EXAMINING ADMINISTRATOR PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES FOR ELL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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This work is dedicated to two individuals that have shaped my past, continue to define my present, and will undoubtedly shape my future. In loving memory of my dear Grandpa Roy, whose larger-than-life personality, and one-of-a-kind spirit continues to inspire me, and to my beloved daughter, Claire, who fills my life with boundless love and joy.

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ABSTRACT

School administrators are key components in improving educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities. However, no studies have assessed how administrators perceive equitable school experiences for ELL students with disabilities in the Pacific Northwest. This qualitative study included semistructured interviews with 12 school administrators in the Pacific Northwest to identify perceptions of how administrators distinguish equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities while utilizing a Disability Critical Race Theory lens. Seven themes were identified: The Power of Perception, Effective Teaching and Instructional Strategies, Equity and Inclusive Practices, Barriers to Learning, Complexities of the Identification Process, Appropriate Curriculum, and Creating Success. The study's implications highlight the transformative role administrators can play in creating equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities by fostering positive perceptions, addressing biases, implementing inclusive practices, and prioritizing effective communication to contribute to a more inclusive, supportive, and successful learning environment for all students.

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Chapter One

Introduction

A quarter of U.S. public school students are exposed to a non-English language at home (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019). As a result, nearly five million children are identified as English Language Learner (ELL) students (Szymanski & Lynch, 2020). Although over three-quarters of ELL students speak Spanish, there are hundreds of languages represented by ELL students in the U.S. (Yochai, 2019). It is estimated that by 2030, 40% of the U.S. student population will represent students with a non-English home language (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019). With such a diverse student population, many school districts are struggling to deliver effective instruction to ELL students, which is reflected in low test scores and student performance compared with non-ELL peers (LeClair et al., 2009; Wilcox et al., 2017; Yochai, 2019).

ELL students consistently perform below non-ELL peers across all academic content areas (LeClair et al., 2009; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Wilcox et al., 2017; Yochai, 2019) Yochai (2019) found that 43% of fourth grade ELL students scored below the basic level in math on the New York State Math Assessment in comparison to 15% of non-ELL peers. The achievement gap widens as students transition to middle school. By 8th grade, 69% of ELL students perform below the basic level in math compared to 26% of non-ELL students. The achievement gap is more significant for graduation rates. ELL students have the lowest graduation rate of all subgroups, with an average of nearly 20% below the national rate (Wilcox et al., 2017; Yochai, 2019).

A contributing factor to the achievement gap is the fact that teachers are not getting enough training to enhance their skill set of instructing ELL students (Jozwik et al., 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Slack, 2019; Yochai, 2019). A 2010 study found that only 33% of

teachers in the U.S. have had any training on instructing ELL students (Padron & Waxman, 2016). Quality professional development is critical, especially for school districts that have few culturally and linguistically diverse educators (Rizzuto, 2017; Roberts & Guerra, 2017). The education workforce is overwhelmingly White, monolingual, and female (Beal & Rudolph, 2015; Chiu et al., 2022; Grissom et al., 2021; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Schwitzman, 2019; Shim & Shur, 2018; Yough, 2019). An overrepresentation of White, monolingual females in the teaching profession can create obstacles to teachers' understanding of ELL student needs, which only widens the achievement gap (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Yough, 2019). The mismatch between educators and an increasingly diverse student population can also produce maladaptive beliefs towards ELL students and lead to inadequate instruction (Mngo et al., 2018; Rizzuto, 2017; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020; Yough, 2019).

Poor attitudes and perceptions are often associated with low educator confidence as a result of insufficient training opportunities to work with ELL students, which affects teachers across the spectrum of teaching experience (Hafner & Ortiz, 2021; Yochai, 2019; Yough, 2019). Alternatively, when educators are confident in their abilities to instruct ELL students, they are much more likely to produce positive outcomes and overcome obstacles to instruction. With the right training, educators can feel capable of teaching diverse students and provide more effective instruction for ELL students and students with disabilities (Jozwik et al., 2020; Yough, 2019).

While many educators struggle to deliver effective instruction for ELL students (Jozwik et al., 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Slack, 2019; Yochai, 2019), even more educators have difficulty providing high-quality education for ELL students with disabilities due to the complex intersection of language and learning needs (Annamma & Morrison; Whitenack et al., 2019). Teachers and administrators rarely receive adequate training to properly instruct ELL

students with disabilities, which can impact how they understand and treat ELL students with disabilities (Baglama et al., 2017; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Smith & Larwin, 2021).

Administrators are key educators to ensure adequate school experiences for ELL students with disabilities (Reyes & Gentry, 2019; Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Administrators can implement change, guide school teams towards equitable initiatives, and create positive environments for all students (Auslander, 2018; Cruze & López, 2020; Grissom et al., 2021; Von Esch, 2018). Additionally, administrators are responsible for supervision of all school staff, school priorities, and professional development opportunities (Mady & Masson, 2018; Wei, 2020). However, research has found that administrators are often severely underprepared to serve ELL students with disabilities. A lack of preparation can influence how administrators view and treat students with unique learning and language differences (Baglama et al., 2017; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Smith & Larwin, 2021). In order to provide a welcoming school environment for ELL students with disabilities, administrators must understand policies and procedures that can positively or negatively influence students' educational experience (Auslander, 2018; Cruze & López, 2020; Lee, 2019; Munguia, 2017; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Reyes & Gentry, 2019; Thompson et al., 2020; Umansky et al., 2020; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019; Von Esch, 2018; White & Mavrogordato, 2019; Wilcox et al., 2017).

Few studies have examined administrators' perceptions on providing adequate school environments or experiences for ELL students with disabilities. Since administrators have such a large influence on student achievement, school climate, and equitable outcomes (Cruze & López, 2020; Grissom et al., 2021; Munguia, 2017; Palmer et al., 2019; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Roberts et al., 2018; Smith & Larwin, 2021), it is critical to understand how administrators perceive school environments conducive to learning for ELL students with disabilities. This

study explored administrator perspectives of equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities in the Pacific Northwest.

Background

Many states in the U.S. are seeing a significant increase in the representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students. For example, New York has seen a 20% increase of ELL students in the past decade (Wilcox et al., 2017). ELL students in Texas increased by 570,000 from 2000-2012, representing more than 120 languages (Reyes & Gentry, 2019). Despite the growing number of ELL students across the U.S., only Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, New York, and Pennsylvania require teachers to receive training on instructing ELL students (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019).

Researchers have sought to identify the root causes of the achievement gap between ELL students and their monolingual peers. ELL students consistently fall behind their peers in state testing scores and graduation rates (Wilcox et al., 2017; Yochai, 2019). Limited educator experience working with ELL students only exacerbates ELL students' educational difficulties (Munguia, 2017; Wissink & Starks, 2019; Yochai, 2019). Without proper training, teachers feel inadequate to address the complex facets of teaching ELL students (Wissink & Starks, 2019). School leaders and equitable policies are critical factors for improving education and instruction for all students, especially for ELL students with disabilities (Auslander, 2018; Cruze & López, 2020; Von Esch, 2018). Unfortunately, educator training has not advanced quickly enough to support ELL students with disabilities (Becker & Deris, 2019; Jozwik et al., 2020; Kangas, 2018; Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017; Palmer et al., 2019).

Students with disabilities are often excluded from studies, while even fewer studies include ELL students with disabilities (Kangas, 2018; Karvonen et al., 2021; Reyes & Domina,

2019; Wanzek et al., 2016). Out of the 13 million students with disabilities in the U.S., ELL students account for over 1.3 million, or 10% of the population (Doutre & Willis, 2021; Jozwik et al., 2020). ELL students with disabilities are at high risk of failing classes and dropping out of high school (Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Wilcox et al., 2017**;** Yochai, 2019). Research has demonstrated a clear link between early academic success and high school graduation rates for all students (Daniel, 2014). For every student that drops out of high school, there is an approximate loss in earnings of $260,000, which impacts the individual and society (Garcia-Borrego et al., 2020).

Despite over forty years of federal policies intended to provide safeguards for students with disabilities, students of color are disproportionately represented in special education and excluded from the general education setting (DeMatthews, 2020; Palmer et al., 2019; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Most students with significant cognitive, physical, or behavioral disabilities (e.g., intellectual disability, deafblind, emotional behavior disability) are placed in restrictive settings, such as self-contained classrooms (Karvonen et al., 2021; Kroesch & Peeples, 2021). The concept of inclusion, which is the practice of including students with disabilities in the general education setting, has consistently demonstrated that it can produce positive student outcomes (Kroesch & Peeples, 2021; Mngo et al., 2018; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Smith & Larwin, 2021). The goal of inclusion extends beyond the physical presence of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Inclusive education transforms school climates and shifts the mindsets of school staff to increase reception of diverse learners (DeMatthews, 2020).

Although many educators have started to embrace the idea of inclusion and understand the benefits, it is not always put into practice (Kroesch & Peeples, 2021; Mngo et al., 2018). One barrier to implementing inclusion is a lack of collaboration between general education teachers

and special education teachers (Kroesch & Peeples, 2021). General education teachers are required members of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. When students with disabilities are receiving instruction in a general education setting, the general education teacher is required to provide the modifications and accommodations as outlined in the IEP. For inclusion to be successful, general education teachers must implement differentiated instruction with fidelity (Hoover et al., 2019; Kroesch & Peeples, 2021). Additionally, administrators must ensure that teachers are committed to providing accommodations and modifications for ELL students with disabilities (Reyes & Gentry, 2019; Roberts & Guerra, 2017).

Administrators are another key component of a student's IEP team. It is essential for administrators to have extensive knowledge of federal, state, and local laws and guidelines for students with disabilities (Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Roberts et al., 2018). As school leaders, administrators have the power to influence teachers to provide effective teaching strategies for ELL students with disabilities (Reyes & Gentry, 2019; Roberts & Guerra, 2017). However, administrators do not always receive sufficient training on identifying appropriate curriculum for students with disabilities, supervising special education programs, and considering the needs of ELL students with disabilities (Roberts & Guerra, 2017).

Although many studies have investigated teacher perceptions of ELL students (Accardo et al., 2020; Baglama et al., 2017; Jozwik et al., 2020; Mngo et al., 2018; Rizzuto, 2017; Smith & Larwin, 2021), few studies have focused on administrators' perceptions of ELL students. There is a much larger gap in the literature that concentrates specifically on administrators' perceptions of ELL students with *disabilities*. Administrators are central figures that can implement change, guide school teams towards equitable initiatives, and create positive environments for all students (Auslander, 2018; Cruze & López, 2020; Grissom et al., 2021; Von Esch, 2018).

Conversely, administrators can endorse policies that negatively impact students' future endeavors and opportunities (Reyes & Domina, 2019). Distorted perceptions can manifest into decisions that influence student outcomes such as academic achievement and graduation rates (Wilcox et al., 2017).

Studying how administrators identify equitable education for ELL students with disabilities can contribute to the literature and our understanding of how to address the needs of students with learning and language differences. Additionally, the data revealed in this study can add to the body of research on preparation programs and training opportunities for administrators to gain confidence supporting diverse students (Roberts et al., 2018). Examining how administrators perceive educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities is an important step to ensuring supportive, caring environments for ELL students with disabilities.

Statement of the Problem

The literature establishes examining educator perceptions toward students with diverse language and learning needs can be a useful starting point to mitigate biased beliefs and attitudes (Accardo et al., 2020; Baglama et al., 2017; Hafner & Ortiz, 2021; Jozwik et al., 2020; Mngo et al., 2018; Palmer et al., 2019; Rizzuto, 2017; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Smith & Larwin, 2021 Szymanski & Lynch, 2020; Yochai, 2019). Adverse perceptions can profoundly affect the quality of instruction educators provide to ELL students (Rizzuto, 2017; Yough, 2019). The literature also states that when educators demonstrate high levels of confidence and positive attitudes toward supporting ELL students, they can increase student achievement (Yough, 2019).

Several studies have focused on broad educator perceptions of ELL students (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Rizzuto, 2017; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020; Yochai, 2019) and teacher perceptions of ELL students with disabilities (Becker & Deris, 2019; Hoover et al., 2019;

Jozwik et al., 2020; Kangas, 2018; Wanzek et al., 2016). However, researchers have largely excluded administrator perceptions of school experiences for ELL students with disabilities. Administrators are a large piece of the puzzle that cultivate optimal student learning experiences, which is particularly important for ELL students with disabilities (Grissom et al., 2021; Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Therefore, it is crucial to examine the perceptions held by administrators regarding the educational experience for ELL students with disabilities.

Furthermore, no studies on ELL students with disabilities have focused on the Pacific Northwest region of the U.S., which includes Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Existing research on ELL students with disabilities has been conducted in the U.S. in the Northeast (Becker & Deris, 2019; Cioè-Peña, 2021; Kangas, 2017; Kangas, 2018; Murphy & Haller, 2015), West (Hoover et al., 2019; Park, 2019), Midwest (Jozwik et al., 2020; Karvonen et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2017; Miller, 2022), Mid-Atlantic (Kangas & Cook, 2020), Southwest (Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017), and South (Roberts & Guerra, 2017).

ELL students make up a significant portion of the student population in the Pacific Northwest. In the 2020-2021 school year, ELL students represented 9.6% of all students in Oregon, 11.7% in Washington, and 6.9% in Idaho (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022; Oregon Department of Education, 2022), which amounts to over 200,000 ELL students in the Pacific Northwest. It is alarming that no research has been conducted on ELL students as well as ELL students with disabilities in the Pacific Northwest. This study will open the door for future research to understand the educational needs of ELL students with disabilities in the Pacific Northwest. Furthermore, by understanding how school administrators view educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities, it can help schools to advance strategies towards inclusive practices. The purpose of this study was to examine administrator perceptions of

equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities in the Pacific Northwest through a qualitative approach.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study draws on disability critical race theory (DisCrit), which examines the intersection of race and disability (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Cioè-Peña, 202; Chiu et al., 2022; Miller, 2022; Schwitzman, 2019). DisCrit is a combination of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Disability Studies (DS) that scrutinizes systemic barriers for minoritized people (Cioè-Peña, 2021). The interconnection of race and disability status is paramount to frame this study as it examines administrators' perceptions of educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities.

Rooting the study in the DisCrit framework will maintain the focus on the systemic barriers that reduce achievement opportunities of minoritized students instead of emphasizing individual limitations of ELL students with disabilities. DisCrit emphasizes that student identities are more than race, level of English proficiency, or disability status (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Cioè-Peña, Chiu et al., 2022; Miller, 2022; Schwitzman, 2019). Examining administrators' perceptions on equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities is a giant first step to creating inclusive, equitable schools for all students (DeMatthews, 2020).

Research Question

This qualitative study focused on administrator perceptions of equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities in the Pacific Northwest. Many studies have centered on teacher perceptions of ELL students (Cruze & López, 2020; Kangas, 2017; Syzmanski & Lynch, 2020; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019; Wilcox et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018; Yochai, 2019). Few studies have examined administrator perceptions of ELL students

(Garcia-Borrego et al., 2020; Mady & Masson, 2018; Munguia, 2017; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Reeves & Van Tuyle, 2014; Reyes & Gentry, 2019), with even fewer studies including administrators and ELL students with disabilities (Kangas, 2018; Roberts & Guerra, 2017).

Existing research on ELL students with disabilities has been conducted in the U.S. in the Northeast (Becker & Deris, 2019; Cioè-Peña, 2021; Kangas, 2017; Kangas, 2018; Murphy & Haller, 2015), West (Hoover et al., 2019; Park, 2019), Midwest (Jozwik et al., 2020; Karvonen et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2017; Miller, 2022), Mid-Atlantic (Kangas & Cook, 2020), Southwest (Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017), and South (Roberts & Guerra, 2017).

However, no studies have examined administrator perceptions and ELL students with disabilities in the Pacific Northwest. The following research question guided this qualitative study:

1. How do administrators in the Pacific Northwest perceive equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities?

Description of Terms

The study of ELL students with disabilities includes many acronyms and terms. It is imperative to understand key concepts related to educating ELL students with disabilities and the complexities of bilingual education. The following list defines each term relevant for this study.

Ableism. Beliefs or actions that perpetuate discrimination against individuals with disabilities (Perouse-Harvey, 2022).

Community-based organization (CBO). A nonprofit community group that offers support to residents and their families (Lee, 2019).

Disability. A condition that adversely affects a student's educational performance, meets eligibility requirements, and requires special education services (Park, 2019).

Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit). A theoretical framework which examines the

intersection of race and disability and scrutinizes systemic barriers that inhibit opportunities for minoritized people (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Cioè-Peña, 2021).

English Language Learner (ELL). A student that speaks a language other than English in the home setting and is not yet proficient in English (Vela et al., 2017).

English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. An educator that has the qualifications and teaching endorsement to work with English language learner students and collaborates with general education teachers to provide effective teaching methods to students learning a new language (Vintan & Gallagher, 2019).

Inclusion. The educational practice of including students with disabilities in the general education setting to learn alongside non-disabled peers (Smith & Larwin, 2021).

Individualized Education Program (IEP). A document for students with disabilities which outlines student goals, accommodations, and specially designed instruction that is tailored to individual needs based on the student's disability. A legally binding document that offers federal protections and safeguards through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Hoover et al., 2019).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). A federal law that mandates all students with disabilities have a guaranteed right to a free and appropriate public education, as well as special education services to meet the unique needs of each student with a disability (Doutre & Willis, 2021).

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). A framework that uses evidence-based interventions and decision-making strategies to improve outcomes for all students with varying levels of need (O'Conner et al., 2013; Park, 2019).

Newcomer Students. English language learner students that were born outside the U.S. and have been attending school in the U.S. for less than three years (Thompson et al., 2020; Umansky et al., 2020).

Reclassified Fluent English Proficient. A classification that English language learner students achieve when they reach fluent or proficient levels in English (White & Mavrogordato, 2019).

Sheltered English Immersion. A method of bilingual education that offers language and academic support to English language learner students in the general education classroom (Hafner & Ortiz, 2021).

Talented and Gifted (TAG). An educational program designed to offer support through instructional, curricular, or administrative modifications to maximize potential for students identified as gifted or talented (Szymanski & Lynch, 2020).

Significance of the Study

This study adds to the current body of literature of educator perceptions of ELL students (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Rizzuto, 2017; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020; Yochai, 2019) and ELL students with disabilities (Becker & Deris, 2019; Hoover et al., 2019; Jozwik et al., 2020; Kangas, 2018; Wanzek et al., 2016). It helps fill the gap in the literature of administrator perceptions of school experiences for ELL students with disabilities. Administrators are essential school figures that can initiate change, advocate for equitable practices, and create positive environments for all students (Auslander, 2018; Cruze & López, 2020; Von Esch, 2018).

By examining administrator views of appropriate educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities, it can set the stage for future research to dig deeper into potential techniques that administrators can promote to improve outcomes for ELL students with disabilities. Additionally, future researchers can expand on the data collected to help districts

across the U.S. understand underlying assumptions towards educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities. Research suggests that identifying educator perceptions toward minoritized students can be a useful first step to shifting biases (Accardo et al., 2020; Baglama et al., 2017; Hafner & Ortiz, 2021; Jozwik et al., 2020; Mngo et al., 2018; Palmer et al., 2019; Rizzuto, 2017; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Smith & Larwin, 2021 Szymanski & Lynch, 2020; Yochai, 2019). If those biases go unchallenged, it can negatively impact the quality of instruction educators provide to ELL students (Rizzuto, 2017; Yough, 2019).

Furthermore, by studying how administrators identify equitable education for ELL students with disabilities, it can add to the body of research on administrator preparation programs to increase confidence in supporting diverse students (Roberts et al., 2018). Understanding how administrators perceive educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities is an important step to ensuring supportive environments and inclusive practices for ELL students with disabilities.

Overview of Methods

This study utilized a qualitative approach to gain insight into administrator perceptions of appropriate educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities in the Pacific Northwest. Qualitative data was gathered by interviewing administrators in the Pacific Northwest on their views of adequate school experiences for ELL students with disabilities. The Pacific Northwest was chosen since there is a large gap in the research in this specific area of the U.S., as other studies on ELL students with disabilities have been concentrated to the following regions: Northeast (Becker & Deris, 2019; Cioè-Peña, 2021; Kangas, 2017; Kangas, 2018; Murphy & Haller, 2015), West (Hoover et al., 2019; Park, 2019), Midwest (Jozwik et al., 2020; Karvonen et

al., 2021; Liu et al., 2017; Miller, 2022), Mid-Atlantic (Kangas & Cook, 2020), Southwest (Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017), and South (Roberts & Guerra, 2017).

Semistructured interviews guided data collection with 12 administrators from Oregon, Washington, and Idaho in districts with large populations of ELL students. The study focused on administrators from the eight districts in each state with the largest population of ELL students. Individual semistructured interviews provided a process in which participants responded to questions on a uniform interview protocol with the flexibility of probing questions allowing opportunities for participants to elaborate or clarify responses (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Participants included a diverse representation of gender, race, ethnicity, language background, and years of experience. Participants were all licensed administrators currently employed in public schools. Participants were recruited using a purposeful, snowball sampling technique which allowed the researcher to reach diverse candidates (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The sampling technique was conducted by sending emails to lead administrators in each targeted school district to forward to potential participants.

A basic, exploratory qualitative research design was employed in order to explore or understand administrator perceptions on educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities (Marshall et al., 2022). This methodology allowed the researcher to dive deep into the research problem to understand how administrators in the Pacific Northwest perceive equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities. The exploratory qualitative research design facilitated the process to seek understanding from participants' views and experiences through semistructured interviews (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Data was collected from recording the interviews, which were then transcribed verbatim. Qualitative data analysis software, Dedoose, facilitated data storage, organization, and

assignment of labels for coding. After the data was transcribed and organized, it was coded to make sense of the text data, then categorized into themes (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The data was analyzed using a DisCrit lens to examine the intersection of race and disability, relevant to the focus on educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Cioè-Peña, Chiu et al., 2022; Miller, 2022; Schwitzman, 2019). The themes generated represented the perspectives of 12 administrators in the Pacific Northwest on equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

English Language Learner (ELL) students are the fastest-growing population of students in both rural and urban U.S. school settings. It is estimated that students with a home language other than English will represent nearly 40% of the total U.S. public school student population by the year 2030 (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019). ELL students currently represent a quarter of the student population, yet teachers are often not prepared to instruct ELL students (Jozwik et al., 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Slack, 2019; Yochai, 2019). Even though nearly half of the U.S. public school student population is represented by minoritized students, the teacher population does not reflect this demographic shift, with over 80% White teachers, as of 2016 (Beal & Rudolph, 2015; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Yough, 2019). This disconnect can lead to maladaptive teacher attitudes and beliefs toward ELL students, which could ultimately interfere with teachers' ability to provide meaningful instruction (Mngo et al., 2018; Rizzuto, 2017; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020; Yough, 2019).

The intersection of ELL status and disability status complicates issues even further (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Cioè-Peña, 2021; Chiu et al., 2022). Teachers and administrators rarely receive adequate education to properly instruct students with disabilities, which can impact how they understand and treat students with disabilities, especially ELL students with disabilities (Baglama et al., 2017; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Smith & Larwin, 2021). Administrators play an important role in establishing welcoming school environments (Grissom et al., 2021; Reyes & Gentry, 2019; Roberts et al., 2018; Wang, 2017). However, administrators must understand policies and procedures that impact minoritized students to create suitable educational experiences (Cruze & López, 2020; Lee, 2019; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Thompson

et al., 2020; Umansky et al., 2020; White & Mavrogordato, 2019) and improve educational outcomes for students with language or learning differences (Auslander, 2018; Munguia, 2017; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019; Von Esch, 2018; Wilcox et al., 2017). ELL students are referred to by many different labels, such as emergent bilinguals (Cioè-Peña, 2021; Jozwik et al., 2020) or English learners (Ankeny et al., 2019; Gomez & Diarrassouba, 2014; Hoover et al., 2019). This study will use the terms ELL students and ELL students with disabilities to emphasize they are students first, as well as the intersection of their identities as students with disabilities and students learning a second language (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Cioè-Peña, 2021).

While several studies have focused on administrators' perspectives on education for students with disabilities (Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Roberts et al., 2018; Smith & Larwin, 2021) and ELL students (Cruze & López, 2020; Baecher et al., 2016; Liton, 2016; Munguia, 2017; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Reyes & Gentry, 2019), few studies have examined administrator perceptions of ELL students (Garcia-Borrego et al., 2020; Mady & Masson, 2018; Munguia, 2017; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Reeves & Van Tuyle, 2014; Reyes & Gentry, 2019), and even fewer studies include administrators and ELL students with disabilities (Kangas, 2018; Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Therefore, little is known about administrators' perceptions on providing adequate school experiences for ELL students with disabilities. This study explored administrator perspectives of equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities in the Pacific Northwest.

Chapter two first lays the foundation of the various factors that affect all ELL students such as ELL policies, educator training and professional development, and educator perceptions. Next, the chapter discusses special education and the factors that influence education for students with disabilities, before diving into the complex intersection of language and learning needs as

experienced by ELL students with disabilities, as well as the important role played by administrators to provide a suitable learning environment. The chapter closes with a discussion of the theoretical framework, DisCrit, which is a combination of Disability Studies and Critical Race Theory. The conclusion of the chapter highlights the lack of research exploring administrators' perceptions on equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities. The chapter highlights that by exploring this area of research, it is an important step to creating supportive, caring environments for ELL students with disabilities.

School Leaders' Effect on ELL Students

School leaders' decisions can have lasting impacts on ELL students' future endeavors and opportunities (Reyes & Domina, 2019). Shortsighted decisions and policies can negatively impact options, academic achievement, and graduation rates for ELL students (Wilcox et al., 2017). On the other hand, equitable policies and strong school leadership can help ELL students reach their full potential and create a welcoming school culture and environment (Auslander, 2018; Cruze & López, 2020; Von Esch, 2018; Wang, 2017). School leaders must learn how to identify harmful policies and make intentional leadership decisions to create more meaningful educational experiences for ELL students (Munguia, 2017).

Impact of Principals and Teacher Leaders

Principals are arguably the most influential leaders within a school (Grissom et al., 2021; Munguia, 2017). Effective principals contribute greatly to student achievement, attendance rates, and staff retention by cultivating welcoming school environments, fostering teacher development, collaborating with staff, and thoughtfully managing school resources (Grissom et al., 2021; Roberts et al., 2018; Wang, 2017). Principals are also a large part of the equation to advancing equity in schools (Grissom et al., 2021; Roberts et al., 2018). Principals can have

significant influence on culturally and linguistically diverse students and staff through various actions, such as overseeing appropriate discipline practices, ensuring the use of culturally responsive teaching, and recruiting staff that is reflective of the student population (Grissom et al., 2021). For ELL students with disabilities, principals can impact students' level of access to general education by promoting inclusive practices (Roberts et al., 2018).

Munguia (2017) assessed how principals use various systems to aid teachers in their mission to increase the educational achievement of ELL students. Interviewees were asked about their individual experience, training, and obstacles surrounding instructing ELL students. The study found five major themes emerge regarding strategies implored by principals to support the education of ELL students and teachers: school culture, structured time for English language development, time devoted to collaboration, interventions, data analysis, and professional development opportunities. The school culture must include educators with high expectations who feel connected to school staff through shared values, and believe they are trusted. It is crucial to build protected time for English language development into students' daily school schedules. Assessing student's language proficiency level is vital to provide targeted instruction and intervention. Professional development was essential for enhancing educators' knowledge of providing effective learning strategies for ELL students.

Teacher leaders play a large part in creating a welcoming environment for all students, especially students from marginalized backgrounds. Teacher leaders that have experience working with ELL students can pass on their knowledge to classroom teachers to provide effective instruction for diverse learners (Auslander, 2018; Von Esch, 2018). Von Esch (2018) examined how teacher leaders created opportunities and adjusted instruction for ELL students at the classroom, school, and district levels. The study highlighted the complicated social and

political elements that surround the education of ELL students and how teacher leaders maneuver this multifaceted environment while building teacher capacity. ELL-focused teacher leaders were the critical components to improving education and creating more equitable outcomes for ELL students, which include creating a vision for ELL instruction that connects to the larger vision of the district, offering professional development for all teachers, incorporating ELL students into the general education setting, and providing consistency for ELL-related issues across the district.

Collaboration

ELL students often face stigmatization, so it is critical to provide them with a safe and inclusive school environment (Auslander, 2018). Unfortunately, classroom teachers' training and skill level has not kept up with the increasing need to instruct students with diverse language needs (Munguia, 2017; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). To bridge this gap, schools should enhance collaboration efforts between classroom teachers and educators who have experience working with ELL students, such as English as a second language (ESL) teachers (He, 2013; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019; Wei, 2020). Collaboration time for teachers has been found to be essential for monitoring student growth, discussing various teaching approaches, and setting goals (Munguia, 2017; Wilcox et al., 2017).

Collaboration is crucial to promote "teacher commitment to long, sustainable change; and creating activities that enable teachers to meaningfully interact with other professionals. Teacher development cannot maximize its influence until it truly engages teachers in growing up as reflective teachers" (Wei, 2020, p. 62). By interviewing ESL teachers, Vintan and Gallagher (2019) found three main themes related to improving ELL instruction. First, authentic collaboration was vital for fostering relationships between ESL teachers and classroom teachers.

Second, obstacles such as time, resources, and training often stood in the way of effective collaboration efforts. Third, sharing instructional ideas for ELL students was complicated by the inconsistent use of technology. The study underscored the importance of schools allowing ample time and resources dedicated to the collaboration between ESL experts and classroom teachers.

Although dedicating time to collaboration between ESL teachers and general education teachers is imperative, it is even more important to focus on the quality of the collaboration so that ESL teachers can maximize their expertise (Kangas, 2017; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). Many schools utilize the push-in model of support, in which ESL teachers come into the general education classroom to provide direct support to ELL students (Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). If ESL teachers are not active participants in the preparation and development of lessons, instructional methods, and learning goals, then ESL teachers tend to feel their role is characterized as a teacher's aide, not as a fellow teacher with extensive knowledge of instructing ELL students (Kangas, 2017). Importantly, the responsibility to provide a positive learning experience for ELL students falls on all educators, not just ESL teachers (Daniel, 2014).

The quality of collaboration between ESL teachers and general education teachers can be positively influenced by administrators (Kangas, 2017; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). When administrators are supportive of ESL teachers and are advocates for ELL students, it can increase the likelihood of general education teachers seeking to partner with ESL teachers (Kangas, 2017). Administrators can gain confidence in supporting ESL teachers and ELL students by increasing their cultural competency and reflecting on their own bias (Vintan & Gallagher, 2019).

Another key to collaboration to create positive, welcoming environments, is for school administrators to lean on the support of mental health professionals in schools (Auslander, 2018;

Cook, 2015). As leaders of school mental health initiatives, school counselors have a wide range of skills that can help schools create an inviting, inclusive environment for all students (Cook et al., 2015). When teachers partner with school counselors, ELL students are better supported through the improvement of school climate, school leadership, and school-based support structures. School counselors are well equipped to lead schools towards policies that ensure ELL students feel safe, connected, and a sense of belonging that ultimately improves the school experience for every student (Auslander, 2018; Cook, 2015).

Current Policies for ELL Students

Education policies can alter the trajectory of the paths of ELL students. When districts implement narrower policies than the state mandates, it can have unintended consequences, especially for minoritized students (Cruze & López, 2020; Reyes & Domina, 2019). It is crucial for school districts to establish policies that offer differentiated language and instructional support while ELL students are developing their skills (Cruze & López, 2020; Reyes & Domina, 2019; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). However, it is also important to determine when to pull back those supports as ELL students reach proficient levels in English oral language skills (Reyes & Domina, 2019; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). When this occurs, ELL students are typically given the status of Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) (Thompson et al., 2020; White & Mavrogordato, 2019).

Reclassification

Many ELL students capable of attaining English proficiency are not appropriately assessed and miss the chance to become RFEP, which can impact their chance to take advanced courses or elective classes instead of English language support classes (White & Mavrogordato, 2019). Research has shown that the timing of reclassification is incredibly important for ELL

students. If support is removed too soon, then students are not able to reach their full academic potential. If students are reclassified too late, then it can interfere with their decision to take rigorous courses, decrease their odds of graduating on time, and impact higher education options (White & Mavrogordato, 2019). Administrators and policymakers need to be aware of the bias in systems that are preventing students from being appropriately placed (Cruze & López, 2020; White & Mavrogordato, 2019).

ELL students must be reclassified within the appropriate timeframe so that they can receive the language and instructional support they need (Thompson et al., 2020). When educators are not familiar with state or local policy guidelines for the classification requirements for ELL students, it can hinder educational opportunities for ELL students (Thompson et al., 2020; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). School districts must ensure that their teachers are well informed on the reclassification policies and procedures.

Research has shown that it can take five to seven years for ELL students to become proficient in understanding and speaking academic English (Diaz et al., 2016). Reyes and Domina (2019) examined two school districts in California on their classification processes for ELL students who reach proficiency in English. Students receiving special education services, students with interrupted education, and students born outside the U.S. were included in the study. The study found that processes in both districts varied yet exposed comparable levels of inequity. One district relied on test scores, while the other district allowed for input from teachers and parents to influence the reclassification process. Both districts had policies that made it more difficult to obtain English proficiency status than what was mandated by the state of California. Despite the different reclassification processes, it was much more difficult for male, Latino students from impoverished backgrounds to reach RFEP status in both districts. On

the other hand, female students with an Asian background were more likely to become RFEP than their other ELL peers.

Statewide Policy Impact on ELL Students

ELL students face many obstacles, and, unfortunately, some of the challenges they encounter are due to statewide policies. In Arizona, schools use what is known as Structured English Immersion (SEI) to instruct ELL students. The SEI method has been criticized since it separates ELL students from their monolingual peers and limits school administrators' decisions to push toward a model of inclusion of ELL students in all education settings (Cruze & López, 2020).

Cruze and López (2020) sought to understand how school leaders in Arizona combat obstructive statewide policies to reduce harm and ensure equity for ELL students. The study emphasized the importance of schools having leaders committed to pursuing equity for ELL students despite having to navigate harmful statewide policies. School leaders, such as principals, are crucial changemakers within school systems (Cruze & López, 2020; Grissom et al., 2021; Wang, 2017). Ultimately, school leaders can use their authority to impact whether schools decide to support ELL students equitably (Cruze & López, 2020; Grissom et al., 2021).

Policies and Programs for Newcomer Students

Newcomer students are ELL students born in a foreign country that immigrate to the U.S. and have been attending school for less than three years (Umansky et al., 2020). Although most ELL students are born in the U.S., newcomer students still represent a considerable portion of the total ELL population, including 10% at age five to 50% at age 18 (Thompson et al., 2020). Newcomer students encounter difficulties that are related to the economic, political, and cultural facets of their new school district (Auslander, 2018). School policies and the way newcomer

students are received can influence newcomer students' educational prospects and aspirations (Ammar et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2020).

Newcomer students face different obstacles than other ELL students (Auslander, 2018; Thompson et al., 2020; Umansky et al., 2020). Some of the difficulties newcomer students cope with are related to trauma and mental health issues that can arise during the journey to a new country (Umansky et al., 2020). Some newcomers make the trek alone and arrive in the U.S. with no family or documentation. Due to unsafe conditions, some newcomers have fled their home country and arrive as refugees. The academic skillsets can vary widely as some newcomers maintained prior consistent school attendance and gained literacy skills in their native language, while other newcomers were unable to attend school regularly, or even at all. Considering the plethora of complicated factors, educational leaders at every level question how to best serve newcomer students (Ammar et al., 2021; Umansky et al., 2020).

Thompson et al. (2020) explored the different factors that impact how newcomer students are received in two states in the U.S. The study found that newcomer students were spread out across districts and most schools often enrolled one or fewer newcomer students for each grade level. Newcomer subgroups encountered a varying level of reception, such as Somali-speaking students that were found to be highly concentrated in certain districts and faced high levels of poverty. The implications were that districts that serve a large population of newcomer students should enhance services that would benefit these students. Examples of effective instructional methods for newcomer students include creating programs and classes specifically designed for newcomers and refugees, pairing together newcomer students from similar backgrounds to increase English language skills, and providing ample bilingual teachers, assistants, immigrant community liaisons, and afterschool programs.

Although newcomer students have educational needs that are separate from ELL students born in the U.S., there are no federal laws or guidelines that explicitly mention newcomer education (Umansky et al., 2020). At the bare minimum, school districts must offer ELL services, but there are no additional legal requirements for students that have recently arrived in the public school system in the U.S. from another country. Due to unregulated service models, instruction for newcomer students can differ widely based on location, resources, and community support. For example, some districts serve newcomer students the same as ELL students by offering separate English language development (ELD) courses or ELD instruction within the general education setting. Some districts offer education through schools that are solely for newcomers and the instruction is dedicated to the development of language, academic, and cultural awareness skills (Ammar et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2020; Umansky et al., 2020).

When districts decide to create newcomer schools or centers, it is imperative that the centers are implemented with fidelity. Umansky et al. (2020) identified three key components that influenced newcomer programs: district leaders' attitudes toward equality, district resources, and educators' beliefs and attitudes toward newcomer students. Educational leaders must consider these elements as they decide on resources, professional development for teachers, and assessing newcomers' diverse needs. One implication for education policy is that school districts need to have sufficient resources, staffing, and teacher capacity to meet the needs of newcomer students (Thompson et al., 2020; Umansky et al., 2020).

Policies and Programs for Immigrant Students

There are many subpopulations of ELL students that have been largely excluded in research. African immigrant ELL students are one group that have been generally ignored in educational research. As of 2012, New York City had over 212,000 African immigrants. Due to

the unique languages spoken by African immigrant students, they often fall through the cracks in the school system and do not receive the bilingual educational support they need (Lee, 2019).

Some nonprofit groups have recognized that communities need to step up in order to fill this critical need. Lee (2019) analyzed a CBO (community-based organization) and how it supports African immigrant female students. The three-year-long study included female students representing the countries of Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Togo, and Gambia. The study highlighted the importance of CBOs to improve support for immigrant students. Creating partnerships between CBOs and school systems can effectively provide additional learning opportunities, especially for ELL students with unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The K-12 educational experience for immigrant students can have lasting implications. Vera et al. (2018) interviewed adults that were former immigrant and ELL students in the U.S., representing the following languages: Spanish, Urdu, Korean, Tagalog, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, Swahili, and Croatian. Even into adulthood, participants clearly recalled numerous examples of bullying or discrimination due to race or English proficiency level. On the other hand, participants reported that having more supportive school staff was associated with an increase in sense of belonging, positive peer relations, and supportive school environment. When teachers are willing to seek knowledge of the students' cultures and pursue community engagement from parents and other community resources to bolster students' educational experience, immigrant students are more eager to participate in the learning process (Jeong, 2021; Wissink & Starks, 2019).

Educators and ELL Students

Experienced and preservice teachers consistently demonstrate significant deficiencies in their ability to instruct ELL students (Daniel, 2014; Hafner & Ortiz, 2021; Wissink & Starks,

2019; Yochai, 2019). Teacher preparation programs can fall short of providing clear guidance to teachers to move from theory to practice. While training programs can provide a solid foundation of educational theory knowledge, many classroom teachers feel as if they were not truly prepared to enter the classroom and navigate the complexities of teaching (Samek et al., 2010). A lack of training can impact educators' confidence levels and their perceptions toward ELL students (Jozwik et al., 2020; Wissink & Starks, 2019). Negative perceptions can have severe consequences and affect the quality of instruction educators provide to ELL students (Gomez & Diarrassouba, 2014; Yough, 2019). On the other hand, when teachers are confident in their abilities to instruct ELL students, they are much more likely to produce favorable outcomes and overcome barriers to instruction (Yough, 2019).

Professional Development Impact on Perceptions of ELL Students

The population of ELL students is rapidly growing, yet most teachers are not advancing their skillset to adequately instruct ELL students (Gomez & Diarrassouba, 2014; Rizzuto, 2017; Slack, 2019; Von Esch, 2018). Professional development is key to enhance teachers' knowledge of providing effective learning strategies for ELL students (Munguia, 2017). Since many teachers do not receive this critical training during their teaching programs, it is imperative that school districts allocate more resources to provide ELL-specific professional development for educators (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019). This is especially important for school districts with a severe imbalance of culturally and linguistically diverse educators (Roberts & Guerra, 2017).

Slack (2019) studied the impact of an ELL facilitator-led professional learning community on teachers' ability to differentiate instruction for ELL students. The study revealed that a teacher-leader facilitator could influence teacher perceptions through professional learning communities (PLC), leading to meaningful differences in teachers' attitudes and practices when

teaching ELLs. Additionally, PLCs led by a skilled ELL-focused facilitator can create effective systems of collaboration and learning that provide equitable instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Research has shown that professional development in which an expert comes to a school district to make a one-time presentation on a single topic is often ineffective (Hoffman et al., 2009). To create meaningful impact, professional development should be an ongoing conversation and learning opportunity to improve practices (Hoffman et al., 2009; Slack, 2019). Hoffman et al. (2009) found that a multi-year partnership with a university and a school district led to an increase in school administrators' ability to understand barriers for ELL students, advocate for improved schoolwide practices, and implement strategies for enriched instruction.

Professional Development in Rural Districts

Research has largely excluded rural school districts, especially regarding teachers supporting the learning of ELL students and the impact of professional development (Ankeny, et al., 2019). The increase in ELL students is not restricted to large cities, as rural communities have seen an even greater growth rate. Rural school districts are often less equipped to support ELL students, leading to lower graduation rates and increased dropout rates for ELL students (Shim, 2013). Rural school districts, which make up one-third of all public schools in the U.S., deal with different barriers, such as limited resources and personnel to provide quality education to ELL students (Ankeny et al., 2019; Shim, 2013).

Ankeny et al. (2019) explored the impact of professional development on teachers working with ELL students in rural Florida. After receiving extensive professional development, teacher leaders began to utilize reflection, ongoing inquiry, and advocacy in order to better serve ELL students. Over a two-year period, the educators were able to not only engage in the content,

but also build relationships with one another to collaborate on how to enhance learning for ELL students in rural settings. After the training, 10 out of 21 participants sought higher degrees (Masters, Specialist, or Doctorate) to gain knowledge on how to best support ELL students.

Educator Training Impact on Perceptions of ELL Students

Only six states require educators to obtain specialized training for instructing ELL students (Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, New York, and Pennsylvania), while 15 states do not require any certifications for teaching ELL students beyond a teaching license (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019). Without specific training or professional development to understand the instructional needs of ELL students, teachers enter classrooms unprepared to educate some of the most vulnerable students (Accardo et al., 2020; Ankeny et al., 2019; Munguia, 2017; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019).

Okhremtchouk and Sellu (2019) explored the level of teacher preparation and skills to educate ELL students and found that most teachers in Arizona were not exposed to training in their teaching programs that addressed instructing ELL students. There was a strong correlation between teachers that often worked with ELL students during their preparation programs and a higher level of confidence in instructing ELL students once in the classroom. The implications from the study highlight the importance to include training during teacher preparation programs that specifically address working with ELL students. Since many teachers do not receive this critical training during their teaching programs, it is imperative that school districts invest in professional development to enhance educators' knowledge of working with ELL students.

When teachers are presented with guided opportunities within their preparation programs to engage in meaningful discourse about ELL students and appropriate instructional practices,

teachers can gain substantial insight on navigating culturally relevant curriculum, providing differentiated instruction to meet students where they are, and the influence of culture and language (Jimenez-Silva & Olson, 2012; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019).

Preservice Teacher Perceptions of ELL Students

Bilingual education has undergone many changes throughout the past few decades. In 2002, Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) was implemented as a way to maintain ELL students in the general education setting with their monolingual peers, with guided language support from their teachers (Cruze & López, 2020; Hafner & Ortiz, 2021). As the implementation of SEI unfolded, districts realized that educators needed to bolster their knowledge of instructing ELL students through SEI. Educators were mandated to complete SEI coursework on lesson planning, instruction, and second language acquisition theory. Despite the goals of the coursework, there were several critical learning objectives missing for educators that could have benefitted ELL students. The coursework failed to examine how to analyze instructional practices to ensure equity for ELL students, which often begins with self-reflection and identifying internalized bias and racism (Hafner & Ortiz, 2021).

By exploring bias toward ELL students by preservice teachers in an SEI course, Hafner and Ortiz (2021) found that most participants held adverse opinions about ELL students' abilities. The study also showed that participants' limited exposure to ELL students impacted their beliefs about SEI. Although participants gained knowledge of injustices pertaining to ELL students, they could not translate that knowledge into practice as they entered practicum sites. The researchers suggested that teachers need considerably more training to gain confidence when working with ELL students to stand up to inequitable practices. Training should include

coursework, guided mentorship, continuing professional development, and the opportunity to practice skills in a classroom with ELL students (Daniel, 2014; Hafner & Ortiz, 2021).

Preservice Teacher Confidence

Teacher preparation programs are the prime opportunity to address bias and racism towards minoritized students because "some teachers may hold maladaptive attitudes toward—and beliefs about—ELL students that are reinforced or left unchallenged as prospective teachers make their way through preparation" (Yough, 2019, p. 206). Yough (2019) analyzed whether explicit instruction for 209 preservice teachers in an educational psychology course would increase their confidence level in working with ELL students by providing a lesson that focused on building empathy for ELL students. The study found that participants who completed the two-hour lesson within the educational psychology course had significantly improved confidence levels towards their ability to instruct ELL students. The study added to the limited literature regarding teacher attitudes and beliefs towards ELL students and yielded two important findings. First, by providing a short lesson that explicitly builds educator confidence and empathy toward ELL students, preservice educators can increase their level of confidence in their ability to instruct ELL students. Secondly, survey responses suggested they felt least confident instructing ELL students compared to the overall student population. These findings suggest that teacher preparation programs should dedicate more courses to address preservice teachers' feelings of inadequacy to teach ELL students.

Preservice Administrator Perceptions of ELL Students

Administrators are an important part of shaping education for ELL students. Administrators must prioritize understanding ELL student learning because administrators are often school curriculum leaders. School leaders must recognize the importance of effective,

evidence-based strategies for ELL students in order to guide teachers who may not feel comfortable with their level of knowledge of instructing ELL students (Cruze & López, 2020; Lee, 2019; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Thompson et al., 2020; Umansky et al., 2020; White & Mavrogordato, 2019).

Reyes and Gentry (2019) aimed to assess the knowledge of administrators in preparation programs regarding learning for ELL students. The researchers found that preservice administrators significantly increased their knowledge of providing effective ELL instruction by receiving explicit, guided instruction as well as the chance to apply their skills. The study implies that providing evidence-based methods for ELL instruction to future administrators can enhance learning for all students. The methods and strategies provided can develop success with students' approaches to high-stakes testing, motivate learning, and can also be applied to students who struggle academically due to low socioeconomic status and lack of educational background.

Inservice Educator Perceptions of ELL Students

Research has shown that teacher beliefs and attitudes can influence instruction, especially for ELL students (Gomez & Diarrassouba, 2014; Rizzuto, 2017; Yochai, 2019). When teachers feel prepared to teach ELL students, there is a greater chance of positive student outcomes (Wissink & Starks, 2019). However, many educators have not received training through teacher preparation programs or professional development to understand how to support the complex needs of ELL students (Auslander, 2018; Baecher et al., 2016; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Wissink & Starks, 2019).

Rizzuto (2017) explored the perceptions of 10 pre-K to third-grade teachers toward ELL students. The research discovered that teachers "held negative perceptions regarding ELL students, specifically concerning the use of their native language in their classrooms and lacked

an understanding of second language acquisition" (Rizzuto, 2017, p. 190). Most of the teachers reported high levels of confidence in their teaching abilities yet denied responsibility for low academic achievement levels and placed blame on ELL students and their families. Interestingly, Yochai (2019) found that teachers that work with ELL students at secondary schools reported higher levels of moral responsibility than educators at the elementary level. School districts should prioritize training for teachers at the elementary level to become aware of their bias and shift their mindset and instructional practices toward ELL students (Rizzuto, 2017; Yochai, 2019).

A survey of 116 K-8 teachers in Michigan found that 80% of teachers reported having confidence to instruct students with diverse needs. However, nearly 86% of teachers agreed that educators should receive specialized training on language development for ELL students and many teachers voiced frustration on the push to include ELL students in mainstream courses. Teachers preferred to have ELL students receive instruction by educators with more expertise, such as bilingual or ESL teachers (Gomez & Diarrassouba, 2014).

TAG ELL Students

Talented and Gifted (TAG) students require differentiated instruction in order to reach their potential, similar to the needs of ELL students. The intersection of TAG and ELL status has revealed a significant gap in education. Although there are nearly five million ELL students in U.S. public schools, they are not represented in TAG programs at the same rate as their monolingual peers. The total TAG population represents 6-10% of all students, but only 3% of ELL students are designated as TAG. Educator training surrounding ELL instruction continues to increase in popularity, yet it consistently excludes the topic of gifted students within the ELL population (List & Dykeman, 2021; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020).

It is important to understand how teachers view TAG ELL students. Szymanski and Lynch (2020) examined underlying beliefs and attitudes that teachers hold toward gifted ELL students. The study found three common themes develop from the participants' responses. First, the beliefs and attitudes that educators hold toward ELL students can impact educational opportunities for ELL students. Second, educator bias can hinder the process of referring ELL students for gifted assessments. Third, a lack of training often leads to educators underestimating or missing signs of giftedness in ELL students. District leaders should aim to provide teacher training that specifically examines the intersection of giftedness in ELL students. More research is needed to determine how educators' positive regard toward ELL students can impact the representation of ELL students in gifted programs and examine training for educators and its effectiveness in shifting beliefs toward gifted ELL students.

Some states have significant discrepancies in their TAG identification process. List and Dykeman (2021) evaluated disproportionalities in TAG programs across the U.S. and found that New Hampshire, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Maine, and Massachusetts had the lowest levels of racial disproportionality, while Mississippi, New Mexico, Delaware, Georgia, and North Carolina had the worst. The study hypothesized there are three probable underlying reasons for racially and linguistically disproportionate TAG identification: discrepant guidelines across states for referring students for TAG, educator bias, and culturally loaded measures of intelligence (List & Dykeman, 2021; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020).

Perceptions of the Educational Experience

While many studies have focused on academic achievement and language proficiency, few researchers have examined how ELL students are affected by social or emotional factors that accompany being identified as ELL (LeClair et al., 2009; Niehaus et al., 2017; Vera et al., 2018).

Learning environments and social-emotional dynamics play a key role into the educational development of ELL students. Considering students spend over 15,000 hours at school over the course of their academic career, much more attention should be aimed at the impact of the classroom environment and social skills that are strengthened or hindered by such factors (LeClair et al., 2009).

Social-Emotional Factors

ELL students must navigate many social, academic, and linguistic demands that may differ from their non-ELL peers. Although it is important to provide excellent instructional for ELL students, educators must also consider the impact of a well-rounded education, including social-emotional factors (LeClair et al., 2009; Niehaus et al., 2017; Vera et al., 2018). Even when ELL students struggle academically, there are many protective factors that can assist ELL students reach high levels of resiliency and success (Danzak & Wilkinson, 2017).

Vera et al. (2018) conducted a mixed-method retrospective study of 57 adults that were former ELL students in the U.S. Participants reported that they often experienced bullying or discrimination based on their status as an ELL student. Some participants reported positive experiences when they felt welcomed by the school environment and staff. Quantitative information concluded that having more supportive school staff was associated to sense of belonging ($r = .467$, $p < .05$), peer relations ($r = .591$, $p < .05$), and supportive school environment ($r = .489$, $p < .05$). Interestingly, size of overall student population, ELL population size, participants' age or years in the U.S. did not influence social-emotional factors.

The power dynamic employed by a teacher can impact how ELL students' progress in the classroom. When ELL students are met with low teacher expectations, ELL students tend to be stunted in their academic growth. Alternatively, when ELL students are encouraged by their

teachers, they often feel inspired to rise to the higher expectations of performance (Diaz et al., 2016; Shim & Shur, 2018). When teachers have limited experience working with ELL students, teachers may not appreciate or understand the potential and value a child brings from a linguistically diverse background (Cho et al., 2019; Nichols & Soe, 2013).

Cho et al. (2019) examined teacher perspectives of ELL refugee students, largely from Somalia and Nepal. The study found that teachers reported an overall negative view of refugee ELL students and focused on what the students may lack, instead of the strengths they bring to the classroom. Only one teacher reported including the students' cultures into lessons, highlighting the students' cultural experience. The general pattern of teacher responses indicated a belief that refugee ELL students arrive with complex problems that are the responsibility of the teacher to remedy.

ELL students differ from their non-ELL peers when examining levels of confidence to perform well academically. Diaz et al. (2016) found that ELL students reported much lower levels of confidence compared to non-ELL students. Importantly, ELL students indicated that teachers often had the ability to increase students' levels of self-confidence. Similarly, Niehaus et al. (2017) found notable differences between ELL and non-ELL students regarding how the students' viewed their social-emotional difficulties versus teachers' perspectives. Latino ELL students reported significantly more social-emotional difficulties than their non-ELL peers, but teachers reported fewer social-emotional concerns for Latino ELL students compared to non-ELL students. Interestingly, the social-emotional difficulties reported by ELL students had a much stronger association with academic achievement deficits than teacher perceptions of ELL students' social-emotional skills. The study highlighted the importance of amplifying ELL

students' voices when considering the impact of social-emotional difficulties that contribute to the achievement gap between ELL and non-ELL students.

School Environment

The school environment can impact how ELL students feel and achieve in the classroom. When ELL students feel cared for, welcomed, and are presented with culturally relevant materials, they have a more favorable view of school. However, ELL students may face difficulties in school different from their non-ELL peers which can impact self-esteem. LeClair et al. (2009) examined 257 3rd through 5th grade ELL and non-ELL students' views and feelings of classroom environments at a school in the Midwest. The results indicated significant group differences in two out of the eight areas measured. ELL students felt less confident completing academic work compared to non-ELL students ($U = 3203$, $p = .038$). The difference in responses indicated that ELL students were aware of their academic difficulties as early as third grade. ELL students reported seeing more positive peer behavior and compliance than non-ELL students ($U = 3187$, $p = .034$). The findings were significant as they showed unexpected positive results that indicate similar classroom experiences for ELL and non-ELL students. However, the results point to differences in ELL students' perspectives on academic work, in which ELL students feel less competent when approaching their work compared to non-ELL students.

Research has found that when students feel understood and comfortable voicing their opinion, it increases academic achievement (Danzak & Wilkinson, 2017; Shim & Shur, 2018). Shim and Shur (2018) examined the perspectives of ELL students and their teachers of learning in the classroom in a rural community of 9,300 residents in the western region of the U.S. The study found three themes emerged among the student participants' responses. First, students found their ESL class to be uninteresting and unstimulating. Second, students reported feeling as

if their ESL teachers lacked empathy and compassion. Third, students expressed frustration over curriculum that is not relevant to their lived experiences as an ELL student. Among teacher participants' responses, two themes were found. First, teachers believed that ELL students spend too much time communicating in their native language. Second, teachers questioned ELL parents' commitment to prioritizing their children's education. The teachers' responses indicated beliefs that overemphasize individual behavior while failing to recognize possible systemic barriers. The study showed a stark difference in perceptions between ELL students and teachers on barriers to learning.

Classroom and Teacher Impact

ELL students are present in nearly 50% of all U.S. districts and schools. As more and more ELL students are instructed in the general education setting, research has focused on the impact on ELL students in this setting. However, few studies have examined potential influence of the classroom presence of ELL students on non-ELL (Gottfried, 2014; Irizarry & Williams, 2013). Gottfried (2014) examined the impact of having ELL students in classrooms on non-ELL student outcomes in a sample of 18,980 students. The study found that non-ELL students had lower levels of social-emotional difficulties with more ELL students in their classroom in kindergarten or first grade. The study reveals the benefits of including ELL students in general education classroom settings alongside monolingual English-speaking peers.

When teachers create positive relationships with ELL students, it improves ELL students' attitudes and beliefs towards school. For teachers to cultivate relationships, they must increase their cultural awareness of ELL students (He, 2013; Irizarry & Williams, 2013; Jozwik et al., 2020). Irizarry and Williams (2013) analyzed the relationship between middle school ELL students and their teachers. The study found several factors that influence ELL students' distrust

in school and their teachers. When ELL students felt disregarded, misunderstood, or devalued for their cultural or linguistic differences, it led to a break of trust towards educators. The study also found that ELL students trusted female Latino educators more than other ethnicities or genders.

The Turbulent History of Special Education

The history of special education has been marked by controversy, misinformation, and inappropriate placements, as well as instances of complete disregard for human dignity (Smith & Larwin, 2021). Although the earliest accounts of special education highlight neglect, progress was made in the 19th century when individuals with disabilities began to receive education in segregated schools, followed by a slow but steady shift towards providing appropriate programming for all children in their Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) (Dessemontet et al., 2012). Prior to the 19th century, there is little evidence to suggest that individuals with disabilities received any formal education (Smith & Larwin, 2021).

As the 20th century began, there were significant developments in the area of identifying students with disabilities, and teachers were becoming better trained to cater to their unique needs as more and more students with disabilities enrolled in public schools (Smith & Larwin, 2021). The landmark Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1975 cemented federal protections for students with disabilities, such as guaranteed access to curriculum and a free appropriate public education (FAPE) (Doutre & Willis, 2021; List & Dykeman, 2021).

When IDEA was reauthorized in 2004, accountability measures were added that aligned with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to track academic progress of students with disabilities (Kangas, 2018; Palmer et al., 2019). In 2015, NCLB was replaced with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which removed the punishments for schools tied to the accountability measures, but the requirement remained for reporting academic performance of

students with disabilities (Kangas, 2018; Kangas & Cook, 2020). The goal of tracking academic progress, as mandated by ESSA, was to ensure equitable educational opportunities for historically marginalized students, such as ELL students and students with disabilities (Kangas & Cook, 2020).

Data tracking from ESSA has revealed that every state in the U.S. has at least one school district that demonstrates disproportionate levels of identifying minoritized students with disabilities. Nearly half of the 17,371 U.S. school districts had disproportionate rates of minoritized students for three successive years (Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Specifically, students who identify as Indigenous, Black, or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander are more likely to be identified for a disability compared to students from other backgrounds (Whitenack et al., 2019).

After students are identified as having a disability, the school team must determine the student's placement, or where the student will receive the bulk of instruction. In the past few decades, there has been progress toward inclusion, which refers to integrating students with disabilities into classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers (Dessemontet et al., 2012; Smith & Larwin, 2021). From 2007 to 2016, the percentage of students with disabilities who were educated in general education classrooms for 80% or more of the school day increased from 57.2% to 63.1% (Smith & Larwin, 2021). However, while inclusive educational settings provide additional opportunities for learning and growth, many students with disabilities are still being educated in overly restrictive environments (Dessemontet et al., 2012; Smith & Larwin, 2021).

Furthermore, despite legislative action and an increase in inclusion to address inequitable outcomes, students with disabilities continue to fall behind their non-disabled peers, as demonstrated with lower academic test scores and lower graduation rates (Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Wilcox et al., 2017**;** Yochai, 2019). For example, 36% of fourth grade students in the U.S.

perform at or above proficiency levels in reading, compared to just 11% proficiency levels for students with disabiliites (Whitenack et al., 2019). Even though there are a plethora of programs or frameworks that aim to address these academic disparities, such as culturally relevant pedagogy, universal design for learning, social-emotional learning, or culturally sustaining pedagogy, Whitenack et al. (2019) suggests that they are siloed approaches that do not consider the intersectionality that capture the whole student.

Educators Supporting Students with Disabilities

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides federal protections for students with disabilities (Doutre & Willis, 2021; List & Dykeman, 2021). Although it is a federal law, special education services are not fully funded by the federal government. In fact, most of the expenses of serving students with disabilities come from state or local funding. School districts feel pressure to appropriately support 13 million students with disabilities across the U.S. with limited funding from the federal government, while still adhering to the law of providing a free and appropriate education (FAPE) (Doutre & Willis, 2021). Funding limitations cause rural school districts to feel especially challenged as they try to attract and retain qualified educators and related service providers, such as school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and nurses. Due to limited funding and personnel, school leaders and administrators may be influenced to only provide students with disabilities services readily available in their district rather than what the students truly need to access their education (Turnage, 2020).

According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2019), roughly 13% of public school students in the U.S. qualify for special education services. However, that average can vary across different states. Some states have as few as 6.4% of students receiving

special education services, while other states have an average of 15.1 percent. The wide range can partially be explained by states' abilities to implement their own process for evaluating students and unique standards that allow students to qualify for services. IDEA is the standard that all states must follow, but there are additional rules and regulations in each state for students with disabilities (Doutre & Willis, 2021; Turnage, 2020).

In addition to following these regulations, teachers and administrators must be prepared to address differences in student learning, personality, social-emotional skills, and sociocultural factors. Educators do not always receive adequate training to properly instruct students with disabilities, impacting how they perceive students with disabilities (Szymanski & Lynch, 2020; Wissink & Starks, 2019). Teacher training programs are the ideal locations to improve perceptions and increase knowledge of students with disabilities (Baglama et al., 2017).

Communication Between Families and Schools

Communication is the most critical part of creating positive relationships between educators and parents. This is especially important for students with disabilities who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) (Accardo et al., 2020; Cioè-Peña, 2021; Kroesch & Peeples, 2021). Parental input on student progress, interventions, and IEP goals can help set up students for success. However, teacher preparation programs often fail to address how to enhance collaboration between teachers and parents (Accardo et al., 2020; Wissink & Starks, 2019). Teachers are the experts in the classroom, but parents are the experts of their children. Therefore, teachers can learn a lot from parents on developing learning opportunities for students with disabilities (Accardo et al., 2020).

Teachers can bolster their communication skills with specific interventions. Accardo et al. (2020) examined the effects of an intervention to improve communication skills between

educators and parents of students with disabilities and found that the intervention produced higher confidence levels in teachers' ability to communicate and establish relationships with parents of students with disabilities. The study is significant because it demonstrates a need for teacher preparation programs to include teacher/family collaboration skills training. Participants who received the training had much lower anxiety levels and higher confidence in their abilities to connect with parents of students with disabilities. The study emphasized the importance of training preservice teachers so that they have the necessary skills when they enter the classroom and are better equipped to serve students with disabilities.

Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

Education has made slow progress when it comes to including students with disabilities alongside typically developing peers. Special education has a long, unfortunate history of excluding students with disabilities from the general education setting (Smith & Larwin, 2021). Legislation in the past few decades has mandated that students with disabilities receive their free and appropriate education in the least restrictive setting (Mngo et al., 2018; Smith & Larwin, 2021). Since most students with disabilities spend the bulk of their day in the general education classroom, general education teachers must be prepared to educate students with unique learning needs (Dessemontet et al., 2012; Smith & Larwin, 2021). Students with significant needs due to their disability (such as autism, intellectual disabilities, deafblind, or emotional/behavioral disabilities) also have the right to the least restrictive environment, which could mean they spend part of or all their day in the general education classroom (Kroesch & Peeples, 2021).

As of 2016, about 63% of students with disabilities are included in general education for most of their day, which is a six percent increase from 2007 (Smith & Larwin, 2021). Instead of being isolated in a specialized classroom or learning resource center, it is ideal for students with

disabilities to receive appropriate instruction next to their non-disabled peers (Dessemontet et al., 2012). In fact, including students with disabilities in the general education setting can lead to positive student outcomes (Dessemontet et al., 2012; Smith & Larwin, 2021). Dessemontet et al. (2012) found that when students with intellectual disabilities were fully included in the general education classroom, they significantly improved their reading skills compared to students with cognitive disabilities in specialized placements.

Some educators and parents worry that including students with disabilities in the general education classroom will negatively affect non-disabled students. However, research has proven that these concerns are unfounded and likely based on stigma that continues to permeate society about the capabilities of students with disabilities (Smith & Larwin, 2021). Non-disabled peers can actually benefit from learning alongside students with disabilities by widening their perspectives and experiencing new ways of learning (Dessemontet et al., 2012; Smith & Larwin, 2021).

Educator Perspectives of Inclusion

Although many educators have started to embrace the idea of inclusion, it is not always put into practice (Mngo et al., 2018). Some educators still hold onto the idea that modified instruction and IEP services cannot be implemented in the general education classroom. Teacher preparation programs often fail to provide guidance for general education teachers to understand the benefits of inclusion, the guidelines for a least restrictive environment, and how to provide instructional modifications (Smith & Larwin, 2021).

Even when teachers can understand the theory behind inclusion and the possible benefits, they still tend to lack confidence in their teaching abilities to instruct students with disabilities and prefer students with disabilities be instructed in a different classroom or even a

different school (Mngo et al., 2018; Smith & Larwin, 2021). To shift the pendulum towards greater levels of inclusion, school districts need buy-in from staff. If educators hold negative views or beliefs toward students with disabilities, it can be much harder for administrators to implement change with fidelity (Smith & Larwin, 2021). Smith and Larwin (2021) analyzed teacher and principal attitudes toward inclusion and whether it is impacted by years of experience or administrator support. Researchers found that educator attitudes toward inclusion were influenced by how long the educator had been in the field. Teachers that had been in the field longer held more negative beliefs about inclusion. Interestingly, this was not true for principals. The level of experience did not affect principals' views regarding inclusion. Lastly, the level of administrator support felt by teachers did not impact teacher opinions toward including students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Educators Supporting ELL Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are often excluded from studies, but many students who receive special education services are also ELL students (Reyes & Domina, 2019; Wanzek et al., 2016). Approximately 10% of students with disabilities are also ELL students. The most common languages represented by ELL students in the U.S. include Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese. However, there are 36 other languages represented by almost 800,000 ELL students (Jozwik et al., 2020). With such a wide array of languages in the U.S. school system, it is no wonder that educators have struggled to tease apart academic difficulties due to language proficiency or a disability. The complexities of addressing language needs and disability needs require specialized training. However, special education teachers and administrators are not always getting the appropriate training needed to properly instruct students with disabilities that are also learning a new language (Jozwik et al., 2020; Roberts & Guerra, 2017).

The Power of Principals

Principals have a core responsibility in guiding schools towards equitable outcomes for all students (Grissom et al., 2021; Roberts et al., 2018; Wang, 2017). As the top leaders in individual schools, principals have the most authority to implement change (Grissom et al., 2021; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Roberts et al., 2018). Therefore, principals need to become champions of advocacy efforts for disadvantaged students (Cruze & López, 2020; Palmer et al., 2019). Principals must also possess knowledge in upholding laws and protections for students, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 accommodations (Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Smith & Larwin, 2021). However, research has found that principals are often not adequately trained to lead school teams to make equitable decisions for students with disabilities, especially ELL students with disabilities (Grissom et al., 2021; Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Principals' beliefs and attitudes toward students with disabilities can impact their entire school system by determining how much a school welcomes and includes students with disabilities (Tracy-Bronson, 2020).

Principals have the power to implement new initiatives in their schools (Grissom et al., 2021; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Roberts et al., 2018). Palmer et al. (2019) studied how principals in training in Texas could support ELL students with disabilities and found that equity audits had a positive impact. The equity audits provided a catalyst for change since they revealed objective data of discrepancies for minorized students and students with disabilities. Principals were able to use data to pinpoint areas for improvement and implement specific solutions. School districts should continually audit their student population and measurable outcomes to ensure equity for all students, especially ELL students with disabilities (List & Dykeman, 2021; Palmer et al., 2019).

When leaders are transparent about their weaknesses, schools can aim toward radical transformation and education that is rooted in equity. Principals must be willing to examine their bias, especially towards historically marginalized students (Grissom et al., 2021; Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Roberts and Guerra (2017) examined the perceptions of principals toward students with disabilities and ELL students with disabilities. Principals demonstrated minimal knowledge in creating and evaluating coursework for students with disabilities. The lack of leadership skills related to special education indicated that principal training programs should include coursework on special education law (such as IDEA or Section 504), universal curriculum designs, and diverse students, including Latino students and ELL students with disabilities.

Educator Cultural Competency

Educators must demonstrate competency to have confidence while working with students with diverse needs. In order to effectively instruct ELL students, teachers need specialized training in language development and second language acquisition (Jozwik et al., 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020). When teachers are bilingual and/or from the same culture as their ELL students, it can help break through linguistic and cultural barriers that other educators encounter and must mitigate using interpreters or cultural brokers. Even if an educator does not have the advantage of being bilingual, they can improve their practice by increasing their cultural competency and being willing to learn about the cultures of their ELL students (Jozwik et al., 2020).

Specialized training for educators supporting ELL students must include guidance on instructing students with disabilities. ELL students with disabilities have some of the most unique needs in a school system (Jozwik et al., 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Szymanski

& Lynch, 2020). Jozwik et al. (2020) assessed educators' competency in supporting ELL students with disabilities and found that bilingual and multilingual participants reported higher levels of confidence in their skill set to educate ELL students with disabilities. Surprisingly, educators with additional teaching credentials, such as English as a Second Language (ESL), did not report higher levels of confidence in general. Participants reported the lowest levels of knowledge regarding students' language development and cultural considerations. The study is significant because it exposes the lack of confidence in preservice, inservice, and ESL teachers to serve students with unique language and instructional needs.

Bilingual Programs

Students with disabilities are protected by many federal laws and guidelines that many educators are well versed in (Kangas, 2018; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Smith & Larwin, 2021). However, when an ELL student also has a disability, their second language needs tend to fall well behind their disability needs (Kangas, 2017; Karvonen et al., 2021; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Bilingual schools and programs have the chance to provide meaningful instruction for students learning another language at the same level that they provide special education services. Bilingual education programs have shown that when ELL students receive native language instruction, they are more likely to produce greater levels of academic achievement (Kangas, 2017).

Bilingual education has faced an uphill battle since the 1990s when it was banned in Arizona, California, and Massachusetts. Although California and Massachusetts repealed those bans, Arizona remains an 'English-only' state for public school education (Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017). Bilingual schools are thought to be ideal for minimizing inappropriate referrals for ELL students for special education services. In a school that touts prioritizing

second language acquisition, it should be easier to distinguish disability from language proficiency. For ELL students with disabilities, bilingual schools should be meeting their linguistic and disability needs.

Unfortunately, in a bilingual charter school studied by Kangas (2017), educators still failed to meet the needs of ELL students with disabilities. The bilingual charter school placed more emphasis on meeting the needs of students' disabilities and prevented ELL students from getting the second language support needed to advance their English language skills. The researcher suggested it is necessary to identify educators' negative thinking patterns rooted in racism and ableism. Educator training programs need to make space for educators to reflect on their beliefs about ELL students with disabilities in order to minimize negative attitudes and perceptions (Gomez & Diarrassouba, 2014; Kangas, 2017; Rizzuto, 2017; Yochai, 2019).

Misrepresentation in Special Education

Educators have long-questioned how to appropriately identify ELL students with disabilities, especially at the elementary level when most ELL students are working towards English proficiency (Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). According to special education law, students cannot meet the criteria for any disability category if their difficulties are the primary result of limited English proficiency (DeMatthews & Knight, 2019). Therefore, many educators question how to ensure that ELL status is not the direct cause of academic difficulties. Educator hesitancy and lack of training can lead to misidentification for ELL students that may have disabilities but are not referred for evaluation in a timely manner (Umansky et al., 2017).

ELL students have been found to be underrepresented in early grades and overrepresented in later grades within special education (DeMatthews & Knight, 2019;

Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). ELL students with disabilities are difficult to categorize due to many overlapping factors. Additionally, many educators do not understand the difference of characteristics of a learning disability and second language acquisition. Therefore, many ELL students are inaccurately labeled with a learning disability in early grades, and many ELL students are missed in the later grades (Yamasaki & Luk, 2018).

Due to the Child Find mandate of IDEA, educators are required to initiate an evaluation for special education if a student is suspected of having a disability. Complexities tied to the intersection of second language acquisition and academic difficulties can often blur the line for educators of whether they should refer students for evaluation for special education. Without specific training for teachers, this can create an imbalance of ELL students represented in special education schoolwide or even statewide (DeMatthews & Knight, 2019; Palmer et al., 2019; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018).

Yamasaki and Luk (2018) found that bilingual students proficient in English were commonly underrepresented in third, fourth, and fifth grade for specific learning disabilities and communication disorders in the state of Massachusetts. Researchers suggested that schools need to rethink the way they retrieve information from families about their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as the families' access to literacy development in the home setting. When schools have accurate information from families, it can help school teams differentiate between second language acquisition difficulties and a specific learning disability.

Overrepresentation in special education for ELL students is also an issue in secondary schools (DeMatthews & Knight, 2019; Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Since some schools wait too long to evaluate ELL students, this creates a ripple of problems. Umansky et al. (2017) found that ELL students were identified with a disability at a later average grade

(fifth to sixth grade) compared to their monolingual peers (fourth to fifth grade). Identifying students with disabilities too late can prevent students from receiving interventions in a timely manner. School districts need to closely examine their identification rates for special education to determine if the rates for ELL students are inappropriate compared to monolingual peers. Districts should also examine specific disability categories (such as specific learning disabilities or communication disorders) to identify any problematic patterns.

Standardized Assessment of ELL Students with Disabilities

ELL students endure more testing than their monolingual peers due to state requirements of English language proficiency assessments (Reyes & Gentry, 2019). When ELL students are dual identified with a disability, they often encounter barriers that prevent them from displaying their knowledge through accessible standardized assessments. All students with disabilities are expected to be included in districtwide and statewide assessments, but low expectations impede students with disabilities from accessing certain tests that are required for students with and without disabilities. Only a few states provide policy that explicitly outlines guidance on assessing ELL students with disabilities (Liu et al., 2017).

Liu et al. (2017) recommended five guidelines to help policymakers make decisions regarding ELL students with disabilities and their participation in standardized assessments. First, the standards for assessment should be equal for students with disabilities and students without disabilities. Second, the construction of test questions should be accessible to all students, with specific attention to accommodations for students with disabilities. Third, decisions to include ELL students with disabilities in standardized assessments should be made according to the student's IEP. Fourth, decisions on testing accommodations should be made by individuals on the student's IEP team that consider the student's English proficiency and

disability needs. Lastly, teachers need guidance on how information from standardized assessments can inform classroom interventions.

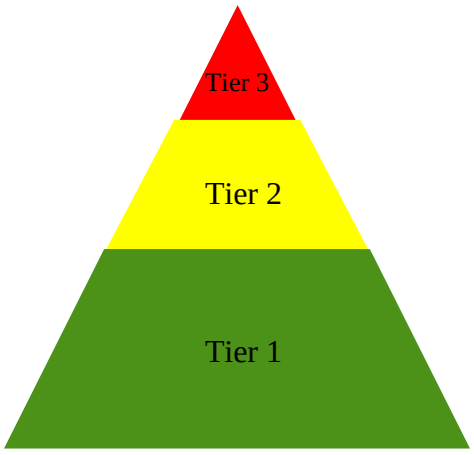
Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

As educators strive for ways to adequately identify disabilities in ELL students, many have advocated for the use of the evidence-based framework, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), which includes Response to Intervention (RTI), to provide targeted instruction in the general education setting (O'Connor et al., 2013; Park, 2019). The goal of MTSS and RTI is to intervene as soon as students are straining to maintain grade level academic standards so that students do not continue to fall behind (O'Connor et al., 2013).

The three tiers of MTSS are often visualized as a triangle with three tiers that build upon each other. Tier 1 includes the foundation of supports that all students receive. A strong Tier 1 should provide enough support for most students (Liasidou, 2013). Tier 2 provides more targeted interventions for some students, while Tier 3 encompasses intensive, individualized support for a few students (Liasidou, 2013; O'Connor et al., 2013; Park, 2019). Figure 1 presents the MTSS triangle with the three tiers and commonly associated colors for each tier.

Figure 1

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Triangle



The rationale behind using MTSS or RTI for ELL students is to ensure educators are correctly distinguishing a disability from limited English proficiency. Data from RTI methods can be used to consider referring students for special education evaluations and even help determine eligibility for special education services (O'Conner et al., 2013; Park, 2019). However, when the basic level of MTSS, Tier 1, is not implemented correctly, then RTI does not allow for appropriate identification of learning disabilities (Park, 2019).

Furthermore, without appropriate Tier 1 support, it is difficult to distinguish whether students' academic difficulties are due to a disability, lack of English proficiency, or lack of instruction. Park (2019) focused on Tier 1 MTSS support for English Language Development (ELD) and how ELL students that were referred for evaluation for special education services were provided ELD support. The study found that many teachers lack the resources and desire to provide appropriate ELD and Tier 1 support to ELL students with possible disabilities. Experienced teachers were more likely to resist changes to their practice, such as implementing RTI methods that individualize instruction to meet the needs of each student.

Many schools have chosen to implement reading intervention strategies using RTI for ELL students. Some proponents of RTI claim that schools that utilize RTI methods will see a decrease in special education referrals for disability categories such as learning disability (O'Connor et al., 2013; Park, 2019). O'Connor et al. (2013) compared the rate of special education identification for one group of 377 ELL students receiving RTI and another group of 381 ELL students who did not receive RTI instructional practices. The four-year study found ELL students in the RTI group had more proportionate representation for ELL students identified with a learning disability.

ELL Students with Significant Disabilities

Researchers have frequently explored the separate complexities of ELL students and students with disabilities. However, not enough research has been conducted that examines the cross-section of English language acquisition difficulties and disability related problems. Even fewer studies have included ELL students with significant cognitive disabilities (Karvonen et al., 2021; Kroesch & Peeples, 2021). Students with severe cognitive limitations have often been lumped in with all students receiving special education services and not examined separately. When ELL students also have significant cognitive disabilities, it is paramount that educators understand their unique language and educational needs.

When ELL students have significant disabilities, schools are still obligated to provide language services as well as special education services (Kangas & Cook, 2020; Karvonen et al., 2021). Karvonen et al. (2021) found that educators centered their instruction on providing interventions based on the student's cognitive disability and disregarded methods that focused on language acquisition. Educators frequently cited difficulty distinguishing student academic difficulties due to cognitive limitations or lack of English proficiency. Educators must prioritize communication and building relationships with students' families is to improve instruction (Accardo et al., 2020; Cioè-Peña, 2021; He, 2013; Karvonen et al., 2021; Kroesch & Peeples, 2021).

Many general education teachers do not feel confident providing instruction to students with severe cognitive disabilities. Kroesch and Peeples (2021) examined perceptions of high school teachers on inclusive practices for students with significant disabilities and found that teachers felt incapable of fulfilling the overall IEP instructional requirements in the general education classroom. Teachers reported low levels of confidence in working together with

related service providers, such as speech pathologists or occupational therapists, to deliver services based on a student's IEP. Most teachers did not feel as if they could include modifications or accommodations in the general education setting. Given that general education teachers are required members of an IEP team (Jozwik et al., 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020), this study underscores the importance of general education teachers feeling confident enough to implement components of an IEP, especially for students with the most significant disabilities.

Educational Opportunities for ELL Students with Disabilities

ELL students with disabilities have access to both ELD services to enhance their language skills and special education services to assist their learning (Ammar et al., 2021; Park, 2019; Thompson et al., 2020; Umansky et al., 2020). Even though these types of services or courses aim to improve skills for ELL students with disabilities, there are often unintended consequences as students transition to the secondary level. As students' schedules become filled with ELD and special education classes, they sometimes lose the opportunity to take advanced courses or elective courses (Kangas & Cook, 2020; Umansky et al., 2020).

Kangas and Cook (2020) analyzed middle school ELL students with disabilities and their access to educational opportunities in a large school in Pennsylvania. The study found several factors that played a role in limiting educational opportunities for ELL students with disabilities. First, the school heavily relied on standardized testing scores to make decisions on course schedules for ELL students with disabilities. Second, although the school aimed to provide inclusive classrooms, it resulted in a restriction of the learning environment for ELL students with disabilities. Third, tracking or placement was influenced by educators' perceptions of ELL students with disabilities. Several educators expressed negative beliefs about the potential of

ELL students with disabilities and did not believe that the students would be successful in higher track classes. Despite several ELL students with disabilities making the honor roll, many educators believed that those specific students would not have as much academic success without the modifications or accommodations offered in the lower-track classes.

Evidence of limited educational opportunities for ELL students with disabilities can also be found by analyzing IEPs. Hoover et al. (2019) reviewed IEPs in suburban and rural districts and found that despite federal mandates, cultural and linguistic factors were often left unaddressed in their IEP, severely neglecting core components to a student's identity. Educators must be knowledgeable in documenting and implementing services, goals, and accommodations in a culturally responsive manner to the needs of ELL students with disabilities (Hoover et al., 2019; Jozwik et al., 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020).

Administrators

Administrators must consider the impact of intersectionality for ELL students with disabilities (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Cioè-Peña, 2021; Chiu et al., 2022; Kangas, 2017; Miller, 2022; Schwitzman, 2019; Whitenack et al., 2019). It is inadequate to evaluate language and learning differences as standalone issues (Annamma & Morrison; Whitenack et al., 2019). Whitenack et al. (2019) suggests administrators take a holistic approach to improve the educational experience for ELL students with disabilities. To do this, principals must understand the complexities that students face due to race, gender, socioeconomic status, and/or disability status. However, principals may be hesitant or feel uncomfortable to address possible discrimination in their schools that come from individuals or systems-level oppression (Wang, 2017).

While administrators must understand policies that affect minoritized students, (Cruze & López, 2020; Lee, 2019; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Thompson et al., 2020; Umansky et al., 2020; White & Mavrogordato, 2019), they must also be able to create school environments conducive to learning for ELL students with disabilities (Auslander, 2018; Cruze & López, 2020; Reyes & Gentry, 2019; Von Esch, 2018). Unfortunately, administrators are not always getting the appropriate training needed to do so (Jozwik et al., 2020; Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Since administrators have a considerable impact on student achievement, school climate, and equitable outcomes (Cruze & López, 2020; Grissom et al., 2021; Munguia, 2017; Palmer et al., 2019; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Roberts et al., 2018; Smith & Larwin, 2021), it is critical to understand how administrators perceive appropriate school environments for students with learning and language differences. By examining administrator perceptions, schools can pinpoint ways to improve outcomes for ELL students with disabilities (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Tracy-Bronson, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Educators have the chance to impact each student that walks through school doors. Most of us can likely remember a teacher that positively influenced our educational experience. However, some students encounter harmful school experiences based on educator bias towards their race or disability status (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Miller, 2022; Palmer et al., 2019). Many individuals, including educators, struggle to have honest conversations about racism, systemic oppression, and inequity. As most of the teaching workforce is White, teachers can sometimes be unaware of their privilege and the systemic barriers that many of their students encounter (Perouse-Harvey, 2022). Teacher preparation programs offer few opportunities for preservice or novice teachers to receive training on confronting bias that can influence classroom

environments and experiences for minoritized students (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Schwitzman, 2019).

Although it can be uncomfortable to confront internalized bias, it is essential work for teachers and administrators. Educators have the obligation to interrupt the ostracism of their students instead of being passive observers. School districts that aim for "nonpartisan" policies and educators that describe themselves as "colorblind" believe they are contributing to unbiased student results, when the opposite is true (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Whitenack et al., 2019). Oppressive school systems are settings that intentionally avoid dialogues on racism, bigotry, and discrimination (Annamma & Morrison, 2018). Awareness of perceptions and bias towards individuals with disabilities, and diverse linguistic or cultural backgrounds, is an initial step towards advancing educational equity for all students (Accardo et al., 2020; Baglama et al., 2017; Hafner & Ortiz, 2021; Jozwik et al., 2020; Mngo et al., 2018; Palmer et al., 2019; Rizzuto, 2017; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Smith & Larwin, 2021 Szymanski & Lynch, 2020; Yochai, 2019).

The theoretical framework for this study draws on disability critical race theory (DisCrit), which examines the intersection of race and disability (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Cioè-Peña, 202; Chiu et al., 2022; Miller, 2022; Schwitzman, 2019). DisCrit theory scrutinizes systemic barriers that inhibit opportunities and inflict harm for minoritized people (Cioè-Peña, 2021; Perouse-Harvey, 2022). Subini Ancy Annamma is credited for coining the term "DisCrit." DisCrit is a combination of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Disability Studies (DS) that considers how race and disability status intersect (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Cioè-Peña, 2021).

Disability Studies

Disability Studies (DS) is an interdisciplinary field of study that examines disability as a social, cultural, and political phenomenon. It seeks to understand the experiences of people with disabilities and challenge the social and cultural barriers that impede their full participation in society (Reid & Knight, 2006; Schwitzman, 2019). The history of DS can be traced back to the disability rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which emerged in response to the institutionalization and segregation of people with disabilities. This movement was influenced by the civil rights and feminist movements and sought to challenge the medical model of disability, which viewed disability as an individual pathology to be cured or fixed (Reid & Knight, 2006).

DS questions the concept of normality as a system of beliefs and brings to light the damaging effects of marginalization, such as portraying individuals with disabilities as outsiders (Reid & Knight, 2006). Second, DS challenges the authority of those who speak on behalf of others in relation to disability matters, such as determining where individuals with disabilities should access services. It prioritizes the lived experiences of people with disabilities over self-proclaimed experts (Reid & Knight, 2006; Schwitzman, 2019). Third, DS critiques the dominant power structures in society and encourages democratic involvement. In doing so, it aims to counteract hegemony and promote a more inclusive society (Reid & Knight, 2006).

DS calls attention to how the labeling of a disability is a social construct, often used to justify discrimination and segregation (Annamma et al., 2013). One clear example of disability as a social construct is when the criteria for an intellectual disability significantly changed in the 1970s, from one to two standard deviations below the mean on a standardized intelligence assessment. Before this shift, individuals with an IQ score of 85 or lower (compared to a score of

70 or lower) could qualify; meaning that many individuals' disability status disappeared overnight (Annamma et al., 2013; Reid & Knight, 2006).

DS has continued to grow and evolve, with scholars and activists focusing on a range of issues, such as accessibility, disability and the environment, disability and technology. A newer field within DS, disability studies in education (DSE) focuses on disability matters in education, such as examining how school environments and systems impact students with disabilities and perpetuate deficit thinking patterns. DSE emphasizes equitable curriculum, accessible school environments, and inclusive classrooms (Schwitzman, 2019).

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an intellectual movement and interdisciplinary field of study that emerged in the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, a law professor, is attributed to the creation of the term "critical race theory" (Morgan, 2022). CRT is grounded in the belief that race is not a natural or biologically determined category, but rather a social construct that has been used to justify unequal distribution of power, resources, and opportunities (Morgan, 2022; Schwitzman, 2019). CRT draws on a variety of disciplines, including law, sociology, anthropology, history, and philosophy, to examine how race and racism operate in society (DeMatthews, 2020; Morgan, 2022; Schwitzman, 2019).

The origins of CRT can be traced back to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, which challenged racial segregation and discrimination in the United States. In the 1970s, a group of legal scholars, including Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado, began to critique the limitations of traditional civil rights approaches to addressing racism (Morgan, 2022). In the 1980s and 1990s, CRT became more widely recognized as an academic

field and has since expanded beyond legal scholarship to encompass a range of disciplines and has influenced social movements and public policy (Morgan, 2022; Schwitzman, 2019).

CRT remains a controversial and debated field of study, with some critics arguing that it is divisive and anti-white, while others argue that it is an essential tool for understanding and challenging systemic racism (DeMatthews, 2020; Morgan, 2022). CRT has become a hot topic and "buzzword" in the K-12 setting, even though CRT is typically only taught at universities. In a 2021 survey of more than 1,100 teachers by the Association of American Educators, over 96% of teachers reported that CRT is not being taught in their schools (Morgan, 2022). Although CRT may not be explicitly taught in K-12 schools, some have argued that other teaching methods or programs, such as culturally responsive teaching or anti-bias training, include similar components found in CRT (Morgan, 2022; Schwitzman, 2019).

Due to the misunderstandings, fear, and panic surrounding CRT, it has led to severe legislative consequences for K-12 education across the U.S. In 2021, Idaho, Iowa, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas banned teaching CRT in schools. Many educators voiced concern that the bans would interfere with their ability to discuss sensitive topics such as racism and slavery, lead to a misrepresentation of historical events, and punish teachers with fines or reduce school funding as a consequence of not implementing the ban (Morgan, 2022). While CRT can provide a framework to recognize the manifestation of racism in school systems, it does not incorporate the additional core component of ableism (Annamma et al., 2013; Annamma & Morrison, 2018; DeMatthews, 2020).

Disability Critical Race Theory

Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) is an interdisciplinary field of study that examines the intersection of race, disability, and other forms of identity and oppression. Subini

Ancy Annamma proposed DisCrit in 2013 as a response to the limitations of both Disability Studies and Critical Race Theory in fully addressing the experiences of people with disabilities who are also members of racialized communities (Annamma et al., 2013; Chiu et al., 2022). DisCrit seeks to understand how race and disability intersect to produce unique experiences of discrimination and marginalization (Annamma, 2018). It challenges the notion that disability is solely an individual medical issue and instead examines how disability is constructed and experienced within social, cultural, and political contexts (Annamma, 2018; Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Miller, 2022).

DisCrit is an evolving field of study that seeks to expand our understanding of the experiences of people with disabilities who are also members of racialized communities. It has the potential to inform social policy and practice by highlighting the ways in which race and disability intersect to shape individuals' lives and experiences (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Miller, 2022). The following are the seven tenets of DisCrit (Miller, 2022).

1. Describes the circular interaction of racism and ableism.
2. Values the multifaceted intersectionality of identities (e.g., race, gender).
3. Emphasizes race and ability as social constructs without minimizing the effects of those labels.
4. Promotes the voices of marginalized populations.
5. Recognizes the legal and historical barriers imposed due to race or disability.
6. Identifies how ability and whiteness function as property.
7. Requires activism and encourages all forms of resistance.

Perouse-Harvey (2022) describes how the tenets of DisCrit can be applied as an analytic tool. For Tenet 1, it is outlined how racism and ableism work in conjunction in ways that are often undetected or unseen. Tenet 2 looks for multidimensional concepts of identity rather than identities in silos. Tenet 3 seeks to identify the physical and psychological impact of society's definition of race and disability. Tenet 4 emphasizes uplifting minoritized voices. Tenet 5 recognizes the historical and legal context of racism and ableism. Tenet 6 acknowledges how society has offered privileges to White, abled-bodied persons. Finally, Tenet 7 supports all forms of resistance to combat racism and ableism. The following list provides examples of the seven tenets of DisCrit (Annamma, 2018).

1. A DisCrit analysis of special education would assess the systemic forces that lead to inflated rates of identification of disabilities and segregation from the general education classroom for students of color.
2. A DisCrit analysis of healthcare would consider how race and disability intersect to create unique healthcare experiences and disparities for people of color with disabilities.
3. A DisCrit approach to policymaking would seek to eliminate policies that limit access to education, employment, and healthcare for people with disabilities and people of color.
4. A DisCrit research project would involve collaboration between people with disabilities and people of color in designing the study, collecting the data, and interpreting results.

5. A DisCrit analysis of the criminal justice system would examine the ways in which race and disability intersect to create disproportionate rates of incarceration for people of color with disabilities.
6. A DisCrit analysis of the economy would examine how people of color with disabilities are viewed, treated, and compensated in the workforce and the systems that lead to exploitation and dehumanization.
7. A DisCrit approach to education would require schools to be accountable for providing accessible and inclusive education for all students, including those with disabilities and people of color.

Tenet 1. The first tenet of DisCrit describes the circular interaction of racism and ableism (Miller, 2022; Perouse-Harvey, 2022). In U.S. culture, racism and ableism have influenced what is considered "normal" (e.g., White and non-disabled). When individuals do not adhere to the norm, these differences can be met with deficit-based perspectives (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Miller, 2022). In the school setting, this can negatively influence how educators view students of color with language or learning differences, and lead to troubling outcomes (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Rizzuto, 2017; Yough, 2019).

Tenet 2. The second tenet of DisCrit values the multifaceted intersectionality of identities (e.g., race, gender, social class, disability) (Annamma et al., 2013; Miller, 2022). Instead of viewing markers of identity in silos, such as CRT only considering race/ethnicity, DisCrit emphasizes an intersectionality concept of identity (Annamma et al., 2013). Moreover, DisCrit recognizes that different facets of identity, such as gender or race, can be accompanied by varying levels of stigmatization and discrimination (Annamma et al., 2013; Perouse-Harvey, 2022).

Tenet 3. The third tenet of DisCrit emphasizes that race and ability are social constructs. At the same time, DisCrit does not minimize the psychological and societal effects of those labels (Annamma et al., 2013; Annamma & Morrison, 2018). DisCrit rejects the idea that only race is a social construct, while disability is purely biological. This false concept leads to unequal treatment of students, in which students of color with disabilities are less likely to be included in the general education classroom than their White peers with disabilities (Annamma et al., 2013).

Tenet 4. The fourth tenet of DisCrit promotes the voices of marginalized populations (Annamma et al., 2013; Perouse-Harvey, 2022). Research has historically undervalued and ignored the voices of marginalized communities (Annamma et al., 2013). DisCrit emphasizes the creation of counter-narratives by listening to students and learning from their experiences as they navigate discrimination. This is considered a form of activism, as it goes against the grain of accepted cultural narratives (Annamma et al., 2013; Perouse-Harvey, 2022).

Tenet 5. The fifth tenet of DisCrit recognizes the legal and historical barriers imposed due to race or disability (Annamma et al., 2013; Miller, 2022). Differences in skin color have historically been linked to levels of intelligence, which is rooted in white supremacy (Annamma et al., 2013). This socially constructed hierarchy has been utilized to justify laws and policies to impose discriminatory practices. DisCrit rejects any actions, laws, or practices that deny rights to any individual. In the school setting, DisCrit encourages inclusion to shift from models of segregation for students of color with disabilities (Annamma et al., 2013).

Tenet 6. The sixth tenet of DisCrit identifies how ability and whiteness function as property (Miller, 2022; Perouse-Harvey, 2022). Personal freedom and economic advancements were initially developed for individuals that identified as White, non-disabled, and male. The civil rights movement, disability rights movement, and women's rights movement moved the

needle toward economic and personal freedom for marginalized groups (Annamma et al., 2013; Reid & Knight, 2006). However, the gains made by these movements often came in the form of progress that benefitted the majority population. For example, the widening of sidewalks to increase safe mobility for individuals that use wheelchairs was an accepted expense because it also benefitted able-bodied persons (parents pushing strollers, people pulling suitcases with wheels, etc.) (Annamma et al., 2013).

Tenet 7. The final tenet of DisCrit requires activism and encourages all forms of resistance (Annamma et al., 2013; Miller, 2022). For educators, this means that it is necessary to actively participate in disrupting systems of oppression (Perouse-Harvey, 2022). However, DisCrit recognizes that certain forms of activism (e.g., protesting, marching, sit-ins) are not practical for all individuals. Therefore, DisCrit accepts and encourages all forms of resistance in order to tear down systems of discrimination and promote a truly inclusive society (Annamma et al., 2013).

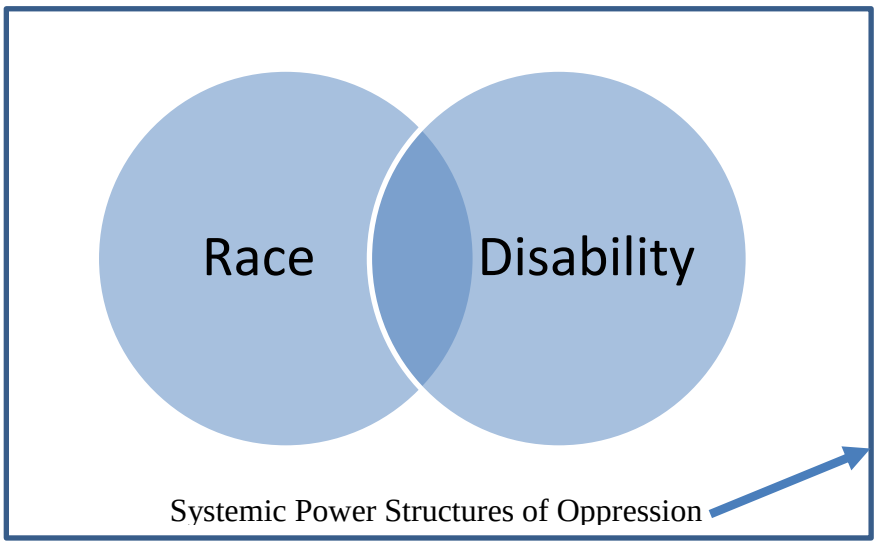
DisCrit and Students

The interconnection of race and disability status is paramount to frame this study as it focuses on perceptions of educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities. As shown in Figure 2, students' identities are interrelated and influenced by surrounding power structures (Iqtadar et al., 2020). When students are viewed as different from the majority population (e.g., White, non-disabled, non-ELL), perceptions are often rooted in deficit thinking. Through identifying patterns of deficit thinking, bias, and negative perceptions, school districts can begin to uproot systemic inequity (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Miller, 2022). It is critical to recognize deficit thinking patterns that educators hold toward minoritized students because it

often translates to inequitable outcomes (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Rizzuto, 2017; Yough, 2019).

Figure 2

Disability Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality



Note. From Iqtadar et al. (2020)

Students of color with disabilities are disproportionately expelled or suspended compared to White students and students without disabilities. Students of color with disabilities are also more likely to be disciplined than students of color without disabilities (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Love & Beneke, 2021; Palmer et al., 2019). Even as early as preschool, Black children are 3.6 times more likely to be suspended compared to White children. Black K-12 students are 2.2 times more likely to be arrested at school or referred to law enforcement due to a school incident (Chiu et al., 2022).

Research has found that culturally responsive teaching can have a profound impact on closing the achievement gap for students of color (Auslander, 2018; Chiu et al., 2022; Jeong, 2021; Kelley et al., 2015; Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017). When students are provided culturally

relevant materials and curriculum, it not only can increase student achievement, but also can improve students' confidence and attitudes towards learning (Kelley et al., 2015). When educators utilize culturally responsive practices, it leads to an awareness of internalized bias and impacts the decision-making process for educators to minimize harm to minoritized students (Chiu et al., 2022; Jeong, 2021; Ford & Russo, 2016). Similarly, the framework of DisCrit provides an avenue for educators to fathom the long-standing inequities that are infused into the U.S. school system (Chiu et al., 2022). Awareness is the first step in addressing inequities towards students of color and students with disabilities. Therefore, using the framework of DisCrit guides the study to recognize and consider the intersectional influence of race and disability (Annamma & Morrison, 2018).

Confronting systemic racism and ableism can be daunting for school administrators that face pressure from many angles, including the community, school staff, school board, and students. It can also be overwhelming when faced with a plethora of systems and policies intended to benefit White, able-bodied persons. School administrators may encounter outdated policies, curriculum that is not culturally responsive, low retention and recruitment of teachers of color, and staff bias (DeMatthews, 2020).

By grounding the study in the DisCrit framework, it will maintain focus on the systemic barriers that reduce achievement opportunities instead of feeding into deficit thinking patterns toward ELL students with disabilities. Utilizing a DisCrit framework can shift the focus from individual deficits to larger systems at play, while emphasizing student strengths (Miller, 2022). With a DisCrit lens, student identities are not merely reduced to race, level of English proficiency, or disability (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Cioè-Peña, 2021; Chiu et al., 2022; Miller, 2022; Schwitzman, 2019). Examining administrators' perceptions on equitable

educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities is a giant first step to creating inclusive, equitable schools for all students (DeMatthews, 2020).

Conclusion

As the population of ELL students continues to rise, so does the number of ELL students with disabilities. This unique group of students represents over 1.3 million students in the public school system in the U.S. (Jozwik et al., 2020). Educator training has not kept up with the changing student demographics to support ELL students with disabilities (Accardo et al., 2020; Baglama et al., 2017; Jozwik et al., 2020; Mngo et al., 2018; Palmer et al., 2019; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Smith & Larwin, 2021). ELL students with disabilities require high-quality instruction to simultaneously learn English and academic subjects. However, a 2010 study found that only 33% of teachers in the U.S. have had training on instructing ELL students (Padron & Waxman, 2016). With such a large number of unprepared teachers, it is critical for school principals to be knowledgeable of effective educational practices for ELL students with disabilities.

School leaders and administrators are key components in improving minoritized students' education outcomes (Auslander, 2018; Munguia, 2017; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019; Von Esch, 2018; Wilcox et al., 2017). Statewide and school policies that impact ELL students with disabilities need to be clearly understood by administrators to advocate for equitable practices and procedures (Cruze & López, 2020; Lee, 2019; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Thompson et al., 2020; Umansky et al., 2020; White & Mavrogordato, 2019).

Educators often struggle to identify ELL students with disabilities and recognize the difference between students learning a new language and students with learning disabilities (Kangas, 2017; Karvonen et al., 2021; Park, 2019; Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk,

2018). Complex and overlapping factors in language development and learning challenges can lead to misrepresentation for ELL students in special education (DeMatthews & Knight, 2019; Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). ELL students are often underrepresented in early elementary grades and overrepresented in later grades within special education (DeMatthews & Knight, 2019; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). The timing of identification for ELL students with possible disabilities is important and should not be inhibited due to educator hesitancy or lack of training, as all students have the legal protection under IDEA to a right to an evaluation if a disability is suspected (DeMatthews & Knight; Umansky et al., 2017).

Educators have sought many ways to navigate the murky waters of identifying a disability as students learn a second language. In recent years, some educators have been proponents of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support approach and the Response to Intervention method, which are based in sound theories, yet are not always put into practice effectively (Park, 2019). Research has found that experienced educators tend to be more likely to resist changes to their practice than novice educators (Park, 2019; White & Mavrogordato, 2019).

When students are identified with a disability, deciding where they are placed has received increased attention in the past decade. More than half of students with disabilities are included in the general education setting for most of their school day (Smith & Larwin, 2021). IDEA states that students with disabilities must receive their education in the least restrictive setting (Mngo et al., 2018; Smith & Larwin, 2021). However, many educators and parents have pushed back against the idea of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Mngo et al., 2018; Smith & Larwin, 2021), despite the benefits of inclusion (Dessemontet et al., 2012). Although teachers can understand the theory behind inclusion, they often lack confidence in their teaching abilities to instruct students with disabilities (Mngo et al.,

2018). If educators hold negative views or beliefs toward students with disabilities, it can be much harder for administrators to implement equitable change (Smith & Larwin, 2021).

Research has found that examining educator perceptions toward students with diverse language and learning needs can be a useful starting point to mitigate biased beliefs and attitudes (Accardo et al., 2020; Baglama et al., 2017; Hafner & Ortiz, 2021; Jozwik et al., 2020; Mngo et al., 2018; Palmer et al., 2019; Rizzuto, 2017; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Smith & Larwin, 2021 Szymanski & Lynch, 2020; Yochai, 2019). Adverse perceptions can profoundly affect the quality of instruction educators provide to ELL students (Rizzuto, 2017; Yough, 2019). Alternatively, when educators demonstrate high levels of confidence and positive attitudes toward supporting culturally and linguistically diverse students, they can increase student achievement (Yough, 2019).

Research has shown that administrators are the second most influential factor for student academic achievement, next to teachers (Grissom et al., 2021; Roberts et al., 2018). Administrators can positively influence student outcomes, teacher retention, bilingual teacher development, and ELL student instruction (Padron & Waxman, 2016). Even though administrators do not impact students directly in the classroom, the way they lead their schools has a substantial influence on all staff and students, especially students with significant needs (Auslander, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021; Munguia, 2017; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019; Von Esch, 2018; Wilcox et al., 2017). However, many administrators have limited training or knowledge on effective classroom practices for students with disabilities (Grissom et al., 2021; Munguia, 2017; Roberts et al., 2018).

School administrators are core components to initiate positive change that influence educational outcomes for minoritized students (Auslander, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021; Munguia,

2017; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019; Von Esch, 2018; Wilcox et al., 2017). Administrators' beliefs and attitudes toward students with disabilities can impact their entire school system by determining how much a school welcomes and includes students with disabilities (Tracy-Bronson, 2020). Administrators must understand policies and practices that may impact ELL students with disabilities in order to provide an equitable school environment (Cruze & López, 2020; Lee, 2019; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Thompson et al., 2020; Umansky et al., 2020; White & Mavrogordato, 2019).

Insufficient research has been conducted to examine the cross-section of English language acquisition difficulties and disability related problems (Karvonen et al., 2021; Wanzek et al., 2016). Even fewer studies have examined administrators' perceptions in relation to ELL students with disabilities. Examining how administrators perceive educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities is an important step to creating supportive, caring environments for ELL students with disabilities. The purpose of the current study was to examine the perceptions of administrators in the Pacific Northwest on equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities.

Chapter III

Design and Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine administrator perceptions of adequate school experiences for ELL students with disabilities in the Pacific Northwest. The study focused on administrators from school districts with large populations of ELL students. The study utilized semistructured interviews with administrators throughout the Pacific Northwest to collect data on perceptions of the school experience for ELL students with disabilities.

School administrators are essential to improve educational outcomes and initiate positive change for marginalized students (Auslander, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021; Munguia, 2017; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019; Von Esch, 2018; Wilcox et al., 2017). Administrator perceptions are powerful and can influence students, staff, and the overall school environment (Munguia, 2017; Roberts et al., 2018; Tracy-Bronson, 2020). In order to advocate for equitable school practices, administrators must understand how educational policies, procedures, and environments can impact ELL students and ELL students with disabilities (Cruze & López, 2020; Lee, 2019; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Thompson et al., 2020; Umansky et al., 2020; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). To understand the perceptions of administrators on educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities, the study asked the following research question.

1. How do administrators in the Pacific Northwest perceive equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities?

The subsequent pages of this chapter begin with an overview of the basic qualitative research design that guided the study. Next, the participants and setting, data collection process, and analytical methods, are defined. Lastly, the role of the researcher and limitations are

discussed. The structure of a qualitative research design provided valuable insight on the perceptions of administrators in the Pacific Northwest in districts with large populations of ELL students.

Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative approach to examine the perspectives of administrators in the Pacific Northwest on equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities. A qualitative approach allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022). Individual semistructured interviews provided a process in which participants responded to questions on a uniform interview protocol with the flexibility of probing questions for opportunities for participants to elaborate or clarify responses. The researcher utilized the process of member checking to provide participants the opportunity to check for accuracy in the summary of their responses and to improve validity of the data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Since ELL students with disabilities are severely underrepresented in research, a qualitative approach was selected to explore a phenomenon that previous literature has left unaddressed, especially in the Pacific Northwest (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022). The interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams and recorded for later transcription. Microsoft Teams interviews allowed the researcher to reach a broader range of participants throughout the Pacific Northwest, which extends to a large geographical region, without the burden of travel time, finding a meeting location, or travel expenses. The digital interview platform also provided flexibility for participants to choose a date and time that worked best for their schedule.

A basic, exploratory qualitative research design was employed in order to explore or understand little-understood phenomena (Marshall et al., 2022). This methodology allowed the researcher to dive deep into the research problem to understand how administrators in the Pacific Northwest perceive equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities. The exploratory qualitative research design facilitated the process to seek understanding from participants' views and experiences through semistructured interviews (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Different qualitative research methods, such as grounded theory, were taken into consideration before landing on an exploratory design but were dismissed for several reasons. Grounded theory is useful to examine processes or interactions among participants but was not applicable to the research problem of the current study. An ethnographic design was not considered since the current study is not analyzing a group that shares the same cultural background (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019), especially since a main goal of the study was to recruit participants of diverse backgrounds.

A narrative research design was closely considered but ultimately rejected. A narrative research design can reveal powerful stories from individual experiences. Those stories are then rewritten by the researcher and placed in a chronological sequence. Narrative research also requires the researcher to collect extensive data from the participants, which would likely require significant time to collect and analyze (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Since a chronological sequence would not align with the research question and due to the nature of the accelerated program format, narrative research was abandoned. Phenomenological research design was also rejected since it aims to describe how individuals experience a specific phenomenon (Marshall et al., 2022). Although all participants were from districts with relatively large populations of ELL

students, they did not all have the same level of experience working with ELL students with disabilities. Since the principal objective of phenomenological research is to study lived experiences, the participants did not all experience a particular phenomenon. Therefore, it would not make sense for the study to utilize a phenomenological research design.

An exploratory research design was chosen over an explanatory design in which the purpose is to explain the underlying causes of a well-researched problem because few studies exist that examine administrator perspectives and ELL students with disabilities (Roberts & Guerra, 2017). No previous research has been conducted on administrators and ELL students with disabilities in the Pacific Northwest. Existing research on ELL students with disabilities has been conducted in the U.S. in the Northeast (Becker & Deris, 2019; Cioè-Peña, 2021; Kangas, 2017; Kangas, 2018; Murphy & Haller, 2015), West (Hoover et al., 2019; Park, 2019), Midwest (Jozwik et al., 2020; Karvonen et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2017; Miller, 2022), Mid-Atlantic (Kangas & Cook, 2020), Southwest (Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017), and South (Roberts & Guerra, 2017).

Even studies focused on perspectives of administrators and ELL students in the U.S. are minimal (Garcia-Borrego et al., 2020; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Wei, 2020). Even though ELL students represent over 200,000 students in the Pacific Northwest, no research has focused on ELL students with disabilities in this region of the U.S. This study will open the door for future research to understand the educational needs of ELL students with disabilities in the Pacific Northwest. Therefore, an exploratory research design was well-suited for the study as it explored a severely under-researched problem.

Participants

Participants were recruited using a purposeful, snowball sampling technique which allowed the researcher to reach diverse candidates (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The sampling

technique was conducted by sending recruitment emails to the administrators that signed the authorization to conduct the study at their district research site. The administrators (often the superintendent or assistant superintendent) then provided names and emails to the researcher of potential participants that would likely be interested to participate. The researcher requested a diverse pool of potential participants, if possible. Once the email addresses were provided for potential participants, the researcher sent out emails with further information on the study and secured permission via signed informed consent forms for individuals willing and interested to participate.

Eight districts in each state with the largest population of ELL students were targeted to recruit diverse participants. The districts targeted in the sampling process in each state are listed in descending order of ELL student population size, with the percentage of ELL students to total student population in parenthesis. Data on the percentage of ELL students with disabilities is not reported at the district level. The districts in Oregon included: Beaverton (13.2%), David Douglas (21.6%), Hillsboro (18.6%), Nyssa (29%), Portland Public (8.5%), Reynolds (27.8%), Salem-Keizer (18.8%), and Woodburn (36.2%). The districts in Washington included: Evergreen (13.3%), Federal Way (19%), Highline (27.2%), Kent (19.6%), Pasco (36.1%), Seattle (12.3%), Vancouver (12.9%), and Yakima (34.4%). In Idaho, the districts included: Boise (7.8%), Caldwell (18.4%), Cassia County Joint (11.9%), Jerome Joint (17.3%), Nampa (10.2%), Twin Falls (7.8%), Vallivue (8.8%), and West Ada (3.3%). However, out of all the districts targeted, only four districts in Oregon, four districts in Washington, and three districts in Idaho agreed to participate in the study.

Participants included 12 administrators, with representation of four administrators from each state (Oregon, Washington, and Idaho). Participants included 10 principals and 2 assistant

principals. Seven administrators identified as male, while five administrators identified as female. All participants fell in the age range of 40 to 50 years old. Participants represented a wide range of experience in administration (1 year to 23 years). Only two administrators had a background in special education, whereas all participants had previous teaching experience. Nine were administrators at the elementary level, while three were administrators at the secondary level. Participants were all licensed administrators currently employed in school districts with large populations of ELL students.

Before the semi-structured interview, participants were asked some basic demographic questions. Each participant was asked to state their current role (principal or assistant principal), state where they work, and years of experience in administration. Additionally, participants were asked if they had previous teaching experience, special education experience, and school level (elementary or secondary) (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Role	State	Years of Experience	Sped	Teaching	Level
Don	50	M	Principal	OR	13	No	Yes	Elementary
Bonnie	43	F	Principal	ID	3	No	Yes	Elementary
Martin	47	M	Principal	OR	10	No	Yes	Elementary
Mark	46	M	Asst. Principal	OR	1	No	Yes	Elementary
Lola	48	F	Principal	ID	3	No	Yes	Elementary
Blair	46	F	Principal	WA	6	No	Yes	Elementary
Ezra	54	M	Principal	WA	20	No	Yes	Secondary
Jude	45	M	Principal	ID	8	No	Yes	Elementary
Chloe	46	F	Principal	ID	6	No	Yes	Secondary

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Role	State	Years of Experience	Sped	Teaching	Level
Wanda	57	F	Asst. Principal	WA	4	No	Yes	Elementary
Paul	55	M	Principal	OR	23	Yes	Yes	Secondary
Harry	50	M	Principal	WA	13	Yes	Yes	Elementary

The administrator participants in this study represented a wide variety of school district types and sizes throughout Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Out of the 24 total districts targeted, four districts in Oregon, four districts in Washington, and three districts in Idaho gave permission for the researcher to reach out to potential participants for the study. The school district demographics are reported in Table 2. The district type (city, town, suburb, or rural) is a designation set by the U.S. Census Bureau that describes the type of area where a school is located based on population size or proximity to populated areas. Generally, a city designation indicates an urban area within a principal city with a population of 100,000 or more. A suburb is on the outskirts of a city but still inside an urban area with varying population levels (less than 100,000 to more than 250,000). A town is a territory that is 10-35 miles from an urban area with no population requirements (NCES, 2022). Participating districts represented the following district types: city, suburb, and town. Rural districts were not represented.

Table 2

District Demographics: NCES 2022-2023 Enrollment Data

School District	District Type	Total Enrollment	Total Schools	Number of School Administrators
A	City	39,253	56	108.70
B	City	19,044	36	56.17
C	Suburb	10,010	20	39.39
D	City	39,507	65	112.51
E	City	20,258	33	62.69
F	Suburb	21,136	46	74.49
G	Suburb	18,485	43	64.44
H	City	15,997	29	58.00
I	Suburb	5,627	11	18.00
J	Town	4,152	7	9.41
K	Town	9,399	18	15.29

Note. NCES Data, 2022. Public Domain.

Data Collection

The study collected data through semistructured interviews with each participant via Microsoft Teams. The study used an interview protocol from an established study on administrators' perceptions of instruction for students with severe disabilities (Roberts et al., 2018). Permission to use and modify the interview protocol was secured (see Appendix B). The interview protocol was modified to align with the focus on administrator perceptions for equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities.

Participants chose a time slot in August or September of 2023 that aligned with availability in their schedules. Participants were asked demographic questions prior to the interview protocol to gain a sense of their years of experience, familiarity working with students with disabilities, and current role. Participants signed an informed consent prior to participation

in individual interviews (see Appendix A). Participants were assured of confidentiality of their identity and that pseudonyms would be used to present the data.

Sources of Data

The primary source of collecting data was semistructured interviews. The interview protocol was modeled after the following semistructured interview protocol from Roberts et al. (2018).

1. Tell me about your experience working with teachers of, and students with, severe disabilities?
2. Can you describe an ideal educational model or program for students with severe disabilities?
3. What does an expert teacher of students with severe disabilities do in the classroom which gives you the sense that he or she is an expert?
4. What does an expert teacher of students with severe disabilities do professionally, outside the classroom, which gives you the sense that he or she is an expert?
5. What else might cause you to think that a teacher is an expert?
6. What attitudes or dispositions do you think an expert teacher of students with severe disabilities would have?
7. What information about individual students do expert teachers use when making instructional decisions?
8. How do expert teachers gain information about their students?
9. Where do expert teachers learn about curriculum materials and instructional strategies to inform their practice?

10. Do you have any other questions, comments, or concerns you wish to share about instruction for students with severe disabilities?

Since the current study focused on ELL students with disabilities, the interview protocol was modified to center questions on administrators' perceptions on educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities using a DisCrit lens. Permission to use and modify the interview protocol was obtained (see Appendix B). The following interview protocol included 10 questions surrounding participants' views on educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities.

1. Can you tell me what you enjoy about working with ELL students with disabilities? Can you tell me about the challenges you have faced with this group of students?
2. What practices do you believe are essential elements for effective teaching and instruction for ELL students with disabilities?
3. What classroom/environmental factors do you believe are important to consider for ELL students with disabilities?
4. What factors should be considered for identifying appropriate curriculum and instructional materials for ELL students with disabilities?
5. What do you believe an ideal educational model or program should look like for ELL students with disabilities?
6. What attitudes or dispositions do you believe are important for administrators to have regarding ELL students with disabilities?
7. What has been your experience with bias, racism, and ableism in your school? Ideally, what steps should be taken to reduce bias, racism, and ableism in schools?
8. What do you believe contributes to creating success for ELL students with disabilities?

9. What steps do you believe could be taken to produce equitable outcomes for ELL students with disabilities? What steps have you personally taken or what do you wish you could implement?
10. Do you have any other questions, comments, or concerns you wish to share about educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities?

The semistructured interview protocol provided opportunities for the researcher to ask probing questions and for the participants to elaborate or clarify their responses (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. The interviews were recorded with permission from each participant so that the researcher could focus on the participants' responses and use the recordings to later transcribe the data.

Validity

Content validity refers to the extent to which an instrument accurately represents the intended construct it aims to measure. In this case, content validity was necessary to confirm that the interview protocol questions effectively aligned with the research question and the overall aim of the study. To ensure the validity of a measurement tool, it is imperative to employ content validation procedures in a systematic way. The procedural framework for content validation encompasses six crucial steps: formulating a validation form, assembling a panel of experts, executing the content validation process, reviewing items for assessment, assigning scores to individual items, and computing the Content Validity Index (Yusoff, 2019).

In this study, a review panel consisting of seven individuals with expertise in school administration and educating diverse learners was consulted to assess the relevance of each interview protocol question. Respondents were tasked with ranking each question on a scale of (1) not relevant, (2) somewhat relevant, (3) relevant, to (4) very relevant. Experts were

encouraged to provide written feedback for each question to enhance the clarity and relevance of items with respect to the central research question. For a question to be considered for inclusion, it needed a score of three or four, as indicated by the X symbol in each box. The outcome of this validation process resulted in all items meeting 100% agreement among the panel (Polit et al., 2007; Yusoff, 2019), and no questions were excluded following the validation process (See Table 3). In response to expert feedback, minor adjustments were made to the interview questions before proceeding with the pilot interview phase. Specifically, adjustments to grammar and using similar verbs in the same question (e.g., "Can you tell me…?").

Table 3

Content Validity Index

Item	Expert1	Expert2	Expert3	Expert4	Expert5	Expert6	Expert7	Number in Agreement	Item CVI
1	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
2	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
3	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
4	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
5	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
6	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
7	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
8	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
9	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
10	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
								Mean Item CVI 1.00	

To confirm the accuracy of the interview findings, the researcher employed member checking (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022). Participants were provided with the initial research conclusions derived from the interviews. As a precaution against causing potential discomfort to the participants, the researcher opted not to request that participants

review their full interview transcripts (Marshall et al., 2022). Instead, the preliminary study outcomes were shared with the participants through email, accompanied by a request for them to assess the initial results, verify the accurate representation of their perspectives, and point out any misconstrued or misunderstood ideas (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Pilot Test

Creswell and Guetterman (2019) suggest conducting a pilot test before using a modified or new instrument in a study. A pilot test can be performed by administering the instrument to a small group of people and adjusting the instrument based on those interactions before use with the study participants. The modified semistructured interview protocol was piloted with two school administrators who have experience in districts with large ELL populations. Participants in the pilot phase were informed that the purpose of the interview was to test the questions and protocol, and their responses would not be included in the formal research study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022). Based on the critiques from the school administrators during the pilot phase, the protocol was amended, particularly in terms of the flow and order of questions, before its use with the main participant group. The items remained unchanged, but the order in which the items were asked were changed. For example, the item about what administrators enjoy working with ELL students with disabilities was moved to the first question to assist in building rapport before moving into discussing barriers or challenges. Additionally, the item that discusses experiences with bias and racism was previously in the upper half of the protocol and was moved to the lower half of the protocol to allow for a less jarring transition to a difficult topic.

Overall, the pilot test helped to identify confusing questions, anticipate the average length of the interview, test various probing questions, and gauge reactions to each question on the

protocol. The pilot test utilized Microsoft Teams for the one-on-one interviews which allowed for flexible scheduling, enabling participants to choose a convenient time and minimizing disruptions. The pilot phase also enabled the researcher to gauge the accuracy of the transcription produced by Microsoft Teams before use with research participants.

Data Analysis

The recorded interview data was first transcribed using exact wording from participants' responses via Microsoft Teams transcription. The transcripts were then reviewed and edited manually by the researcher. Qualitative data analysis software, Dedoose, facilitated data storage, organization, and assignment of labels for coding. After the data was transcribed and organized, it was coded to make sense of the text data, then categorized into themes (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

First, all transcripts were read thoroughly, and electronic notes and reflections were attached to the transcripts within the Dedoose software to gain a sense of the responses. Then, the researcher went through each individual interview transcript again and coded the document with text segments codes and in vivo codes as part of the first cycle coding process (Saldaña, 2021). Each interview document produced 15 to 25 codes.

After the first cycle of coding for each document, the researcher moved into the second cycle coding process to utilize pattern coding to group similar codes together to consolidate the data (Saldaña, 2021). The condensed codes were used to review the documents once more to determine if new codes emerged. The researcher highlighted specific responses from participants that supported the selected codes within Dedoose. Once this process was performed with all 12 interview documents, the researcher reviewed the full list of pattern codes to condense into seven themes (See Table 4) (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Table 4

Pattern Coding to Themes

Theme	Pattern Codes
The Power of Perception	
	Enjoyment of working with ELL students with disabilities
	Challenges faced with ELL students with disabilities
	Admin attitudes towards ELL students with disabilities
	Belief in student success
	Expectations and bias
	Racism and ableism
Effective Teaching and Instructional Strategies	
	Peer language support
	Importance of scaffolding language
	Language-rich environment
	Use of visuals in the classroom
	Sheltered instruction
	Understanding language proficiency
Equity and Inclusive Practices	
	Inclusive education model
	Push-in services
	Push-out model
	Equity training
	Removing silos
	Benefits of inclusion
Barriers to Learning	
	Language as a barrier
	Staffing shortages
	Lack of training
	Parent communication
	Need for bilingual staff
	Communication with students
Complexities of the Identification Process	
	Language vs. learning differences
	Over or under identification
	Complicated process to identify
	Accuracy of identification
	Misidentification
	Identification protocols and processes

Theme	Pattern Codes
Appropriate Curriculum	
	Culturally responsive
	Accessible to students
	Accessible to staff
	Project GLAD
	Building language skills and vocabulary
	Adapting and modifying
Creating Success	
	Supportive staff
	Connecting with students
	Family relationships
	Individualized education
	Building partnerships
	Meeting students at their level

As the process moved into the postcoding phase (Saldaña, 2021), the tenets of DisCrit were utilized to understand the relation to the themes that emerged and the seven tenets of DisCrit. The researcher went through each of the seven themes and made connections on how the themes supported or differed from each tenet. More specifically, the researcher reflected on how the lens of DisCrit highlighted the intersection of race and disability (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Cioè-Peña, 2021; Chiu et al., 2022). By using the framework of DisCrit, it guided the study to recognize and consider the intersectional influence of race and disability for ELL students with disabilities (Annamma & Morrison, 2018).

Limitations

A limitation of the study was the use of the sampling technique. The study utilized a purposeful, snowball sampling technique to recruit participants, which is a non-probability sampling technique and makes it difficult to make generalizations to the broader population (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The researcher reached out to school leaders in the eight school districts with the highest population of ELL students in each state in the Pacific Northwest.

However, the sampling technique allowed the researcher to select a diverse group of participants from various types of communities in the Pacific Northwest.

Another limitation of the study was the exclusion of rural school districts. Since the study targeted the eight school districts in each state with the largest number of ELL students, rural districts with smaller populations were naturally excluded. Although rural school districts make up one-third of all public schools in the U.S., and face unique challenges (Ankeny et al., 2019), rural school communities were not represented in the current study. Additionally, the pool of participants was limited to only two administrators with a background in special education and there were only three administrators at the secondary level. Future studies should include more administrators at the secondary level and more administrators with special education experience.

Although the semistructured interviews provided a format to gain insight on participants' perceptions, the findings were not substantiated by other sources of data, such as observations, to determine if participants' perceptions aligned with their actions in the school setting. The study did not seek input from other educators or stakeholders in school districts with large populations of ELL students. Lastly, since few studies have explored perceptions of administrators towards appropriate educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities, the interview protocol from an established study had to be modified so that it would encompass specific questions on educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities in the Pacific Northwest.

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research can be influenced by personal bias. The phrasing of questions, analysis of data, and the reporting of data can all be subjected to bias. No matter a person's age, race, ethnicity, or gender; we all form biases. Therefore, an important part of the qualitative research process is to identify possible biases that could impact the results (Marshall et al.,

2022). Although it is impossible to fully eliminate bias, it is critical to address it and give a full effort to minimize bias in qualitative research.

The researcher's identity as an Indigenous, bilingual school psychologist, who works closely with ELL students with disabilities, administrators, and multicultural families in various school environments, was an important topic of reflection throughout the research process. Awareness of the researcher's intersecting identities and similarities to the research topic were critical understandings for the research process and especially while analyzing results. The passion for ELL students with disabilities facilitated a hunger for knowledge that led to this specific research problem. The researcher received feedback from experts during the piloting phase and content validation process to minimize questions that appeared to be leading or confusing. During the data collection phase and analysis phase, the researcher utilized reflexive journaling to enhance self-awareness of bias and feelings surrounding the topic and responses from participants.

Chapter IV

Results

Administrators are key educators to ensure adequate school experiences for ELL students with disabilities (Reyes & Gentry, 2019; Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Administrators can implement change, guide school teams towards equitable initiatives, and create positive environments for all students (Auslander, 2018; Cruze & López, 2020; Grissom et al., 2021; Von Esch, 2018). Unfortunately, research has found that administrators are often severely underprepared to serve ELL students with disabilities. A lack of preparation can influence how administrators view and treat students with unique learning and language differences (Baglama et al., 2017; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Smith & Larwin, 2021). In order to provide a welcoming school environment for ELL students with disabilities, administrators must understand policies and procedures that can positively or negatively influence students' educational experience (Auslander, 2018; Cruze & López, 2020; Lee, 2019; Munguia, 2017; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Reyes & Gentry, 2019; Thompson et al., 2020; Umansky et al., 2020; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019; Von Esch, 2018; White & Mavrogordato, 2019; Wilcox et al., 2017).

Few studies have examined administrators' perceptions on providing adequate school environments or experiences for ELL students with disabilities. Since administrators have such a large influence on student achievement, school climate, and equitable outcomes (Cruze & López, 2020; Grissom et al., 2021; Munguia, 2017; Palmer et al., 2019; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Roberts et al., 2018; Smith & Larwin, 2021), it is critical to understand how administrators perceive school environments conducive to learning for ELL students with disabilities, especially in the Pacific Northwest, since no previous research has focused on this topic in this region of the U.S.

This chapter contains the findings of the qualitative study designed to answer the following research question:

1. How do administrators in the Pacific Northwest perceive equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities?

This chapter outlines the seven themes that emerged from semistructured interviews with 12 school administrators that participated from Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. This chapter concludes with a summary before beginning chapter five, which will include the discussion of how the findings align with the seven tenets of DisCrit to examine the intersectionality of race and ability for ELL students with disabilities (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Cioè-Peña, 2021).

Themes

"Qualitative inquiry demands meticulous attention to language and deep reflection on the emergent patterns and meanings of human experience" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 10). Through careful inspection of the data, several common themes emerged from school administrators' perceptions of equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities. The outcome of coding and categorization of 12 interview transcripts led to the production of seven themes. The following list presents the themes that emerged from the 12 interviews.

1. The Power of Perception
2. Effective Teaching and Instructional Strategies
3. Equity and Inclusive Practices
4. Barriers to Learning
5. Complexities of the Identification Process
6. Appropriate Curriculum

7. Creating Success

The Power of Perception

Participants shared that the attitudes and perceptions of school administrators can have a powerful impact on education for ELL students with disabilities. The impact of these perceptions can create positive or negative outcomes for ELL students with disabilities. Participants had many things to say about positive administrator perceptions and attitudes towards ELL students with disabilities. Martin (pseudonym), a principal in Oregon, shared how critical it is for administrators to "lean on their [ELL students with disabilities] strengths and their assets that they bring." Don, a principal in Oregon, described these assets as a gift:

> To learn a second language is a gift, and we need to treat it as such. But that is a significant gift that the brain is making greater synapses in two languages than…being monolingual. And you know there's a whole argument…on the power of being bilingual, biliterate, which we know that has higher brain function.

Positive Perceptions. Participants mentioned that it is important for administrators to focus on positives because it is so rewarding to see the growth made by students with learning and language differences. Lola, a principal in Idaho, shared her favorite thing about working with ELL students with disabilities is "just those little light bulb moments…when they finally grasp something in the language and they make those connections. It's rewarding when they finally get things."

Participants mentioned the importance of administrators' attitudes being based in empathy, passion for educating students, and ownership for all students. Martin, a principal with 10 years of experience in Oregon, stated, "first and foremost, you have to have a belief that all students can learn at a high level and they can all grow and achieve to the best of their abilities."

Blair, a principal in Washington with six years of experience, stated that administrators should have "the mentality that all students can and will learn and that we will meet them where they are." Bonnie, an elementary principal in Idaho, also mentioned that administrators must have a "student-first philosophy and know that all students can learn…they may learn at their own levels, but they all can learn, and they can all achieve." Lola noted that administrators should attempt to close the achievement gap and should:

> Have a passion for educating kids and for educating kids who may not make the typical growth…so you have to be willing to go to bat and to understand that you know what, like if all the kids are starting here, my kiddos are here, but we're going to work on closing that gap and that efficacy that they believe those kids can do it right.

Mark, an elementary assistant principal in Oregon added:

> We support all kids and we believe that all kids can learn. So, I think first of all, you have to have that mentality and then you have to model that time and time again and you're not only do you have to say it, but then you have to, you have to act it every day.

A vital administrator perception that emerged in several interviews was the idea of ownership of all students, especially those with diverse needs. Blair noted, "they really are our kids and it's the mindset of like it's going to take a village of all of us…co-planning and being this really strong community." Ezra, a secondary principal in Washington with 20 years of experience, stated, "the attitude should be that they are our students and that we need to get them, you know, ready for graduation." Wanda, an elementary assistant principal in Washington, stated:

> We really cannot afford to think of our students served in special ed or a student served in MLL [Multilingual Learner] as somebody else's responsibility because you can't help

them a half hour a day and that's what they get a lot of times, right, depending on what their IEP is. That's not the formula that's gonna work.

Don suggested that administrators need to shift their mindset of how they view their role by saying:

> As an administrator, you're responsible for every student with an IEP in your school, no matter what. You get that through your head. It's not your case manager. It's you. It's you. So, get that through your head. Secondly, you're a bilingual administrator. I don't care if you speak Spanish or English or whatever language you speak or if you're monolingual—guess what? You're now a bilingual educator. You value bilingualism. Therefore, if you value bilingualism, you value students, and IEPs, you value all your students.

An approach to increase empathy and a feeling of ownership of all students was discussed by Lola:

> Sitting in a room where somebody teaches in a foreign language…to have to experience that, like even for 1/2 a day, right. Like if they sat in a situation…where somebody was, you know, presenting or teaching for in a foreign language, and they had to try to make heads or tails of it, even if it was an educational seminar in Spanish or German or whatever, gives you that mind shift of how uncomfortable it is and how awkward it is to only hold on to every third word and to…have to sit there and try to process…Like and that empathy and that experience really kind of changes the way that you look at those kiddos sitting in your room and it's a mind shift and I think that that those educational experiences are necessary for people to really kind of grasp that concept if they're open to it because there are people that just aren't, and that's unfortunate in education.

Negative Perceptions. Although participants shared that the attitudes and perceptions of school administrators can have a positive impact on education for ELL students with disabilities, there were also many perceptions noted that can have a negative impact. Jude, an elementary principal in Idaho, spoke about negative perceptions and bias:

> I think unintentionally there are bias out there even if we don't believe that they're biased. And so, it's about, you know, when we do see it, if we do see it that we acknowledge it, that we recognize it and we try to get better from it. Doesn't do us any good if we ignore it or pretend like it doesn't exist, like really just identify it, see what it is, OK, well, why is this happening? Why do we feel like this population of kids can't achieve at this level? And then you know, get to the root cause of it and then and then meet to add on to say, OK, well, how do we get better and how do we learn from it? How do we continue to grow professionally to make sure that we don't find ourselves in that position?

Jude added an explanation for his beliefs on how administrator bias is constructed and ways to prevent bias:

> I just think that like when you have people who haven't necessarily been in other places or experienced different cultures, you tend to have a limited understanding of things. And then you might have more biases because you're used to that…And so I think the best thing that we can do is just be proactive in our education. I think education in general is proactive. That's why we are doing what we're doing to help grow, you know, community members. And so, then if we can as adults learn and grow from that and be exposed to more things and kind of have our eyes open to those things that help, then I think that helps eliminate some of those biases.

Ezra added that bias stems from a sense of feeling sorry for ELL students with disabilities:

> The bias I think just comes from…a sense of feeling, you know, feeling sorry for them instead of like you know, I mean, you could have empathy, but then, you know, like just feeling sorry and like, oh, they just can't do it. And so, we're going to, you know, really minimize our education opportunities, right? There are some missed opportunities when you can get into that thinking that…we don't challenge them but that can happen with any special ed student as well.

In addition to bias, administrators talked about other harmful perspectives stemming from racism and ableism. Chloe, a secondary principal in Idaho, shared:

> We talk a lot about what not to do. We don't talk about why we don't do it and the impact it has on people. And then it also feels…uncomfortable for a middle-class white woman…I want to be sure that I'm not saying the wrong thing. So, there's very little training for administrators on the topics of racism, ableism…all of that. We don't really get trained on how to deal with it and if we do, it very generic and it's not enough.

Several participants added that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased incidents or attitudes rooted in racism or ableism. Mark, an assistant principal, discussed the problem as, "I think all humans forgot how to interact with each other to a degree during the pandemic." Jude added, "given the political climate over the last couple of years, that's more touchy…and so just trying to find a balance and making sure that we do address it when needed, but also making sure we manage it well."

Blair shared her thoughts on what she saw happening during the pandemic and the events happening in the U.S.:

> It was very eye opening to really get into people's beliefs. And then you kind of layer in what was happening in the United States at the time with some big events with the police and deaths and Black Lives Matter…it became a little bit, I'll be completely frank—really, really ugly, really quickly. And then when you're starting to talk about ableism and the fact that all kids will and should learn and you will, you know, you will meet them where they're at…it was ugly.

Blair continued by discussing the impact it has had on school staff at her elementary school in Washington:

> So, in the past two and a half years we have lost staff that just don't have the same…value system I guess…that we are really wanting at this school because we do serve children of color, we do serve high poverty students, we do serve second language learners, and if you don't have the mentality that every single one of them is going to learn, then this is not the building for you.

Mark, an assistant principal, shared a similar experience at his elementary school in Oregon:

> It comes down into staff understanding of the cultural differences. There's some pretty outdated thinking, you know. I work with now an older staff who, you know, in like I was saying before our group biggest population of ELL students is Russian and there's viewpoints on what it means culturally to be Russian that don't necessarily match with the reality of today…so learning, updating our biases, or views.

A couple of participants were unsure or unfamiliar with recalling incidents or attitudes rooted in racism or ableism. Bonnie, stated, "racism…it's I mean maybe, I don't know, I don't really remember…There might have been a little racism between students…I wouldn't say there

was racism, necessarily between teachers and students. I never witnessed that." Regarding ableism, Bonnie continued, "there probably was some ableism a little bit…there were probably some teachers that felt like, you know, they had students and they didn't have to do certain things in their classroom because the sped teacher took care of it."

However, several administrators readily discussed racism and ableism. Harry, an elementary principal in Washington, pointed out how racial differences in school staff compared to the student population can impact perspectives:

> As educators, 'cause the majority of us are white…and being able to have understanding and perspectives of what our predominant cultures in our schools or even the students who are not predominant. Just understanding how race really impacts students' and families' access to schools because not all students have…school experiences that are the greatest. And I believe that that's something that we as a system in our district have been working on addressing through training…and really understanding how race directly ties to student achievement and student access to learning.

Harry continued by stating the importance of "putting race at the center of decision making and data mining and acknowledgement of how implicit bias and bias that we just carry as white individuals happens all the time and bringing that to the forefront." Harry added, "we are talking about race because these are the decisions our school or individuals are making around students who are other than white. So, and this is and then what is the impact?" Chloe, a secondary principal, stated succinctly, "we can't be colorblind." Don emphasized how important it is to be "consciously trying to find teachers who come from a diverse set of backgrounds that represent our kids."

Effective Teaching and Instructional Strategies

A second theme that emerged from the 12 interviews was the importance of effective teaching and instructional strategies for ELL students with disabilities. Participants discussed how classroom supports such as scaffolding, language-rich environments, and the use of visuals can enrich the educational experience for ELL students with disabilities. Lola stated that she believes effective teaching begins with intentional planning for ELL students with disabilities and "multiple opportunities to respond in total physical responses…and, you know, that whole chunk and chew, giving them short amounts of things and then letting them process and really getting them to use the language and to connect things."

Understanding language proficiency levels and other background factors for ELL students with disabilities is another key concept for effective teaching. Wanda stated, "I think it's super important to know the language proficiency levels and the students that we have." Ezra similarly mentioned, "just like with any of those students, we need to know their levels…their levels of comprehension and any background information that we can get from them, as far as education and what country, what language." Don stated how it is an individualized approach at his elementary school, "we really are trying to focus on the individual student and what their progress is and what they need…knowing what that is and then us celebrating it when they get there."

Scaffolding. Many administrators emphasized scaffolding as an effective teaching strategy for ELL students with disabilities. Martin was the only administrator that mentioned scaffolding in multiple languages, "scaffold language so that students can access it and not just in English. I think everyone traditionally thinks of like, you know, scaffolds in English to help English learners, but we also have to scaffold the language in Spanish." He continued by saying,

"scaffolding so that students can access the grade level core is really where we need to be." Jude noted, "scaffold support…so we can see what they do know and then be able to provide them support in that area." Jude continued by mentioning how scaffolds can help identify academic gaps, "we are trying constantly to find those scaffolds and supports that they're really support them and do our very best to make sure that there's no gaps in there." However, one administrator, Wanda, cautioned against overusing scaffolding, "learning at the level that they need it with scaffolding removed and they don't wanna continue to over scaffold and that's not helping kids become independent learners and having to work."

Wanda noted that the classroom environment needs to be "print and language rich, but with good scaffolds and access points for all students." Paul stressed the significance of teaching students how to use the scaffold before moving on, "we have to teach the kids the scaffolding and we can't just throw a scaffold at the kids…we actually have to teach the kids at all the ways through and it has to be continued repetition." Paul continued:

> I can scaffold for a kid who…maybe the academic language isn't high enough…but scaffolding for a kid with no language, scaffolding for, I have no clue what you're even saying…I mean, the scaffolding toward that kind of student is way different than scaffolding for a kid who's a little behind in reading or in math.

Jude noted how scaffolds can benefit all students, but especially ELL students with disabilities, "scaffolds are really good for all kids, but then are really, really beneficial for our kids, especially EL kids with disabilities." Don emphasized that administrators need to have the right systems and the right people in place to implement effective support, "you have to have that scaffolding system and an approach to it and then you have to have some specialists that are ready to support students."

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). Another effective teaching and instructional strategies for ELL students with disabilities mentioned by administrators that makes content material more accessible to students learning multiple languages was the use of Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). Don stated that every teacher in his building receives SIOP training to assist teachers to find way to "integrate things into your lesson that would help a kid who is an English learner." Bonnie echoed that students need to understand "what they're learning and how they're going to get to that learning, or that understanding of that content. We've done a lot of SIOP training in our district, which has been phenomenal and super helpful." Harry noted that some of the components of SIOP should include:

> Naming what learning is going to occur for kids and like identifying and pre teaching of language, giving them some of those experiences prior to the lesson or naming language within lessons that kids are going to encounter that might be challenging or difficult for them and then making that represented in a visual way.

Visual Supports. Most administrators mentioned how visual supports in the classroom can be an effective instructional strategy for ELL students with disabilities. Mark stated, "there needs to be visual supports." Jude echoed that a classroom should have an "absolute ton of visuals" and that it is "good for all kids to be able to access." Paul explained that visual supports have to be more than just "decoration on the wall." He continued, "so it has to be rich print environments, but taught to the students. It can't just be a poster on the wall and we tend to do that." Wanda believes that a classroom "has to be have a lot of visuals color-coded" for ELL students with disabilities. Wanda clarified that:

> It's going to be different for every student because not every student that's an ML [Multilingual Learner] or that has a disability, they're all going to come with some

> strengths that are unique to that person and their background and their experience. And then they're all going to come with some areas of challenge. And so instructionally though I think and I'm a big fan of visuals.

Harry explained that strategies such as SIOP, or "pre teaching of language, giving them some of those experiences prior to the lesson or naming language within lessons that kids are going to encounter that might be challenging or difficult" can be strengthened by "making that represented in a visual way." Don stated similarly that teaching strategies have to be "very explicit…but it also has to be in context because we know the students with disabilities learn when things are very clear in context…But if it's in context, it's visual. You can see it. That's great."

Language-Rich Classrooms. Lastly, participants reported that building language skills by providing language-rich opportunities and environments is a crucial teaching strategy for ELL students with disabilities. Bonnie believes that it is key for educators to implement "strategies to build those vocabulary skills so that they can really access the general ed curriculum." Martin thinks classrooms should include "language rich walls." Bonnie noted, "it's important that what they're [ELL students with disabilities] learning is visible so they can see and they can refer to it continually." Wanda added:

> The environment needs to be…print and language rich…and really deliberate ways of interacting and having students communicate with each other of their learning. So not just turn and talk, but today you're going to turn and talk about this. Here is a sentence frame you might use. Here's other ways that you can respond and then pair sort of if you can with the language alike person.

Harry stated that teachers can enhance language development for ELL students with

disabilities by increasing language opportunities such as “peer dialogue, collaboration time…and being able to thoughtfully plan and predict where challenges for that some population of students may incur.” Lola described an ideal classroom as a “really fluid environment of, you know, vocabulary development and experiential learning.” Wanda explained that students’ work or ideas should be posted around the classroom and visible in the learning environment:

> I think students’ thinking should be posted and identified because I think that raises the level of and all kids to see the contributions that our students that are served in the ML and dually served in ML and special services.

Equity and Inclusive Practices

The next theme that surfaced from the interviews with 12 administrators discusses equity and inclusive practices. Administrators discussed their schools’ approaches to implementing inclusion to the general education setting. Blair noted that after the pandemic and racial injustice throughout the U.S., that “equity became a huge topic.” Paul stated that first:

> Equity becomes equality and we have to recognize that equity and equality are not the same word which we tend to merge them together and make equity into equality. You have to start with equity in order to get to equality. That's how it works. You can't just, you can't just say, oh, everything is equal now. No, not everything is equal. Sorry, just because you're teaching it and you're not making, you're not placing value and does not make it equal. It’s not equity, you're just doing it. So that's the first part.

Paul added, “when you focus on that equity and equality level then that's the success and that you're not, you're just making things better for everybody.”

Equity Training. Harry reported that at his elementary school in Washington, “one of the things that we're doing at my school is we're doing equity transformation cycles where we're

doing empathy interviews with students and their families and doing code generative planning around." In Blair's district in Washington, they are "rolling out an equity policy" and "the district has really pushed pretty hard for equity and inclusive practices." Mark stated, "we developed a really strong equity program. We had a really strong equity team." Wanda similarly noted that in her district, they have implemented systems to address equity:

> The whole district started an equity training thing where we've been having, we went through a year and a half of *Courageous Conversations* and then we've been working on responsive teaching. And so, I think you know some of that racism, ableism, ethnicity…Because I'm…I don't know how to say that, but I think some of those barriers have come down a little bit.

Inclusion. Administrators emphasized that they are attempting to push inclusive practices for ELL students with disabilities in their schools. Many participants explained that they want their school staff to understand the benefits of including ELL students with disabilities in the general education setting as much as possible. Providing services outside of the classroom are often referred to as a "pull-out" model, whereas individualized services inside the classroom are a "push-in" model. Paul discussed his middle school's approach to inclusion in Oregon:

> We recognized at least that we needed to change our model and that's what we let us from a location and special education is a location to special education inclusion and by need. And, we are changing our model to meet the needs of the kid rather than changing the kid to meet the needs of the model, which is what we often do in education, especially in special education.

Paul continued:

> Here at my school, we've been working towards that model. So, we just, we just went to

> a complete inclusive environment this year where fully 100% inclusion and we've been training staff and special education teachers and our ELL staff…how to work with all students rather than just sending them to a location, no more location, special education, not by geography, but by need.

Administrators expressed that students that are dual-identified being served as ELL students and in special education are often served in isolated systems or environments. For instance, Wanda stated:

> We have to have inclusionary models where we're not sending kids in special ed classrooms or ELL classrooms and calling that good because frankly, they're not getting either or they're not getting the instruction that they need at grade level and the expectations for them are not rigorous enough for them to really be pushed enough to have to work hard to do it…So, I think…We gotta get rid of that silo-ing and that blaming, you know, giving the kid to somebody else as their responsibility.

Blair described isolated environments as islands for ELL students with disabilities:

> So, you all get to stay with your teacher, and then we either will push in the support or build the capacity of that grade level teacher so that they can become the expert and we with sending them off to these islands thinking that in 30 minutes they're going to be fixed because the reality is they aren't. And sometimes their learning becomes stagnant.

Chloe noted that inclusion is beneficial for all students by saying, “I don't think there's anything unique when it comes to whether you're sped or you’re ELL gifted and talented or general education, right? Best practices are best practices and that’s inclusion.”

Administrators stated that they have noticed that pulling students out for ELL or special education services has not increased academic achievement scores. Blair explained:

> And then I think also trying as much as possible to build the capacity of the teachers to ensure that the kids are getting assistance within the classroom setting, not always this pullout system because the pullout program, if you looked at our scores, they have not been beneficial. We really have not seen gains from that, so having them go with separate adults is not working.

Mark mentioned that at his elementary school in Oregon, they have begun "building the plan to push in…and so that will take place this year as soon as I get to sit down with both of my people. That's something that I've been working on this summer" in order to increase the rate of inclusion of ELL students with disabilities. Wanda explained her belief in the push-in model, "I don't think you can learn lessons one-on-one necessarily. I think we learn language and we learn to communicate in community. So, I believe in pushing in services." Lola described how they utilize their ESL teacher to increase push-in services for ELL
students with disabilities:

> And if they are in the special education room during that time, then she's pushing in and supporting there. And those two teachers are working together to do what's best for those kiddos. So, we're really kind of in the foundational pieces of that and we're hoping that we can move the needle and improve our scores and do what's best for our kiddos here.

Chloe described her beliefs on incorporating ESL teachers to increase services for the push-in model:

> I'm all about inclusion, but I also realize that we need some Tier 3 intervention with kids and it needs to be very, very concise and small groups. So, in a in a perfect world, I'd have way more ESL teachers, have more than one and they would be able to push into

> classrooms to help those kids during their regular classes instead of only being able to help in an EL or resource class.

Mark added:

> My hope is to work two models this year. One is a pull-out model, which is what we will do on a regular basis with our full-time person…Using the correct curriculum and differentiation within that. Within her small groups that she's pulling out and then pushing in to support in the gen ed setting, or even pushing into the resource room when they're working in there in, in just those students who are really struggling.

Barriers to Learning

Administrators reported that there are several barriers that can arise to impede the educational experience for ELL students with disabilities. Blair stated, “the challenge is, I think it’s more with the adults. It’s not necessarily with the students.” Bonnie mentioned staffing shortages as a barrier, “our ELL staff is severely…under-staffed. We just don’t have enough people really for it.” Wanda stated, “we have not enough resources and not enough experts and not enough people who feel like they have the time or energy to be an expert in one more thing.” Ezra echoed that the challenge at his school is “finding or being able to hire enough support personnel to help” ELL students with disabilities. Mark similarly noted, “when you don’t have enough ELD teachers and you don’t have enough sped teachers, being able to get one, that’s tough.”

Educator Training. Even with full staffing, administrators said that educator training is lacking and becomes a barrier for ELL students to adequately learn and access their education. Harry stated, “I honestly don’t believe that our just classroom teachers are equipped and neither are our special educators to really support that subgroup.” Chloe also noted, “we do a very poor

job of training people." Wanda mentioned that the biggest challenge is "figuring out how do we teach students, what do they need most, and then coaching teachers in that way to know…not to do something completely different, but they do need to teach language." Don added it is critical for administrators to consider the "training that people need to help this specific group of kids…and I think that there's really important individual training for all that." Blair stated, "so, it's really getting the teachers' capacity built so that they can understand that this child has multiple areas of need and all of what you can do for this child will benefit all of your students." Jude mentioned that it is difficult for his staff to stay up-to-date with evidence-based training or research:

> That requires new learning and new strategies and making sure that we stay at the forefront of what's best for kids. And so, just the constant battle of making sure that we stay up with new research and science to support what we do with kids.

Paul mentioned that educator experience is a factor when it comes to barriers to learning for ELL students with disabilities, "my newer, the newer colleagues, they're, they just don't know what to do, they don't know."

Language. Several administrators discussed how language acts as a barrier for ELL students with disabilities both individually and at a systems-level. Don stated, "language is a barrier, right? It's a barrier for us to help them get to a point where they're able to engage in school in a meaningful way…to feel like they're a part of something bigger." Don continued:

> It's really hard sometimes for a kid with no English, you know, different set of beliefs and values, just to like to feel like they fit in in our system…because some of them come with no school background at all, others come they've had school but it's you know, but they have no language.

Paul explained that a lack of special education teachers who are bilingual creates a challenge for many of his students:

> Learning two languages can be very difficult and not having enough special education staff who speaks Spanish. So, like I have zero special education staff who speaks Spanish and I have six licensed teachers who speak Spanish, but none of them are special education teachers. So, making that connection is difficult.

Harry described ELL students with disabilities as students on the margins compared to the rest of the student population, "the challenge is, you know, already working with kids that would be considered on the margins…as far as language acquisition…then compounded by some type of diagnosed disability or identified disability for kids pushes them further out."

Systemic Barriers. At the systems-level, Lola explained that when there are many diverse languages represented in the school, it can become difficult for schools to provide appropriate instruction:

> I think that's one of the biggest barriers is so many, like for us, here at the school, we have 12 nations represented…12 languages and and 12 different places. So, it's one thing…when it's a Spanish speaker, because that's something that's you know, we have a lot of Spanish speakers. But to clarify in Arabic or Farsi, or you know, it's a little more difficult for those kiddos.

Don noted that at his elementary school, it can be difficult to try to communicate with students with so many different languages, even with the help of technology, "we have 17 languages in my building and some of those Siri doesn't help me with and so, you know, it's just one of those things but I try and find some common ground." Wanda stated that it can be difficult to tailor instruction because there are so many background factors that students arrive with, "kids that

come from different countries that have different levels of education that have parents with different levels of education that have different levels of trauma and have different levels of need in terms of special services."

School-Family Relationships. Administrators also mentioned that the disconnect between schools and families can be a barrier for learning for ELL students with disabilities. Chloe emphasized, "I think all around we need to do better with parents." Wanda described some of the factors that impact the communication level between schools and families of ELL students with disabilities:

> Families often times don't wanna share their whole history. They're afraid and kids don't really know what they've experienced or why…everyone has a story. When you can't communicate with kids and the families in their language and know their cultural ways of storytelling and their comfort levels of revealing who they are and what they've been through, I think that's challenging.

Mark mentioned a lack of understanding of families:

> This is maybe the biggest shortcoming we have in the system right now is really getting an understanding of the families because our challenge is differentiating between the language barrier and the disability itself. The easiest way to do that is to begin understanding what's being done in the family, in the home, and seeing what's happening.

Jude stressed the importance of building connections with families:

> We wanna build a strong foundation. We wanna build not only foundation with kids, but a foundation with their families so that they know that this is a place that not only that they feel safe at, but kind of belongs to them and create that sense of belonging for them.

> And, so the more that we do that, then we can take those really good instructional strategies from that professional development and then implement that within the classroom.

Identification Process

All of the participants brought up the complexities of the identification process for ELL students and special education. Administrators want to make sure they are putting processes in place at their schools so that they are not overidentifying or misidentifying ELL students with disabilities. Some participants feel as if their district or school building have rigorous systems in place to help school staff carefully identify disabilities for ELL students. Martin stated, "I think our district does a really good job at actually slowing everyone down…we have a real rigorous process that we have to go through and I think for good reason, so that we're not overidentifying students." While other administrators discussed challenges that their school staff face during the process of identifying possible disabilities for ELL students. Bonnie noted, "I think even for our special education teachers, I don't know if they really understand that EL language portion when it applies to a special ed student." Bonnie continued, "I think there's…there's something that we just kind of need to keep exploring and working towards so that we can better understand, and we can better qualify kids…maybe sooner."

Identifying Disability. Many participants stated that the biggest obstacle they face to providing equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities begins with identifying whether students' difficulties are due to learning differences, language differences, or both. Paul questioned, "Is it the language? Is it the disability? Is it both?" Bonnie mentioned, "sometimes it's hard to determine if language is an impairment or if there's other impairments involved." Chloe said, "the biggest challenge that I think we faced with our EL population is are

we looking at a language barrier or a learning barrier?" Ezra posed the question, "Is it a learning disability or is it in the ELD factor?" Mark similarly stated, "the biggest challenge is really being able to decipher is are the struggles that the student is having related to a language barrier or the disability and kind of discerning between the two." Don mentioned, "it's really hard sometimes to decide is a kid being identified for special ed because of a language issue or is the kid truly a special ed student…that's a really hard line to walk." Harry clarified, "truly ruling out language acquisition versus language delays and deficits based on an identified disability." Harry continued, "Do they really hold a disability? A truly identifiable disability or is language really at the heart of their learning and the barriers that they're facing?"

A few participants believe that the process to evaluate and identify ELL students with disabilities is too long and cumbersome. Bonnie stated, "the process to get them qualified for special education can be kind of convoluted." Ezra expressed, "I wish there was like a faster way to identify the students…so that they can be placed in the right program." Don stated, "how we're really identifying them and how that process is, it needs to be different…it sometimes delays services." Chloe added, "our biggest challenge is we wait too long to identify a learning need because we focus on the language." Chloe continued by discussing the impact of waiting so long to identify disabilities for ELL students:

> So, a student that would be a native English speaker, you know, in second grade we start noticing some learning loss…they could be identified within nine months and getting resources. Whereas, if that same student was our EL population, it could be fifth grade before we've done all of the necessary steps for intervention to get them referred for that.

Misidentification. Administrators also expressed concern for the overidentification, under identification, or misidentification for ELL students with disabilities. Wanda stated, "I

think mostly kids are over qualified for special education and so I'm pretty passionate about that." Harry added that administrators need to be mindful of:

> Over identification of certain subgroups around students who we know that language acquisition is an area for them and just ensuring that we are being really thoughtful about naming and identifying the barriers of access versus the perceived barriers that we may think we have encountered for a student who is a multi-language learner.

Wanda stated, "so that over-identification and under identification really needs to be on top of everyone's mind every time a student is looked at or referred [for special education]." Don discussed the failure of the system to misidentify disabilities:

> I believe that from time to time our system has let kids down and either misidentifying or you know and suddenly the kids getting service or something maybe don't need or under identifying because like well they're ELL kids and now we have to go through five or six extra hoops trying get this kid some special services.

Paul questioned the accuracy of identification process, "All those students have a disability? I questioned that…because we watched the number of students who are long-term English learners like *oh, they're long-term English learners, they must have a disability*, then it's not necessarily the case." Don noted that administrators are responsible for overseeing the student study teams that often initiate the identification process:

> As administrators it's really important for us to engage our systems for identification of these problems and…I don't have the right answer exactly how it is but in a more meaningful way so that we're not misidentifying the student, so that we're not stopping services that a kid needs because we think it's just because they don't speak the language and they're just a little behind…I think that that's important for administrators to keep in

> mind too, are your student study teams, is your identification process, are all those things that you have going on in your building, are they helping your kids or hinder, right? That's important for us to keep an eye on exactly. What things are in my building that's stopping those kids from accessing something that they need?

Some participants articulated concern for the over identification, or overrepresentation, of ELL students in certain categories of special education. Harry stated that in a previous job, "I did some pretty deep data mining and we had seen a dramatic increase over the last seven to eight years around multi language learners, especially our Spanish speaking Latin American students where we were overidentifying for communication [disorder]." Don added, "the eligibility of communication disorder is often overrepresented in our students of color and our students who are speak Spanish or other languages for that matter, but primarily our Spanish speaking students." Martin mentioned how it can be frustrating to receive students from preschool or other districts that are overidentifying for communication disorders, "a student that comes in from another district where they're overidentifying students…or from Pre-K that the ESD loves to hand out communication disorders…then they walk into school and they've already got this label on them." Lola discussed how she has seen an overrepresentation of ELL students with specific learning disabilities and the impact of misidentification:

> You don't want to misidentify it. I've seen that happen where, you know, kindergarten and first grade, we've put a student on an IEP who's a language learner and then by third or fourth grade they no longer qualify based on their scores and then you're throwing them back into the gen ed curriculum and they've never experienced it. And that's just really hard. So, it's that fine line of doing what's best for them.

Appropriate Curriculum

Administrators believe it is crucial to have curriculum that is appropriate, culturally responsive, and accessible for ELL students with disabilities. Overall, Jude noted that "it's about finding what's best for kids." Additionally, administrators must consider other factors of curriculum as Don noted, "everything from cost of program…how many consumables…are you going to be able to constantly keep this up if it doesn't take a massive amount of training for staff to be able to use this program."

Culturally Responsive Curriculum. Several participants mentioned that curriculum should be culturally responsive and include diverse representation. Mark noted, "All curriculum should be culturally appropriate, right? It should be reflective of the students that are using it as much as possible." Jude added, "we want curriculum that speaks to our kids, and the kids when they look in there, they can say like, *hey, this kid looks like me*." Jude continued that curriculum "should be relevant for kiddos, should be relevant to their situation, their culture, so trying to find things that we can utilize to help them identify with what they're learning about." Lola stated, "students need…those connections to things that they understand culturally…we need to make sure that we're looking at like those cultural understandings of things." Don mentioned, "I think the curriculum needs to be, you know, multicultural in its nature."

Accessible Curriculum. Administrators believe that curriculum should be accessible to ELL students with disabilities by containing multiple points of entry so that educators can meet students where they are at and build on foundational skills. Don explained:

> I think you're looking for things that have accessible access to entry points for them…it's so different between all levels but if you have a program that has A, B, C, D, E, F all the way to Z, right? More entry points, more pinpointed instruction, more like that I can

> really narrow the focus down a lot more, maybe not spend as much time on it, but it gives me a lot of like a lot more places to enter a student into it, I think that's important because I mean I think so much of our core curriculum is, you know, it means following the Common Core standard that's what it's very inaccessible to kid who has learning disabilities, much less learning disabilities with language issues on top of it so I think a curriculum that allows for more access points is good.

Harry added that educators need to be able to meet students where they are at by fine-tuning the curriculum that they utilize to make it accessible for diverse learners:

> Making sure that teachers are thoughtfully pulling apart whatever curriculum is in front of them because the curriculum as we know is meant for the middle, not for the margins. So, whether and that's you know whether it's ELL student with a disability or our accelerated student. So, it's meant for the middle, so being able to thoughtfully plan and predict where challenges for that some population of students may incur.

Curriculum also needs to be accessible for educators, as noted by Wanda, "the biggest thing about curriculum…would be that the teacher knows how to use the curriculum as a base." Wanda added that curriculum "has to be able to adapt into the classroom." Paul discussed how built-in scaffolds are key so that it does not overwhelm the teacher and make the curriculum inaccessible:

> Built-in scaffolds for curriculum…like, here, teacher, here is the scaffolds that you can use to teach this subject…here are other things that you can do and some [curriculum] don't have any of that, and the teacher's scrambling to find it and that's not great when the teacher has to go scramble because we know that too often the teacher doesn't do that. The teacher won't scramble to find it. Some do, but not everybody does.

Don stated that administrators should keep in mind that curriculum should be accessible for not just teachers, but for instructional assistants that are assisting students in the classroom or one-on-one:

> You have to acknowledge that when you're picking a curriculum that because there's a difference between a curriculum that a certified teacher can look at and go, *okay, I can do this lesson no problem*, versus a lesson that for an educational assistant is able to deliver the same content. So, I think that that's important. So, I think your model of how you're delivering services has to come into effect when you're taking a look at that.

Building Language Skills. Curriculum for ELL students with disabilities should include methods to build vocabulary and language skills as they learn content. Lola emphasized that curriculum should be "engaging and rigorous, with multiple opportunities for kids to respond and work together, and to actually build their language while still building their knowledge and still connecting it to their, you know, own background." Blair noted that building vocabulary skills is essential to access the general education curriculum, "building the vocabulary so that they can, especially with math and science, because it's so vocabulary rich…to build those vocabulary skills so that they can really access the general ed curriculum." Harry stated that curriculum should focus on "language development, language opportunities, a peer dialogue, and collaboration time" to enhance learning for ELL students with disabilities.

Jude stated that in his elementary school in Idaho they utilize Project GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design), "GLAD is really, really good for building understanding, you know, prior knowledge then digging into like vocabulary…to give kids context for what they're learning. So, all our teachers are trained in GLAD." Blair also mentioned Project GLAD is used in her elementary school in Washington and helps students build language skills:

> Project GLAD…is like paramount it for our English language learners and I do think because there are so many strong…because it scaffolds so well and a lot of it involves chant or…total physical response that that is very, very beneficial for, you know, long term memory.

Adapting Curriculum. Lastly, participants noted that educators need to understand how to adapt curriculum to deliver specially designed instruction, provide accommodations, and know the difference between a modification and accommodation. Wanda noted:

> Many curriculums will sell themselves as having SDI, specifically designed instruction, for ELL students. But it's like maybe one paragraph or one page, and I think the biggest thing about curriculum that we get for students, especially in special ed and our language learners that are served both in those areas, would be that the teacher knows how to use the curriculum as a base. But then use the knowledge of access to both of those things within that framework. So, I think whatever the curriculum that you are using, you have to have that special ed and ML focus, language focus to really be able to adapt to your curriculum, to the students that you have with whatever proficiency level and whatever level of need that there is.

At the secondary level, Paul stated:

> Especially in secondary, when the curriculum is becoming more advanced like physics or chemistry, they're trying to learn the curriculum on top of learning how to accommodate it. And, I think the last piece is just understanding the difference between an accommodation and modification. And this is something that's is this is huge, no matter if you're a dual identified student with language in a disability. But just understanding the difference between the two, because we tend to say we're accommodating something,

> we're truly modifying something or we're saying…I modified this and it's really an accommodation and the higher we go [in grade levels], the more complex it gets.

Wanda added, “I just think we're fooling ourselves if we think we can just pull out a curriculum and teach a student that way. It just doesn't work and it has to be able to adapt it into the classroom.”

Creating Success

The last theme that surfaced from the interviews with 12 administrators in the Pacific Northwest was creating success. Administrators discussed factors they perceive contribute to creating success for ELL students with disabilities. Participants believe it is critical to have a strong school staff, focus on relationship building, and individualize approaches to educating ELL students with disabilities.

Supportive Staff. Administrators reported that creating success begins with a strong, supportive school team. Martin stated, “you gotta have a strong team.” He continued by discussing what works well in his elementary school:

> We have a really awesome team of specialists and, you know, everyone’s on the same page like, we like, I think people know what the values are of our district and of our school and so it’s not just, it’s not just me, you know, holding the line, like everyone understands like what we need to do and why we need to do it. So, just having a strong team is huge.

Don noted, “the people that are involved in the process are a massive contribution to their success, right? The right teacher at the right moment, the right person who feels like they’re supporting them.” Jude stated, “I think it starts with good professional development, hiring good people, and then having the right people in the classroom.” Blair said, “I really believe strongly

that their success is dependent upon the capacity of the adult in front of them. So, if the adults in front of them really believe that they can learn…students will find success." Chloe noted in her school, "our kids are surrounded by people that can support them and it makes a huge difference." Jude stated that a strong team is critical, "where we recognize that like all kids are learners and they need the very best from us. And I think that's first and foremost, and then bring in the right people to do that."

Building Relationships. Administrators believe it is key to focus on building relationships with ELL students with disabilities and their families. Jude noted, "strong relationships and strong foundation. Then I think that you're really set up for success." Jude continued, "I think first and foremost, like at our school, we really focus on the relationship first, like kids have to feel safe in their environment before they're ever gonna trust and put forth a great effort academically." Ezra noted, "I think teachers as being mentors as resource, you know, just developing those strong relationships… somebody that they can trust and they can rely on and ask questions."

Mark stated it is important to build relationships with families because "having a really good understanding of what's happening in the home, and what a student is capable of in their native language" can help us better understand students. Don stated that "there needs to be some parent buy-in…to lead to something that they see as beneficial." Chloe discussed that at her elementary school, they have implemented different activities at the school to bring in parents and build stronger relationships, "we're bringing in parents for those activities because we're trying to bridge that gap." Chloe continued by discussing some of the activities they have implemented:

> So, we have started having cultural events here like uh, we on our first Hispanic heritage event last year and it was well attended and the kids loved it and we learned how to make tortillas and…like the sponge sugar masks that they paint for Dia de Los Muertos. And the kids loved it, you know, and the parents loved it…And so we're doing that throughout the year and we're creating a map on the wall of where all of our kids are from or at least their families to show like how many different countries are represented.

Ezra commented that he connects with parents and helps them navigate paperwork in order to give their student the most appropriate education:

> Bring the parents on board, you know, communicate if we have if we can't communicate with, you know, schools or teachers that they came from to help understand if they have paperwork that can help us better understand their…levels to provide the best program possible.

Ezra continued by discussing how he empowers parents:

> Part of that is communicating to parents as well, right? That parents understand their rights and their parents understand that they have, you know, that they know that they're also a partner in the student's education and that they can ask questions…so it's part of it too is that you can, the parents can feel empowered, right?

Individualized Approach. Administrators believe that the educational experience for ELL students with disabilities should be tailored to provide an individualized approach to best meet the needs of these unique students. Paul stated that at his school, "we are changing our model to meet the needs of the kid rather than changing the kid to meet the needs of the model, which is what we often do in education, especially in special education." Paul continued, "we need to move more creative in that and we have to think through the eyes of the kids." Bonnie

mentioned at her school, she leans on the expertise of her staff members to create an effective individualized approach for diverse students:

> I think taking the time to really understand what students need, not just assuming that everyone's kind of at this one level and differentiating, but really being very specific about what students needs are in their academic journey is really important and I really appreciate the ELD teachers and how their specialization in that and…sped too and really relying on them for their expertise and their knowledge about the student and their knowledge about just the system, the education system.

Mark discussed how his school team has taken a unique approach to providing individualized instruction for students struggling with reading:

> We need to be willing to say, *listen, this is a third grader who's reading at the kindergarten level and we need to intervene at the kindergarten level even if nobody else is…or there's nobody else at their level*. We need to put the right tools in front of that student. I mean, really, it's kind of getting out of our own way. I think schools and districts worry about the data and things like that and it's well, I can spend a lot of time working on these two students down here that might not get a full year's worth of growth, or these ones right here that if I move them three points then they look great. And I think we need to remember; we have to work with both.

Harry stated succinctly that at his school, he is "making sure that we're addressing the students in front of us in ways that we know that can provide them access."

Summary

This qualitative study aimed to examine administrators' perceptions of equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities. Qualitative data was collected from

semistructured interviews with 12 school administrators in the Pacific Northwest. The coding and categorization of the 12 interview transcripts produced seven themes: The Power of Perception, Effective Teaching and Instructional Strategies, Equity and Inclusive Practices, Barriers to Learning, Complexities of the Identification Process, Appropriate Curriculum, and Creating Success.

Chapter V

Discussion

In this qualitative study, the researcher conducted semistructured interviews with 12 school administrators in the Pacific Northwest to identify how they perceive equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities. The researcher modified an existing interview protocol from a similar study (Roberts et al., 2018). Permission to use and modify the interview protocol was obtained (see Appendix B). The interview protocol was modified using a DisCrit lens to focus 10 questions on administrators' perceptions on equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities. The semistructured interview protocol provided opportunities for the researcher to ask probing questions and for the participants to elaborate or clarify their responses (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This chapter describes the results, recommendations for future research, and implications for professional practice.

Summary of the Results

Semistructured interviews were conducted from August 2023 to September 2023 with 12 school administrators in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. To understand the perceptions of administrators on educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities, the study asked the following research question.

1. How do administrators in the Pacific Northwest perceive equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities?

After careful analysis of the interview transcripts, seven themes were identified: The Power of Perception, Effective Teaching and Instructional Strategies, Equity and Inclusive Practices, Barriers to Learning, Complexities of the Identification Process, Appropriate Curriculum, and

Creating Success. Participants' diverse experiences and backgrounds provided richness and depth to how they responded to the interview questions.

Theme One: The Power of Perception

Research has shown that administrators' beliefs and attitudes toward students with disabilities can impact their entire school system by determining how much a school welcomes and includes students with disabilities (Tracy-Bronson, 2020). Research has also shown that educator beliefs and attitudes can influence instruction, especially for linguistically diverse students (Gomez & Diarrassouba, 2014; Rizzuto, 2017; Yochai, 2019). However, most of the literature has highlighted negative perceptions and the impact on educational outcomes. This study uncovered new findings related to administrators voicing their passion for education, empathetic attitudes, and a sense of ownership for ELL students with disabilities.

Participants described how administrator perceptions can have powerful impacts on education for ELL students with disabilities. The impact of these perceptions can create positive or negative outcomes for ELL students with disabilities. Each participant shared what they believed to be important to consider for administrators to focus on positive perceptions but also to be aware of negative perceptions, such as bias, that may arise and influence decisions for a vulnerable population of students.

Positive Perceptions. Participants highlighted the significance of maintaining a positive focus. Administrators expressed the joy derived from witnessing the growth of students with learning and language differences. One participant emphasized the rewarding nature of those "little light bulb moments" when ELL students with disabilities grasp concepts in language and make connections. Furthermore, participants stressed the importance of administrators' attitudes grounded in empathy, a passion for education, and a sense of ownership for all students.

Participants emphasized the belief that all students can learn at a high level, and administrators must meet students where they are. The notion of having a "student-first philosophy" and the commitment to closing the achievement gap emerged as a common perception among participants. Administrators also emphasized the need to not only express these beliefs but to consistently model them in their daily actions.

Another critical perception that surfaced in multiple interviews was the idea of administrators taking ownership of all students, particularly those with diverse needs. The concept of a collective responsibility, described as "it's going to take a village," emphasized collaboration and a strong community approach. Participants highlighted the importance of considering students with diverse needs as integral parts of the school community, rejecting the notion that certain students are someone else's responsibility. Finally, participants discussed the need for administrators to view themselves as responsible for every student with an IEP in their school, reinforcing the idea that administrators are bilingual educators valuing all students. To increase empathy and ownership, administrators should seek experience teaching in a foreign language, fostering a mindset shift towards understanding the challenges faced by students learning two languages. This cultural immersion approach could lead to a more profound appreciation of the students' experiences and needs.

Negative Perceptions. Attitudes and biases of administrators and other educators can significantly impact the educational landscape. Participants emphasized the unintentional biases that exist and advocated for acknowledging and addressing them. The root cause analysis, proactive education, and exposure to different cultures were proposed as strategies to eliminate biases. The danger of bias stemming from a sense of pity towards ELL students with disabilities was noted to lead to missed educational opportunities.

Moreover, administrators discussed harmful perspectives rooted in racism and ableism. Participants expressed concerns about the lack of specific training for administrators on topics like racism and ableism, leading to discomfort and inadequate preparation to deal with these issues. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was also evident in increased incidents or attitudes rooted in racism or ableism. Administrators shared experiences of the pandemic revealing deep-rooted beliefs, resulting in a significant loss of staff in schools that prioritize the value of every student.

Several administrators emphasized the need for cultural competence and understanding of racial differences among school staff. The importance of addressing implicit bias, acknowledging the impact of race on student achievement, and incorporating diverse perspectives into decision-making processes were highlighted. Participants underscored the significance of putting race at the center of decision-making and data analysis, recognizing the constant presence of implicit biases. The responses from participants shed light on the complex interplay between administrators' perceptions, biases, and the creation of equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities, with a call for proactive measures and training to address these issues effectively.

Theme Two: Effective Teaching and Instructional Strategies

As school leaders, administrators have the power to influence teachers to provide effective teaching strategies for ELL students with disabilities (Reyes & Gentry, 2019; Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Administrators must recognize the importance of effective, evidence-based instructional strategies in order to guide teachers who may not feel comfortable with their level of knowledge of instructing diverse learners (Cruze & López, 2020; Lee, 2019; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Thompson et al., 2020; Umansky et al., 2020; White & Mavrogordato, 2019).

Even though administrators do not impact students directly in the classroom, the way they lead their schools has a substantial influence on all staff and students, especially students with significant needs (Auslander, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021; Munguia, 2017; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019; Von Esch, 2018; Wilcox et al., 2017). However, many administrators have limited training or knowledge on effective classroom practices for ELL students with disabilities (Grissom et al., 2021; Munguia, 2017; Roberts et al., 2018). The findings from this study do not agree with the literature purporting administrators' limited knowledge on effective classroom practices. The participants in this study demonstrated a high level of knowledge and expertise with naming specific examples, such as naming learning goals, pre-teaching language, visual supports, and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP).

Language Supports. In examining effective teaching strategies for ELL students with disabilities, administrators highlighted the crucial role of scaffolding. Participants emphasized the need for scaffolding in multiple languages, underlining the importance of enabling students to access grade-level content and to identify academic gaps. However, one participant cautioned against overusing scaffolding, emphasizing the need for a print and language-rich classroom environment with suitable scaffolds for all students. Administrators stressed the necessity of teaching students how to use scaffolds before progressing, recognizing the distinct approaches required for students with varying language proficiency levels.

Administrators also acknowledged the effectiveness of SIOP as a valuable strategy to make content accessible to students learning multiple languages. Some participants noted widespread implementation of SIOP training in their schools, emphasizing its role in assisting teachers to integrate elements that benefit all students. Participants shared many positive

experiences with SIOP training, and the importance of naming learning goals, pre-teaching language, and providing visual representations to enhance comprehension.

Classroom accommodations. Visual supports emerged as another key instructional strategy for ELL students with disabilities. Participants emphasized the necessity of visual supports in the classroom, beyond mere decorations, to aid accessibility for all students. Administrators advocated for a personalized approach to visual supports, recognizing the unique strengths and challenges of each student. Participants shared that visual representations can strengthen teaching strategies, and bring clarity and contextual relevance for ELL students with disabilities.

Administrators reported that classrooms should be rich with language to enhance students' skills and increase access to language supports. Participants stressed the need for educators to implement vocabulary-building strategies to enhance access to the general education curriculum, while some participants proposed the idea of "language-rich walls" in classrooms. Visibility of learning materials and students' work was consistently emphasized. Administrators advocated for a deliberate print and language-rich environment, incorporating structured communication strategies beyond turn-and-talk activities. Participants suggested increasing language opportunities through peer dialogue and collaboration, while creating a classroom that is a dynamic space for vocabulary development and experiential learning. Finally, administrators highlighted the importance of showcasing students' thinking around the classroom to raise academic standards and foster inclusive learning, particularly benefiting ELL students with disabilities.

Theme Three: Equity and Inclusive Practices

Principals have a core responsibility in guiding schools towards equitable outcomes for all students (Grissom et al., 2021; Roberts et al., 2018; Wang, 2017). As the top leaders in individual schools, principals have the most authority to implement change (Grissom et al., 2021; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Roberts et al., 2018). For ELL students with disabilities, principals can impact students' level of access to general education by promoting inclusive practices (Roberts et al., 2018). However, research has found that principals are often not adequately trained to lead school teams to make equitable decisions for students with disabilities, especially ELL students with disabilities (Grissom et al., 2021; Roberts & Guerra, 2017). The findings from this study do not agree with the literature asserting administrators' limited knowledge in equity and inclusive practices. Participants emphasized the importance of equity and inclusion and cited specific practices and goals of their schools. However, administrators noted that they are often constrained by budget, hiring qualified personnel, and time for training and professional development.

Equity Training. Several administrators reported initiatives and policies aimed at promoting equity in their respective schools and districts. Some participants discussed the implementation of equity transformation cycles at their schools, involving empathy interviews with students and families and code generative planning. Participants highlighted the rollout of an equity policies in their districts, reflecting a broader commitment to equity and inclusive practices. Some participants emphasized the development of a robust equity program and the formation of a dedicated equity team embedded in the school. Some participants noted district-wide efforts, including the implementation of the *Courageous Conversations* training program

and ongoing work on responsive teaching to address issues related to racism, ableism, contributing to the breakdown of barriers in these areas.

Inclusion. Administrators consistently underscored their commitment to promoting inclusive practices for ELL students with disabilities in their schools. They expressed a desire for school staff to understand the benefits of including these students in general education settings. The distinction between the "pull-out" model, involving services outside the classroom, and the "push-in" model, providing individualized services inside the classroom, was emphasized. Some participants detailed a shift from a location-based special education model to one based on student needs, aiming for complete inclusion. Participants advocated for inclusionary models that break down silos and avoid isolating students, emphasizing the need to eliminate blaming and sharing responsibility for students' learning. Administrators pointed out the ineffectiveness of pull-out models in increasing academic achievement scores, supporting the push-in model to enhance inclusion. They discussed ongoing efforts, such as training staff and utilizing ESL teachers, to implement and improve push-in services, aiming for a comprehensive and effective approach to benefit ELL students with disabilities in diverse educational settings.

Theme Four: Barriers to Learning

Communication is the most critical part of creating positive relationships between educators and parents. This is especially important for students who have IEPs (Accardo et al., 2020; Cioè-Peña, 2021; Kroesch & Peeples, 2021). Parental input on student progress, interventions, and IEP goals can help set up students for success. However, educator preparation programs often fail to address how to enhance collaboration between teachers and parents (Accardo et al., 2020; Wissink & Starks, 2019). A lack of educator training can also be a barrier to learning for ELL students with disabilities. Research has consistently demonstrated that

educator training and skill level has not kept up with the increasing need to instruct students with diverse language and learning needs (Munguia, 2017; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019).

The findings from this study agree with the literature. Participants stated that communication can be a huge barrier for students and their families due to many diverse languages, a lack of bilingual staff, and a lack of trust among families. Participants also expressed skepticism about the preparedness of classroom teachers and special education teachers to effectively support ELL students with disabilities.

Communication. Administrators stated that communication with students and families can be a barrier for equitable education experiences for ELL students with disabilities. Communication with students can be a challenge at both the individual and systems level. Language acts as a barrier for students to engage meaningfully in school, making it challenging for them to feel part of the larger educational system. A lack of bilingual special education teachers can be a hurdle for students learning two languages. Administrators described ELL students with disabilities as being on the margins due to language acquisition challenges, compounded by diagnosed disabilities. At the systems level, the presence of diverse languages in the school poses difficulties in providing appropriate instruction, especially for less common languages like Arabic or Farsi. Participants noted the challenge of communication in a school with over a dozen languages, even with technological assistance. Administrators highlighted the difficulty of tailoring instruction due to various background factors that students bring, including different levels of education, trauma, and special service needs.

Most participants acknowledged that they would like to see an improvement in communication and connection with families. Participants highlighted factors influencing communication challenges, noting that families may be hesitant to share their entire history due

to fear, and the language barrier can hinder understanding cultural storytelling and comfort levels. Administrators pointed out a major shortcoming in systems-level support, emphasizing the importance of understanding families' communication styles and preferences. Participants underscored the necessity of building strong connections with families, creating a sense of belonging and ensuring that the school is a safe place for both students and their families. Overall, administrators emphasized the need for improved communication and understanding between schools and families to enhance the learning experience for ELL students with disabilities.

Training. Administrators acknowledged that there is a significant lack of educator training, posing a barrier to the adequate learning and access to education for ELL students with disabilities. Participants expressed skepticism about the preparedness of both classroom teachers and special educators to effectively support this subgroup. Administrators identified the challenge of determining the most effective ways to teach students and emphasized the need to coach teachers accordingly. Participants underscored the importance of individualized training for administrators to address the specific needs of this student group. Administrators emphasized the necessity of building teachers' capacity to understand the multiple needs of ELL students with disabilities, noting that the benefits extend to all students. It can be difficult for staff to stay updated on evidence-based training and research, emphasizing the constant battle to remain at the forefront of effective practices. Participants pointed out that educator experience is a factor, particularly for newer colleagues who may lack the knowledge and strategies needed to support ELL students with disabilities effectively.

Theme Five: Complexities of the Identification Process

Educator hesitancy and lack of training can lead to misidentification for ELL students that may have disabilities but are not referred for evaluation in a timely manner (Umansky et al., 2017). ELL students have been found to be underrepresented in early grades and overrepresented in later grades within special education (DeMatthews & Knight, 2019; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Administrators must consider the impact of intersectionality for ELL students with disabilities (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Cioè-Peña, 2021; Chiu et al., 2022; Kangas, 2017; Miller, 2022; Schwitzman, 2019; Whitenack et al., 2019). It is inadequate to evaluate language and learning differences as standalone issues (Annamma & Morrison; Whitenack et al., 2019). The findings of this study agree with the literature. Participants noted the significant challenge of teasing out language versus learning differences and how a lack of educator training can lead to misidentification and overidentification in certain categories (e.g., communication disorder).

Accurate Identification. Administrators highlighted the significant challenge of identifying whether difficulties faced by ELL students with disabilities stem from learning differences, language differences, or a combination of both. One administrator questioned, “Is it the language? Is it the disability? Is it both?” The process of evaluating and identifying ELL students with disabilities was criticized as being lengthy and cumbersome, with some participants suggesting a need for a faster and more efficient identification system. Delays in the identification process were seen as a significant issue, potentially leading to prolonged periods before students receive necessary resources and interventions, particularly affecting ELL students who might wait until later grades for proper identification and support.

Misidentification. Participants raised concerns about the overidentification, underidentification, or misidentification of ELL students in special education. Administrators

expressed passion regarding the belief that many kids are overqualified for special education and administrators need to be mindful of overidentification. Participants discussed system failures leading to misidentifying disabilities, pointing out instances where students may receive services they don't need or face challenges in obtaining necessary support. Concerns were also voiced about the overrepresentation of ELL students in specific special education categories, such as communication disorders. Participants highlighted instances where certain eligibility categories were disproportionately applied to students of color or Spanish-speaking students. The frustration with the overidentification of communication disorders and the impact of misidentification leading to challenges in transitioning students back to general education underscored the need for careful evaluation processes to ensure accurate identification and appropriate support for ELL students with disabilities.

Theme Six: Appropriate Curriculum

When students are provided culturally relevant materials and curriculum, it not only can increase student achievement, but also can improve students' confidence and attitudes towards learning (Kelley et al., 2015). Principals can have significant influence on culturally and linguistically diverse students through ensuring the use of culturally responsive teaching and curriculum (Grissom et al., 2021). However, administrators do not always receive sufficient training on identifying appropriate curriculum for students with disabilities and considering the needs of ELL students with disabilities (Roberts & Guerra, 2017). The findings of this study somewhat agree with the literature. Participants noted the importance of culturally responsive curriculum to increase student engagement. However, administrators did not always have authority over choosing the curriculum. Authority for selecting curriculum was often at the

district level in larger school districts. Participants demonstrated a high level of knowledge in providing appropriate curriculum, which conflicts with current literature.

Culturally Responsive Curriculum. Administrators emphasized the importance of culturally responsive curriculum and diverse representation. Participants highlighted the need for all curriculum to be culturally appropriate, reflecting the diversity of the students using it. Administrators emphasized the desire for curriculum that resonates with students, allowing them to see themselves represented. Curriculum should be relevant to students' cultural background and situation. Participants underscored the necessity of creating connections by incorporating cultural understandings into the curriculum and that the curriculum should inherently be multicultural in nature. Administrators collectively advocated for a curriculum that acknowledges and incorporates the cultural diversity of ELL students with disabilities, fostering a more inclusive and relatable educational experience.

Accessible Curriculum. Administrators stressed the importance of multiple points of entry in the curriculum to meet students where they are and build foundational skills. Participants emphasized the significance of diverse entry points in the curriculum, allowing for pinpointed instruction. Administrators stressed the need for educators to thoughtfully adapt the curriculum to cater to diverse learners with recommendations of supports such as built-in scaffolds to support teachers and prevent it from becoming overwhelming. Participants further emphasized that curriculum accessibility extends to instructional assistants, recognizing the difference in delivery between licensed teachers and educational assistants.

Adapting Curriculum. Participants stressed the significance of educators understanding how to adapt curriculum to deliver specially designed instruction, provide accommodations, and differentiate between modifications and accommodations. Administrators highlighted the need

for teachers to use curriculum as a base and adapt it to the specific needs and proficiency levels of students, particularly those in special education and language learner categories. Secondary administrators pointed out unique challenges at the secondary level, where students are learning complex subjects while grappling with accommodation strategies, emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between modifications and accommodations.

Theme Seven: Creating Success

ELL students with disabilities have some of the most unique needs in a school system (Jozwik et al., 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Szymanski & Lynch, 2020). When educators create positive relationships with students, it improves students' attitudes and beliefs towards school (Jozwik et al., 2020). For educators to cultivate relationships, they must increase their cultural awareness of diverse learners (He, 2013; Irizarry & Williams, 2013; Jozwik et al., 2020). Research has found that when students feel understood and comfortable voicing their opinion, it increases academic achievement (Danzak & Wilkinson, 2017; Shim & Shur, 2018). The findings of this study agree with the literature. Participants all agreed that relationships are the cornerstone of creating success for ELL students with disabilities. New findings emerged regarding administrators stating the importance of providing an individualized approach, shifting the education model to meet students' needs, and relying on building experts.

Supportive Staff. Administrators highlighted the pivotal role of a strong and supportive school team in fostering success. Participants emphasized the importance of a cohesive team of specialists aligned with the values of the district and school. Administrators underscored the significant contribution of individuals involved in the process, emphasizing the impact of the right teacher at the right moment. Participants identified quality professional development, hiring qualified personnel, and placing the right individuals in classrooms as key factors in initiating

success. Administrators strongly linked students' success to the capacity and belief of the adults leading them, emphasizing the importance of adults who genuinely believe in the students' learning potential. Participants highlighted the positive impact of students being surrounded by a supportive network of people in school, as well as the critical nature of a team recognizing that all students are learners and deserve the best support.

Building Relationships. Administrators emphasized the crucial role of building strong relationships with both students and their families. Participants highlighted the significance of establishing strong relationships and a solid foundation, considering them essential for academic success. Administrators should prioritize a safe environment for students to build trust and foster academic effort. Participants emphasized the role of teachers as mentors and resources, focusing on developing strong relationships that students can trust and rely on for support and guidance.

Participants stated that building relationships with families is just as important as the relationships built inside the classroom. Administrators noted that building relationships with families helps to gain a better understanding of students and acknowledged the value of knowing what happens in the home and a student's capabilities in their native language. Participants stressed the need for parent buy-in, suggesting that it can lead to outcomes perceived as beneficial by parents. Participants discussed implementing initiatives at their schools to bridge the gap and enhance relationships with parents, including cultural events that celebrate diversity and engage both parents and students. Administrators highlighted the importance of empowering parents by ensuring they understand their rights and encouraging them to be active partners in their child's education.

Individualized Approach. Administrators discussed the importance of tailoring the educational experience to provide an individualized approach for these unique students.

Participants highlighted shifts in education models, aiming to meet the needs of students rather than expecting students to conform to the existing model, particularly in the special education setting. Participants emphasized the need for creativity and viewing education through the eyes of the students. Administrators underscored the significance of understanding each student's specific needs rather than making assumptions about a uniform level of proficiency. Administrators acknowledged the expertise of ELD and special education teachers, relying on their specialized knowledge to create effective individualized approaches.

Administrators discussed unique approach in their schools, such as intervening at the appropriate level for students struggling with reading, even if it means addressing skills below the typical grade level. One administrator advocated for "getting out of their own way," acknowledging the importance of working with students at various proficiency levels. One participant succinctly expressed that at his school, he is "making sure that we're addressing the students in front of us in ways that we know that can provide them access."

Discussion of Themes Related to DisCrit

DisCrit posits that the intersectionality of race and disability creates unique challenges that must be addressed to achieve educational equity (Annamma, 2018, Perouse-Harvey, 2022). DisCrit emphasizes that student identities are more than race, level of English proficiency, or disability status (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Cioè-Peña, Chiu et al., 2022; 2021; Miller, 2022; Schwitzman, 2019). Examining administrators' perceptions on equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities is an important step to creating inclusive, equitable schools for all students (DeMatthews, 2020). The seven themes that emerged from this study and their relation to the theoretical framework, DisCrit, are outlined below.

The Power of Perception and DisCrit. In the first theme, The Power of Perception, the positive perceptions identified by participants resonated with DisCrit's emphasis on dismantling systemic barriers. For instance, the commitment to a "student-first philosophy" aligns with DisCrit's call to center the experiences of marginalized students, including those with disabilities and linguistic differences. Additionally, the concept of administrators taking collective responsibility, as described by Blair's metaphorical "it's going to take a village," reflects the DisCrit principle of recognizing the interconnectedness of various factors contributing to educational disparities.

Conversely, negative perceptions identified in the study, including biases rooted in racism and ableism, align with DisCrit's focus on uncovering and challenging the systemic injustices faced by individuals at the intersection of race and disability. The experiences shared by participants, such as concerns about the lack of specific training for administrators on topics like racism and ableism, resonate with DisCrit's call for critical reflection and action. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on incidents of racism or ableism further underscores DisCrit's contention that societal contexts and crises can exacerbate existing disparities.

Moreover, the emphasis on cultural competence and understanding racial differences among school staff, as highlighted by several administrators, aligns with DisCrit's emphasis on recognizing and addressing the racialized aspects of disability. The call for addressing implicit bias and acknowledging the impact of race on student achievement reflects DisCrit's commitment to dismantling the interlocking systems of oppression that affect marginalized students.

Effective Teaching and Instructional Strategies and DisCrit. The emphasis on scaffolding, as highlighted by several participants, reflects a perception that acknowledges the

diverse linguistic needs of ELL students with disabilities. This aligns with DisCrit's overarching goal of dismantling systemic barriers, including those related to language proficiency. Participants' caution against overusing scaffolding and the advocacy for a print and language-rich classroom environment demonstrate a nuanced perception that goes beyond a one-size-fits-all approach, recognizing the individual strengths and challenges of each student, in line with DisCrit's call for culturally responsive practices.

Furthermore, the acknowledgment of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) as an effective strategy aligns with DisCrit's focus on creating inclusive environments for diverse learners. The positive experiences shared by administrators with SIOP training reinforce the perception that values strategies promoting accessibility for students learning multiple languages, contributing to the DisCrit framework's goal of addressing language-based disparities.

In the realm of classroom accommodations, the emphasis on visual supports by administrators aligns with DisCrit's recognition of the diverse needs of students with disabilities, emphasizing the importance of accessibility beyond mere decorations. Participants' call for a personalized approach to visual supports resonates with the DisCrit framework's emphasis on individualized, culturally responsive strategies.

Furthermore, the administrators' views on creating language-rich environments align with DisCrit's focus on recognizing and addressing language-based disparities. This perception reflects a commitment to fostering inclusive learning environments that benefit all students, including those with disabilities and language needs, as promoted by DisCrit.

Equity and Inclusive Practices and DisCrit. The reported initiatives and policies aimed at promoting equity in schools and districts, as highlighted by administrators, resonate with DisCrit's foundational principles of dismantling systemic barriers and addressing issues related to

racism and ableism. The discussion of equity transformation cycles, district-wide equity policy rollout, and dedication to a robust equity program reflect a commitment to fostering inclusive practices that consider the unique needs of ELL students with disabilities. The implementation of district-wide efforts, including *Courageous Conversations* and culturally responsive teaching, contribute to the breakdown of barriers related to racism and ableism, aligning with DisCrit's emphasis on proactive measures to create equitable educational experiences.

In terms of inclusion, administrators consistently emphasized their commitment to promoting inclusive practices for ELL students with disabilities. The distinction between the "pull-out" and "push-in" models, reflects a nuanced understanding of the diverse needs of students. The push towards complete inclusion and administrators' advocacy for push-in models reflects a perception that values comprehensive and effective approaches to benefit ELL students with disabilities in diverse educational settings, aligning with DisCrit's emphasis on fostering inclusive environments that consider the interconnected systems of oppression faced by marginalized students.

Barriers to Learning and DisCrit. The challenges described by administrators at both individual and systems levels, such the lack of bilingual special education teachers and the difficulties posed by diverse languages, underscore DisCrit's call for addressing systemic inadequacies in providing appropriate instruction for ELL students with disabilities. The highlighted challenges in communication with families align with DisCrit's focus on recognizing and addressing barriers that extend beyond the school environment. The acknowledgment of factors influencing communication challenges, including fear, language barriers, and cultural differences, resonates with DisCrit's call for culturally responsive and inclusive practices to create a supportive educational environment.

The lack of educator training illuminates DisCrit's concern with systemic inadequacies in preparing educators to effectively support ELL students with disabilities. The skepticism expressed by administrators about the preparedness of educators aligns with DisCrit's emphasis on dismantling systemic barriers that impede access to quality educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities.

Complexities of the Identification Process and DisCrit. The administrators' challenges among their school teams in accurately identifying whether difficulties faced by ELL students with disabilities stem from learning differences, language differences, or a combination of both, reflect DisCrit's contention that intersectionality plays a crucial role in understanding and addressing the unique needs of students at the crossroads of race, language, and disability. The criticism of the lengthy and cumbersome identification process, with calls for a faster and more efficient system, resonates with DisCrit's emphasis on dismantling systemic inadequacies that disproportionately affect marginalized students, potentially delaying necessary resources and interventions.

Concerns raised by participants about overidentification, underidentification, or misidentification of ELL students in special education align with DisCrit's focus on addressing disparities in the application of special education categories and recognizing the potential impact of systemic failures on accurate identification. The frustration expressed about the overidentification of communication disorders and the challenges related to misidentification leading to difficulties in transitioning students back to the general education setting underscore the need for a careful and nuanced evaluation process to ensure accurate identification and appropriate support for ELL students with disabilities within the DisCrit framework.

Appropriate Curriculum and DisCrit. Administrators' emphasis on culturally responsive curriculum reflects DisCrit's foundational principles of acknowledging and incorporating the cultural diversity of ELL students with disabilities. Participants' advocacy for curriculum that is inherently multicultural and resonates with students' backgrounds aligns with DisCrit's call for culturally responsive practices to create an inclusive and relatable educational experience.

In terms of accessible curriculum, administrators' stress on multiple points of entry and the need for educators to adapt the curriculum to cater to diverse learners resonates with DisCrit's emphasis on dismantling systemic inadequacies to ensure equitable access to education. The recommendation for built-in scaffolds within the curriculum and recognizing the differences in delivery between licensed teachers and educational assistants aligns with DisCrit's focus on addressing barriers to learning for diverse student populations.

Additionally, the administrators' focus on adapting curriculum aligns with DisCrit's call for educators to understand how to deliver specially designed instruction, provide accommodations, and differentiate between modifications and accommodations. The acknowledgment of challenges at the secondary level, where students are learning complex subjects while grappling with accommodation strategies, underscores the need for individualized approaches to curriculum adaptation, aligning with DisCrit's emphasis on recognizing the unique needs of students at the intersection of race, language, and disability.

Creating Success and DisCrit. Administrators' focus on a supportive staff reflects DisCrit's foundational principles of acknowledging the critical role of adults in creating an equitable learning environment. The emphasis on cohesive teams, quality personnel, and

individuals who genuinely believe in students' potential aligns with DisCrit's call for fostering inclusive educational experiences for marginalized students.

Administrators reported the importance of building relationships, which resonates with DisCrit's focus on acknowledging the importance of strong relationships with both students and their families. The recognition that building relationships with families is just as important as those built inside the classroom aligns with DisCrit's emphasis on creating a supportive network that considers the broader context of students' lives. The initiatives to bridge the gap and enhance relationships with parents reflect DisCrit's call for culturally responsive practices and active engagement with families to promote success.

The emphasis on an individualized approach aligns with DisCrit's call for tailoring the educational experience to provide personalized approaches for unique students. Administrators' responses of the shift in school models to meet the needs of students, understanding each student's specific needs, and intervening at appropriate levels for struggling students reflect DisCrit's emphasis on dismantling uniform approaches and addressing the diverse needs of students at various proficiency levels.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the limited body of research on administrators and ELL students with disabilities by examining administrators' perspectives on equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities. Since administrators have such a large influence on student achievement, school climate, and equitable outcomes (Cruze & López, 2020; Grissom, 2021; Munguia, 2017; Palmer et al., 2019; Roberts & Guerra, 2017; Roberts et al., 2018; Smith & Larwin, 2021), it is critical to understand how administrators perceive school environments conducive to learning for ELL students with disabilities, especially

in the Pacific Northwest, since no previous research has focused on this topic in this region of the U.S.

This study has unveiled a rich tapestry of administrator perceptions on equitable educational experiences of ELL students with disabilities. Administrators' perspectives emerged as powerful drivers of either positive or negative outcomes for this vulnerable student population. The positive perceptions emphasized by participants, such as maintaining a student-first philosophy, fostering a collective responsibility, and exhibiting empathy and ownership, align with the ideals of fostering inclusive and equitable educational environments. The commitment to a positive mindset underscores the importance of administrators actively modeling beliefs in the capabilities of all students and closing the achievement gap.

Conversely, negative perceptions rooted in biases, racism, and ableism pose significant challenges to creating equitable educational experiences. The study illuminates that unintentional biases emphasize the need for proactive strategies like root cause analysis and exposure to different cultures. The impact of harmful perspectives during the COVID-19 pandemic emphasizes the urgency of addressing deep-rooted beliefs that can lead to the loss of staff and compromised educational environments.

Equity training, inclusionary models, effective communication, and targeted training for educators emerged as critical factors in the quest for equitable educational experiences. Initiatives like equity transformation cycles, *Courageous Conversations*, and the push for inclusion underscore administrators' dedication to dismantling barriers related to racism, ableism, and language differences. The identification process complexities and the need for accurate identification reinforce the call for clarified processes and careful evaluation to ensure timely support for ELL students with disabilities.

Furthermore, administrators stressed the importance of a culturally responsive curriculum, recognizing the significance of diverse representation and multiple entry points to cater to students' diverse needs. The emphasis on adapting curriculum, delivering specially designed instruction, as well as the role of a supportive staff, building strong relationships with students and families, and fostering an individualized approach collectively form a foundation for creating success. These findings emphasize the necessity for administrators to view themselves as critical players in providing equitable educational experiences, addressing biases, and fostering an environment where every student thrives.

As we move forward, the study highlights the imperative for ongoing professional development, systemic changes, and a continuous commitment to creating inclusive, culturally responsive, and equitable educational environments for ELL students with disabilities. The narratives shared by administrators offer valuable insights and underscore the need for collective efforts to dismantle systemic barriers and foster a more just educational landscape for all students.

Recommendations for Further Research

While this study has provided valuable insights into administrators' perceptions and their impact on equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities, there remain avenues for further research to deepen our understanding and inform actionable strategies. There are several areas to consider for future research on administrators and ELL students with disabilities.

Longitudinal Studies on Equity Initiatives

Conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of equity initiatives, such as *Courageous Conversations* and equity transformation cycles, would be beneficial.

Understanding how sustained efforts influence administrators' perceptions and subsequently impact the academic outcomes and experiences of ELL students with disabilities over time could provide valuable insights.

In-Depth Exploration of Bias and Racism

Given the acknowledgment of biases and racism by administrators, further research could delve deeper into understanding the nature and sources of these biases. Exploring the effectiveness of specific anti-bias training programs or interventions in reducing bias and promoting cultural competence among administrators could be a focal point.

Secondary and Rural Administrator Representation

One limitation of the study was the exclusion of rural school districts. Since the study targeted the eight school districts in each state with the largest number of ELL students, rural districts with smaller populations were naturally excluded. Future studies should include administrators from rural school districts to examine their perspectives and the unique challenges that rural districts encounter. Additionally, the pool of participants was limited to only two administrators with a background in special education and there were only three administrators at the secondary level. Future studies should include more administrators at the secondary level and more administrators with special education experience.

Parental Involvement and Communication Strategies

Investigating effective strategies to enhance communication and connection between schools and families of ELL students with disabilities is crucial. Research could explore the role of cultural competency training for educators and administrators in facilitating more meaningful interactions with diverse families, as well as strategies to increase parent buy-in and collaboration.

Comparative Studies on Identification Processes

Comparative studies across different school districts or regions could provide insights into variations in the identification processes for ELL students with disabilities. Analyzing the effectiveness of different identification models and interventions in reducing misidentification or underidentification would contribute to the development of best practices.

Assessment of Curriculum Adaptation Strategies

To enhance our understanding of culturally responsive curriculum, research could focus on assessing the impact of specific curriculum adaptation strategies on the academic achievement and engagement of ELL students with disabilities. This could include evaluating the effectiveness of built-in scaffolds, diverse entry points, and differentiated instruction within the curriculum.

Exploration of Administrator Professional Development

Lastly, investigating the impact of targeted professional development for administrators on fostering positive perceptions, dismantling biases, and promoting equitable practices is essential. This could involve assessing the effectiveness of existing training programs and identifying areas for improvement, as well as exploring the training that preservice administrators receive in graduate school.

Implications for Professional Practice

The conclusions drawn from the study on administrators' perceptions of equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities have several implications for professional practice among school administrators. Here are key considerations for administrators to enhance their practices:

Cultivate Positive Perceptions

Administrators play a pivotal role in shaping school culture and fostering positive perceptions. The emphasis on maintaining a positive focus, believing in the capabilities of all students, and adopting a "student-first philosophy" underscores the importance of administrators instilling confidence and high expectations in both staff and students. Practicing empathy and celebrating incremental successes contribute to a supportive and motivating educational environment.

Address Unconscious Bias and Racism

The study underscores the need for administrators to proactively address unconscious biases and racism within the school system. Professional development programs focused on cultural competence, implicit bias, and systemic racism could empower administrators to create more inclusive environments. This involves not only acknowledging biases but actively working towards dismantling them through education, exposure to diverse perspectives, and ongoing self-reflection.

Implement Equity Initiatives

The findings emphasize the positive impact of equity initiatives such as *Courageous Conversations* and equity transformation cycles. Administrators should consider implementing or expanding such initiatives within their schools or districts. Engaging in empathetic interviews with students and families can enhance administrators' understanding of individual needs and contribute to more informed decision-making.

Enhance Communication Strategies

Effective communication with ELL students and their families is critical. Administrators should prioritize strategies that bridge language barriers and facilitate meaningful connections.

This includes investing in bilingual support staff, leveraging technology for multilingual communication, and implementing initiatives that create a welcoming and inclusive environment for families. Understanding the unique challenges families face can inform tailored communication approaches.

Prioritize Inclusive Practices

The commitment to inclusive practices is a recurring theme in the study. Administrators should advocate for and implement inclusionary models that break down silos and avoid isolating ELL students with disabilities. This involves promoting a shift from the traditional "pull-out" model to the more inclusive "push-in" model. Ongoing training for staff, collaboration with ESL teachers, and a focus on shared responsibility for student learning are key components of this approach.

Clarify Identification Processes

The study highlights challenges in the identification of learning differences and disabilities among ELL students. Administrators should explore ways to clarify and outline the identification process to prevent delays in providing necessary resources. Administrators should ensure there is a clear evaluation process, with the right experts at the table to avoid overidentifying or misidentifying students. This may involve revising assessment methods, including language dominance and language proficiency assessments, implementing culturally sensitive evaluation tools, and ensuring that the identification process considers the intersectionality of language and disability.

Embed Culturally Responsive Curriculum

Administrators should actively promote the integration of culturally responsive curriculum within their schools. This includes ensuring that curriculum materials reflect the

diversity of the student body, incorporating multiple entry points to accommodate diverse learners, and providing built-in scaffolds to support both teachers and students. Cultivating an environment where students see themselves represented positively in the curriculum can enhance engagement and academic success.

Foster Supportive School Teams and Relationships

Administrators should prioritize building and maintaining a strong, supportive school team. This involves investing in professional development, hiring quality personnel, and placing individuals in roles that align with the values of the school. Additionally, administrators must recognize the importance of building strong relationships with both students and their families. Creating a safe and trusting environment is foundational for academic success for all students, especially ELL students with disabilities.

In conclusion, these implications highlight the transformative role administrators can play in creating equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities. By fostering positive perceptions, addressing biases, implementing inclusive practices, and prioritizing effective communication, administrators can contribute to a more inclusive, supportive, and successful learning environment for all students.

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Appendix A

Qualitative Informed Consent

A. Purpose and Background

I am currently a doctorate student at Northwest Nazarene University, and I am conducting a research study related to how school administrators perceive educational experiences for English Language Learner (ELL) students with disabilities. The purpose of this study is to determine how administrators in the Pacific Northwest perceive equitable educational experiences for ELL students with disabilities. I appreciate your involvement in helping better understand how administrators view the educational dynamics for ELL students with disabilities.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are over the age of 18 and you fit the criteria for the study.

B. Procedures

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.
2. You will be interviewed once at a mutually agreed upon time via Teams in August 2023 or September 2023. The interviews will be audio taped and are expected to take approximately 45 minutes each.
3. After the interviews have been disseminated you will be asked to read the write-up to make sure that the information you gave is correct.

C. Risks/Discomforts

1. There is minimal risk involved if you volunteer for this research. You will not be identified in the research; all interviews and responses will be kept confidential with all data being secured in my home.
2. Some of the questions in the interview may make you uncomfortable, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time. There will be no compensation for your participation in this study.
3. Only the primary researcher and the research supervisor will be privy to data from this study. As researchers, both parties are bound to keep data as secure and confidential as possible.

D. Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help principal preparation programs and future K–12 administrators.

E. Payments

There are no payments for participating in this study.

F. Questions

If you have any questions or concerns about participation in this study, please feel free to contact the research investigator, Karley Strouse. She can be contacted at 971-241-4998; email at kstrouse@nnu.edu.

Should you feel distressed due to participation in this study, you should contact your own health care provider.

G. Consent

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participation in research is voluntary. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. This research study has been approved by the Northwest Nazarene University Human Research Review Committee in August 2023.

I give my consent to participate in this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

I give my consent for the interview to be audio taped in this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study. No person identifying information will be used in the report from this study:

_____ _____

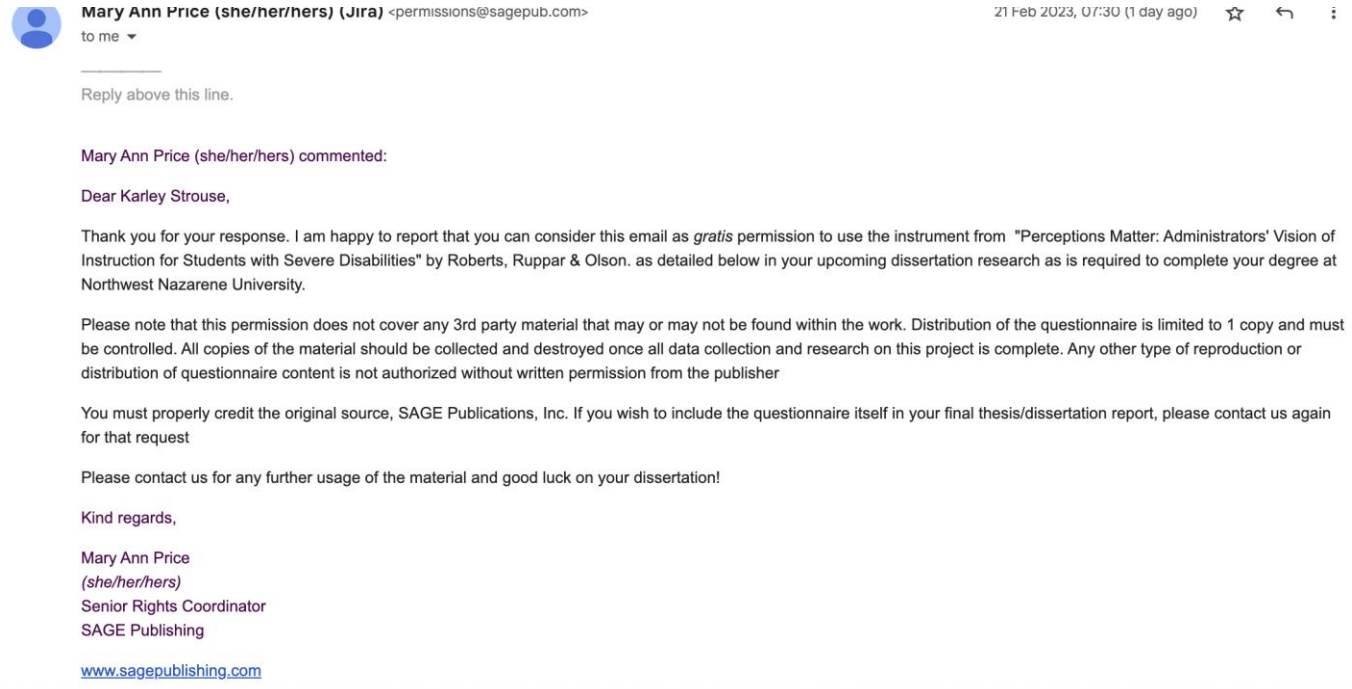
Signature of Study Participant **Date**

_____ _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent **Date**

Appendix B

Instrument Permission



Mary Ann Price (she/her/hers) (Jira) <permissions@sagepub.com> 21 Feb 2023, 07:30 (1 day ago)
to me

Reply above this line.

Mary Ann Price (she/her/hers) commented:

Dear Karley Strouse,

Thank you for your response. I am happy to report that you can consider this email as *gratis* permission to use the instrument from "Perceptions Matter: Administrators' Vision of Instruction for Students with Severe Disabilities" by Roberts, Ruppar & Olson. as detailed below in your upcoming dissertation research as is required to complete your degree at Northwest Nazarene University.

Please note that this permission does not cover any 3rd party material that may or may not be found within the work. Distribution of the questionnaire is limited to 1 copy and must be controlled. All copies of the material should be collected and destroyed once all data collection and research on this project is complete. Any other type of reproduction or distribution of questionnaire content is not authorized without written permission from the publisher

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