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**Academic Engagement and Learning Experience of English Learners:
A Case Study of Chandler Magnet Elementary School, Worcester, MA**

Clara O'Rourke

May 2017

A Master's Paper

Submitted to the faculty of Clark University, Worcester,
Massachusetts, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in the department of Community Development and Planning

And accepted on the recommendation of

Dr. David Bell, Chief Instructor

ABSTRACT

Academic Engagement and Learning Experience of English Learners: A Case Study of Chandler Magnet Elementary School, Worcester, MA

Clara O'Rourke

Drastic increases in English Learner (EL) populations in public schools have prompted districts to investigate ways to improve programs for EL students to support their academic growth. This study explores academic engagement of ELs at Chandler Magnet Elementary School to understand how student success may differ among three distinct EL programs. This study incorporated teacher and EL student interviews, however, limitations prevented this study from making conclusions about student success by program. The findings of this study reveal that student learning experience is unique and academic engagement is influenced by many factors that are not necessarily associated with the EL program in which students are enrolled. Moreover, the study highlights that EL students participate differently based on their English proficiency level, EL students are more cognitively engaged when they feel they can be successful, and relational engagement is an important factor when understanding student academic engagement.

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DEDICATION

To all the beautiful accents that share their wisdom and bring vibrancy to our community.

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Introduction

There has been a steady increase in the numbers of English learners¹ (ELs) in public schools across the United States and an increasing need to deliver effective public educational programs to support these students (Babino, 2016). In Massachusetts, the EL population in public schools has increased by 80% over the past 10 years. In Worcester alone, there has been over a 150% increase, amounting in a total of 38.4% of all students being classified as ELs in the 2016-17 academic year (Massachusetts Department of Education). A growing body of literature suggests that it takes EL students 4 to 10 years or more to reach English proficiency and be reclassified² as a Former English Learner (FEL) after they are exposed to high quality EL programming (Umansky Et al, 2014). Studies also show that reclassification takes longer for Spanish speaking and economically disadvantaged students, and students with low English proficiency levels³ (Slama et al, 2015).

As a Research Analyst for the Worcester Public Schools (WPS) in the Office of Research and Accountability I conduct research that supports the district in delivering high quality education to its students. As the district with the highest percent of EL students in the

¹ English learners, also referred to as English-language learners are students who have not yet reached a level of fluency in English to learn English coursework at the same rigor as their peers. ELs therefore receive specialized or modified instruction in the English language and in their academic courses.

² Reclassification is the process in which EL students are reclassified to no longer needing or receiving additional English supports. This occurs once EL students have demonstrated that they have reached a level of English fluency that allows them to learn effectively at grade level alongside their English-speaking peers in mainstream classes.

³ English proficiency level is determined based off the ACCESS for ELL standardized test in Massachusetts. The scale of English proficiency ranges from 1 to 6, one being the lowest level of English proficiency and 6 signifying English proficiency.

state, the WPS district is consistently looking for ways to better support their EL students.

Throughout my time at the district I have worked as a practitioner to analyze EL testing data and better understand the programmatic offerings in the district.

The Massachusetts English Language Learners' Profiles and Progress: A Report for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education of 2015 recommended that districts promote dual language instruction and conduct research on student progress in dual language programs. The report recommended that districts, like Worcester, monitor dual language programs to ensure that students are making progress in English language proficiency and content mastery. Moreover, the state may consider financially supporting dual language programs if they show promising results. The report also highlighted that Spanish speaking ELs take the longest in the WPS district to become reclassified. Inspired by this study and its recommendations I decided to study the three different programs offered by the WPS designed to serve EL students: sheltered English immersion (SEI) required in all mainstream classrooms, transitional bilingual education (TBE), and dual language 50/50 English/Spanish programs. This study was designed to evaluate how these three programs stimulate academic engagement⁴ of Spanish speaking EL students.

⁴ Academic engagement refers to the extent to which a student is interested in academic content and how they behave and participate in class. Academic engagement in this study is broken down into the following categories for this study: behavioral engagement, relational engagement,

Figure 1 EL Program Overview

Sheltered English Immersion (SEI)	SEI is a set of teaching strategies used in mainstream classrooms that are designed to help teachers incorporate English comprehension content while delivering academic content. This is intended to support students in classrooms with a mix of ELs and native English speakers.
Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)	TBE programs are designed for EL students with low English proficiency levels (often newcomers to the U.S.). TBE delivers coursework in both English and the student's native language to support them in their transition to English dominant classrooms.
Dual Language 50/50 English Spanish (Dual Language)	Dual Language programs are designed to instruct academic content equally in both target languages (English and Spanish in this case) so that students become bi-literate in all academic content areas. Dual language programs include Spanish speaking EL students, heritage Spanish speaking students, and monolingual native English speaking students.

This study utilizes the Chandler Magnet Elementary School as a case study and uses the learning experiences⁵ of native Spanish speaking EL students in the three distinct EL programs offered to unpack academic engagement. Chandler Magnet is unique in the district as it is the only school that offers all three EL programs. The majority of schools only offer SEI in mainstream classrooms because it is a statewide mandate for supporting EL students. By exploring if academic engagement varies between SEI, TBE, and 50/50 dual language classrooms, the district may be able to assess how to better accommodate English Learners in the future.

⁵ Learning experiences are the interactions and other experiences that take place in academic settings.

Conceptual framework

Historical Context

In 1971 Massachusetts legislature passed Chapter 71A, the Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) Bill, making Massachusetts was the first state to mandate TBE for EL students in public schools. This law was a result of a 2-year grassroots campaign advocating for better services for EL students. Starting in the 1990s, however, Ronald Unz began a campaign to eliminate bilingual education in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts (Babino et al, 2016). Through this campaign, policy makers, leaders in education, and businesses expressed concern that EL academic achievement was too slow in TBE programming. Those in opposition argued that the programs prevented social integration and therefore EL students did not learn the level of English needed for a future in higher education or a profitable employment (Smith et al, 2008). In 2002, Massachusetts voters approved ballot “Question 2” making Massachusetts one of three states to eliminate TBE programs. Although urban areas with high concentrations of EL students, like Worcester, Springfield, and Holyoke, voted over 90% against the bill, the bill passed in the state with 70% in favor, legally mandating a move away from TBE programs and making SEI the primary form of EL instruction in all school districts across the state.

Although Question 2 made Massachusetts one of three English-only states, dual language instruction was sanctioned (Slama et. Al, 2015). In 2008 Worcester was sued by the United States of America’s Department of Justice for not providing equal education

opportunities for EL students. As a part of the consent decree Worcester became mandated to offer a TBE program for Spanish speaking students and SEI accommodations for all ELs. The primary program that is present in mainstream classrooms in Massachusetts public schools is sheltered English immersion (SEI). There are also two schools in the WPS district, Roosevelt and Chandler Magnet Elementary, who also offer 50/50 Spanish/English dual language immersion programs as a result of innovation grants. Additionally, Chandler Magnet also hosts a TBE program per the consent decree.

Chandler Magnet Elementary

The Chandler Magnet Elementary School, located across the street from Worcester State University, currently serves 487 students from Preschool to 6th grade. Chandler Magnet is a unique school where 80.7% of the students do not speak English as their first language (district average is 50.8%), and 76.4% of students are ELs (district average is 38.4%). Moreover, Chandler Magnet serves a higher portion of economically disadvantaged (63.9%), high needs (90.3%), and Hispanic (73.7%) students than the district as a whole.

Chandler Magnet is an innovation school⁶ and has received funding via an innovation grant to provide 50/50 Spanish/English dual language programming. The dual language program began in 2011 with a kindergarten cohort and has expanded to support another grade level each year. The oldest cohort of the dual language program is now in 6th grade. The

⁶ An innovation school is a school selected by the Massachusetts Department of Education whose designation as an innovation school allows them increased flexibility and anonymity in the following areas: curriculum, budget, schedule and calendar, staffing, professional development, and district policies. With this increased flexibility schools are held accountable for improving student learning and performance with clear and measurable goals.

program is designed to accommodate classrooms with one third monolingual Spanish speakers (classified as ELs), one third monolingual English speakers, and one third heritage speakers⁷. The challenge at Chandler Magnet, is that there are many more Spanish and heritage speakers than monolingual English speaking students enrolled in the program. The dual language program delivers academic content in 50% English and 50% Spanish with the instruction from native speaking teachers who are certified in bilingual education. There is no English as a second language (ESL) component for EL students in this program as the dual language model is designed to foster bilingualism. Another unique component of this program is that most students start the dual language program in kindergarten or first grade. Once in a while a student transfers in from another district with a dual language program or from the TBE program, however, most the students stay within the same class cohort throughout their entire education at Chandler Magnet.

On the other hand, the consent decree for transitional bilingual education (TBE) has allowed Chandler Magnet to provide TBE programming for native Spanish speaking students who are new to the county and have the lowest level of English proficiency, a level 1 out of 6. This program is offered to students in kindergarten through sixth grade and delivers academic content to students in Spanish, slowly transitioning them to English content. These students also receive formal ESL services in addition to the bilingual support in the classroom. Once a

⁷ Heritage speakers are students who learn to speak a language at home that is a minority in their society (in this case Spanish), but due to being exposed to the dominant language (English) while growing up, the speaker seems more competent and comfortable in the dominant language.

student reaches an English proficiency level of 3, they are then transitioned into a mainstream classroom. ELs that are not enrolled in the TBE or dual language program are in mainstream classrooms where SEI methods are used to support their academic development and students receive daily ESL support.

Chandler Magnet has been selected as a case study because of its uniqueness in the district. Not only is the school predominantly Hispanic, Spanish speaking, and EL, it is also the only school in the district where three EL programs are implemented. The school's demographic composition includes a high portion of EL students who are economically disadvantaged, high needs, and Spanish speaking. According to the literature, students with these demographic elements take longer, on average, to transition out of EL status. Moreover, Chandler Magnet, per the Massachusetts school accountability data, is underperforming on statewide assessments and has received a level 3 rating, marking Chandler Magnet as part of the lowest performing 20% of schools in the state. According to the 2016 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education accountability reports, Chandler Magnet EL and former EL students did not make the target for growth determined by the state per their standardized testing scores. This study uses student and teacher reflections about student learning experiences to assess academic engagement in the three distinct EL programs at Chandler Magnet.

Programmatic Structure and Pedagogy

Sheltered English Immersion

Sheltered English immersion (SEI) is a set of teaching strategies that are designed for teachers to incorporate while delivering their academic content that support students with lower English proficiency levels and native English speakers. The strategies used in this method are designed to lower the linguistic demand of the lesson to accommodate EL students without compromising the rigor of the subject matter. This method seeks to serve classrooms with both EL students and native English speakers with a variety of learning styles. Additionally, the academic content of SEI in Massachusetts is designed to align with objectives and standards outlined in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks known as the Massachusetts Common Core. While ELs are not restricted from using their native language in class, all content, academic materials, and assessments must be in English.

In addition to the strategies used in the SEI classrooms, EL students received targeted ESL instruction in English. Depending on a student's English proficiency level⁸, EL students receive 45 to 90 minutes of ESL instruction a day. ESL instruction can take the form of "push in" classroom support where a certified ESL teacher supports an EL student in the classroom, or "pull-out" services where students receive ESL instruction outside the classroom with an ESL teacher.

⁸ A student's English proficiency level is determined by the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs exam, a standardized English proficiency exam in Massachusetts which all EL students are required to take once a year. This exam assigns EL students an English proficiency level from 1 through 6, 1 being the lowest level of English proficiency and 6 being proficient.

Dual Language

Dual language programs, on the other hand, are intended to foster bilingualism and bi-literacy through a well-integrated curriculum that blends academic concepts with language instruction. Most dual language programs also include multicultural competence and equity frameworks to best engage students (Howard et al, 2007). Dual language programs typically serve EL students as well as monolingual students. Courses are designed to instruct academic content equally in both target languages so that students become bi-literate in all academic content areas. In this study, the dual language program supports classrooms with a mix of Spanish speaking EL students, heritage Spanish speaking students, and monolingual native English speaking students. Since the program is small, the cohort of students remains in the same class throughout the entire program unless a student changes schools or a new student transfers in from another program or school. Although there are EL students in this program, there is no formal ESL component in addition to the academic content and strategies used in class.

Transitional Bilingual Education

Transitional bilingual educational (TBE) programs are designed for EL students with low English proficiency levels. TBE delivers coursework in both English and the student's native language. At Chandler Magnet, the TBE program for Spanish speaking students who are newcomers to the United states and are assigned a level 1 in English proficiency. Therefore, the content is delivered in Spanish and students are transitioned to English content by using lots of visual aids and SEI strategies. TBE is based in the theory that EL students

will acquire fluency quicker in English once they are at grade level fluency and literacy in their native language. As mentioned earlier, TBE student receive ESL support in the classroom like the students in mainstream SEI classrooms.

Programmatic Discussion

Those in favor of SEI programming advocate that English proficiency is necessary before academic content in school. This argues that students must learn English quickly to avoid falling behind their peers academically and the fastest way to do this is to be in English immersion classrooms (Umansky et al, 2016). Research and cognitive science, however, has shown that, since languages share underlying structures, students who acquire a strong foundation in one language are better prepared to learn a second (Genesee et al, 2008). Another argument is that EL students who are in mainstream classrooms comprehend little of what is going on while in two-language classrooms they have full access to the curriculum. Those in favor of two-language instructional programs, such as dual language or TBE, often argue the importance of a child's learning experience. On a social level, it has been argued that bilingualism also promotes social benefits such as decreased discrimination and heightened self-esteem (Umansky & Reardon, 2014).

Multiple longitudinal studies have tracked EL student proficiency in various programs. These studies reveal that reclassification occurs quickest for student in SEI mainstream classrooms. However, by 5th grade, SEI students' English proficiency progress tends to plateau while students in bilingual or dual language programming surpass their SEI peers in reclassification rates and are overall more likely to become reclassified. Additionally, when

looking at academic outcomes of ELs, by 7th grade, students in transitional bilingual and dual language programs outperform their SEI peers on ELA and Math standardized assessments (Steele, 2015). Therefore, academic growth, although slow, is supported most by two-language programs.

Although there is a body of research that qualifies student progress in varying EL programs, there is little research that looks to understand how a student's academic engagement differs by program. This research, therefore looks to understand how academic engagement and learning experiences differ in these programs. Understanding student learning and engagement will serve as indicators as to how these three EL programs impact student progress.

Learning Experience and Academic Engagement

In this study, academic engagement is the frameworks used to understand these three EL programs. To unpack how EL academic engagement may vary by program, accounts of student experiences were compiled through teacher and student interviews that focused on student learning experiences. A growing body of literature reveals that academic engagement plays a significant role in the academic success of a student (Suárez-Orozco et al, 2009). Many studies have identified academic engagement as a predictor for classroom grades, performance on standardized tests, and student persistence (Akey, 2006). This study looks to for a more in depth understanding of a student's level of engagement to shed light onto their ability to thrive academically and grow in terms of their English proficiency. For the purposes

of this study, academic engagement will be defined by four key categories: academic attitudes, cognitive engagement, behavior engagement, and relational engagement. The use of these academic engagement categories was inspired by the longitudinal study done by Suárez-Orozco and documented in the book *Learning and New Land*.

Academic attitudes determine how a student feels about their educational experience. Attitudes about school, such as learning values, pride in success, and personal capability play a pivotal role in academic achievement. Studies show that there is a correlation between perceived academic competence and performance in math and reading (Akey, 2006). Cognitive engagement, on the other hand, relates to a student's psychological investment in their learning (Chiu, 2012). This concept incorporates students' willingness to put effort into their learning while using needed cognitive and metacognitive strategies that promote their understanding of the subject matter (Blumenfeld et al., 2006). This study looks into how a student feels when they are learning new and challenging materials to gauge their level of cognitive engagement.

Behavior engagement, in many contexts, is used synonymously with academic engagement. In this study, however, behavioral engagement is a component of academic engagement that focuses on a student's efforts to perform academic tasks and their level of participation. Behaviorally engaged students are those who have good attendance, pay attention and behave appropriately in class, and do their best on their class and homework assignments (Suárez-Orozco, 2008). Many studies show that a student's ability to stay on

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task, pay attention, and respond to direction are positively correlated to academic achievement (Redricks, 2012).

Lastly, relational engagement is the degree to which a student feels connected to their peers, teachers, and others in their school environment. Meaningful and positive relationships in the school setting are an important academic component for students as these relations provide a sense of belonging, emotional support, role modeling, and positive feedback (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hofman, 1997).

Together these four categories of academic engagement are incorporated into student and teacher interviews to holistically assess student academic engagement. Studies have shown that academic engagement is positively correlated to student success, therefore measuring engagement can shed light onto how the different EL programs offered at Chandler Magnet promote student growth.

Methodology

Unit of Analysis

This research focuses specifically on the Chandler Magnet Elementary School and EL students who are native Spanish speakers. Qualitatively, this study focuses specifically on native Spanish speaking EL students in 5th and 6th grade for a variety of reasons. Chandler Magnet's student body is predominantly Hispanic and the large majority of EL students speak Spanish as their native language. Research shows that Spanish speaking EL students take longer to exit EL status than other language groups, further demonstrating the need to pay

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particular attention to this subpopulation (Slama et al, 2015). Additionally, the TBE and dual language programs incorporate Spanish to develop biliteracy. Therefore, limiting the study to specifically Spanish speaking EL students will control for variation in student experience as a result of native language. Interviews were limited to students in 5th and 6th grade due to their stage in development and ability to articulate and reflect upon their experiences as well as staff recommendation for this age group (Suárez-Orozco, 2008). To select the students to be interviewed, parent permission slips were handed out to all EL students in 5th and 6th grade.

Methodological Approach and Rationale

This study uses a qualitative approach that utilized student and teacher interviews. Three teacher interviews were conducted with teachers from each of the three programs; SEI mainstream classroom, dual language, and TBE. Teacher interviews were incorporated to better understand the pedagogy of each program, unpack the teachers' perceptions of student learning experiences in each program, and verify what was said in the student interviews. The interviews took place in Chandler Magnet Elementary during the school day and each interview lasted from twenty to thirty minutes. The teachers interviewed were selected by the administration. The interviews focused on what challenges EL students face at Chandler Magnet, what impressions teachers had regarding EL students' engagement, academic performance, social interaction, and how learning experience may differ by program. The teacher interviews also asked teacher what challenges they face teaching EL students in their classroom.

Students were selected for the interviews based off of the cohort who returned parent consent forms. Six students, two from each program were also interviewed; a female and male student from each program with comparable English proficiency levels in their program. Please see Figure 2 below for brief profiles of the students interviewed. The table shows the program, gender, grade, English proficiency level, and duration at Chandler Magnet.

Figure 2 Student Profiles

	Program	Gender	Grade	English Proficiency Level	Time at Chandler Magnet (years)
1.	SEI	Male	6	4	8
2.	SEI (<i>previously in TBE</i>)	Female	5	3	2
3.	Dual Language (<i>previously in TBE</i>)	Male	6	4	4
4.	Dual Language	Female	6	4	4
5.	TBE	Male	5	1	1.5
6.	TBE	Female	5	1	0.5

The table above reveals that there are varying levels of English proficiency by program. The TBE program is designed for newcomer students from other countries who start their education at Chandler Magnet with a proficiency level 1. Once students in TBE reach a proficiency level 3 they are transitioned into another program. The table demonstrates the design of the TBE program as the TBE students interviewed have much lower levels of English proficiency than the other two programs. The other students interviewed were level threes and fours which are significantly higher proficiency levels than level one. Students learning experience will vary based on their English capabilities and therefore these differences influence the learning experiences captured in the student interviews.

Moreover, language choice in the interviews varied greatly among interviews. The teacher interviews were conducted exclusively in English while the student interviews were intentionally conducted in “Spanglish”. There was no reason as to why the teacher interviews were conducted exclusively in English besides that fact that English was the language in which all the teachers defaulted to upon being introduced by the principal. The student interviews, however, were intentionally designed so that students would reply in the language they felt most comfortable. Students were greeted at the beginning of each interview with a blend of English and Spanish and students were asked which language they preferred to speak in. Students were encouraged to answer questions in whichever language they felt most comfortable. Questions were asked in both English and Spanish, with the exception of students with a English proficiency level on 1 who were interviewed exclusively in Spanish.

The student interview questions were designed to evaluate student academic engagement via four categories: academic attitudes, cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement, and relational engagement. The interview assessed academic attitudes by asking students to complete sentences such as “Homework is..., Schools are..., Teachers are..., Learning English is...”. See Appendix II to review the student interview questions. The student interviews used a scale for cognitive engagement that measures the extent to which a student is intellectually engaged in what they are learning. This scale, inspired by the methodology of Carola Suárez-Orozco, which uses a 5-point scale to gauge whether students find learning boring, interesting, or neutral when involved in different scenarios (Suárez-Orozco, 2008). Behavioral engagement was assessed by asking each student to identify with

one of two groups of students, a behaviorally engaged group and a behaviorally disengaged group. The formatting for this exercise was also influenced by the work of Suárez-Orozco, see Appendix II, to encourage students to reflect more authentically regarding their behavioral engagement. Lastly, to capture a student's relational engagement the interviews ask students to draw a picture of their best day at school. After asking the students to describe what they drew, the students are asked if there is anyone at school that makes their day special and who those people are. This identifies if there are adults and peers at school that make a student feel connected to their learning environment.

The last aspect of the student interviews included a Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). TAT is a projective test designed to reveal a person's feelings or needs through their interpretation of pictures of emotionally ambiguous situations. TAT encourages the expression of imagination (Cattell & Ibboston, 2000) and is designed so that interviewees speak to their personal experiences and understandings of situation without asking them directly. The students interviewed in this study were given an image of a young boy looking over his violin, see Appendix II, and asked to tell a story about the student they saw in the picture, what the student was doing, how they were feeling, and how their story might end. Often influenced by power dynamics or the desire to please the interviewer, students respond to questions according to what they assume the interviewer wants to hear. TAT was incorporated into the interviews to capture more candid responses about student's lived experiences without asking them directly. This was done by examining what students chose to share in their stories, with the assumption that they were speaking to their lived experiences.

The objective of this study is to explore student academic engagement among the three EL programs offered at Chandler Magnet. Therefore, the interviews were analyzed with a lens that looked for commonalities and discrepancies between ideologies and attitudes, objective reality, and the feelings of teachers and students in these programs.

Limitations

This study encountered both logistical and methodological challenges. The first challenge encountered in this study was the inability to triangulate the findings from the interviews by incorporating observations and a quantitative analysis from WPS data. The original intent of this research was to incorporate a longitudinal analysis of student progress by program. Due to complications with data accuracy, analyzing data earlier than the previous academic year was not feasible. This realization has been noted by the district and data records are now being collected in order to analyze the progress of the 2015-16 kindergarten and first grade cohort. Moreover, the frequency of snow days complicated the standardized testing schedule at Chandler Magnet and resulted in the inability to conduct classroom observations.

Another limitation to the study was the selection of interviewees. The teachers interviewed were selected by the administration which may have unintentionally incorporated bias in terms of pedagogy and practice. Student interviews were limited to students who returned permission slips which may have unintentionally created a selection of more engaged students or student who have more involved parents. The diversity of the English proficiency levels, which is natural to each program, make it challenging to analyze academic engagement

since this may vary by proficiency level opposed to program. Moreover, it is important to note that two students, one currently in a SEI mainstream classroom and another in the dual language program, were previously in the TBE program, therefore the students experience and engagement may be influenced by two programs, opposed to exclusively one program. Lastly, the number of interviews conducted were very small, making it difficult to draw clear conclusions about individual programs.

Both teacher and student interviews were conducted in the principal's office of the school. The teacher and student associations with this space could have significantly impacted the way they felt and reacted to the interview. The intonation of some of the students during the interview was questioning, as if they were looking for the right answer to the questions asked, opposed to talking candidly about their experiences, opinions, and feelings. For example, when one student was asked how they felt when learning something new in English class, they exclaimed with the most emotion displayed in the interview that they felt really bored. However, after they responded this way they changed their answer to saying they felt neutral. This reveals that the power dynamics at play in the interview definitely influenced the ways in which students answered the interview questions.

Findings

The findings of this study were categorized into three main sections: ideology and attitudes, objective reality, and feelings. The ideologies and attitudes section reflects the programmatic pedagogy expressed by teachers as well as the academic attitudes and

O'Rourke perspectives vocalized in the student interviews. Objective reality, on the other hand, is a section that considers what exactly took place, according to the interviewees. Objective reality refers to the true state or reality of a situation that exists outside an individuals' biases, interpretations, feelings, etc. In contrast, the last section, feelings, takes into consideration the emotional response or connections that were referenced throughout the interviews.

Ideologies and Attitudes

Programmatic Pedagogy

Throughout the interviews, teachers responded differently to the questions asked and focused on different themes. Their responses informed this section of ideology and attitudes which focuses on the pedagogy of their practice and the attitudes they expressed in relation to student learning. Each program teacher highlighted that every student is unique in their learning and that it was their responsibility, as teachers, to meet students at their level and support them.

The mainstream SEI classroom teacher was unique in their ideology in the sense where they reiterated the challenges teachers face in creating applicable content that is familiar and accessible to their students throughout the course of the interview. A student-centered approach was mentioned as a way to accommodate the needs of students who are at different English and academic proficiency levels. There was an emphasis on "hard work", that teachers work hard, are positive with their students, and come prepared to teach. The SEI teacher said "the students don't necessarily get discouraged; the teachers face the challenge.

Students, when they get the content, they are really excited to learn, you can see the excitement in their faces. Figuring out where a kid is [academically], is the main challenge". This teacher expressed that creating a lesson plan that is well received by their students is extremely rewarding and evokes a sense of pride. This was the only program that mentioned that the students are encouraged to speak English at school. Lastly, both mainstream and TBE teachers emphasized that students become excited about learning when they can feel successful.

The ideology of the mainstream SEI teacher used positive language that varied in the way it was used to describe teacher and student experience. The positive comments made about teacher experience used the language of positivity in the sense they felt a sense of pride or rewarded when hard work "paid off" and students were engaged in their lessons. The framing of teacher positivity emanates from a sense of happiness they feel when seeing their students engage in learning, making it an external emotional response. When talking about student positives, the teacher used words like encouraged, excited, and engaged. This understanding of positivity talks about student happiness coming from a more internal experience in which they get excited in situations where they feel successful and a sense of encouragement.

The ideology of the TBE program differed from the others with a strong focus on difference and providing comfort. The teacher prefaced the interview by stating "First of all, when we are talking about English Language Learners, we group them in one space, but they

are different language learners. They come from different countries, different situation, so their backgrounds are different too". The word different surfaced many times in this interview to highlight that students are unique; they have a range of backgrounds, personalities, cultures, and learning styles that need to be considered when teaching them. Difference was also used in explaining that these students are arriving to the country and can be timid due to being surrounded by a different language, different rules, and a world that looks entirely different.

[Students] come here scared. Imagine you are listening to a different language and you don't understand what is happening; there are different rules, everything looks different. And then they come to a classroom where their teacher speaks their language, that is huge. Although there are many things around them, there is something familiar.

The word difference was used to describe the challenges faced by students because of their uniqueness. To address this, the pedagogy behind this TBE program focuses on introducing a sense of comfort through a familiar language. The program is designed to get students to a level of academic and English proficiency where they are comfortable to learn. By establishing that comfort zone students are more likely to gain confidence and take the chances they need to grow.

The main distinction of the dual language program is its ideological focus in bi-literacy and meta-linguistic skills. While other programs focused a lot on creating environments and lessons that allowed students to feel comfortable or successful, the dual language teacher talked about encouraging students to use Spanish and instilling a value for bilingualism. The teacher mentioned that students already have a value for English as a result

of the societal pressure; therefore, the dual language program encourages and emphasized the importance of learning Spanish. This program looks to instill the value of biliteracy in students and highlight that learning Spanish will be an asset in the future.

Student Academic Attitudes

To gauge student academic attitudes, each student was asked to complete sentences in the following format: “_____ is (are)...”, for the following four topics: homework, school, teachers, and learning English. The sentence completion activity served to gauge the student's attitudes, but also to see if there was a variation in the way students would complete sentences based on the level of sentence complexity. The sentence prompts and responses can be found on the following page in Figure 3.

Students in all program had the most similar responses when completing the sentence “schools are...” Five of the six students responded that schools are for learning or studying in their definition. This unanimous response shows that students conceptualize their school as an educational space where academics are the focus. However, the ways students responded to the other questions revealed interesting trends by program.

Figure 3 Academic Attitudes: Sentence Completion Activity

SENTENCE PROMPT	STUDENT RESPONSE
<p>La tarea es... <i>Homework is...</i></p>	<p>Dual Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Umm... hard to do • Muy complicada (<i>very complicated</i>) <p>SEI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La cosa que termino para el otro día que me da más energía para que yo la entrego (<i>The thing that I finish for the next day that gives me energy so that I turn it in</i>) • Divertida? <p>TBE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para escribir (<i>for writing</i>) • Divertidas? (<i>fun?</i>)
<p>Las escuelas son... <i>Schools are...</i></p>	<p>Dual Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To learn • Muy grande (<i>very big</i>) <p>SEI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The things that help you learn and get you through the day without being mad or upset or being conflicted and having different emotions • Donde tu aprende (<i>where you learn</i>) <p>TBE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para aprender (<i>for learning</i>) • Para estudiar? (<i>for studying</i>)
<p>Los profesores son... <i>Teachers are...</i></p>	<p>Dual Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buenos (<i>great/ good</i>) • Buenos (<i>great/ good</i>) <p>SEI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • la gente que quiere ayudarnos pasar el grado y tener un buen futuro (<i>the people that want to help us pass the grade and have a good future</i>) • los que te dan clase. (<i>those who give you class</i>) <p>TBE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • para ayudarte (<i>to help you</i>) • para enseñar? (<i>for teaching?</i>)
<p>Aprender inglés es... <i>Learning English is...</i></p>	<p>Dual Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun • Un poco difícil (<i>a little difficult</i>) <p>SEI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An important skill that you have to learn to mostly get around in English speaking nations so you have more people to talk to and more friends to make • muy divertido tener un segundo lenguaje (<i>really fun to have a second language</i>) <p>TBE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • como para tu prácticas en tu casa (<i>like, so that you practice at home</i>) • importante (<i>important</i>)

When students were asked about homework, both dual language students responded that homework is hard. This was the only clear negative trend in attitudes that was associated exclusively with one program. When looking back on the teacher interviews, the dual language teacher had mentioned her students in the dual language program were very diligent about completing homework, however, the sixth-grade cohort in the program was an exception. In fact, the teacher mentioned that the sixth-grade cohort struggled the most out of all grades in the program. The teacher explained that the 6th grade cohort was the first year of the dual language program and therefore they experienced a lot of teacher and programmatic transitions. Thus, many of the 6th grade students are below grade level in both math and English language arts. This feedback from the teacher is supported by the fact that both dual language students interviewed, who are both on 6th grade, reported that homework is difficult. Moreover, the dual language students consistently completed the sentences with very simple one or two word answers revealing that they may struggle to produce sentences with the same structure as other EL students at their grade level. Being behind academically influences the learning experiences of students and this challenge affects how these students feel engaged in their learning. While dual language students reported homework as being difficult, other students framed homework in a more positive light by saying homework was *divertida* (fun) or gave them energy.

There were clear distinctions between students' responses when asked to complete the sentence "Teachers are...". Both dual language students completed the sentence by saying "*buenos* (good)". The responses from male students in the other programs both referred to

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teachers' roles are helpers. While one male student simply mentioned "*para ayudarte* (to help you)" the other described how teachers are there to help and support students pass their classes and become more prepared for the future. The female students in the mainstream and TBE classrooms mentioned that teachers' roles are to teach. While students from the TBE and mainstream classrooms elaborated on teachers' roles as either as resources for teaching or people who help and support students, the dual language students used an adjective to describe the teachers that did not speak to their role.

Student attitudes about teachers connects with the pedagogies expressed by the teachers for each program. The focus of the pedagogies of the mainstream and TBE teachers were focused on encouraging learning by supporting students and making them feel successful. On the other hand, the dual language focused more on the value of learning and fostering biliteracy. Although all student's attitudes towards the teachers were positive, when students expressed their attitudes about teachers, the TBE and mainstream students see their teachers in supportive roles, as educators, while the dual language students did not frame teachers in this role.

Objective Reality

Program Composition

This research shows that objective reality for each of these programs is extremely different. Not only does each program incorporate very different pedagogies, each program also serves varying populations of students. For example, the mainstream classrooms at Chandler Magnet are very diverse; they are comprised of students from all backgrounds

ranging from non-EL students, EL students from different language levels and languages, students with IEPs⁹, etc. Additionally, an important distinction about the Chandler Magnet mainstream classrooms is that they differ than the mainstream classrooms throughout the district. The mainstream classrooms at Chandler Magnet are comprised of over 70% EL students which is much higher than the district average of around 40%.

The TBE program, on the other hand, is more homogenous in terms of native languages as it serves almost exclusively Spanish speaking students who are new to the United States and have either a level 1 or 2 English proficiency. Dual language, in contrast, is a mix of native and heritage Spanish speakers and English speakers and none of these students have an IEP. Since the dual language program does not serve students who have noted learning disabilities they do not face some of the challenges that the TBE and mainstream classroom teachers face in accommodating diverse learning styles. Figure 4 below highlights the difference in the populations served and the languages used by each program.

Figure 4 Programmatic Differences

	Mainstream SEI	Transitional Bilingual Education	Dual Language 50/50
Grades	K-6	K-6	K-6
English Proficiency Level	1-6 (all)	1-2 (exit program at 3)	3-6
Student Native Languages	Many	Spanish	Spanish or English
Students with IEP	Yes	Yes	No
Languages Used in Teaching	English	Spanish and English	Spanish and English

⁹ IEP (individualized service plan) is a plan or program designed specifically for an individual child who has a disability identified under law to ensure that they receive the necessary related services.

Gaps

A topic that was brought up in each interview when asking teachers about what challenges ELs and teachers face was the idea of gaps. Teachers talked about gaps in different ways, ranging from EL students having gaps in their education, that there are gaps among student English and academic proficiency levels in the classroom, and there are also gaps in the resources they can access to assist EL student. Although all teachers talked about there being educational gaps among their students, the way in which they framed this reality varied by program but all teachers framed the concept of “gaps” as a challenge.

The TBE teacher said that EL students who have gaps in their education are facing academic challenges on top of their language barriers. Educational gaps were referred to as the missing pieces in a child's education from a lack of schooling or varying grade-level content in other countries. For example, some students who enter the third grade as newcomers are missing a lot of the academic content that their peers learned in previous grades. The TBE teacher also talked about the students coming with different vocabulary and different learning experiences that make it difficult for students to take the academic content in English and apply it to their academic knowledge in their own language. In this sense, everything is foreign because they cannot necessarily apply to academic content to something familiar. The TBE teacher said that EL students who come into school at grade level in their native language transition much faster. As soon as the vocabulary sets in they can understand the content in another language. Unfortunately, this is not the reality for many students. The

TBE teacher expressed that students need to be brought to grade level academic proficiency in Spanish before they are brought up to speed in English.

All teachers talked about the stress of teaching students at many different levels of proficiency and bringing them up to grade level. The dual language and mainstream SEI teacher talked specifically about scaffolding and the importance of creating lesson plans that accommodate different proficiency levels in the classroom so that the content was manageable for all students. The TBE teacher and mainstream teacher both mentioned that identifying these gaps is extremely time consuming and teachers expressed that they didn't have enough time or resources to adequately assess each student, especially the new comers who enter the TBE program. This time constraint leads to teachers being unable to effectively gauge student's academic levels and further challenges in accommodating them in the classroom.

While the TBE teacher focused on time as a scarce resource, the mainstream teacher was more focused on a lack of material resources. Throughout the interview materials and resources were mentioned as important factors in creating successful learning environments and lesson plans that engage students. The focus on physical resources may signify that teachers feel that they would be better prepared to serve students if they had more access to materials. This teacher mentioned that many teachers make their own materials to support the needs of their specific students and take a student centered approach to their lessons. The mainstream classroom teacher framed her pedagogy with the concept that teacher

involvement and dedication are key ingredients in effective teaching and lead to student engagement and success. However, there was a strong focus on there being a lack of materials, implying that teachers would be able to deliver more effective lessons if they had access to more resources. These concepts together imply that mainstream teachers believe that their hard work is crucial for the success of their students, however, they feel there is a lack of material support that limits their ability to do so.

The SEI and TBE teachers mentioned that the school used to have language labs¹⁰, however the funding for these labs ran out and language labs were eliminated at Chandler Magnet at the end of last year. The teachers referred to these labs as extremely helpful stepping stones for students which significantly supported them in improving their English proficiency. All teachers commented that SEI mainstream classrooms are most effective for the ELs with higher proficiency levels. Therefore, the language labs were seen and an important transitional step to get students to a level of English proficiency where they could excel in a mainstream classroom.

Participation (Behavioral Engagement)

An interesting nuance also captured in the teachers' and students' responses was that student participation did not necessarily increase with proficiency, the way engagement is expressed changes. Students with lower English proficiency levels show their learning in

¹⁰ Language laboratories are classrooms with equipment such as computers and tape recorders where students can learn and practice English outside of the mainstream classroom with the support of an ESL instructor.

different ways meaning that as their proficiency level advanced, the ways students participated and demonstrated engagement changed with it. Each teacher was aware of this and mentioned the importance of providing opportunities for students to participate, regardless of their level.

The student interviews showed that students with lower English proficiency levels demonstrated behavioral engagement and participation differently than students with higher proficiency levels. The responses of students with lower levels of English proficiency showed that they participated by paying attention, turning in homework, and trying their best. Students with higher proficiency levels, on the other hand, expressed they paid less attention, turned in homework less, and did not always try their best, however, they enjoyed participating in class and finished their class work more than students with lower proficiency. When students were asked to describe what they do to participate they mentioned a variety of different ways they participate such as paying attention, listening, doing their homework, writing on the board, and raising their hand. The higher the student's English proficiency levels, the more extraverted activities they listed. For example, students with higher English proficiency levels listed writing on the board or raising their hand while students with lower English proficiency levels expressed more introverted participation like paying attention, listening and doing homework. This reflects the teachers' comments on how participation changes as students meet higher proficiency levels in English.

Another nuance in the responses was that lower level EL student struggle to finish to finish their classwork in time and but expressed they almost always do their homework while their peers with higher proficiency levels express the contrary. However, the teacher from a mainstream classroom noted they would like to see an improvement in EL homework completion. They mentioned that EL students are much less likely to complete their homework in contrast to the non-EL peers. In contrast, the dual language teacher mentioned that the students in her program were extremely engaged and diligent about homework completion, regardless on their EL or non-EL status and with the exception of the 6th grade class. Most dual language students are higher level ELs therefore the dual language teacher's comments are supported by the trends found in the student interviews. The TBE teacher did not comment much on homework completion besides mentioning that some students demonstrate their participation through doing their homework. It is difficult to determine whether homework completion is a way in which some students demonstrate behavioral engagement seeing as there is so much variation. This may reflect that there is difference in understanding of what is expected in relation to homework completion. Moreover, homework completion may be tied to a theme that was not formally incorporated into the interview questions: parent engagement.

The TBE and mainstream teachers also spoke to the challenge of parental support. The TBE teacher said that some parents cannot read, not even in their native language and don't have many ways to support their child academically at home. The mainstream teacher said that not having a family member at home who speaks English to help with homework can be a

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challenge. Parent engagement was mentioned in these two programs but was not brought up at all by the dual language teacher. The only students who mentioned family or parent involvement were the students in the mainstream classroom. Parental engagement and academic ability have been proven to be predictors of student academic engagement and achievement. This indicator should be considered in future research.

Cognitive Engagement

Across the board, teachers talked about students being engaged, curious, and eager to learn. Moreover, teachers said the more students felt confident in their academic or English ability the more engaged they were in class. Each teacher expressed there was a clear correlation between academic engagement and academic performance. The literature supports this claim as it states that students are more engrossed and engaged in their studies when they perform better academically. Student interviews revealed that students are cognitively engaged and enjoy learning and doing their school work. However, students expressed that they were less cognitively engaged when they were learning difficult material. This finding reinforces the mainstream and TBE teachers' belief that students are more engaged and eager to learn when they feel successful.

During the Thematic Apperception Test, all students responded to the picture; see Appendix II, with a story of disengagement and or academic struggle. Both students in the TBE program told a story about the student in the picture being bored while they both struggled to describe a story in detail although they were speaking in their native language.

One student expressed that the boy in the picture did not want to do his work and got mad in the end, while the other story expressed the boredom a result of not having enough to do and wanting to learn more than was offered. The reoccurring theme of boredom in the TBE program might be a sign that these students are craving more challenging academics. The stories of the other four students had the common theme of not understanding academic material. Two students described that the student tried to get help from their teacher but the teacher was busy or couldn't help them and the student didn't know what to do. Both students from the dual language program talked about the stress of not being able to do the same work as their peers, one of these students expressed a fear of judgment from their peers. This trend reveals that the academic rigor of the program can cause anxiety for students who are behind grade level.

Language

While the teachers framed language in clearly different ways by program, there were not clear programmatic trends in the ways in which students spoke about or used Spanish or English throughout the interviews. Moreover, the student interviews we conducted in "Spanglish", using a blend of Spanish and English in order to see when students would use one language over the other. When looking at language use, there were no distinctions in language use by program, however the students which lower proficiency levels talked in Spanish for almost the entire interview. The students in the TBE program, having an English proficiency level of 1, talked exclusively in Spanish.

The teacher perspective in dual language put an emphasis on the importance of students becoming bilingual with a heavy focus on Spanish literacy. The teacher mentioned that the students are incentivized to speak Spanish exclusively in their Spanish classes and not incentivized in their English classrooms to speak English in order to instill an importance of learning Spanish in the context of an English dominant society. In contrast, the mainstream teacher mentioned that the school encourages students to speak English in the classroom but when students are at lunch and feel more comfortable they speak Spanish. This highlights that the lunchroom may be seen as a more social space in which students use Spanish to communicate while English is seen as an academic language that is encouraged in the classroom. The TBE teacher, on the other hand, talked about the value of each language but the importance of gaining academic proficiency in Spanish before transitioning over to an English-only program.

During the sentence completion activity in the student interviews, there were no clear similarities by program in the way students responded to “learning English is...”. Two students, both female and enrolled in dual language or TBE, responded that learning English was fun. Another two students defined learning English as important. When asked to explain what they meant by “important” both of their responses included the importance of being able to communicate with people in English speaking countries. The two other responses included “*un poco difícil*” (I little difficult), and “*para tu prácticas en tu casa*” (so that you practice at home). The variety of responses shows that students have unique attitudes to learning English.

Although there was not a trend by program, there was a gendered trend in their responses as female students felt that learning English was fun while male students gave neutral responses.

Another interesting finding in the cognitive engagement assessment was that the boys interviewed consistently felt less engaged when learning English while the girls expressed they were very engaged. While responding to the questions in the cognitive engagement section, one male student, although they expressed being engaged in all other areas, almost shouted that they felt bored when learning English. In continuing research, it will be crucial to explore how gender influences a student's experience learning English progress.

Social Integration

Another aspect of the observed reality was social integration: the way that teachers commented on how they see EL students interact with their peers. Teachers from each program framed social engagement differently when asked about how EL students integrated with their EL and non-EL peers. The TBE program was unique in talking about a student's proficiency level and confidence as an influential factor in terms of their social integration but had a commonality with the dual language teacher's responses as they both focused on cultural integration. A common theme among all programs was that students integrate and socialize with one another regardless of the EL status and all programs referenced culture as a component that influences social integration.

Although demographically the school is comprised of predominantly Hispanic students, there are higher concentrations of Hispanic and Spanish speaking students in the

dual language and TBE program than in mainstream classrooms. The dual language and TBE programs use bi-literacy strategies in which Spanish is integrated into the curriculum and therefore more native Spanish speakers and Hispanic students are enrolled in these programs than in the mainstream classroom. The TBE program, for example, is comprised of Spanish-speaking newcomers and the dual language program, although intended to host one-third native English speakers, native Spanish speakers, and heritage speakers, is mostly comprised of Hispanic and Spanish speaking students. The dual language teacher commented that students in the dual language and TBE programs are surrounded by “Spanish students because they are there to learn English”. The dual language teacher also expressed that students might say negative things to one another once in a while but she assumed this would happen more in mainstream classrooms where students are more racially and linguistically mixed. The mainstream classroom teacher mentioned that most of the students at Chandler Magnet are ELs and most speak Spanish so “everyone gets along great”. This statement implied that students got along with one another due to solidarity around linguistic or cultural similarities. Both the mainstream and dual language teachers expressed a sense of linguistic and cultural similarity as unifying ingredients what amplify social integration.

When asked about social integration, both the dual language and TBE teachers referenced culture in the context of acclimation. The TBE teacher mentioned that many of the newcomers are very shy when they arrive but as soon as they are ready they talk with other students and take risks as they feel more comfortable. The TBE program was the only program to mention culture shock. TBE students are not just learning English; they are

learning to live in a completely new culture. The way the teacher framed social integration within culture shock aligns with the pedagogy of the program which is designed to support students through culture shock and to prepare them to grow to eventually succeed in a mainstream classroom. Although the dual language teacher did not explicitly mention culture or culture shock she did reference how some students have different social or behavior norms when they commented “Socially, sometimes their behaviors are just different than what people expect. We go over what expected behavior looks like in school”. Therefore, both programs acknowledge that there are different social norms and different cultures at play in the school.

Experiences and Feelings

Relational Engagement

Being engaged on a relational level, such as having positive relationships in the school setting, is crucial for students in achieving academic success. This engagement is a crucial academic component as relationships provide a sense of belonging, emotional support, role modeling, and feedback for students. Studies show that relationally engaged students, immigrant students in particular, are more successful overtime than less relationally engaged peers (Suárez-Orozco, 2009). To better understand a student’s relational engagement at Chandler Magnet, students were asked to draw a picture of what their best day at school looks like. After completing the picture and asking the student to describe what they draw, the students were asked if there was anyone who made their day at school special.

Friends were a prominent theme in many of the interviews. When asked about people who make their day special, all but two students talked about their friends. Two students, one from and SEI mainstream and another from TBE talked specifically about how their friends help them in class when they don't understand something. Dual language classrooms are unique in their sense of community. The majority of students enrolled in the program started at a very young age because the program is designed for students to enroll in the program in kindergarten or first grade. As students progress from grade to grade, they stay with the same cohort. The teacher and student interviews reveal that students who have been with the same dual language cohort for years have created a bond with their peers and a sense of community. One student interviewed remarked that they had been in the dual language program since kindergarten. This student was the only student to actually draw friends in their drawing of their ideal day at school and mentioned friends first when asked about what they drew. When asked, who supports them at school, they responded "Everybody in my class. It's fun every day 'cause I have all my friends, since we all play together all the time, we've been in the same class since kindergarten, it's been really fun."

However, sometimes students enter the dual language program at an older age when they transition out of TBE. The other dual language student interview transitioned into the program much later from the TBE program and their interview revealed that the student had a different experience than their peers who have been together throughout their entire educational experience. In contrast, when this student talked about their ideal day, they mentioned "hacer amigos", to make friends, opposed to playing with their friends. Later,

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when asked if there was anyone at the school who made their day special they replied “no”, showing a very different experience than their classmates. This was a theme throughout this interview. When asked to finish the sentence “schools are” the student responded “muy grande (very big)”, implying they might feel isolated and lost in the school environment. This student also has the lowest cognitive and behavioral engagement from the group. The interview highlighted that the student desired to make more friends, felt that the school was a big place, and experienced social anxiety. This shows the power of community that can be created when students are unified in a cohort throughout their educational experience as well as the isolation one may feel when entering such a program when the community is already so tightly knit. Therefore, the trajectories of these students are crucial elements in understanding their experiences in each program. Moreover, this nuance speaks to the importance of relational engagement as one may perceive their learning environment differently if they do not feel relationally connected. This relationally disengaged student was also less engaged behaviorally and cognitively and had more negative academic attitudes than the other students interviewed. Moving forward it is important to consider the social challenges students may face when transitioning in and out of programs as this affects their learning.

Students also mentioned teachers in their interviews. Teachers were referred to as friendly, nice, and supportive by all the female students. Although one male student mentioned he wished students were as enthusiastic to learn as teachers were to teach, no male students talked about teachers being someone who made their day special. Majority of the teachers at Chandler Magnet are female. This gender dynamic may play into creating more

supportive environments for female students while male students lack positive role models of their gender. Other than teachers and friends, there were no other relational supports mentioned at the school. It is important to note that five of the six students talked extensively about relational supports and only one student said that there was no one who made his day special. Overall, students are relationally engaged in the school and feel supported by their peers and teachers revealing that they are more likely to be successful academically. It is important to assure that students transitioning into new classrooms and different programs get the support needed to feel relationally engaged.

Standardized Testing

An area in which a communal sense of frustration and passion was expressed was around standardized testing. All teachers explained that many of their EL students are a couple grade levels behind or have low English proficiency levels. Although students make significant progress during the year, their progress is not recognized by their grade level assessments. While students make gains in the classroom and on certain assessments, it appears that they are not learning per the statewide assessments.

The biggest challenge for me is, at the end of the year, no matter what level my kids are, they are all going to get the same assessment... Teachers are under the pressure to not only catch [students] up on the topics they need to know by third and fourth grade but also the language they need to know by that grade: reading ability, math content, and the background knowledge they have missed by being at a different school or different country. As their teacher, you see a lot of their growth that the state doesn't get to see. Sometimes there is just one word that they don't understand and it blows it from them [on the test], it's just heartbreaking.

All teachers highlighted that standardized testing such as MCAS and MAP testing are challenges for students, teachers, and the school as a whole. These state mandated tests are

offered only in English and teachers expressed that they do not capture the progress made by their students. Teachers argue that students are unable to prove what they know on these exams. Although they might understand what they are being asked on the exam, they are unable to understand the questions. This implies that language becomes a barrier in assessing academic content on statewide standardized assessments. Chandler Magnet, however, is underperforming in terms of EL student progress according to the Massachusetts state standards. Although language is clearly a barrier, it is important to investigate why ELs at Chandler Magnet are underperforming in relation to their EL peers in the district and state. Teacher feelings about standardized testing may speak to a larger school wide mentality that could be unpacked further in future research.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study looked to gain a more in depth understanding of student academic engagement by EL program to shed light onto students' ability to thrive academically and grow in terms of their English proficiency. The limitations of the study made it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about student learning by individual program, however, important trends have been identified for further research. Moreover, this study shows that student learning experience is unique on an individual level and academic engagement is influenced by many factors, many of which are not necessarily relevant to the EL program in which student are

enrolled. However, the pedagogical beliefs of each program and the student accounts reveal the following conclusions.

A consistent theme in student and teacher interviews spoke to the participation or behavioral engagement of students. The study shows that although there is not an increase in the amount or intensity of a student's participation, the way in which students demonstrate participation varies by their English proficiency level. Students with higher proficiency levels, for example, engage in more extraverted activities while lower proficiency levels demonstrate their engagement through more passive actions. Moreover, students with lower proficiency levels struggle to finish their classwork on time but reported that they would always complete their homework while students with higher proficiency levels reported the opposite. This contrast could reveal that students who are more challenged in class work harder at home to catch up their peers while the students who feel less challenged in class are less driven to apply themselves at home. This could also reflect that there is a difference in understanding what completed homework means among students. There are many factors that may have influenced student's responses on homework, one of which is parent engagement. The effect of parent engagement on students is unique, therefore, it is paramount to include parent engagement as a factor of student engagement in future studies.

The study uncovered that students are more engaged and gain more confidence in their academic abilities when they feel that they can be successful. Students responses showed that they were less engaged when they were learning difficult material. Students also referenced

feeling discouragement and anxiety when they did not understand material. The teacher interviews echoed the students' responses as they all talked about the need to create lesson plans that are appropriate for their students' academic and English proficiency levels. It is extremely important what teacher create material that makes students feel successful in order for them to grow. Students spoke to feeling social anxiety when they didn't understand a concept that was understood by their peers. This highlights the importance of fostering an environment where all students feel supported and comfortable enough to take risks. Therefore finding a balance in scaffolding material to support and challenge students is crucial to improve engagement and ultimately academic growth.

Both the findings from this study and the literature emphasize that relationships play a major role in a student's learning experience. Teachers expressed that linguistic and cultural similarity as unifying ingredients that amplify social integration. Students also talked about friends throughout their interviews, highlighting that friends supported them academically and socially. On a social level, it has been argued that bilingualism promotes social benefits such as decreased discrimination and heightened self-esteem. By having a school that promotes bilingualism, it appears that relational engagement is prominent among peers in each program at Chandler Magnet, not just the bilingual classrooms.

While all students expressed positive attitudes towards teachers, the student interviews highlighted that relational engagement with teachers is gendered and varies by program. When students were asked if anyone made their day special, all female students talked about

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their teachers while male students did not. This trend may be connected to the fact that Chandler Magnet's staff is predominantly female. It is important to look deeper into the way gender affects relational engagement and how the school can best support all genders.

Final Reflections

The process of conducting this study presented many challenges that changed its scope and focus and challenged me in producing a polished and concise final product. The original intent of this study was to conduct a quantitative longitudinal analysis on student outcome data to measure whether a student's progress in reaching English and academic proficiency was influenced by which program they were enrolled in. My ultimate goal was to provide the WPS with evidence that would allow them to understand the effectiveness of different programs in order to better accommodate EL students district wide. Once it became known that the quantitative research would not be plausible due to errors in data records, I reframed the study and looked to qualitative indicators that would assess factors that influence academic success among programs. Using academic engagement as the framework and interviews and observations as primary methods, I hoped to evaluate the difference in student academic engagement among the three programs offered at Chandler Magnet. In this sense, I looked to equate program wide trends in academic engagement to potential student outcomes.

In the end, I was unable to conduct classroom observations which would have influenced and improved the interviews I conducted with students and teachers. Moreover, the small number of interviews I conducted made it impossible to draw any definitive conclusions about specific programs or determine levels of academic engagement by program. I became disheartened to realize that the study did not yield conclusions that would be particularly helpful for Chandler Magnet or the school district in terms of improving services for EL

student. However, the process of this study has uncovered glitches in district wide record keeping that have since been ameliorated and highlights important dynamics among students and teachers that may help the school reflect on ways to support their EL students. This process has improved my ability to conduct and analyze research and has ultimately heightened my capabilities as a Research Analyst for the Worcester Public Schools.

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Appendix I

Teacher Interview Questions

What are some of the challenges EL students face in Chandler Magnet?

What challenges do teachers face when teaching EL students?

What are your impressions about EL student's academic engagement and academic performance in the EL program you teach (TBE, dual language or mainstream SEI)? Does it differ by subject area?

Does EL student participation differ from that of non EL students?

What do you see as some of the challenges and successes regarding the interaction (social and academic) between EL and non EL students?

Appendix II

Preguntas Para La Entrevista Del Estudiante

Student Interview Questions

Participación Relacional:

Relational engagement:

¿Puedes hacer un dibujo describiendo como sería tu mejor día en la escuela (3 minutos)?

Could you draw me a picture of what your best day at school looks like (3 minutes)?

- Este dibujo me muestra cómo sería tu mejor día en la escuela. ¿Podrías utilizar palabras para describir tu dibujo?
This picture tells me a lot about what your best day at school looks like. Could you use some words to describe what you drew?
- ¿Hay personas que hacen que tu día en la escuela sea especial? ¿Quiénes son?
Are there any people who make your best day at school special? What are they?
 - Si es así, ¿Qué es lo que hacen ellos, para que sea especial?
If so, what do they do to make it special?

Actitudes Académicas:

Academic Attitudes:

Los estudiantes deben completar estas oraciones

Students complete the sentences

(Ej: El Fútbol es... el deporte que amo jugar con mis amigos después de la escuela)

(Ex: Soccer is... a sport I love to play with my friends after school)

- La tarea es...
Homework is...
- Las escuelas son...
Schools are...
- Los profesores son...
Teachers are...
- Aprender inglés es...
Learning English is...

Participación Cognitiva:

Cognitive engagement:



Te sientes alegre-----No sientes nada-----

-Aburrido

Feel excited -----Feel nothing-----

-----Feel Bored

- ¿Puedes decir cómo te sientes, cuándo haces las siguientes actividades?
Can you point to how you feel when you do the following things?

(Ej: Cuando juego con mis amigos, me siento...)

Ex) When I play with my friends I feel...

- Cuando aprendo cosas nuevas, me siento...
When I learn new things, I feel...
- Cuando hago trabajos de la escuela, me siento...
When I do school work, I feel...
- Cuando aprendo algo nuevo y es muy difícil, me siento...
When I learn something new and it is really hard, I feel...
- Cuando comenzamos aprender algo nuevo en la clase de Ingles, me siento...
When we start to learn something new in English class, I feel...

Participación de Conducta

Behavioral Engagement

- Escala de 4 ítem que divida a los estudiantes en dos grupos “algunos estudiantes ___ pero “otros estudiantes ___. Los estudiantes se identificarán a que grupo pertenecen y se les preguntara si “a veces” o si "es cierto/siempre" acerca de ellos (escala de 4 puntos).

4 item scale that divides students into two group “Some students ___ BUT other students _____. Students identify which group they belong to and asked if it is “sort of” or “really” true about them (4 point scale)

- Algunos estudiantes siempre terminan sus trabajos de clases, pero otros no lo terminan.
Some students always finish their classwork BUT others often do not finish it
- Algunos estudiantes siempre entregan sus tareas, **pero** otros no suelen hacerlo.
Some students always turn in their homework BUT others often do not.
- Algunos estudiantes prestan mucha atención en clases, **pero** otros no suelen hacerlo.
Some students pay close attention in class BUT other students do not
- Algunos estudiantes hacen lo que pueden en la escuela, **pero** otros siempre dan lo mejor de sí. (invertido)
Some students just get by in school BUT others always try their best (reversed)
- Algunos estudiantes les gusta participar en las discusiones de las clases, **pero** a otros les gusta permanecer callados.
Some students like to participate in class discussions BUT others like to stay quiet

Prueba Temática de Apreciación

Thematic Apperception Test

- Cuéntame una historia sobre el estudiante que se observa en la imagen.
Tell me a story about the student you see in this picture

- ¿Qué es lo que el estudiante de la imagen está haciendo en la imagen?
What is the student in the picture doing in the picture?
- ¿Qué es lo que él está pensando y sintiendo?
What are they thinking and feeling?
- ¿Qué lo llevo a esa situación? ¿Por que él está en esa situación?
What lead up to their situation?
- ¿Cómo termina la historia?
How does the story end?

