching LTELs. A

EL Overview Document		
First Name Last Name	Grade:	ELL STATUS:
Background Information		
Home language:	Entered EL:	
Birth Country:	IEP:	SLIFE:
Scores		
Overall Composite Score:		
Reading:	Writing:	
Speaking:	Listening:	
Target Focus		
Met _____ Growth Target:	Focus Language Area:	
Students will be able to process, understand, produce, and use...		
Specific scaffolds for supporting level _____ students:		

Figure 1. EL overview document provided to teachers (Figure created by the author, A. Healy.)

district study found that some educators in the research site perceived a “lack of shared responsibility” for EL instruction and felt that EL outcomes negatively impacted their teaching evaluations (Council of the Great City Schools, 2019, p. 49). Through interviews with the literacy coach and informal discussions with colleagues, the teacher-practitioner learned that many colleagues knew little about their LTELs and how the students were performing on the annual ELPA. In response, the teacher-practitioner created a one-page mail merge document (Figure 1) synthesizing data for each EL using the Ellevations, Inc. (2022) platform. This effort was grounded in the belief that, to effectively serve students, teachers must know who they are, believe in their potential, and share responsibility for their success (Gándara & Santibañez, 2016; Shin, 2020; USDOE, 2016).

The EL one-pager combined student demographics and ELPA scores and offered teachers “can-do” descriptors and strategies for instruction to promote an asset-based mindset to each EL’s abilities (Flores et al., 2015; WIDA, 2016). The teacher-practitioner ran informational sessions during each content team’s common planning time to introduce the information sheet, define the characteristics of LTELs, and help teachers identify LTELs’ strengths and needs according to individual performance on the previous year’s ELPA. She added a “target focus” section to sheet to encourage teachers to develop goals with their LTELs and target students’ lowest language domains.

The inquiry process revealed that on the 2021 ELPA, 64% of LTELs were either scoring as developing ELP ($n = 20$) or expanding ELP ($n = 17$), WIDA level range 3 and range 4, respectively, thereby nearing the state reclassification score of 4.8 (Ellevations, Inc., 2022; Table 1). Also, 41% of LTELs scored as entering ELP, the lowest on the speaking domain of the test, despite the common assumption that LTELs are orally proficient in English but not proficient in reading and writing (Freeman & Freeman, 2002; Menken et al., 2012). By examining outcomes, the teacher-practitioner concluded that understanding the upper-level scoring requirements on the ELPA speaking test was critical for LTELs to increase their overall score and consequently increase their likelihood of reclassification. Therefore, the teacher-practitioner researched WIDA’s ACCESS 2.0 speaking test administration and scoring to develop the second teacher-led PD (WIDA, 2020, 2021a, 2021b).

Table 1. WIDA (2021a) English proficiency level descriptions

Level	Definition
Entering (level 1)	Knows and uses minimal social language and minimal academic language with visual and graphic support
Emerging (level 2)	Knows and uses some social English and generic academic language with visual and graphic support
Developing (level 3)	Knows and uses social English and some specific academic language with visual and graphic support
Expanding (level 4)	Knows and uses social English and some technical academic language
Bridging (level 5)	Knows and uses social English and academic language working with grade-level material
Reaching (level 6)	Knows and uses social and academic language at the highest level measured by this test

Table 2. Faculty professional development sessions' survey questions

Session description	Survey questions	Responses		
(1) Knowing our LTELs introduction session	What new strategies do you want to implement in your classes, or what can [our literacy coach] or I do to help you in this process?	Open response		
	To what extent did you already know this content?	New to me 19% (3)	Familiar but lacked details 69% (11)	Already knew it 13% (2)
(2) [ELPA] speaking test overview	Both [our literacy coach] and [our district coach] have volunteered to come to your class to run a speaking activity with your students before the ELPA in January. Is this something you would be interested in? If yes, provide your name.	No response 56% (9)	No 13% (2)	Yes 31% (5)
(3) Academic vocabulary	What else do you feel you need to do or have to do to support the academic vocabulary development of our LTELs?	Open response		

Table 3. Faculty EOY survey responses

Questions	Faculty survey responses (n = 22)				
	District PD	Teacher-led PD	Third-party coaching	College or certificate course work	Other
Which types of [EL] professional development best helped you prepare students for the yearly [ELPA]? (select all)	27% (6)	86% (19)	23% (5)	14% (3)	5% (1)
How much did you know about unique needs of [EL] subgroups prior to this year?	Not at all (1)	2	3	4	Very much (5)
Traditional [EL] students	0% (0)	14% (3)	32% (7)	50% (11)	5% (1)
Long-term ELs (LTELs)	0% (0)	23% (5)	36% (8)	36% (8)	5% (1)
Dually-identified [ELs]	5% (1)	27% (6)	32% (7)	27% (6)	9% (2)
Rate your level of confidence in incorporating the following practices into your lessons after your PD sessions:	Not at all confident (1)	2	3	4	Extremely confident (5)
[ELPA] practice	0% (0)	18% (4)	45% (10)	36% (8)	0% (0)
Explicit academic vocabulary instruction	0% (0)	5% (1)	23% (5)	32% (7)	41% (9)
Teaching rhetorical structures	0% (0)	14% (3)	18% (4)	45% (10)	23% (5)
Incorporating speaking & listening activities into your lessons	5% (1)	5% (1)	23% (5)	41% (9)	27% (6)
To what extent did you utilize the following teacher-led PD resources:	Not at all (1)	2	3	4	Regularly (5)
One page [EL] overview document	9% (2)	9% (2)	32% (7)	32% (7)	18% (4)
WIDA's ACCESS for ELs 2.0 test practice	41% (9)	5% (1)	41% (9)	9% (2)	5% (1)
[ELPA] style speaking test activities	32% (7)	9% (2)	36% (8)	14% (3)	9% (2)
Marzano's six steps for academic vocabulary instruction	14% (3)	14% (3)	36% (8)	32% (7)	5% (1)
In what ways did you help prepare students for the ACCESS test?	Open response				
Any additional comments regarding PD activities, MLL specific teaching, or your own concerns?					

The primary objective of the second PD session was to help teachers understand the specific functional literacy demands of the ELPA (Ardasheva et al., 2012; Solano-Flores, 2008). In the PD, teachers took a practice speaking test and examined the academic vocabulary and rhetorical structures required for a proficient score (WIDA, 2021b). Teachers discussed test-taking strategies and looked at model lessons that focused on using oral communication in their content classes. Embedding regular practice of testing language in context has been shown to be an effective way to integrate ELPA preparation and increase outcomes (Hos et al., 2019; WestEd, 2016).

The teacher-practitioner used inductive coding to determine themes based on teacher survey responses after the first two PDs (Table 2). Survey responses indicated that the faculty shared a goal of increasing academic vocabulary instruction after learning that LTELs

need more direct practice using the language tested on ELPAs (Aguirre-Muñoz et al., 2008; WestEd, 2016). Therefore, the teacher-practitioner designed and implemented a third PD on instructional strategies to explicitly teach academic language across the content areas. The teacher-practitioner gave each content area educator three things: a sample list of vocabulary and text structures appropriate for their content areas (Marzano, 2004), an instructional strategy for tackling academic language (see Marzano's six-step strategy at NCRSA, n.d.), and an online toolkit of EL resources in Google classroom.

Next, a series of teacher and student surveys helped the teacher-practitioner determine the impact of LTEL strategy-focused PD on classroom practice. Teachers completed surveys after each PD session (Table 2) and at the end of the year (EOY) (Table 3). Teachers answered all survey questions via online surveys, except for the

Table 4. Student EOY survey responses

Questions	Student survey responses (n = 47)				
	Not seriously at all (1)	2	3	4	Very seriously (5)
BEFORE this school year, how seriously did you take the [ELPA]?	9% (4)	6% (3)	30% (14)	21% (10)	34% (16)
THIS school year, how seriously did you take the [ELPA]?	2% (1)	2% (1)	9% (4)	34% (16)	53% (25)
THIS YEAR did you see more, less, or the same number of the following strategies in your classes:	None this year	Less than other years	The same as other years		More than
Vocabulary lessons	0% (0)	13% (6)	23% (11)		60% (28)
Oral presentations	7% (3)	28% (13)	22% (10)		43% (20)
Class and small group discussion	4% (2)	20% (9)	28% (13)		48% (22)
Speaking tasks	0% (0)	18% (8)	36% (16)		47% (21)
	Yes		No		
Did any teacher, other than your ELD teacher, discuss your test scores or language needs with you?	62% (29)		38% (18)		
Did any teacher, other than your ELD teacher, encourage you to do well on the [ELPA]?	89% (42)		11% (5)		
	No influence at all (1)	2	3	4	A great deal of influence (5)
How much influence did your discussions with your teachers about the [ELPA] influence your performance on the test?	4% (2)	6% (3)	28% (13)	26% (12)	36% (17)
What could your teachers do to help you prepare for the [ELPA] next year?	Open response				

“instructional strategies-used” lists which were posted in the teachers’ common planning room. The teacher-practitioner encouraged teams to add to these lists as they implemented new strategies or had questions because teachers who collaboratively, reflexively, and dynamically assess and request their own learning have been shown to be most effective in school change (Ravitch & Wirth, 2007). The PD survey (Table 2) asked teachers to identify their perceived needs and plans for implementing new instructional practices. At EOY, teachers responded to a survey (Table 3) to describe their experience and impact of all types of PD they received during the school year and rate their confidence in implementing PD material and strategies. To corroborate the teacher responses, the teacher-practitioner surveyed the EL population about their classroom and testing experiences, perceptions, and suggestions (Table 4).

To learn if LTEL-specific PD increased the number of LTELs reaching reclassification status, we analyzed descriptive statistics of reclassification rates to compare the number and percentage of LTELs who reached reclassification in 2021 to 2022. We used the Ellevations, Inc. (2022) platform to find reclassification data and Jamovi (2020) to analyze the frequency and probability of reclassification.

Through data triangulation of teacher surveys, EL surveys, and ELPA results, we answered the research questions by describing how targeted PD impacted perception, practice, and reclassification outcomes for LTELs.

FINDINGS

Lack of Awareness

Content teachers were unaware of who their LTELs were or what language development LTELs needed. Discussions after the first teacher-led PD confirmed that many teachers did not utilize the school’s online database, Ellevations, Inc. (2022), to retrieve student data to inform their instruction despite district-led PD on how to use the platform. Teachers felt the abundance of web-based student data platforms was overwhelming and were reluctant to use them regularly.

Teacher EOY survey results indicated that 60% of the 22 respondents were not very aware of LTEL needs prior to the teacher-led PD sessions (Table 3). After the teacher-practitioner synthesized EL information in the one-page EL information sheet, 82% of respondents used it more than one time, and faculty reported that they “found the material useful” for “learning who the kids are” on the EOY survey. This appeared to change teacher perception of LTELs.

Open-ended responses from the post-PD surveys (Table 2) revealed that teachers recognized the need to increase oracy and academic vocabulary instruction to help LTELs improve speaking outcomes on the ELPA. In an open-ended response about perceived knowledge and needs, teachers wrote that they needed more support in implementing “strategies to hit target goals,” “explicit strategies to help with speaking,” and “academic vocabulary to very large groups.” These requests aligned to 50% of LTELs scoring the lowest on the ELPA speaking domain the previous year.

Faculty responses after the WIDA ACCESS testing PD (session 2) revealed that teachers lacked details about the ELPA speaking domain (Table 2). Of 16 respondents, only 13% reported that they knew how the ELPA assessed oral proficiency, while 69% said they were familiar, but lacked details, and 19% admitted no previous knowledge of the ELPA speaking domain. These responses demonstrated that teachers who were aware of test structure were not clear on scoring criteria, especially how much academic vocabulary and structures impact proficiency scores. 31% of teacher respondents indicated they would want an ELPA speaking activity modeled in the classroom, but most participants did not want additional support beyond the PD.

Change in Practice and Perception

Teachers overwhelmingly indicated that teacher-led PD positively impacted their ability to prepare LTELs for ELPA as nearly all teachers, 86%, selected teacher-led PD as the most helpful. Teacher-led PD also had some impact on teachers’ confidence in teaching academic vocabulary and oral language development (Table 3). 73% of teachers used Marzano’s six-step process for teaching academic vocabulary (see NCRSA, n.d.) more than once. Faculty EOY survey results indicated

Table 5. Frequency of reclassification for LTELs in 2021 and 2022

Test year	Number of LTELs	Number of LTELs to reclassify	Percentages of total LTELs
2021	44	3	6.8
2022	58	7	12.1

that 72% of respondents felt fairly or extremely confident implementing academic vocabulary instruction after the PD, and 68% cited teaching rhetorical structures and incorporating speaking and listening tasks into every lesson. Teachers reported that they implemented WIDA's Online test practice activities and ELPA-style speaking test activities less than other PD materials.

EL responses ($n = 47$) to the EOY survey (Table 4) aligned with the findings of the teachers' survey—specifically that teachers were using the EL one-pager. When asked if teachers other than their ELD teacher were discussing language needs with them, 62% of ELs confirmed that they were. Also, 60% of ELs saw more vocabulary lessons in their classes than in previous years. However, 55% of ELs reported that they did not see any more oral presentations or discussions, and 51% indicated they did not have more speaking tasks than they had in the past. When ELs were asked how their teachers could help them prepare for the ELPA next year, they said, “more presentations” and “they could help me practice the speaking test more.”

The majority of ELs (89%) indicated that teachers other than their ELD specialist encouraged them to do well on the ELPA test and these discussions influenced their performance (Table 4). EOY survey results showed a shift in EL perception where 87% of ELs reported taking the 2022 ELPA seriously compared to the 55% from the previous year. ELs' responses suggest that teachers' demonstration of a shared responsibility for EL education may have positively impacted student perception and performance.

Improved Outcomes

The total number of LTELs at the school increased from 44 in testing year 2021 to 58 in testing year 2022. The number of LTELs who reached reclassification also increased from 3 to 7; therefore, the percentage of LTELs who reached reclassification increased from 6.8% in 2021 to 12.1% in 2022 for a difference of 5.3 percentage points (Table 5). While this is a small sample with an increase in counts of LTELs, the percentage change demonstrates that the likelihood of LTELs reaching reclassification increased during the case study. Six ELs reached reclassification in 2021, 50% of which were LTELs. Ten ELs reached reclassification in 2022, 70% of which were LTELs.

Limitations

Two limitations of this study include the unknown factors that may have impacted LTEL performance and the lack of a standardized tool to verify the implementation of PD practices. The study took place one year after a global pandemic in a school with a new schedule, leadership, and curriculum. In SY21-22, teachers received district-developed PD and coaching in EL instructional strategies, but pandemic restrictions canceled observational walkthroughs. Without control groups and a standardized walkthrough tool, no definitive causal links can be made between teacher-led PD and LTEL reclassification. Instead, we collected survey data beyond ELPA scores, but surveys were not independently vetted, introducing potential bias. However, results indicated that ELs took the ELPA more seriously than they had in the past and teachers influenced their performance. Teacher surveys indicated that teacher-PD was the preferred source of learning and had

some impact on instruction. A multi-year follow-up study with teacher interviews, observations, and student-level controls would address those limitations and help us better understand LTEL performance.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS ON PRACTICE

This case study explored how teacher-led PD that emphasized the needs of LTELs impacted perception, practice, and ELPA outcomes within a school. Teacher-led PD had a positive impact on teachers' understanding of LTELs, their needs to meet reclassification, the implementation of instructional strategies designed to increase academic language use, and the likelihood of LTELs reaching reclassification. Prior to the teacher-led PD, teachers at the research site acknowledged that they did not know who their LTELs were or how the ELPA measured their proficiency. Sharing the causes of LTEL status and individual proficiency data helped teachers recognize that LTELs are often products of marginalization based on their labels within a school system that did not previously support their language development (Brooks, 2020; Menken et al., 2012). Thus, having a mechanism for sharing individual LTEL data to create collaborative language goals is essential. Teachers indicated they are more likely to use data when a peer delivers information that is understandable, relevant, and easily obtained. The EL one-pager was a mail-merge document generated from online databases that could be complemented by existing response-to-intervention forms and be adapted for students and families.

Teachers initially lacked awareness about their shared responsibility for ELPA preparation for LTELs—assuming this was the scope of an ELD teacher only, a common perception nationwide (Babinski et al., 2018; Council of the Great City Schools, 2019). Evidence gleaned from the co-constructed “instructional strategies used” lists and surveys showed that teachers' perceptions changed throughout the inquiry process. Teachers viewed themselves as responsible for LTEL success, instead of assuming low scores on ELPAs were based on students' lack of abilities and motivation, as has been the case with teacher perception of LTELs in previous research (Brooks, 2020). Flores et al. (2015) argued, LTELs “have to be seen through the strengths they bring to school, and those must be overtly valued and embedded into classroom instruction” (p. 130), and through changed perceptions and practice, a school might increase their LTEL reclassification rates.

Content area teachers must both understand how ELPAs measure English proficiency and how to help LTELs demonstrate functional literacy on ELPAs (Giouroukakis & Honigsfeld, 2010; USDOE, 2016). In turn, teachers must increase their understanding of the academic and oral language measured development assessed on the ELPA to provide explicit instruction in those areas and impact LTEL outcomes (Brooks, 2020; Hos et al., 2019; Olsen, 2012). The findings of this study align with previous research are that teachers feel more equipped to provide targeted language support within the content area once they engage in collegial and thoughtful PD (Babinski et al., 2018). Teachers were more

willing to implement academic language strategies when the peer-led PD provided application models aligned to research (Gándara & Santibañez; 2016; National Education Association, 2011).

The teacher-led PD, and subsequent change in educator perception and practice, seemed to increase goal-oriented communication between teachers and students. On the EOY survey, ELs reported having conversations about the ELPA with general educators and taking the ELPA more seriously. The percentage of LTELs who reached reclassification nearly doubled during this project, from 6.8% to 12.1%. The PD topics were informed by LTEL's 2021 data and continuous teacher input. Relatedly, Babinski et al. (2018) found that positive EL achievement could be because of certain instructional focuses over others. Therefore, increased LTEL reclassification could be attributed to the teacher-led PD sessions and the subsequent changes in practice.

CONCLUSION

LTELs in a Northeastern U.S. urban high school were nearing but not meeting the state's reclassification standard. Teachers did not know who their LTELs were, how to support their speaking performance on the ELPA, and how to incorporate strategies in their classrooms. Implementing teacher-led PD improved teachers' perception of LTELs' needs and their role in ELPA preparation and outcomes. The PD led to more instructional focus on academic and oral language development, and students reported taking the ELPA more seriously than in the past, coinciding with explicit teacher discussions about the test. These shifts in perception and practice corresponded to increased LTEL reclassification rates.

Teacher leadership is powerful in school change. This teacher-led PD improved ELPA preparation by responsively incorporating teacher feedback into each session. All teachers should receive training in ELPA scoring to understand reclassification criteria. When a school community shares responsibility for EL education, and specifically LTEL education, outcomes can improve.

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