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## Best Practices for Addressing the Achievement Gap for Hispanic Elementary Students

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Best Practices for Addressing the Achievement Gap for Hispanic Elementary Students

A Dissertation by

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Irvine, California

School of Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

February 2019

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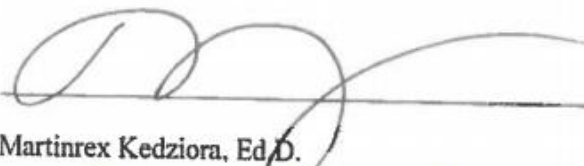
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February 2019

Best Practices for Addressing the Achievement Gap for Hispanic Elementary Students

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## ABSTRACT

Best Practices for Addressing the Achievement Gap for Hispanic Elementary Students

by Megan C. Greene

**Purpose:** The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to identify and describe effective instructional strategies for English language arts and mathematics perceived by expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers in southern California to reduce the achievement gap in high poverty and high English language learner (ELL) elementary schools.

**Methodology:** The researcher selected a qualitative research design to describe the instructional strategies used by teachers in three southern California school districts. Through in-depth, semi-structured, open-ended interviews, the researcher provided an examination of the instructional strategies used to address the needs of high poverty and high ELL elementary schools. Teachers were identified from three criteria: (a) teaching at a school with a Latino population of 50% or more, (b) population of 80% or more in poverty, and (c) currently teaching fourth or fifth grade. Data collected using NVivo software to determine patterns and categories.

**Findings:** Based on the responses from the study participants, four major findings were established for both Research Questions 1 and 2.

**Conclusions:** The major finding from Research Questions 1 and 2 were summarized as four conclusions: (a) collaboration is the number one tool teachers need to prepare students; (b) teachers need training on a collaborative style for teaching small groups, the management, and different teaching strategies and organizational patterns to make small group instruction effective in a large group setting; (c) teachers do not have the

technology skills and knowledge necessary to maximize the impact of technology as an instructional tool; and (d) teachers do not have the technology skill and knowledge to maximize the impact of technology as an instructional tool for mathematics or mathematics using manipulatives.

**Recommendations:** Six recommendations are: (a) larger sample across the United States focusing on ELLs from different origins; (b) similar study with a teacher of a different origin from the ELLs, (c) similar study of secondary teachers' effective instructional strategies, (d) observational study in collaboration to evaluate effectiveness in supporting ELLs, (e) similar study with special education students, and (f) study of English only students comparing differences and similarities between ELLs and effective instructional strategies.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	4
ELL Students in the United States .....	5
Achievement Gap is Getting Larger for ELL Students .....	5
Learning Theories .....	6
Implicit theory.....	6
Constructivist theory.....	6
Transformative theory.....	7
Researched Bases Learning Methods .....	7
Cooperative learning .....	7
Project-based learning.....	8
Flipped learning. ....	8
Blended learning. ....	8
Educational Theorists.....	9
John Dewey.....	9
Maria Montessori .....	9
Lev Vygotsky .....	9
Upper Elementary Teachers.....	10
Achievement Gap.....	11
At Risk Students .....	12
ELLs.....	12
Statement of the Research Problem .....	13
Purpose Statement.....	15
Research Questions.....	16
Significance of the Problem.....	16
Definitions.....	17
Delimitations.....	18
Organization of the Study .....	19
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	20
Increasing Achievement gap for ELL Students .....	21
Learning Theories .....	22
Implicit Theory .....	23
Constructivist Theory.....	23
Transformative Learning Theory .....	24
Research Based Learning Methods.....	24
Cooperative Learning.....	25
Project-Based Learning.....	26
Flipped Learning .....	26
Blended Learning.....	27
Educational Theorists.....	29
John Dewey.....	29
Maria Montessori .....	30
Lev Vygotsky .....	31

Fourth and Fifth Grade Elementary Teachers Requirements .....	32
Requirements for Teaching Credential .....	32
Curriculum Framework.....	33
ELA/ELD .....	34
Mathematics .....	35
Standards.....	36
History of Assessing Progress .....	38
California ELD.....	38
ELP assessments for California .....	39
CAASPP .....	39
Achievement gap .....	39
Teacher Practices Designed to Address the Achievement Gap .....	41
At Risk Students .....	42
Poverty .....	42
ELLs.....	43
Literature Gap .....	44
Summary .....	45
Synthesis Matrix .....	45
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY .....	46
Overview .....	46
Purpose Statement.....	46
Research Questions.....	46
Research Design.....	47
Population .....	48
Target Population.....	48
Sample .....	49
Sample Selection Process .....	50
Instrumentation .....	52
Instrument Development.....	53
Reliability.....	54
Validity .....	54
Field Test .....	55
Data Collection .....	55
Data Analysis .....	57
Inter-Coder Reliability .....	57
Limitations .....	58
Summary .....	59
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS.....	60
Purpose Statement.....	60
Research Questions.....	60
Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures .....	61
Population .....	62
Sample.....	62
Presentation and Analysis of Data .....	64

Data Analysis by Participant.....	64
Participant 1 .....	64
Research question 1 .....	64
Research question 2 .....	65
Participant 2 .....	66
Research question 1 .....	67
Research question 2 .....	67
Participant 3 .....	69
Research question 1 .....	69
Research question 2 .....	69
Participant 4 .....	70
Research question 1 .....	71
Research question 2 .....	71
Participant 5 .....	72
Research question 1 .....	73
Research question 2 .....	74
Participant 6 .....	76
Research question 1 .....	76
Research question 2 .....	77
Participant 7 .....	78
Research question 1 .....	78
Research question 2 .....	79
Participant 8 .....	80
Research question 1 .....	80
Research question 2 .....	82
Participant 9 .....	83
Research question 1 .....	83
Research question 2 .....	84
Participant 10 .....	86
Research question 1 .....	86
Research question 2 .....	88
Participant 11 .....	90
Research question 1 .....	90
Research question 2 .....	91
Participant 12 .....	92
Research question 1 .....	93
Research question 2 .....	94
Data Analysis by Common Themes in Research Questions.....	95
Research question 1 .....	95
Common theme 1: Collaboration.....	96
Common theme 2: Small groups.....	96
Common theme 3: Technology.....	96
Common theme 4: Parent involvement.....	97
Common theme 5: Scaffolding .....	98
Common theme 6: Positive classroom culture.....	98
Common theme 7: Student world connection.....	99

Common theme 8: Visuals .....	99
Common theme 9: One-on-one teaching .....	99
Common theme 10: Vocabulary .....	100
Common theme 11: Student’s home culture.....	100
Common theme 12: Translate to native language.....	100
Research Question 2 .....	101
Common theme 1: Manipulatives .....	101
Common theme 2: Visuals.....	102
Common theme 3: Small groups.....	102
Common theme 4: Technology.....	102
Common theme 5: Collaboration.....	103
Common theme 6: Positive classroom culture.....	103
Common theme 7: Student world connection.....	104
Common theme 8: One-on-one teaching.....	104
Common theme 9: Parent involvement.....	104
Common theme 10: Taking notes .....	104
Common theme 11: Translate to native language.....	105
Common theme 12: Vocabulary .....	105
Summary .....	106
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	108
Summary of the Study .....	108
Purpose Statement.....	108
Research Questions .....	108
Research Methods .....	109
Population and Sample .....	109
Major Findings.....	110
Research Question 1 .....	110
Major finding 1 .....	110
Major finding 2 .....	111
Major finding 3 .....	111
Research Question 2 .....	111
Major finding 4 .....	112
Unexpected Findings .....	112
Conclusions.....	112
Conclusion 1 .....	112
Conclusion 2 .....	113
Conclusion 3 .....	114
Conclusion 4 .....	114
Implications for Action.....	115
Implication for Action 1.....	115
Implication for Action 2.....	116
Implication for Action 3.....	116
Implication for Action 4.....	117
Recommendations for Further Research.....	117
Concluding Remarks and Reflections.....	120

REFERENCES .....	121
APPENDICES .....	138

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Amount of fourth and fifth grade students and teachers in the three school districts being compared..... 51

Table 2. Characteristics of Participants ..... 63

Table 3. Participant 1: Themes in Response to Research Questions ..... 66

Table 4. Participant 2: Themes in Response to Research Questions ..... 68

Table 5. Participant 3: Themes in Response to Research Questions ..... 70

Table 6. Participant 4: Themes in Response to Research Questions ..... 72

Table 7. Participant 5: Themes in Response to Research Questions ..... 75

Table 8. Participant 6: Themes in Response to Research Questions ..... 77

Table 9. Participant 7: Themes in Response to Research Questions ..... 80

Table 10. Participant 8: Themes in Response to Research Questions ..... 83

Table 11. Participant 9: Themes in Response to Research Questions ..... 86

Table 12. Participant 10: Themes in Response to Research Questions ..... 89

Table 13. Participant 11: Themes in Response to Research Questions ..... 92

Table 14. Participant 12: Themes in Response to Research Questions ..... 95

Table 15. Common Themes in all Participant Responses Addressing Research Question 1..... 101

Table 16. Common Themes in all Participant Responses Addressing Research Question 2..... 106

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

“The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), is given every three years to measure reading ability, math, science literacy, and other key skills among fifteen-year-olds in developed and developing countries” (Desilver, 2017, para. 2). According to the 2015 PISA results, the United States placed 38th out of 71 countries in math, 24th in science, and 24th in reading. This is a decrease in performance from the year 2000, where the United States placed 18th in math, 14th in science, and 15th in reading (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.).

The population of adults 25 years and older who do not continue their education reference the barriers of age, lack of tuition money, inadequate secondary schooling, reluctance to study, and discouragement from family and friends (Uchitelle, 2000). These perceived barriers have a limiting effect on job opportunity to those not requiring a college education. Yet, a solution is to mandate that students pass assessments at various levels of their schooling which would require school districts to increase the quality of education with teacher training, reduced class sizes, improved courses, and provide vocational training.

The Hispanic subculture is the largest subculture in the United States. Of the English Language Learners (ELL) in the United States from the 2014-2015 school year, 3,709,828 are of Spanish speaking homes (U.S. Department of Education, 2017a). By the year 2050, the Hispanic population will likely be the majority (Almeida, 2016). In 2002, the poverty rate of immigrant children was 23% (Takanishi, 2004). Immigrant children tend to be disadvantaged in family economic security, access to health care, and

access to sound early education. Approximately 53.5% of California students in kindergarten through grade 12 are of Latino heritage (Diamond, Furlong, & Quirk, 2016).

It is well documented in the literature that ELLs who live in poverty may experience school differently than affluent native English speakers (Hammer et al., 2017; Hartman, Winsler, & Manfra, 2017; Jung, 2016). In the United States, educating ELL students who have additional risk factors such as parents with limited education, single parent households, and low socioeconomic status, has proven challenging. While some ELL students have succeeded in spite of these challenges by reaching English language proficiency (ELP) levels and continuing their education leading to satisfying careers, many do not.

About one third of adults 25 years old and older in the United States have finished high school (Uchitelle, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2017b). Thirty-five percent of African-American, 27% of Hispanic, and 21% of Asian population 25 years and older have completed high school as reported in 2003 (U.S. Department of Education, 2017b). It is well known throughout the educational reach that success in elementary school is related to success in each level there after which ultimately determines career and earning power (Galvan, 2017; Pierce, 2000; Sundberg, 2017). If a student does not succeed at the elementary level, especially in areas of English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, the probability of student success at the next level, middle school, decreases significantly (Farkas & Hall, 2000). The United States consists of ELLs from more than 30 different languages (U.S. Department of Education, 2017a). Students from these diverse backgrounds have various communication, learning styles, and culture and languages that teachers must be prepared to teach and students must learn (Maldonado Torres, 2009).



At the beginning of fourth grade in public schools only 6% of ELLs were proficient in reading, in 2009 (Gibson, 2016). Families impact student achievement and are linked to the student's development of language and literacy, however, minority families lack knowledge, expectations, and strategies to help reach academic success (Wessels & Trainin, 2014). Developing vocabulary early is a strong predictor of future reading and academic skill. Students entering primary grades below their peers in vocabulary knowledge and are from low-income household are starting at a disadvantage (McLeod, Hardy, & Kaiser, 2017). The Asian population achievement in reading and math is higher than African-American, Caucasian, or Hispanic in fourth grade as measured in 2017 by the U.S. Department of Education. In reading and math, the African-American population scored lower than the Hispanic, with the Asian population higher than the Caucasian population.

Fifty-three percent of Asian adults 25 years and older have bachelor's degrees and 21% have graduate degrees. Of the Caucasian population, 32% have a bachelor's degree and 12% reach graduate degrees. Twenty-two percent of the African-American population have a bachelor's degree and 8% possessing a graduate degree. Out of the mentioned cultures, the Hispanic population has the lowest percentage with only 15% having a bachelor's degree and 4% having a graduate degree (Ryan & Bauman, 2016).

While student challenges play a big part in this equation, how a student receives and responds to the instructional environment is critical. An abundance of literature suggests there is not only an achievement gap to be concerned about, but additionally a teacher gap as well (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Institutes, 2008; Kennedy, 2010; Shierholz, 2013; Zernike, 2001). That is "teachers are failing to learn the best way to

teach” (Zernike, 2001, para. 5). Title I is a program aimed to fund schools categorized as high poverty and ELL students. The number of ELLs are increasing in public schools across the nation with California having the largest percentage (Gallegos & Wise, 2011). Learning academic forms of English may take between seven to 10 years to learn. Further, with the focus of teaching English and literacy skills there is little time to focus on academic content (Ziegenfuss, Odhiambo, & Keyes, 2014). In fact, the longer an ELL spends in school learning English, the further they fall behind in curriculum content material (Olsen, 2014). “Sixty percent or more of all ELL in the nation do not progress beyond the intermediate level” (Gallegos & Wise, 2011, p. 49), never reaching proficient or advanced. What does the future hold for the United States socially, economically, and politically?

### **Background**

The United States population has changed significantly over the past 30 years with over 30 million immigrants searching for a better life. With the increase in immigration to the United States the amount of ELLs has drastically increased. “The population of immigrants and U.S. natives speaking a language other than English at home has nearly tripled since 1980, when it stood at 23.1 million” (Batalova & Zong, 2016, para. 2). Batalova and Zong (2016) state that 64.7 million people ages five and older in the United States spoke a language other than English at home in 2015. Additionally, Spanish is the most commonly spoken language of ELLs and ELLs are more likely to live in poverty compared to English-proficient individuals (Batalova & Zong, 2016).

## **ELL Students in the United States**

ELL students enrolled in public education in the United States are estimated at 4.6 million students. Of ELL students in public schools, kindergarten through grade 12, 3.7 million in the 2014-2015 school year, the majority claim their home language was Spanish (U.S. Department of Education, 2017a). Experts agree language acquisition is an indicator of academic success (de Jong, 2016; Diaz-Strong & Ybarra, 2016; Gallegos & Wise, 2011; Lawson, 2017). Consequently, low proficiency is an indicator of a high probability of dropping out of high school. Minorities are faced with navigating the ‘white-normed’ expectations for academics (Venzant Chambers, Locke, & Tagarao, 2015 2015). The term ‘white-normed’ is expressed as the expectation to meet the academic performance and assimilate to that of the Caucasian, middle class culture. Venzant Chambers, Locke, and Tagarao (2015) explains, while minorities are often deficient in student support, parental involvement, and school community, if they conform to the ‘white-norms’ the students frequently feel isolated, lonely, and disconnected.

The dropout rate in California for ELL students during the school year 2014-2015 was 17.6%, while the overall average was 10.6%. In California, ELL’s graduation rate is 69.4% with the overall average is 82.3% (California Department of Education [CDE], 2016).

## **Achievement Gap is Getting Larger for ELL Students**

With the growing percentage of ELL students in public education, the achievement gap between non-ELL and ELL students was 36 points at the fourth grade level in 2011. The achievement gap is the difference between the average scores of two student subgroups on the standardized assessments. “Half of the achievement gap in

fourth grade exists when students walk through the door in kindergarten” (Quirk, Grimm, Furlong, Nylund-Gibson, & Swami, 2016, para. 2). Preschool and early life experiences are predictors of cognitive readiness levels and critical for improving school readiness of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Educational leaders are pressured to meet the needs of the diverse population of ELLs and help them achieve at the same levels as other students (Gallegos & Wise, 2011). The Williams Act is a result of a class action law suit filed in 2000, Eliezer Williams et al. vs. State of California. This law suit was based on educational institutions not providing public school students with equal access to instructional materials (basic necessities required for learning), safe and clean facilities, and qualified teachers (ACLU, Southern California, 2018).

### **Learning Theories**

Learning theories help to make sense of the various approaches to learning that will be discussed throughout this research. The implicit, constructivist, and transformative learning theories explain various approaches to learning.

**Implicit theory.** The implicit theory is how an “individuals’ intrinsic beliefs about their intellectual abilities will impact their responses when faced with challenges. These are predictive or adaptability which associated with academic success” (J. L. Parker, 2017, p. 26). The implicit theory is important in academic success by having an optimistic outlook and positive behavior towards student abilities. The focus of the student is on what is possible.

**Constructivist theory.** “The constructivist approach to education is focused on the internal core of the learner supporting the specific needs of contemporary learners by

developing skills that will promote individual competencies in a shifting and complex environment” (J. L. Parker, 2017, p. 25). In this approach, learners construct their own meanings of knowledge based on past experiences to develop future solutions.

**Transformative theory.** The transformative learning approach “draws upon intrinsic strengths and supports resilience for a sustainable education, seeking to develop the learner” (J. L. Parker, 2017, p. 28). Transformative learning theory requires the learner to look inward and determine new or different ways to do what is right for themselves (Christopher, Dunnagan, Duncan, & Paul, 2001). This learning theory can impact lives long term beyond classroom learning. ELL can obtain a new perspective to transforming current learning situations to future academic success.

### **Researched Bases Learning Methods**

Instructional strategies used to teach students need to be research based, practiced in the classroom, and taught in the college of education schools. Popular instructional strategies currently used are cooperative learning, project-based learning, flipped learning, and blended learning.

**Cooperative learning.** Cooperative learning refers to instruction methods in which students work in small groups to help each other learn. This strategy involves students working together to accomplish a task they would not have been able to otherwise complete. For cooperative learning to take place it also requires socialization among students. A common use of cooperative learning is think-pair-share. During think-pair-share students are given a task to think about on their own, then pair with another student to share ideas, and develop a response together.

**Project-based learning.** Project-based learning allows for in-depth investigation of a topic. It is a comprehensive approach to classroom teaching and learning designed to engage students in investigation of complex, authentic problems and carefully developed products and tasks (Bas, 2010). Benefits of project-based learning include communication, creativity, reflection on knowledge, learning new skills, and problem solving to complete a task. Project-based learning roots from John Dewey and William Kilpatrick's instructional theories.

**Flipped learning.** Flipped learning differs from traditional learning in that the student accesses information and gains knowledge on concepts prior to the teacher presenting the lessons. This enables the teacher to guide the students in a deeper understanding and facilitate activities. Flipped classrooms offer a greater variety of activities for learning, participating, and reaching a diverse population. However, with a flipped classroom, activities require rigorous work and thinking from the students. In a flipped class, for example, students may be required to watch a video, view documents or presentations prior to class. Students are motivated to prepare for class knowing that during class they are expected to participate in group discussions, problem solving, debates, or projects. Also, in class the focus is applying knowledge to real-world situations, synthesizing and analyzing information, and discussing concepts (Yale Center for Teaching and Learning, 2018).

**Blended learning.** Blended learning is a combination of online learning and face-to-face, traditional learning. Blended learning enables the student to gain access to information previously limited by the resources of the schools. Teacher's present lessons in the classroom, students are then able to extend the learning through exploring online

research beyond the boundaries of the school. Teachers also use technology to post discussions and assignments for students to access from home or school.

### **Educational Theorists**

John Dewey, Maria Montessori, and Lev Vygotsky are a few educational theorists known to educators. John Dewey's hands-on approach to learning, Maria Montessori centered her theory of learning based on play, and Lev Vygotsky's development of support students need to succeed.

**John Dewey.** "Problem-based learning (PBL) is an instructional approach that has been used successfully for over thirty years and continues to gain acceptance" (Walker, Leary, Hmelo-Silver, & Ertmer, 2015, p. 5). John Dewey believes that education needs to be student-centered, guided by a well-trained teacher. It is the teacher's goal to understand both the demands of the discipline and the needs of the child. The teacher then provides learning experiences for the student to discover the curriculum (Hammond, Austin, Orcutt, & Rosso, 2001).

**Maria Montessori.** Montessori's instructional approach, as described by Hammond, Austin, Orcutt, and Rosso (2001) gives students the opportunity for free expression providing them activities for social and cognitive learning. Again, the teacher is a guide for their students learning instead of an authority figure. Montessori's use a combination of free play, guided play, and didactic instruction (A. Lillard, 2013). Free play includes objects, pretend, and physically playing while engaged with peers. Guided play is a scaffold, overseen by an adult, and is geared towards specific knowledge

**Lev Vygotsky.** Vygotsky says cognitive abilities of the student include the idea of social-cultural cognition, that all learning occurs in a cultural context and involves social

interactions. He believes that culture and language are connected to developing students' thinking and way in which teachers and peers assist learners in developing new ideas and skills (Hammond et al., 2001). Vygotsky developed the idea of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that states there is a gap between what students can learn independently and what needs to be scaffold to assist the leaning (Blake & Pope, 2008).

Teachers are the facilitator who organize activities and experiences for linking learning to prior knowledge. Theories and strategies are a guide for decision making in the classroom. The classroom has become teacher-centered where information flows in one direction, from the teacher to the student. The classrooms should be student-centered where collaboration takes place for students to construct meaning.

### **Upper Elementary Teachers**

The requirements for becoming a general education elementary teacher varies by state. The state of California requires a baccalaureate or higher degree from an accredited college or university, passing of the California Basic Education Skills Test, the California Subject Examination for Teachers, and the Reading Instruction Competency Assessment. In addition, teaching candidates must satisfy the Developing English Language Skills, complete a course in provisions and principles of the U.S. Constitution, and complete a foundational computer technology course.

Curriculum frameworks are provided by the California Department of Education (CDE) for ELA and English Language Development (ELD) and Mathematics. The ELA curriculum framework is a guide for implementing California Common Core State Standards for ELA/ELD. The goal is to educate students to be able to read and communicate with competence in English for personal and academic aspirations. The



math curriculum framework is a guide for implementing California Common Core State Standards for Mathematics. The goal is to develop student math skills that can be applied to their lives for college, career, and citizenship. The importance of knowledge, skills and understanding is stressed for what students will need to succeed in years to come.

California utilizes the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test statewide to measure student achievement. All students, despite their ELP, are tested. In addition to the SBAC, each year students identified as ELLs were tested using the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). The ELL assessment is currently using the ELPAC. The ELL assessments test in the domains of listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The three levels of achievement are emerging, expanding, and bridging.

### **Achievement Gap**

The achievement gap is measured by the difference in average scores of groups. In the United States the achievement gap is measured among the population that identifies as Asians, Caucasians, African-Americans, Hispanics, Native American, and Pacific Islanders. The achievement gap can further be explored by ELLs, disadvantaged students, and disabled students. A major part of academic achievement is the lack of academic language and literacy (Gallegos & Wise, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (n.d.), in the year 2015 the United States placed 38th out of 71 countries in math, 24th in science, and 24th in reading. This is a decrease in performance from the year 2000, where the United States placed 18th in math, 14th in science, and 15th in reading (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, n.d.). PISA selects a

sample of students representing the full population of 15 to 16 year-olds from 150 schools, both public and private, with a minimum of 5,400 students. Possible explanation for the negative performance trend of the United States on the PISA are the race/ethnicity groups selected each year which include challenges such as socioeconomic levels and English proficiency (NCES, 2018).

### **At Risk Students**

Indicators for students who are at risk academically include: (a) parent's level of education, (b) poverty, (c) one parent families, (d) parent's whose native language is not English, (e) parental involvement, (f) English proficiency, (g) being a student of color, and (h) attending a school with a high concentration of poverty, a high concentration of students of color, or both. (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Chatterji, 2006; Hammer et al., 2017; Kieffer, 2008; McLeod et al., 2017). According to research, language acquisition is complex and critical to academic success (Hammer et al., 2017; Jenson, 2017).

Language acquisition occurs through environment, experiences, competent speakers, the ability to understand, and frequency (Kartal & Sarigul, 2017). Vocabulary development in the process of learning language is a predictive factor in reading and academic skills. Students who are not prepared in their academic ability and English proficiency when entering school start at a disadvantage and often predicts their success and achievement in later years (Diaz-Strong & Ybarra, 2016; Liebeskind, Piotrowski, Lapierre, & Linebarger, 2014).

### **ELLs**

“ELLs with low levels of school readiness have been shown to have substantially decreased odds of transitioning from a lower to a higher achievement trajectory”

(Diamond et al., 2016, p. 161). Diamond et al. (2016) further states that “thirty-nine percent of Hispanic students, who entered kindergarten with lower levels of readiness, had a chance of achieving at grade level or reaching above levels by grades 2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>” (p. 161). Poverty level Hispanic families have fewer books at home, visit the libraries less frequent than middle class families, and are less likely to attend preschool. These families also view reading as a school activity therefore not practicing parent-child shared reading (Schick & Melzi, 2016).

Teachers continue to struggle with the challenges of teaching ELLs. Literature cites there is a teaching gap and suggests additional training is needed among educators (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Kennedy, 2010; Shierholz, 2013; Zernike, 2001).

Alternatively, researchers have found that teaching strategies linking content and language to authentic experiences that are meaningful are appropriate for supporting ELLs (Sprayberry-King, 2015). Another suggestion for future practice is to allow ELLs to learn in their native language and in English using regalia, illustrations, and graphic aids. A further thought is to teach ELLs in a sheltered class rather than in mainstream classes (Macaulay, 2014). Recommendations suggest there is a need for future research to contribute a better understanding of instructional practices that can promote higher levels of achievement for ELLs.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Education has changed immensely over the past four decades in the United States. Schools have incorporated instructional practices and strategies to meet the needs of the ELLs. ELLs are the fastest growing group of students in the United States public schools. Despite the overwhelming need to teach ELLs, they are underserved and

underachieving (Olsen, 2014). In California and across the United States, schools are being pressed to respond to performance expectations as measured by teaching fidelity of Common Core standards to improve student success. To meet these expectations teachers must utilize effective instructional strategies.

In the United States 64.7 million people age five and older spoke a language other than English at home in 2015 (Batalova & Zong, 2016). Approximately 4.6 million ELLs are enrolled in public education in the United States. In addition to being an ELL other risk factors are affecting their educational achievement gap such as low maternal education, poverty, one parent home, and having parents whose native language is not English (Chatterji, 2006; Hammer et al., 2017; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005; Palacios, Guttmannova, & Chase-Lansdale, 2008; Sheridan, Knoche, Kupzyk, Edwards, & Marvin, 2011). Further, the longer immigrant families with ELLs are in the United States and assimilate into the English-speaking culture, the lower the ELLs academic and behavioral outcomes (Hartman et al., 2017). These outcomes are due in part to the feelings of isolation, loneliness, and disconnected combined with social inequalities such as parent involvement and accessibility to resources.

There is much to understand about the instructional strategies teachers employ to meet the growing demands and needs of ELL students in the United States. In California, the state with the largest ELL population had 1.3 million ELLs enrolled in public schools during the 2016-2017 school year with 83% being native Spanish speakers. The dropout rate in 2014-2015 was 17.6% for ELLs (CDE, 2016). Those ELLs who dropout of high school have a limited job opportunity to jobs not requiring a college education.

“The 21st century school environment has a diverse population of students. These students need to draw on acquired knowledge and personal strength to be successful in academics and withstand difficult real-life situations” (J. L. Parker, 2017, p. 4). A student’s academic ability upon entering school often predicts their success and achievement in later years (Liebeskind et al., 2014). “Only thirty-nine percent of Hispanic students entering kindergarten with lower levels of readiness, had a chance to achieve at grade level or above when reaching grades 2-5” (Diamond et al., 2016, p. 161).

As the population of the 21st century school environments are evolving, there is an abundance of research on past instructional strategies and learning theories, but limited research stating the effectiveness of these instructional strategies and learning theories in practice for the current environment (Macaulay, 2014; Sprayberry-King, 2015). The role of the teacher varies from the traditional teacher-centered-learning to student-centered-learning (Network, 2014). However, the application of instruction through various strategies and learning theories by the teacher with the curriculum and students needs further research. More information is needed to discover ways in which elementary teachers may use instructional strategies and learning theories in their practice of instruction for student achievement.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to identify and describe effective instructional strategies for ELA and mathematics perceived by expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers in southern California to reduce the achievement gap in high poverty and high ELL elementary schools.

## **Research Questions**

Research questions were developed to help guide this study and they are:

1. What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?
2. What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?

## **Significance of the Problem**

The role of the teacher is more challenging and complex than ever before (Vail, 2010). Teachers are required to promote, facilitate, model, and support 21st century students in academic achievement. Similarly, they are held accountable for accomplishing positive academic achievement through performance objectives, assessments, and observations. Schools across the United States are making changes to meet the demands of the 21st century student by adopting new curricula to meet the Common Core Standards and offering staff development on instructional strategies and best practice, while practicing a growth mindset. “A new pedagogical framework will be required to assure standards’ fulfilment, called adaptive instruction that is instruction which adapts itself to the nature of students’ thinking” (Czarnocha, Dias, Baker, & Prabhu, 2012, p. 154).

There are several educational theorists who are experts on learning theories and popular teaching strategies ranging from teacher-centered to student-centered and from

traditional teaching to flipped teaching methods. This study will fill the gap in the research regarding the impact of instruction on ELLs at the fourth and fifth grade elementary level required to obtain academic achievement in the 21st century to prepare students for college, career, and citizenship. “Despite the attention given to researching causes of the achievement gap between Latino and White students at the middle and high-school levels, little attention has been focused on the elementary school level” (Vilas, 2018, p. 195). Vilas (2018) continues to state that “studying the achievement gap between Latino and White elementary students will provide school districts with specific strategies to design specialized training programs that create a stronger teaching force better equipped to teach primary Latino students” (p. 196). This study may also provide much needed information and data to schools of educational credentialing programs regarding the instructional strategies that have the greatest impact on fourth and fifth grade ELLs.

Professional organizations, such as CDE, which approves teacher applicants for teaching credentials and universities with teacher’s colleges, which provide instruction for future teachers, may be interested in the results of this study as they look toward improvement of their programs. In addition, policymakers at the local, county, and state level may find this study useful in setting policies that support the 21st century ELL students.

### **Definitions**

The following terms are frequently used throughout this study. The definitions are intended to provide clarity and context for this dissertation study.

*Achievement Gap.* The achievement gap occurs when one group of students (grouped by race/ethnicity, gender) outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant (NCES, 2015).

*English Language Development.* Strategies for the successful integration of English language and literacy skills English learners need in key content areas (CDE, 2018).

*English Language Learners.* A student who is unable to communicate fluently in English who often comes from a non-English background (Vilas, 2018).

*Expert Teacher.* Effective teachers have been identified as teachers who have five or more years' experience, possess a cross-cultural, language, and academic development (CLAD) credential, are recognized by their principal, collaborate with other teachers, administrators, parents, and education professionals to ensure student success of students with special needs and those at high risk for failure (Goe & Andrew, 2009).

*Hispanic/Latino.* A Spanish-speaking person living in the United States of Latin descent. Persons from Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico. Central or South America, or other Spanish culture (Flores, 2017).

*Instructional Strategy.* Techniques teachers use to help students become strategic, independent learners (Learning, 2002).

### **Delimitations**

The focus of this study is delimited to high poverty and high English language learner fourth and fifth grade teachers who have successfully advanced students in English proficiency in the Coachella Valley Unified School District in the State of California. This study focuses on the Hispanic population as a minority group and fourth



and fifth grade expert teachers. This study does not focus on any other minority group nor does it focus on new teachers.

A qualitative case study approach was utilized for this study. Data from qualitative research cannot be generalized to a larger population (Patton, 2015). The data can be used to understand the experiences of a few individuals who have successfully advanced ELLs in English proficiency.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters and concludes with references and appendices. Chapter I presents an overview and the significance of this study. Chapter II provides a review of literature including theoretical framework, instructional strategies, characteristics of poverty students and ELLs, the history of ELLs, current efforts to support students in poverty and ELLs, and gaps in research. The literature review is followed by Chapter III, which presents the study methodology and research design in addition to an explanation of data gathering procedures and a description of the study population and sample. Chapter IV offers an analysis of the data derived from this study. A description of the common themes that surfaced and interpretations of the finding are presented. Chapter V consists of the conclusion, implications, and recommendations for future studies. The study concludes with references and appendices.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“Latinos are the largest growing ethnic group in the United States” (Maldonado Torres, 2009, p. 1) and are the largest minority group in the United States with a population of 44.3 million. Of the 44.3 million, California has 13.1 million Latinos, the largest of any state. Of the Latinos in the United States, 66.7% have a high school education or more, and 15.5% have completed a bachelor’s degree or more (Ryan & Bauman, 2016).

Latino learners as a minority group in the United States possess individual differences that need to be taken into consideration to have an effective curriculum incorporating students’ learning styles (Maldonado Torres, 2009). Teachers must be prepared to work in a multicultural environment providing structures of support (Maldonado Torres, 2009). “Latino families are less likely to read books with their children because they may lack the confidence in English, lack the experience, or view these activities as the role of teachers” (Wessels & Trainin, 2014, p. 41).

Research generalizes the Hispanic population as largely disadvantaged, make lower grades, take less rigorous classes, and are more likely to drop out of high school than their peers. To be successful, researchers suggest assimilating with the socioeconomically advantaged, and ways of the American education system.

With the identified Latino population, there is concern for improving academic success. The Latino population is a minority group today but in the future, may become the majority. Determining how to prepare this group for success is imperative to the future of the United States.

This literature review is organized by discussing the effective instructional strategies to address the achievement gap for ELLs, followed by learning theories, research based learning methods, influential educational theorists. Then the individual variables of achievement gap and at risk students, specifically ELLs and poverty, will be discussed individually. Finally, seminal authors' research as it related to identifying gaps in the current research followed by a summary.

### **Increasing Achievement gap for ELL Students**

While the Latino public school population has nearly doubled between 1987 to 2007, on average Latinos perform far below most of their peers (Gándara, 2010). Gándara (2010) continues to explain the U.S. Census Bureau predicts that one out of four students will be Latino by the year 2021 and that California is approaching half of all students are Latino. One fourth of the United States foreign born population live in California (Sugarman & Lee, 2017). Latinos are the fastest growing minority group and are the least educated (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011). Several researchers agree with the factors influencing the Latino educational struggle include less access to preschool education, high poverty, lack of health insurance, food insecurities, and parents do not speak English (Batalova & Zong, 2016; Gallegos & Wise, 2011; Gándara, 2010). Latinos are more likely to attend school that consist of 10% or less of Caucasian students. This gives Latino students less access to the mainstream United States culture where an understanding of norms, standards, and expectations are learned (Gándara, 2010).

“The achievement gap between Hispanic and White is defined as the difference between the average score for White students and the average score for Hispanic students” (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011, p. 5). The NCES (2015), Institute of Education

Sciences reported on the Hispanic-Caucasian achievement gap statistics. In the year 2009, the reading achievement gap between Hispanic and Caucasian public school students in fourth grade was a 25-point difference (NCES, 2015). Also in 2009, 77% of Hispanics and 29% of Caucasians were eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NCES, 2015). Eligibility for the National School Lunch Program states the “family’s income is between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level for reduced lunch, for free lunch the family’s income is below 130 percent of the poverty line” (as cited in Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011, p. 29). Among the Hispanic fourth grade public school population there was a 29-point gap between Hispanic ELLs and Hispanic non-ELLs (NCES, 2015). In the state of California, the Hispanic-Caucasian achievement gap for reading in 2009, for public school students in fourth grade was 31-points (NCES, 2015).

In the year 2009, the mathematics achievement gap between Hispanic and Caucasian public school students was a 21-point difference (NCES, 2015). Among the Hispanic fourth grade public school population there was a 19-point gap between Hispanic ELLs and Hispanic non-ELLs (NCES, 2015). In the state of California, the Hispanic-Caucasian achievement gap for mathematics in 2009, for public school students in fourth grade was 28-points (NCES, 2015). ELL’s success “in school will be critical for their well-being and for the economic vitality of our nation’s future workforce” (Murphey, 2014, p. 1).

### **Learning Theories**

Several learning theories exist; the three learning theories discussed in this literature review are the (a) implicit, (b) constructivist, and (c) transformative learning

theories. Each of these theories are explained as they relate to ELL students' achievement.

### **Implicit Theory**

The implicit theory is how an "individuals' intrinsic beliefs about their intellectual abilities will impact their responses when faced with challenges. These are predictive or adaptability which associated with academic success" (J. L. Parker, 2017, p. 26). The implicit theory is important in academic success by having an optimistic outlook and positive behavior towards student abilities. The focus of the student is on what is possible and setting goals.

Latino ELL students attend public school with limited life experiences due to various risk factors such as lack of preschool, poverty, non-English speaking parents, and parent educational levels attained. With these disadvantages, Latino ELL students have limited worldly knowledge, therefore they do not know what is possible to set as goals for achievement. Rather extrinsic motivators, such as money, act as a driver (Galvan, 2017).

### **Constructivist Theory**

"The constructivist approach to education is focused on the internal core of the learner supporting the specific needs of contemporary learners by developing skills that will promote individual competencies in a shifting and complex environment" (J. L. Parker, 2017, p. 12). In this approach, learners construct their own meanings of knowledge based on past experiences to develop future solutions.

The theory of constructivism has two main principles as stated by Pardjono (2016). The first states that "knowing is active, individual, and personal based on

previously constructed knowledge” (Pardjono, 2016, p. 172). Secondly, “constructivism does not discover an existing reality, but adapts a proposed theory of reality to the experiential world” (Pardjono, 2016, p. 172). Therefore, the constructivist theory is based on one’s own ability to construct meaning through experiences to relate to the world and predict outcomes, self-efficacy. “Self-efficacy is one’s perceived capabilities for learning or performing actions at designated levels” (Schunk, 2016, p. 34).

### **Transformative Learning Theory**

The transformative learning approach “draws upon intrinsic strengths and supports resilience for a sustainable education, seeking to develop the learner” (F. L. Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple, & Peay, 1999, p. 13). Transformative learning theory requires the learner to look inward and determine new or different ways to do what is right for themselves (Christopher et al., 2001). This learning theory can impact lives beyond classroom learning. Latino learners can obtain a new perspective to transforming current learning situations to future academic success. The central constructs within this theory are experience, empathy, and a desire to change (Cranton & Taylor, 2013). Children need an understanding of recognizing cause and effect relationships, using logic to make analogies and generalizations, being aware and control their own emotions, imaginative, and able to critically reflect (Cranton & Taylor, 2013; Mezirow, 1997). The ability to view problems from different perspectives with an open mindset, in addition to the mentioned central constructs and skills enable transformative learning to occur.

### **Research Based Learning Methods**

Various research based learning methods have been used in education. The four research based learning methods discussed in this literature review are the (a) cooperative

learning, (b) project-based learning, (c) flipped learning, and (d) blended learning. Each of these learning methods are explained as they relate students' achievement and teachers' roles.

### **Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative learning is an instructional method that is student-centered and allows students to work in structured small groups. This is a shift away from the traditional teacher-centered learning where the teacher is the transmitter of information and is the expert on the subject matter. Benefits of cooperative learning include: (a) enhanced social skills, (b) intrinsic motivation, (c) cognitive outcomes, (d) positive attitude, (e) liking school, and (f) self-esteem (Buchs, Filippou, Volpe, & Pulfrey, 2017; Emmer & Gerwels, 2002). In cooperative learning teachers “teach students how to cooperate (listen, share, participate, and accept ideas), establish procedures for peer involvement in groups, monitor groups, and provide sufficient background knowledge for success” (Emmer & Gerwels, 2002, p. 76). Therefore, it is the teachers' role to provide feedback, monitor groups, and incorporate manipulatives. However, teachers are most comfortable using traditional instructional methods. The teachers' perceptions of cooperative learning is that is not easy to implement for six reasons. Teachers find cooperative learning difficult to implement because it is:

- Difficult to properly implement cooperative learning principles.
- Position of responsibility and authority.
- The teacher's role as a facilitator.
- Alignment with curriculum.

- Class and preparation time.
- Assessment in cooperative learning (Buchs et al., 2017).

Buchs et al. (2017) recommends “teacher education programs address the issues of pedagogical convictions and pragmatic obstacles” (p. 304).

### **Project-Based Learning**

Project-based learning is defined as “a systematic teaching method that engages students in learning important knowledge and 21st century skills through an extended, student influenced inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and learning tasks” (Hunter & Botchwey, 2017, p. 79).

Project-based learning starts with asking an open-ended question. Then the following process is navigated by the student moving through the levels of Bloom’s taxonomy: The student first defines the problem, data is collected, brainstorm and analyze ideas, develop solutions to be tested, present ideas to others for feedback, and then improve the design (Svihla & Reeve, 2016). Project-based learning is a student-centered approach to teaching students how to collaborate, communicate, use critical thinking, and creative problem solving skills to prepare them for the 21st century demands. With this approach students become better learners (Bounds, 2018).

### **Flipped Learning**

The flipped classroom first emerged around 2005, with the purpose to motivate student engagement and improve interactions to develop deeper learning (Shen, 2018).

“The flipped classroom inverts traditional teaching methods, delivering lecture instruction outside class and devoting class time to problem solving, with teachers’ role becoming that of a learning coach and facilitator” (Altemueller & Lindquist, 2017, p. 1).



Flipped learning provides individualized instruction and is a hands-on, student centered approach to learning that combines technology with a student-teacher instructional interaction (Altemueller & Lindquist, 2017; Corcoran, 2013). Prior to students attending class, students are responsible for learning background knowledge through previewing presentations, recorded lectures, or videos. Class time is dedicated for collaboration, mastery exercises, student/teacher interaction, and answer inquiries (Shen, 2018). Benefits of flipped learning include increased student motivation, differentiated instruction, self-paced lessons and mastery learning, increased collaboration, cooperative learning, communication skills, engagement, improved critical thinking skills, provide instant feedback, and promote becoming an independent learner (Altemueller & Lindquist, 2017; Corcoran, 2013; Shen, 2018). Concerns of implementing a flipped classroom are student internet access at home, the teacher being devalued, the start-up required from instructors and students, and technical problems (Altemueller & Lindquist, 2017; Lo, 2018).

### **Blended Learning**

Blended learning models are student centered, utilize technology, and allow educators to quickly identify learning gaps, identify topics for re-teaching, and address these issues with differentiated instruction and assign students to small groups (Horn & Fisher, 2017; Powell et al., 2015; Schorr & McGriff, 2012).

Blended learning is defined as a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning with some elements of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace and at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home. The modalities along each student's

learning path within a course or subject are connected to provide an integrated learning experience. (Powell et al., 2015, p. 5)

Blended learning models include a model in which students rotate among online learning, small group instruction, and pencil-and- paper assignments at their desks focusing on different standards to guide by the teacher’s analysis of need (Horn & Fisher, 2017; Powell et al., 2015).

Other types of blended learning include the flex model, a la carte model, and enriched virtual model (Horn & Fisher, 2017; Powell et al., 2015). The flex model centers around the student learning online while the teacher is on-site and students learn mostly on the brick-and-mortar campus except for any homework assignments. Students move through the course according to their individual needs. The teacher provides face-to-face support on an as needed basis. A la carte model is one where students take classes completely online to accompany other experiences they are having at a brick-and-mortar school. “This (model) differs from the full-time online learning because it is not a whole-school experience” (Powell et al., 2015, p. 7). The last model of blended learning is the enriched virtual model. This model students attend a required face-to-face learning session with the teacher then complete their remaining coursework remotely (Horn & Fisher, 2017). Face-to-face, office hours, and social events may be required setting the enriched virtual model apart from a fully online course (Powell et al., 2015). A benefit of the blended learning model is that it allows the teacher to spend more time for face-to-face coaching and small-group instruction.

## **Educational Theorists**

Numerous educational theorists exist, the three educational theorists discussed in this literature review include John Dewey, Maria Montessori, and Lev Vygotsky. Each of these theorists are explained as they relate to how students learn.

### **John Dewey**

John Dewey, an American philosopher and educational reformer, was cautious of seeing the world in extremes and was drawn to making connections between opposing viewpoints to gain new perspectives to consider education (Gordon, 2016). Dewey is known for the idea that knowledge is the product of actively engaging in activities, children learn by doing (Platz & Arellano, 2011; Tarrant & Thiele, 2016). In other words, individuals learn through experiencing and discovering. He used a holistic approach to make sense of a variety of issues including education, the holistic approach is based on the interaction between individuals and the world (Gordon, 2016; Hohn, 2013).

John Dewey believed in constructivist teaching which is defined by Gordon (2016) as students are encouraged to create their own meaning of a text, not require students to teach themselves. Dewey viewed learning as active engagement of the students and believed it is the responsibility of the student to learn (Platz & Arellano, 2011). Students cannot make meaning out of something they do not have knowledge of, “nothing can be developed from nothing” (Gordon, 2016, p. 1081). Gordon (2016) describes an effective constructivist classroom is one in which there is a balance between teacher and student-directed learning. The teacher takes an active role in the learning process in addition to formal teaching.

Furthermore, Dewey also stated that it is important to expose children to as many experiences as possible because as children grow and mature they learn through their life experiences. Because learning takes place in society, it is important to make connections for students in real world living and give authentic opportunities for social interactions. These interactions provide why learning is important and how it applies to their lives. Therefore, learning is a life-long process as explained by Platz (2011).

Dewey wanted an education that helps each person grow and reach their full potential. He thought this could only take place in a “society that values individual liberties, citizens working together to achieve the common good, and a respect for diverse perspectives and life styles” (as cited in Gordon, 2016, p. 1089).

### **Maria Montessori**

The Montessori education began in the early 1900s in Rome with the House of Children (Casa dei Bambini) (A. S. Lillard, 2013). In the Montessori education, the teacher moves from the center of attention to supporting the students. This is a student-centered and constructivist approach for children to participate in self-directed activities and develop their senses to understand the world in a hands-on way. Maria Montessori built her educational curriculum on the basic philosophy that children should be active participants in learning; this included playful learning with peers (Platz & Arellano, 2011). This curriculum involves “a blend of freedom and structure using didactic objects, interactive teacher lessons, freely chosen activities, and engagement with peers” (A. S. Lillard, 2013, p. 168).

Two types of play are used in the Montessori curriculum, free play and guided play. Maria Montessori discovered children are intrinsically motivated to play and the

reward is learning (A. S. Lillard, 2013). A. S. Lillard (2013) states “free play includes object play, pretend and sociodramatic play, and rough-and-tumble play” (p. 157). In free play children engage in play without close adult control or oversight. Free play is fun, flexible, active, and voluntary. The second type of play is guided play where “an adult aims a child towards specific knowledge in a playful, fun, and relaxed way” (A. S. Lillard, 2013, p. 158). Guided play is supervised by an adult who observes the child, comments on their discovery, co-plays, and asks open-ended questions to assist in the child learning.

Maria Montessori found that when children are away from adults, they are calm and capable of intense concentration (Ross, 2012). Ross (2012) stated that Montessori had the following conclusions: first children absorb the influences and content of their environment and secondly, all children are different because of the diversity of environmental influences.

### **Lev Vygotsky**

Lev Vygotsky’s goal was to provide a rigorous system for pedagogical and educational issues. He is best known in education for his theory of the (ZPD which was introduced in the early 1970s (Karimi-Aghdam, 2017). ZPD is defined as the distance between the actual developmental level and the level of potential development (Clarà, 2017; Esteban-Guitart, 2018; Karimi-Aghdam, 2017; Roberson, 2017). ZPD is important because the gap identified between the developmental level and the level of potential is the area in which the student struggles learning concepts. The student then uses their understanding from the learning activity, collaboration, and trial and error, and pre-existing understanding to allow learning to take place.

Roberson (2017) suggests teachers be mindful of matching opportunities with student's developmental levels and identify the gap for ZPD for the following benefits. First, having students work in their ZPD gap allows maximum learning to take place. Second, the students' knowledge and understanding is challenged as they struggle with the concept to make sense. Third, this allows for interaction with learning activities and collaboration with peers. Fourth, communication through feedback regarding essential and necessary information for improvement takes place. Lastly, the students have self-reflection which is a necessary step for growth.

Vygotsky, like Maria Montessori and John Dewey, believed life experiences are a vital part in forming behavior. Vygotsky, Montessori, and Dewey agree that play provides a learning opportunity as it prepares for future activities. Play teaches individuals how to look, listen, grasp, make objects move, and then how to behave in society and solve problems (Esteban-Guitart, 2018). Vygotsky's learning method include student centered learning where the teacher facilitates the learning and connects school to the community and the world. Students must be ready to get involved in the learning activities as the teacher manages the environment to interest and engross the learners.

#### **Fourth and Fifth Grade Elementary Teachers Requirements**

To teach elementary school in the state of California a multiple subject teaching credential is required. This credential allows individuals to teach preschool, transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, and grades 1-12, and adult classes (California, 2018). There are two levels of teaching credentials, preliminary and clear.

#### **Requirements for Teaching Credential**

The preliminary teaching credential is obtained only after

- Receiving a baccalaureate degree.
- Passing the California Basic Educational Skills Test.
- Passing the subject-matter competence test.
- Pass the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment.
- Satisfy the Developing English Language Skills including reading instruction.
- Complete a course on and pass an examine on the U.S. Constitution.
- Complete a foundational computer technology course.
- Complete a Commission-approved multiple subject teacher preparation program (California, 2018).

The preliminary teaching credential is only valid for five years. To obtain a clear teaching credential, one of two options must be satisfied. The first option is to complete a commission-approved teacher induction program or obtain a national board of professional teaching standards certification and apply for a clear teaching credential.

### **Curriculum Framework**

Curriculum frameworks provide guidance for implementing the standards adopted by the State Board of Education. ELA/ELD and mathematics are the two curriculum frameworks of focus. The guiding principles and beliefs used to develop the curriculum framework include:

- Schools should help all students achieve their highest potential.
- The responsibility for learners' literacy and language development is shared.
- ELA/literacy and ELD curricula should be well designed, comprehensive, and integrated.
- Effective teaching is essential to student success.

- Motivation and engagement play crucial roles in learning (Slowik, Yopp, & Brynelson, 2015, p. 2).

**ELA/ELD.** California adopted the common core state standards (CCSS) for ELA and California ELD standards. Some goals of implementing the CCSS is for students to demonstrate independence and an understanding of other perspectives and cultures (Slowik et al., 2015). The ELA/ELD Framework identifies four strands students should be able to demonstrate skills and understanding in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and Language. The ELD standards support ELLs

to interact in meaningful ways with others and with complex text, engage in and learn through intellectually challenging tasks across content areas, develop academic English, and develop awareness about how English works so that they can use it intentionally and purposefully. (Slowik et al., 2015, p. 6)

ELD is taught during the school day in two different manners. First, ELD is taught integrated in the classroom using ELD standards in conjunction with other content standards. The second way ELD is taught each day during a designated ELD protected time. In the designated ELD class, students are grouped according their ELP levels (emerging, expanding, or bridging). The ELD designated class follows the California ELD Standards which mandate English is used in a purposeful way, students interact in meaningful ways, and provides an understanding of how English works. The fourth and fifth grade ELD focuses on making meaning, language development, effective expression, content knowledge, and foundational skills (Slowik et al., 2015). “All students should have access to curricula, instruction and learning environments that develop their 21st century skills” (Slowik et al., 2015, p. 31) including critical thinking,



creative thinking, communication and collaboration skills, social and cross-cultural skills and global competence, and technology skills (Slowik et al., 2015).

**Mathematics.** California adopted the CCSS for mathematics. These standards have defined what is believed to be needed to prepare students for college, careers, and civic life. The CCSS of mathematics focus on three principles, focus, coherence, and rigor. Focus is needed for students to have enough time to practice and integrate mathematics concepts and engage in discussions and interactions with peers. Coherence is the progression of mathematic standards across grade levels to make connections within the learning. Last, rigor is necessary for teaching concepts, skills, fluency, and application with equal intensity (Yakes & Sprague, 2015).

The CCSS for mathematics also consists of Standards for Mathematical Practice and Standards for Mathematical Content. The Standards for Mathematical Practice are the same for each grade level and state:

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
- Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
- Model with mathematics.
- Use appropriate tools strategically.
- Attend to precision.
- Look for and make use of structure.
- Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning (Yakes & Sprague, 2015).

The Standards for Mathematical Content is different for each grade level and is a progression of topics.

The mathematic framework provides strategies and visual aids for how one might solve the various problems. It also describes how students build on prior knowledge to make connections and reason. This framework provides effective and efficient mathematics instruction for planning and implementing to meet the needs of every student.

### **Standards**

In 1965, President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed in to law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Lyndon B. Johnson believed that “full educational opportunity” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., History of ESSA section) should be “our first national goal” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., History of ESSA section). ESEA was a statute that funded primary and secondary education and emphasized high standards and accountability. ESEA also authorized funds for professional development, instructional materials, resources to support educational programs and the promotion of parental involvement (Paul, 2018).

President Ronald Reagan passed the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act in 1981. This act emphasized bilingual education programs and put money in the state’s hands and local jurisdictions instead of holding the money at the federal level (Paul, 2018).

In 1987, California incorporated its standards in the state’s comprehensive curriculum frameworks. In 1994 Congress passed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act

and later that year, President Clinton signed the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA). The Goals 2000: Educate America Act was an act

to improve learning and teaching by providing a national framework for education reform; to promote the research, consensus building, and systemic changes needed to ensure equitable educational opportunities and high levels of educational achievement for all students; to provide a framework for reauthorization of all Federal education programs; to promote the development and adoption of a voluntary national system of skill standards and certifications; and for other purposes. (U.S. Department of Education, 1994, An Act section)

In 2002, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act became law. NCLB helped in closing the achievement gaps and mandated transparency, but it also created incentives for states to lower standards, emphasized punishing failure instead of rewarding success, focused on scores as opposed to growth, and was a pass or fail system with a single solution for intervention for schools who did not meet their goals (Paul, 2018).

In 2010, the California Academic Content Standards Commission recommended California adopt the Common Core State Standards. "Content standards adopted by the California State Board of Education were designed to encourage the highest achievement of every student, by defining the knowledge, concepts, and skills that students should acquire at each grade level" (California State Board of Education, 2017, Content Standards section).

In 2015, President Obama signed into law Every Student Succeeds Act (Svihla & Reeve, 2016). The ESSA:

- Advances equity by upholding critical protections for America's disadvantaged and high-need students.
- Requires that all students in America be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers.
- Helps to support and grow local innovations.
- Sustains and expands the investments in increasing access to high quality preschool.
- Maintains an expectation that there will be accountability and action to effect positive change in our lowest-performing schools, where groups of students are not making progress, and where graduation rates are low over extended periods of time (U. S. Department of Education, n.d.).

### **History of Assessing Progress**

From the 1998 until 2013, California utilized the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program to include data on California Standards Test (CST). The STAR was replaced with the CAASPP system. The data collected from the CST and CAASPP were not able to be compared for a couple reasons. First, the CAASPP and CST evaluated different standards. Secondly, the CAASPP focuses on analytical thinking, problem solving and communication skills.

**California ELD.** Students from kindergarten through grade 12 with a home language other than English were required to be tested on their ELP. In California, this assessment is called the CELDT. The CELDT was designed for three reasons. First to identify students with limited English proficiency, to determine the level of students' ELP, and lastly, to assess the progress of English acquisition in reading, writing,

listening, and speaking. The CELDT placed students into five proficiency levels, beginner, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, and advanced. California used the CELDT which was aligned with the 1999 California ELD standards.

**ELP assessments for California.** The ELPAC was aligned with the 2012 California ELD standards and places students into three proficiency levels, emerging, expanding, and bridging. Like the CELDT, the ELPAC tests English acquisition and student proficiency for the four domains, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The ELPAC is scheduled to be fully operational for the school year 2018-2019.

### **CAASPP**

CAASPP was signed into state laws in 2013, and effective on January 1, 2014, replacing the STAR program. The purpose of CAASPP was to improve high-quality teaching and learning and is administered using technology such as computers or personal devices like I-pads with the Smarter Balanced assessment system. The Smarter Balanced assessment system used computer-adaptive tests and performance tasks to measure what students know. This system is based on the CCSS and has the summative assessments, interim assessments, and a digital library with formative assessment tools.

### **Achievement gap**

“Significant gaps in school readiness and achievement exist between children in poverty and those more affluent” (Hartman et al., 2017, p. 2). “Children from low socioeconomic status homes leave preschool with vocabulary, reading, and math abilities that are below those of their peers from middle socioeconomic status homes” (Hammer et al., 2017, p. 609). While 37% of Latino children live in poverty combined with additional risk factors of generally low parental education and limited English

proficiency, these children tend to excel in behavioral and socioemotional skills; however, the longer the families are in the United States and assimilate the poorer the children's academic and behavioral outcome are (Hartman et al., 2017).

“Students without college-educated parents are frequently from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds, and are described in the literature as exposed to many stressors” (Morazes, 2016, p. 202). To move closer to equity in education is to address stress. Stressors to students include individual factors and environment conditions. To succeed in education students must possess resilience, perseverance, intrinsic strengths, and knowledge of themselves, strengths, and weaknesses (J. L. Parker, 2017). One predictor of academic success is the “larger the vocabulary and the greater the understanding of spoken language, the higher the reading score” (Farver, Xu, Eppe, & Lonigan, 2006, p. 197).

“The development of proficient language skills is an integral component of young children's school readiness” (Liebeskind et al., 2014, p. 2). However, “low-income Latino families in the United States have fewer books in their homes and visit libraries less frequently than do middle-class European-American families” (Schick & Melzi, 2016, p. 4). Consequently, Latino mothers view reading as a school activity and reading is not a common routine at home (Schick & Melzi, 2016). Because of literacy being a predictor of academic success, Schick (2016) found that Latino children's school-readiness skills were comparable to those of a preschool child.

Latino academic success comes at a price according to Venzant Chambers (2015), states Latino are expected to conform to white-normed expectations for academic success. While this is an inequality Latinos face to be academically successful, Latinos

are left “feeling isolated, lonely, and disconnected” (Venzant Chambers et al., 2015, p. 802). “Latino youth has a higher high school dropout rate than any other ethnic group” (Vick & Packard, 2008, p. 464). Vick and Packard (2008) continue to discuss utilizing a “positive youth development framework,” (p. 464) stating that this can lead to a positive outcome such as higher graduation rates and teach self-efficacy.

### **Teacher Practices Designed to Address the Achievement Gap**

“Teachers must see reducing inequality as an important goal” (Rochmes, Penner, & Loeb, 2017, p. 7). However, evidence shows teachers use inequalities or disadvantages like living in poverty or being an ELL as a justification for having low expectations of these students. When having high expectations matter the most for disadvantaged students. Some teachers feel students with disadvantages are beyond their control. Other teachers are not willing to make tradeoffs to teach the disadvantaged. In contrast, other teachers focus their efforts on the underachieving students which proves to not be an effective way to reduce achievement gap.

Students are different from past students; however, the school structure and organization have remained unchanged. The goal of all students achieving proficiency is not realistic in a system that was made to provide access to all but mastery for some (Miles & Baroody, 2012). Miles and Baroody (2012) continues to explain excellence for all, equity, and efficiency are needed in addition to seven strategies to transform education. Excellence for all means removing stigmas of pull out services by providing flexible and effective alternatives, allowing for sharing innovative practices, and providing opportunities for teacher growth. Equity means teachers need to educate all

children well and deliver quality education. Efficiency is acting in new ways regarding resources such as teachers, time, and technology to benefit from the economies of scale.

Research states teachers can address the achievement gap with a positive impact by gathering, analyzing, and using data to drive instruction for underperforming groups. Teachers can support students in the classroom with one-to-one support and provide small group instruction to address the gaps in learning (Demie & McLean, 2015). In addition to providing intervention support, activities such as field trips to expose, enhance, and gain experiences to support learning. “Teacher effectiveness is the single most important in-school predictor of student achievement” (Miles & Baroody, 2012, p. 5).

### **At Risk Students**

At risk students include those who are living in poverty and are ELLs. Additional risk factors are identified as low maternal education, single parent homes, parenting practices, poor English proficiency, and low preschool attendance (Crone & Whitehurst, 1999; Sheridan et al., 2011). Immigrant children are more likely to live in poverty (De Feyter & Winsler, 2009). Of the Hispanic students, 33% were found to have two or more risk factors (Chatterji, 2006).

### **Poverty**

“Latino students are the most economically disadvantaged ethnic group in California, 80% of Latino students are disadvantaged” (Buenrostro, 2016, p. 3). Students coming from poverty backgrounds are at higher risk for reading failure, language development, and academic achievement beginning school less prepared than their peers starting kindergarten with lower scores on cognitive assessments (Chatterji, 2006; Crone



& Whitehurst, 1999; Lesaux, 2012; Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). Parent socio-economical level is the strongest predictor of student academic achievement (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Poverty, as stated by Bracken and Fischel (2008) is a risk variable in development and achievement.

One in four children living in poverty is a child of an immigrant (Takanishi, 2004). About one in every three Latino students grow up in poverty and only 17 % in fourth grade read at or above proficient (Lesaux, 2012). Children are more likely to learn in an environment that is safe, predictable, positive, engaging, and challenging offering school as a place of security.

### **ELLs**

English proficiency is a barrier to academic success of immigrant students (Palacios et al., 2008). For the 2015-2016 school year, 1,147,404 homes in California spoke Spanish accounting for 83.5% of ELLs (Sugarman, 2017). Many Latinos are not exposed to English until they enter school and 50% of Latino children do not recognize the letters of the alphabet when they start kindergarten (Schick, 2013). This places these students significantly behind their peers academically and requiring intervention, remedial education, and make them more likely to drop out of school than their peers.

English may take between seven and 10 years to learn. While students are learning English, they are missing out on academic content. The longer students spend learning English the further behind they are getting academically. Recommendation for teaching ELLs include: (a) formative assessments, (b) intensive small-group intervention, (c) vocabulary instruction, (d) formal academic English, and (e) 90 minutes a week devoted to teaching mixed ELL proficiencies together (Gersten et al., 2007).

ELL classes should teach students English in terms of the curriculum they are learning in core classes. It is important to use reading and writing experiences students can connect using support such as regalia, pictures, and demonstrations to support comprehension (Sprayberry-King, 2015). Since the parent is the child's first teacher in life, parental lack of education and English proficiency make teaching the child a challenge. The majority of Latino students come from homes where English is not spoken, therefore, not being proficient in English negatively affects their academic success (Buenrostro, 2016). Teaching teachers how to work in a diverse classroom caring for the students' socially and emotionally are skills important to add to the classroom.

### **Literature Gap**

This review of literature revealed extensive research exists that discusses the Hispanic achievement gap with respect to students living in poverty and being ELLs. However, the existing research fails to offer the perspective of expert teachers with effective teaching strategies for closing the Hispanic/Caucasian achievement gap. "There is little research carried out to study good practice to narrow the achievement gaps in schools" (Demie & McLean, 2015, p. 141).

In addition, it is well documented as to the factors creating barriers for student achievement, but what teachers do to overcome these barriers is not easily identified. "The process by which teachers act to facilitate gap closing is not well understood" (Rochmes et al., 2017, p. 6). Therefore, more research that investigates how teachers are effectively teaching students living in poverty and are ELLs is necessary. There is

limited qualitative research that identifies specific teaching strategies for fourth and fifth grade Hispanic students.

### **Summary**

Teachers need to know how to effectively teach to the diversity of Latino learners as the largest and fastest growing minority group in the United States. Many Latinos possess several risk factors including being ELLs and living in poverty. Not only is there a significant Hispanic/Caucasian achievement gap, but also between Hispanic/Hispanic who are also ELLs and qualify for the National School Lunch Program. Educational theorists agree experience, environment, relationships, play, and connecting learning to the real world are beneficial to learning. These can all be achieved through skillfully implementing a student-centered research based learning method to support the 21st century learner through technology, collaboration, small group, and coaching support. This review of the literature revealed that despite several attempts to reform the United States educational system with increased rigor and accountability an achievement gap still exists for the Hispanics compared to their Caucasian peers.

### **Synthesis Matrix**

A synthesis matrix (see Appendix A) was used by the researcher to organize variables presented in the review of the literature. The synthesis matrix shows data on the variable and cites the author. The synthesis matrix is a strategy used by researchers to show agreement between various research studies and authors concerning variables being studied. The synthesis matrix contributes to the validity of study variables.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### **Overview**

This chapter is focused on the effective instructional strategies expert teachers use to increase the academic achievement of high poverty and high ELLs in fourth and fifth grade. A qualitative research design was chosen to allow an in-depth study of effective instructional practices, using a set of interviews with expert teachers. This allowed for the purposeful selection of multiple cases to show various perspectives on the topic.

The purpose statement and research questions are followed by the research design with cited references to discuss the chosen methodology. The population and research sample are stated in addition to the process developed to validate and implement the interview process. The procedures for analyzing the data are presented. Lastly, the methodology chapter lists the limitations of the study.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to identify and describe effective instructional strategies for ELA and mathematics perceived by expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers in southern California to reduce the achievement gap in high poverty and high English language learner elementary schools.

### **Research Questions**

Research questions were developed to help guide this student and they are:

1. What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?

2. What effective mathematics instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?

### **Research Design**

A qualitative research design was chosen for this study to allow the researcher to understand the instructional strategies that expert teachers use. Qualitative research as a methodology requires interpreting interviews to find substantively meaningful patterns and themes from individuals or groups (Patton, 2015). In addition, artifacts were collected from expert fourth and fifth grade teachers to triangulate the data. A phenomenological study was conducted to understand these teachers' experiences and determine their instructional strategies that influenced their success in increasing academic achievement of high poverty and high ELLs in fourth and fifth grade students. This is the most appropriate method to acquire information. The only way to attain this information is to interview the teachers, therefore this is a phenomenological study.

As stated by Patton (2015), "Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experience..." (p. 432). Researchers are not limited to asking the same questions as in quantitative research, rather ask "questions to produce a wealth of detailed data about a smaller number of individuals" (Patton, 2015, p. 257). An advantage of phenomenological qualitative research is to provide a depth of data with detail and context. This study, which included multiple sites from the Coachella Valley, Moreno Valley, and Palm Springs Unified School Districts, was conducted to provide a general understanding and to present common themes and patterns of participant teachers. The design was developed to

identify themes and patterns that permitted the researcher to add to the literature regarding effective instructional strategies to increase academic achievement of students described as at risk or performing below grade level. The teachers' knowledge on successfully meeting the needs of fourth and fifth grade high poverty and high ELLs is valuable information for future teaching practices.

### **Population**

“A population is a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of the research” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 129). The population of this study is all fourth and fifth grade teachers in California who are in schools with at least 65% low socio-economic status and at least 50% ELLs. Riverside and San Bernardino counties, were selected because of the high poverty and high ELL population and the number of teachers serving this population. The two counties selected had similar demographics as the state of California.

### **Target Population**

A target population for a study is the entire set of individuals chosen from the overall population for which the study data are to be used to make inferences. The target population defines the population to which the findings are meant to be generalized. It is important that target populations are clearly identified for the purposes of research study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It is typically not feasible, due to time or cost constraints, to study large groups; therefore, the researcher chose population *samples* from within a larger group. The target population was identified as all elementary schools in Riverside and San Bernardino counties with fourth and fifth grade teachers

teaching students consisting of in schools with at least 65% low socio-economic status and at least 50% ELLs.

The target population from which the participants will be chosen consists of fourth and fifth grade expert teachers in Riverside and San Bernardino counties were selected from Coachella Valley, Moreno Valley, and Palm Springs Unified School Districts. Since the demographics of Southern California are similar to other elementary schools in the California, the researcher may generalize results to the larger overall California state population.

### **Sample**

The sample is a group of participants in a study selected from the target population from which the researcher intends to generalize. The target population for this study include Coachella Valley, Moreno Valley, and Palm Springs Unified School Districts. The purposeful sampling strategy of instrumental use multiple-case sampling was utilized. This strategy uses “selecting cases of a phenomenon for the purpose of generating generalizable findings that can be used to inform changes in practices, programs, and policies” (Patton, 2015, p. 270).

“Although there are statistical rules for probability sample size, there are only guidelines for qualitative sample size” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 328).

“Qualitative sample size can range from 1 to 40 or more” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 328). The researcher chose a small sample group of 12 for this study to ensure the opportunity to conduct detailed information-rich interviews with participants. The sample consisted of four teachers from each of the three school districts for a total of 12 from Coachella Valley, Moreno Valley, and Palm Springs Unified School Districts.

## **Sample Selection Process**

Reputational case sample strategy selection was used to select expert fourth and fifth grade teachers of high poverty and high ELL students to learn what instructional strategies are effective. The reputational case sample strategy is described as “obtaining the recommendation of knowledgeable experts for the best examples, for example a principal nominates competent teachers” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 326). The researcher chose to select teachers from southern California, Riverside county, specifically the Coachella Valley, Moreno Valley, and Palm Springs Unified School Districts. California, in the school year 2016-2017 counted 6,294 schools that taught fourth grade consisting of 471,141 students. During the 2016-2017 school year, California had 6,374 school that taught fifth grade consisting of 487,493 students. The Coachella Valley Unified School District has 14 elementary schools fitting the criteria with 1,378 fourth grade students of which 959 are ELLs. There are 1,488 fifth grade students with 983 being ELLs. Coachella Valley Unified School District employed 52 fourth grade teachers and 58 fifth grade teachers during the 2017-2018 school year. These school districts were selected because they are representative of the growing Latino population and low socio-economic status. It was necessary to first identify how many fourth and fifth grade teachers are employed by Coachella Valley, Moreno Valley, and Palm Springs Unified School District (see Table 1). Teachers were identified based on the selected criteria.

- Teachers have five years or more experience teaching.
- Recognition of student progress.



- Recommended by their principal.
- Received awards based on teaching practices.

Table 1

*Amount of fourth and fifth grade students and teachers in the three school districts being compared*

-	Riverside County	Coachella Valley Unified School District	Moreno Valley Unified School District	Palm Springs Unified School District
Fourth and fifth grade population	65,206	2,865	5,069	3,557
Fourth and fifth grade teachers	2,173	110	168	118

From the group of 110 fourth and fifth grade teachers in Coachella Valley Unified School District, 7 teachers were identified who met the criteria of expert teachers as determined by their principal. Moreno Valley Unified School District had 168 fourth and fifth grade teachers, of which 4 teachers were nominated who met the criteria. Palm Springs Unified School District had 118 fourth and fifth grade teachers with four teachers were identified who met the criteria. The researcher randomly selected 12 participants to interview. Letters of introduction were sent to these 12 participants explaining the purpose of the research and asking for their participation (see Appendix B). Personal telephone calls followed. When the number of those consenting had been determined, the identical process followed until the group of 12 had been reached. All teachers included in this study received an Informed Consent (see Appendix C) form as well as a Participants Bill of Rights (see Appendix D), assuring privacy and confidentiality.

## **Instrumentation**

In qualitative research the instrument used to collect data is the researcher themselves. The researcher examines artifacts, observes behaviors, or conducts interviews to understand the participant's perspective on their everyday lived experience (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Since the researcher is the instrument in a qualitative study, experimenter effects being a bias, referred by McMillan and Schumacher (2010), as "both the deliberate and unintentional influences that the researcher has on the subjects" (p. 113). The experimenter effect includes treating subjects differently, using a different tone of voice, being reassuring to a participant and not another, and displaying different attitudes. Another possible bias is subject effects which refers to participant's changes in behavior initiated by the participant themselves in response to the research situation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). "Participants may want to present themselves to have positive self-presentation, social desirability, or a belief that certain responses are expected, which may affect the results" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 114).

During this study, the researcher was employed as an elementary teacher. As a result, the researcher brought a potential bias to the study based on personal experiences in a similar setting to those which were studied. A research colleague was used to observe a field test interview and research questions were previewed by the dissertation committee for clarity of meaning and to receive feedback on format, structure, and process of the interview were all steps taken to neutralize research bias. Qualitative interviews were conducted with the research participants. The interview questions and responses were conducted in person and digitally recorded (see Appendix E).

The interview was structured and selected as the instrument for this qualitative research. Open-ended questions were asked in attempt to understand the holistic view of the participants (see Appendix F). This study involved participants from several school sites which made utilizing a structured interview analysis easier to find and compare. Furthermore, an interview guide was used to list the questions and issues to explore (Patton, 2015). This was utilized to ensure that the same basic lines or inquiry were pursued with each participant interviewed. Patton (2015) states, the use of an interview guide allows the “interviewer to remain free to build a conversation within a subject area” (p. 439) spontaneously.

### **Instrument Development**

The two research questions provided the basis for instrument development were developed using a research question development matrix (see Appendix G). Probing questions focuses on the variables identified in the three research questions. The key variables were (a) instructional strategies in place to meet the needs of students in poverty (b) instructional strategies in place to meet the needs of ELL students (c) expert fourth and fifth grade teachers’ perspectives on the achievement gap (d) strategies used for ELA (e) strategies used for mathematics.

An interview schedule was created for preparing questions that were justifiable, defining objectives, writing questions, and deciding format. The interview process is flexible and adaptable and allows the interviewer to record verbal and nonverbal behaviors.

## **Reliability**

Reliability is “the consistency of measurement—the extent to which the results are similar over different forms of the same instrument or occasions of data collection” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 179). To promote reliability and consistency a script including details such as confidentiality of interviewee, explaining the purpose of the interview and answer any questions or concerns, probing questions to determine rapport with the interviewee, and a list of topics and items to explore with follow up questions for clarification was used.

## **Validity**

Validity is defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) as “the degree of congruence between the explanations of the phenomena and the realities of the world” (p. 330). In other words, do the questions measure what it is designed to measure. One strategy to enhance the validity and increase the agreement on the description by the researcher and participants is to use low-inference descriptors. That is to use concrete, precise descriptions from interview elaboration, and use literal terms and defining important terms used and understood by participants and the removal of abstract language of the researcher. Secondly, data from the interviews were digitally recorded on two devices to provide accurate and complete records.

For this study, experts in the field of fourth and fifth grade elementary education reviewed the interview questions. The experts were two individuals who had earned doctoral degrees. One of the individuals was a retired superintendent at the time of the study, while the other was a superintendent. These experts confirmed the validity of the measure by correlating the relevance and logic between interview questions and research

questions. Questions were scanned to ensure ambiguous language was not used and either literal terms or a definition of important terms were used. The instrument was revised based on the feedback from the field experts. The instrument was then field tested by interviewing two fourth and fifth grade teachers with high poverty and ELL students and recorded on two devices. Following the interviews feedback was sought on improving the instrument and process. Upon completing the interviews the digitally recorded interviews were professionally transcribed.

### **Field Test**

A field test interview was administered using the instrument previewed by the dissertation committee and observed by a Brandman University Ed.D. graduate, who has experience in qualitative research and interviewing participants. The qualified, non-participating teacher agreed to participate as a test participant to test the process and instrument. After the test interview, the participant was asked for feedback as to the clarity and understanding of the questions, the format of the instrument, and structure of the process. Similarly, the qualified observer was asked to provide responses to the clarity of questions, format of the instrument, and structure of the process, in addition to providing their own observations which may lead to bias and how to overcome the bias. Feedback was documented from both the observer and test participant. The feedback was discussed with the dissertation committee and adjustments made based on the feedback.

### **Data Collection**

Qualitative inquiry includes the collection of data by the researcher conducting interviews, observations, and artifacts. Once receiving permission from the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix H) and after the course work was

completed to meet the criteria by the National Institutes of Health (see Appendix I), the researcher held 12, one-on-one separate interviews face-to-face with expert fourth and fifth grade teachers from Coachella Valley, Moreno Valley, and Palm Springs Unified School Districts who teach high poverty and high ELLs in mathematics and ELA. The researcher selected expert teachers through contacting Coachella Valley, Moreno Valley, and Palm Springs Unified School District's elementary school principals and asking for recommendations of expert teachers of fourth and fifth grade students who work with high poverty and high ELLs and have been successful in teaching these students mathematics and language arts based on the selection criteria.

The researcher contacted each interviewee with a personal email explaining the purpose of the study, why each participant was selected, and requested their voluntary participation. A follow up email was sent to confirm participation and clarify any questions. The researcher explained the consent form and scheduled a date and time for the interview.

Each interview consisted of an expert teacher and the researcher. An interview script was used for each interview to understand what effective instructional strategies are used with the students. The interviews for this study, which were conducted on each elementary school site, gave the researcher an opportunity to understand the teaching environment and provide comfort for the interviewee.

During data collection, participants' confidentiality was maintained by assigning each interviewee a participant code. The researcher utilized various methods to maintain the integrity of the data which included using a professional transcription service as a third party and participant code.

## **Data Analysis**

First, the researcher compiled the data from the interviews into a table listing the eight interview questions with 12 expert teacher's responses to each question. Each cell of the table captures each interviewee's response to each question. This data table made analyzing the 12 interviewee's responses easier to find commonalities to be studied.

Each question corresponds to a research questions. Organizing the data this way made developing themes, patterns, and commonalities among the data possible.

The professionally transcribed data recorded from the interviews were turned into the working documents in addition to the researcher's notes taken during the interviews. They were then uploaded into NVivo, a software program for coding qualitative data and analysis. The researcher identified themes and patterns and placed them in narrative form to develop the overall narrative for the data.

### **Inter-Coder Reliability**

In order to protect against researcher bias and reliability of analysis, the researcher used a colleague as an Inter-Coder agent. According to Patton (2015), inter-coder reliability referred to the extent to which two or more independent coders agreed on the coding of the characteristics of the interviews or artifacts and reached the same conclusion. Ten percent of the data collected from the interviews, artifacts, and observations were presented to an outside researcher, who possesses a doctoral degree, who confirmed the themes, trends, and frequency counts of the data collection. According to Neuendorf (2002), "given that a goal of content analysis is to identify and record relatively objective characteristics of messages, reliability is paramount. Without the establishment of reliability, content analysis measures are useless" (p. 141).

To maintain confidentiality and security of the data, the researchers secured and monitored the use of all research data, audio recordings and other documents. After two years, transcripts, audio-recording, and any other documents that can identify participants will be destroyed.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of this study include the small sample size, which was limited to three school districts, Coachella Valley had 14 elementary schools, Moreno Valley had 27 elementary schools, and Palm Springs had 15 elementary schools for 56 elementary schools out of the 5,868 elementary schools in the state of California. An additional limitation includes only expert teachers of high poverty and high ELLs in mathematics and language arts. This may present difficulties in generalizing the data. Each principal was asked to recommend expert teachers, a limit of the study could be to what extent teachers are considered expert. Furthermore, the researcher's personal biases could influence the data. The absence of anonymity of the participant is yet another possible bias. This was a voluntary participation study, participation rates could also present limitation. Additionally, this study was limited by participants' self-reported experiences. The researcher had no control over the participants' responses during the interview. It was believed that all participants provided honest responses to the interview questions. Follow up questions were asked during the interview process to clarify and gather accurate data. Lastly, the variable of time presents limitations. Data collection and analysis for qualitative research is time consuming.



## **Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of the methodology used for this study. It presented the research design, population and sample, instrumentation, and data-collection and analysis procedures. Limitations of the study were also presented. Chapter IV presents the data and findings of the study. Chapter V identifies findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

This chapter begins with an overview of the chapter, a review of the purpose of the study, the research questions, the research methodology, the procedure for data collection and analysis, and population and sample. The data from each participant is presented according to themes in responses to research questions. In addition, the data is presented as overarching themes developed from all participants in relation to their answers to research questions. The summary of findings in the study concludes this chapter.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to identify and describe effective instructional strategies for ELA and mathematics perceived by expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers in southern California to reduce the achievement gap in high poverty and high English language learner elementary schools.

### **Research Questions**

Research questions were developed to help guide this study and they are:

1. What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?
2. What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?

## **Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures**

This qualitative study used semi-structured open-ended interview questions to determine the instructional strategies expert fourth and fifth-grade teachers of high poverty and high ELL population schools use to address the educational needs of ELL students.

The interviews consisted of 10 main questions. Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 were designed to answer Research Question 1 regarding the instructional strategies used by expert fourth and fifth-grade teachers in ELA. Interview Questions 6, 7, 8, and 9 were designed to answer Research Question 2 regarding the instructional strategies used by expert fourth and fifth-grade teachers in mathematics. Interview Question 5 was designed to record the participants' perceptions of the Hispanic learning gap in ELA. Interview Question 10 was designed to record the participants' perception of the Hispanics learning gap in mathematics.

Each participant was provided with a copy of the Research Participant's Bill of Rights along with the details of the study. After obtaining approval from each participant, each interview was conducted and audio-recording via REV, an application-based recorder for the I-phone. Digitally recorded data from the interview were transcribed by REV. These transcriptions were reviewed by each participant to ensure accuracy of the interviews. The verified transcriptions were uploaded to NVivo, a coding software used for qualitative data analysis. After the interview transcripts were independently coded by the researcher to identify patterns and themes among participants' responses. An expert data coder was given a transcribed interview to analyze and code. The researcher also analyzed and coded the same interview to measure

the percent of agreement between raters. Because the research and expert obtained a high percentage of interrater agreement, potential bias was eliminated.

Appendix J contains a summary of the research methods used in the research study and the procedures used to collect data.

### **Population**

The population of this study is all fourth and fifth grade teachers in the California who are in schools with at least 65% low socio-economic status and at least 50% ELLs. Riverside and San Bernardino counties were selected because of the high poverty and high ELL population and the number of teachers serving this population. The two counties selected had similar demographics as the state of California.

### **Sample**

For the purpose of this research, the participants were teachers who have taught for five years or more, have been recognized for student progress, recommended by their principal, have received awards based on teaching practices, and were employed within Coachella Valley, Moreno Valley, and Palm Springs Unified School Districts, in southern California.

The researcher contacted 16 potential participants individually and invited them to participate in the study. Twelve of the participants confirmed and set up an interview date and time. The remaining four participants declined to or did not respond in which an official interview did not take place. The research included four teachers from Coachella Valley, Moreno Valley, and Palm Springs Unified School Districts for a total of 12 participants. Table 2 provides a categorization of the participants.

Table 2

*Characteristics of Participants*

Participant	Grade Level	Years of Teaching	
		Experience	School District
Participant 1	5th grade	23 years	Coachella Valley Unified School District
Participant 2	4th grade	15 years	Moreno Valley Unified School District
Participant 3	4th grade	10 years	Moreno Valley Unified School District
Participant 4	5th grade	11 years	Moreno Valley Unified School District
Participant 5	4th grade	20 years	Moreno Valley Unified School District
Participant 6	5th grade	15 years	Coachella Valley Unified School District
Participant 7	4th grade	32 years	Palm Springs Unified School District
Participant 8	5th grade	5 years	Palm Springs Unified School District
Participant 9	5th grade	19 years	Palm Springs Unified School District
Participant 10	4th grade	36 years	Palm Springs Unified School District
Participant 11	5th grade	16 years	Coachella Valley Unified School District
Participant 12	5th grade	18 years	Coachella Valley Unified School District

## Presentation and Analysis of Data

### Data Analysis by Participant

**Participant 1.** Participant 1 was an ELL who grew up in Coachella, California. She attended the University of Redlands where she received a Bachelor's degree. She later attended Chapman University to obtain a Master's degree. She is currently in her 23rd year of teaching.

**Research question 1.** The first research question was: “*What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 1 responded citing 15 different strategies used to support ELLs living in poverty when teaching ELA. Background knowledge is important to teach “*because some kids lack*” (Participant 1) knowledge in terms of different topics. These students “*come with larger gaps in terms of life experiences*” (Participant 1). Technology available in the classroom such as I-pads, computers, LCD projectors, and Apple TV enhance the ability to use visuals such as pictures and videos to build background knowledge. Vocabulary, both content specific and academic, used in think, talk, read, write, talk, read, write while collaborating with a partner in addition to sentence frames are used to support language. Also important are graphic organizers and 3-column notes. Creating a positive classroom culture that embraces the student's culture lets students understand “*we're working together to help each other*” (Participant 1) and “*they can depend on their classmates*” (Participant 1).

Participant 1 stated,

Speaking the student's native language helps in teaching to build a relationship of relating, knowing cognates, and being able to translate for clarification and understanding on the student's behalf. Speaking the student's native language also is helpful in parent communication.

Pulling small group or providing one-on-one teaching allows support at or a little above their level. Scaffolding is provided after teacher modeling and posting anchor charts to support collaborative or independent work. Student world connection is huge, students must understand why they are learning certain skills and know that there is a purpose for learning

**Research question 2.** The second research question was: *“What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?”*

Participant 1 said she does the same for math as she does teaching ELA, however manipulatives are important for students to see what may be abstract to them. *“I definitely use more models, pictures, and manipulatives, bringing them out. I know sometimes upper grades, we tend to forget they are there. The kids really need it to understand the concept”* (Participant 1).

Participant 1 said the lack of understanding the context in terms of vocabulary used in story problems cause a problem. Sometimes one word, even if it is not related to the math skill, can create confusion for the students.

Table 3 summarizes Participant 1's responses in themes and patterns related to her experiences teaching ELLs and students of poverty.

Table 3

*Participant 1: Themes in Response to Research Questions*

Research Question	Themes in Responses
What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background knowledge</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• One-on-one teaching</li> <li>• Parent involvement</li> <li>• Classroom culture</li> <li>• Scaffolding</li> <li>• Sentence frames</li> <li>• Small groups</li> <li>• Student world connection</li> <li>• Student's home culture</li> <li>• Taking notes</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Think time</li> <li>• Total physical response</li> <li>• Visuals</li> </ul>
What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manipulatives</li> <li>• Small groups</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Translate to native language</li> <li>• Visuals</li> <li>• Vocabulary</li> </ul>

**Participant 2.** Participant 2 was an ELL who grew up in Norwalk, California.

She attended California State, San Bernardino. She is currently in her 15th year teaching.



**Research question 1.** The first research question was: “*What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 2 identified 14 different strategies she used to teach her ELLs living in poverty. She believes all students benefit from these strategies. First, activating prior knowledge and building background knowledge to build experiences using visuals and technology and acquiring vocabulary development because there is a deficient in language. Moreno Valley is a one-to-one device district using Chromebooks. Chromebooks help build experiences and connect better with students in ELA and with vocabulary.

Creating a positive classroom culture where each student’s culture is valued is important in creating a safe environment to learn and make mistakes. Also, having small groups or one-on-one opportunities are needed. This can take place in the classroom or walking in line, making a person connection and acknowledging them.

**Research question 2.** The second research question was: “*What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 2 said because common core math includes many ELA skills the same skills for ELA are incorporated in teaching mathematics. In addition to ELA strategies are the use of manipulatives and providing plenty of opportunities to practice skills. For example,

having manipulatives to touch and understand the base 10 numbering system using blocks. We also use a lot of manipulatives when we get to fractions, we use fraction strips. I think they need to visualize the fraction first then we can transfer the knowledge. (Participant 2)

Table 4 summarizes Participant 2’s responses and themes related to her experiences teaching ELLs and students of poverty.

Table 4

*Participant 2: Themes in Response to Research Questions*

Research question	Themes in responses
What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Background knowledge</li> <li>● Collaboration</li> <li>● Feeling safe</li> <li>● One-on-one teaching</li> <li>● Parent Involvement</li> <li>● Positive classroom culture</li> <li>● Scaffolding</li> <li>● Small groups</li> <li>● Student world connection</li> <li>● Taking notes</li> <li>● Technology</li> <li>● Translate to native language</li> <li>● Visuals</li> <li>● Vocabulary</li> </ul>
What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaboration</li> <li>● Manipulatives</li> <li>● Taking notes</li> <li>● Technology</li> <li>● Translate to native language</li> <li>● Visuals</li> </ul>

**Participant 3.** Participant 3 was an ELL who grew up in Ontario, California. She attended the University of California, Riverside where she received a Bachelor's degree. She is currently in her 10th year of teaching.

**Research question 1.** The first research question was: “*What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 3 expressed 10 different instructional strategies she uses when teaching ELLs of poverty ELA. She has built her classroom around the theme of kindness to create a positive classroom culture. She begins teaching ELA by pre-teaching vocabulary and scaffolding the reading to dig deep into the text. If students do not understand she translates the topic or concept into the students' native language to make the connection. She also said knowing the students' native language is helpful in communicating with parents.

Small groups and technology are used to promote reading, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency. In class, collaboration takes place among students with the scaffold of sentence frames to increase student talk. Participant 3 makes sure to make the student world connection to expose students to the world.

**Research question 2.** The second research question was: “*What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 3 said she uses two additional strategies in teaching mathematics, taking notes and using visuals, for ELLs living in poverty to those strategies used to teach ELA. The word problems create challenges for her students. She uses a strategy called CUBE. This stands for circle the number, box the important information, evaluate and eliminate and then solve the problem.

Table 5 summarizes Participant 3’s responses in themes and patterns related to her experiences teaching ELLs and students of poverty.

Table 5

*Participant 3: Themes in Response to Research Questions*

Research Question	Themes in Responses
What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Parent involvement</li> <li>• Positive classroom culture</li> <li>• Scaffolding</li> <li>• Sentence frames</li> <li>• Small groups</li> <li>• Student world connection</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Translate to native language</li> <li>• Vocabulary</li> </ul>
What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking notes</li> <li>• Visuals</li> </ul>

**Participant 4.** Participant 4 was an ELL who grew up in Blythe, California. She attended the University of California, Riverside where she received a Bachelor’s degree. She is currently in her 11th year of teaching.

**Research question 1.** The first research question was: “*What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 4 expressed 11 strategies she uses while teaching ELA. Visual aids and total physical response are two strategies she keyed in on right away. She acts out a lot of what she says in class. Visual aids such as videos, pictures, charts are a big help especially in writing and vocabulary. She uses vocabulary cards, sentence frames, and language buddies for collaboration, additionally, graphic organizers.

Participant 4 is a dual language teacher and stated this program requires a lot of parent involvement to be successful. The students have been together since kindergarten and have developed a cohesiveness and culture among them. She does provide one-on-one and small group instruction for students, only about 20 minutes a day, and finds it challenging to balance. Being a dual language teacher is a benefit for communicating with parents and students. Another benefit is the use of technology. Students can research when they are writing, look up pictures, use the thesaurus at the click of a button to help them find a word they don't understand to connect to a word they do understand.

**Research question 2.** The second research question was: “*What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 4 feels her instructional strategies for mathematics is basically the same as ELA. Participant reiterated the use of visual aids and total physical response and

added the use of manipulatives and white boards. “*It is really important for students to construct and deconstruct*” (Participant 4). Small groups make students feel comfortable to make mistakes. White boards are used so every student is working and nobody is focused on just one student. All answers are recorded on the board in front of the classroom and one is singles out. There is anonymity.

Table 6 summarizes Participant 3’s responses in themes and patterns related to her experiences teaching ELLs and students of poverty.

Table 6

*Participant 4: Themes in Response to Research Questions*

Research Question	Themes in Responses
What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaboration</li> <li>● One-on-one teaching</li> <li>● Parent involvement</li> <li>● Positive classroom culture</li> <li>● Sentence frames</li> <li>● Small groups</li> <li>● Technology</li> <li>● Total physical response</li> <li>● Translate to native language</li> <li>● Visuals</li> <li>● Vocabulary</li> </ul>
What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Manipulatives</li> <li>● Small groups</li> <li>● Total physical response</li> <li>● Visuals</li> <li>● White boards</li> </ul>

**Participant 5.** Participant 5 was not an ELL who grew up in northern, California, moved to Utah, and then settled in southern California. She attended the University of California Riverside where she received a Bachelor’s degree. Later she attended Grand

Canyon University and obtained a master's degree. She is currently in her 20th year of teaching.

**Research question 1.** The first research question was: “*What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 5 expressed 15 different strategies she uses to teach ELA to ELLs living in poverty. She started with vocabulary, both academic and content vocabulary. Students must have a clear understanding. Then a lot of modeling and scaffold work through guiding students and gradual release of responsibility. Using a lot of collaboration mixing ELLs with a higher ELL or an English only student. She found creating pictures to make connections for ELLs to visualize are important for language arts.

Building rapport with students to make a connection with each of them, having shared experiences to promote collaboration is important. That way we can have something to build background experiences. This is also part of building positive classroom culture. “*Each student has something they to connect to, feel proud of, something they can share. Letting students share their own cultures as well*” (Participant 5). Students know the classroom is a safe place, she believes this is huge. “*I strive to create a culture that is accepting and supportive*” (Participant 5).

Pulling small groups and having one-on-one teaching opportunities is hard. She pulls students based on skills needed. Other students work independently or collaboratively during this time. She also can visit with groups working collaboratively.

She does a lot of modeling, collaborative group work and then gradual release to independent work.

While Participant 5 is not bilingual, she feels that teachers who are bilingual do have an advantage in some areas. She makes up for this challenge by using technology programs to translate and colleagues for assistance. Parent involvement has declined because of the requirements and policies in place for fingerprinting. However, if parents reach out, she always welcomes them to the classroom and provides opportunities to be involved.

In addition to using technology herself for communication needs, the students have access to several intervention programs on their one-to-one devices. They also create portfolios using the Google suite which parents can access. She also assigns vocabulary, flashcards, and cognates to help with language development. Using videos or pictures make topics more relatable for students to connect. The more they connect, they get a text to world or self to world connection. The curriculum used for ELA always has a connection piece to each text.

***Research question 2.*** The second research question was: “*What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 5 expressed the strategies used to teach mathematics are like language arts. She emphasizes note taking. She models the notes and students keep a journal of the notes. Students can refer to the notes when working problems and collaborate with a



partner before expected to work independently. She expects students to verbalize the math reasoning to practice the academic vocabulary.

Having a positive classroom culture, being supportive, and letting students know making mistakes are okay and that is how we learn is especially important in math. Also, manipulatives are crucial. Creating those hands on experiences are important to understanding math concepts.

Table 7 summarizes Participant 5’s responses in themes and patterns related to her experiences teaching ELLs and students of poverty.

Table 7

*Participant 5: Themes in Response to Research Questions*

Research Question	Themes in Responses
What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Background knowledge</li> <li>● Collaboration</li> <li>● Feeling safe</li> <li>● Modeling</li> <li>● One-on-one teaching</li> <li>● Parent involvement</li> <li>● Positive classroom culture</li> <li>● Scaffolding</li> <li>● Small groups</li> <li>● Student world connection</li> <li>● Student’s home culture</li> <li>● Technology</li> <li>● Translate to native language</li> <li>● Visuals</li> <li>● Vocabulary</li> </ul>
What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaboration</li> <li>● Manipulatives</li> <li>● Parent involvement</li> <li>● Positive classroom culture</li> <li>● Taking notes</li> <li>● Technology</li> <li>● Translate to native language</li> <li>● Vocabulary</li> </ul>

**Participant 6.** Participant 6 was not an ELL who grew up in Ontario, Canada, and later in life moved to California. He attended college in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where he received a bachelor's degree. Later he attended school in Malibu, California to obtain a master's degree. He is currently in his 15th year of teaching.

**Research question 1.** The first research question was: “*What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 6 strongly stated that scaffolding and modeling are two of the nine strategies used in teaching ELA to ELLs living in poverty. He used modeling in reading text with students and acts of parts of the text and uses exaggeration to engage students. When asked the effectiveness of using student's home culture in the classroom he responded by saying this is very effective. It is important to relate their education to their own lives and can be very valuable. This also helps build a positive classroom culture. His classroom emphasizes absolute kindness and patience, “*this is a must*” (Participant 6).

Participant 6 pulls small groups a few times a week, he found some students do not thrive in a small group and others just don't want singled out. Coachella Valley Unified School District is a one-to-one district utilizing I-pads for every student. Participant 6 used this technology strictly for practice and rote practice. For example, having students constantly go over nouns and verbs and picking them out of sentences. Another example using technology is Lexia Core5, this application teaches foundational skills, language skills, and reading comprehension. Technology is used to expose

students to experiences through media, videos, and recordings. These experiences are important, “*our students are hungry for their connection to their world*” (Participant 6).

**Research question 2.** The second research question was: “*What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 6’s strategies for teaching math are not different from that used teaching ELA except for the use of manipulatives. “*Manipulatives are really valuable*” (Participant 6). The fifth graders use manipulatives at the beginning of the year, but as they start turning into sixth graders they do not want to play with manipulatives anymore.

Table 8 summarizes Participant 6’s responses in themes and patterns related to his experiences teaching ELLs and students of poverty.

Table 8

*Participant 6: Themes in Response to Research Questions*

Research Question	Themes in Responses
What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Modeling</li> <li>• Positive classroom culture</li> <li>• Scaffolding</li> <li>• Small groups</li> <li>• Student world connection</li> <li>• Student’s home culture</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Visuals</li> </ul>
What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manipulatives</li> <li>• Modeling</li> <li>• Scaffolding</li> </ul>

**Participant 7.** Participant 7 was not an ELL who grew up in northern Illinois, the suburbs of Chicago. She attended Northwestern University where she received a bachelor's degree. She is currently in her 32nd year of teaching.

**Research question 1.** The first research question was: *“What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?”*

Participant 7 discussed 10 instructional strategies she uses while teaching ELA to ELLs living in poverty. She started by saying, *“One of the most important things is for kids to make sure they know they can trust me, establish a good relationship, this lowers their affect. This creates a positive classroom culture”* (Participant 7). She thinks one-on-one teaching opportunities are important. She does this by circulating through the room instead of pulling students. These interactions build relationships and *“kids all crave that little individual time”* (Participant 7). Then she believes a rich vocabulary instruction and modeling is important for the students. She holds book clubs, literature circles, which allows her to hear the children speak and hear the conversations among them. Another type of small group is her “morning meeting.” They sit in a circle on the floor to discuss various issues and topics for the day.

She likes to balance the different teaching styles from teacher directed, student centered, and collaborative. Students collaborate through different types of projects, activities, and lessons.

Parent involvement is hindered by increase of security measures, parents must get fingerprinted and complete an application.

Not only does Palm Springs Unified School District have one-to-one devices, chrome books, but they also provide hotspots to remove the barrier from not having technology at home. Students can take the chrome books home and have access to the internet to assist in their learning. Participant 7 uses the technology to activate prior knowledge and make student world connections.

**Research question 2.** The second research question was: “*What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 7 does a lot of the same strategies she uses in language arts, additionally, she uses a lot of visual modeling and math talk. The ELLs participate through collaborating with peers, hearing the vocabulary, and eventually build confidence to add their thoughts. She also uses small collaborative groups and rotates to stations for small group activities. She has found small groups are less threatening and students are more likely to speak, share, and listen. This helps the students. “*I really believe that we’re teaching people not subjects, and the minute I forget that I become less effective*” (Participant 7).

Table 9 summarizes Participant 7’s responses in themes and patterns related to her experiences teaching ELLs and students of poverty.

Table 9

*Participant 7: Themes in Response to Research Questions*

Research Question	Themes in Responses
What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Background knowledge</li> <li>● Collaboration</li> <li>● One-on-one teaching</li> <li>● Parent involvement</li> <li>● Positive classroom culture</li> <li>● Scaffolding</li> <li>● Small groups</li> <li>● Technology</li> <li>● Visuals</li> <li>● Vocabulary</li> </ul>
What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Modeling</li> <li>● Positive classroom culture</li> <li>● Small groups</li> <li>● Visuals</li> </ul>

**Participant 8.** Participant 8 was not an ELL who grew up in Walnut, California. She attended Azusa Pacific where she received a bachelor’s degree and obtained a master’s degree. She is currently in her 5th year of teaching.

**Research question 1.** The first research question was: “*What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 8 believes first and foremost vocabulary instruction makes her successful in teaching ELA to ELLs living in poverty. Students need to know what the words mean and how to use them in context in whatever they are reading. She is teaching vocabulary to build background knowledge. When reading students annotate

the stories and collaborate with partners. Another strategy she uses is read aloud. She reads the text aloud, students follow with their finger, annotating the text at the same time. This gives the students a task and they become invested in the text.

Parents look to the teacher to tell them what to do to make their student better. She communicates with the parents to have their student read 20-30 minutes on their own and then ask them what they read about. Parents can do this even if they do not speak English. Parents need to have discipline and strategies because “*the students really want to do well*” (Participant 8). Palm Springs Unified School District has one-to-one devices, chrome books, and provides hotspots for internet access. Students are supposed to use this technology for supplemental support at home. This makes sure barriers have been removed and all students have equal access to everything and all have the same resources.

Participant 8 builds a positive classroom culture by celebrating every student’s culture and communicates that they are all different but “*we’re all here to achieve the same goal*” (Participant 8). Building rapport and relationships is a high priority, “*relationships before content*” (Participant 8). Her students and school have a very strong culture on building community, high parent involvement, and high teacher involvement with students. An example is their class meetings and restorative circles. When teaching ELA she scaffolds using “we do, I do, you do, we do,” during the *we do* portion the work is modeled, videos are used to build knowledge and connecting student to world. Also during we do, students collaborate with each other. One-on-one opportunities happen when students work independently and small groups. Now, she can

provide further scaffolding, she can go step by step and take notes to reference when not in a small group.

Participant 8 uses project based learning model which is highly collaborative. Students learn to work together, resolve conflict, make presentations, and use technology to complete the project.

**Research question 2.** The second research question was: “*What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 8 said her instructional strategies for mathematics does not differ from those used in ELA. She uses more whole group instruction. She also uses read aloud and asks students to repeat the vocabulary so they get comfortable using the words. Participant 8 feels strongly about student world connection, always connecting lessons or skills to the real world. “*Students want to know why they need to know things. This is key, this is the hook*” (Participant 8).

Table 10 summarizes Participant 8’s responses in themes and patterns related to her experiences teaching ELLs and students of poverty.



Table 10

*Participant 8: Themes in Response to Research Questions*

Research Question	Themes in Responses
What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background knowledge</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Modeling</li> <li>• Parent involvement</li> <li>• Positive classroom culture</li> <li>• Read aloud</li> <li>• Scaffolding</li> <li>• Small groups</li> <li>• Student world connection</li> <li>• Student's home culture</li> <li>• Taking notes</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Visuals</li> <li>• Vocabulary</li> </ul>
What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read aloud</li> <li>• Student world connection</li> </ul>

**Participant 9.** Participant 9 was not an ELL who grew up in Roseburg, Oregon. She attended Western Oregon University where she received a bachelor's degree. She is currently in her 19th year of teaching.

**Research question 1.** The first research question was: “*What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 9, upon reflecting, described 15 instructional strategies she feels are effective in teaching ELA to ELLs living in poverty. She uses technology to create PowerPoint visuals of vocabulary and videos to build background knowledge. She also does a lot of collaboration with peers and providing think time. Providing scaffolding to support the different language levels in the classroom. At the beginning of the year she uses a slowed down pace and provide more scaffolding.

Students bring their cultures with them and allowing them to share gives them a feeling they belong. Every day in her classroom they say a pledge focusing on being a family and therefore the classroom is a safe place to make mistakes and learn.

Participant 9 offers tutoring to her students before school for 30 minutes, during recess time, and a couple days a week after school. This is when she has one-on-one teaching opportunities

Parent involvement does not happen in the classroom because they are a *closed campus*. Parents are supportive and participate in sending materials, supplies, and money when needed. They support in different ways, but not physically in the classroom. Lastly, making the student world connection is practiced. She always tries to connect the “why” for the students. “*We don’t just want to know how to do something, but we need to know why we have to do these lessons or skills*” (Participant 9).

**Research question 2.** The second research question was: “*What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 9 strongly expressed in teaching math to ELLs living in poverty, hands on teaching with manipulatives. *“They need that hands-on experience with the academic vocabulary and it really helps”* (Participant 9). Other than the use of manipulatives her instructional strategies do not differ. She said, again, slowing down the pace but not changing the rigor. She mentioned the student to world connection linking math to money both American dollars and cents and the pesos or measurement customary units of measurement or the metric system.

She has the chance to work one-on-one with students during independent work time. She can then provide missing pieces and figure out where their gap in the learning is. She also teaches small groups during math time and promotes collaboration for students to learn from each other. *“I think small groups in math definitely benefit really well”* (Participant 9).

Technology is used in math for online computer programs like Prodigy and DreamBox. *“In math, because the new math program is so hands on, we don’t really use a lot of technology this year”* (Participant 9).

Table 11 summarizes Participant 9’s responses in themes and patterns related to her experiences teaching ELLs and students of poverty.

Table 11

*Participant 9: Themes in Response to Research Questions*

Research Question	Themes in Responses
What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background knowledge</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Feeling safe</li> <li>• One-on-one teaching</li> <li>• Parent involvement</li> <li>• Sentence frames</li> <li>• Slow down pace</li> <li>• Small groups</li> <li>• Student world connection</li> <li>• Student’s home culture</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Think time</li> <li>• Tutoring</li> <li>• Visuals</li> <li>• Vocabulary</li> </ul>
What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Manipulatives</li> <li>• One-on-one teaching</li> <li>• Positive classroom culture</li> <li>• Slow down pace</li> <li>• Small groups</li> <li>• Student world connection</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Vocabulary</li> </ul>

**Participant 10.** Participant 10 was not an ELL who grew up in Yucca Valley, California. She attended the University of San Diego where she received a bachelor’s degree. She is currently in her 36th year of teaching.

**Research question 1.** The first research question was “*What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 10 described 14 different instructional strategies utilized in teaching ELA to ELLs living in poverty. She started by saying, “*I think the most important strategy is that before you expect students to write about what they read, is that you let them speak about it*” (Participant 10). It is a progression of talking, reading, talking, and then writing. She spent time at the beginning of the year providing a lot of sentence frames for every question. Teaching students to speak correctly so they can write correctly. Everything needs to be modeled, providing scaffolding, and guiding them. Then allowing collaboration to build confidence.

Building the student world connection, giving experiences to students, and showing them what you are talking about with the use of technology to bring the experience into the classroom. Having students share their culture with the class empowers the students, makes everyone richer with knowledge, and creates a safe environment to share and learn.

Participant 10 absolutely takes advantage of one-on-one teaching opportunities, she refers to this as “*working the room*” and every day get to every student. When she *works the room* she calls the individual teaching opportunities “*shoulder conferences*” (Participant 10). She also pulls small groups for 25 minutes a day “*to get their reading up to par*” (Participant 10). Participant 10 provides further learning opportunities for her students by offering tutoring. Every morning classrooms are open for homework help 40 minutes before the start of school, tutoring is available during recess time, and students can make appointments for after school tutoring.

While participant 10 is not bilingual, she has an instructional aide or community aide help her if she needs translating to enhance the learning or make a connection with the students.

Parents are involved in fact, she has 100% attendance for parent conferences. She likes to arm the parents with strategies to use at home to help the students. She thinks of parents as her partner in teaching the students.

Technology is used by students to conduct research. Once students find what they are researching they take notes on their findings. Students also practice reading on the Accelerated Reading programs and take quizzes.

***Research question 2.*** The second research question was: “*What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 10 thinks hands on learning using manipulatives and visual components are extremely important for ELLs learning mathematics. They use and create their own manipulatives. Next, vocabulary, the constant use of academic vocabulary and providing visuals for understanding is something she focuses on. Then, spiraling of the concepts and academic language. She provides a poster problem every day so they can see the skills they have learned and the language. Another strategy she uses is pre-teaching, this helps her identify items or vocabulary students are not familiar. For example, her students did not know what a dart board was or how to play the game concentration. Using pre-teaching to build background knowledge is helpful to front load the students.

Lastly, “it is so important, the most important thing is that they know why they are doing math, it is for a reason” (Participant 10).

Table 12 summarizes Participant 10’s responses in themes and patterns related to her experiences teaching ELLs and students of poverty.

Table 12

*Participant 10: Themes in Response to Research Questions*

Research Question	Themes in Responses
What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Feeling safe</li> <li>● Modeling</li> <li>● One-on-one teaching</li> <li>● Parent involvement</li> <li>● Scaffolding</li> <li>● Sentence frames</li> <li>● Small groups</li> <li>● Student world connection</li> <li>● Student’s home culture</li> <li>● Taking notes</li> <li>● Technology</li> <li>● Translate to native language</li> <li>● Tutoring</li> <li>● Visuals</li> </ul>
What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Background knowledge</li> <li>● Collaboration</li> <li>● Manipulatives</li> <li>● One-on-one teaching</li> <li>● Parent involvement</li> <li>● Positive classroom culture</li> <li>● Scaffolding</li> <li>● Spiral teaching</li> <li>● Small groups</li> <li>● Student world connection</li> <li>● Translate to native language</li> <li>● Visuals</li> <li>● Vocabulary</li> </ul>

**Participant 11.** Participant 11 was an ELL who grew up in Mecca, California. He attended Cal Poly Pomona where he received a bachelor's degree. He is currently in his 16th year of teaching.

**Research question 1.** The first research question was: *“What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?”*

Participant 11 included 18 strategies used in teaching ELA to ELLs living in poverty. He starts by creating a safe learning environment where students share their culture with the class and Participant 11 has the same culture. This helps to build a relationship with the students. He sets the tone with the students, *“we are here to learn, grow, and respect each other”* (Participant 11).

He said sentence frames in conjunction with think pair share, these are a big part of their day to day activities in addition to graphic organizers, total physical response, and visuals. Technology is used to show pictures of vocabulary and picture cards. Read aloud is done with the help of technology to read the text and highlight the words as it reads. This helps students with fluency and comprehension.

Participant 11 and the students use body language to get messages across. A clear routine that is predictable is provided for the students to feel safe. Cooperative collaborative learning in groups where students support one another. Another form of collaboration he uses is peer tutoring.



During his direct instruction, he uses three column notes and anchor charts for visual and extra support. When students are working, he pulls small groups or does one-on-one teaching to provide scaffolding and extra support.

Since participant 11 was an ELL himself, he can translate to the students' native language and provide clarification and support in their native language. This is helpful when communicating with parents as well. There is not parent involvement in the classroom, but he communicates with them on class Dojo either individually or in a group to share information about homework or projects.

**Research question 2.** The second research question was: *“What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?”*

Participant 11 uses the same strategies for mathematics as he does for ELA. He relies heavily on three column notes, provides sentence frames to model answering in complete sentences, graphic organizers, and manipulatives both hands on and using technology to manipulate problems. One application he uses is number pieces. He stated that parents communicate with him and can provide more help to the students at home since mathematics is number based as opposed to ELA where many parents don't speak or read English.

Table 13 summarizes Participant 11's responses in themes and patterns related to his experiences teaching ELLs and students of poverty.

Table 13

*Participant 11: Themes in Response to Research Questions*

Research Question	Themes in Responses
<p>What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Feeling safe</li> <li>● One-on-one teaching</li> <li>● Parent involvement</li> <li>● Positive classroom culture</li> <li>● Read aloud</li> <li>● Scaffolding</li> <li>● Sentence frames</li> <li>● Small group</li> <li>● Student world connection</li> <li>● Student's home culture</li> <li>● Taking notes</li> <li>● Technology</li> <li>● Think-pair-share</li> <li>● Total physical response</li> <li>● Translate to native language</li> <li>● Tutoring</li> <li>● Visuals</li> <li>● Vocabulary</li> </ul>
<p>What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Manipulative</li> <li>● One-on-one teaching</li> <li>● Parent involvement</li> <li>● Sentence frames</li> <li>● Small groups</li> <li>● Student world connection</li> <li>● Taking notes</li> <li>● Technology</li> <li>● Visuals</li> </ul>

**Participant 12.** Participant 12 was not an ELL who grew up in Mecca, California. She attended the University of Redlands where she received a bachelor's degree. She is currently in her 18th year of teaching.

**Research question 1.** The first research question was: “*What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 12 feels strongly that teaching must start with explicit instruction and states: “*I use a lot of explicit instruction. When I describe a concept, I have to explain what the concept is and allow them to understand what I am talking about before I start teaching it.*” This includes a lot of step by step repetition with three column notes for everything we do. She provides scaffold guided practice, direct instruction, and independent practice combined with constantly explaining and describing for the students.

A mutual appreciate for the students’ culture and the classroom culture creates buy in from students in accepting each other and creating a “family.” The larger class size makes is difficult to provide one-on-one teaching, but she tries to get to every student at least once a week. Small groups help her find out where students’ levels are more specifically. She can use the student’s native language but uses it only in emergencies. She defines parent involvement in that she has parent support if dealing with a behavior problem.

Participant 12 loves technology in the classroom. She uses Google classroom every day by posting 90% of her assignments there and is also able to provide feedback almost instantly and collaborate too. Students enjoy this and they are accountable for their work.

**Research question 2.** The second research question was: “*What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*”

Participant 12 expressed slowing down teaching and being explicit is helpful in teaching mathematics. In addition, she creates charts, maps, and step by step procedures for different skills. A lot of repetition in math especially for more challenging problems. She fosters the classroom culture where students collaborate providing peer to peer support. “*We are a family, if one achieves, we all achieve, we all want to achieve together*” (Participant 12).

Using manipulatives is a must. They are crucial. Students must be able to see what they are going to be doing to understand it before they can do it with numbers. Then connecting math to the real world to create a purpose for learning.

Table 14 summarizes Participant 12’s responses in themes and patterns related to her experiences teaching ELLs and students of poverty.

Table 14

*Participant 12: Themes in Response to Research Questions*

Research Question	Themes in Responses
What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicit instruction</li> <li>• Expose to experiences</li> <li>• One-on-one teaching</li> <li>• Parent involvement</li> <li>• Positive classroom culture</li> <li>• Repetition</li> <li>• Scaffolding</li> <li>• Small groups</li> <li>• Student world connection</li> <li>• Student’s home culture</li> <li>• Taking notes</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Translate to native language</li> </ul>
What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Explicit instruction</li> <li>• Manipulatives</li> <li>• One-on-one teaching</li> <li>• Parent involvement</li> <li>• Positive classroom culture</li> <li>• Repetition</li> <li>• Slow down pace</li> <li>• Spiral teaching</li> <li>• Small groups</li> <li>• Student world connection</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Visuals</li> </ul>

**Data Analysis by Common Themes in Research Questions**

The following sections present an analysis of the most common themes based on all participant data and responses to each research question.

**Research question 1.** The first research question asked: “*What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high*

*poverty and high English language learner schools?”* Once all data was collected and coded the participants’ responses were analyzed collectively for common themes and patterns.

***Common theme 1: Collaboration.*** For 12 of the 12 participants, 100%, shared that collaboration is an effective instructional strategy for teaching ELA to ELLs living in poverty. Participants agree students need the opportunity to collaborate with one another for support. Students share ideas with each other, practice using vocabulary, and build confidence in speaking in front of the class. Participant 5 stated, *“When it comes to my ELLs I try to mix it up for them so they have either a higher-level ELL they can work with, or an English only they can work with so there is modeling of more advanced skills.”*

***Common theme 2: Small groups.*** Twelve of the 12 participants, 100%, stated small groups as an effective instructional strategy for teaching ELA to ELLs living in poverty. All participant agree small groups are beneficial to teaching ELA to ELLs.

I use a lot of small group time with students who are really struggling, in regards to reading, I am using some of the fluency packets, just some are even in need of high frequency words, so I provide that extra support for them. (Participant 11).

Other participants use small groups as a fluid groups that change based on the skill taught and support needed by various students.

***Common theme 3: Technology.*** Twelve of the 12 participants, 100% of participants, include the use of technology as an effective instructional strategy for teaching ELA to ELLs living in poverty. All participants agree technology in the 21st century is required as an important instructional tool and strategy in student learning.

Participants use technology both as a tool to connect student to the world through providing visuals and a strategy for students to use technology as each school district is a one-to-one device district. Student use the Google Suite for collaboration, application for intervention, research, reading, and completing assignments.

For example, Participant 1 said, *“I use technology to show the students the transcontinental railroad. A lot of students don’t have the geography skills. I had to show them a map of where it started on one side and where it met.”* Another participant shared, *“I think that experiential is a big thing missing with our kids of poverty and a lot of our ELL students. I think we have to provide a lot more experiences with the technology of this day and age”* (Participant 10).

**Common theme 4: Parent involvement.** Eleven of the 12 participants, or 92% of the participants, share parent involvement as an effective tool for teaching ELA to ELLs living in poverty. While each school district visited are “closed” campuses, parent involvement includes attending parent conferences, attending special events like math night, participating in teacher communication through phone calls home, email, or classroom groups such as remind or class Dojo. Parents are also supportive in donating items needed in the classroom. Very few parents are on campus because of the security measures in place. Parents must fill out an application and pay to get fingerprinted before they are allowed on campus.

My district has adopted a firm policy of parents have to be fingerprinted now.

This is actually causing a huge issue with parent involvement, because they have to pay for the fingerprinting themselves. Coming from a high-poverty school, this is widening a gap, of disadvantage. (Participant 5)

Several participants communicate with parents and offer strategies of how parents can support student learning at home. However, *“I’ve learned that high poverty areas usually mean less support at home. Not so much because parents don’t care but because parents have to work”* (Participant 4).

***Common theme 5: Scaffolding.*** Eleven of the 12 participants, or 92% of the participants agree scaffolding is an effective instructional strategy. Participant 1 pointed out, *“even though we have to scaffold and make the work manageable for students, we still want it to be at the rigor of the standards.”* Some scaffolds mentioned were teacher collaboration with students, making anchor charts on chart paper to place on classroom walls for students to see and reference, sentence frames, spiral teaching, graphic organizers, closed reading, multiple readings of each text, slowed down teaching pace, and a lot of guidance.

***Common theme 6: Positive classroom culture.*** Ten of the 12 participants, or 83%, point out that having a positive classroom culture as an effective instructional strategy. Most of the participants agreed the class is like a “family.” If the teacher appreciates the student’s culture then the student buys into the classroom culture. *“I try to make it a positive experience for them”* (Participant 2). Each of the school districts participate and have adopted positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). Building the classroom culture extends beyond the classroom. Participant 2 stated: *“students have a chance to interact with me, even if we are standing in line, having that personal connection and just acknowledging them. Sharing about me and them, something that simple can be very valuable to a child.”*



**Common theme 7: Student world connection.** Ten of the 12 participant, or 83%, mentioned making a student to world connection to set the purpose and answer the question why are we learning this is an effective instructional strategy. Students need to know “why” they are learning, what the purpose is for their efforts and investment. Participant 1 stated: *“I do always try to ask them a question of how it relates back to them.”* One participant shared a story about a student,

One of my students I was showing them Arlington Cemetery and he said, now I know about that country song about the hills of Arlington. He made the connection. He said, ‘I always sang this song but I didn’t know what it meant.’  
(Participant 10)

Students need many more experiences and connections provided.

**Common theme 8: Visuals.** Ten of the 12 participants, or 83%, expressed the use of visuals as an effective instructional strategy. The use of visuals make lessons *“more relatable and the more students are going to connect to whatever it is we are doing, it helps the whole text to world and text to self”* (Participant 5). Visuals included physical object brought in by the teacher, the use of technology, charts created, and pictures. Participant 9 stated, *“I label things, picture code things for them and have them sit next to someone who can translate. I want them to learn the English language.”*

**Common theme 9: One-on-one teaching.** Nine of the 12 participants, or 75%, pointed out one-on-one teaching opportunities prove to be an effective instructional strategy. Getting one-on-one teaching time with students is difficult. Participants agreed the larger the class size the more challenging this is. *“I also love the individualized time”* (Participant 12). Many participants expressed they get one-on-one teaching time by

circulating the classroom and checking student work by looking over their shoulder.

Some participants pull students during independent work time to support student needs.

**Common theme 10: Vocabulary.** Nine of the 12 participants, or 75%, shared the importance of teaching vocabulary as an effective instructional strategy in teaching ELA to ELLs living in poverty. Participant 5 said, *“our high-poverty situation often creates a deficit of vocabulary and language for them.”* Another participant stated, *“they need lots of vocabulary development. We are constantly building on vocabulary”* (Participant 2). Participant 7 belief is, *“I believe rich vocabulary instruction and modeling is important for the kids.”*

**Common theme 11: Student’s home culture.** Eight of the 12 participant, or 66%, shared the value of embracing the student’s home culture as an effective instructional strategy. Most participants agreed at the beginning of the year acknowledging the student’s culture proved effective in building a positive classroom culture. Participant 10 stated, *“I think it is so powerful when they bring their own culture because even the kids who don’t know say about the Hispanic culture, they are interested and they get into it. I think it also makes everybody richer.”*

**Common theme 12: Translate to native language.** Eight of the 12 participants, or 66%, mentioned being able to translate content to the student’s native language is an effective strategy for teaching ELA to ELLS living in poverty. Participants who can speak the student’s native language make a connection with the student by acknowledging the student’s culture. This helps build rapport with the students and a positive classroom culture. Most participants referred to knowing cognates of words and using the cognates to connect the student to learning English. Those participants who do

not speak the student’s native language referenced using other resources to translate for them. Participants utilize technology or coworkers and students to translate for them.

Table 15 delineates the common themes addressing Research Question 1.

Table 15

*Common Themes in all Participant Responses Addressing Research Question 1*

Theme	Number of Respondents	Frequency of Responses
1. Collaboration	12	33
2. Small groups	12	26
3. Technology	12	62
4. Parent involvement	11	26
5. Scaffolding	11	17
6. Positive classroom culture	10	25
7. Student world connection	10	19
8. Visuals	10	35
9. One-on-one teaching	9	18
10. Vocabulary	9	21
11. Student’s home culture	8	10
12. Translate to native language	8	15

**Research Question 2.** The second research question was: “*What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*” The researcher analyzed the data, and common themes emerged from their response.

**Common theme 1: Manipulatives.** Nine of the 12 participants, 75%, shared the use of manipulatives as effective instructional strategy for teaching mathematics to ELLs living in poverty. Participants agree providing manipulatives or some type of hands on learning for teaching mathematics is extremely important for ELLs. Participant 1 shared,

*“I definitely use more models, pictures, and manipulatives. I know sometimes upper grades, we tend to forget that they are there. The kids really need it to understand the concept. I find they are very helpful.”* Manipulatives were discussed by participants when teaching place value and fractions specifically.

**Common theme 2: Visuals.** Eight of the 12 participants, or 66%, stated using visuals as an effective instructional strategy for teaching mathematics to ELLs living in poverty. Participant 12 said the following when telling about the use of visuals for teaching mathematics: *“I’ve learned creating charts and step-by-step procedures of what you are doing for the skills are helpful.”* Participant 2 stated: *“I think for them to visualize it first and then they can transfer it into a variety of other uses.”* Lastly, Participant 7 stated the following: *“Doing a lot of visual modeling and math talk, I believe, has made a huge difference in my ELLs, because they can participate in the lesson.”*

**Common theme 3: Small groups.** Seven of 12 participants, or 58%, pointed out utilizing small groups as an effective instructional strategy. Participants said they do not have a set time for small groups in mathematics rather pull small groups when students have a gap in skills. One participant saw a correlation between the frequency of one-on-one or small groups and the increase in achievement. Again, the class size makes a difference. The larger the class size the more difficult it is to provide one-on-one or small group instruction. Participant 4 said, *“using small groups in mathematics lowers the effective filter, so that they can make mistakes and not get anxiety or feel pressure.”*

**Common theme 4: Technology.** Six of the 12 participants, or 50%, mentioned technology as an effective instructional strategy. Participants use technology in

mathematics to provide supplemental support to reinforce skills, differentiated instruction, and others use online manipulatives. Applications used include LearnZillion, Khan Academy, Freckle, Prodigy, Imagine Math Facts, geoboards, Number Pieces, and DreamBox.

***Common theme 5: Collaboration.*** Five of the 12 participants, or 41%, shared collaboration as an effective instructional practice in teaching mathematics. Participants agree it is important for ELLs to collaborate to learn from each other. Participant 5 explain that “[students] do partner work before doing independent work. Allowing them to collaborate with each other, rehearse their explanations, and then sharing out with the class.” “Students are able to help each other and support each other more with the peer-to-peer support, and so fostering that classroom of leaning it together” (Participant 12).

***Common theme 6: Positive classroom culture.*** Five of the 12 participants, or 41%, stated creating a positive classroom culture where students feel safe and comfortable is an effective instructional strategy in teaching in a high poverty and high ELL school. One participant shared a story of a student who hid his work from the teacher. He was fearful of getting hit if he had the wrong answer. The teacher finally discovered what was happening and communicated with the student and class that no one would get hit in the classroom. Creating a positive classroom culture will allow students to take the risk to solve mathematic problems and verbalize the thinking or reasoning behind the work.

Relating the math to the something familiar from the student’s culture, for example, the use of pesos or the metric system provides a connection. This connection builds relations within the classroom building a positive classroom culture.

***Common theme 7: Student world connection.*** Five of the 12 participants, or 41%, mentioned the student world connection is important as an effective instructional strategy in teaching mathematics. *“Most important thing is that they know why they are doing math, it is for a reason”* (Participant 10). Teaching common core adopted curriculums, participants have found more problems are real. This is helpful to the students. Relating math to money, working at a bank, or purchasing ice-cream from the ice-cream man makes the connection and they understand that.

***Common theme 8: One-on-one teaching.*** Four of the 12 participants, or 33%, pointed out the benefits of providing one-on-one teaching as an effective instructional strategy for teaching mathematics. Class size makes a difference in the amount of one-on-one teaching opportunities. *“It varies with the skill, it allows me to see what is the piece they are missing and then figure out a way to fill that gap”* (Participant 9).

***Common theme 9: Parent involvement.*** Four of the 12 participants, or 33%, said parent involvement is an effective instructional strategy for teaching mathematics. *“Parents can help the students with math at home and common core allows students to use a strategy where you can get the right answer”* (Participant 10). Parents who know their basics can help the students at home because they know the traditional algorithm. One school held a family math night. The attendance was so great they had to get additional tables, the room was packed! One participant used class Dojo or Google Classroom to offer explanations and help if needed to support parent involvement.

***Common theme 10: Taking notes.*** Four of the 12 participants, or 33%, shared each of the districts of the participants are Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) districts. Therefore, many participants referred to the importance of using three-

column notes. For example, the problem is written down, the strategy used for the lesson, and the justification for the answer. Taking notes allows students to go back and review lessons. *“Taking notes helps them to be more successful”* (Participant 2). Taking notes also helps students with homework. Often, they do not have support at home. Having notes with relevant examples gives them a tool to refer back.

***Common theme 11: Translate to native language.*** Four of the 12 participants, or 33%, stated translating mathematic problems to the student’s native language is an effective instructional strategy. One participant said having someone to reiterate the lesson in the student’s native language to confirm they are doing the right thing or how to differentiate sometimes problems, the wording in them, absolutely would be beneficial. Participant 5 said, *“keeping communication open to parents with the translation tools, making sure students have some degree of confidence before they go home to do their independent practice”* is effective in their teaching of mathematics.

***Common theme 12: Vocabulary.*** Four of the 12 participants, or 33%, pointed out teaching vocabulary with mathematics is an effective instructional strategy. *“Sometimes the vocabulary in word problems, one word can throw them off, even if it’s not related to the math skill”* (Participant 1). The vocabulary content specific to mathematics can be confusing, *“I use the vocabulary often and spiral the teaching”* (Participant 10). Another participant said, *“hands-on experiences with the academic vocabulary really helps the ELL students”* (Participant 9).

Table 16 summarizes the emerging common themes addressing Research Question 2.

Table 16

*Common Themes in all Participant Responses Addressing Research Question 2*

Theme	Number of Respondents	Frequency of Responses
1. Manipulatives	9	17
2. Visuals	8	13
3. Small groups	7	8
4. Technology	6	13
5. Collaboration	5	9
6. Positive classroom culture	5	6
7. Student world connection	5	7
8. One-on-one teaching	4	6
9. Parent involvement	4	6
10. Taking notes	4	7
11. Translate to native language	4	4
12. Vocabulary	4	10

### Summary

This chapter presented a summary of responses and experiences collected from 12 study participants. Each participant responded to a set of open-ended, semi-structured interview questions designed to describe effective instructional strategies used by expert fourth and fifth-grade teachers of high poverty and ELL schools.

The participants were expert fourth and fifth-grade teachers from Coachella Valley, Moreno Valley, and Palm Springs Unified School Districts, in southern California. Once participants agreed to participate in this study, the researcher scheduled individual appointments to conduct the interview. All 12 interviews were face-to-face. All interviews were digitally recorded using an application on an iPhone and using a MacBook recording program as a backup.



Once all interviews were done, all data collected was transcribed and then analyzed using NVivo coding software. The researcher analyzed all the coded data and identified common themes and patterns among participants' responses. Each transcript was analyzed individually to gather themes and patterns from each interview. Once all interviews were analyzed, the researcher combined all data to find common themes and patterns.

## CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for the study. It begins with a summary of the purpose statement, research questions, methods, population, and sample. The researcher discusses major findings of the study, including unexpected findings as well as conclusions drawn from the data analysis. Finally, implications for research are discussed as well as recommendations for future research and concluding remarks and reflections.

### **Summary of the Study**

This study researches the instructional strategies expert fourth and fifth-grade teachers implement when teaching a population of ELLs living in poverty. Moreover, the study also revealed various strategies used in conjunction for teaching both ELA and mathematics. The researcher used the research questions to explore and determine what instructional strategies are most commonly implemented.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to identify and describe effective instructional strategies for ELA and mathematics perceived by expert fourth and fifth-grade elementary teachers in southern California to reduce the achievement gap in high poverty and high English language learner elementary schools.

### **Research Questions**

Research questions were developed to help guide this study and they are:

1. What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth-grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for

English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?

2. What effective mathematic instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth-grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?

### **Research Methods**

This qualitative study used semi-structured open-ended interview questions to determine the instructional strategies expert fourth and fifth-grade teachers of high poverty and high ELL population schools use to address the educational needs of ELL students. A qualitative research design was chosen to allow an in-depth study of effective instructional practices, using a set of interviews with expert teachers. This allowed for the purposeful selection of multiple cases to show various perspectives on the topic.

### **Population and Sample**

The population of this study is all fourth and fifth grade teachers in the California who are in schools with at least 65% low socio-economic status and at least 50% ELLs. Riverside and San Bernardino counties were selected because of the high poverty and high ELL population and the number of teachers serving this population. The two counties selected had similar demographics as the state of California.

For the purpose of this research, the participants were teachers who have taught for five years or more, have been recognized for student progress, recommended by their principal, have received awards based on teaching practices, and were employed within Coachella Valley, Moreno Valley, and Palm Springs Unified School Districts.

The researcher contacted 16 potential participants individually and invited them to participate in the study. Twelve of the participants confirmed and set up an interview date and time. The remaining four participants declined to or did not respond in which an official interview did not take place. The research included four teachers from Coachella Valley, Moreno Valley, and Palm Springs Unified School Districts for a total of 12 participants.

### **Major Findings**

Chapter I introduced the research questions as well as the literature supporting a learning gap for ELLs who are also living in poverty. The data collected from the 12 participants proved that teachers use a variety of strategies to present lessons to support student learning. Of the strategies used by teachers, collaboration, small groups, visuals, manipulatives and technology are among the strategies mostly utilized. The data suggests even though teachers are prepared through attending university teacher credentialing programs, the way students learn in the 21st century are different than previous students. The major findings of this study are organized by research question.

#### **Research Question 1**

Research Question 1 sought to answer: *What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*

**Major finding 1.** The first major finding was 100% of the participants reported collaboration as an instructional strategy frequently used to teach students. The common core state standards require students to collaborate through discussing, sharing, and

supporting answers. California state standards which simply asked students to select the correct answer on a bubble sheet or scantron form no longer exist. Students today are taught according to common core state standards. These standards ask students to generate an answer and to justify their answer through a written response.

**Major finding 2.** The second major finding was that 100% of the participants stated small groups as an instructional strategy necessary to teach students. Teachers disclosed they meet with small groups each day to meet the needs of students according to skill level providing intervention up to enrichment for student support. Participants referred to the small groups pulled during class mostly supported intervention students. Lessons taught during this time focus on phonics and reading fluency.

**Major finding 3.** The third major finding was 100% of the participants agreed with the use of technology as an instructional strategy needed to teach students. One participant said when she started teaching, if she forgot her computer at home it was not a big deal. However, today if she forgets her computer she must turn around and get it. Technology is needed every day in the classroom. The use of technology ranged from student use to teacher use. Students use technology every day for research, practice, and assignments. Teachers use technology to present lessons, build background knowledge or experiences, and to communicate with parents.

## **Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 sought to answer: *What effective mathematics instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?*

**Major finding 4.** The third major finding was that teachers referenced teaching mathematics with the same strategies as ELA except for the use of manipulatives. This was the most agreed upon instructional strategy for teaching mathematics. Participants shared their expert opinion, students need to see and touch the concepts by using manipulatives for understanding before they can understand to perform computations with only pencil and paper, chrome book, or I-pad.

### **Unexpected Findings**

The data collected through interviewing participants was a way to explore and describe effective instructional strategies used by expert fourth and fifth-grade teachers for high ELL and high poverty schools. An unexpected finding from this study was the strategy of building vocabulary, exposure to experiences, building background knowledge, slowing down the pace, and modeling were not among the most commonly used strategies. Teacher credentialing programs and teacher edition curriculum texts start lessons with building vocabulary and background knowledge in addition to teacher modeling and releasing students to then do independent or collaborative work.

### **Conclusions**

After analyzing the major findings from the data, the researcher drew conclusions from each research question. The conclusions listed address each research question.

#### **Conclusion 1**

Despite the efforts of universities and professional development provided for teachers, teachers must continue to grow and evolve as students change from generation to generation. In the 21st century students are connected to the world through video games, sports, education, family, and eventually in their careers. Collaboration is the

number one tool teacher need to prepare students to use effectively. Teaching vocabulary, background knowledge, providing experiences, and visuals through technology are not separate lessons, rather taught within the essence of the subject matter collaboratively. Collaboration starts with the arrangement of desks and can be enhanced by using 21st century desks that fit together like puzzle pieces.

Collaboration is a life skill that reaches beyond the classroom including teaching students background, language both verbal and nonverbal, and listening. Teachers must facilitate by setting the stage, understanding collaboration, and consider student personalities and abilities to blend the students appropriately. Therefore, it is concluded that, although the subjects of this study were aware of and used collaboration techniques, the continually evolving student population and the need for changing practices to successfully involve them require that teachers continually be involved in upgrading their skills and knowledge in the practices of collaboration.

## **Conclusion 2**

Students benefit from small group instruction; however, teachers are not able to provide as much small group instruction as is needed because of class sizes, as stated by participants. It is concluded that, if teachers were trained to teach a collaborative style for not only teaching small groups but the management and different teaching strategies and organizational patterns needed to make small group instruction effective in a large group settings, the overall results would improve. Teachers need to change and alter their teaching methods and class organizational patterns to meet student learning methods to keep students engaged.

### **Conclusion 3**

Technology itself is just a tool like a book or pencil; the value of technology is not fully experienced if used to teach the same methods as before having technology. It is concluded from the participants in this study that teachers do not have the technology skill and knowledge necessary to maximize the impact of technology as an instructional tool. Classes need to be provided to teach teachers how to best use different technologies such as laptops, I-pads, Chrome books, AppleTV, and projectors. Technology classes are needed to teach how to apply technology in a collaborative model that is exciting and engaging for students, and not to fill in the blanks individually. The use of technology to collaborate and share research to drive discussion and engage learning. Technology also needs to include the vocabulary, background knowledge, experiences, and visuals.

### **Conclusion 4**

It is concluded from the participants in this study that teachers do not have the technology skill and knowledge necessary to maximize the impact of technology as an instructional tool for mathematics nor do they have the knowledge and skill required to successfully teach mathematics using manipulatives. Manipulative or hands-on learning includes physical objects but also how to manipulate technology to get the answer. Collaboration on I-pads or Chrome books to investigate and find answers. Using manipulatives and technology to be inquisitive with other students. Students can explore what they need to do to find an answer in a math problem. Students can determine what manipulatives they will use and how they will use the manipulative by incorporating technology. If teachers use the same instructional strategies they use for ELA as they do mathematics, then all subject matter should be taught similarly, collaboratively.



## **Implications for Action**

Based on the conclusions, there are several implications for action that will enhance the effectiveness of instructional strategies of teachers who educate the population of high ELLs and high poverty schools. The researcher offers several recommendations for action to support teachers. Organizations responsible for the implementation of these implications are listed within each implication for action.

### **Implication for Action 1**

This study revealed collaboration as an effective instructional strategy for teaching high ELL and high poverty students. This skill is a higher level of functioning not only in the classroom but in society and career. Learning and assessing students focused on the knowledge, comprehension and application in years past. Today the focus has shifted and demands that students analyze, synthesize, and evaluate. Universities and professional development must also shift in how they prepare teachers to meet these demands when they enter the classroom. Universities and professional development need to model collaboration in educating teachers how to teach students collaboration skills. What does collaboration look like in the classroom? How are students interacting? What are students responsible for doing during collaboration time? What is the teacher's role in student collaboration? This is a shift away from teacher centered learning to student centered learning. Project based learning or a blended learning model, as discussed in Chapter II, are examples of student centered learning models which allow for collaboration and exploration to drive student learning.

Policy makers should revisit the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) to incorporate collaboration as a vital part of the CSTP. These standards have

not been changed for a decade to reflect the changing needs of students and the evolving technology to engage students and enhance learning.

### **Implication for Action 2**

All participants responded that student learning increases with the use of small group instruction. The teacher and student build a relationship of trust and understanding in intimate, small group instruction. This is a time when collaboration between student and teacher take place and can be modeled for the students who need extra support. Teachers again need to be taught how to collaborate with students to drive maximum student learning, and to develop classroom organization that maximizes small group opportunities. Universities, extended learning, professional development, or workshops are needed to ensure teachers are consistent in teaching throughout the grade levels.

### **Implication for Action 3**

Technology is evolving every day. School districts provide technology for every teacher and classroom to teach students. The technology is of no use to the teacher or student if the teachers does not know how to best utilize the technology. If technology is used to teach in the same method as before implementing the technology, value is not added. Teachers must be required to update their knowledge base of technology and how to incorporate technology to enhance student leaning in a collaborative way. Teachers need continuing education through support of a university or school district. Providing the opportunity for teachers to observe multiple lessons of a teacher who is an exemplary model of teaching collaboratively in the classroom with a focus on student centered learning of the similar population is a recommendation of the researcher. Additionally, requiring teachers to participate in professional development that simulates how they are

to use technology in their classrooms. This will be student centered and project based, requiring all members of the collaborative learning group to add their value to the end-product.

#### **Implication for Action 4**

Participants expressed teaching mathematics in the same manner as ELA except for including manipulatives, manipulatives are needed to teach mathematics. Teachers, however, in the upper elementary grades often do not use manipulatives. Preparing to use manipulatives takes time. Teachers are pressured from the district office through pacing guides and benchmark assessments to cover the curriculum. Teachers need to be better prepared to teach mathematics. Mathematics is number based. The barrier is the teacher's lack of preparedness. Teachers need to increase their own knowledge of mathematics concepts. School districts need to provide better training for teachers and obtain teacher input on pacing guides that are realistic to meet student needs.

Teachers need to be connected to their emotional intelligence while teaching students. Teachers must be cognoscente of which instructional strategies are working and when to abort and use different instructional strategies to connect students to learning.

#### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Many studies focus on best teaching practices. This study focused specifically on the teacher's perceptions of effective instructional strategies of high ELL and high poverty students. However, further study in this area is needed to better understand effective instructional strategies to meet the needs of this population in education.

The researcher recommends this study be duplicated with a larger sample population from across the United States to confirm the findings of this study. The larger sample across multiple states in the country would provide a better understanding of ELLs from across the United States. The study could also focus on different types of ELLs from different origin.

Another area that should be considered is the origin of the teacher different than the ELL's origin. The researcher recommends that a study on the factors that influence effective instructional strategies in student learning be conducted. This would add more to the body of literature and allow educators to learn more about the needs of ELLs who are also living in poverty.

This study focused on fourth and fifth-grade elementary school teachers' perception of effective instructional strategies for ELLs living in poverty. The researcher recommends that a study of the perceptions of secondary teachers' effective instructional strategies be conducted. This would allow researchers an opportunity to learn more about instructional strategies to support ELLs living in poverty at an older age group to be successful in school and society.

There is a need for observational studies in which the instructional strategy of collaboration is evaluated for effectiveness in supporting ELLs who also live in poverty. Such studies would reveal the value of information on student centered learning models and strategies teachers use. This type of information could help teachers replicate teaching collaboration in a student-centered learning model.

Another area that should be considered is the specific needs of special education students. This study did not take into consideration the challenges special education

teachers encounter. This information could help district office personnel train staff members in addition, might provide valuable finding for general education teachers too.

The researcher recommends this study be conducted with English only students living in poverty to compare differences and similarities between ELLs living in poverty and the effective instructional strategies of each group. This study could analyze the factors that support each population on academic achievement. The results could show how to better support different populations of students.

The researcher recommends further research on organization and management practices that facilitate learning for ELL students. This study would focus on the teacher's organization of students in heterogeneous and or homogeneous groupings to promote student collaboration to support learning for ELL students. Furthermore, this study also focuses on how the teacher manages ELL student's learning in a collaborative setting where learning is more active and engaging.

The researcher recommends research of the use of technology that facilitates learning for ELL students. This study would focus on the knowledge and skill level of teachers and how the teachers utilize technology to promote learning for ELL students in a collaborative manner. This study would also identify effective practices of students to create learning.

The researcher recommends research on parent involvement that facilitates learning for ELL students. This study would focus on the role of parents and the importance of parental support to enhance learning for ELL students. Also, this study would identify effective parenting strategies that support classroom learning.

## **Concluding Remarks and Reflections**

The findings of this study are significant because they add to the body of literature focusing on effective instructional strategies and academic achievement specifically for ELLs living in poverty. The study provided insight to the importance of engaging students to work collaboratively and the student need for collaboration skills in education, sports, recreation, family, and career. Collaboration is a skill not only to be used in education but it goes beyond the classroom in to all aspects of life. Such findings can help educational institutions provide support for this specific population.

The researcher's life experiences are different from participants, therefore, she could not relate to the experiences of most of her participants. The researcher is a teacher who is passionate about improving instructional strategies to enhance the student's learning experience. Discovering the most used effective instructional strategies was enlightening and will be incorporated in future teaching opportunities. The researcher believes teachers need to seek continuing knowledge and experiences to provide the best educational experiences for students.

The researcher also believes that without support, experiences to observe, and training, teachers will continue to teach using the same methods they have always used, effective or not. The students will suffer the greatest of consequences in this scenario. Collaboration is the combination of the minds of children to grow and learn. Like different colors of the rainbow, each child's mind is a different color. Blending the colors to create different colors is when the child's mind learns, when children blend together they collaborate and make meaning. Each child in collaborative a group has a purpose.

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## APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

Literature Synthesis Matrix

Reference	Background	Achievement Gap For ELL Students	Learning Theory: Implicit	Learning Theories: Constructivist Theory	Learning Theory: Transformative Theory	Methods: Cooperative Learning	Methods: Project-based Learning	Research Based Learning	Research Based Learning	Educational Theorists: John Dewey	Educational Theorists: Maria Montessori	Educational Theorists: Lev Vygotsky	Requirement for Teaching Credential	Curriculum Framework	Standards	History of Assessing Progress	Achievement Gap	Teacher Practices Designed to Address the Achievement Gap	At Risk Students	Literature Gap
Altemueller, L., & Lindquist, C. (2017). Flipped classroom instruction for inclusive learning. <i>British Journal of Special Education, 44</i> (3), 341.								X												
Batalova, J., Zong, J. (2016). Language diversity and English proficiency in the Unites States. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/language-diversity-and-english-proficiency-united-states">https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/language-diversity-and-english-proficiency-united-states</a>		X																		
Bounds, A. (2018). Erie's Meadowlark PK-8 uses innovative building design to foster collaborative project-based learning. Retrieved from <a href="http://libproxy.chapman.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&amp;AuthType=ip,uid&amp;db=edsgaa&amp;AN=edsgcl533729112&amp;site=eds-live">http://libproxy.chapman.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&amp;AuthType=ip,uid&amp;db=edsgaa&amp;AN=edsgcl533729112&amp;site=eds-live</a>							X													
Bracken, S. S., & Fischel, J. E. (2008). Family reading behavior and early literacy skills in preschool children from low-income backgrounds. <i>Early Education and Development.</i>																			X	
Buchs, C., Filippou, D., Volpe, Y., & Pulfrey, C. (2017). Challenges for cooperative learning implementation: reports from elementary school teachers. <i>JOURNAL OF EDUCATION FOR TEACHING.</i>						X														
Buenrostro, M. (2016). Latino students in California's k-12 public schools. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.csba.org/~media/A451224C1BAE4C659884268EFD2B3089.ashx">https://www.csba.org/~media/A451224C1BAE4C659884268EFD2B3089.ashx</a>																				X

Reference	Background	Achievement Gap For ELL Students	Learning Theory: Implicit Learning Theories: Constructivist Theory	Learning Theory: Transformative Theory	Methods: Cooperative Learning	Methods: Project-based Learning	Research Based Learning	Research Based Learning	Educational Theorists: John Dewey	Educational Theorists: Maria Montessori	Educational Theorists: Lev Vygotsky	Requirement for Teaching Credential	Curriculum Framework	Standards	History of Assessing Progress	Achievement Gap	Teacher Practices Designed to Address the Achievement Gap	At Risk Students	Literature Gap
Chatterji, M. (2006). Reading achievement gaps, correlates, and moderators of early reading achievement: evidence from the early childhood longitudinal study (ECLS) kindergarten to first grade sample. <i>Journal of Educational Psychology</i> (3).																		X	
Clarà, M. (2017). How instruction influences conceptual development: Vygotsky's theory revisited. <i>Educational Psychologist</i> , 52 (1), 50-62. doi:10.1080/00461520.2016.1221765											X								
Christopher, S., Dunnagan, T., Duncan, S. F., & Paul, L. (2001). Education for self-support: Evaluating outcomes using transformative learning theory. <i>Family Relations</i> (2), 134.				X															
Congress. (1994). Goals 2000: Educate America act. Retrieved from <a href="https://www2.ed.gov/legislation/GOALS2000/TheAct/index.html">https://www2.ed.gov/legislation/GOALS2000/TheAct/index.html</a>													X						
Corcoran, J. (2013). Flipping reading lessons at a title I school. <i>School Administrator</i> , 70 (3), 22-23.							X												
Cranton, P., & Taylor, E. W. (2013). A theory in progress? Issues in transformative learning theory. <i>European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults</i> , 4 (1), 35-47. doi:10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela5000				X															
Crone, D. A., & Whitehurst, G. J. (1999). Age and schooling effects on emergent literacy and early reading skills. <i>Journal of Educational Psychology</i> (4).																		X	

Reference	Background	Achievement Gap For ELL Students	Learning Theory: Implicit	Learning Theories: Constructivist Theory	Learning Theory: Transformative Theory	Methods: Cooperative Learning	Methods: Project-based Learning	Research Based Learning	Research Based Learning	Educational Theorists: John Dewey	Educational Theorists: Maria Montessori	Educational Theorists: Lev Vygotsky	Requirement for Teaching Credential	Curriculum Framework	Standards	History of Assessing Programs	Achievement Gap	Teacher Practices Designed to Address the Achievement Gap	At Risk Students	Literature Gap	
De Feyter, J. J., & Winsler, A. (2009). The early developmental competencies and school readiness of low-income, immigrant children: Influences of generation, race/ethnicity, and national origins. <i>Early Childhood Research Quarterly</i> , 24(4), 411-426.																				X	
Demie, F., & McLean, C. (2015). Tackling disadvantage: What works in narrowing the achievement gap in schools. <i>Review of Education</i> , 3(2), 138-150.																		X			X
Duncan, G. J., & Murnane, R. J. (2011). Chapter 5. The widening academic achievement gap between the rich and the poor: New evidence and possible explanations (pp. 91). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.																					X
Education, C. S. B. o. (2017). Content Standards. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/">https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/</a>															X						
Education, U. S. D. o. Every student succeeds Act (ESSA). Retrieved from <a href="https://www.ed.gov/essa?src=ft">https://www.ed.gov/essa?src=ft</a>															X						
Emmer, E. T., Garwels, Mary Claire (2002). Cooperative learning in elementary classrooms: Teaching practices and lesson characteristics. <i>The Elementary School Journal</i> (1).						X															
Esteban-Guitart, M. (2018). The biosocial foundation of the early Vygotsky: Educational psychology before the zone of proximal development. <i>History of Psychology</i> . doi:10.1037/hop0000092												X									

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<i>Executive summary: English language arts/English language development framework for California public schools, K-12.</i> (2015). Retrieved from <a href="https://www.scoe.net/castandards/Documents/summary_ela-eld_framework.pdf">https://www.scoe.net/castandards/Documents/summary_ela-eld_framework.pdf</a>												X	X						
<i>Executive summary: Mathematics framework for California public schools K-12.</i> (2015). Retrieved from <a href="https://www.scoe.net/castandards/Documents/summary_math_framework.pdf">https://www.scoe.net/castandards/Documents/summary_math_framework.pdf</a>												X	X						
Farver, J. A. M., Xu, Y., Eppe, S., & Lonigan, C. J. (2006). Home environments and young latino children's school readiness. <i>Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 21</i> , 196-212. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2006.04.00																X			
Gallegos, C., & Wise, D. (2011). Leadership for English learners: Challenges and questions. <i>Educational Leadership and Administration: Teaching and Program Development, 23</i> , 37-55.		X																	
Galvan, M. (2017). Learning for earning: Relating extrinsic motivation to academic commitment. Retrieved from <a href="https://search.proquest.com/openview/88678c04441c4dc253fc451c0e1e7a0/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&amp;cbl=18750&amp;disq=">https://search.proquest.com/openview/88678c04441c4dc253fc451c0e1e7a0/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&amp;cbl=18750&amp;disq=</a>			X																
Gándara, P. (2010). The Latino education crisis. <i>Part of a special issue: Meeting Students Where They Are, 67</i> (5), 24-30.		X																	

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Gersten, R., Baker, S. K., Shanahan, T., Linan-Thompson, S., Collins, P., Scarcella, R., & Institute of Education Sciences, W. D. C. (2007). Effective literacy and English language instruction for English learners in the elementary grades. IES practice guide. NCEE 2007-4011. <i>What Works</i>																				X
Gordon, M. (2016). Why should scholars keep coming back to John Dewey? (Vol. 48, pp. Hammer, C. S., Morgan, P., Farkas, G., Hillemeier, M., Bitetti, D., & Maczuga, S. (2017). Late talkers: A population based study of risk factors and school readiness consequences. <i>Journal of Speech, Language &amp; Hearing Research</i> , 607-626. doi:10.1044/2016_JSLHR-L-15-										X										
Hartman, S., Winsler, A., & Manfra, L. (2017). Behavior concerns among low-income, ethnically and linguistically diverse children in child care: Importance for school readiness and kindergarten achievement. <i>Early Education and Development</i> , 28(3), 255-273. doi:10.1080/10409289.2016.1222121																				
Hemphill, F. C., Vanneman, Alan. (2011). <i>Achievement gaps: How Hispanic and white students in public schools perform in mathematics and reading on the national assessment of educational progress</i> . Retrieved from National Center for Education		X																		

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Hohr, H. (2013). The concept of experience by John Dewey revisited: Conceiving, feeling and "enliving". <i>STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION</i> , 32(1), 25-38.										X										
Horn, M. B., & Fisher, J. F. (2017). New faces of blended learning. <i>Educational Leadership</i> , 74(6), 59-63.									X											
Hunter, P. E., & Botchwey, N. D. (2017). Partnerships in learning: A collaborative project between higher education students and elementary school students. <i>Innovative Higher Education</i> , 42(1), 77-90.							X													
Karimi-Aghdam, S. (2017). Zone of proximal development (ZPD) as an emergent system: A dynamic systems theory perspective. <i>Integrative Psychological &amp; Behavioral Science</i> , 51(1), 76-93. doi:10.1007/s12124-016-9359-1												X								
Lesaux, N. K. (2012). Reading and reading instruction for children from low-income and non-english-speaking households. <i>Future of Children</i> , 22(2), 73-																				X
Liebeskind, K. G., Piotrowski, J. T., Lapiere, M. A., & Linebarger, D. L. (2014). The home literacy environment: Exploring how media and parent-child interactions are associated with children's language production. <i>Journal of Early Childhood Literacy</i> , 14(4), 482-																	X			
Lillard, A. S. (2013). Playful learning and Montessori education. <i>American Journal of Play</i> , 5(2), 157-186.											X									

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Lo, C. K. (2018). Grounding the flipped classroom approach in the foundations of educational technology. <i>Educational Technology Research &amp; Development, 66</i> (3), 793.								X												
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Reference	Background	Achievement Gap For ELL-Students	Learning Theory: Implicit	Learning Theories: Constructivist Theory	Learning Theory: Transformative Theory	Methods: Cooperative Learning	Methods: Project-based Learning	Research Based Learning	Research Based Learning	Educational Theorists: John Dewey	Educational Theorists: Maria Montessori	Educational Theorists: Lev Vygotsky	Requirement for Teaching Credential	Curriculum Framework	Standards	History of Assessing Progress	Achievement Gap	Teacher Practices Designed to Address the Achievement Gap	At Risk Students	Literature Gap
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Reference	Background	Achievement Gap For ELL Students	Learning Theory: Implicit	Learning Theories: Constructivist Theory	Learning Theory: Transformative Theory	Methods: Cooperative Learning	Methods: Project-based Learning	Research Based Learning	Research Based Learning	Educational Theorists: John Dewey	Educational Theorists: Maria Montessori	Educational Theorists: Lev Vygotsky	Requirement for Teaching Credential	Curriculum Framework	Standards	History of Assessing Progress	Achievement Gap	Teacher Practices Designed to Address the Achievement Gap	At Risk Students	Literature Gap
Platz, D., & Arellano, J. (2011). Time tested early childhood theories and practices. <i>Education, 132</i> (1), 54.										X	X									
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Reference	Background	Achievement Gap For ELL Students	Learning Theory: Implicit	Learning Theories: Constructivist Theory	Learning Theory: Transformative Theory	Methods: Cooperative Learning	Methods: Project-based Learning	Research Based Learning	Research Based Learning	Educational Theorists: John Dewey	Educational Theorists: Maria Montessori	Educational Theorists: Lev Vygotsky	Requirement for Teaching Credential	Curriculum Framework	Standards	History of Assessing Progress	Achievement Gap	Teacher Practices Designed to Address the Achievement Gap	At Risk Students	Literature Gap
Ross, S. (2012). The Montessori method. <i>Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis &amp; Culture</i> , 19, 87.											X									
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Reference	Background	Achievement Gap For ELL Students	Learning Theory: Implicit	Learning Theories: Constructivist Theory	Learning Theory: Transformative Theory	Methods: Cooperative Learning	Methods: Project-based Learning	Research Based Learning	Research Based Learning	Educational Theorists: John Dewey	Educational Theorists: Maria Montessori	Educational Theorists: Lev Vygotsky	Requirement for Teaching Credential	Curriculum Framework	Standards	History of Assessing Progress	Achievement Gap	Teacher Practices Designed to Address the Achievement Gap	At Risk Students	Literature Gap
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Reference	Background	Achievement Gap For ELL Students	Learning Theory: Implicit	Learning Theories: Constructivist Theory	Learning Theory: Transformative Theory	Methods: Cooperative Learning	Methods: Project-based Learning	Research Based Learning	Research Based Learning	Educational Theorists: John Dewey	Educational Theorists: Maria Montessori	Educational Theorists: Lev Vygotsky	Requirement for Teaching Credential	Curriculum Framework	Standards	History of Assessing Progress	Achievement Gap	Teacher Practices Designed to Address the Achievement Gap	At Risk Students	Literature Gap
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## APPENDIX B

### Letter of Invitation

Study: Best Practices for Addressing the Achievement Gap for Hispanic Elementary Students

September \_\_\_\_\_, 2018

Dear Prospective Study Participant:

You are invited to participate in a qualitative methods research study about the effective instructional strategies used by expert 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers of high poverty and English language learners. The main investigator of this study is Megan C. Greene, Doctoral Candidate in Brandman University's Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program. You were chosen to participate in this study, because you are identified as an expert teacher of 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade students from a poverty background and are English language learner.

Approximately three public elementary schools from each of the four Southern California targeted (Moreno Valley, Palm Springs, and Coachella Valley Unified School District) totaling 12 public elementary school teachers will participate in this study. Participation should require about one hour of your time and is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

**PURPOSE:** This study is being conducted for a dissertation for the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program at Brandman University. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to identify and describe effective instructional strategies for English language arts and mathematics perceived by expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers in Southern of California to reduce the achievement gap in high poverty and high English language learner elementary schools.

**PROCEDURES:** If you decide to participate in the study, you will be interviewed by the researcher. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions designed to allow me to share your experiences as a teacher of 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade students from a poverty background and are English language learners. The interview session will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

**RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS:** There are minimal risks to your participation in this research study. It may be inconvenient for you to arrange time for the interview questions.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS:** There are no major benefits to you for participation, but your feedback could find alternatives strategies for teaching 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade students from poverty background and English language learners more effectively. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, and educators.

**ANONYMITY:** Records of information that you provide for the research study and any personal information you provide will not be linked in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study.

You are encouraged to ask questions, at any time, that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. You may contact me at [redacted] or by email at [gree1302@mail.brandman.edu](mailto:gree1302@mail.brandman.edu). You can also contact Dr. Phil Pendley by email at [pendley@brandman.edu](mailto:pendley@brandman.edu). If you have any further questions or concerns about this study or your rights as a study participant, you may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

Respectfully,

Megan C. Greene  
Doctoral Candidate, Brandman University

## APPENDIX C

### Informed Consent Form

#### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**INFORMATION ABOUT:** Best Practices for Addressing the Achievement Gap for Hispanic Elementary Students

**RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR:** Megan C. Greene, Doctoral Candidate

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:** This study is being conducted for a dissertation for the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program at Brandman University. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to identify and describe effective instructional strategies for English language arts and mathematics perceived by expert fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers in Southern of California to reduce the achievement gap in high poverty and high English language learner elementary schools.

In participating in this research study, I agree to partake in an audio-recorded semi-structured interview. The interview will take place in person at a school site or by phone, and lasts about an hour. During the interview, I will be asked a series of questions designed to allow me to gain the experiences of a teacher of 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade students who are from a poverty background and an English language learner.

I understand that:

- a) The possible risks or discomforts associated with this research are minimal. It may be inconvenient to spend up to one hour in the interview. However, the interview session will be held at a school site or at an agreed upon location, to minimize this inconvenience.
- b) I will not be compensated for my participation in this study. The possible benefit of this study is to determine effective instructional strategies used by expert teachers of students living in poverty and who are English language learners. The findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants.
- c) Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Megan C. Greene, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Ms. Greene may be contacted by phone at [redacted] or email at gree1302@mail.brandman.edu. The dissertation chairperson may also answer questions: Dr. Phil Pendley at pendley@brandman.edu.
- d) I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.

- e) The study will be audio-recorded, and the recordings will not be used beyond the scope of this project. Audio recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews. Once the interviews are transcribed, the audio and interview transcripts will be kept for a minimum of two years by the investigator in a secure location.
  
- f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be informed and my consent re-obtained. If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research Participant’s Bill of Rights.

I have read the above and understand it and hereby voluntarily consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant or Responsible Party**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Witness (if appropriate)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Principal Investigator**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Brandman University IRB February 2018**



## APPENDIX D

### Research Participant's Bill of Rights



#### BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

#### Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.

9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
  
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

Brandman University IRB  
November 2013

Adopted

APPENDIX E

**Audio Release Form**

**RESEARCH STUDY TITLE:** Best Practices for Addressing the Achievement Gap for Hispanic Elementary Students

**BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY  
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD  
IRVINE, CA 92618**

I authorize Megan C. Greene, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate, to record my voice. I give Brandman University and all persons or entities associated with this research study permission or authority to use this recording for activities associated with this research study.

I understand that the recording will be used for transcription purposes and the information obtained during the interview may be published in a journal/dissertation or presented at meetings/presentations.

I will be consulted about the use of the audio recordings for any purpose other than those listed above. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising correlated to the use of information obtained from the recording.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to the outlined terms. I hereby release any and all claims against any person or organization utilizing this material.

---

**Signature of Participant or Responsible Party**

---

**Date**

## APPENDIX F

### Interview Protocol

#### Script and Interview Questions

**Interviewer:** Megan C. Greene

**Interview time planned:** Approximately one hour

**Interview place:** Participant's school site or other convenient agreed upon location

**Recording:** Digital voice recorder

**Written:** Field and observational notes

Make personal introductions.

**Opening Statement:** [Interviewer states:] I greatly appreciate your valuable time to participate in this interview. To review, the purpose of this study is to identify effective instructional strategies used by expert fourth and fifth grade teachers of poverty and English language learner students.

**Interview Agenda:** [Interviewer states:] I anticipate this interview will take about an hour today. As a review of the process leading up to this interview, you were invited to participate via letter, and signed an informed consent form that outlined the interview process and the condition of complete anonymity for the purpose of this study. We will begin with reviewing the Letter of Invitation, Informed Consent Form, Brandman University's Participant's Bill of Rights, and the Audio Release Form. Then after reviewing all the forms, you will be asked to sign documents pertinent for this study, which include the Informed Consent and Audio Release Form. Next, I will begin the audio recorder and ask a list of questions related to the purpose of the study. I may take notes as the interview is being recorded. If you are uncomfortable with me taking notes, please let me know and I will only continue on with the audio recording of the interview. Finally, I will stop the recorder and conclude our interview session. After your interview is transcribed, you will receive a copy of the complete transcripts to check for accuracy prior to the data being analyzed. Please remember that anytime during this process you have the right to stop the interview. If at any time you do not understand the questions being asked, please do not hesitate to ask for clarification. Are there any questions or concerns before we begin with the questions?

#### Background Questions:

1. Were you an English language learner yourself in school?
2. Where did you grow up?

3. Did you experience diversity growing up? If so, how?
4. Where did you attend college?
5. How many years have you taught? Of those years, how many years have you taught a population of 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade poverty and English language learners?

**Content Questions: English Language Arts**

1. What are the instructional strategies you believe make you successful in teaching English language arts to English language learners in the classroom? Can you give an example?
2. Do the instructional strategies differ from those who are non-poverty and non-ELLs? If they do differ, can you explain how the strategies differ?
3. How do your instructional strategies of being an expert teacher change with increase in high poverty and ELL students in the classroom?
4. What is the effectiveness of the following items on teaching ELA to ELLs:
  - Culture in the classroom
  - Classroom culture
  - Class size
  - One-on-one teaching opportunities
  - Dual-literacy teacher
  - Parent involvement
  - Small groups
  - Technology
  - High expectations
  - Student/teacher collaboration
  - Realia
  - Student to world connection
5. What is your perception of the Hispanic achievement gap in English language arts?

**Content Questions: Mathematics**

6. What are the instructional strategies you believe make you successful in teaching mathematics to English language learners in the classroom? Can you give an example?
7. Do the instructional strategies differ from those who are non-poverty and non-ELLs? If they do differ, can you explain how the strategies differ?

8. How do your instructional strategies of being an expert teacher change with increase in high poverty and ELL students in the classroom?
9. What is the effectiveness of the following items on teaching mathematics to ELLs:
  - Culture in the classroom
  - Classroom culture
  - Class size
  - One-on-one teaching opportunities
  - Dual-literacy teacher
  - Parent involvement
  - Small groups
  - Technology
  - High expectations
  - Student/teacher collaboration
  - Manipulatives
  - Student to world connection

What is your perception of the Hispanic achievement gap in mathematics?

APPENDIX G

Interview Question Development Matrix

Research Questions	Interview Question(s)	Source
<p>1. RQ1: What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth-grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?</p>	<p>IQ1: What are the instructional strategies you believe make you successful in teaching English language arts to English language learners in the classroom? Can you give an example?</p> <p>IQ2: Do the instructional strategies differ from those who are non-poverty and non-ELLs? If they do differ, can you explain how the strategies differ?</p> <p>IQ3: How do your instructional strategies of being an expert teacher change with increase in high poverty and ELL students in the classroom?</p> <p>IQ4: What is the effectiveness of the following items on teaching ELA to ELLs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture in the classroom</li> <li>• Classroom culture</li> </ul>	<p>Source 1 (Vilas, 2018)</p> <p>Source 2 (Klein &amp; Knitzer, 2006)</p> <p>Source 3 (Klein &amp; Knitzer, 2006)</p> <p>Source 4 (Gallegos &amp; Wise, 2011)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class size</li> <li>• One-on-one teaching opportunities</li> <li>• Dual-literacy teacher</li> <li>• Parent involvement</li> <li>• Small groups</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• High expectations</li> <li>• Student/teacher collaboration</li> <li>• Realia</li> <li>• Student to world connection</li> </ul> <p>IQ9: What is your perception of the Hispanic achievement gap in English language arts?</p>	<p>Source 9  (California Department of Education. (2016). <u>State schools Chief Tomo Torlakson Reports New Record High School Graduation Rate and Sixth Consecutive Year of an Increase</u>. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr16/yr16rel38.asp">https://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr16/yr16rel38.asp</a></p>
<p>2. RQ2: What effective mathematics instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth-grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high</p>	<p>IQ5: What are the instructional strategies you believe make you successful in teaching mathematics to English language learners in the classroom? Can you give an example?  IQ6: Do the instructional strategies differ from those who are non-poverty and non-ELLs? If they do differ, can you explain</p>	<p>Source 5 (Vilas, 2018)</p> <p>Source 6 (Klein &amp; Knitzer, 2006)</p>





APPENDIX H

**Brandman University Instructional Review Board**

Dear Megan C. Greene,

Congratulations, your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the Brandman University Institutional Review Board. This approval grants permission for you to proceed with data collection for your research. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If any issues should arise that are pertinent to your IRB approval, please contact the IRB immediately at [BUIRB@brandman.edu](mailto:BUIRB@brandman.edu). If you need to modify your BUIRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at the following link: <https://irb.brandman.edu/Applications/Modification.pdf>.

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank you,  
**Doug DeVore, Ed.D.**  
Professor  
Organizational Leadership  
BUIRB Chair  
[ddevore@brandman.edu](mailto:ddevore@brandman.edu)  
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APPENDIX I

**National Institutes of Health (NIH) Certificate**



## APPENDIX J

### Summary of Research Methods Used and Procedures

Research Question	Interview Question
1. What effective English language arts instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth-grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	Question 1
	Question 2
	Question 3
	Question 4
	Question 5
2. What effective mathematics instructional strategies do expert fourth and fifth-grade elementary teachers perceive reduce the achievement gap for English language learners in high poverty and high English language learner schools?	Question 6
	Question 7
	Question 8
	Question 9
	Question 10