

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS WITH
DISABILITIES THROUGH QUALITY INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

By

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ABSTRACT

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Understanding the needs of students who are English learners (ELs) and are also students with disabilities has become an area of policy and research in recent years. Uncovering the needs of this student group requires a closer examination and understanding of the Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is a foundational process and document used by all educators of students identified as students with disabilities to help inform those students' education. The IEP defines everything from a student's current abilities to their goals and even identifies educators' plans for instruction and support. The IEP is the 'road map' for students' classroom experiences. But what should be included in the 'road map' for students with disabilities that are also ELs? The need to answer this question is of great importance as there is currently no guidance from the Michigan Department of Education for Michigan educators on this topic. It is likely that because of an absence of this magnitude that students would bear the brunt of its absence. The negative repercussions come in the form of a potential lack of students' learning opportunities specific to their needs as English learners.

Through the use of the opportunity to learn (OTL) framework developed by Kurtz and Elliott (2011) my research investigates how educators can improve a student's OTL within the IEPs they conduct and write. My dissertation explores the barriers educators experience as they develop IEPs for this group of students. It will also consider when educators should include EL's specific needs within the IEP. The study will also recommend that educators use a tool created

through my research to improve OTL for ELs with disabilities within the IEPs on which they work.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The number of students that have been identified as both English learners (EL) and a student with disabilities (SWD) has been increasing steadily in recent decades (Office of Special Education Programs Data Accountability Center, 2015; Watkins & Liu, 2013). Data from the 2017-18 school year indicated that 10 percent of the total national K-12 population were identified as ELs. Of that population of students, 12 percent were identified as ELs with disabilities (Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), 2021). These numbers may not be totally trustworthy because Considerable research exists that suggests that ELs with disabilities are pointing to subject to both overrepresentation and underrepresentation of ELs with disabilities in K-12 schools (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Linn & Hemmer, 2011; Sullivan, 2011). These significant identification issues are concerning but not the focus of this study. For the foreseeable future, educators will undoubtedly continue to struggle with these identification challenges, however, if a student is properly identified as an EL with disabilities it is absolutely clear that U.S. law recognizes both a legal and ethical duty for the education of these students.

Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 established the Bilingual Education Act so that schools and districts could meet the unique instructional needs of students who are still acquiring English language proficiency. As ESEA was amended over the years to better provide more equitable services for ELs a series of important court rulings also established ELs as a separate classification of students whose linguistic needs must be addressed by schools. A first step in recognizing the specific needs of ELs, the landmark 1974 case *Lau v. Nichols* the Supreme Court ruled that “there is no equality of treatment by merely providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.” Despite

legal mandates, such as this, to ensure equality for ELs, policy makers have overlooked the heterogeneity of the population. For example, ELs are a group composed of students who are refugees, students who have limited literacy in their first language, and even students who have disabilities. Although ELs share a common thread of engaging in the English language acquisition process, they each may experience a variety of different challenges.

One reason that ELs with disabilities have been proven difficult to accommodate is that schools have found it challenging to determine which of their students are part of this population. Federal law does not clearly establish who should be formally identified as an EL with disabilities, nor does it provide much subjective guidance (Park et al., 2016). Because of this, it is challenging for schools to make determinations as to whether a student's needs are related to second language acquisition or due to a disability (Klinger & Artiles, 2006). Compounding the issue is also the fact that determination as an EL often precedes the special education referral processes (Rinaldi & Samson, 2008). Schools are required by federal law to identify students as EL within the first 30 days of a student's enrollment (OELA, 2016). There are no such timeline requirements for identification of a student with disabilities. The process of identification of disabilities can be quite lengthy involving an initial identification that the student *may* need special education services. This initial identification usually comes as a result of educator data and information to suggest that the student may be struggling. This may take time to accumulate. After this initial stage a student must then be formally evaluated which will take additional time depending on the nature of the suspected disability. Additional challenges with serving ELs with disabilities include districts lacking educators with appropriate experience to address the needs of ELs with disabilities (Zehler et al., 2003).

Federal law attempts to address the unique needs of all SWDs by requiring any student identified as a SWD to have a written IEP. IEPs are intended to provide for the planning of appropriate educational opportunities to students needing specially designed instruction (Smith, 1990). IEPs are proven to be effective in providing these educational opportunities for SWDs if they are of high quality (Bateman & Herr, 2006; Capizzi, 2008; Powers et al., 2005). In stark contrast to the world of special education, there are no federal laws specifying written documentation activities for students solely identified as ELs. Some states have addressed this federal void by passing their own laws. For example, Arizona's Individual Language Learner Plan (ILLP) attempts to fill this need with a requirement for a "written plan in the mainstream classroom that specifies what happens, instructionally, for the particular English language learner (ELL)" (Arizona Department of Education, 2011). Michigan, unlike a state such as Arizona, does not have additional laws focusing on the documentation of these students' instructional needs. Michigan educators are therefore solely reliant on the IEP to provide information on the needed areas of focus for a student. This is not to say that all aspects of a student's English language acquisition needs should be outlined in the IEP. In some cases, a student's language needs may have no connection to the student's disability or special education services needed. Despite this, without a formal process to help guide educators in determining what should be in the IEP for an EL with disabilities, the potential for under-serving these students exists.

With this in mind, educators should actively plan for the instruction of ELs with disabilities and consider the specialized nature of their academic needs in light of the fact that they are also acquiring a second language. If IEPs help ensure equality in education for SWDs then educators have both a legal and moral duty to use that process to provide an appropriate education with their specialized needs in mind.

In recent years, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) identified Michigan as the only state in the country failing to meet federal special education requirements. USED's letter to Interim State Superintendent Sheila Alles indicated that "Michigan needs intervention in implementing the requirements" of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (USED, 2018, p. 1). In addition, Michigan's special education programming has been under scrutiny preceding President Trump's inauguration and DeVos' subsequent appointment to her position. Michigan had spent the previous four years in the status of "needs assistance" by USED. Because of this, Michigan is in a position to revitalize and reinvent guidance and policies to better serve the needs of its students with disabilities, including its ELs with disabilities.

Because IEPs for ELs with disabilities have the potential to significantly impact students' learning in the classroom, my study aims to better understand what impacts educator decisions at the time of the development of an IEP for an EL with disabilities. Additionally, my research investigated how educators are able to determine when and how it is appropriate to include aspects of a student's English language proficiency in the IEP. There appears to be a dearth of peer-reviewed research on ELs who are also SWDs, but the research on the development of IEPs for ELs who are also SWDs is particularly lacking. The goal of my dissertation is to a) gather data on what educators need in order to improve the process of creating IEPs for ELs with disabilities, and b) create an educator tool, or ELs with Disabilities IEP Guidance Document, to help them do that. Specifically, I will investigate the following research questions:

1. What are educators' experiences creating IEPs for EL students?
 - a. What barriers do educators face and how can we remove these barriers?
2. How are educators able to determine when to include a student's English language proficiency in the process of creating or revising an IEP?

3. How does the ELs with Disabilities IEP Guidance document shape the way educators think about IEPs for ELs with disabilities?

a. How do educators think the guidance will reshape OTL for ELs with disabilities?

My research has the potential to make a significant contribution to the field by increasing attention on this population of students on which educators and policy makers have had limited focus. This research will most notably help the field improve the day-to-day processes and ultimately aid in the improvement of education for ELs with disabilities.

Chapter Two of my dissertation is designed to provide a staged approach for examining the current literature related to ELs with disabilities and historical legal background centering on attempts to increase access to learning opportunities for students. To best understand the EL with disabilities population, it is necessary to first understand the historical and current educational context for students identified as ELs followed by that of SWDs. These examinations will provide a foundation for understanding the issues specific to ELs with disabilities. The focus of the chapter will then shift to examining the Individualized Education Program (IEP), its purpose, history, and importance in providing educational opportunities to students.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the field of study related to the concept of opportunity to learn (OTL). Varying definitions of OTL are reviewed and critiqued. A conceptual framework for how opportunity to learn may function through the IEP itself is established.

Chapter Four includes an explanation of the methods and rationale for why I selected the research approaches I did. I provide details of each phase of my research including the procedures, participants included, as well as the interview and focus group protocols I developed and utilized.

Chapter Five presents my findings from aspects of my research in which I collected data. Those data collection opportunities included individual interviews and a series of focus groups. This chapter also includes a description of the tool I developed to help provide guidance to educators on the development of IEPs for ELs with disabilities.

Chapter Six synthesizes my data and findings by presenting overall conclusions from my research. The chapter is inclusive of recommendations to policy makers at the state level to improve the quality of IEPs for ELs with disabilities. A call to action for continued research on the needs of this group of students will be extended to readers.

Chapter 7 provides a summary of my dissertation. The conclusion includes a review of my research questions and research methods used. It also summarizes my findings and future implications for policy and research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to understand the challenges ELs with disabilities face in today's classrooms as well as ways to increase educational opportunities for this group of historically underserved students, I begin by reviewing the literature on English learners and separately, students with disabilities. I subsequently turn to the limited literature that examines dual identification, being an English learner who is also a student with disabilities. Throughout this review, I describe national population and policy trends and also zoom in on trends within Michigan since it is the context of the study.

English Learners

Current Status of ELs in K-12 Schools

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), there were an estimated 5.0 million public school students in the U.S. in the 2018-19 school year identified as EL. The percentage of ELs increased in most states between the school years of 2010 and 2018 (NCES, 2021). Unsurprisingly, the largest concentrations of these students exist in many Western states such as California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas. However, Michigan's total 2019-20 K-12 EL population is nearing 100,000 students (Center for Educational Performance & Information, 2021). Making Michigan's total population of nearly 1.5 million K-12 students, ELs represented 6.27% of the total population during the 2019-20 school year.

The backgrounds and languages spoken by these students vary considerably. For example, in California the most spoken language other than English is Spanish. Michigan f also has an EL population primarily speaking Spanish. However, Michigan also has a sizable

proportion of EL students who speak Arabic. Table 1 shows the most commonly reported home languages these students speak across the U.S and in Michigan.

Table 1.

National versus Michigan K-12 Home Language Frequency

National Home Language	Number of National ELs	Percentage of National ELs	Michigan Home Language	Number of Michigan ELs	Percentage of Michigan ELs
Spanish, Castilian	3,741,066	77.1	Spanish, Castilian	36,717	37.7
Arabic	114,371	2.3	Arabic	24,092	24.7
Chinese	101,347	2.1	Bengali	2,812	0.2
Vietnamese	81,157	1.7	Chinese	1,618	0.1
Somali	36,028	.7	Aramaic	1,479	0.1
Hmong	34,813	0.7	Vietnamese	1,327	0.1
Russian	33,057	0.7	Japanese	1,226	0.1
Haitian, H. Creole	30,231	0.6	Telugu	987	0.1
Tagalog	27,277	0.6	Korean	708	<0.1
Korean	27,268	0.6	Russian	389	<0.1

Note. Details do not sum to 100 because not all language categories are reported due to small n-counts. National data from National Center for Education Statistics, 2015. Michigan data from internal sources at Michigan Department of Education (MDE) for the 2017 school year.

As already noted, Michigan's two most frequently spoken languages are Spanish and Arabic. Although across states there may be small differences between the number of students speaking individual languages, the fact that Michigan's K-12 student population is not dissimilar from the language make-up of the national K-12 student population suggests that my research may be applicable to other state contexts.

Historical Background on ELs

For most of the 20th century, non-native English speakers were not provided opportunities within the classroom specifically designed to help them meet their English language acquisition needs. ELs were not considered as a subgroup of students until the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1967. In total, 37 separate bills designed to provide students with educational programs such as English as a second language instruction were merged into what is commonly known as the BEA or Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1967 (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). By providing funds in the form of competitive grants, schools were able to gain needed resources for these specialized educational programs that were not limited to classroom materials. These new grants could now be used to pay for training for educators and parent inclusion projects. Not only was the BEA a step in formally recognizing ELs as a population of students, but it was also more importantly intended as a solution for violations of these students' civil rights and opportunities (Guthrie, 1981; San Miguel, 2004).

BEA was a momentous step for increasing educational opportunities for ELs by formally recognizing the needs of ELs and increasing funding opportunities to help schools target resources specific to their needs. However, after its enactment some students still faced significant challenges. A major reason was that the BEA made a school district's participation voluntary. The law asked districts to do what was right on their own accord. However, districts choosing to do what was right was inconsistently acted upon with some districts choosing not to participate. This inconsistency created an unequal situation for students across the country. Also adding to the challenges for schools, was that no funding was provided for the BEAs first year of

enactment with a notable number of subsequent years receiving very limited funds (Mavrogordato, 2012; San Miguel, 2004).

The courts provided a remedy to some of the BEAs shortfalls. One of the most important legal actions to take place in favor of the rights of ELs was the famous *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) case which was brought against the San Francisco Unified School District by parents of nearly 1,800 Chinese students attending school in that district. These families claimed that their children could not understand the instruction provided exclusively in English and were not given any special assistance to aid in overcoming their linguistic challenges. The school district argued that its policies were not discriminatory because all students were provided with the same instruction regardless of national origin. In 1974, the Supreme Court ruled that “there is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education,” (*Lau v. Nichols*, 1974).

In addition to this landmark case in 1974, that following year the Office of Civil Rights issued a set of guidelines titled the Lau Remedies (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). The Lau Remedies were intended to help a district determine if they were in compliance with the BEA and to aid districts in the development of EL appropriate educational plans for the purpose of correcting any civil rights infractions. Between the 1974 ruling and 2018, BEA has been amended four times (1978, 1984, 1988, and 1994) and renamed once in 2002. These amendments changed funding structures to schools and state agencies for bilingual education, expanded eligibility requirements for students who are ELs, increased flexibility of instructional programs, and even created fellowship programs for educators’ professional learning. The name of the act was changed to the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and

Academic Achievement Act in 2002. This coincided with national implementation of No Child Left Behind (2001) which focused on the achievement of ELs and school district's accountability for ELs' acquisition of English (ESEA, 2015; Moran, 2011).

Identification of ELs

After the requirement to accommodate ELs was legally established, the question of which students should qualify for these specialized services arose. How should districts go about identifying students? Should there be consistency across schools within states in terms of how they identify students? States are required by federal law to provide an initial parent/family questionnaire as a part of the school's enrollment process to begin the steps of EL identification (Bailey & Kelly, 2010; 2013; ESEA, 2015). This enrollment questionnaire, typically called a Home Language Survey (HLS), serves as a trigger point for additional screening to narrow the pool of students who assumedly are in need of language support services. Many criticisms exist about the EL identification process that range from concerns about parent literacy levels when filling out the form to the simplicity of the questions themselves (Abedi, 2008; Abedi et al., 1997).

To alleviate these concerns, a systematic and consistent process for identification is necessary. Without it, students may have been incorrectly identified or were entered into EL services based on some form of subjective prejudice that has little to do with their actual level of English proficiency. A lack of a consistent process has called into question whether resources were actually getting to the students who need them. However, the U.S. Department of Education has promulgated rules and guidance in recent years that requires that each state provide a consistent method for identifying students who may be ELs in its districts.

In Michigan, the consistent methodology for identifying students eligible for services can be found in the Michigan Department of Education's Entrance & Exit Protocol policy. At the time of enrollment, districts are required to utilize what is called the Home Language Survey. The Home Language Survey is much like other state's initial language surveys in that it is designed to ask parents/guardians a limited set of questions that aid in the determination of whether a student may know a language other than English or may be exposed to a language other than English in their home environment.

Michigan's Home Language Survey includes the following two questions:

1. Is your child's native tongue a language other than English? Yes or No
2. Is the primary language used in your child's home or environment a language other than English? Yes or No

This is only the first step in the identification process. For students whose parents/guardians may answer 'yes' to either of the two questions, those students are then screened for the level of their English language proficiency using an assessment tool. In Michigan, these assessment tools, the WIDA Screener and WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT), are purchased by the Michigan Department of Education from the WIDA Consortium for use in all Michigan school districts. There are still problems with the identification process such as the continuing issue of false positives and a lack of tools available to more accurately identify ELs with disabilities. However, the implementation of the Michigan Home Language Survey and one consistent tool used within the state is certainly a step towards appropriate allocation of resources for ELs.

Challenges Facing ELs

When second language learners enter the classroom, they face a variety of personal challenges that include beyond those related to English language acquisition. These challenges

could include learning academic content while learning language (Cummins, 2000; Collier & Thomas, 1989; Perkins-Gough, 2007), culture shock (Bochner, 2003), limited formal education experiences (DeCapua et al., 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 2002), post-traumatic stress disorder (Williams & Kent Butler, 2003), social emotional challenges (USED, 2017) high mobility (Kim, 2011), socioeconomic challenges (Ramirez & Carpenter, 2005), environments/behaviors promoting biases (Walker et al., 2004), and even depression anxiety (USED, 2017). The rate at which EL students develop English language proficiency and experience academic success is dependent on these and many other factors. Additional variables include age and gender, the amount and type of exposure to academic language inside and outside of school, continuity of educational experiences, and affective factors such as attitude toward learning as well as a student's general personality (Krashen, 1982; Ellis, 1986).

Each of these identified challenges impact students' opportunity to learn in the classroom. Many of these challenges are outside of the control of the individual students themselves. For example, some states have English-only laws (Liu & Sokhey, 2014) which would prohibit schools from implementing bilingual education programs, which may promote environments that are hostile to students' native languages and cultures. This is not to say that ELs cannot achieve because of these challenges as evidenced by the large number of ELs who develop English proficiency, exit EL status, and demonstrate high levels of academic achievement, but these challenges stand to impede the progress of EL students and reduce their opportunity to learn, nonetheless.

Challenges Facing Educators of ELs

Not only do EL students face challenges, but when they enter the U.S. school system, educators also experience challenges with their arrival. The diversity of EL students entering the

classroom often overwhelms teachers and administrators. As previously noted, the term EL is used to describe a population of students that has a wide variety of characteristics. Schools may serve students of multiple language backgrounds and any variety of combinations of student/family attributes and circumstances previously noted within their classrooms.

Educators are also typically underprepared to understand the challenges facing EL students and struggle to implement effective solutions to address their needs. These underprepared educators may be contributing to a widening or sustaining of the EL achievement gap (Samson & Collins, 2012). As of 2014, few states had required their teachers to take courses in how to teach ELs as part of their continuing education programs (Lopez, Scanlan, & Gundrum, 2014). Educators also report feeling ill equipped to teach to their multicultural students, some of whom may be ELs (Kolano, et. al., 2014). States that do have course requirements identified by their departments of education or by state law tend to have higher levels of student achievement than states that do not (Lopez, Scanlan, & Gundrum, 2014).

Coursework alone may not necessarily be enough to improve educators' knowledge base for ELs. The literature indicates that courses must include instruction on certain concepts about language learning to be most effective in improving educators' knowledge base for ELs (Samson & Collins, 2012). From a high level, those concepts include:

1. The way in which oral language develops,
2. Knowledge of academic language and the difference between academic language and conversational language, and
3. Knowledge of the role of culture in learning for language improvement and general academic achievement,

The role that school and district leaders play in the education of ELs cannot be overlooked. Like teachers in the classroom, educational administrators should understand the above concepts if they are to provide appropriate leadership within a school. Educational

administrators can ensure resources are disseminated, programs funded properly, and large-scale decisions can be made to support ELs.

Increasing Access to Educational Opportunities for ELs

Teachers and administrators are in the best position to immediately and efficiently increase access to learning and opportunities for ELs. These educators have the ability, whether they realize this or not, to implement effective use of resources. Administrators can effect change in schools, no matter the topic or area of change (Mavrogordato & White, 2020).

It is very likely that a large number and variety of educators within a school may be responsible for educating ELs. These include bilingual/dual language teachers, content teachers, second language acquisition specialists (English as a second language, etc.), general education teachers, teachers of the gifted and talented, instructional coaches, teachers of specialized subjects, as well as Title I and other support teachers (Gottlieb, 2016). Paraprofessionals should also be considered in this group of educational staff who provide services to ELs. Although these staff members are not licensed educators, in a given school day, a student could encounter any combination of these types of educators. For example, a middle school student may attend general education classes for math, science, and social studies. Within those classes a paraprofessional, or instructional coach may provide one-on-one support for a student. That same student may also attend an ESL specific class taught by an English as a second language certified teacher. This short example illustrates that ELs should be considered a shared responsibility amongst educators within a school.

This strategy of including EL students in general education courses is also one which has been shown by research to improve access to learning for ELs. This research suggests that not only is inclusivity important, but schools that are linguistically and culturally responsive to their

students are able to provide high expectations and instructional techniques to support step-by-step progress and success (Bazron et al., 2005). Having educators focus upon the cultivation of ELs' academic language proficiency for achievement in their content area courses cannot be ignored.

Students with Disabilities

Current Status of Students with Disabilities in K-12

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that all students who are eligible for special education services be identified with a primary disability type. There are thirteen disability types which may be identified as a student's primary disability. In the 2019-20 school year, Michigan's total special education population was 201,122 students which is 13.41% of the total K-12 student population (1,499,552 students) (CEPI, 2021). Table 2 provides the 2019-20 number of students with each primary disability type. The table additionally provides the percentage of students of the total special education population for each primary disability.

Table 2.*Number of National and Michigan K-12 Students by Primary Disability Type*

Primary Disability Type	National Number of SWD Students	Percentage of Total Special Education Population	MI Number of SWD Students	Percentage of MI SWDs
Autism Spectrum Disorder	762,000	10.7%	21,550	10.3%
Cognitive Impairment	439,000	6.15%	18,455	8.8%
Deaf-Blindness	2,000	0.0%	29	0.0%
Early Childhood Developmental Delay	479,000	6.7%	7,559	3.6%
Emotional Impairment	358,000	5.0%	11,522	5.5%
Hearing Impairment	74,000	1.0%	2,633	1.3%
Other Health Impairment	1,049,000	14.7%	28,426	13.6%
Physical Impairment	39,000	0.6%	1,695	0.8%
Severe Multiple Impairment	133,000	1.9%	3,312	1.6%
Specific Learning Disability	2,368,000	33.2%	58,509	28.1%
Speech and Language Impairment	1,378,000	19.3%	53,565	25.7%
Traumatic Brain Injury	27,000	0.4%	499	0.2%
Visual Impairment	27,000	0.4%	789	0.4%

Note. Data retrieved from the National Center for Education Statistics and

www.MiSchoolData.org. National data is from 2018-19. Michigan data is from 2018-19.

Historical Background on Students with Disabilities

Throughout the early part of the 20th century, SWDs were effectively excluded from receiving a free and appropriate public education by local schools and states. States were allowed to discriminate against this population of students by refusing to enroll “uneducable” students (Gordon, 2006; Martin et al., 1996). However, a turning point came during the 1950s Cold War

era. As a part of the United States' efforts to compete for international superiority both technologically, militarily, and economically over the Soviet Union, President Eisenhower signed Public Law 85-926 which provided financial support to institutions of higher education for the purpose of training those in schools to teach children with cognitive disabilities. This law was expanded upon in 1963 to increase financial assistance, in the form of grants, to continue this training by expanding the array of disabilities. Shortly thereafter, the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 paved the way for Public Law 89-313, which allowed for Title I funding to be directly used for the benefit of educating SWDs. Advocates for these students continued pressing for a federal entity to coordinate educational efforts for this student group, increased categorical funding, as well as an enforceable mandate that these students must receive services through public schools (Martin et al., 1996).

These efforts finally paid off during the 1970s with several positive changes occurring. Not only did states begin to pass state laws mandating services for these students, but at the same time a series of federal court cases (*Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia*, 1972; *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1971) established that public schools were required to provide equal protection without discrimination. Until the 1971 case against the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, schools in that state were allowed to deny services to students who had not yet reached a "mental age of five years". The case's ruling ensured that the state would provide an appropriate free education based on these students' individual needs.

In *Mills v. Board of Education* in 1972 a group of children needing special education services brought suit against the District of Columbia public schools. The district argued that they were financially unable to service SWDs, however, the U.S. District Court ruled that the

school was constitutionally prohibited from deciding to deny services to these students. This case cited the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment arguing that the burden of insufficient funding should not fall more heavily on children with disabilities than students without disabilities.

The cases of *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* and *Mills v. Board of Education* were the first of a total of 29 total federal court cases that led to national pressure eventually leading to the 1975 Education for all Handicapped Children Act, now called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Generally, IDEA requires that schools provide equal access to education for children with disabilities. IDEA specified procedures schools must follow to locate all SWDs, conduct evaluations to determine how the student's disability may impact their educational performance and ensure that each student had an individualized education program (IEP), or written legal document that outlines the student's special education instruction, supports, and services needed to make educational progress.

This requirement of the IEP has been credited to the efforts of parents from the middle class who were determined for their children to have the same access to education as all other students (Holtzman et al., 1982). Some researchers even suggest that disability categories themselves have become formalized and mainstreamed for political reasons that at their root can be attributed to parental involvement. Sleeter (1987) writes that the disability category of 'learning disabled' is one such category. He explained that the term 'learning disabled'

“...emerged for a political purpose: to differentiate and protect White middle-class children who were failing in school from lower class and minority children, during a time when schools were being called upon to raise standards for economic and military purposes. Rather than being a product of progress, the category was essentially

conservative in that it helped schools continue to serve best those whom schools have always served best: the White middle and upper-middle class” (p. 212).

This parental involvement has also extended to parents advocating for the rights of their children by filing lawsuits against states and schools. Entire areas of research are even devoted to analyzing the types of court cases that have been filed (Zirkel, 2011). President George Bush recognized the volume of lawsuits as an issue and during a press conference upon signing the 2004 version of IDEA he said, “When schools are so busy trying to deal with unnecessary and costly lawsuits, they have less time to spend with students. So we're creating opportunities for parents and teachers to resolve problems early. We're making the system less litigious so it can focus on the children and their parents,” (USED, 2004). Although these lawsuits are filed by parents attempting to do what is best for their child, there are unintended and possible detrimental impacts litigation has had on schools.

Identification of Students with Disabilities

Identifying SWDs is a legislatively mandated process at the federal and state levels and is called Child Find. IDEA requires schools to locate, identify, and evaluate all children with disabilities from birth through age 21. The law is not limited solely to students at public schools, but even includes students who may be attending private schools. From a legal perspective, all students, regardless of status as a migrant, homelessness, or status as an EL, are covered by this requirement. In Michigan steps for identifying students are outlined in what is called the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education. These steps include a request for an initial evaluation and the completion of an initial evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services.

Challenges Facing Students with Disabilities

Once students are identified, a large variety of challenges await them in schools. Students with physical disabilities are challenged by the physical spaces surrounding them that were not designed with their needs in mind. For example, a student with complete hearing loss will not be able to hear a classroom bell as a sign of transitioning between classrooms. This student would be completely reliant on the visual cues from other students without hearing loss who may stand up suddenly to leave a classroom. In schools for the deaf, transitions between classrooms are signified by flashing lights.

Students with cognitive disabilities often interact with educators who may not have the necessary knowledge to provide effective instruction based on their unique learning needs. Part of this reason is enmeshed with the national trend towards inclusive classrooms. More and more general education teachers are teaching SWDs due to these efforts towards inclusivity (Cameron & Cook, 2007; Worrell, 2008). Some studies have indicated that more than half of students with disabilities are actually being taught in general education classrooms (Bocala et al., 2010; Holdheide & Reschly, 2008). For educators such as Mary Fair, a general education teacher interviewed for an article written for The Atlantic, she “had no idea how to handle her students with disabilities, whose educational challenges ranged from learning deficits to behavioral disturbance disorders,” (Mader, 2017, para. 2). This quote represents many general educators’ experiences as they begin their teaching careers and may also be true of veteran teachers with limited experience teaching SWDs. The lack of educator knowledge appears to be a limiting factor in educator’s ability to provide both a free and *appropriate* education for students.

SWDs also face negative attitudes from both students and teachers when they enter the classroom. There are subtle forms of discrimination that schools may be unable to completely

prevent (e.g., exclusion of SWDs from social peer groups, etc.). However, schools should and do take active steps to reduce more intense forms of this such as overt bullying. The most extreme forms of discrimination come in the form of actual assault, which, although uncommon, does occur. For example, in early 2017, four Chicago suspects were charged with assault of an 18-year-old teen with schizophrenia and attention deficit disorder. The attackers were “accused of forcing the victim to drink toilet water and kiss the floor, stuffing a sock into his mouth, taping his mouth shut and binding his hands with a belt,” (Associated Press, 2017, para. 3). The suspects broadcasted the assault using Facebook’s Live feature. Luckily, this type of violence is rare.

Students with disabilities also experience other types of non-violent exclusionary actions such as negative perceptions and bullying. Educators have been found to perceive children with the label of special education more negatively than unlabeled but similar students (Allday et al., 2011; Ohan et al., 2011). Negative perceptions are not just exhibited by educators but also by students’ peers. Students with disabilities are subject to more bullying from other students than their peers without disabilities (Martlew & Hodson, 1991; Whitney et al., 1994). Those students with autism and high school students with orthopedic disabilities were at the greatest risk of experiencing repeated bullying efforts by their peers (Blake et al., 2012). For students with disabilities, these bullying events can cause extreme emotional distress which often leads to reduced learning opportunities since these students with disabilities may resort to truancy in order to alleviate their own exposure to the bullies (Gastric, 2008).

Challenges Facing Educators of Students with Disabilities

The National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services (2018) reports that 12.3% of teachers leave the special education profession which is

nearly double the rate of general education teachers. The reasons for this large rate of attrition are varied and include affective reasons such as stress, emotional exhaustion, lack of feelings of personal accomplishment as well as excessive paperwork, inadequate administrative support, professional isolation, and unmanageable caseloads/workloads (Brownell & Smith, 1992; Martin et al., 2012). The extremely low retention rate of Special Education teachers points to significant challenges for these educators.

A challenge shared by most special education teachers is the significant variety of student abilities in their classrooms (Mastropieri, 2010; Whitaker, 2001). Classrooms may include students who are complete nonreaders as well as students who are reading on grade level (Mastropieri, 2010). This creates a situation where a teacher is expected to increase their workload to accommodate for the drastic differences in students' levels and therefore the highly individualized instruction that students would require. The impact student variation can have on educators can be mitigated with appropriate class sizes and caseloads of students with more similar levels for teachers.

Increasing Access to Educational Opportunities for Students with Disabilities

The U.S. educational system is designed to develop a student into a skillful and purposeful person (Hammond, 2008). Special education laws are designed specifically to increase access to a free and appropriate public education that meets a student's unique needs (IDEA, 2004). SWDs should be provided with the opportunity for experiences through which they can achieve their goals to the best of their abilities. In fact, providing students with these opportunities is the sole purpose of the Child Find process (Button & Sontag, 1979). Child Find is a process required by IDEA that generally requires that schools seek out and identify children at ages ranging from birth through 21 who may be eligible for special education services. If a

school district does not know who is in need of services, then they are clearly not able to actually provide services to students in need. As required by federal law, when a student is identified as a SWD a district must still have knowledgeable staff who can plan and subsequently provide for instruction that meets a student's needs (ESEA, 2015). Without both the identification and knowledgeable staff, students are at risk of not being provided with educational opportunities that they need to find educational success.

ELs with Disabilities

Current Demographic Trends of ELs with Disabilities in K-12 Schools

Descriptions of the number of ELs with disabilities nationally and more robust details such as what the most prevalent types of disabilities are for this population are shockingly limited. Some information about the estimated total population can be gathered from the U.S. Department of Education. Even at the individual state level, most state departments of education do not report on the progress of these students as a group on state assessments (NCEO, 2016). States are not required to report this population of students as a part of ESSA. This is expected to change and potentially positively impact state's efforts to support this student group in future years with the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Park et al., 2016). ESSA requires local school districts to report on EL progress in achieving English language proficiency with a disaggregation for SWDs.

As noted in Chapter 1, the best current data about the number of ELs with disabilities nationwide comes from the 2017-18 school year (NCES, 2020). However, this data does not include a state-by-state breakdown. The most current data from the National Center on Education Outcomes (NCEO) reports that during the 2013-14 school year, ELs with IEPs represented a large range of the percentages of students with IEPs across all states (<1% to 31%)

(NCEO, 2016). The reason for this substantial variation is unknown but could be due to differences in the sizes of each state’s EL population as well as identification challenges which will be discussed later. Of this subset of students, the following approximate percentages of ELs were identified by NCEO (2016) with each of these federally recognized disability categories:

Table 3.

National Percent of ELs with Disabilities by Primary Disability Type

Primary Disability Type	Percent
Hearing Impairment and Deafness	12%
Orthopedic Impairment	12%
Specific Learning Disability	12%
Speech Language Impairment	12%
Developmental Delay	9%
Intellectual Disability	9%
Visual Impairment and Blindness	9%
Autism	7%
Deaf Blind	6%
Traumatic Brain Injury	6%
Multiple Disabilities	5%
Other Health Impairment	5%
Emotional Disturbance	3%

Note. Taken from NCEO, 2016.

As displayed in Table 3, the most common disability types are Hearing Impairment and Deafness, Orthopedic Impairment, Specific Learning Disability, and Speech and Language Impairment. The lowest percentages are Emotional Disturbance, Multiple Disabilities, and Other Health Impairment. Information that these statistics do not cover is what proportion of these disabilities are categorized as primary or secondary disabilities nor does this necessarily include all students with 504 plans. The 504 plans are developed for SWDs so that students may have access to specific instructional supports, if needed. These plans are typically in place for students who may not need an IEP because they do not need individualized instruction. For example, a

student who breaks their dominant arm and is unable to write could have a 504 plan written for them to have access to a scribe for classroom assignments and state assessments. Unlike IEPs, 504 plans are not part of special education law, but are part of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Challenges Facing ELs with Disabilities

ELs with disabilities have dual challenges to face. Not only are they facing the aforementioned challenges associated with the process of acquiring English proficiency, but they have the addition of a disability as well. Due to the lack of statewide exit criteria for ELs with disabilities, SWDs are often overrepresented in EL numbers which has concerned many national EL experts (Artiles et al., 2005; Linquanti & Cook, 2015). The concern for these students stems from their inability to meet the rigorous cut scores on state assessments necessary for no longer being identified as an EL. They often become what is termed as long-term ELs, any EL who remains in EL status for five years or more (USED, 2016).

Additionally, ELs with disabilities receive their K-12 education through a system that is often built on false assumptions. One such assumption is that children with disabilities are too overwhelmed by learning and should not be exposed to more than one language. Significant research exists to refute this assumption and label it as a myth (Chen & Gutiérrez-Clellen, 2013; Gutiérrez-Clellen, 2000; Hambly & Fombonne, 2012). The myth that exposure to two or more languages will have a negative impact on students' first language is quite pervasive (Kay-Raining Bird et al., 2016). If educators base their instruction on these myths, then students' opportunities for learning could be negatively impacted because the instruction they receive could be severely limited or changed.

An additional challenge facing ELs with disabilities is their parents' and family's language limitations. The diverse cultural backgrounds of families may prevent those families from fully engaging in the IEP process. Early research studies point to the fact that parent involvement improves the formal education of students (Henderson, 1988). Despite the potential for positive outcomes, the cultural and linguistic diversity of parents of ELs with disabilities often means they are excluded from the IEP process (Bennett et al., 1998). Some guidance for improving IEP processes for students who may also be ELs can be found in research related to families of linguistically diverse students (Harry, 2008; Jung, 2011; Pang, 2011; Zhang & Bennett, 2003). These authors argue that parent-school communication is an important aspect in understanding and improving the effectiveness of the IEP for these students because of the significant differences found across cultures with respect to disability acknowledgement, communication, and social capital. Mainstream western values are embedded throughout the IEP process, potentially making attendance and participation in the IEP process intimidating for those from different cultural backgrounds (Jung, 2011). Concepts such as making individual decisions and the contradiction of those perceived as being in positions of authority are cultural values of westerners (Jung, 2011). Conversely, educators working with culturally and linguistically diverse parents can misinterpret parents' passivity as a sign of disinterest or even of agreement with the decisions being made (Jung, 2011).

Jung (2011) additionally points out the more obvious complications of communication between parents and educators. Communication styles as well as the level of English proficiency of parents can present problems for full parental inclusion in the IEP process. Schools often attempt to address the communication problems by including translators during IEP development. However, this also presents its own set of issues. The qualifications of the

translators may be subpar, but translators may also have biased attitudes towards the parents and are even perceived by parents at times as being allies of the school district and not simply translators (Harry, 1992).

Challenges Facing Educators of ELs with Disabilities

As educators consider how to meet the instructional needs of the variety of ELs with disabilities in their classrooms, their decisions may be clouded by the array of identification problems. Researchers have noted the significant EL identification inconsistencies that exist across and even within states (Abedi, 2004; Abedi et al., 2004). Recently, policy organizations, most notably the Chief Council of State School Officers' (CCSSO), convened a group of researchers to create a white paper. These researchers outlined these identification challenges in defining the student group 'ELs with disabilities' as well as the EL identification process in general to reduce complexities and provide a clearer pathway for college and career success for EL students (Linguanti et al., 2016). CCSSO's subsequent publication on the topic of ELs with disabilities calls for additional policy guidance and research in the area of ELs with disabilities identification, instruction, and exiting from EL status (Park et al., 2016). These authors write, "previous research clearly identifies an ongoing systematic problem of misidentification among ELLs receiving special education services. However, the literature is remarkably silent on empirical solutions for remedying this problem" (p. 2).

Schools struggle to not only identify students as ELs at the same time as they are attempting to gauge a student's current levels of content knowledge and cognition levels. Educators are often limited by a lack of criterion-referenced assessments that are normed on EL populations as well as assessments in students' native languages (Ortiz, 2002; Zehler et al., 2003). For schools that may have interest in providing on-the-spot translations of assessment

tasks they may be unable to find translators in a student's given language. Researchers have also cited significant cultural bias in these assessments (Ortiz, 2002). Differences in the dialects of the interpreters and the families may cause additional communication concerns.

Perhaps most problematic is that educators have significant difficulties differentiating between a disability and a second language acquisition concern (Klingner & Artiles, 2006). All of these problems have led to both overrepresentation and underrepresentation as well as complete misidentification and inappropriate disability categorization of these students' (Artiles et al., 2005; Linn & Hemmer, 2011; Ortiz et al., 2011; Samson & Lesaux, 2009; Sullivan, 2011). Research has also shown that educators experience significant challenges attempting to determine whether a student's academic issues are related to their second language acquisition needs or a physical, emotional, or cognitive disability (Klingner & Harry, 2006; Lesaux, 2006; McCardle et al., 2005; Wagner et al., 2005). The Michigan Department of Education has no current guidance to support districts in identifying ELs with disabilities and overcoming these challenges.

The results of a 2003 descriptive study of services to ELs with disabilities found that of a national sampling, 75.7% of districts whose special education coordinator responded to the survey did not provide services designed specifically for ELs with disabilities in their special education programs (Zehler et al., 2003). Of the remaining coordinators who indicated they did offer services specific to the needs of this population, the services they described as being available were not unique to the needs of the population but were general services for ELs such as EL classes, interpreters, and IEP development. This study additionally sought to learn more about the IEP process itself for these students. In 67.2% of districts the special education staff took primary responsibility for developing these students' IEPs while 23.4% indicated the

responsibility was a shared one between EL program staff and the special education staff. Only a very small percentage (0.8 percent) of coordinators reported EL program staff as having primary responsibility for developing the IEPs.

At a deeper level, the survey also looked at what type of student information was collected and reviewed by educators to make informed decisions for which type of instructional services students should be receiving. Of the 11 types of information cited in the survey as being used by educators, 8 of them pertained to tests. Educators primarily used achievement/content area tests in English (83.8 percent) while tests provided in the student's native language were much lower with a use percentage of 59.3%.

An additional complication for students includes educators failing to understand that students can, and should when appropriate, be offered both English language services as well as special education services. This is often a point of clarification in state documentation for educators (MDE, 2021) because of the continuing perception that students may not have both. An egregious case of students not being provided with both English language services and special education services played out recently in the state of Texas. Due to poor guidance provided by the Texas Education Agency, districts believed that there was a cap on the number of students who could receive special education services (Rosenthal, 2016). Because of this EL students as a part of the SWD population were heavily under-represented within the state because Texas' guidance limited ELs' identification as students with disabilities.

Increasing Access to Educational Opportunity for ELs with Disabilities

EL Expectations

Many states have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts and Mathematics, as well as the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) in

recent years. The expectation of the implementation of these standards is that they are applicable to all students. These standards expect that ELs and ELs with disabilities write narratives, apply listening comprehension skills, present their own ideas and arguments, and do tasks that require heavy use of content specific language (Bunch et al., 2012; Moschkovich, 2012; Quinn et al., 2018). Unless students are a part of a bilingual education program where they are receiving daily instruction in their native language, the expectation is that students carry out these activities in English. Logic dictates that students can only do this if they have had sufficient opportunities to learn academic English. However, providing these opportunities for students is a challenge for educators.

For ELs who are also SWDs, their linguistic challenges are potentially complicated by a physical, cognitive, or emotional disability or a combination of disabilities (Klingner & Artiles, 2006; Klingner & Harry, 2006; Rueda & Windmueller, 2006). Because the process of second language acquisition varies slightly from student to student it is quite often the case that the linguistic challenges EL students face appear very similar to a learning disability. Kuder (2003) describes the problematic nature of figurative language for some SWDs. For example, a student with learning disabilities being asked to create a ‘table’ from mathematical information presented in a piece of text may interpret this instead as being asked to create an object of furniture. Some students with autism fail to appropriately comprehend irony, lies, jokes, metaphors, faux pas, and deception (Baron-Cohen, 1997; Dennis et al., 2000).

ESSA and the preceding federal legislation require states to adopt a set of English language proficiency standards to promote a focus on second language acquisition in the classroom. Students identified as ELs are expected to be acquiring these English second language acquisition skills in listening, reading, writing, and speaking in addition to a state’s

content area standards in Math, English Language Arts (Reading and Writing), Science, and Social Studies as well as any other state required content. The vast majority of states (40 states and territories), including Michigan, have adopted the WIDA English Language Development standards. These standards meet the ESSA requirements and are designed to provide educators with a functional definition of academic language for second language acquisition.

SWDs, including SWDs who are also ELs, are supposed to be held to high expectations and educators are expected to ensure students are working towards academic standards and other goals. As standards-based reform efforts began to be implemented in the late 1990s, educators struggled with attitudes toward whether SWDs could be held to any of the same expectations as their general education peer group. In 1997 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reformed and included specifications about the inclusion of goals in students' IEPs that would describe how a student would progress in the general curriculum. At that time, the general curriculum was defined as "the same curriculum as for nondisabled children" (IDEA, 1997). Additionally, it was expected that the starting point for educational programs for SWDs would be the general curriculum to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the child.

A 2002 study surveyed participants to better understand their perspectives on this change in instructional focus (Agran et al., 2002). The findings from this study suggested that although educators indicated that they were focusing on the general curriculum with their students they appeared to make little efforts towards actually doing so. Over half of the respondents (53 percent) indicated that their district had no plans for ensuring access to the general curriculum for SWDs. Additionally, when educators were asked to rank the importance of 9 skill areas for SWDs students: possession of appropriate social, communication, and choice-making skills were

ranked the highest while the lowest priorities included academic, daily living, and transition skills from school to work.

Educator Knowledge

National researchers and policy makers, including myself, have recently identified ELs with disabilities as a group of students on which focus is necessary (Park et al., 2016). This national call for research identifies needs related to educator's knowledge base:

- How educators can increase their culturally and linguistically responsive practices,
- Use of culturally and linguistically responsive practices for Response to Intervention (RtI), and
- The languages of assessment and language skills of test administrators.

The basis for these recommendations lies in the idea that the educational system should be made up of educators whose knowledge base is inclusive of the needs related to ELs and those related to SWDs (Garcia & Tyler, 2010; Hoover & Patton, 2005; Ortiz & Yates, 2001; Rodriguez, 2005). Some experts (Samson & Collins, 2012) believe that all educators should have specific knowledge of issues directly related to the needs of ELs such as:

- Second language acquisition and theory, including oral language development
- Academic language demands,
- Cultural competencies and value of cultural and linguistic diversity

Ultimately, the more understanding there is about these students and their needs the more tools educators have available to them to increase access to the curriculum.

The Role of the Administrator

In considering how to best meet the needs of ELs who are SWDs, the role of the administrator should be examined a bit more closely. Although there are many factors that may potentially influence the success of ELs with disabilities, the principal at a school is uniquely positioned to have a particularly powerful influence (August & Hakuta, 1998; Mavrogordato &

White, 2020; Reyes, 2006; Shaw, 2003; Walquí, 2000). Although there is little argument in the field that principals' impact on student learning in the classroom (Blase & Blase, 1999) more recent questions have developed regarding their influence on creating effective and equitable environments for diverse populations of students. As has been previously noted, with EL populations in schools continuing to rise and given the recent negative political focus during the Trump administration on inclusion of non-native English speakers in our society, a high level of importance should be placed on these leaders' abilities to consider student inclusiveness in their leadership.

Effective Leadership Abilities of Principals

What are these special abilities that allow principals to play a role as effective leaders for meeting the needs of EL who are also SWDs? There are lessons to be learned from the EL specific literature. Researchers have identified the following factors as leadership abilities that positively affect ELs instruction (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). These indicators, as shown in the following tables, have been categorized to better facilitate understanding of the principal's abilities.

Table 4.*Leadership Beliefs, Knowledge, and Skills Around Inclusive English as a Second Language (ESL)*

Believes That...	Has Knowledge About...	Has Skills to...
Inclusive general education classrooms are best for all children	English language learner research	Create service delivery that keeps all students in general education and maximizes human resources and staff expertise
They possess a sense of agency - feeling they could and need to change their schools	Pullout services being disruptive, stigmatizing, less effective, and continuing marginalization	Facilitate and plan for change by creating a sense of urgency and leading collaboratively
Student diversity (language) is an asset to the student and school	Current realities of their school, their data, their district, and their community	Set up and maintain systems of communication with families whose home language was not English
They need to focus on and correct issues that have traditionally marginalized particular students	How professional development supports school reform	Support their staff learning new roles
School reform must be comprehensive involving all aspects of the school	Any reform (e.g., inclusive ESL) needs to be part of a larger vision and plan	Plan, lead, and integrate distinct initiatives into an overarching vision and reform
Collaborative and democratic leadership serves the school and children the best	Student or family cultures present in their schools	Manage time to be visible in classrooms and community

Note. Taken from Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011.

Although some beliefs, knowledge, and skills noted in Table 4 are non-specific to ELs and could just be considered good leadership, such as the ways in which appropriate professional development can help support school reform, many of these are explicitly tied to EL students. The beliefs centering on inclusivity and language diversity being an asset to the student and the school are part of an asset-based orientation indicator that is of particular importance for ELs. When speaking a language other than English is viewed positively rather than as a problem that needs to be fixed, principles are better able to provide equal access to opportunities for ELs (Crawford, 2004). For many ELs with disabilities, the asset-based orientation for educators and

administrators may be considerably more difficult to promote within school culture because often student disabilities are similarly viewed as ‘problems that need to be fixed’.

Building on the inclusivity indicators principals may possess in Table 4, principals that attempt to meet the needs of SWDs have been found to possess similar beliefs, knowledge, and skills. The following tables show areas of similarity based on previous studies (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003).

Table 5.

Inclusivity Indicators for English Learners (ELs) and SWDs – Beliefs

Indicator Type	Indicator Description	EL	SWD
Belief	Inclusive general education classrooms are best for all children	X	
Belief	Possess a sense of agency - feeling they could/needed to change their schools	X	
Belief	Student diversity (language) is an asset to the student and school	X	
Belief	Need to focus on/correct issues that have traditionally marginalized particular students	X	X
Belief	School reform must be comprehensive involving all aspects of the school	X	
Belief	Collaborative and democratic leadership serves the school and children the best	X	X

Table 6.*Inclusivity Indicators for English Learners (ELs) and SWDs - Knowledge*

Indicator Type	Indicator Description	EL	SWD
Knowledge	English language learner research	X	
Knowledge	Pullout services being disruptive, stigmatizing, less effective, and continuing marginalization	X	
Knowledge	Current realities of their school, their data, their district, and their community	X	
Knowledge	How professional development supports school reform	X	X
Knowledge	Any reform (e.g., inclusive ESL) needs to be part of a larger vision and plan	X	X
Knowledge	Student or family cultures present in their schools	X	

Table 7.*Inclusivity Indicators for English Learners (ELs) and SWDs - Skills*

Indicator Type	Indicator Description	EL	SWD
Skills	Create service delivery that keeps all students in general education and maximizes human resources and staff expertise	X	X
Skills	Facilitate/plan for change by creating sense of urgency and leading collaboratively	X	X
Skills	Set up/maintain systems of communication with families whose home language was not English/engage parents to enhance students' opportunities for learning	X	X
Skills	Support their staff learning new roles	X	
Skills	Plan, lead, and integrate distinct initiatives into an overarching vision and reform	X	X
Skills	Manage time to be visible in classrooms and community	X	
Skills	Communicate and reinforce expectations of high student achievement		X
Skills	Develop positive disciplinary climate		X
Skills	Ensure high-quality instruction		X
Skills	Develop a system for progress monitoring		X
Skills	Organize working conditions for instructional effectiveness		X
Skills	Provide opportunities for professional learning and teacher evaluation		X

As shown in these tables the beliefs, knowledge, and skills principals possess that are identified overlap in some areas and in others they do not. Interestingly, there is not as much overlap as one may think should exist. For example, why does progress monitoring only appear for SWDs? A successful learning environment for ELs should also include the development of a system through which the growth and progress of ELs are regularly monitored.

The Principal - Missing in Action?

The principal should ensure their own active role in the IEP process. Although federal guidelines do not provide explicit guidance on a principal's degree of involvement during IEP meetings, historically principals have been formally identified as a required participant. If the IEP is to be deemed as the 'road map' to services for ELs with disabilities, principals are the key to ensuring effectiveness of instruction through inclusivity. Therefore, at a minimum, principals should be tasked with obtaining an understanding of the IEP process. Additionally, if a principal fails to ensure correct IEP procedures are followed, the district or the principal can face legal consequences. In the worst cases, principals have been removed from their positions for failure to seriously enact the requirements of the IEP. This was exactly the outcome of a 1996 case, *Williams v. Cabell County Board of Education*, in which a principal was fired for "not taking IEP meetings seriously, not ensuring that the IEPs were carried out, and not cooperating with parents," (McElhinny & Pellegrin, 2014). For principals to succeed in meeting the needs of ELs with disabilities, their active involvement in the IEP process is necessary.

In considering the needs of students who are ELs and the needs of students who are SWDs, the literature shows that students who are ELs with disabilities have a combination of challenges that they must face. As educators and policy makers look towards meeting the needs of ELs with disabilities they seem to be limited in terms of knowledge, time, and resources.

Because of these limitations, policy makers should be more concerned about the potential for diminished opportunities to learn for these students and attempting to overcome their associated challenges. One way to overcome these challenges of diminished opportunities to learn is to consider finding ways to improve students' IEPs.

The IEP as a Road Map for Students with Disabilities

The widely held belief is that the IEP provides the most effective means for instructional and other related services for students. The IEP has been deemed essential to achieving ambitious goals for students and has been called the “heart and soul of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” (Bateman, 1995; McLaughling & Thurlow, 2003). Others have called it the ‘cornerstone’ of providing effective post-secondary transition planning for students (Doren et al., 2013). Although these strong claims may primarily stem from IEPs being the legal centerpiece, a sizable body of research does exist related to their actual use further contributing to their importance.

The IEP has been described as a “road map” for how OTL may be realized by SWDs (Pullin, 2008, p. 116). This unique “road map” is something that students outside of SWDs, including ELs, are not required to have. The formal structure and process for the development of the IEP is intended to provide students with the benefits an individualized program may be able to afford them (Pullin, 2008).

Fuchs and Fuchs (1995) asserted that what is special about special education is this intensive focus on the individual needs of students. IEPs require individual instruction and that is “perhaps the signature feature of effective special education practice” (para. 40). The IDEA (2004) requires that an individual's IEP contain the following:

1. Statements detailing a student's present levels of educational performance, including how the disability influences progress in the general education curriculum

2. Measurable annual goals, including benchmarks and short-term objectives, that detail strategies to address needs that emanate from a disability, thus enabling participation and progress in the general education curriculum
3. Statements that detail the special education and related services, supplementary aids, and program modifications or supports to be provided
4. An explanation that specifies the extent to which a student will not participate with nondisabled peers in the general education environment
5. Statements that detail individual modifications to statewide or district wide assessments (e.g., administration in small group setting) to allow for student participation
6. The projected date to implement the services and modifications, as well as their anticipated frequency, location, and duration
7. Statements specifying measurement of the annual goals and strategies for informing parents about their child's progress on a regular basis
8. Statements detailing the transition service needs of a student, if appropriate, that focus on the student's courses of study at age 14 and interagency responsibilities at age 16

Of these eight necessary components, the ones that have proven to be most important in litigation have been the present levels of educational performance; measurable annual goals, benchmarks, and short-term objectives; and the special education services provided. It is these substantive requirements that “ensure that students receive an education that results in meaningful educational progress” (Drasgow et al., 2001, p. 359).

The IEP was developed to be more than just a singular document but is also a process focused solely on one student (Shriner & Destefano, 2003). In order to adequately address the creation and re-evaluation of a student's goals and progress, IDEA dictates that certain individuals must be part of this IEP development process through what is called the IEP team. Members of this IEP team must fit the following roles: Special Education teacher/provider, a person who can interpret evaluation results, regular education teacher, school system representative, transition services agency representative, others with knowledge or special expertise about the child, the student (as appropriate), and parents. USED indicates that parents are key members of the IEP team. The U. S. Department of Education (USED, 2000) outlines six steps towards the creation of the IEP document itself as:

Step 5: IEP team meeting is scheduled

Step 6: IEP team meeting is held, and the IEP is written

Step 7: Services are provided

Step 8: Progress is measured and reported to parents

Step 9: IEP document is reviewed

Step 10: Child's needs are re-evaluated

Steps 1-4, not covered here, are related to the identification of a child for the evaluation of special education services. USED describes the purpose of Steps 7 through 9 as the actual rendering of educational services as outlined in the IEP document as well as continuous re-evaluation of goals and progress of the student.

Huefner (2002), while acknowledging the IEP as the 'blueprint' for services, also acknowledges the difficulty of developing and implementing IEPs. Very early IEP studies primarily focused on issues of compliance with federal policy (Schenck & Levy, 1979). In general, lack of teacher training, challenges with the team process of IEPs, onerous paperwork coupled with automatic compliance, and extreme time demands have been cited by researchers as challenges educators face upon implementation of IEPs (Smith, 1990). Others have cited educators' failure to develop measurable goals and objectives that aid in the evaluation of student achievement (Yell, 1998) as well as difficulties in linking assessment data to instructional goals for students (Smith & Simpson, 1989).

Other researchers have pointed to the fact that even though significant federal legislation may be passed the implementation for IEPs may not be followed through to the best of intentions which as a result could impact effectiveness. Powers et al. (2005) studied 399 IEPs of students ages 16 to 22 and analyzed them for compliance with federal IEP mandates and effective

transition practices that should include attention to demographic factors such as gender, disability type, district residence, race, and ethnicity. Of the nine effective transition practices identified for this study six of these practices made up less than 10% of the IEPs transition plan. Additional studies have found that IEPs may omit the required details to successfully guide instructional planning (Bateman & Herr, 2006; Capizzi, 2008).

In 1989 Ortiz and Wilkinson's conducted research related to the content of the IEPs of EL students with disabilities. They examined the IEPs of Hispanic students identified as ELs from three large urban school districts in Texas. Of the 203 students' IEPs examined, 168 of those students were identified as having a learning disability and 35 were identified as having mental retardation. They developed a coding form and then used it to analyze the IEPs for frequency of identified instructional goals/objectives. A total of 21 goals and 56 categories of objectives were identified as being targeted areas of instruction for SWDs across all districts in the study. This included goals such as reading, written expression, spelling, math, oral expression, receptive language, speech, reaching comprehension, and math calculation. Some of the most frequently listed IEP objectives for students included passage comprehension, word attack, word recognition, and spelling. Results of this study are rather startling; no IEPs included English as a second language goals. This study showed a heavy emphasis on English language arts within IEPs but revealed that an IEP team's selection of instructional goals and objectives for students had little to do with a student's level of English proficiency or bilingualism.

Not only is there minimal research on the IEPs of ELs, but there is also limited research analyzing the content of actual IEPs. Blackwell and Rosetti (2014) sorted recent peer reviewed literature related to IEPs into the following categories: IEP Content, Student Participation, Dynamics of IEP Meetings, and Assessment Information Consideration. Of the 51 peer reviewed

articles included in their analysis the majority of the studies focused on IEP Content (24 studies), followed by Student Participation (13 studies), Dynamics of IEP meetings (11 studies), and Assessment Information Consideration (3 studies). Interestingly, this recent literature review contains no studies that specifically identify or analyze results of students who have been identified as ELs with disabilities. A limited number of these studies provide some demographics related to race/ethnicity such as indicating whether a student is Hispanic, but not EL status, a clear gap in the literature.

Currently Available Tools for Educators

The landscape for tools or guidance to help educators through the process of creating IEPs for ELs with disabilities is significantly lacking. However, there are three resources that can easily be pointed to: U.S. Department of Education's OELA Toolkit Chapter 6, WIDA's ALTELLA Research Brief Number 4, and the California Department of Education's Practitioners' Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities. Table 8 provides an overview of each resource.

Table 8.*Available Resources to Create IEPs for ELs with Disabilities*

Resource	Provides a Theoretical Foundation	Research Based	Specific to One Disability Group	Description
USED OELA Toolkit Chapter 6	No	Not identified	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides information about laws pertaining to SWDs and ELs Provides information that can help educators consider the influence of language differences and disability on learning behaviors Provides a tool to help educators consider EL specific needs as a part of the IEP and IEP process
WIDA ALTELLA Brief Number 4	No	Not identified	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides information about laws pertaining to SWDs Provides a tool to help educators consider EL specific needs as a part of each section of the IEP and IEP process
California (CA) Practitioners' Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities	No	Not identified	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides information about federal and CA specific laws pertaining to SWDs and ELs Provides information to help educators consider EL specific needs as a part of the IEP and IEP process Provides examples for writing linguistically appropriate IEP goals for ELs with disabilities

Chapter 6 of the OELA Toolkit provides a list of questions for educators to consider for help in identifying whether a student has a disability or not. Also included is a table outlining potential language concerns for EL students and how those might be related to second language acquisition or a learning disability. However, there is no indication that this information and recommendations have been researched. A yes/no style checklist is later included for educators to further consider how to strengthen a student's IEP related to their EL needs.

WIDA's ALTELLA Brief Number 4 provides one unique aspect in that it provides educators with a breakdown of what should be considered for ELs with disabilities for each federally required IEP component. This brief is focused on considerations for ELs with significant cognitive disabilities limiting its range of use for educators.

The California document is lengthy and covers more than just addressing IEPs for ELs with disabilities. In total it is 464 pages in length with topics ranging from identifying ELs, conducting the pre-referral process, and even methods for teaching and learning to meet student needs. The size of this document should be an indication to others as to the complexity and importance of addressing the needs of ELs with disabilities. The voluminous size may not scare educators away from using it, however, for Michigan educators there are certainly drawbacks to using a document that is as heavily specific to California as this one is. For example, the California document references how educators can make connections to California's state specific English language development standards and assessment performance levels which differ drastically from Michigan's. Educators are also pointed to California's accessibility resources for determining supports and accommodations for classroom and assessment use.

One of the most notable areas of concern when analyzing these guidance documents is that each of these resources is lacking in being grounded in theory or research. The recommendations are grounded in law and are presented as 'best practice' however no applicable research is mentioned within the text itself or within the references that would allow the information therein to stand more strongly as valid and reliable practices.

Additionally, although each of these resources provide questions that may help educators consider the needs of ELs during the creation of IEPs. they are not provided in easily usable

formats. Each of these documents are in PDF form which limits editability. They are also structured in narrative formats further limiting usability.

Using Data to Inform IEPs

Educators are obligated to ensure that students make progress in attaining skills outlined in a state's content standards. A sizable number of lawsuits have been filed based on the 'reasonableness' of instructional methodologies provided to students for this purpose. Parents in these cases have argued that some programs are not appropriate for their children. To further illustrate this point of parental concern, in 2015 free appropriate public education (FAPE) cases accounted for the largest percentage of court cases against school districts (17%) in the U.S. (Katsiyannis et al., 2016). Courts determined that if schools are truly providing FAPE, then parents cannot force a district to change methodologies provided to students. The *Board of Education of the County of Kanawha v. Michael M.* found that the “ultimate success is not the touchstone of the inquiry: reasonable calculation is all that is required under the law”. It therefore stands to reason that improved IEPs could be an effective means of reducing FAPE cases against districts, including improved IEPs for ELs with disabilities.

So how do districts determine what is an appropriate education for SWDs? Educators are required to tailor instruction and educators must review SWDs test scores and any other objective data to help provide evidence that the instruction is providing educational benefit to the student. The goals written into the IEP must be consistent with the evaluation data provided and analyzed.

Despite these efforts to ensure students can access the same opportunities to learn as other students, some experts have argued that there may still be aspects of disadvantage for SWDs. Martin, Martin, and Terman (1996) explained that “the law does not require that the IEP

be designed to obtain the maximum possible benefit to the child, that is, the child is not entitled to every service that could conceivably confer a benefit,” (p. 34). A 1982 Supreme Court case, *Board of Education of the Hendrik Hudson Central School District v. Rowley*, provided a working definition of the term ‘appropriate education’. The Court concluded that ‘appropriate education’ can be defined as “personalized instruction with sufficient support services to permit the child to benefit from that instruction” (*Board of Education of the Hendrik Hudson Central School District v. Rowley*, 1982). Martin and colleagues wrote that that “the basic floor of opportunity” afforded to students through IDEA consists only of access to specialized instruction and services that are individually designed for the child (Etscheidt, 2012; Garda, 2004; Martin et al., 1996; Seligmann, 2005).

Thompson, Thurlow, Quenemoen, Esler, and Whetstone (2001) recognized that the stakes had changed for educators writing IEPs after the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA and therefore the question of adequacy of the IEP should be more closely examined. These authors argue that the age of accountability has successfully pressured educators into improving outcomes for not just their general education students but also for their SWDs.

Despite the efficacy concerns, there is little evidence to suggest that IEPs are not important for the education of ELs with disabilities. The importance of IEPs is illustrated in considering the IEP moniker of ‘road map’ which is also indicative of opportunity itself. The metaphor of a map emphasizes the purpose of an IEP. A map provides not only navigation, but also an *opportunity* to follow a path to an intended goal. In the following chapter I will explore the concept of opportunity as it relates to IEPs.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Opportunity to Learn (OTL): Breaking through Barriers

In the 1970s policy makers and researchers began wrestling with an element of the 1974 *Lau v. Nichols* case: opportunity to learn (OTL). As previously noted, the *Lau v. Nichols* case held that the opportunity for ELs to access a meaningful education in the K-12 classroom was a constitutional right. The concept of lack of access to opportunity has continued as a topic for opponents against the accountability and assessment initiatives of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) 2001. These naysayers of the standards, assessment, and accountability policies often cite fairness issues in penalizing schools if students were not provided with appropriate opportunities to learn (Porter, 1995; Starratt, 2003). Despite NCLB being a decades old court ruling that includes federal initiatives towards standardizing some aspects of education (learning standards and assessments), some educators believe the rights of ELs are still being infringed upon. Even as recently as 2016, a lawsuit was filed against Michigan Governor Rick Snyder and other education officials which claimed students in the Detroit Public Schools were denied opportunities to learn to read and write (Chambers, September 13, 2016). Within the list of complaints in the lawsuit against the schools were a lack of EL instruction and insufficient or unqualified staff.

The EL designation is intended to be a status from which a student should exit after some period of time, after demonstrating their English proficiency as measured by a state's standardized English language proficiency assessment and other criteria in some cases. These test scores are central to ELs exiting from their formal status as an EL, also called reclassification. However, without appropriate opportunities to learn (OTLs) English students may not be able to do this. When it comes to standardized assessments for ELs, low English

language proficiency negatively impacts students' performance on standardized assessments (Abedi & Lord, 2001). If low English language proficiency is negatively impacting students' assessment performance in all of their academic content areas, then a lack of English proficiency most certainly directly impacts their abilities understand and perhaps learn contents in all of their academic content areas as well.

For students to benefit from being taught English language arts content, teachers must attend to the development of their academic English proficiency (Aguirre-Muñoz & Boscardin, 2008). Similarly, ELs should be provided opportunities to strengthen their academic English language proficiency skills in order to access the content of all their general education classes including mathematics and science (Moschkovich, 2007; 2012; Quinn et al., 2012). This means that English language development must be attended to in all of a students' classes or attended to for all the content areas in which they are taking classes.

There do exist specific instructional models that are more effective than others in helping ELs acquire English. The literature describes classroom practices that may result in OTL, and therefore English language acquisition, being reduced for ELs as those instances of students being taught at a slower pace, not being provided with content related classes designed for second language acquisition (i.e., attend ESL pull-out classes), or not being taught to the same depth of knowledge as their native English-speaking peers (Boscardin, et al., 2004; Francis et al., 2006; Francis et al., 2006; Gutiérrez, & Jaramillo, 2006; Herman et al., 2000). Inclusive instructional models such as those designed as 'push-in' models are seen as being more effective in addressing the English language needs of ELs (Platt et al., 2003).

As described, instruction not designed to provide opportunities for English language acquisition for ELs results in lower content area knowledge for those ELs. Some believe that

these inequalities of opportunity, such as those in the form of poor instructional models, are a natural and inevitable part of society, while others recognize that inequality exists but believe it is a ‘social ill’ for which there is a solution (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Gans, 1973; Jencks, 1972). These ‘ills’, or educational inequities, have been addressed within a variety of OTL definitions. These definitions encompass educational experiences of students in the school, including curriculum, resources, teacher quality, instructional practices, and remediation efforts (Abedi et al., 2006; Herman & Abedi, 2004). Other OTL definitions include categories of ‘ills’ such as school delivery standards (safe school environments, school organizational characteristics), systemic reform (professional development and policy alignment with curriculum, instruction, and assessment), input conditions (funding and availability of teachers, instructional materials, and curriculum), and even time may be considered a variable (time allocation for mastery) (Ysseldyke et al., 1995).

The only attempt to legally formalize a set of OTL standards was introduced during President Clinton’s administration. In 1994 he signed into law the voluntary OTL standards known as the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Goals 2000: Educate America Act, 2000). These standards were developed from the continued research around topics such as access to physical resources, funding, and teacher knowledge. The law provided funding that states could use for the development of their own OTL standards and programs within a state. This law also established a committee to review applications for this funding. This attempt at formalizing OTL standards seemed to recognize the growing importance of OTL but wasn’t continued into the NCLB era that began in 2001. This was a missed opportunity to provide a broader approach to improving education within the somewhat narrow NCLB standards-based reform efforts which prioritized content standards, assessment, and accountability as the new educational focus.

Criticisms and Challenges of OTL

The voluntary nature of the Goals 2000 Act was problematic in that there was no requirement to adopt the standards nor was there a major incentive for states to adopt or create their own OTL standards. As a part of the introduction of these standards, President Clinton did create a competitive grant, allocating \$2 million dollars in 1996 to ensure children in schools could utilize technology to achieve 21st century skills. This amount of money, even in 1996 dollars, was too little to be a meaningful incentive for the creation of these standards for states. The competition clearly promoted a lack of equitability for the actual allocation of those resources. The passage of NCLB in 2001 singularly ended promotion and funding of the Goals 2000 efforts since the focus of standards-based reform centered around states' required adoption and assessment of academic based standards such as those for English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and English language proficiency.

With the limited implementation of the national OTL standards developed as a part of the Goals 2000 Act, policy makers face even more OTL implementation and use challenges. One of those additional challenges is the lack of a willingness from policy makers and researchers to agree on one OTL definition. There are a large variety of different definitions of OTL that exist. As a conceptual framework, OTL's broad catch-all disposition makes comparison of studies utilizing it as a framework difficult.

Not only is the variety of OTL definitions problematic for researchers, but so are researchers' efforts to measure aspects of OTL objectively. The usage of self-reports from educators on quality of education and portfolio assessments for students could be utilized to measure OTL (Porter, 1995). However, these measures are often subject to high degrees of variability because of the inherent biases of self-reporting. They would not lend themselves to

cross school comparability nor could they be used as effective measures of a state's progress in improving OTL for students.

Specific OTL Models

None of the OTL definitions identified in the literature are specific to one student group versus another. However, an OTL model developed by Martinez, Bailey, Kerr, Huang, & Beauregard, (2010) includes components of traditional OTL definitions such as 'time' and 'instructional quality' indicators, but additionally includes elements specific to the needs of ELs. These researchers utilized a model developed by Stevens (1993) which included the following components: Content coverage, content exposure, content emphasis, and quality of instructional delivery. *Content coverage* is defined as the breadth of core content coverage while *content exposure* indicates instructional time. *Content emphasis* focuses on identification of the major focus of the instruction. Lastly, *quality of instructional delivery* is defined as the instructional strategies used to deliver content. These were initially identified by Stevens whose research focused on these as classroom variables impacting minority students' educational achievement.

The model developed by Martinez and colleagues (2010) specifically borrows EL related elements from the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing's (CRESST) (2006) model as well as Boscardin, Aguirre-Munoz, Chinen, Leon, & Shin's 2004 model. These borrowed elements included second language acquisition strategies, EL process strategies, and instruction delivery formats. Second language acquisition strategies are used to provide students with tools for either making sense of the six linguistic inputs they receive or producing linguistic output that meets expectations for academic discourse (Boscardin et al., 2004). *EL process strategies* are tactics used to reduce the amount of linguistic input in instruction; examples of this include language scaffolding techniques such as the use of graphics

coupled with the students' primary language, as well as extra wait time for students' responses. *Instruction Delivery Format* is defined as the use of classroom participation structures (e.g., collaborative group work or individual seat work), (Martinez et al., 2010).

Additionally, Martinez and co-authors (2010) utilized a separate model for Academic Language Exposure (ALE) measurement which more specifically focuses on second language acquisition. For the purposes of their study, ALE was defined by Martinez et al. (2010) as "opportunity to acquire the linguistic features through which content is typically taught, specifically the extent to which students are exposed to the academic vocabulary and grammatical structures specific to scientific contents, and the diverse range of language functions used in academic settings (p. 6). The three dimensions of ALE and their definitions are as follows:

- Instructional Strategies: instructional strategies/techniques to promote ALE
- Instructional Emphases: how teachers support the development of students' abilities in linguistic areas related to their learning of the content
- Academic Language Functions: covers the varying ways in which language is used in a science classroom (i.e., description, explanation, definition, and prediction)

As is shown in the definition of ALE, a final portion of the definition itself is centered on one specific content area. However, the Academic Language Function element could be applied to any other subject area such as Mathematics or Social Studies.

The most consistently used OTL model in related research comes from Kurz and Elliott (2011). Their research has focused almost exclusively on measuring OTL for students with disabilities. Their theory is that the starting point for OTL is the teacher. To provide OTL to students, a teacher must spend time covering the content the student needs. Similar to the Martinez et al. (2010) framework this is achieved through the OTL dimensions of Instructional

Time, Content Coverage, and Quality of Instruction. These OTL dimensions are defined in Table 9.

Table 9.

Kurz and Elliott's OTL Definitions

Time	Allocated time (i.e., time scheduled for instruction), or more instructionally sensitive and student-oriented indicators such as Instructional Time (i.e., proportion of allocated time used for instruction), engaged time (i.e., proportion of Instructional Time during which students are engaged in learning), and academic learning time (i.e., proportion of engaged time during which students are experiencing a high success rate of learning)
Content	Teacher's Content Coverage of the general curriculum standards
Quality	Instructional practices: direct instruction, guided feedback, student think-alouds, and instructional grouping formats. Cognitive expectations: applying a range of cognitive processes from lower-order to higher-order. Grouping format: pairs, small groups, multiple grouping formats.

The model from Martinez et al. (2010) at first glance seems to be the most appropriate for my study related to ELs with disabilities since its dimensions focus heavily on language. However, for the purposes of my study it is too narrow in that focus. The Kurz and Elliott (2011) model is a convergence of three OTL variables (time, content, and quality) researchers have agreed have strong independent correlation to student learning (Kurz, 2011). It is for this reason that I chose to ground my research on the Kurz and Elliott framework.

Methods for Researching Students with Disabilities and English Learners

In 2003 the Council of Exceptional Children's Division for Research identified a total of four research methodologies that could be used to appropriately address research questions in special education: (1) experimental group (2) correlational, (3) single subject, and (4) qualitative (Odom et al., 2005). The Council also created a set of research indicators that help researchers determine the methodological soundness of each type of study (Council for Exceptional

Children, 2014). These were likely identified due to the recognition that special education research may be the “hardest of the hardest-to-do science” (Odom et al., 2005).

Special education research has been called the “hardest-to-do science” because of a variety of challenges which have been identified in special education research that are natural components of providing services to this population of students (Odom et al., 2005). One of the reasons for the difficulty in doing research on special education students is due to the large heterogeneity of the students themselves. Although there are defined disability categories that are reported by states, general classifications such as *physical impairment* or *other health impairment* can include very specific and rare impairments for students. Additional complexities can be found in the setting and context in which students attend school. For special education students the settings in which they receive services are varied, ranging from traditional classrooms to receiving services at home or in community living facilities. For these reasons, researchers cannot address simplistic effectiveness questions but must specifically identify for whom the practice is effective and in what context it is effective.

The disadvantages of many special education research design types (experimental group, correlational, single subject, and qualitative), particularly experimental test design which is considered the gold standard for research, is the issue of small n-counts for specific disability types. Like single subject research, the difficulty of generalizability comes into play. Correlational studies are also problematic in that they do not indicate causality but instead solely focus on the degree to which variables are associated with each other.

Unlike the field of students with disabilities research, there is no national organization that has provided guidance on how researchers should think about researching ELs. Both

qualitative and quantitative research can be found centering on ELs. A prevalent set of methods within these research types is also not present in the literature.

Although my research is not centered on students specifically, having the understanding of the complexity of challenges facing educators, and therefore researchers as they investigate issues related to this student group are important for the foundation of my dissertation.

Understanding these challenges lends itself to better understanding the challenges the potential limitations of my research for this dissertation.

Methods for Researching OTL

Although OTL has been studied utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods, quantitative methods seem more prevalent. A 2012 quantitative study (Cawthon et al., 2012) analyzed 2005 4th grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data to better describe the factorial validity of OTL which provided a description of the internal structure of how the parts of a test were related to each other. Through the factor analyses, the study found that classroom reading activities, student constructed projects, and calculators used for instruction in mathematics were differentially predictive of students' test scores.

Other quantitative studies have focused on measuring OTL for ELs and included analyses of standardized assessment scores. A 2004 study analyzed the correlation between students' Math SAT 9 scores and students' grades in Algebra as well as students' SAT 9 scores in Reading in addition to their Language Assessment Scale scores (Herman & Abedi, 2004). The regression analyses used for this study showed that non-EL students had a higher OTL than the EL students.

The Martinez et al. study (2010) was aimed at measuring OTL and academic language exposure in science classrooms of EL students. By examining the qualitative and quantitative

data gathered through surveys, interviews, and observations from 4th grade science teachers in California and Colorado researchers suggest that OTL varies between ELs and non-EL students. Each conceptual framework in this study attempted to focus on classroom opportunities that may increase a student's learning of science content.

All of the studies mentioned here were focused on analyzing individual student data in some way. The focus of my study is not on individual students, so the requirement of student heterogeneity is not applicable. Additionally, my study does not intend to include data sets requiring quantitative analyses. By using Kurz and Elliott's (2011) model I will be adding depth to the research using their OTL model.

Related Equity Concepts

Many different theoretical concepts exist that are very similar to that of OTL. They at times overlap and intersect in ways that do make them seem inseparable. However, the concept of OTL is the superior choice for my dissertation.

Equality of Opportunity

IDEA requires "equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities," including those who are also ELs (IDEA, 2004). As explained in IDEA, educational services offered to SWDs are, in part, intended ultimately to improve the quality of life for students by improving their emotional wellbeing, interpersonal relationships, material well-being, personal development, physical wellbeing, self-determination, social inclusion, and personal rights. Varying definitions of quality of life have emerged over time in the literature. Some authors openly offer that quality of life is subjective and based solely on each unique person's experiences (Taylor & Bogdan, 1990). Others view quality of life as the degree to which an individual has control over their

environment (Brown et al., 1988) or as the degree to which a viable self can be established in the social world (Parmenter, 1994). Other theories offered ascertain that educators need to place more educational emphasis on identifying preferences, decision making, and experience outcomes based on students' choices selected to enable them to more fully experience a higher quality of life (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). More specific to the lives of SWDs is the definition presented by Goode (1990) who writes that a high quality of life is the meeting of needs in major life settings (work, school, home, community) while also satisfying normative expectations held by others in each of those settings.

Regardless of which specific definition is used, the concept of OTL is tied to the framework of quality of life. For students to be able to function in social environments as well as in other settings, students must be provided an opportunity to enhance and learn additional skills in those areas. An assumption of an IEP (Halpern, 1994) is that services a student needs are *available*, and the quality of those services is sufficient to actually be beneficial to a student's quality of life. We cannot talk about the term 'availability' as it relates to quality of services without the concept of 'opportunity' for those services.

Despite the intertwined nature of these concepts, equality of opportunity as it is defined for SWDs does not fit with my study's goals. OTL focuses on elements currently occurring in the K-12 environment. To use equality of opportunity as a theoretical framework my study would likely require a comparative focus of differing student groups, which again, is not the intention of my work.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning is a very similar concept to OTL. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) however focuses on the actions of teachers, usage of specific resources, and

primary design elements of assessments and instructional materials to enhance students' OTL across subject areas. The term 'Universal Design' originated in the field of architecture (Friend & Bursuck, 2009). Through its application to education, the Center for Applied Special Technology's (CAST) definition is based on three primary principles:

- Multiple means of representation, to give diverse learners options for acquiring information and knowledge,
- Multiple means of action and expression, to provide learners options for demonstrating what they know,
- Multiple means of engagement, to tap into learners' interest, offer appropriate challenges, and increase motivation

As it relates to education, UDL was developed initially to increase accessibility in the classroom for SWDs (Chita-Tegmark et al., 2012). The development of the framework stemmed from the learning sciences and attempts to help educators better understand the major points of variability for these and all learners.

When considering how educators may or may not be meeting the needs of ELs with disabilities it may be appropriate to consider the existence of UDL elements as a part of the IEP. However, research utilizing UDL as a framework focuses on improving lesson planning and curriculum development for students but is not specific to the needs of ELs or IEP development. More problematic is that UDL may appear to be a framework inclusive of *all* types of students, but, in reality, pays little attention to previous experiences or cultures of students. In considering ELs and ELs with disabilities, students who generally do have significant differences with previous learning experiences and cultural backgrounds, the applicability of this framework appears limited. Lastly, UDL's limitations include a lack of broad application to all aspects of the IEP process.

OTL and IEPs Working Together

The literature suggests that OTL has the power to change the course of a student's learning progression. For ELs with disabilities, this power is amplified through the development and implementation of a quality IEP. Although not exclusively focused on ELs, the OTL model used by Kurz and Elliott (2011) for their research applies to all students but has been focused on students with disabilities. As the most consistently used research-based definition centered on students with disabilities across numerous studies, this framework will be foundational in this study.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between OTL and student learning as well as how IEPs work within the OTL framework for students.

Figure 1.

Relationship Between OTL and Student Learning

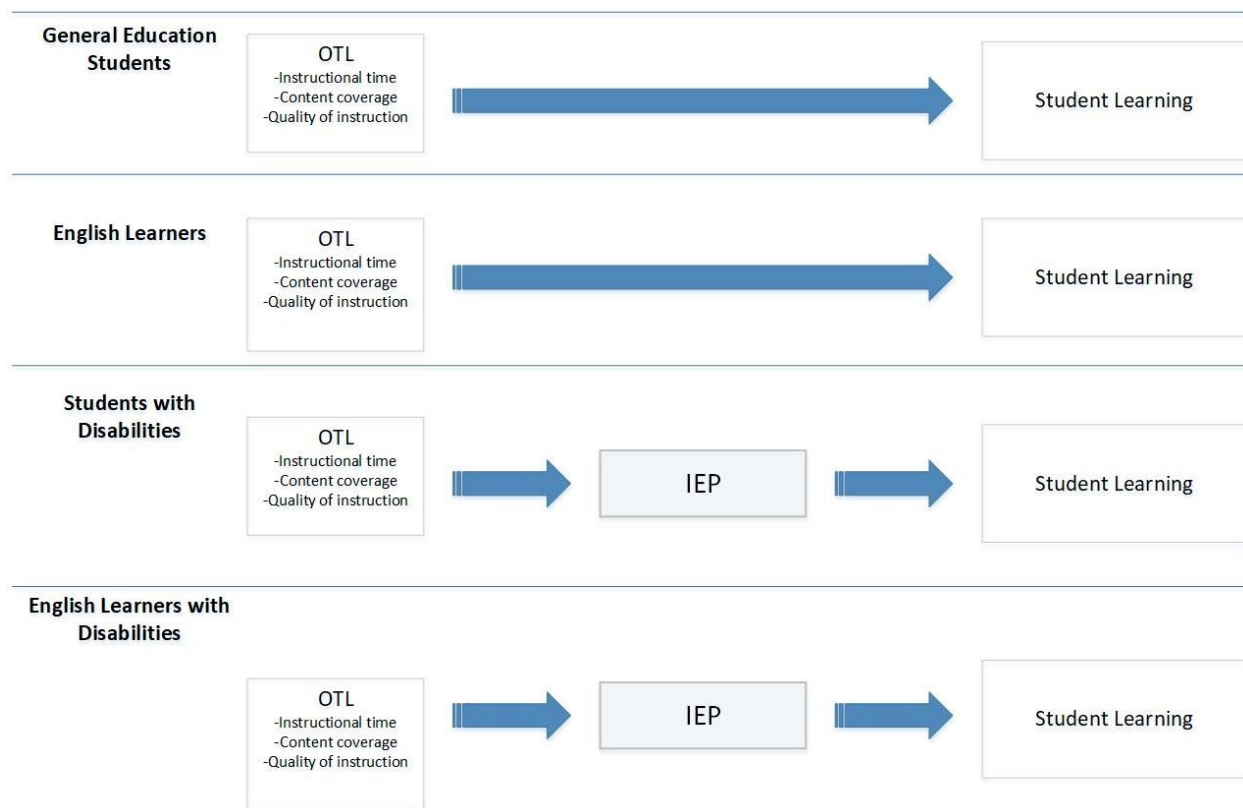


Figure 1 starts by framing OTL’s interaction for general education students. The model depicts OTL as a combination of the OTL definition indicators of Instructional Time, Content Coverage, and quality of instruction. These aspects should be present for student learning to occur. The model also provides a visual for how the IEP functions for SWDs. All aspects of OTL flow through the IEP leading to student learning. The IEP is the focal point for OTL to function correctly for these students. Similarly, the focal point for OTL to function for ELs with disabilities is also the IEP.

Figure 2.

OTL's Relationship and Impact to Student Learning

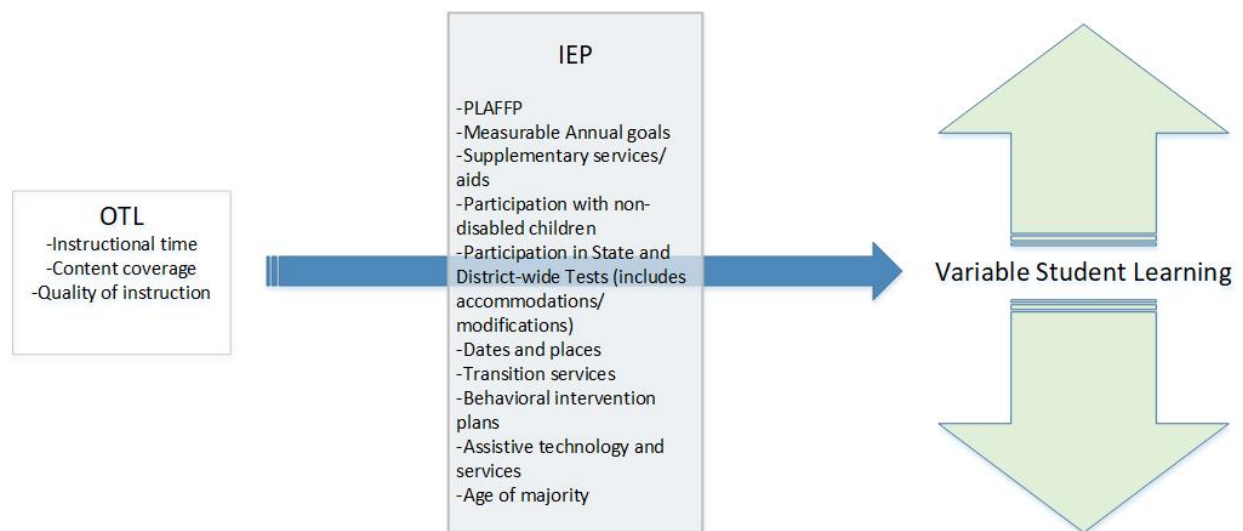


Figure 2 is a closer look at what occurs with OTL for ELs with disabilities. As previously noted, OTL works through the IEPs for these students, and more specifically it works through the various components of the IEP as shown. Depending on the quality or degree to which OTL is enacted through the components of the IEP, this will potentially result in variability of student learning.

Summary and Research Questions

As described above, ELs with disabilities need to have access to opportunities which have the potential to increase academic learning and support English language acquisition. Despite access to appropriate opportunities being challenging, educators have a method through which increasing access to appropriate opportunities can be accomplished. Appropriate use of the IEP is the gateway or “road map” through which OTL can be increased for ELs with disabilities. My study aims to examine challenges more closely in the creation of a quality IEP for ELs with disabilities as well as how educators may be able to overcome them by answering the following questions:

1. What are educators' experiences creating IEPs for EL students?
 - a. What barriers do educators face and how can we remove these barriers?
2. How are educators able to determine when to include a student's English language proficiency in the process of creating or revising an IEP?
3. How does the ELs with Disabilities IEP Guidance document shape the way educators think about IEPs for ELs with disabilities?
 - a. How do educators think the guidance will reshape OTL for ELs with disabilities?

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODS

In this chapter I describe the methodology used for my study as well as the rationale for why the approach I utilized is the most useful for conducting my qualitative study. Additionally, I illustrate the needs of the study as they pertain to the study participants while also defining the participants' characteristics. A description of the data generation and analyses are also included. The chapter concludes with a discussion of my role as the researcher and potential limitations of the study.

Study Design and Rationale

The use of a descriptive research design afforded me the best way to understand the use of IEPs for ELs with disabilities and make recommendations for how to improve the creation of IEPs for this group of students. The primary research method I utilized was a qualitative interview approach. Each stage of my research was built on an inquiry process to understand a very specific educational problem that required an investment of time spent with educators to fully understand the scope of the problem and a possible resolution (Creswell, 1994). That time spent came in the form of the qualitative data I gathered for my dissertation from a series of educator interviews and focus groups.

An overview of the data collection and analysis is shown in Table 10.

Table 10.*Data Collection and Analysis Overview*

Research Question	Data Collection Overview	Data Analysis Overview
1. What are educators' experiences creating IEPs for EL students? a. What barriers do educators face and how can we remove these barriers?	Individual interviews: selected educators	Inductive and Deductive coding
2. How are educators able to determine when to include a student's English language proficiency in the process of creating or revising an IEP?	Focus group 1: selected educators	Inductive and Deductive coding
3. How does the ELs with Disabilities IEP Guidance document shape the way educators think about IEPs for ELs with disabilities? a. How do educators think the guidance will reshape OTL for ELs with disabilities?	Focus group 2: selected educators	Inductive and Deductive coding

Research Question 1

In order to answer the questions posed as a part of Research Question 1, which included an investigation of educator's experiences creating IEPs for ELs and the barriers they experience, it was necessary to conduct individual interviews with educators. Rubin and Rubin (2005) describe individual interviews as necessary if research questions involve studying what people think and why they think what they do.

Research Question 1 Sample

The individuals selected for these interviews were a combination of educators who I know to be experts in their field based on my experiences working with them in my role at the Michigan Department of Education as well as educators who responded to a participation interest survey. The interest survey was provided to some members of the Michigan Department of Education's English Learner Advisory Committee for dissemination to educators in their regions. The Advisory Committee is composed of 40 EL educators from around the state who are either

the EL lead at their ISD (Intermediate School District)/RESA,(Regional Education Service Agency) an EL lead at a large district/rural/high migrant population, a representative from an EL oriented community organization, or a higher education educator. The participants also included educators from the Michigan Department of Education who are considered experts in their respective fields. A total of 24 educators responded to the interest survey. A special education coordinator and superintendent were roles missing from those surveyed. The interest survey was augmented with direct contact via e-mail to two specific districts for help in identifying additional educators who could provide specific perspectives needed.

Of the pool of educators from which to select, I specifically chose a variety of types of educators. Because of the varying levels of educators involved in the IEP process (teacher, principal, coordinator, superintendent), it was important to ensure that those perspectives were included in this stage of the study. However, the primary focus for my research centers on educators in administrative and leadership roles and as such those perspectives were prominently considered in my sample. Educators often turn to the Michigan Department of Education for support in writing and convening IEP teams. As such, a representative whose primary function is to work with educators of ELs and a representative who works with educators of students with disabilities were included. The importance of this focus stems from the need to consider the systems level perspective within my research. Educators in these roles of strongly positioned to be able to lead change and allocate resources within districts.

Not only was a variety of roles important to the study, but a variety of educators working in different settings was as well. The importance of perspectives from those working in rural, suburban, and urban environments coupled with districts with large and small EL populations

needed to be considered within my pool of selected participants. Table 11 displays the participants and their roles.

Table 11.

RQ1: Individual Interview Sample

Participant	Role	# of Years Experience in Education	Experience w/ELs with Disabilities	District Type	% EL of Total District Population*	% SWD of Total District Population*	Certification/Degree in Second Language Acquisition (ESL)
Ms. Aspen	MDE EL Consultant	20	Y	NA	6.27% (statewide)	13.41% (statewide)	Y
Ms. Birch	ISD/RESA EL Coordinator	13	Y	Rural	NA	NA	Y
Ms. Cypress	District EL Teacher	14	Y	Suburban: Large	1.1%	11.48%	Y
Ms. Dogwood	District EL Coordinator	22	Y	City: Small	16.2%	9.91%	Y
Mr. Elm	District Superintendent	22	N	Suburb: Small	<1%	15.86%	N
Mr. Fir	District Special Education Educator	11	Y	City: Midsize	14.68%	16.91%	N
Ms. Hickory	MDE Special Education Consultant	30	Y	NA	6.27% (statewide)	13.41% (statewide)	Y
Ms. Juniper	District EL Coordinator	7	Y	City: Small	14.68%	6.65%	Y

Note. Participant names have been changed to protect participant privacy. *Percent of total district enrollment is based on 2019-20 enrollment data. Due to COVID, enrollments across the

Table 11. (cont'd)

board in 2020-21 were down statewide and are unreliable. Data was taken from publicly available data.

See Appendix A for a copy of the consent form. The individual interview questions can also be found in Appendix A.

Research Question 1 Procedures

My data collection coincided with the emergence of COVID-19 in Michigan and the strict lockdown procedures that began in March of 2020. Preceding the lockdown measures I was able to conduct two in-person interviews. After that time, due to COVID-19 safety concerns, I continued the interviews via Zoom. The study participants were contacted via e-mail to schedule the interviews. All interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes depending on the descriptiveness of the participants' responses. However, they were not scheduled to go beyond what is a recommended 90 minutes (Seldman, 2006). One of the in-person interviews was conducted on-site in an office at the participants school and the second was conducted in a hotel.

Participants were offered a \$25 Amazon gift card at the completion of their interview. Current research shows that people are more willing to participate in qualitative research studies if monetary incentives are provided (Kelly et al., 2017). Participants who I met with in-person were presented with the gift card at the conclusion of the interview while participants who participated in the interview via Zoom had their gift cards e-mailed to them afterwards.

The two in-person interviews were recorded using recording software on a mobile phone that was later transferred to the laptop on which all data was recorded. The interviews conducted via Zoom were recorded in that same software platform. The online transcription service, Temi, was used for the focus group transcription.

Research Question 1 Measures

By using semi-structured interviews, I was able to gain an understanding of educator's perspectives on how they fit within the IEP process in their district as well as more clearly understand their experiences in creating IEPs. These lived experiences are the heart of what makes interviews the ideal choice to answer Research Question 1 (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Seldman, 2006). The development of the individual interview questions was primarily a result of considering the research question itself and the types of questions that would provide insight. A variety of question types were included that pertained to the participants' experience, values, and opinions (Patton, 2002). Recognizing the importance of writing questions that allow participants the maximum ability to respond thoughtfully (Glesne, 2011), I paid careful attention to language within the questions and removed dichotomous question types.

To ensure that the research objectives were met through this part of my study, it was important to conduct a pilot (Glesne, 2011; Seldman, 2006). The individual interview questions were piloted over the phone with a current K-12 teacher prior to use. This pilot resulted in minor revisions to some questions for clarification purposes.

The individual interview protocol began with questions designed to ease the participants into the discussion. These initial questions largely consisted of questions pertaining to the participant's professional background as it related to ELs, students with disabilities, and ELs with disabilities. I then transitioned to discussions of the participant's concepts of an IEP as well as their experiences developing IEPs for ELs with disabilities.

Participants were also asked directly about their experiences creating IEPs for ELs with disabilities. However, my questions also attempted to gain a deeper perspective on their role within the development of IEPs. Questions such as those asking about whether they would like to

have a greater role in their development provided perspective on the value they thought they could bring to IEP meetings. This deeper look at the participants' experiences extended to their beliefs about IEPs and beliefs related to the ways in which disability and language learning interact with each other. A subset of questions is shown below.

- Do you think an IEP for an EL SWD should differ from a non-EL SWD?
 - If yes, how?
 - If no, why not?
 - If sometimes, can you explain what this depends on?
- Do you believe that IEPs for ELs with disabilities lead to meaningful educational changes that help students?
 - If yes, please explain why you answered in this way.
- What do you think the greatest misunderstandings or points of confusion are for educators creating IEPs for ELs with disabilities?
 - Why did you select these?

Questions such as these were important for the participants to consider because the answers to them could point to underlying barriers related to the development of IEPs for ELs with disabilities of which the participants themselves are unaware. My questions also considered the participants' perspectives about differences between disability and language. Similar to my questions about beliefs on IEPs, these questions had the potential to point to underlying barriers to the creation of IEPs for ELs disabilities that the participants may be unaware of. Additionally, in order to address Research Question 1, participants were asked to comment on beliefs about what should be included in IEPs for ELs with disabilities. The full interview protocol can be found in Appendix A.

Research Question 1 Analytic Approach

Using the Dedoose qualitative software program I was able to code the individual interviews. The coding was conducted in multiple rounds. I utilized a hybrid approach of a deductive and inductive coding process to identify categories found within the participant

responses (Boyatzis, 1998; Crabtree & Miller, 1999). This approach complemented my research questions by allowing me to utilize the phenomenology of what's occurring in the participants' worlds while still allowing for themes to emerge from the interviews themselves. Some of these initial codes included Beliefs about IEPs, Data, Lack of Knowledge, Importance/Prioritization, Parties Involved, Points of Confusion, Time. These categories were refined and added to as each interview was coded. New themes and ideas emerged and required reviewing already coded interviews for coding updates and a hierarchical structure emerged. For example, I added child codes to the root code 'Follow-through'. I added 'Conditions that inhibit follow-through' and 'Conditions that promote follow-through'. Appendix A provides the finalized set of codes used for the individual interviews.

To ensure validity of the coding, a second coder was utilized through the initial round of coding. After each coder completed a session, we met to discuss the codes and review them, which allowed me to define each code more concretely. This additionally required that I recode individual interviews when definitions were modified.

Research Question 2

Through the use of a focus group, Research Question 2 investigated the ways in which educators were able to determine when a student's English language proficiency could be included in the process of creating or revising an IEP. A focus group provided the benefit of the participants' ability to build from each other's responses and collect multiple perspectives simultaneously providing a great deal of efficiency in data collection (Glesne, 2011).

Research Question 2 Sample

Participants included in Focus Group 1 to address Research Question 2 were asked to participate based on their widely acknowledged EL expertise within the state of Michigan. A potential drawback of focus groups is the potential for participants to hold back opinions and

thoughts if they differed from others in the group. For this reason, it was important for me to select participants who I know through my professional experiences who can share their own opinions while being polite and respectful of others' opinions. Similar to my rationale for my Research Question 1 sample, I focused on the inclusion of educators who have administrative and leadership roles within their school districts because of these educators' ability to implement change within districts.

The participants were contacted via e-mail to participate in a discussion of IEPs for ELs with disabilities. They were asked to fill out a Doodle poll to identify a shared convenient time for their participation. Two participants were redundant participants as they had also participated in the individual interviews. The size of the group was limited so that all participants would have the ability to share their thoughts and opinions (Glesne, 2011). Table 12 shows information pertaining to each participant that participated in the focus group.

Table 12.*Focus Group 1 Sample*

Participant	Role	# of Years Experience in Education	Experience w/ELs with Disabilities	District Type	% EL of Total District Population*	% SWD of Total District Population*	Certification/Degree in Second Language Acquisition (ESL)
Ms. Birch	ISD/RESA EL Coordinator	13	Y	Rural	NA	NA	Y
Ms. Dogwood	District EL Coordinator	22	Y	City: Small	16.2%	9.91%	Y
Ms. Oak	ISD/RESA EL Coordinator	21	Y	Suburb: Large	NA	NA	Y

Note. Participant names have been changed to protect participant privacy. *Percent of total district enrollment is based on 2019-20 enrollment data. Due to COVID, enrollments across the board in 2020-21 were down statewide and are unreliable. Data was taken from publicly available data at www.mischooldata.org.

Research Question 2 Procedures

My data collection continued through the COVID-19 pandemic in Michigan. The Focus Group 1 participants were contacted via e-mail to schedule the focus group and provided with options via Doodle for a convenient time. The focus group was scheduled for a recommended 90 minutes (Glesne, 2011). The focus group was conducted via Zoom and was recorded in that same software platform. The online transcription service, Temi, was used for the focus group transcription.

Participants were offered a \$100 Amazon gift card at the completion of the focus group. A larger incentive than what was offered for the individual interviews was provided to these participants due to their professional roles and needed expertise within my study. The participants received their gift cards via e-mail after the completion of the focus group.

A PowerPoint was used to display information to the participants, the goals for the event, directions on the focus group's activities, and questions posed to the focus group as a part of the semi-structured focus group protocol. A Google spreadsheet was created for each focus group participant, and each was populated with a template for response areas corresponding to the engagement activity as a part of the focus group protocol. See Appendix B for a copy of the consent form. The full Focus Group 1 protocol can also be found in Appendix B.

Research Question 2 Measures

Using a semi-structured focus group protocol, I was able to investigate Research Question 2 which focused on how educators are able to determine when to include a student's ELP in the IEP. Similar to a semi-structured interview, my semi-structured focus group approach emphasized the importance of a responsive interview model (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This allowed me to provide the participants with flexibility within the conversations and resulted in higher quality data.

Prior to the actual convening of Focus Group 1 a practice run of the focus group protocol was conducted with two participants in the field of English learner education and research to whom I had easy access. Based on their feedback, several modifications to the protocol were made such as eliminating one of the two planned engagement activities, reducing the time spent on one engagement activity, and clarifying information on PowerPoint slides.

The Focus Group 1 participants were first presented with an engagement activity designed to activate their thinking on the topic of OTL. The activity required participants to

define OTL and how they might change that definition as it relates to ELs and ELs with disabilities within timed periods. Participants provided their responses to the engagement activity questions within a Google sheet that was specific to each participant. In this way, I was able to make sure the participants were engaging in the activity during a remote focus group situation, and it also ensured that participants were unable to see each other's responses. The highly structured timed aspect of the engagement activity ensured that sufficient time would be spent on the more important discussion questions. A sample of the engagement questions is shown below.

- How would you define Opportunity To Learn (OTL) for a non-educator audience? (Column A) List words or phrases.
 - You have 2 minutes to answer this question.
- What words would you use to define OTL as it relates to ELs with disabilities? (Column D)
 - Rank your words or phrases in an order of your preference (e.g. by order of importance to educators, importance to policy makers).
 - You have 2 minutes to answer this question.

Participants were then presented with an overview of the OTL framework and definition used for this study. The focus group continued with the use of a semi-structured interview process as a whole group activity. The educators were asked questions specific to each aspect of the OTL framework: Instructional Time, Content Coverage, and Instructional Quality. The questions included variations of how the OTL aspect can be increased through the IEP and whether they had or could envision real world examples of that occurring. Focus Group 1 questions are shown below. The discussion also connected aspects from the OTL framework to IEPs for ELs with disabilities. As such, three sets of questions focusing on the three main aspects of the OTL framework were used and are as shown.

Focus Group 1 Instructional Time Discussion Questions

- How can increasing Instructional Time be achieved through the use of the IEP?
- Do you have examples of how educators have tried to use an IEP to increase Instructional Time? Was this effective? Why or why not?

- If you haven't seen examples of increasing Instructional Time using an IEP, what would it need to look like?

Focus Group 1 Content Coverage Discussion Questions

- How can increasing Content Coverage be achieved through the use of the IEP?
- Do you have examples of increasing Content Coverage? Why was this effective?
- If you haven't seen examples of increasing Content Coverage, how would you envision this?

Focus Group 1 Instructional Quality Discussion Questions

- How can increasing Instructional Quality be achieved through the use of the IEP?
- Do you have examples of increasing Instructional Quality? Why was this effective?
- If you haven't seen examples of increasing Instructional Quality, how would you envision this?

These questions attempted to elicit responses from the participants about how a student's ELP could be considered within the IEP as they relate to the OTL framework. Participants were also asked directly to identify potential ways in which a student's ELP could be or should not be included in creating or revising a student's IEP. The full focus group protocol for Focus Group 1 can be found in Appendix B as well as the consent form in Appendix B.

Research Question 2 Analytic Approach

The analysis for Research Question 2 included the usage of Dedoose software. Again, using an inductive and deductive coding process, I classified participant responses using concepts from the OTL framework to organize the responses and added additional classifications that would aid in the development of the actual EL IEP Tool. Some examples of the initial classifications were Barriers to Content Coverage, Increasing Instructional Quality, and Collaboration.

In my second pass through the focus group data, I labeled responses based on identifying patterns and emerging themes from the data (Huberman & Miles, 1994). I looked at patterns of agreement and disagreement by the participants. Through cross-referencing data from the

individual interviews with the Focus Group 1 responses, I was able to more fully understand requirements of the tool based on the needs identified from participant data.

EL IEP Tool Development

Once the categorization of responses was completed, I began actual tool development. This included ensuring I paid careful attention to including recommendations and needs discussed by the Focus Group 1 participants through the development process. The initial stage of the tool included development in a Word document. I used my professional experience creating public facing high-use tools and policy documents at the Michigan Department of Education to inform a general structure for the document.

The document was split into two main sections as a result of considering the data from the participants. Multiple rounds of additions and refinement were completed in order to ensure a good and logical flow to the content, clarity of content, and above all, systematically ensuring that the recommendations and needs discussed by the Focus Group 1 participants were addressed.

Once the draft was completed it was e-mailed to a professional graphic artist who I employed to transform the content into a professionally laid out PDF document. This professionalization was important to add a sense of visual importance to this document for educators using it. Professionalizing the document would also ensure that if the document were to be adopted by MDE, it would meet accessibility standards required for governmental public facing documents. I then worked with the graphic artist through multiple rounds of development for the completion of a draft that would be used with Focus Group 2.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 focused more heavily on how the draft EL IEP Tool would shape the way educators think about IEPs for ELs with disabilities as well as how OTL may be affected

by it. A focus group was again convened to review the draft EL IEP Tool as well as a separate individual participant.

Research Question 3 Sample

Focus Group Participants. Participants included in the final focus group, Focus Group 2, to address Research Question 3 were asked to participate based on their widely known expertise across the state of Michigan. The participants from Focus Group 1 were reconvened to review the draft of the EL IEP Tool that their responses from the initial focus group helped create. This group was reconvened due to their understanding of the OTL framework that they had been introduced to during the first Focus Group event. This provided not only efficiency in the time the group had together to provide feedback on the document but ensured that due to this additional processing time they had with the concept of OTL that the participants would be able to provide feedback specific to how OTL may be improved through the use of this tool. Additionally, because these educators are considered experts within the EL field in Michigan, their buy-in on the development of the tool itself was important for future dissemination and actual use.

Participants were offered a \$30 Amazon gift card at the completion of the focus group. A smaller incentive than what was offered for the first focus group was necessitated due to budgetary constraints. The participants received their gift cards via e-mail after the completion of the focus group.

Individual Participant. Because the special education perspective was missing from the focus group, I contacted a current K-12 Superintendent whose background includes having been a special education consultant at the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), prior K-12 principal, and special education teacher. I worked closely with this participant during their time

at MDE. Due to his availability, he was only able to provide feedback via e-mail on the draft of the tool instead of participating in the focus group.

Research Question 3 Procedures

Focus Group Procedures. My data collection continued through the COVID-19 pandemic in Michigan and therefore overlapped with my September data collection event. Educators were still wary of meeting and conducting in-person events. This focus group was conducted via Zoom and within a recommended 60-minute time frame (Glesne, 2011). The study participants were contacted via e-mail to schedule the focus group and provided a Doodle poll to coordinate a convenient date and time. The focus group was recorded in Zoom. The online transcription service, Temi, was used for the focus group transcription.

For purposes of the focus group, a PowerPoint was used to display information to the participants that included information such as the goal for the day and the discussion questions posed to the focus group as a part of the semi-structured focus group protocol. See Appendix C for a copy of the consent form. The full Focus Group 2 protocol can be found in Appendix C.

Individual Participant Procedure. The special education contact was contacted via e-mail to participate. He was provided with a draft of the EL IEP Tool by e-mail to review within an agreed upon timeframe. Comments on the tool were then provided back to me by e-mail in a separate Word document that the participant created.

Research Question 3 Measures

Through the use of a semi-structured focus group protocol, I was able to focus on investigating Research Question 3. The development of the Focus Group 2 measures came in part from an analysis of data from Focus Group 1 as well as the comments from the draft EL IEP Tool provided by the special education participant.

The Focus Group 2 protocol was based on the Focus Group 1 protocol. I structured the focus group protocol similarly to the Focus Group 1 protocol. The only difference being a lack of an engagement activity. I deemed this unnecessary and inefficient because the participants knew each other and had already been introduced to the topic. Additionally, being that the focus group was being held at the start of the school year, I wanted to prioritize efficiency for the participants' time commitments as this was being held during their workday.

By returning to the OTL framework I re-grounded the participants in the theoretical underpinnings of the study by providing a simple overview of OTL. This was followed by a review of the feedback the participants provided during Focus Group 1 for each aspect of the OTL framework followed by a related open-ended question. The Focus Group 2 protocol questions are shown below.

- Does this tool provide an improved IEP process for increasing Instructional Time?
- Does this tool provide an improved IEP process for increasing Content Coverage?
- Does this tool provide an improved IEP process for increasing Instructional Quality?
- In what ways do you believe the problems of addressing a student's ELP in the process of creating or revising an IEP have been improved with the use of this tool?
- In what ways do you believe the problems of addressing a student's ELP in the process of creating or revising an IEP have been worsened with the use of this tool?
- Given our goal of reviewing this guidance and tool for educators, are there things we missed in our discussion?
- How do you foresee using this tool with your district(s)?

The discussion questions asked general questions in addition to those specific to OTL. This allowed me to gather feedback related to whether the tool was practical and usable for educators. The full Focus Group 2 Protocol can be found in Appendix C.

Research Question 3 Analytic Approach

Using a coding process similar to the approach for Research Question 2, I categorized the participant responses from Focus Group 2 as well as the feedback received from the Special

Education participant. The codes are primarily focused on connections to the OTL framework. A list of codes can be found in Appendix C.

EL IEP Tool Finalization

Once the categorization and coding of responses was completed, I began tool refinement by considering the data collected to inform the revision process. This required another round of revisions to the document through the graphic artist. Once the revisions are completed, the tool will be posted online through Google Docs. This would ensure that the document was easily accessible to educators who may want to utilize it.

Role of the Researcher

I am aware that I bring personal biases to my research which could have an influence on my research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This is quite notable given my current role at the Michigan Department of Education. I was careful to ensure that the educators involved in the study knew that I was interviewing them as a prospective doctoral student at Michigan State University and not in my role as a representative of the Michigan Department of Education. This required diligent efforts to communicate through my Michigan State University e-mail and referring to myself as a MSU student throughout communications and data collection opportunities.

I attempted to ensure that I remained as unbiased and fair as possible given that I know the majority of these individuals quite well professionally. It was also helpful for me to ensure that I not only selected a range of types and roles of participants, but that I attempted to ensure that whomever I selected would be open with me in their opinions. Most of the participants are educators with whom I have worked professionally for a considerable number of years. They are not shy about sharing thoughts and opinions.

Potential Study Limitations

A limitation of the study is the small number of educators who participated. However, the quality of time spent with each participant coupled with the variety of perspectives based on the participants' K-12 roles helped to offset the effects of this small sample. Another limitation is the small number of special education perspectives who aided in addressing Research Question 2 and 3. Although someone with a significant special education background reviewed a draft of the tool, I was not able to include someone with this perspective in the focus groups despite varied recruitment efforts.

It is possible that responses collected during the individual interviews may have been impacted some way by the tumultuousness of the early months of COVID-19 in Michigan. Although I was able to attain participants relatively easily, I cannot discount the emotional stresses that were impacting every aspect of people's lives at that time as having a potential effect on the data.

Another potential limitation is that this study is unique to the Michigan context. Although some similarities might exist between Michigan's policies around IEPs and guidance for creating IEPs for ELs with disabilities, broad generalizations and their applicability to other states may not be possible.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

Chapter 5 describes the results of my study. The chapter is organized to present results for each of my three research questions one by one. It concludes with a synthesis of findings across research questions.

RQ1: Experiences and Barriers to Creating IEPs for ELs with Disabilities

Research Question 1 focused on investigating the experiences of educators creating IEPs for ELs with disabilities as well as the barriers they faced. The interviews spanned an array of types of educators, however, the 8 participants had common experiences and feelings about their practices creating IEPs for EL students.

Confidence is Everything

One of the most striking features of their stories was that none of the participants were confident in their own abilities to create IEPs for these students. This was evident in their responses regarding the low perception they have of abilities to distinguish between language and disability. When asked about his level of confidence to be able to distinguish between these two things, Mr. Elm, a superintendent for a small suburban district, rated himself quite low in his abilities to do that. The reason for that low rating was due to “lack of education, just lack of exposure, experience, and education”. This rationale was echoed by other participants who additionally noted that they experience difficulties in trying to determine what parts of the students’ needs are language related and what parts may be a cause of the disability.

Participants were additionally lacking in confidence of their colleagues’ abilities to make these distinctions. Participants pointed to an absence of EL knowledge and inaccessibility of student data as issues pertaining to these concerns about confidence. When asked directly about their colleagues’ abilities to distinguish between language and disability Ms. Aspen, a state level

EL consultant, rated her colleagues at the Michigan Department of Education as low and when asked why she responded, “Cause they don’t even know how to support English learners in the first place and then adding a disability on it is way beyond their scope.” This confidence insufficiency stretches across all organizational levels, from the department of education to local schools, and across all types of schools, including those with low and high EL populations. Mr. Fir, a district level special education educator with a large EL population, noted that his colleagues at his district “just need so much more professional development and training on this topic because it’s not something we really talk about a lot”. Mr. Fir’s belief in formal learning opportunities providing educators with confidence on this topic is reflective of the strong need and desire by educators to have those experiences offered to them.

Not having data about a student’s English abilities and skills during the IEP process was on which seemed to add to the participants’ confidence concerns when creating IEPs for ELs with disabilities. Ms. Juniper, an EL educator at a small rural school, noted that having high quality data over a consistent period of time would be helpful for educators’ ability to distinguish between language and disability. However, she also noted that even if she had “copious” amounts of data she would never be able to say she was fully confident in her ability to make that distinction.

The confidence issues could be attributed to the many barriers to creating IEPs for ELs that the participants identified. These ranged from organizational barriers to deeply ingrained professional obstacles that were compounded by a variety of factors. Additionally, participants with an EL background were acutely aware of the lack of EL knowledge that educators involved in the IEP process possess. Some of them noted that this is part of a larger systemic issue with the teacher preparation programs which are not adequately preparing educators to work with ELs

and their families. Ms. Birch, an EL coordinator for an ISD/RESA, indicated that EL knowledge deficiencies by the whole staff results in burdening the EL specific staff. In these cases, the EL staff are seen as educators who have sole responsibility for educating and improving EL students' English language abilities.

I think some of that weight needs to be shared. That our gen ed teachers, our special ed teachers, our administrators should be expected to come with some basic background knowledge about English learners and they come to the table likely with no experience and no background, no training in language. And so I think that equity piece on sharing our obligation to really serve our English learners as well needs to be spread out.

Ms. Birch's quote again illustrates an absence of knowledge as part of the everyday experiences for educators attempting to serve ELs. Furthermore, she points out that this may have an impact on how well educators are able to provide an education for those students.

The lack of EL knowledge is only one component of an educator knowledge gap identified by participants. There is an undersupply of knowledge about how educators should work with ELs with disabilities which translates to areas of confusion on what should be included in IEPs. All participants noted severely limited formal educational learning experiences such as college courses or professional development opportunities designed to help them meet the needs of this student group. Of the participants who had been able to attend structured events on the topic of ELs with disabilities, these one-time events occurred during and not prior to their professional careers. The participants with high EL percentages in their districts noted more experiential learning opportunities but only simply due to the high EL population size.

The knowledge and therefore beliefs educators hold related to language and disability as well as how they interact with each other, clearly plays a role as a potential barrier to creating

IEPs for ELs. One participant problematically noted that in her district language learning was an exclusionary factor for being considered for an IEP evaluation therefore limiting any EL student from receiving special education services. However, Mr. Fir's experiences were slightly different. In his district EL students who may have been found eligible for disability services were provided services at times that did not focus upon needs as they relate to their disability.

How we view IEPs and how we feel that if someone speaks a different language somehow that's supposed to be the main focus and that we should forget the other factors. So, we care for them, but we're in, throughout that care, we're still not providing them what they need. It's kind of like that parent that's overprotective, overbearing. They don't realize at the end of the day they're hurting their kid. I think that's what we're doing and we don't realize it.

Mr. Fir's quote identifies how educators are approaching the IEP process for ELs with disabilities; that in the absence of knowledge about the topic, that emotions take precedence. This provides an opportunity for dually identified students their language and disability become the focus over academic development. This effectively lowers the academic expectations for students and limits the academic opportunities that they may be provided with.

Language and Disability: A Web of Complexity

Complicating this issue is the way in which language learning and disability are thought about by educators. Participants such as Ms. Birch said that the way in which language learning and disability interact for students is unique to each student. Ms. Dogwood, an EL coordinator for a district with a large EL population, echoed this by saying "You know, each child is so individual in both things that when you get them together, it's just, it's big. It's very big." Ms. Cypress, a special education consultant at MDE, also spoke to the challenges for ELs with

disabilities by saying that language and disability can “intensify the other to make learning more challenging”. This concept of language learning being an additional layer of challenge for students with disabilities was prominent amongst the participants. Ms. Dogwood added:

And to have that added challenge of being an EL and a special ed student is substantially harder. Like when you can't access the language fully to either provide output or when you're given input and then your brain's working differently and you're already struggling to provide output or get input. It just gets so much harder.

This educator’s statement provides a deeper look into views on language learning and disability through the acknowledgement that the language learning process has both inputs and outputs of which students with disabilities may experience additional challenges. The ‘inputs’ and ‘outputs’ Ms. Dogwood is referring to are the receptive and expressive types of language. Receptive language is defined as how language is understood or comprehended by a student and expressive language is how words are used by a student for expression purposes. An example of receptive language is a student’s ability to comprehend and follow directions. An example of expressive language is a student’s ability to ask questions or write a paragraph. For ELs, their ability to express themselves in a comprehensible manner in English or their ability to receive information in English and understand it is already a challenge. When a disability that impacts a student’s receptive or expressive abilities is present, that student may have an additional learning challenge.

Most of the participants struggled to respond to questions on their beliefs about language learning and disability, including the ability to define language learning versus disability. Many acknowledged the difficulties they were having answering these questions. Some participants prefaced their responses with comments such as Ms. Birch’s by saying “Wow, I thought maybe

you were being sarcastic” about the difficulty of the interview questions when asked whether she could explain the difference between language learning and disability. In Ms. Aspen’s attempts to respond to related questions she says, “Repeat your question ‘cause I got confused.” When the question was repeated, she paused and then said, “That’s a good question.” Ms. Hickory, a special education consultant at MDE, explained this difficulty as

... [language learning and disability are] two separate things, and special educators want to look at just the disability and what we know. We know what we know and we can control that and we have our plan and our system and, but I think we don’t always understand how the fact that the student is an English language learner is going to interplay with all of that kind of, again, we don’t know what we don’t know.

Educators, understandably, want to focus on what their areas of expertise are. Ms. Hickory points out the fact that there is a ‘system’ in place that educators follow. This ‘system’ is perpetuated by educators’ own views of their expertise. Ms. Hickory’s quote acknowledges the difficulties because of a lack of knowledge. She also explains that this lack of knowledge has the potential for creating even greater problems for educators, and ultimately students, when educators are not even aware that they have gaps in their knowledge.

As Ms. Birch calls it, the “web of complexity” of parsing out how second language learning and disability may be interacting can only be addressed through a team approach. Ms. Birch not only acknowledges the challenges but offers collaboration as a solution.

This web of complexity does take a team of individuals and a lot of expertise to really meet all of those needs and be able to set appropriate expectations and goals and supports that can address those differences.

In her quote we see her solution as a reliance on the expertise of educators that is enhanced for the benefits of students through a collaborative effort between EL and special education educators.

The IEP: More Than an Acronym

The discussion of beliefs about language learning and disability inevitably bleeds into the participants' beliefs about IEPs themselves. When asked to describe the purpose of an IEP, the participants used words and phrases such as “personalized”, “intentional”, “level the playing field”, “accountability”, “legally binding document”, “helping them gain access to the curriculum”, “personalized guide”, and “a program offering support”. These mostly positive definitions were aligned with participants saying that IEPs are in fact important for students. Ms. Juniper believes that IEPs are important because they are protecting an underserved subset of students. “There's a whole legal aspect to an IEP, which is important because it's protecting a normally not so protected set or subset of our students.”

Many of the educators interviewed pointed to the legal nature of IEPs in their descriptions seemingly alluding to the importance of IEPs based on their legal status. One participant indicated that the IEPs may not be as important to students themselves and parents because a student's life goals are not being considered. Mr. Fir noted that although IEPs should be helpful for students, they can also be detrimental because of the negative connotation that exists for a student once they are identified as a student with disabilities:

I think the biggest point of confusion is just the stigma that we've attached to having an IEP. We see having an IEP as bad and when someone has a language barrier, we don't want that for them. We feel that it's tough enough for them to be in this country new or to

have parents that don't know the language, especially if they're from a struggling socioeconomic status. We feel like we don't want to add that label to them.

Mr. Fir points out the stigma surrounding the labeling of not just students with disabilities but also the labeling of students who are ELs. Educators themselves are not removed from the potential to not provide students with instructional opportunities because of educators' emotions.

Mr. Fir's quote illustrates a genuine concern that labels have stigmas associated with them.

However, avoiding them can further disadvantage students.

Despite participants feeling strongly about the importance of IEPs, they also believe that IEPs may not actually be leading to meaningful educational changes that help students.

Challenges that the participants identified included IEP goals being too basic and lack of timely student information transfers when students move between districts. They also included an inability for educators to provide both special education services and EL services because of students' lack of access to EL educators, as reasons for the participants' confidence concerns related to the benefits of IEPs for students.

Practical barriers such as competing priorities were noted by the participants. Limitations of staff, resources, and time were all provided as examples of why there may be a limited focus on ELs needs related to IEPs. There is desire by the participants to be more involved but that is complicated by competing priorities. When asked whether she would like to have a greater role in the development of IEPs for students in their district Ms. Juniper responded with the following:

I think, I think it's needed. Yes. I've attempted to get myself invited to them, but I was told that if I attempted to get invited to all of them, my calendar would not function anymore.

Ms. Juniper's quote illustrates the desire by EL educators to be more involved. However, in Ms. Juniper's case, she is unable to because of time constraints. Time has been noted as being one of the biggest inhibitors to EL educators being able to be involved more within the IEPs for ELs with disabilities. Ms. Dogwood candidly said, "...most of the time it just comes down to we don't have the time to do this well...". However, a ray of hope was found in Mr. Elm's response on the topic of time. His experience sitting on IEP team meetings is that he has never felt as though he or the staff he worked with wanted to just hurry up and get the IEP done and over with. He never felt as though they 'shortchanged' the families involved.

Even within the classroom environment itself, educators are often not able to interact with students to the level with which they would like. None of the participants illustrate this more than Ms. Hickory in her recollection of an EL student who was deaf/hard-of-hearing in her class years ago.

And he was in the district for three years. I had him as a preschooler. The next year I got bumped into kindergarten gen ed. He was in my kindergarten classroom, so I wasn't wearing the deaf hard of hearing teacher hat. I was wearing a gen ed kindergarten teacher hat and he had an interpreter with him so I could communicate directly with him. But I couldn't do that very often because I had 28 kids.

This example describes a similar but different time related issue educators face which have resulted in negative impacts on students' opportunities to learn. Ms. Hickory's experience shows a desire to be more involved with the student but an ability to do so because of her additional classroom responsibilities which came in the form of 28 additional students.

Appropriate Solutions to the Barriers of Developing IEPs for ELs with Disabilities

All individual interview participants acknowledged that something needs to be different about IEPs for ELs with disabilities. Their answers included ensuring that different types of data points and many more data points should be collected to help make better IEP decisions, that students' cultural needs should be considered, and that students' needs as they relate to language should be considered as a part of the process. Mr. Elm, a participant with limited EL experiences, acknowledged that EL students have particular needs and IEPs should be considering those needs somehow.

... I do think there probably does need to be some exception in there to make sure I don't know what would look different, but to ensure that those students who have a very particular challenge in front of them have their needs met... I could see them having a couple different needs than everybody else.

Mr. Fir's thinking was in line with Mr. Elm's.

I don't think [the IEP process is] comprehensive enough in terms of looking at cultural considerations, looking at their history. I don't think it's comprehensive enough. I think in terms of just regular baseline data for any student that has a disability, but as far as an ELL student, I think we need something a little more comprehensive to look at all of the factors that could be playing a role in their demise or success. I don't think it's comprehensive enough to meet the students.

Mr. Fir and Mr. Elm's acknowledgement that something needs to be different about the IEP process for ELs with disabilities to provide them with what they need is tied to educators' abilities to address one of the greatest challenges pointed out by the participants: the absence of a collaborative team process when creating IEPs for ELs with disabilities. The participants said

that at times they have experienced a complete lack of collaboration around IEPs for ELs with disabilities. Some of the participants noted that they have either experienced inconsistent invitations to the meetings or they have just been forgotten about entirely.

Many of the participants said that they felt as though even if they were invited to IEP team meetings, they had no voice in the process. Ms. Dogwood expressed a similar sentiment. “I’ve been in the process, but our process didn’t allow many people to speak. So I was in the room, I wasn’t in the role. I don’t know that I was as confident and willing to say what I do now.” Others shared this feeling such as Ms. Birch by saying that she felt as though her special education colleagues’ voices were more respected than her own during those meetings. She also strongly believed that the simple act of inviting an EL teacher to the table wasn’t enough.

And so even when we’re at the table, when our ESL teachers are there, when I was in the classroom and sat at an IEP meeting, I think the special ed voice is more respected and is stronger than our ELs, we need to really elevate our English learner experts and say they are experts in language and their insight and background and experiences is just as important as that of the special ed world.

Ms. Birch expressed this desire to find ways to elevate the professional backgrounds of EL staff so that they could have more involvement. She noted that there needs to be a mentality shift from the top down across the state to try to address this. Ms. Dogwood and Ms. Birch both spoke to the concept of expertise and that educators with both areas of expertise, those with EL and those with disability expertise, should be required to be a part of the process to help create appropriate goals so that the student can move at an appropriate learning pace.

Collaboration seemed to play a prominent role in addressing conditions that were inhibiting the creation of appropriate IEPs for ELs with disabilities. Few solutions were provided

by participants during the interviews to the collaboration process. However, Ms. Juniper acknowledged the difficulties in achieving such a thing.

I think the bleed between the programs has to happen. And the way for it to happen is by people being pushy and nosy and you know, like pushing themselves into places where people normally have said, we don't need you here.

Ms. Juniper's solution was to "strong arm" herself into situations and conversations within her district. This approach requires a great degree of confidence, powerful desire, and prioritization that improving upon the IEP process for ELs with disabilities was needed.

RQ2: Determining When to Include ELP In the IEP Process

For Research Question 2, I convened Focus Group 1 whose purpose was to investigate more fully what should be included in an IEP for an EL with disabilities and do so with a group of knowledgeable educators. The focus group responses were then used to create a draft of the EL IEP Tool. Most of the focus group discussion centered around increasing OTL through the three OTL framework aspects of increasing Instructional Time, increasing Content Coverage, and increasing Instructional Quality. These three components of OTL are what allow the IEP to function well so that higher levels of learning can occur.

Increasing Instructional Time

Focus Group 1 provided perspective on how increasing Instructional Time could be achieved within the IEPs of ELs with disabilities. Instructional Time is the first of the three Kurz and Elliott (2011) OTL aspects my research utilizes. Instructional Time connects to IEPs in the ways in which time may be allocated for instructional purposes for a student. IEPs may be written to include these elements for individual students depending on the unique needs of a student.

The participants expressed a strong interest in the idea of educators better thinking through how Instructional Time could be used for students and therefore incorporated into the IEP. As Ms. Oak explained, “It’s an increase of effective use of Instructional Time”. The use of the word ‘effective’ is what participants explained was important. Ms. Birch expanded the thought by saying, “It’s a lot about how are we rethinking the use of the time that we already have.”

Ms. Dogwood provided a concrete example of how to increase Instructional Time for students. It’s like the stupid example of the ‘magic E/silent E’ you know. If you’re using the same words when you’re working with a student, you are not wasting time having them learn them both.

In this example Ms. Dogwood explains that a student that is learning about the concept of the ‘silent e’ such as words like ‘ate, bye, pie, and toe’ may have been instructed that the concept is called ‘silent e’ by one teacher and ‘magic e’ by another. This simple difference in terminology can cause additional and unnecessary teaching time and furthermore cause confusion for the student. The participants point out that these issues could be alleviated through collaboration. Ms. Oak said, “And so I’m thinking about in an IEP defining when are supports happening and from whom. How is that collaboration happening?”

When writing IEP goals, Focus Group 1 participants identified collaboration as a key approach to increasing Instructional Time. Ms. Dogwood, along with the other participants, again shared her experiences related to lack of collaboration between EL educators and special education staff:

... [the EL staff are] more about providing information to support the IEP team rather than working collaboratively. I think there’s a hierarchy balance. That’s still happening

where it's like, okay, the IEP, let them attend the meetings and they're there to provide what's their WIDA data. I feel like the decision making and the actual form that's being filled out is really dictated by the special ed team in that meeting. And so I think we missed an opportunity for that Instructional Time.

The participants acknowledged that although collaboration between EL staff and the special education staff could increase the effective use of Instructional Time, that there was one potential area that could be seen as a slight negative. Ms. Dogwood commented that finding more effective ways to use Instructional Time through collaboration could only be “seconds or minutes of Instructional Time”. However, that time would add up for students.

Ms. Birch continues to say that there is a “misinterpretation of a hierarchy” between the EL and special education staff. Her comments elude to special education staff viewing EL staff as only being able to provide very narrow and specific EL student information that the special education staff has decided is valuable and necessary. She does not view this as a collaborative approach. It is representative of a power imbalance between educators. Ms. Dogwood agreed with Ms. Birch’s comments by adding that “if the voices are equal, and one isn’t heard, then they’re not equal.”

Increasing Content Coverage

Focus Group 1 provided perspective on how increasing Content Coverage could be achieved within the IEPs of ELs with disabilities. Content Coverage is the second of the three Kurz and Elliott (2011) OTL aspects my research utilizes. Content Coverage focuses on coverage of the general curriculum standards. IEPs are written to include connections to the state’s content standards as they pertain to the student’s learning goals.

On the topic of increasing Content Coverage for students, the participants shared their frustrating experiences working with educators who are largely focused on projects instead of standards for students. Ms. Birch shared an example from her experiences working with schools:

I remember a teacher saying I had an ELL with a disability and they were in a social studies class and the teacher came to me and asked 'What would you do to support this student? The assignment is they have to memorize the preamble of the constitution.' And I was almost speechless. Why are they memorizing the preamble of the constitution? Right? Like it's not in your standards. So it's going back to the 'why' of the first task, because they're trying to layer on all of the accommodations that were in the IEP or linguistic accommodations that I might recommend, but the tasks from the start were completely inappropriate.

This example illustrates an overreliance on activity-based instruction for students, without educators thinking through how those projects are connected to grade level standards. The focus group believed that this issue is not just an issue for ELs with disabilities but is one that continues to pervade the educational system as a whole despite.

Ms. Dogwood expressed her desire to move educators away from this "task oriented" instruction in order to increase Content Coverage for students. Although IEP goals are written to connect to standards, the goals listed therein are not the totality of what students experience in the classroom. The participants' wished to move towards increasing Content Coverage for students, and to do so within a formal collaborative approach between EL educators and special education educators.

An additional complication to increasing IEP content coverage noted by the participants was a lack of knowledge by educators about the needs of ELs. Ms. Birch elaborated on this point by saying:

If our teachers aren't prepared and taught, which we know they're not in their teacher preparation programs, we know that our students, their test scores, aren't going to reflect their content mastery. They're likely going to reflect their language proficiency.

Ms. Birch's quote echoes what others indicated during the individual interviews. However, her quote is specific to the impact that lack of educator knowledge can have on students' assessment performance. A student's lack of English proficiency may appear as a lack of understanding academic content, such as science or social studies content, on the assessment. She also notes that lower student performance on content area assessments would appear not just for state required standardized assessments but for local teacher developed assessments as well.

Unfortunately for any EL student, a lack of good content coverage, which includes coverage of English language proficiency skills, plays out for students in lower content area assessment performance.

One of the solutions the participants offered to the barriers identified in increasing Content Coverage within IEPs was to further consider the role that instructional leaders have within districts. Ms. Birch offered a statement on this topic.

It really needs to be driven by the instructional leader in the building and that system from the top down, because it's a tier-one instruction piece. It's not something that can be fixed through an IEP. It would take a leader that's going to empower their teachers to question the why, why do we do this? What's most important in our instruction? And then think about if our goal is to provide opportunity and equal opportunity for all of our kids.

Ms. Birch's statement identifies the importance that a leader has in order to shape appropriate instruction for students. More importantly, she specifically identifies the necessity of a top-down approach to improving Content Coverage as a solution.

Increasing Instructional Quality

The Focus Group also provided perspective on how increasing Instructional Quality could be achieved within the IEPs of ELs with disabilities. Instructional Quality is the third of the three Kurz and Elliott (2011) OTL aspects my research utilizes. Instructional Quality focuses on instructional practices for a range of cognitive processes and social interactions. IEPs may be written to include these elements for individual students.

As the participants pondered ways to increase the third OTL aspect, Instructional Quality, Ms. Oak identified this area as perhaps the easiest to include in IEPs by saying, "I think this is the indicator of the three we've talked about so far to me, this is the one with the most potential to get into the IEP." As she described the reasons why she identified this as the easiest to include in IEPs it became clear that the reason was because this is an area in which she sees a "natural fit" for components of Instructional Quality being housed within an IEP.

Participants provided a window into the decision-making structure of IEPs. Ms. Birch thoughtfully considered the ways in which increasing Instructional Quality may be inhibited for students by saying

...go back to what I said earlier with a lot of rigidity about what can go into the IEP. So some directors, they told their staff 'that's not going in there.' So, I think there's a lack of real access for our EL people to participate in goal writing, unless it's initiated by the special ed counterparts within the IEP writing team.

This quote clearly depicts, not just a deficiency in collaboration, but also seems to point to the special education directors at times being quite controlling of the IEP process. Furthermore, it is not just that they have control but that they act as gatekeepers for EL staff's participation. Ms.

Dogwood offered the following related comment:

If special ed is struggling with the student they'll come to us and be open, but they're not open to anything we say if they don't see the student as being an extra challenge or if they think that everything's status quo with the student. They don't want to. They just tune us out.

Ms. Dogwood's interpretation of the lack of collaboration rests on her perception that the special education staff are purposefully unwilling to engage in discussion about the needs of all of their ELs with disabilities. In her experience, the special education staff independently selects which ELs with disabilities they would gain the most benefit from EL staff collaboration. This selection process potentially limits academic opportunities for all ELs with disabilities that staff may be serving.

At that point, the conversation shifted towards Ms. Birch pointing out a concept that was presented numerous times by educators participating in the individual interviews; that EL educators don't feel as though their teacher preparation programs have equipped them to have a voice at the IEP table. EL teachers don't feel like they have the expertise to provide appropriate opinions even when they are invited to participate as a part of the IEP process. Ms. Birch said the following:

I have EL teachers who sit at IEP meetings and say, who am I? I don't have the advice. I don't have the expertise around this. So, they don't feel like their preparation program

prepared them to have a strong opinion at the table. And I think similarly, would they even if they're there and feel confident.

She ends her statement by saying that even if EL educators are included in the IEP process and feel confident about being there, that they still may not have the appropriate knowledge to provide appropriate support for the process.

The participants additionally thought that district leadership, outside of the special education staff, would need to be involved in considering solutions to barriers around developing IEPs for ELs with disabilities. Ms. Birch indicated that, “we need strong instructional leadership” to do that. Furthermore, she added that one of the ways instructional leaders can do impact instructional quality would be to focus on having appropriate numbers of EL staff. Each of the participants indicated a lack of sufficient numbers of EL staff in districts. Ms. Birch continued by adding

We’re already spread so thin. You know, I have EL teachers who are meeting with small groups, 20 minutes, twice a week, calling it appropriate services. So if I say now, you also have to be at an IEP meeting. Our staffing levels are just so inadequate across the state that I think that you're right. We need them at the table. I want them to be at the table, but we also need to look at how do we build capacity so that's even possible.

Ms. Birch’s well-founded concern is that the EL staff that are already within districts are already at capacity and do not have the ability to continue to add on more responsibilities. Additional EL staff in the districts would not only allow ELs that are being provided with services the ability to receive higher quality services but would expand opportunities for those educators to also be included in areas of need such as improving the IEPs of ELs with disabilities.

The Importance of the IEP

At many points throughout the focus group, the participants identified the importance that educators place on following the IEP for any student with disabilities. On this topic Ms. Oak said, “Gen ed teachers have a respectable fear of going outside of what's written in the IEP. They don't have that same fear for ELs.” In this statement Ms. Oak identifies that the IEP is both beneficial and simultaneously a hinderance for educators. She believes that this ingrained reverence for adherence to IEPs in some ways disadvantages ELs with disabilities. She explains this by saying

Sometimes teachers don't (A have permission or (B feel like they have permission to go away from the [the IEP]. So some of it is developing a bigger culture of understanding about essential learning, teaching to the standards, providing reasonable

accommodations, to help students with IEPs and linguistic accommodations for ELs.

The hindrance for educators comes in the form of the fear she describes which educators may experience if they want to provide instruction for ELs with disabilities that may still be appropriately connected to standards. That desire to consider instruction or supports outside of what is strictly laid out in the IEP ultimately comes as a result of educators believing that there may be additional instructional elements needed in order to help students improve.

Despite the barriers that the focus group participants continued to identify, they all believed that a student's ELP should always be included as a part of the IEP conversation for every student. This was not to mean necessarily that all EL related aspects must be included in the IEP itself, but that the linguistic/cultural background and language needs of ELs should at least be formally discussed with the IEP team and special education staff working with the

student. When asked when ELP should be included Ms. Birch responded by saying, “Well, I feel like it’s a trick question. It should always be included from the start.”

The Design of the EL IEP Tool

My priorities for creating the tool included the following: ensuring ease of use for educators, attention to the ability for differing levels of backgrounds could access the content, providing a step-by-step approach for educators, ensuring that educators were able to think about addressing problems identified during my individual interviews and focus groups, providing a way for educators to work through the step-by-step process and document their decisions and discussion, providing a connection to OTL concepts, providing connections to Michigan statewide policies and resources. I created a draft tool after the convening of Focus Group 1 which was then reviewed by Focus Group 2. In this chapter I describe the rationale for the structure and content of the tool. The final version of the tool can be found in Appendix D. The formal title of the document is “School/District Tool for the Development of IEPs for English Learners (ELs) with Disabilities”. For the sake of brevity, the document title may be shortened within this paper and referred to as “EL IEP Tool”.

Defining the Structure and Content for the School/District Tool for the Development of IEPs for English Learners (ELs) with Disabilities

As I considered the issues identified by my research participants, it became clear that two things needed to be tackled: the way in which IEPs were being addressed at the organizational level and the way in which educators considered the needs of EL students within the IEP itself. My approach to designing a document structure was to create two different sections of the document to address these two very differing topics.

The document begins by introducing readers to its purpose, provide them with an introduction to the ELs with disabilities populations, explain how educators should use the

document, and then provides educators with an opportunity to consider why improving IEPs for ELs with disabilities is important. I present a rationale to answer this question and additionally provide a connection with an explanation to the OTL conceptual framework.

I devoted the first portion of the document to addressing organizational level issues in a step-by-step methodology. These steps are not intended for individual teachers, but are for educators who are in administrative and leadership roles within districts. The steps are intended to help those with decision making authority move towards improving the processes that surround and encompass the creation of IEPs for ELs with disabilities. Educators are led through the following 5 steps outlined in Table 13.

Table 13.*EL IEP Tool Steps Overview*

Step Number	Section	Purpose	Findings Connection
1	Identification of Personnel	Asks educators to identify staff members that should be involved in a review of current policies around IEPs for ELs with disabilities and can be a part of the decision-making processes to change those processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses the role of collaboration • Addresses the importance of inclusion of decision makers to facilitate change
2	Identification of Date(s)	Asks educators to identify a potential date for a meeting of the staff identified in Step 1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses concerns about lack of time being set aside for collaboration
3	Reflection Questions & Read Ahead	Provides educators with reflection questions designed for educators to consider their current IEP processes for ELs with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses knowledge building and informational gaps
4	IEPs for ELs with Disabilities Meeting & Discussion	Asks educators to meet on the identified Step 2 date with their colleagues identified in Step 1. The meeting will address concrete plans for improving IEPs for ELs with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses the role of collaboration • Addresses knowledge building and informational gaps • Addresses full range of educator needs identified as barriers
5	Sustainability Plan	Asks educators to consider how to continue to improve upon the decisions and processes that were decided upon in Steps 4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses concerns about lack of time being set aside for collaboration

Step 4 is the most robust section of the step-by-step portion of the tool. As noted in Table 13, I created it to facilitate discussion amongst educator leaders that would address many of the barriers identified by my research participants. These include knowledge building related to the challenges facing educators as they work to identify ELs who may also be students with disabilities. Resources provided by the U.S. Department of Education as well as the Michigan Department of Education on the topic of disability identification are presented in this section.

Because the purpose of the tool is to focus on improving the IEP process once students have already been identified as having a need related to a disability, these are provided as useful resources for educators to consider if they are interested in continuing their work to address identification of students with disabilities who are also ELs.

Educator Collaboration is defined as its own section within this step allowing educators to consider ways in which collaboration will occur. My research participants also identified a need for IEPs to better consider student background. The Student Background section aims to facilitate discussion between district leaders about how aspects of a student's language background can be incorporated into the IEP process such as the dominant language in the home, the student's primary language of communication at home and in school, aspects of the student's primary language that may impact instruction (ex. Reading left to right, alphabet differences, absence of a written form of the language), the cultural values and beliefs of the family, formal education experiences, and even disrupted education due to COVID, civil unrest, or war. These student background aspects have been largely established in the literature as important to understanding what may impact an EL student's learning.

A Family and Student Collaboration section was also included in Step 4. My research participants identified improving communication with EL parents as an issue that should be addressed by districts. I designed this section to provide administrators and other district decision makers with a way to consider how parents and families would be communicated with in a language and manner that is appropriate for their needs.

Language was included as a section so that these educators can focus at a high level on whether a student's language and print literacy skills are included within a student's IEP as well as even considering whether the language the student intends to use in their post-

secondary setting is identified. Similar to what I mentioned in the Student Background section, these language aspects are present in current literature as key to understanding English language acquisition impacts.

A regularly occurring point of concern brought to light by my research participants was the absence of information pertaining to the student's assessment needs as they pertained to which ELP assessment a student should be taking. The Assessment section asks administrators and other district decision makers to consider how the IEP team is making a decision about whether the student should be taking the general WIDA ACCESS for ELLs or the WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessment. The Assessment section is followed by the Supports & Accommodations section which most prominently directs educators to question what information they know about available Universal Tools and Accommodations for the WIDA assessments. WIDA's and the Michigan Department of Education's policies on the use of Accommodations for the WIDA assessments require that the need to use a specific Accommodation on the WIDA assessment be outlined in the student's IEP.

Step 5 focuses on a Sustainability Plan which is a necessary component to ensure that the district is continuing to refine their processes and include new educators when turnover occurs in the school. Within this step educators are asked what their continuous cycle of improvement looks like. Although sustainability was not brought up as a topic within the individual interviews nor from the Focus Group 1 participants, I added this as it is an important aspect of organizational change (Park et al., 2013). The Focus Group 2 participants did comment that they were appreciative that this section was added.

Defining the Structure and Content for the Tool for the Development of an IEP for an EL with Disabilities

The document then transitions to the second portion of the tool which is devoted to helping IEP team educators consider a student's English language needs within the IEP itself. Participants in my research indicated that an English learner's language needs should be considered within all parts of the IEP. With that in mind, I designed this section to provide guidance on what educators should consider as a part of each legally required IEP component. I decided upon this approach because Michigan does not require schools to use one IEP format, nor is there one IEP software system that districts are required to use. Focusing on the legally required components allowed me to circumnavigate that issue when designing this part of the tool.

This portion of the tool provides IEP team educators with guidance in the following areas: Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAFFP), Measurable Annual Goals, Supplementary Aids/Services, Participation With Non-disabled Children, Participation in State and District-wide Tests, Dates and Places, Transition Services, Behavioral Intervention Plans, Assistive Technology and Services, and Age of Majority. The content of the guidance in each federally required IEP section was drawn from sources such as the USED OELA Toolkit Chapter 6, the WIDA ALTELLA Brief Number 4, as well as feedback from participants during the individual interviews and focus group. I also included an example of how a student's English language needs could be considered as a part of that required IEP content. When reviewing the draft of this tool, the Focus Group 2 participants expressed their appreciation for these examples.

A point that was raised by special education educators who participated in the individual interviews was to remind educators that language is not a disability and furthermore, the purpose

of the IEP is to consider the needs of the student as they relate to their disability. This point has been included in the Tool and is reiterated throughout to ensure that educators do not fall into this misunderstanding trap.

Because each student's needs are unique there is not a one-size-fits all set of requirements that I believed would be helpful to apply. The guidance serves to ask educators to only consider how language could be addressed, if possible. Although educators seem to gravitate towards simplicity, I designed this portion of the guidance and the corresponding Worksheet section purposefully avoiding a checklist style structure. This was to avoid the appearance of the checklist providing required language components.

The document ends by providing additional resources for educators to review. Some of these resources such as the California Practitioner's Guide were added at the request of the Focus Group 2 participants. It additionally provides a number of useful tips that were suggested by my Focus Group 2 participants.

Dissemination and Sustainability

My plans to disseminate the tool and corresponding worksheet rely heavily upon the educators with whom I worked throughout my research as well as educators I am in contact with regularly through my work at MDE. I intend to house the document and the worksheet on a Google drive so both components remain easily accessible publicly. I will provide the MDE EL Advisory Committee members links to these documents and will coordinate a presentation on my work and use of the tool to the committee with the MDE Office of Educational Supports Manager. The documents will also be sent to educators from the MDE's Office of Special Education with whom I work in the hopes that this will inform their work and potential policy focus in this area. My great hope is that MDE will choose to adopt this tool which will create

much wider use and adoption. The availability of the documents online via Google will allow me to update the documents as needed for educators if significant policy or informational changes occur.

RQ3: Reshaping OTL for ELs with Disabilities

In order to answer Research Question 3, I again convened a focus group to review the draft EL IEP Tool that I created. I also provided the tool for review to my individual special education participant. Research Question 3 aimed to answer questions pertaining to how the draft EL IEP Tool could reshape OTL for educators.

They Like It, They Really Like It

The participants of Focus Group 2 gave glowing reviews of the EL IEP Tool. The below quotes represent Focus Group 2's reactions to the tool.

Ms. Birch: "I love your tool. I think it's awesome. I like the clear steps in it, and I like the formatting of it."

Ms. Oak: "We also really want you to know that this is exceptional."

Ms. Birch: "I think it's really user-friendly. I think having a five-step feels palatable to people. 'Cause sometimes you get all the guidance and it's overwhelming."

Ms. Dogwood, "Thank you for doing this work because although you think you're helping us, we're helping ourselves by helping you".

The participants were also so enamored with the thought of using it that they even wanted to use it in an unfinished format. Ms. Dogwood enthusiastically said, "I want it when it says 'draft'." They also appreciated that the document fit with work that is already being conducted

by and within districts. For example, Mr. Oak and Ms. Birch have worked towards the creation of guidance that improves the pre-referral part of the special education process so that it is culturally responsive. The participants recognized that this EL IEP Tool is intended as a post-referral processing tool.

The individual special education participant also provided positive reviews. His general feedback was:

I really like where you are headed with this. Having a single source document and plan to account for a student's needs keeps the lens on a student comprehensive, and eliminates siloed approaches to meeting a student's needs.

This participant, despite not being a part of the focus group, clearly identified the issue of silo-ization and that this tool has the potential to make progress in addressing that issue for educators.

On Increasing OTL for ELs with Disabilities

Participants in Focus Group 2 were asked questions pertaining to how the EL IEP Tool increased each of the three OTL components of Instructional Quality, Content Coverage, and Instructional Time. Upon being asked if the draft EL IEP Tool will serve to increase Instructional Time for ELs with disabilities through the IEP process, the participants responded affirmatively that it would. During Focus Group 1 the participants had pointed out requirements to increasing Instructional Time. Those points were identified as improving collaborating between EL and special education staff, increasing knowledge about basic EL data within the IEP process such as (first language literacy, formal education experiences, etc.), finding ways to allow educators to use the IEP to drive instructional collaboration, and reminding educators that EL services cannot happen in place of core instruction. The Focus Group 2 participants pointed to educator

collaboration and the portions of the draft tool that focused on sustainability in the district as strong components which addressed the needs they had previously outlined. The collaborative element extended to Ms. Oak's identification of a small detail within the tool.

I was really happy to see you explain what to do if you don't have an EL coordinator, because I get a lot of random calls from Michigan, not in [Ms. Birch's] area, but I'm talking real rural. Like recently from the U.P. and the state and a town I had never heard of, that got a Chinese student, the first one ever. They don't know what to do. Putting that information in that context there to say to reach out to the ISD or RESA, I know it's a small seemingly insignificant thing. I think it was really important that you named it there.

Ms. Oak's identification of this detail is a response to portions of the EL IEP Tool that direct educators to reach out directly to their local ISD or RESA if they don't have someone on staff with EL knowledge. In this quote Ms. Oak acknowledges that the guidance is helpful for the variety of school district situations that may occur. Often, educators may not have access to an EL Coordinator due to staff turnover or due to a small EL population within the district.

Similarly, the participants said that the points the focus group identified during Focus Group 1 that would lead to increasing Content Coverage for students were largely met. Those increases could be achieved by better adherence by educators to Michigan's content standards. In part, adherence could be achieved through educators moving away from task-oriented approaches to teaching. Focus Group 1 participants also said that increasing ways to provide correct and appropriate linguistic supports and accommodations to meet students' goals would also improve Content Coverage for students. During Focus Group 2, Ms. Oak offered that increasing OTL for this part of the framework would work "if they [educators] take the time to

read your section on why you should work to improve IEPs with ELs”. This conditional statement points to the importance of the inclusion of introductory information on the topic of OTL for educators.

To increase Instructional Quality, the participants agreed that the draft EL IEP Tool seems to provide a way to do that within the IEP process. The concerns pointed out during Focus Group 1 included barriers to collaborating, a need to have strong instructional leadership from the district, and a strong need to have appropriate amounts of EL staff. The participants were again appreciative of the collaboration aspects that were included. Ms. Birch felt that “naming different levels of leadership that could be included in the process was well done too”. Ms. Dogwood conveyed similar sentiments by saying “I think the fact that the document spells out true collaboration between your special ed staff and your ELD staff...It causes conversations also that may not have been happening before.” This thread of the importance of collaboration and its impact to the OTL components is a significant finding. And is one that points to a way to reshape and improve OTL for ELs with disabilities.

Improving the Draft EL IEP Tool

Despite the positive reviews by the participants, they did have some suggestions to improve the tool. Main suggestions included specific ways the tool could be enhanced to increase OTL.

Participants suggested adding a tip for educators reminding them to adhere to the content standards when they think about IEP goals and instruction for ELs with disabilities within the classroom. This was discussed as a condition for improving Content Coverage but Focus Group 2 participants did not feel that this point was made clear enough in the draft of the tool. The participants suggested adding this point in a tips section within the tool or possibly add it in Step

3 of the tool as something educators should think about in advance that's on the topic of "Whose responsibility is it to ensure ELs with disabilities receive a high-quality education". There was as a shared concern that despite the ease with which the document is written and laid out that educators may still choose to 'glaze' over the first introductory section and skip immediately to the steps. My attempts to address this concern were to try to ensure that the content preceding the steps was not so lengthy that educators would choose not to read it.

With regard to Instructional Quality, participants identified ideas around how the tool might speak to EL staffing. Ms. Oak's thoughts on the topic were as follows:

An English learner will not reach annual measurable goals in language, whatever proficiency, if they're not receiving appropriate English language development services from a certified English language development educator.

Ms. Oak believes very strongly that an EL with disabilities will not make sufficient progress in learning if they are not provided with services from an educator who is certified in English language development. Ms. Birch offered a solution to including a statement about this in Step 1 of the draft EL IEP Tool which focuses on the identification of personnel to be involved in discussing and improving the IEP process for ELs with disabilities. I accomplished this suggestion by reminding educators that Michigan schools are required to have an ESL certified educator serving English learners in the Tips section.

There were many other suggestions provided that did not connect directly to the OTL framework. For example, Ms. Oak was interested in additional questions and readings that could be added to Step 3 which focuses on reflection questions for the identified personnel from Step 1. There were additional concerns identified by Ms. Birch that general educators may not be able to "sit around and grapple with these questions" in the same way that the participants of the

focus group could because they would be lacking in foundational knowledge to be able to do so. This led to an idea Ms. Oak presented that it may be helpful for educators to be able to see exemplar answers to these questions written up. Participants requested that California's ELs with disabilities guide be included as a reference because of the comprehensive nature of that document.

A practical consideration was noted by the participants who felt it should be pointed out to users of the document. The participants felt strongly that identifying that an IEP meeting for an EL takes longer because you're reviewing many other components for the student should be included. Ms. Oak said, "We've found it upwards of two, twice as long sometimes". Focus Group 2 participants desired that educators who are not knowledgeable to be aware and prepared for this so I added this as a note in the Tips section of the tool.

An area of need identified was for more tips related to writing IEP goals. The participants expressed a strong interest for the inclusion of additional examples related to writing IEP goals for students. I addressed this request for more tips by pointing educators to California's guidance document which provides examples of goal writing for educators.

Lastly, the participants were able to share ideas they felt could be beneficial for future use of and work related to the EL IEP Tool. Ms. Oak believed that a webinar showing educators how to use the tool could be valuable. They recognized that not all work would be completed in advance or as a part of my dissertation itself but hoped that the work around the tool could continue after this stage of development.

The development of the EL IEP Tool required a significant amount of feedback from participants to develop. Their feedback aided in the initial creation of the document as well its review once it had been professionally laid out. The participants' feedback was direct and much

of it was focused on improving aspects related to OTL and therefore answering my Research Question 3 which was focused on reshaping OTL with the use of the EL IEP Tool.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Educators are struggling with how to best meet the needs of ELs with disabilities through the use of these students' IEPs. My research leads to a number of important considerations for policy and research. My results have broader policy implications outside of those specific to IEPs. Additionally, my work has theoretical implications that could help drive future research.

National and State Policy Implications

My findings suggest a continuing and pervasive issue within teacher preparation programs. This includes issues for all general educators, those seeking ESL endorsements, and even those receiving special education endorsements in Michigan. As noted in Chapter 6, one of the barriers all of my research participants experienced is a lack of preparation in terms of knowledge about the needs of ELs and the needs of students with disabilities. They also acknowledge the same lack of preparation in their colleagues. Educators from both types of backgrounds, those with EL and those with special education, agree that there is much that they do not know about each other's areas of expertise. This absence of knowledge seems to be responsible for contributing to a narrowing of how educators feel that they can and should participate in IEPs for ELs with disabilities. The juxtaposition of how to value expertise in education while not viewing that expertise as so separate that an educator can't be involved in discussion and decision making needs to be recognized as a concern.

IHEs, national, and state policy leaders need to work towards a better message that educators are responsible for all their students. It may be that this could simply be solved through focusing more on the concept of collaboration. Schools may need to find additional ways to schedule opportunities for those collaborative opportunities to occur. The best models for collaborative opportunities should also be further investigated and the real-world collaborative implementation of my EL IEP Tool could be one of those models that is investigated.

Educators from districts with small EL populations seem to be the most disadvantaged in terms of their knowledge base around the needs of ELs with disabilities. Small and rural districts suffer not just from educators' lack of formal education knowledge about the needs of ELs with disabilities, but also from educators' lack of experience with this group of students because of their low EL population. This acknowledgement should provide opportunities for MDE and local agencies such as ISDs/RESAs to consider how best to provide professional learning opportunities to districts with small EL populations.

Despite the standards movement of the NCLB era, my research identified that educators are still unable to focus on standards-based instruction and continue to focus on project based instructional approaches for students. This disappointing realization points again to a larger systemic educational issue that is not limited to EL or special education educators but was noted as an issue for all educators by my research participants. For ELs with disabilities, if their teachers are unable to provide appropriate Content Coverage then they are completely missing one of the three OTL components. Additional qualitative research should be conducted to better understand the reasons why this phenomenon is continuing, and why it is continuing for students with disabilities who have very specific learning goals connected to standards within their IEPs.

As I've already described, teacher preparation programs are sorely lacking in providing guidance and instruction to educators on how to address the needs of this special population of students. Additional research should be conducted to further investigate the reasons for this. Some current policy organizations such as CCSSO have pointed out that there is a significant dearth of research on the interaction between disability and second language acquisition. This seems to be an emerging field of research but could be contributing factor to why teacher preparation programs do not include more focus in this area.

Teacher preparation programs along with other certificate or degree programs designed for currently practicing educators should focus on instilling the importance of leadership. If all educators are afforded opportunities to improve in the areas of fostering initiative, creative problem-solving, and a willingness to look at all sides of an issue to make well-informed decisions then OTL for ELs with disabilities might also improve. The EL educators in my study largely felt powerless to initiate change within their districts or organizations despite recognizing problems with the IEP process for ELs with disabilities.

Each of these large-scale concerns are ones that the Michigan Department of Education should be more closely examining for ways in which it could provide guidance or enact new policies. Those policies could come in the form of more rigorous teacher preparation requirements for general education staff related to the needs of ELs, for educators seeking an ESL endorsement to learn more about the needs of students with disabilities as they relate to the needs of ELs, and for educators seeking special education endorsements to understand more about the needs of ELs as they relate to students with disabilities. MDE also has an opportunity to adopt the use of my EL IEP Tool for use across the state. Adoption by the department of education would fill a current gap in Michigan guidance. All the participants involved in this study were aware of the lack of guidance and their lack of understanding about how to begin to address this lack of guidance around IEPs for ELs with disabilities. Educators across the state are clamoring for help. MDE's adoption of this tool would provide more benefit to more people than just those who are able to hear about this document through word of mouth.

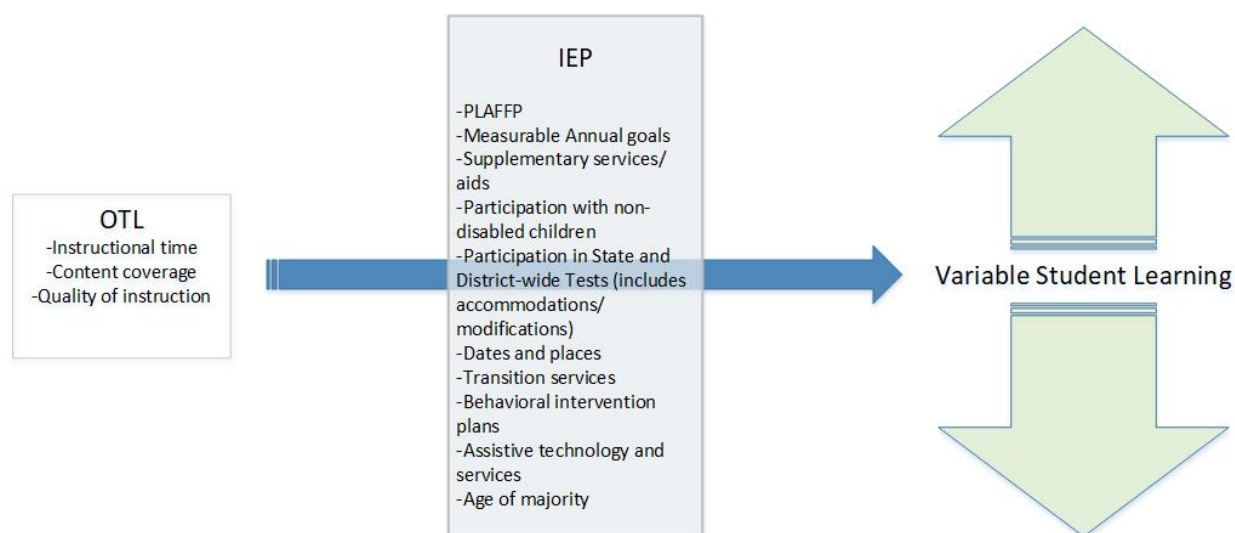
Theoretical Implications

My research builds on collaboration studies by providing a sense of urgency due to the theoretical grounding in OTL. My research provides a clear picture of the way in which OTL is

impacted and could be enhanced through the more effective use of IEPs for ELs with disabilities. Throughout each stage of my research, a theme of collaboration between EL staff and special education staff became increasingly present. This led me to a new vision of the OTL framework. As previously discussed, the OTL framework I utilized comes from Kurz and Elliott's (2011) work. My initial conception of how the IEP facilitates OTL for students is show in Figure 3.

Figure 3.

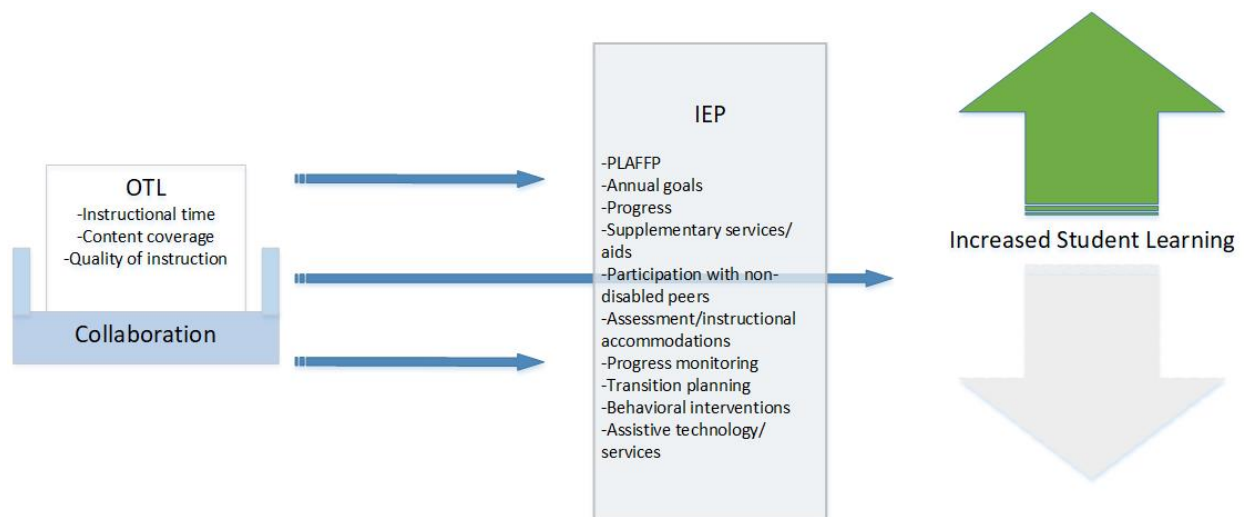
OTL's Relationship and Impact to Student Learning



OTL is composed of the three dimensions of Instructional Time, Content Coverage, and Quality of Instruction. OTL works through the components of the IEP to arrive at variable student learning. However, collaboration adds to the conceptual understanding of what makes OTL function well. My new framework asserts that collaboration is the vehicle on which OTL is driven to arrive at increased student learning. Figure 4 shows this relationship.

Figure 4.

Impact of Collaboration on Student Learning



As you can see in Figure 4, collaboration wraps itself around the three OTL dimensions, while still allowing those to move through the IEP. Figure 4 shows this new element flowing through each of the federally required IEP components ultimately resulting in increased student learning. This modified conceptual framework has the potential to significantly change the level of importance that educators place on IEPs for students.

Future research should be conducted on the measurability of the increase of student learning through EL and special education staff collaboration on IEPs. The scope of my research was not this broad but quantitative studies would certainly provide a new depth of understanding to the impact IEP collaboration has on student learning.

The Future of the EL IEP Tool

Because I was only able to include a majority of participants in my research who had EL background, an appropriate next step for the EL IEP Tool would be to review the EL IEP Tool in a more robust way with appropriate educators who have special education expertise. This could

include running another focus group with only special education perspectives. Additionally, there could be future variations of the second part of the tool that is devoted to analyzing individual IEPs for ELs with disabilities. These variations could include disability specific information. For example, it could include common concerns for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. Those may look very different from the needs and concerns for an EL student who has a visual impairment. Again, the inclusion of this level of detail would require additional work to be completed with educators who have this specialized knowledge and background.

The EL IEP Tool itself could also benefit from strengthened examples of how OTL connects to various aspects of the tool. Finding quality real world examples that do this could be elicited, again, through additional work with educators. This could be completed in the form of focus groups or individual interviews focused on this topic.

One of the downsides to the use of the EL IEP Tool itself is that it will inevitably create more work for districts. Convening the additional meetings that are mentioned in the tool along with finding time to do the additional thinking and analysis asked by the EL IEP Tool for individual IEPs will certainly create the potential for additional burden at the local level. Despite this potential, the EL IEP Tool will scaffold the very complex process of creating IEPs for ELs with disabilities which, in the long run, may lead to time efficiencies for schools if better systems level structures are put into place. To prepare educators for these and other unforeseen challenges and benefits, an additional appropriate next step would be to try the current iteration of the tool out with educators. By working with a district to follow all steps in both parts of the IEP Tool to completion I would gain a clearer understanding of how to address real world implementation.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The focus of my dissertation was to investigate the ways in which educators are experiencing the development of IEPs for ELs with disabilities. Additionally, my qualitative research interest focused on how educators can consider OTL within the IEP process. The culmination of my dissertation resulted in the development of a tool to help educators improve IEPs for ELs with disabilities. My research questions were as follows:

1. What are educators' experiences creating IEPs for EL students?
 - a. What barriers do educators face and how can we remove these barriers?
2. How are educators able to determine when to include a student's English language proficiency in the process of creating or revising an IEP?
3. How does the ELs with Disabilities IEP Guidance document shape the way educators think about IEPs for ELs with disabilities?
 - a. How do educators think the guidance will reshape OTL for ELs with disabilities?

My research findings from a series of individual educator interviews suggest that the needs of ELs with disabilities are not being considered as a part of the IEP process by most Michigan educators due to a variety of factors. These barriers most prominently include a lack of educator knowledge that impacts both EL educators and special education staff as they attempt to meet the instructional needs of ELs with disabilities. Educators also cited as barriers a lack of research related to the needs of these students as well as resources in the form of staffing and time. Interestingly, the participants in my study noted negatives to educators' specialized knowledge base or area of expertise. Due to educators' areas of expertise such as English as a second language or special education, educators are often excluded from important student level instructional discussions. In particular, EL educators experience high levels of exclusion from

the IEP process for ELs with disabilities. Their special education colleagues view them as not having appropriate expertise related to the students' disabilities. These barriers, including the double-edged sword of educator expertise, limit the opportunities for learning ELs with disabilities may have access to through the IEP process.

My research provided evidence that even when educators are included in the IEP process for ELs with disabilities they still struggle with some aspects of the process. EL educators experience a lack of confidence in their ability to provide appropriate student level information and this is complicated by the way in which their special education colleagues' view the EL staffs' role in the IEP process.

By collecting data through the use of focus groups, I was able to gain insight into how educators are best able to make decisions about what EL specific information should be included in IEPs. My participants indicated that there is no one-size-fits-all scenario for how to achieve this for ELs with disabilities. Because of this, the most effective means of providing appropriate instructional opportunities for students is to improve upon collaborative efforts between the EL staff and special education staff. As such, collaboration became the central element of the EL IEP Tool which I developed through feedback collected from focus groups.

I designed the EL IEP Tool for ELs with Disabilities to provide K-12 educators with an easy approach to understanding the impact OTL can have within the IEP process. The tool also allows for the development of formal collaborative IEP approaches between all of a district's stakeholders

My study not only illustrates the importance of collaboration, but that collaboration has the ability to function as a carrier for OTL to operate in an improved manner. My study demonstrates some of the challenges of doing collaborative work facing educators. These

challenges merit additional research. As states narrow their areas of work and priorities for additional policy, addressing the needs of ELs with disabilities will become a greater majority of their focus. My research provides not just contributions for policy makers and researchers, but ultimately provides K-12 educators with a ready-to-use tool that can provide immediate help in improving IEPs for ELs with disabilities.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: RQ1 – Consent form, individual interview protocol, and codes

RQ1: Consent to Participate in Research – Individual Interview

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Institution: Michigan State University, Educational Administration (K-12)

Principle Investigator: Dr. Madeline Mavrogordato, Associate Professor of K-12 Administration

Student Investigators: Jennifer Paul

Title: Creating Opportunities for Learning for English Learners with Disabilities Through Quality Individualized Education Programs

1. Explanation of the Research

The purpose of this study is to more deeply understand the processes and barriers educators have with regards to the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for English learners (ELs) who are also students with disabilities. The study aims to answer the follow questions:

1. What are educators' experiences creating IEPs for EL students? What barriers do educators face and how can we remove these barriers?
 - a. How are educators able to determine when to include a student's English language proficiency in the process of creating or revising an IEP?
2. What are the key components of IEPs for ELs with disabilities?

Through a series of interviews and focus groups with adult educators the study will result in the creation of guidance for the developers of IEPs to aid them in creating high quality IEPs for ELs with disabilities. This will allow me to then answer a third research question which is as follows:

3. How does the researcher-generated guidance shape the way educators think about IEPs for ELs with disabilities?

You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this research.

What You Will Do

As a participant in this study, you are being asked to participate in a one-hour individual interview or 1 ½ hour focus group that will be conducted in person with Jennifer Paul. You will be asked a number of questions pertaining to your experiences and knowledge about ELs with disabilities and the development of their IEPs. This session will be audio recorded, with the recording later transcribed.

2. Your Rights to Participate, Say No, Or Withdraw

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

3. Costs and Compensation For Being In the Study

There are no direct costs to the participant for agreeing to be a part of the study. At the completion of the interview or focus group, you will receive a \$25 gift card. However, you may not benefit personally from this study in any other way. We do hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through the knowledge and understanding of ELs with disabilities as well as how to improve upon IEPs for these students.

There are no foreseeable risks, however you may be uncomfortable answering questions regarding your individual practices or practices of others in your school/district.

4. Privacy and Confidentiality

This study is confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you, your district, or school to the study will be included in any report or publication. Research records will be stored securely. All documents and forms will be coded, and we will keep a separate master list with the names of participants and the corresponding code numbers. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. The audio recordings will be used for research purposes only and will be held for up to three years before being destroyed. All other forms will be retained for at least three years in a locked file cabinet in a secure office space.

5. Contact Information

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher Dr. Madeline Mavrogordato, Associate Professor of K-12 Educational Administration, at mavro@msu.edu, Michigan State University, Department of Educational Administration, 620 Farm Lane, Room 407 East Lansing, MI 48824.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

6. Informed Consent Information

You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing signing below.

Participant Signature_____

Participant Name (Please print)_____

RQ1: Individual Educator Interview Protocol

Participant ID: _____

Participant Role: _____

Opening

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. Today's discussion will last approximately an hour. At the end of our time today you will receive a gift card for \$25. Please be as honest and candid as possible in your responses. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Base Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your current role and your background in education.

i. Do you have a specialized teaching certificate such as TESOL/ESL, bilingual education, linguistics, or speech pathology?

2. What experiences do you have working with:

i. SWDs?

ii. ELs?

iii. ELs who are also SWDs?

i. *If classroom experience for any of these:* How many students, for what periods of time, type of programming (pull in/out, SIOP, self-contained classroom, etc.) did you work with students?

ii. *If experience is at the administrative level:*

- What was your level of focus on the needs of these students?

-
- Were the needs of the students embedded and actively thought about in initiatives and regular work such as school improvement?
-

- Can you provide examples and explain why a level of focus on SWDs, ELs, or ELs who are also SWDs was included in those initiatives?
-

3. Have your experiences in working with each of these student groups changed over the years? For example, was there a change due to a shift in programming being offered to students? Or has the number of EL students in your district increased?

i. If yes: Can you describe **how** your experiences have changed? For example, if there was a change in programming being offered to students, why was the change made? Or if the number of EL students in your district increased, what impact did that have on your experiences working with students?

ii. If no: Can you explain why not?

4. If you were to describe the purpose of an IEP to someone outside education, how would you explain it?

5. In your opinion, why is an IEP important or not important?

6. Can you describe your experience related to the development of IEPs for students?

7. Can you describe your role related to the development of IEPs for ELs who are also students with disabilities?

i. Would you like to have a greater role in their development?

1. If yes, why?
2. If no, why not?

8. Can you tell me how you decide what information should go into each section of the IEP for students who are ELs with disabilities? Let's look at each section (list IEP sections and go through each one).

9. Do you think an IEP for an EL SWD should differ from a non-EL SWD?

- i. If yes, how?
- ii. If no, why not?
- iii. If sometimes, can you explain what this depends on?

10. What are the most frequent challenges you believe Michigan educators face in creating IEPs for ELs?

i. Why have you identified each of these as challenges?

11. Can you explain the difference between language learning and disability?

i. Why did you answer in the way that you did?

12. How, if at all, do language learning and disability status interact to impact a student's academic outcomes?

i. Why did you answer in the way that you did?

13. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low and 5 being high, can you give me your sense of your school colleagues' level of comfort being able to explain the difference between a student's language learning and their disability?

i. Why did you provide these ratings?

14. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low and 5 being high, can you give me your sense of your school colleagues' level of comfort knowing about the interaction between a student's language learning and their disability?

i. Why did you provide these ratings?

15. Do you believe that IEPs for ELs with disabilities lead to meaningful educational changes that help students?

i. If yes, please explain why you answered in this way.

16. Which aspects of a student's education are impacted the most by IEPs?

i. Why do you believe these are impacted the most?

17. Which aspects of a student's education are impacted the least by IEPs?

i. Why do you believe these are impacted the least?

ii. If no, please explain why you answered in this way.

18. What do you think the greatest misunderstandings or points of confusion are for educators creating IEPs for ELs with disabilities?

i. Why did you select these?

19. Do you have any additional information you think is important to share in terms of IEPs for EL students?

Closing

Thank you so much for your time today. The information you shared and the discussion we had was invaluable.

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Do you believe it is more difficult to write IEPs for ELs with disabilities?

a. Why do you believe that is the case?

2. Do you believe that it is more difficult to write IEPs for some students with disabilities because of their disability type?

a. Can you explain your answer?

3. What pieces of student-level data do you think are the most important to use for development of an IEP for ELs with disabilities?

a. Why do you believe these are important?

4. Do you review a student's WIDA ACCESS scores? (Provide a sample Individual Student Report to look at for these questions.)

a. Which data are the most meaningful for you in the context of creating IEPs for ELs with disabilities? For example, are the scale scores in each domain meaningful for you.

b. Why are these the most meaningful?

c. Which data are the least meaningful for you?

d. Why are these least meaningful?

5. Do you ever review a student's WIDA Alternate ACCESS scores? (*Provide a sample Individual Student Report to look at for these questions.*)

- a. If yes, in the context of creating IEPs for ELs with disabilities, which data are the most meaningful for you?

- b. Why are these the most meaningful?

- c. Which data are the least meaningful for you?

- d. Why are these least meaningful?

6. Have you used any resources to help write IEPs for ELs with Disabilities?

- a. If so, what or who have you used?

Local Administrator Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about any policies and processes your school has related to the development of IEPs for ELs with disabilities? For example, you may have a policy to always include one EL staff member on the IEP.

2. Do you have any expectations about what student level data such as assessment scores the IEP team should be reviewing for these students?

3. Have you helped direct your staff to any resources to help write IEPs for ELs with Disabilities?

a. If so, what or who have you used?

4. Why did you direct staff to this resource?

5. What electronic IEP software system do you use?

6. Why do you think this software is used over others?

7. Can you describe how your IEP software meets or does not meet the needs of developing an IEP for your ELs with disabilities?

Closing

Thank you so much for your time today. The information you shared and the discussion we had was invaluable.

ISD/RESA Staff Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about any policies and processes your ISD/RESA has related to the development of these students' IEPs? For example, you may have a policy to always include one EL staff member on the IEP.
-

2. Do you have any expectations about what student level data such as assessment scores the IEP team should be reviewing for ELs with disabilities?
-

3. Has your ISD/RESA provided any resources for districts to use to help them create IEPs for ELs with disabilities?
-

- a. If yes: What or who have you provided and why?
-

- b. If no: Can you describe why you have not provided resources for districts? Are there resources you would like to provide?
-

Closing

Thank you so much for your time today. The information you shared and the discussion we had was invaluable.

Figure 5.

RQ1: Codes and Coding Descriptions

Parent Code	Child Code	Grandchild Code	Definition
Beliefs about disability and language learning			Beliefs about how disability and language learning work together or work independently
Beliefs about IEPs			Beliefs about IEPs, how they function, their purpose
Data	Non-Assessment Data		Data that is non-assessment related that helps educators make decisions about working with ELs with disabilities
	Non-EL Data		Data that is not EL specific that helps educators make decisions about working with ELs with disabilities
	Other EL Assessment Data		Data that is assessment specific but is not the summative ELP assessment data that helps educators make decisions about working with ELs with disabilities
	Summative EL Assessment Data		Data that is specific to summative ELP assessments that helps educators make decisions about working with ELs with disabilities
Best intentions			
Follow-through	Conditions that inhibit follow-through	Insufficient EL staff	Insufficient EL staff may inhibit follow-through of content from the IEP
		Loss of information - software changes	Student information such as assessment/instructional data is lost when districts change software systems inhibiting follow-through of content from the IEP
		Loss of information - student transfers	Student information such as assessment/instructional data is lost/unavailable when students transfer between districts inhibiting follow-through of content from the IEP
	Conditions that promote follow-through	Accountability or supervision	Educators being held accountable and/or being supervised by others promotes follow-through of content from the IEP
IEP Process			Beliefs or actual experience with the IEP process being unique to each student or being standardized
Importance/Prioritization			Importance/prioritization of ELs with disabilities within schools

Figure 5. (cont'd)

Instruction	Conditions that are barriers	Omission of accommodations	Omission of accommodations specific to the needs of ELs presents a barrier to providing quality instruction to ELs with disabilities
		Omission of required details	Omission of required details to successfully guide instructional planning of ELs presents a barrier to providing quality instruction to ELs with disabilities
	Conditions that promote focus	Educators possess autonomy	Educators possess autonomy to be able to make instructional decisions based on students' needs
		Emphasis on learning over compliance	Educators place an emphasis on learning over compliance (going through the motions of IEP development)
Knowledge	Acquired/possessed knowledge	Colleague's knowledge	Participants' views of their colleague's knowledge
		EL knowledge	Participant acknowledges/presents knowledge of the needs of ELs
		Language acquisition	Participant acknowledges/presents knowledge of language acquisition
		Participant knowledge - Experiential	Participant's knowledge is experiential
		Participant knowledge - Formal education	Participant's knowledge is through a formal educational experience
	Lack of knowledge	SWD knowledge	Participant acknowledges/presents knowledge of the needs of SWDs
		Lack of EL & SWD knowledge	Lack of EL and SWD knowledge, interaction of those two sets of needs (ELs with disabilities)
		Lack of EL knowledge	Lack of knowledge about the needs of ELs
		Lack of research/easily accessible info	Lack of research/easily accessible info pertaining to the needs of ELs
Parties involved	Administrators	Lack of SWD knowledge	Lack of knowledge about the needs of SWDs
		Aspirational	Administrators are identified as being necessary to the IEP process
	Joint endeavor	Current process	Collaborative opportunities between EL and SWD staff are only aspirational, not currently occurring
		Only special education educators	Collaborative opportunities between EL and SWD staff are currently occurring
Points of confusion			A point of confusion identified by the participant

Figure 5. (cont'd)

Role of EL educator			The EL educator believes they have a specific role to fill for students (advocate for students, advocate for professional self, advocate for parent, belief in how the participant sees the role of the EL educator within the IEP process)	
Student measures	Access to appropriate student measures	Ability to modify assessments Access to valid and reliable assessments	Ability to modify assessments available (e.g., translation) Access to valid and reliable assessments	
	Lack of access to appropriate student measures	Difficulties developing measurable goals Difficulties linking assessment data to instructional goals	Difficulties developing measurable goals Difficulties linking assessment data to instructional goals	
		Inability to modify assessments to work for ELs	Inability to modify assessments to work for ELs	
		Lack of appropriate assessments	Lack of appropriate assessments	
		Lack of meaningfulness	Lack of meaningfulness of available measures/data	
	Team process	Challenges with the team process	Disadvantaging parents	Disadvantaging non-native speaking parents through the process either by not providing adequate interpreters or through lack of other at home resources, etc.
			Lack of access to data/information systems	Lack of access to data/information systems challenges educators' ability to work together
			Lack of coordination/opportunity to collaborate	Lack of coordination/opportunity to collaborate
Special education colleague's not valuing EL staff			Special education colleague's not valuing EL educator input	
Conditions creating positive team process		Creation of PLCs or other collaborative groups	Creation of PLCs or other collaborative groups	
		Effective communication	Effective communication	
Time	Conditions creating sufficient time	School/district providing time for IEP related activities	School/district providing time for IEP related activities	
	Time constraints	Competing priorities	Competing priorities	

Figure 5. (cont'd)

Creation of non- typical instruction	Creation of non-typical instruction
Onerous paperwork Scheduling	Onerous paperwork Scheduling

APPENDIX B: RQ2 – Consent form, individual interview protocol, and codes

RQ2: Consent to Participate in Research – Focus Group 1

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Institution: Michigan State University, Educational Administration (K-12)

Principle Investigator: Dr. Madeline Mavrogordato, Associate Professor of K-12 Administration

Student Investigators: Jennifer Paul

Title: Creating Opportunities for Learning for English Learners with Disabilities Through Quality Individualized Education Programs

1. Explanation of the Research

The purpose of this study is to more deeply understand the processes and barriers educators have with regards to the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for English learners (ELs) who are also students with disabilities. The study aims to answer the follow questions:

1. What are educators' experiences creating IEPs for EL students? What barriers do educators face and how can we remove these barriers?
 - a. How are educators able to determine when to include a student's English language proficiency in the process of creating or revising an IEP?
2. What are the key components of IEPs for ELs with disabilities?

Through a series of interviews and focus groups with adult educators the study will result in the creation of guidance for the developers of IEPs to aid them in creating high quality IEPs for ELs with disabilities. This will allow me to then answer a third research question which is as follows:

3. How does the researcher-generated guidance shape the way educators think about IEPs for ELs with disabilities?

You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this research.

What You Will Do

As a participant in this study, you are being asked to participate in a one-hour individual interview or 1 ½ hour focus group that will be conducted in person with Jennifer Paul. You will be asked a number of questions pertaining to your experiences and knowledge about ELs with disabilities and the development of their IEPs. This session will be audio recorded, with the recording later transcribed.

2. Your Rights to Participate, Say No, Or Withdraw

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

3. Costs and Compensation For Being In the Study

There are no direct costs to the participant for agreeing to be a part of the study. At the completion of the interview or focus group, you will receive a \$100 gift card. However, you may not benefit personally from this study in any other way. We do hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through the knowledge and understanding of ELs with disabilities as well as how to improve upon IEPs for these students.

There are no foreseeable risks, however you may be uncomfortable answering questions regarding your individual practices or practices of others in your school/district.

4. Privacy and Confidentiality

This study is confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you, your district, or school to the study will be included in any report or publication. Research records will be stored securely. All documents and forms will be coded, and we will keep a separate master list with the names of participants and the corresponding code numbers. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. The audio recordings will be used for research purposes only and will be held for up to three years before being destroyed. All other forms will be retained for at least three years in a locked file cabinet in a secure office space.

5. Contact Information

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher Dr. Madeline Mavrogordato, Associate Professor of K-12 Educational Administration, at mavro@msu.edu, Michigan State University, Department of Educational Administration, 620 Farm Lane, Room 407 East Lansing, MI 48824.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

6. Informed Consent Information

You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing signing below.

Participant Signature_____

Participant Name (Please print)_____

RQ2: Focus Group 1 Protocol and PowerPoint

- Log onto Zoom
- Share screen and Focus Group 1 PowerPoint
- Start Zoom recording
- Conduct introductions
 - Tell us
 - Your name
 - What school district you're from
 - Your role
- Review with participants the following goals of Focus Group 1:
 - Work towards concrete development of guidance for educators on developing IEPs for ELs with disabilities
 - Generating discussion related to ELs with disabilities
- Provide participants with an overview of the Google spreadsheet that they will be using for the introductory activity
- Provide each participant with their unique Google spreadsheet link
- Review each of the following questions with the participants, providing them with 2 minutes for each question
 - How would you define OTL for a non-educator audience?
 - What words would you use to define OTL as it relates to ELs?
 - What words would you use to define OTL as it relates to ELs with disabilities?
- Discuss the following questions as a whole group
 - What was your first OTL definition?
 - What did you add or change for your EL definition?
 - What did you add or change for your ELs with disabilities definition?
- Provide participants with an overview of Kurz and Elliott's (2011) OTL Framework
 - Ask participants to go to their OTL Definition tab in the Google sheet to review the OTL definition
- Review my conceptual framework for how OTL and IEPs connect
- Prepare the participants for the open questions by telling them
 - You will be asked a series of open questions and you should

- Provide as many of your opinions and thoughts as possible
 - Remember that they are there because they are an expert in the field
 - Understand that the questions will be connected to the OTL definition
- Ask participants the following Instructional Time Questions
 - o How can increasing Instructional Time be achieved through the use of the IEP?
 - o Do you have examples of how educators have tried to use an IEP to increase Instructional Time? Was this effective? Why or why not?
 - o If you haven't seen examples of increasing Instructional Time using an IEP, what would it need to look like?
- Ask participants the following Content Coverage Questions
 - o How can increasing Content Coverage be achieved through the use of the IEP?
 - o Do you have examples of increasing Content Coverage? Why was this effective?
 - o If you haven't seen examples of increasing Content Coverage, how would you envision this?
- Ask participants the following Instructional Quality Questions
 - o How can increasing Instructional Quality be achieved through the use of the IEP?
 - o Do you have examples of increasing Instructional Quality? Why was this effective?
 - o If you haven't seen examples of increasing Instructional Quality, how would you envision this?
- Ask participants a series of General Questions
 - o When do you believe you should include a student's English language proficiency in the process of creating or revising an IEP? And when do you believe you shouldn't include it?

- o Educators have identified this as a problem, how would you envision addressing this in your districts?
 - o Given our goal of creating guidance for educators, are there things we missed in our discussion?
- Closing and Thank You
 - o Provide a reminder to participants about the gift card and provide participants with my contact information in case they need to reach me with additional questions or concerns.



IEPs for ELs with Disabilities Focus Group

MARCH 25, 2021



Introductions

- ▶ Jennifer Paul
 - ▶ Ph.D. student at Michigan State University
- ▶ Tell us:
 - ▶ Your name
 - ▶ What school district you're from
 - ▶ Your role



Today's Goals

- ▶ Work towards concrete development of guidance for educators on developing IEPs for ELs with disabilities
 - ▶ Generating discussion related to ELs with disabilities

Prime the Pump

- ▶ You will receive a series of questions and you will be asked to rank some of your responses.
- ▶ Let's look at an example.

Focus Group ☆ 📁 ☁

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	How would you define the concept of instructional scaffolding for a non-educator audience?	What does instructional scaffolding for ELs look like? List words or phrases.	Place #	What does instructional scaffolding for ELs with disabilities look like? List words or phrases.	Place #		
2	Your Definition	2nd List		3rd List			
3	When a teacher adds or removes things that help students learn in a systematic way.	pre-teach	2	Individualized	1		
4		Graphic organizers	3	supportive	2		
5		supportive	1	pre-teach	4		
6		allow use of native language	4	graphic organizers	5		
7				allow use of native language	3		
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+ 📁 Example for Question 1 ▾ Question 1 ▾ OTL Definition ▾

Google Sheet Links



Prime the Pump

- ▶ How would you define Opportunity To Learn (OTL) for a non-educator audience? (Column A) List words or phrases.
 - ▶ You have 2 minutes to answer this question.

Prime the Pump

- ▶ What words would you use to define OTL as it relates to ELs? (Column B)
 - ▶ Rank your words or phrases in an order of your preference (e.g. by order of importance to educators, importance to policy makers).
 - ▶ You have 2 minutes to answer this question.

Prime the Pump

- ▶ What words would you use to define OTL as it relates to ELs with disabilities? (Column D)
 - ▶ Rank your words or phrases in an order of your preference (e.g. by order of importance to educators, importance to policy makers).
 - ▶ You have 2 minutes to answer this question.

Prime the Pump

- ▶ How would you define Opportunity To Learn (OTL) for a non-educator audience?
- ▶ What words would you use to define OTL as it relates to ELs?
- ▶ What words would you use to define OTL as it relates to ELs with disabilities?

- ▶ **Discussion:** What was your first OTL definition?
- ▶ **Discussion:** What did you add or change for your EL definition?
- ▶ **Discussion:** What did you add or change for your ELs with disabilities definition?

Opportunity to Learn

- ▶ I'm going to narrow your definitions.
- ▶ OTL is a theoretical concept that has no standard definition in the research literature.
- ▶ My research is using [Elliot and Kurz's](#) definition.
- ▶ Go to your OTL Definition tab in your Google sheet. Take a few minutes to read through the 3 aspects of the OTL definition.

OTL Summary

- ▶ **Time** – allocated time, engaged time, academic learning time
- ▶ **Content** – content coverage of the curriculum standards
- ▶ **Quality** – direct instruction, guided feedback, range of higher and lower order thinking skills, pair or small group work

Questions about this definition?

How do we connect OTL and IEPs?

- ▶ IEPs have been described as the 'roadmap' for students with disabilities' classroom experiences.
 - ▶ The concrete representation of OTL is an IEP for ELs with disabilities.
-
- ▶ **Time** – allocated time, engaged time, academic learning time
 - ▶ **Content** – content coverage of the curriculum standards
 - ▶ **Quality** – direct instruction, guided feedback, range of higher and lower order thinking skills, pair or small group work

Discussion

- ▶ Series of open questions
 - ▶ Please provide as many of your opinions and thoughts as possible.
 - ▶ Remember, you are here because I believe you are an expert in the field.
 - ▶ The questions will be connected to the OTL definition we reviewed.

Instructional Time

- How can increasing instructional time be achieved through the use of the IEP?
- Do you have examples of how educators have tried to use an IEP to increase instructional time? Was this effective? Why or why not?
- If you haven't seen examples of increasing instructional time using an IEP, what would it need to look like?

Time – allocated time, engaged time, academic learning time

Content Coverage

- How can increasing content coverage be achieved through the use of the IEP?
- Do you have examples of increasing content coverage?
Why was this effective?
- If you haven't seen examples of increasing content coverage, how would you envision this?

Content – content coverage of the curriculum standards

Instructional Quality

- How can increasing instructional quality be achieved through the use of the IEP?
- Do you have examples of increasing instructional quality?
Why was this effective?
- If you haven't seen examples of increasing instructional quality, how would you envision this?

Quality – direct instruction, guided feedback, range of higher and lower order thinking skills, pair or small group work



IEP Content

- ▶ When do you believe you should include a student's English language proficiency in the process of creating or revising an IEP? And when do you believe you shouldn't include it?
- ▶ Educators have identified this as a problem, how would you envision addressing this in your districts?



What is missing?

- ▶ Given our goal of creating guidance for educators, are there things we missed in our discussion?



Thank you

- ▶ Words cannot express my gratitude.
- ▶ Your \$100 Amazon gift card will be in your e-mail shortly.
- ▶ Please feel free to e-mail me if you have questions or concerns.

pauljen2@msu.edu

Figure 6.

RQ2: Focus Group 1 Codes and Descriptions

Parent Code	Child Code	Definition
Content Coverage	Barrier to content coverage	Identifies a barrier to content coverage within the IEP process for ELs with disabilities
	Facilitates content coverage	Identifies an element that facilitates content coverage within the IEP process for ELs with disabilities
Instructional Quality	Barrier to instructional quality	Identifies a barrier to instructional quality within the IEP process for ELs with disabilities
	Facilitates instructional quality	Identifies an element that facilitates instructional quality within the IEP process for ELs with disabilities
Instructional Time	Barrier to instructional time	Identifies a barrier to instructional time within the IEP process for ELs with disabilities
	Facilitates instructional time	Identifies an element that facilitates instructional time within the IEP process for ELs with disabilities
Barrier		A general barrier to including the needs of ELs with disabilities within the IEP process for ELs with disabilities
Collaboration		Collaboration identified as an element that will improve IEPs for ELs with disabilities

APPENDIX C: RQ3 – Consent form, individual interview protocol, and codes

RQ3: Consent to Participate in Research – Focus Group 2

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Institution: Michigan State University, Educational Administration (K-12)

Principle Investigator: Dr. Madeline Mavrogordato, Associate Professor of K-12 Administration

Student Investigators: Jennifer Paul

Title: Creating Opportunities for Learning for English Learners with Disabilities Through Quality Individualized Education Programs

1. Explanation of the Research

The purpose of this study is to more deeply understand the processes and barriers educators have with regards to the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for English learners (ELs) who are also students with disabilities. The study aims to answer the follow questions:

1. What are educators' experiences creating IEPs for EL students? What barriers do educators face and how can we remove these barriers?
 - a. How are educators able to determine when to include a student's English language proficiency in the process of creating or revising an IEP?
2. What are the key components of IEPs for ELs with disabilities?

Through a series of interviews and focus groups with adult educators the study will result in the creation of guidance for the developers of IEPs to aid them in creating high quality IEPs for ELs with disabilities. This will allow me to then answer a third research question which is as follows:

3. How does the researcher-generated guidance shape the way educators think about IEPs for ELs with disabilities?

You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this research.

What You Will Do

As a participant in this study, you are being asked to participate in a one-hour individual interview or 1 ½ hour focus group that will be conducted in person with Jennifer Paul. You will be asked a number of questions pertaining to your experiences and knowledge about ELs with disabilities and the development of their IEPs. This session will be audio recorded, with the recording later transcribed.

2. Your Rights to Participate, Say No, Or Withdraw

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

3. Costs and Compensation For Being In the Study

There are no direct costs to the participant for agreeing to be a part of the study. At the completion of the interview or focus group, you will receive a \$30 gift card. However, you may not benefit personally from this study in any other way. We do hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through the knowledge and understanding of ELs with disabilities as well as how to improve upon IEPs for these students.

There are no foreseeable risks, however you may be uncomfortable answering questions regarding your individual practices or practices of others in your school/district.

4. Privacy and Confidentiality

This study is confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you, your district, or school to the study will be included in any report or publication. Research records will be stored securely. All documents and forms will be coded, and we will keep a separate master list with the names of participants and the corresponding code numbers. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. The audio recordings will be used for research purposes only and will be held for up to three years before being destroyed. All other forms will be retained for at least three years in a locked file cabinet in a secure office space.

5. Contact Information

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher Dr. Madeline Mavrogordato, Associate Professor of K-12 Educational Administration, at mavro@msu.edu, Michigan State University, Department of Educational Administration, 620 Farm Lane, Room 407 East Lansing, MI 48824.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

6. Informed Consent Information

You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing signing below.

Participant Signature_____

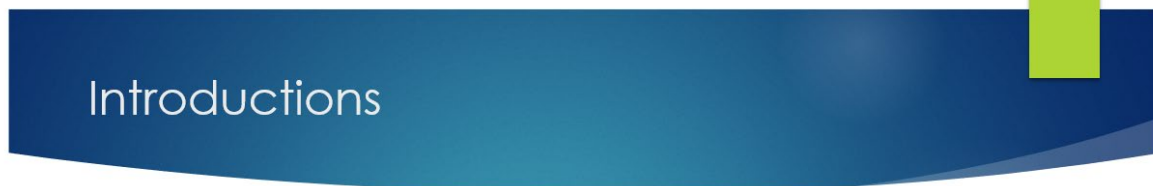
Participant Name (Please print)_____

RQ3: Focus Group 2 Protocol and PowerPoint

- Log onto Zoom
- Share screen and Focus Group 2 PowerPoint
- Start Zoom recording
- Conduct introductions
- Review with participants the following goals of Focus Group 2:
 - Reconvene to review the Draft EL IEP Tool for ELs with Disabilities
 - Gather data on participants' reaction to the tool
 - Gather input on changes/additions/edits
- Provide participants with a review of Kurz and Elliott's (2011) OTL Framework
- Review Focus Group 1 feedback related to OTL areas of focus and ask the participants OTL related questions as they pertain to the Draft EL IEP Tool Focus Group 1 Feedback and Research Question 3
 - Review of feedback related to Instructional Time
 - Participants are asked the question: Does this tool provide an improved IEP process for increasing Instructional Time?
 - Review of feedback related to Content Coverage
 - Participants are asked the question: Does this tool provide an improved IEP process for increasing Content Coverage?
 - Review of feedback related to Instructional Quality
 - Participants are asked the question: Does this tool provide an improved IEP process for increasing Instructional Quality?
- Ask participants a series of General Questions
 - In what ways do you believe the problems of addressing a student's ELP in the process of creating or revising an IEP have been improved with the use of this tool?
 - In what ways do you believe the problems of addressing a student's ELP in the process of creating or revising an IEP have been worsened with the use of this tool?
 - Given our goal of reviewing this guidance and tool for educators, are there things we missed in our discussion?
 - How do you foresee using this tool with your district(s)?

Closing and Thank You

- o Provide a reminder to participants about the gift card and provide participants with my contact information in case they need to reach me with additional questions or concerns.



- ▶ Jennifer Paul
 - ▶ Ph.D. student at Michigan State University

Today's Goals

- ▶ Reconvene to review the Draft IEP Tool for ELs with Disabilities
 - ▶ Gather data on your reaction to the tool
 - ▶ Gather input on changes/additions/edits

Review of Opportunity to Learn

- ▶ OTL is a theoretical concept that has no standard definition in the research literature.
- ▶ My research is using Elliot and Kurz's definition.

OTL Summary Review

- ▶ **Time** – allocated time, engaged time, academic learning time
- ▶ **Content** – content coverage of the curriculum standards
- ▶ **Quality** – direct instruction, guided feedback, range of higher and lower order thinking skills, pair or small group work

Questions about this definition?

How do we connect OTL and IEPs?

- ▶ IEPs have been described as the 'roadmap' for students with disabilities' classroom experiences.
 - ▶ The concrete representation of OTL is an IEP for ELs with disabilities.
-
- ▶ **Time** – allocated time, engaged time, academic learning time
 - ▶ **Content** – content coverage of the curriculum standards
 - ▶ **Quality** – direct instruction, guided feedback, range of higher and lower order thinking skills, pair or small group work

Discussion

- ▶ Series of open questions
 - ▶ Please provide as many of your opinions and thoughts as possible.
 - ▶ Remember, you are here because I believe you are an expert in the field.
 - ▶ The questions will be connected to the OTL definition we reviewed.

Review Discussion from March

- ▶ Instructional Time Summary
 - ▶ Increases to instructional time can be achieved by
 - ▶ High level of collaboration, providing equal voice, between all educators for the development of the IEP
 - ▶ Increasing knowledge of basic EL data about the student within the IEP team such as first language literacy, formal education experience, etc.
 - ▶ Use of the IEP to drive instructional collaboration
 - ▶ EL services cannot happen in place of core instruction

Time – allocated time, engaged time, academic learning time

Does this tool provide an improved IEP process for increasing instructional time?

Content Coverage

Content – content coverage of the curriculum standards

- ▶ Content Coverage Summary
 - ▶ Increases to content coverage can be achieved by
 - ▶ better adherence to content standards, not project based approach with no connection to students' goals
 - ▶ Increasing ways to provide correct and appropriate linguistic accommodations and supports to meet the content standards and students' goals

Does this tool provide an improved IEP process for increasing content coverage?

Instructional Quality

Quality – direct instruction, guided feedback, range of higher and lower order thinking skills, pair or small group work

- ▶ Instructional Quality Summary
 - ▶ Increases to instructional quality can be achieved by work
 - ▶ Collaboration
 - ▶ Engaging the student and family in the conversation
 - ▶ Strong instructional leadership
 - ▶ Appropriate EL staffing

Does this tool provide an improved IEP process for increasing instructional quality?

General Questions

- ▶ In what ways do you believe the problems of addressing a student's ELP in the process of creating or revising an IEP have been improved with the use of this tool?
- ▶ In what ways do you believe the problems of addressing a student's ELP in the process of creating or revising an IEP have been worsened with the use of this tool?

What is missing?

- ▶ Given our goal of reviewing this guidance and tool for educators, are there things we missed in our discussion?
- ▶ How do you foresee using this tool with your district(s)?



Thank you

- ▶ Words cannot express my gratitude.
- ▶ Your \$30 Amazon gift card will be in your e-mail shortly.
- ▶ Please feel free to e-mail me if you have questions or concerns.

pauljen2@msu.edu

Figure 7.

RQ3: Focus Group 2 Codes and Descriptions

Parent Code	Child Code	Definition
Content Coverage	Positive feedback	Positive feedback related to how content coverage needs were addressed within the draft EL IEP Tool
	Improvements	Needed improvements related to how content coverage is addressed/not addressed within the draft EL IEP Tool
Instructional Quality	Positive feedback	Positive feedback related to how instructional quality needs were addressed within the draft EL IEP Tool
	Improvements	Needed improvements related to how instructional quality is addressed/not addressed within the draft EL IEP Tool
Instructional Time	Positive feedback	Positive feedback related to how instructional time needs were addressed within the draft EL IEP Tool
	Improvements	Needed improvements related to how instructional time is addressed/not addressed within the draft EL IEP Tool
General Concerns		General concerns that should be addressed in the final draft of the EL IEP Tool
Positive Feedback		General positive feedback about the draft EL IEP Tool
Tip		Recommended to be added as a tip for educators in the final draft of the EL IEP Tool

APPENDIX D: EL IEP Tool

Figure 8.

EL IEP Tool

School/District Tool for the Development of IEPs for English Learners (ELs) with Disabilities

This tool can be used by educators at the district and school level to improve IEPs for ELs with disabilities by examining and enhancing their IEP processes and procedures. Although this tool can be used by an educator independently, its real value lies in using it as an opportunity for discussion and planning between administrators and coordinators to help implement actionable steps to improve IEPs for ELs with disabilities.

Educators are often overwhelmed at the idea of adding 'one more thing' to their plates. Even now, you may be wondering how you're going to take on a project this size. This step-by-step guidance breaks down the entire process of helping you meet that goal of improving IEPs for ELs with disabilities.

Additionally, at times educators are directed to not include information about a student's English language proficiency within the IEP. Gathering and sharing information about a student's English language needs may not even need to be part of the IEP itself but could be discussed as part of an overall process. This guide will help you understand when it may be appropriate to include that information in the IEP and include those discussions as a part of your district's processes designed to focus on student learning and academic progress.

We start with helping you and your colleagues understand where you are and move to where you want to go. Many advocates of strategic planning believe "if you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there" (Cook, 2004; Porter, 1980;

Carroll, 1898). This guidance is aimed at helping districts not only plan out the road they will take on this path of improvement but will also help educators move from planning to doing.

Although this guidance is comprehensive, feel free to tailor the steps to your organization's needs and add as much information and detail as you think is necessary.



Who is this document for?

This document is intended primarily for educators involved in the creation of IEPs. This includes a student's regular education teacher, a representative of the school system, an individual who can interpret the evaluation results, representatives of any other agencies that may be responsible for paying for or providing transition services, and other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise about the student. This guidance is also targeted at educators who are responsible for setting up the systems and structures to support student success such as superintendents, principals, special education coordinators, and English learner coordinators. The purpose of the guidance is for all levels of educators to discuss improving ELs with

Figure 8. (cont'd)

disabilities' access to opportunity to learn through the IEP. It is also not a replacement for the culturally responsive identification processes that should be used for the identification of ELs with suspected disabilities.

■ How To Use This Tool

A logical starting point is for the district EL Coordinator and the Special Education Coordinator to work collaboratively to facilitate the use of this step-by-step guide and the corresponding editable



[Worksheet](#). These educators should use this tool to convene a group of additional educators within the district who can do the following:

- Review the current processes and procedures for developing IEPs for ELs with disabilities,
- Discuss and propose changes to those processes and procedures,
- Approve the proposed changes,
- Implement the proposed changes; and
- Annually review the processes for continuous updates and improvements.

■ Why should you work to improve IEPs for ELs with disabilities?

In order to understand why educators should even focus on the IEPs of ELs with disabilities, it's important to understand the concept of Opportunity to Learn (OTL) and the purpose of the IEP. The widely held belief is that the Individualized Education Program (IEP) provides an effective means for unique student-centered services. The IEP has been deemed essential

to achieving ambitious goals for students and has been called the “heart and soul of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” (Bateman, 1995; McLaughling & Thurlow, 2003). Others have called it the ‘cornerstone’ of providing effective post-secondary transition planning for students (Doren, Flannery, Lombardi, & McGrath Kato, 2013). For students with disabilities, the IEP has been described as a “road map” for how

OTL may be realized (Pullin, 2008). For students in your district who are ELs with disabilities, the IEP brings to life their opportunities to learn.

The 1974 landmark case *Lau v. Nichols* determined that the opportunity for ELs to access a meaningful K-12 education was a constitutional right. This ruling was the start of a much stronger focus on the specific needs of ELs within the K-12 system. ELs' opportunity to learn the English language is central to their ability to exit from their formal status as an EL in Michigan. ELs in Michigan are expected to achieve a certain level of English proficiency on the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs or WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessment as defined by the Michigan Department of Education's Entrance and Exit Protocol (EEP).

Figure 8. (cont'd)

Research on this topic has indicated that a lack of English language proficiency negatively impacts students' performance on assessments (Abedi & Lord, 2001). Aguirre-Muñoz and Boscardin (2008) suggested that for students to benefit from being taught English language arts content, they must be provided with equal attention on the development of their academic English proficiency. Other researchers have echoed this need for ELs to be provided opportunities to strengthen their academic English skills in order to access the content of all of their general education classes including mathematics and science (Moschkovich, 2007; 2012; Quinn, Lee, & Valdes, 2012).

The literature on this topic indicates that OTL may be reduced for ELs if classroom practices such as being taught at a slower pace or not being provided with

content related courses designed for second language acquisition are utilized (Boscardin, et al., 2004; Francis, Lesaux, & August, 2006; Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006; Gutiérrez, & Jaramillo, 2006; Herman, Klein, & Abedi, 2000).

But how is OTL actually defined? Many definitions of OTL exist. However, one of the most widely used research-based definitions includes dimensions of Time, Content, and Quality. A more full description of each dimension is in the table shown below.

This foundation of OTL will help you better understand how to use IEPs to bring to life OTL for ELs with disabilities.

OTL Dimensions & Definitions

Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocated time (i.e., time scheduled for instruction) • Instructionally sensitive and student-oriented indicators such as instructional time (i.e., proportion of allocated time used for instruction) • Engaged time (i.e., proportion of instructional time during which students are engaged in learning) • Academic learning time (i.e., proportion of engaged time during which students are experiencing a high success rate of learning)
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher's content coverage of the general curriculum standards
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional practices: direct instruction, guided feedback, student think-alouds, and instructional grouping formats. • Cognitive expectations: applying a range of cognitive processes from lower-order to higher-order. • Grouping format: pairs, small groups, multiple grouping formats.

Figure 8. (cont'd)

Improving the IEP Process Step-By-Step

The first part of this tool is designed for educators to review their current district wide processes and take steps towards modifying them. Keep in mind that these steps are not for the convening of actual IEP teams, but are intended for the review and development of enhancing your district processes for those meetings when they occur.

You should follow the steps below and use the [Worksheet](#) to document your discussion and progress.

STEP 1 – Identification of Personnel

List the names of those responsible in the school or district for making decisions about the ways in which IEPs are constructed. If the district or school's EL/Title III Coordinator is not currently involved in decision making, that person should be included with this group. If you are working on enhancing the IEP process for ELs at the district level, consider including the Superintendent, the District EL Coordinator, the District Special Education Coordinator, and anyone else who is responsible for helping make decisions about district level policies. The inclusion of both the EL Coordinator and the Special Education coordinator is necessary to ensure that both areas of expertise,

English language acquisition and special education, are fully considered in these discussions.

If you are doing this at an individual school level then consider including the building principal, the school EL coordinator/educator, and the building level special education coordinator/educator.

It's possible that a school may not have someone identified in one of these roles. For example, in many districts with small EL populations a building level EL coordinator or EL educator may not exist. In these cases, the district will still benefit from including an EL educator from another building within the district or reaching out to their ISD/RESA for expertise in this area.

STEP 2 – Identification of Date(s)

Identify a date on which an initial hour meeting can be convened with the set of personnel identified in Step 1 to discuss IEPs for ELs with disabilities. Additional meetings will likely be needed based on the rate at which the discussion questions in each step are completed. It's possible you just might not get through all the steps in that meeting.

Figure 8. (cont'd)

STEP 3 – Reflection Questions & Read Ahead

Asking your colleagues that will be involved in this process to reflect on the following questions ahead of time will help prepare everyone for the discussion and topics in the remaining steps. These reflection questions can be e-mailed to your colleagues in advance of the meeting and could even be used as discussion questions to start that initial meeting. Educators should also review pages 1-3 of this document as well as Chapter 6 of the [U.S. Department of Education's English Learner Toolkit](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/chap6.pdf) (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/chap6.pdf>) which focused on tools and resources for addressing ELs with disabilities.

In our organization:

- Whose responsibility is it to ensure ELs with disabilities receive a high-quality education?
- How, if at all, are our EL Coordinator and Special Education Coordinator working together on IEPs?
- What challenges do you think we will face as we attempt to improve the IEPs for ELs with disabilities?
- What positive things do we have in place that will help us improve IEPs for ELs with disabilities?
- How do we believe students' opportunity to learn the English language may be enhanced or diminished by our current IEP process?

STEP 4 – IEPs for ELs with Disabilities Meeting & Discussion

Your group is convened! Step 4 includes a series of questions for the group to discuss. In some cases, the questions are two-part questions and others require concrete actionable steps to be discussed and planned for. Make sure to identify someone as the notetaker on the [Worksheet](https://docs.google.com/document/d/12QVzOqSkj9UfBIV-8IsqmOqGAWr2Eq81aT38qOvrew/edit?usp=sharing) (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/12QVzOqSkj9UfBIV-8IsqmOqGAWr2Eq81aT38qOvrew/edit?usp=sharing>). Each section of the Step 4 discussion focuses on a different and important aspect of IEPs for ELs with disabilities. Relevant research and high-quality resources are connected for additional reading in each of the areas.

At the beginning of the meeting make sure to identify who is responsible for each of the following items:

- [Worksheet](#) notetaker

- Person responsible for leading the discussion in each Step 4 section

Disability Identification for ELs

One of the greatest challenges facing educators is the difficulty at times in determining whether or not an EL is eligible for special education services. Current research indicates a high degree of variability in how schools identify ELs for special education services (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2005). Although the intent of this tool is not to focus on these identification aspects, educators should consider using the identification tools provided in

Figure 8. (cont'd)

the U.S. Department of Education's [Chapter 6 Tools and Resources for Addressing English Learners with Disabilities](#).

Educators can refer to the [Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education](#) (https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MARSE_Supplemented_with_IDEA_Regs_379598_7.pdf) for additional help in determining the presence of a disability. Oakland ISD provides excellent resources for helping educators make a determination between whether a student's needs are disability or language related on [their website](#) (<http://differenceordisability.weebly.com/referral-tools.html>).

■ Educator Collaboration

The U.S. Department of Education indicates that including an EL educator in the IEP process is valuable and “essential” (OELA, 2016). By doing so special educators improve the connectedness between themselves and EL educators. Educators with EL expertise are routinely not invited to IEP team meetings, EL educators often feel that their special educator peers are not interested in their expertise, and special education staff and EL educators often fall into the *specialization trap*, which occurs when the special educator and EL educator only attending to the needs of the student related to their own areas of expertise (Kangas, 2018). This compartmentalization leaves the potential for a gap in addressing the student's full needs. The following questions are aimed at addressing these issues.

1. Who is/are the knowledgeable EL educator(s) and special educator(s) that will participate in the IEP team meetings for students?
2. How will these personnel be notified of this responsibility?
3. Will these personnel assignments vary by building?
4. How will teachers coordinate instruction and

services to implement the IEP and provide the student with coherent and appropriate instruction?

■ Student Background

The U.S. Department of Education indicates that the IEP team must consider the student's level of English language proficiency when an IEP is developed (OELA, 2016). In order to fully understand all aspects of a student's conversational and academic language proficiency the student's background as it relates to language should be discussed.

1. **When** and **how** does the IEP team plan to reflect on the following aspects of the student's language background:
 - the dominant language in the home
 - the student's primary language of communication at home and in school
 - aspects of the student's primary language that may impact instruction (ex. Some languages read right to left, alphabet differences, absence of a written form of the language)
 - the cultural values and beliefs of the family
 - formal education experiences
 - disrupted education due to COVID, civil unrest, war, etc.

■ Family and Student Collaboration.

Guidance from the U.S. Department of Education directs educators to ensure that parents with limited English proficiency are able to meaningfully participate as a member of the IEP team. This guidance specifically states that educators must take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the parent understands the proceedings of the IEP team meeting which may necessitate the inclusion of an interpreter (OELA, 2016). Using the OELA guidance educators must have a plan for the following:

Figure 8. (cont'd)

- How will the district determine if parents or guardians have limited English proficiency?
- How will the district determine the primary language of the parents or guardians?
- How will the district determine the actual language needs of the parents or guardians (i.e. necessity of interpreters or written translated information)?

[Chapter 10](#) of the OELA English Learner Tool Kit provides an opportunity for educators to gather additional information and ideas for how to answer these questions as well as how to best communicate with parents of ELs.

■ Language

The federal regulations about IEPs indicate that in cases of students who are ELs, educators must “consider the language needs of the child as those needs relate to the child’s IEP” ([IDEA, Sec. 300.324 \(a\) \(2\)](#)). It is very often the case that IEPs should consider how English language proficiency factors into the IEP, but there are certainly cases where English language proficiency is less important for a student. It is important to note that a lack of English language proficiency does not equal a disability.

Ideally, the following components should be identified within the student’s IEP. If they are not, then discuss a plan for including this information:

1. In what language does the student receive their content instruction?
2. What are the student’s print literacy skills in their first language?
3. What language will the student need to use in the planned post-secondary setting?

■ Assessments

Although assessments are identified within IEPs, for ELs with disabilities, this IEP section needs a closer look. Michigan uses the WIDA assessments to measure English language development and therefore educators have the ability to administer the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs or the WIDA Alternate ACCESS for

ELLs assessment. The decision about which form of this assessment an EL with disabilities should take is a decision that must be made by the IEP team and documented within the IEP.

1. **How** and **when** will the IEP team discuss if the WIDA Alternate ACCESS or the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs is appropriate for a student?
2. How will the IEP team incorporate the use of the Michigan Department of Education’s [WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Decision Guidance](#) document into their work?

■ Supports & Accommodations

For the Classroom

Educators must keep in mind that supports and accommodations are intended to level the playing field. They should enable a student to have equal access to content while providing them the ability to participate and progress in the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible. In order for educators to determine what will help level the playing field for a student, they must start with what the learning goals are for the student and what may help them achieve those goals.

A student’s classroom supports and accommodations will vary depending on a student’s needs. These should be included in the IEP itself to ensure that a student is receiving the fullest extent of the benefits these can offer. It may be helpful to reach out to your district’s ISD/RESA for more information on how to make appropriate supports and accommodations selections for the classroom.

For Assessments

Similar to the previous section, what a student should have access to at the time of statewide assessments is a typical component of IEPs. The use of anything identified on the WIDA assessments as an ‘Accommodation’ is intended only for students who have a need for that Accommodation outlined in their IEP. One of the most commonly used Accommodations on the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs assessment is the use

	<p>of “Extended Speaking test response time”. The need for this English language Accommodation must be identified as a need somewhere in the IEP.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Are the the IEP team members familiar with the Universal Tools and Accommodations available for the WIDA assessments? If not, what is the plan for ensuring staff have an opportunity to become familiar with those? Are the Universal Tools or Accommodations students need for the WIDA assessments identified in the IEP? If not, is there a current place in the IEP form to include this information or does that need to be added? <p>Information about all supports and accommodations for Michigan’s state assessments can be found in the MDE Supports & Accommodations Guidance Document (https://www.michigan.gov/)</p>
	<p>documents/mde/Michigan_Accommodations_Manual.final_480016_7.pdf).</p> <h2>OTL in the IEP</h2> <p>Earlier in this document, we focused on understanding how OTL impacts IEPs for ELs with disabilities. Educators should discuss these questions in light of that understanding.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How does your current IEP process consider each of the three components of OTL: instructional time, content coverage, and instructional quality? How and when will the IEP team discuss whether and how English language proficiency is necessary as part of each student’s goals and objectives?
<h2>STEP 5: Sustainability Plan</h2> <p>Creating a system through which you can annually review the processes you’ve established to improve IEPs for dual identified students can lead to a continuous cycle of improvement. You may find it useful to review steps 1-5 before the start of each school year.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What will your continuous cycle of improvement look like? Who is the person in this group responsible for overseeing the implementation and follow-through of activities defined in this plan?

8

Figure 8. (cont'd)

Tool for the Development of an IEP for an EL with Disabilities

This part of the tool can be used by the IEP team at the district and school level to improve IEPs for students who are identified as both English learners (ELs) and students with disabilities.

This part of the tool can be used to ensure that each element of the required components of the IEP considers the needs of the students who are ELs. An example of how a typical IEP might look for each component is also provided.

■ Parts of an IEP

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)

This section of a student's IEP summarizes a student's current abilities such as their strengths and weaknesses, what helps the child learn, identifies the limitations for a child's learning, the ways in which the disability affects the student's ability to participate and progress in the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible, as well as objective data from current evaluations. In order to successfully identify measurable goals a baseline of the student's abilities should be reviewed. A student's second language abilities as they pertain to the student's disability should also be described in this section.

- Include current English language proficiency information as it pertains to each expressive (Speaking and Writing) and receptive (Listening and Reading) domain
- Include current home language proficiency information in student's preferred language of communication as it pertains to each expressive and receptive domain

Gathering information such as a student's abilities in the expressive and receptive domains could come in the form of scores from the WIDA screener or other assessments conducted in English by the school.

Additionally, information such as the student's preferences for communication in their home language will likely need to be obtained by first asking the student or family members about the student's preferred language of communication. Then, the district could choose to assess the student's abilities in that language with an appropriate tool.

Measurable Annual Goals

Measurable annual goals are statements that describe what a student can reasonably be expected to accomplish within 12-months. The measurable annual goals should be tied directly to the needs identified in the PLAAFP. One of the main tenets of these annual goals is that they must be related to meeting the student's needs that result from the child's disability. A student's second language abilities as they pertain to the student's disability(s) should also be included in this section.

- Include current English language proficiency information as it pertains to each expressive (Speaking and Writing) and receptive (Listening and Reading) domain
- Ensure that each goal identifies in which language the goals will be addressed
- Ensure each goal identifies who will be responsible for measuring the outcomes

Current research shows that students may not be able to reach goals such as those measured by standardized assessments if the educators providing instruction to the students do not have training in working with ELs (Master, et al. 2012). Districts should make additional efforts to ensure that educators are increasing their knowledge about how best to meet the needs of ELs. This may mean hiring additional staff or investing in training opportunities.

Figure 8. (cont'd)

Supplementary Aids/Services

Supplementary aids and services includes aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes, other education-related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings, to enable students with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate. A student's second language abilities as they pertain to the student's disability(s) should also be included in this section.

While ESL services should not be listed as a special education program or service, they could be listed here when a link has been created between the student's disability and their English language proficiency.

- Include current English language proficiency information as it pertains to each expressive (Speaking and Writing) and receptive (Listening and Reading) domain

Example without Language Consideration

Supports and Modifications to the Environment	Time/Frequency/Condition	Location
Word prediction software	When needed; class work, homework, formal assessment	Classroom

Example with Language Consideration

Supports and Modifications to the Environment	Time/Frequency/Condition	Location
English word prediction software	When needed; class work, homework, formal assessment	Classroom

The tables above illustrate a simple addition to this section of the IEP that could provide meaningful information to educators about how to implement portions of the IEP for an EL with disabilities.

Participation With Non-disabled Children

Peer to peer interaction for students learning English is important for their language growth. The requirement for this section of the IEP includes documenting the extent to which a student's disability precludes their participation with students without disabilities but also allows the IEP team to recommend whether or not a student should be exempt from the language other than English requirement because the student's disability affects their ability to learn English. This should only apply in cases with students who have the most significant cognitive disabilities.

- Promote interaction with English speaking peers with and without disabilities

Participation in State and District-wide Tests (this include accommodations/modifications)

Michigan offers a variety of summative assessments students are expected to take. This includes assessment options for students being taught the general education curriculum and those who are being instructed on alternate content expectations. For ELs, students are also expected to take the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs or the WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs, an assessment designed for ELs with the most significant cognitive disabilities. There is no clear-cut answer on which students with disabilities should take the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessment. Because of that, the IEP team must use the [WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Selection Guidance](#) to determine what is appropriate for the student on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, Accommodations a student may need for all state assessments should be included in the IEP. One practical reason for this is to ensure that the student gets what they need at the time of the assessment, ensuring validity of the test results.

- Determine whether the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs or WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is appropriate for the student
- Identify alternative English language proficiency assessments if necessary, and explain why the assessment is necessary and meets the student's needs

Figure 8. (cont'd)

Assessment Area	Assessment	Rationale for Appropriateness/ non-appropriateness	Accommodations
ELA	MI-Access Functional Independence	M-STEP is not appropriate because the student is not being instructed on the general education curriculum but is rather working toward state alternate content expectations	Scribe Additional time
Mathematics	MI-Access Functional Independence	M-STEP is not appropriate because the student is not being instructed on the general education curriculum but is rather working toward state alternate content expectations	Scribe In-person human translator Additional time
Science			
Social Studies			
English Language Development (Proficiency)	WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs	The student is working towards alternate achievement standards/student has, or functions as if they have among the most significant cognitive disabilities	Scribe Extended time Speaking

- Include Accommodations a student may need related to their second language acquisition needs for the ELP assessment and content area assessments

Please keep in mind that the Accommodations listed in the previous example, are a subset of Accommodations possible on the state summative assessments. A full list of what is available and what may match a student's needs can be found in the [Michigan Department of Education's Supports & Accommodations Guidance Document](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Michigan_Accommodations_Manual.final_480016_7.pdf) (https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Michigan_Accommodations_Manual.final_480016_7.pdf).

Dates and Places

The IEP must state when services will begin, how often they will be provided, where they will be provided, and how long they will last.

No information related to a student's English language needs is relevant for this portion of required information.

Transition Services

Transition services are special education services that are designed to focus on improving academic and functional achievement for students with disabilities as the student moves from school to post-school life

such as postsecondary education, employment, and even independent living. For ELs with disabilities, they may need to continue their English language learning even after their K-12 experiences. Their ability to function successfully in post-school activities such as post-secondary or vocational education, employment, independent living, and even community participation depends in part on their ability to understand and use the English language.

- Identify ways in which the student will continue their English language learning after their K-12 experience

Behavioral Intervention Plans

The IEP should include a behavioral intervention plan if the student's behavior impedes their learning or the learning of others. These plans typically include approaches to addressing the behavior. For example, these strategies may include designing routines, teaching the student new silent signals, or even taking breaks. Depending on the student's behavior being addressed, this part of the IEP should also include pertinent information related to their English language proficiency needs. For example, a teacher may have noticed that a student with limited English proficiency becomes easily frustrated when attempting to interact

Figure 8. (cont'd)

with his English-speaking peers. The student throws a toy every time he is unable to verbally interact in English with them. In addressing this behavior for the student, it would seem likely that educators may need to work on self-calming behaviors. However, the student's lack of English seems to be a contributing factor to the behavioral issues.

- Identify English language proficiency needs as they relate to measuring the student's annual goals

Assistive Technology and Services

Many students with disabilities use assistive technology to aid them. Examples of this are magnifiers, refreshable braille devices, speech generating devices, text-to-speech systems, crutches and many other types of supports. These supports are specialized to meet the student's needs as they relate to their disability. Because of this, it is unlikely that these educators would be considering the student's English language needs as they relate to these devices. Despite the unlikelihood, educators should still consider how the technology may be able to offer assistance to the student in their English language needs. For example, a student using speech-to-text may benefit from utilizing it at times in their native language. In cases such as this, that level of detail should be included in the IEP.

- Identify English language proficiency needs, if applicable, as they relate to the student's assistive technology needs

Age of Majority

The age of majority is the age at which a student is now considered an adult. Their rights as they relate to the IEP must be explained to them no later than one year prior to reaching the age of majority. For ELs there are some practical implications to this discussion, ones of course, that include ensuring that the student is receiving information about the age of majority in a language they understand.

- Identify English language proficiency needs for

communicating age of majority information as they pertain to each expressive (Speaking and Writing) and receptive (Listening and Reading) domain

Additional Resources

- Many similar concepts to those found in this document can be found in the [WIDA ALTELLA Brief Number 4](https://altella.wceruw.org/pubs/ALTELLA_Brief-04_IEPs.pdf) (https://altella.wceruw.org/pubs/ALTELLA_Brief-04_IEPs.pdf).
- Educators will find many useful chapters, such as the previously mentioned Chapter 6 and 10, of the [OELA Toolkit](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html) (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html>).
- Although not specific to Michigan, there are many valuable resources available in the [California Practitioners' Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities](https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/ac/documents/ab2785guide.pdf) (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/ac/documents/ab2785guide.pdf>).

Tips/Reminders

- The [CCSSO English Learners with Disabilities Guide](https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/CCSSO%20ELSWD%20Guide_Final%2011%2011%202017.pdf) (https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/CCSSO%20ELSWD%20Guide_Final%2011%2011%202017.pdf) may also be helpful
- Creating an IEP for an EL may take longer due to the amount of information necessary to fully understand a student's needs.
- Michigan schools are required to have an ESL certified educator serving EL students. This may require schools to shift hiring practices or work with consortium to provide appropriate services for students. Educators can find more information about these requirements by reviewing MDE's [Appropriate Staffing of EL Programs](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Appropriate_Teacher_EL_Endorsements_665160_7.docx) document (https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Appropriate_Teacher_EL_Endorsements_665160_7.docx). Questions about educator requirements can be directed to the MDE Office of Educational Supports at 517-241-6974 or mde-el@michigan.gov.

Figure 8. (cont'd)

- Educators should keep in mind that ensuring students have access to content instruction is an integral part of meeting the goals of their IEP as well as meeting their language acquisition skills. This additionally means that educators should be adhering to the content standards themselves, including the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards, in their instruction. The WIDA ELD standards are not a substitute for core content area instruction. They must be focused on in addition to content standards.
- As mentioned, the processes outlined in this document are not a replacement for the culturally responsive identification process for ELs with suspected disabilities. Additional resources on that topic can be found through the [Oakland ISD's Difference or Disability website](http://differenceordisability.weebly.com/store/c1/Featured_Products.html) (http://differenceordisability.weebly.com/store/c1/Featured_Products.html).

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