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August 2013

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**Job-Embedded Professional Development in Reading for Teachers of  
English Language Learners**

**by**

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## **Dedication**

To my dad who in his last conversation with me said “finish school.”

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# **Job-Embedded Professional Development in Reading for Teachers of English Language Learners**

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

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The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of job-embedded professional development, with coaching, on teachers' of ELLs content knowledge and instructional practice in the area of reading and how teachers perceived this type of professional development. Professional development in reading was provided to first grade teachers of English Language Learners at one urban elementary school. The following research questions guided this study: (a) How does job-embedded professional development in reading influence individual teacher's knowledge about reading instruction for English Language Learners? (b) How does job-embedded professional development in reading influence individual teacher's reading instruction for English Language Learners? (c) How do teachers perceive a job-embedded approach to professional development in reading instruction? This study employed a mixed methods design using both quantitative and qualitative data to allow for a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon from various perspectives. Results indicate that teachers changed their content knowledge and instructional practices, and perceived the training as

beneficial. Job-embedded professional development offers an effective method for delivery of professional development to teachers of ELLs that meets their diverse learning needs and varying levels of content knowledge and experience.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

There is a growing emphasis on educational reform to improve the quality of education for public school students in the United States (NCLB, 2001). There is mounting concern about students' poor academic performance in reading, and the long-entrenched gap between reading outcomes of traditionally under-served groups such as low-income students and English language learners (ELLs) and their mainstream peers (Aud et al., 2012). Research has shown that many teachers (Bos, Mather, Dickson, Podhajski, & Chard, 2001; Brady et al., 2009; Cunningham, Perry, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2004; Moats, 1994; Washburn, Malatesha Joshi, Binks Cantrell, 2011) and teacher education college and university instructors (Malatesha Joshi, et al., 2009) lack the content knowledge to teach reading. Moreover, most professional development provided to teachers typically does not address the needs of English language learners (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Teachers simply cannot teach what they do not know (Malatesha Joshi, et al., 2009) and they cannot effectively meet the needs of ELLs unless they understand how these students acquire literacy skills in the native language and or English as a second language (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008; Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006). Preparing in-service teachers to teach students requires a concerted professional development effort by outside experts (Malatesha Joshi, et al., 2009) and school staff because teachers present different levels of pedagogy, knowledge, and experience and may have different needs (Stover, Kissel, Haag, & Shoniker, 2011). Identifying and implementing an

effective method of providing professional development to in-service teachers is a topic of concern for school and district personnel who have to contend with fewer economic resources (Aud et al., 2012), reductions in staff, and limited support services for students and teachers.

### **Professional Development Standards**

Standards for professional development can help improve educator learning by setting expectations for professional learning that will increase its effectiveness. Standards can help ensure equity and excellence and establish quality measures in educator learning to develop teacher knowledge, skills, and practice (Learning Forward, 2011). In 2001, NSDC published standards for use in designing and delivering staff development to improve learning for all students. There were 12 standards in the areas of context, process, and content. These standards were later revised by Learning Forward (formerly NSDC) to include seven standards for professional *learning*. The change in wording from *staff development* to *professional learning* was for greater emphasis on educator learning and active engagement of teachers in continuous improvement of their practice (Learning Forward, 2011). In 2011, the third edition of these standards was published with a greater emphasis on educator learning and student results. The revised standards are as follows:

1. *Learning communities* – provide the context for continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

2. *Leadership* – requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.
3. *Resources* – requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.
4. *Data* – uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.
5. *Learning designs* – integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.
6. *Implementation* – applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.
7. *Outcomes* – aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards. (Learning Forward, 2011)

In addition, Desimone (2011) suggests other important features of professional development:

1. *Content focus*: activities that focus on the particular subject matter being taught and how students can learn that content;
2. *Active learning*: activities that involve teacher observations, feedback, analyzing data and student work, and presentations; and
3. *Coherence*: cohesion with other professional development and teacher knowledge and beliefs, and aligned with school, district, and state goals.

Researchers recommend that professional development include at least 20 hours of contact time spread across a semester (Desimone, 2011) to 49 hours over the course of a school year (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

In summary, professional development that includes knowledge transfer, evaluation, coaching, collaboration, collective participation, guidance, support in making changes, and self-assessment has been found to be most effective in changing teacher practice (Carlisle, Schnabel-Cortina, & Katz, 2011). These features allow teachers to see how content knowledge influences and improves instruction (Cohen & Ball, 1999), which in turn takes the guesswork out of implementation. According to Cohen and Ball (1999) once teachers acquire content knowledge, they can use it at will making professional learning a “particularly salient feature of instructional improvement” (Cohen & Ball, 1999, p 28).

Standards for professional learning can help elevate the quality of professional development. Standards assure that critical components of professional development remain static even when the content changes. Taken together, the professional learning standards (Learning Forward, 2011) and Desimone’s (2011) core features can be used for designing professional development to improve teacher knowledge and practice. Specifically, professional development should be driven by data or assessed need, include evaluation and feedback, be based on research, focus on content, designed for active, collaborative learning within a professional learning community, and aligned with school and district goals. It should be ongoing and situated in the school and classroom setting to optimize its effectiveness.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Providing professional development based on standards and designed to be more intensive than traditional professional development is the first step in improving teacher knowledge and student achievement. The NSDC conducted a comprehensive analysis of two national surveys, *National Center for Education Statistics (2003-04) Schools and Staffing Survey* and the *NSDC Standards Assessment Inventory (2007-08)*, which included about 300,000 teachers. It is the most comprehensive analysis of professional learning to date and features teacher development models from a number of countries and an accurate view of the status of professional development in the United States.

The NSDC status report indicated that the United States lags behind other industrial nations in providing professional development for teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). In those countries, (a) ample time is allotted for professional learning within the teachers' work schedules; (b) new teachers receive increased mentoring and support; (c) teachers actively engage in school decision-making; and (d) governments support and require professional development and promote national training programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Such mandates provide teachers ample opportunities, not only to develop content knowledge, but to also work collectively and collaboratively with peers to improve teacher practice.

Addressing gaps in teacher knowledge through professional development is part of the current educational reform movement driven by the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 2001) calling for highly qualified teachers to teach all students. NCLB (2001) provides for school-wide reform and increased opportunities for

intensive and sustained professional development to address the need for improved quality of instruction and to increase student achievement particularly for students at risk of school failure (Sec. 101, 2123). Consequently, in-service teachers who lack content knowledge are provided the opportunity to acquire content knowledge through professional development while simultaneously delivering that content to students (Sec. 3115). Research has shown that teachers can acquire content knowledge and apply it to practice under certain conditions including intensive professional development (Brady et al., 2009; Podhajski, Mather, Nathan, & Sammons, 2009) collaboration (Linder, Post, & Calabrese, 2012; McLeskey, Waldron, & Redd, 2012), and coaching (Bean, 2004; Foorman & Moats, 2004; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 2002; McCutchen & Berninger, 1999; Stover et al., 2011; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000).

Professional development to improve teacher knowledge has been evolving in the last ten years from the “one shot workshop” where teachers are passive recipients to a learner centered professional development model in which teachers are actively involved in learning (Hawley & Valli, 2000; McLeskey, 2011). One-day professional development workshops and conferences may result in new knowledge but not instructional changes (Desimone, 2002; Opfer & Pedder, 2011) or the improvement of student achievement (Desimone, 2002; Hawley & Valli, 2000; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).

In a review of the literature for the National Staff Development Council (NSDC), Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2009) identified key features of effective professional development. Effective professional development is embedded in professional learning

communities, that is, groups of school staff members who regularly collaborate and learn together to improve practice and student learning (Hord, 1997). It is also intensive, provides opportunities for teachers to apply new knowledge to the planning and delivery of instruction, and incorporates school-based coaching.

### **Job-Embedded Professional Development**

A collaborative culture promoted through professional learning communities (Carlisle et al., 2011; Desimone, 2009; Desimone, 2011; DuFour, 2004; Linder, Post, & Calabrese, 2012) sets the platform for job-embedded professional development that transforms teacher knowledge into teacher practice. Unlike traditional professional development, job-embedded professional development is offered more frequently and for shorter periods of time (Desimone, 2002; Garet et al., 2001; NSDC; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) and includes demonstrations, observations, and coaching (Porche, Pallante, & Snow, 2012). It takes place during the teacher's workday, within classrooms, allowing teachers to address immediate instructional problems and focus on specific instructional needs within their daily work environment. They learn, model, practice, and evaluate new knowledge as it is implemented (Hawley & Valli, 2000).

In summary, job-embedded professional development increases motivation to learn because of its relevance and proximity to daily practice (Hawley & Valli, 2000). Proximity to daily practice implies a direct effect on teachers' classroom practice (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Kubitskey & Fishman, 2006). It is more effective than traditional professional development because it is content focused, aligned

with school and district standards, and relevant to the teachers' daily instruction (Desimone, 2002; Garet et al., 2001). Moreover, when teachers collaborate, they benefit from guidance provided by peers who are also participating in the professional development, and from the expertise of others (e.g., external consultants or reading specialists) who have a deeper understanding of the content or more experience (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Essentially, they have others who help them and with whom to discuss issues about their practice.

### **Coaching**

Providing coaching to teachers following delivery of professional development has been found to be very beneficial in increasing implementation of newly learned teaching strategies because of the support it provides teachers (Bean, 2004; Carlisle et al., 2011; Foorman & Moats, 2004; McCutchen & Berninger, 1999; Taylor et al., 2000; Joyce and Showers, 1996; Joyce and Showers, 2002; NSDC, 2009; Stover et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) from demonstrations of instructional approaches and the ongoing interaction with coaches (Porche et al., 2012). This extra level of support provides the necessary boost teachers sometimes need to incorporate changes into their instruction. Coaching models that have been found effective in improving teacher practice are peer-coaching (Showers & Joyce, 1996), differentiated coaching (Stover et al., 2011), and student focused coaching (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005).

Peer coaching is defined as teachers working collaboratively together to plan and develop lessons and implement professional development training (Joyce & Showers,

2002). Peer coaches engage in mutual problem solving and observations. This type of support helps the coaches and their peers improve their practice. In a review of the literature, Joyce and Showers (2002) found that teachers who received coaching tended to practice, adapt, retain, explain, and demonstrate their new knowledge more frequently and appropriately than those who were not coached. Effective professional development should consist of modeling, practice, and coaching to promote knowledge transfer and collegiality (Showers & Joyce, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Differentiated coaching refers to the provision of differentiated support to teachers based on their unique needs and learning styles (Stover et al., 2011). With differentiated coaching, coaches identify what motivates teachers by giving them a say in their learning through careful consideration of their needs and interests, then provide them with individualized training and support so they make informed instructional decisions (Stover et al., 2011). Through this process of selecting their own learning, teachers are in control of what professional development they receive, and are therefore more vested in making instructional changes (Stover et al., 2011).

Hasbrouck and Denton (2005) describe a theoretical model for coaching that they term, *Student Focused Coaching*. It involves “a cooperative, ideally collaborative relationship with parties mutually engaged in efforts to provide better services for students” (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005, p. 2). In this model, the reading coach acts as a *facilitator*, *collaborative problem-solver*, and as a *teacher/learner* (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005). Hasbrouck and Denton (2005) developed a guide for coaches to use to provide

professional development. It offers a cycle for professional development from delivery to evaluation of its efficacy.

Coaching as a component of professional development can improve implementation of new content knowledge. Coaching can be the bridge between knowledge acquisition and implementation of newly learned skills for teachers who receive professional development. It should be viewed as an extension of professional development because it may be essential for implementation for teachers with less content knowledge or experience.

### **Professional Learning Communities**

Professional development is more likely to impact student learning if it is job-embedded, delivered to collaborative teams, and addresses relevant topics (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Lumpe, 2007; Wayne, Yoon, Zhu, Cronen, & Garet, 2008). “Because there are disparate experience levels and use of practice among educators, professional learning can foster collaborative inquiry and learning that enhances individual and collective performance” (Learning Forward, 2011).

The NSDC promotes professional learning communities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) because of the collaborative nature of the learning that takes place in these organizations in relation to improving teacher practice and student achievement (Hord, 1997). Professional learning communities are characterized by teachers’ collective

participation and collaboration making them a good choice for delivery of job-embedded professional development that can address the diverse needs of teachers.

Various attributes of professional learning communities have been advanced in the literature. According to Hord (1997), professional learning communities are more than just collaborative staff meetings or groups of teachers who meet often, indeed they are learners who meet purposefully and collegially to improve teacher practice and student achievement. In professional learning communities, teachers and principals participate jointly in continuous professional growth and learning as well as decision-making. They work collaboratively to build capacity through shared aspirations and they participate jointly in developing a shared vision for the school that “leads to binding norms of behavior that the staff shares” (p 19).

Hord’s description of professional learning communities is similar to DuFour’s (2004). They both promote teachers’ collaborative, collective participation in improving student achievement. DuFour (2004) describes the three “big ideas” or core principles of professional learning communities as 1) focusing on student learning instead of teaching, 2) having a collective purpose or culture of collaboration, and 3) focusing on student academic achievement or results. According to DuFour, a focus on student learning instead of teaching ensures differentiation of instruction so that each student is successful and receives the necessary level of support. It is not enough that teachers acquire content knowledge; they must integrate it into their practice working together collaboratively and systematically with the end goal of improving student achievement. If they are to ensure student success, teachers can no longer work in isolation but must, instead, commit to

working together in an iterative process of analyzing and designing instruction to improve student achievement (DuFour, 2004).

### ***Professional Learning Communities as Context for Professional Development***

The National Staff Development Council (2009) recommends that professional learning communities meet regularly and frequently during the school day in collaborative learning to strengthen teacher knowledge and improve instructional practices. The collective participation of teachers in grade level or department teams and in professional development activities that identify gaps in knowledge and skill needs is conducive to changes in teacher practice ((Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; McLeskey, 2011; NSDC, 2009).

### **Theoretical Framework for Job-Embedded Professional Development**

Using a common conceptual framework for professional development would improve teacher learning and student outcomes (Desimone, 2011). From an extensive review of several decades of professional development studies, Desimone offers a theoretical framework for professional development. It is aligned with NCLB's (2001) description of high quality professional development and features five core components: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and active participation (Desimone 2009; Desimone, 2011). A logical outcome of professional development using this framework would be an increase in teachers' knowledge, skills, change of attitudes, and beliefs, improved instruction, and increased student outcomes (Desimone, 2011).

This qualitative study was guided by the standards for effective professional learning (Learning Forward, 2011), Desimone's (2011) professional development conceptual model, and Hasbrouck and Denton's *Student Focused Coaching* model. Additionally, this study will be guided by the theories of DuFour (2004) and Hord (1997) that have been instrumental in advancing the body of knowledge on professional learning communities. Jointly, their work promotes the transformation of schools into learning institutions where the teachers and students are involved in the learning process through collaborative, collective, knowledge seeking that is continuous and focused on improving student achievement. Situating this study in a professional learning community can facilitate teacher learning due to the shared attributes of job-embedded professional development and professional learning communities. Specifically, these models provided the guide for job-embedded professional development that helped teachers reflect on their practice, identify areas of need in terms of content knowledge in reading, jointly set goals for learning, and provided the professional development needed to fill teachers' instructional needs based on their different levels of experience and content knowledge.

### **Content Focused Professional Development**

Professional development is more effective when it is content-focused. In the context of educational reform, improving reading outcomes has received the most attention in school improvement efforts (NCLB, 2001). According to the NAEP test results, 33% of all fourth grade students are performing below basic levels in English reading and only 8% are performing at an advanced level (NCES, 2011). These scores

are higher than the reading scores in 1992, indicating a long trend of poor reading outcomes for all students (Aud et al., 2012). School districts are focusing improvement efforts on ELLs because of NCLB's (2001) emphasis on closing the gap between traditionally under-served groups and their mainstream peers.

### **Reading Achievement of ELLs**

ELLs generally receive lower standardized test scores across subjects (Ballantyne et al., 2008). According to the the *Condition of Education 2011*, the achievement gap reported between ELLs and non-ELLs is 36 points for fourth grade reading and 47 points for eighth grade reading (Aud et al., 2011). Nationally, only 7% of fourth grade ELLs demonstrated proficiency on the 2007 NAEP reading test (USDOE, 2009). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), the Nation's Report Card reveals that 24% of students scoring below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile in reading were ELLs, who only numbered 2% of the students scoring above the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile (NCES, 2011). These data reflect results for English reading; little information is available describing Spanish reading achievement. However, in Texas, results of state mandated assessments of reading in Spanish show that 86% of third grade ELLs met the test standard with 39% receiving commended performance (Texas Education Agency, 2011). Commended performance is defined as performing considerably higher than the state standard (Texas Education Agency, 2011). These performance results decrease as ELLs advance in grades in both Spanish and English reading achievement.

## **Professional Development to Teach ELLs**

Teachers need to develop content knowledge and skills to effectively teach ELLs and help them succeed. In 2008, Gallo, Garcia, Pinuela, and Youngs investigated how teachers of ELLs perceived their bilingual education programs and their level of preparation to teach ELLs. Teachers reported a lack of training in bilingual education and lack of rigor and richness in the training they did receive. One teacher reported not receiving any training as a bilingual educator in the last 6 years. Overall, teachers reported disappointment about the professional development they received stating that most of the training that they received was geared for English immersion settings. They reported a lack of materials available at the professional development sessions they attended and noted that materials were rarely provided in Spanish. Teachers expressed a lack of collaboration with peers and discomfort with their own second language skills.

Similar findings were reported in a large scale survey of teachers of ELLs. Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005) found that teachers of ELLs felt they needed more professional development and training on how to teach ELLs. Findings indicate that 43% of teachers with majority ELLs in their classrooms had received one or less in-service on teaching ELLs in the last five years. Most teachers with fewer ELLs in their classrooms had received no professional development on teaching ELLs. Of the teachers who attended professional development, 35% reported finding the training most useful when it addressed the specific needs of ELLs. Although, teachers reported receiving professional development that purported to be for ELLs but was provided by presenters who lacked expertise or who suggested “as an afterthought” adapting

curriculum for mainstream students for use with ELLs (p 13). Teachers expressed a need for more professional development in reading and writing for ELLs and training where they could collaborate with other teachers and observe more skilled teachers on-site. The researchers recommend that professional development for teachers of ELLs must be given higher priority with attention to the differing needs and experience levels of these teachers. They call for differentiation of professional development for bilingual and ESL teachers that responds to their specific needs for improving instruction for ELLs.

These studies suggest that teachers of ELLs need support and training to effectively teach ELLs and help them succeed. They need professional development that targets their individual differences in experience and content knowledge about reading and instructional strategies to teach ELLs. Providing job-embedded professional development to teachers of ELLs can help address their disparate levels in these areas. Unfortunately, there is no research base in job-embedded professional development that addresses teachers of ELLs. This is an important area of investigation because of the increasing population of ELLs, 4.7 million, in the United States and the need for effective practices to address their needs (Aud et al., 2012). Improving content knowledge of reading and understanding the needs of ELLs can help teachers of ELLs improve their instructional practice and increase student achievement. Given the lack of reading success for ELLs and the lack of research in job embedded professional development for teachers of ELLs, the present study addressed this issue.

## **Statement of Problem**

School leaders have struggled to understand how to provide professional development for teachers in a manner that influences practice. Traditional professional development may not be effective because it reflects a *one-size fits all* approach (Stover et al., 2011). It is provided to all teachers as a group without attention to individual teacher needs or relevance to their daily work, their prior content knowledge, and their experience. In contrast, job-embedded professional development allows for differentiation of instruction for teachers (Stover et al., 2011), much like teachers' differentiation of instruction to meet students' individual needs. Professional development is situated within the teaching-learning context, in professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004).

With the persistent emphasis on educational reform in the United States to improve the academic outcomes of students at-risk of reading failure, there is a heightened need for improving teacher knowledge and practice and, in turn, student outcomes. Integral to this issue is the need for effective professional development that fills teacher knowledge gaps and helps them stay abreast of current scientifically-based reading instruction and strategies. It is important to understand the type of professional development that is most likely to influence teacher practice so school staff can design professional development that will improve the quality of instruction and increase student outcomes. This study addressed this gap in the literature in the context of bilingual education and teachers who work with ELLs.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How does job-embedded professional development in reading influence first grade teachers' content knowledge about reading for English language learners?
2. How does job-embedded professional development in reading influence first grade teachers' reading instruction for English language learners?
3. How do teachers perceive a job-embedded approach to professional development in reading instruction?

## **Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of job-embedded professional development, with coaching, on teachers' of ELLs content knowledge and instructional practice in the area of reading and how teachers perceived this type of professional development. Results are informing of ways to increase teacher knowledge about reading instruction for English Language Learners and helped identify components of professional development that are effective in improving teachers' instructional practices. The study adds to the body of research on effective professional development and how to accommodate the needs of teachers of ELLs with varying levels of content knowledge and experience.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The research literature in the field of education is replete with articles highlighting the need for school reform and improved instruction. The expectation is that increased quality of instruction will yield better student outcomes. Efforts to improve the quality of instruction have focused attention on professional development. As a result, professional development in the United States is undergoing a transformation. The National Staff Development Council (2001) has created standards for professional development that have greatly influenced the field. Namely, the traditional “one-shot” workshops are being replaced with other forms of professional development. Some of the most salient changes have occurred in response to the NSDC (2001) standards. However, the question still remains regarding what type of professional development works best to improve teacher knowledge and practice.

Through a review of the literature in the areas of professional development, coaching, and professional learning communities, the theoretical framework that guided this study is articulated. Included in this framework are Desimone’s (2011) conceptual model on professional development, Hasbrouck and Denton’s (2005) coaching model, and DuFour (2004) and Hord’s (1997) models on professional learning communities. These models illuminate the connection between the principles they promote, their relevance to teacher knowledge about reading, and their applicability to this study.

The next section will review the literature associated with professional development. The literature search conducted for this review only revealed one empirical

study of professional development in reading for ELLs (McIntyre, Kyle, Chen, Munoz, & Beldon, 2010). No other studies were found that addressed this topic in relation to teachers of ELLs. This is an important area of investigation because of the increasing population of ELLs in the United States and the need for effective practices to address their needs.

It is important to clarify the meaning of *job-embedded* and distinguish it from *on-site* professional development by specifying that *on-site* is not synonymous with *job-embedded*. For the purpose of this research study, it is important to distinguish between the two with the latter implying *within the work day and including time spent in the participant's classroom*. The research literature does not make this distinction. For example, Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, and Gallagher (2007) refer to “proximity of practice” meaning site-based and dealing with changes directly translatable to instructional practice (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Kubitskey & Fishman, 2006). This does not necessarily imply within the teacher’s classroom. Therefore, job-embedded, as used by the researcher in this study extends the definition to include *at the job-site and within school hours delivered to teachers of that school*, as opposed to a school that hosts a professional development training after school for district-wide teachers, and that may or may not include an “in-class” or “on-site” component of coaching, collaboration, observation, mentoring, etc.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The current status of professional development was illuminated in the NSDC status report (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). This comprehensive analysis provided useful information about professional development that can be used to improve the quality of professional development in the United States. The following section examines some of the findings in this report.

### ***Teacher Perceptions of Professional Development***

According to the NSDC status report, the majority of teachers in the United States are not satisfied with the professional development they have received or with opportunities for professional development provided to them (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). For example, 90% of U.S. teachers participated in traditional “one-shot” workshops and only 59% of teachers who attended content-related professional development found it useful. Less than half of teachers who attended other types of professional development found it of any value to them. One possible reason for the teachers’ negative perceptions of the professional development given by the researchers is that it did not fit their needs. Because teachers differ in experience and content knowledge, their needs are often not met with professional development designed for large groups of teachers. In a similar report on teacher perceptions of professional development in the UK, teachers expressed dissatisfaction with professional development that uses the traditional *one shot workshop* approach because it does not account for

individual “teachers’ existing knowledge, experience and needs” (Hustler, McNamara, Jarvis, Londra, & Campbell, 2003, p viii).

The NSDC status report also stated that in nations that perform higher than the United States on assessments, professional development for teachers is prioritized, ongoing, collaborative, and provided during the teacher’s work day (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Three additional related findings in this report address the issue of collaboration. First, collective participation and collaboration can promote school-wide change. Second, teachers in the U.S. do not report collaborating to plan and implement instruction. Finally, although U.S. teachers receive similar levels of professional development as teachers in other nations, they have fewer opportunities for building collaborative communities during or after the training. These findings highlight the importance of collaboration to teacher learning and implementation of new knowledge and practice. A summative finding from this report was that the United States is performing poorly on providing “the structures and supports that are needed to sustain teacher learning and change and to foster job-embedded professional development in collegial environments” (p 27).

### ***Professional Development to Teach ELLs***

Professional development to effectively teach ELLs is a growing area of need because of the increasing number of ELLs in public schools in the United States. The need is not limited to bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) teachers. The

increasing population of ELLs requires that all teachers receive professional development to address their specific learning needs.

The NSDC report indicated that, 73% of U.S. teachers received no training in the previous three years in how to teach ELLs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). This is a significant finding because ELLs are the fastest growing subgroup of children in public schools with an annual increase of 10% (McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, Cutting, Leos, & D’Emilio, 2005). ELLs represent an estimated 4.7 million public school students (Aud et al., 2012). According to the NSDC report, most teachers in the U.S. work in isolation and would welcome more help in teaching ELLs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). In fact, teachers who taught in schools with large percentages of ELLs rated reading and other content-focused professional development higher than did teachers in schools with less ELL enrollment (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Although the report did not indicate if the professional development the teachers received was designed for teachers of ELLs, it suggests that teachers may have been motivated to learn effective ways to teach ELLs because of the large numbers of ELLs at their schools. This report underscores the need to provide professional development that addresses teacher’s content and teaching needs. Teachers need both content knowledge and teaching strategies to effectively teach ELLs.

The standards and features of effective professional development that have been identified direct the focus of this literature review. The professional learning standards promote delivery of professional development to professional learning communities, using appropriate resources and data that integrate research-based content that can

produce sustained change that is aligned with curriculum standards (Learning Forward, 2011). Desimone's (2011) framework and NCLB (2001) recommend active learning that is content focused where teachers participate collectively and collaboratively. Collectively, these sources provide guidelines for designing professional development and provide the background for the conceptual framework for professional development articulated in this dissertation. This literature review integrates relevant empirical studies that highlight these features and support the use of the job-embedded professional development model proposed for this study.

### **Empirical Studies on Professional Development**

In 2001, Garet and colleagues surveyed a national representation of teachers who had participated in professional development and identified characteristics of professional development that teachers reported influenced their learning. It was a large-scale empirical study with 1,027 participants that the researchers believe confirmed some assumptions in the literature regarding best practices for improving professional development. Teachers reported that reform type professional development was favored over traditional types. Reform type was described as study groups, mentoring, or coaching that are typically job-embedded. The researchers concluded that professional development should be sustained and intensive, should focus on content, should involve collective participation of teachers from the same grade level or school, should involve active learning, and should demonstrate coherence with the school objectives in order to enhance teacher knowledge and practice (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon,

2001). These features were later integrated into Desimone's conceptual model for professional development (2009; 2011) that serves as the conceptual model for professional development guiding this study.

### ***Teacher Knowledge and Practice***

Stemming from the Garet et al. (2001) study, a longitudinal study using a subsample of the larger study was conducted to evaluate the effects of professional development on teachers' instruction (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). The study included a cross-section of teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools who had participated in the larger study. Three important findings from the study are that teachers who were actively engaged in learning instead of passive recipients were more likely to benefit from and implement professional development skills. Second, the inclusion of specific content focus was predictive of implementation of that practice in the classroom and collective participation of teachers from the same grade level or school contributed to active learning supporting the benefit of interaction opportunities between colleagues and third no effects were found for duration in this study.

Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, and Gallagher (2007) built on the Garet et al. (2001) study that identified characteristics of professional development that likely influence instruction. They amended the definition of "reform type" of professional development to include "proximity to practice" (p 928). In other words, reform type is more than just study groups, mentoring, and coaching, it also includes job-embeddedness with an effect on instructional practice. The researchers concluded that findings from

Garet et al. (2001) and other emerging research have provided a useful framework for effective professional development. However, they caution that individual program and contextual factors of the school can mitigate implementation. They suggest that there “must be a good “fit” between the curriculum and the local context” (p 952). For example, in their study, teacher implementation was largely affected by the necessary planning time required by the curriculum. This time was not built into the professional development model. Nevertheless, like the Garet et al. (2001) findings, this study supports the critical features of professional development (Desimone 2009; Desimone, 2011; Garet et al., 2001) and extends those findings to situate learning in the school setting, close to practice.

In a related study, time was also found to be a barrier to instructional change. Like Penuel et al. (2007), Burbank and Kauchak (2003) found that planning time must be considered when designing professional development. Burbank and Kauchak (2003) paired in-service and pre-service teachers for one academic year to participate in a professional development collaborative action research study. These teams of teachers worked collaboratively on self-selected research topics that examined teaching and research. Positive findings included use of self-reflection, peer collaboration, and learning to incorporate theory into practice. Improved teacher practice was also evidenced. Some reported constraints were the lack of common goals (Hord, 1997), scheduling time to meet, and developmental differences between new and veteran teachers that influenced the choices they made throughout the study. Findings from this study support the use of collaboration (DuFour, 2004), mentoring, and job-embedded

learning (NSDC, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). They also underscore the need for a content focus in professional development (Desimone, 2009; Desimone, 2011).

Time was also a factor in a two year longitudinal study focusing on teacher change and student achievement. Positive changes in student outcomes were attributed to the duration of this study. Johnson and Fargo (2010) utilized the *Transformative Professional Development (TPD) Model* created for use with urban schools to deliver content focused professional development to middle school teachers. The TPD model holds that:

Through effective, sustained, collaborative professional development, which addresses teachers' personal, professional, and social development, climates of schools, needs of diverse students, as well as beliefs and practices of teachers, can be positively transformed over time (p 9).

The researchers sought to improve instruction and student outcomes, enhance the school environment for teachers and students, and strengthen collaboration through shared visions and goals. Changes in teacher practice and improved student outcomes were evidenced in this study resulting from the professional development received by treatment teachers. Control teachers showed a decline in implementation of content strategies and their respective students performed lower than students in treatment classrooms. The researchers concluded that their professional development model was effective in changing teacher practice, but noted that a sustained effort is required to allow time for changes to occur in student outcomes. These findings lend support to

previously mentioned best practices in professional development found in the literature such as collaboration, content focus, and duration.

Results from these studies indicate that professional development can influence teacher knowledge and practice. These studies also support the Garet et al. (2001) findings on essential components of professional development with added emphasis on content focus and collaboration to increase implementation of newly learned instructional practices.

### ***Professional Development with Coaching***

In a study of three different professional development models designed with increasing supports Carlisle, Schnabel-Cortina, and Katz (2011) found that teachers responded best to the model that included the most supports. The *KEC* model consisting of *knowledge* (seminars), *evaluation* (training in using student data to evaluate their teaching), and *consultation* (coaching and help with peer collaboration) was found to be the most effective, measured by changes in instructional practice. The other two models included only *knowledge* or *knowledge* and *evaluation*. The professional development provided was sustained and ongoing and the coaching helped teachers integrate newly learned strategies into their instruction. Despite the fact that the *KE* (knowledge and evaluation) model had the greatest increase of ratings of self-efficacy, these teachers demonstrated fewer instructional changes than the *KEC* teachers, indicating that changes in teacher knowledge do not necessarily influence teacher practice. As has been noted in the literature, teachers who received professional development without implementation

follow-up or support in the classroom were the least likely to change their instructional practices (Cohen & Ball, 1999; Desimone, 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Hawley & Valli, 2000; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Yoon et al., 2007). These findings support the use of professional development that incorporates coaching and collaboration as well as data-driven instruction. Both the *KE* and *KEC* models included key features of professional development (Desimone, 2011) and professional learning standards (NSDC, 2001; Learning Forward, 2011).

Coaching was also found to be an important component of professional development in a study on literacy instruction. Porche, Pallante, and Snow (2012) offered professional development to teachers that featured sustained, content-focused training, collective participation, collaboration, and ongoing job-embedded coaching. The authors provided off-site professional development with job-embedded coaching to teachers from five schools. Their model, *Collaborative Language and Literacy Instruction Project* (CLLIP), incorporated features of professional learning communities. The researchers found that a critical component of the professional development was the job-embedded coaching that facilitated learning through use of modeled lessons and scaffolding. It created a conduit between theoretical knowledge and instructional practice. In addition, although not the focus of this study, student achievement was measured for kindergarten and fourth grade students of teachers participating in the CLLIP professional development. Student performance was compared to control students within the same schools. Main effects for CLLIP were found for fourth grade students only on one of four measures, letter-word identification ( $d=1.51$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Also

found was that risk status moderated the gains of fourth grade at-risk students in CLLIP classrooms. Their gains on fluency ( $d=2.24, p<.05$ ) and vocabulary ( $d=0.74, p<.05$ ) were significantly higher than those of at-risk students in the control condition. The authors concluded that their professional development model can potentially improve student outcomes by translating research into practice and providing intensive on-site coaching. The findings from this research study support the existing literature regarding use of best practices for professional development including an emphasis on sustained, job-embedded coaching (Bean, 2004; Carlisle et al., 2011; Foorman & Moats, 2004; Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005; McCutchen & Berninger, 1999; Taylor et al., 2000; Joyce and Showers, 1996; Joyce and Showers, 2002; NSDC, 2009; Stover et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

McIntyre, Kyle, Chen, Munoz, and Beldon (2010) implemented an 18-month professional development program in reading using sheltered instruction strategies for ELLs that involved 23 teachers from various schools within a district. They examined the impact of teacher learning on student outcomes and found that only seven teachers could be considered full implementers. Based on this finding, the researchers decided to compare the academic growth of the 50 students of the full implementers to a matched control group of students. The researchers found no significant differences between groups on post test reading scores. They attributed this finding to dissimilar scores on pretest scores with the treatment group scoring significantly higher ( $F = 83.76, p < .001$ ). The researchers found significant differences between pre and post reading tests for the treatment group ( $t = 2.62, p < .05$ ) leading them to conclude that their sheltered

instruction in reading training was beneficial for ELLs. Their training model included best practices in professional development, such as sufficient duration, partial job-embeddedness, and coaching. The researchers acknowledged that their model lacked an explicit reading content-focus centering more on strategies, and that they only provided one coaching session per teacher during the 18-month training due to time and funding. They also noted that collaborative relationships were never truly developed between the researcher and coaches and the participating teachers mostly due to time. One other observation made by the researchers was that their professional development did not occur in the context of a professional learning community that could have impacted the findings. Still, results from this study helped to strengthen the researchers' positions on the need for professional development that is content focused, builds collaborative relationships, includes scaffolding for teachers, and is relevant to the teachers' daily work.

Results from the studies that featured coaching lend support to inclusion of coaching to professional development to increase implementation (Carlisle et al., 2011; Porche et al., 2012). McIntyre et al. (2010) found poor implementation by teachers but the researchers acknowledged that only one coaching session was provided and that teachers never fully formed collaborative groups. Collaboration is a critical component to the success of professional development.

## **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES**

Professional learning communities have found favor in education in the past two decades and their appeal continues to grow. They have been identified by different names such as teacher study groups (Gersten, Dimino, Jayanthi, Kim, & Santoro, 2010) and learning teams or job-alike teams (Gallimore, Ermeling, Saunders, & Goldenberg, 2009). They are characterized in the literature as school staff continuously learning together to improve practice and student learning through supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice (Hord, 1997), and as focused on student learning and achievement, with a collective purpose and a culture of collaboration (DuFour, 2004). These are not groups who simply meet; they are groups of educators who learn together (Hord, 2007). The National Staff Development Council promotes the use of professional learning communities for job-embedded delivery of professional development.

### **Empirical Studies on Professional Learning Communities**

In a review of the literature that examined the impact of professional learning communities on teacher practice and student outcomes, Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008) found eleven studies reporting that an increase in teacher learning resulted in improved instructional practice and student outcomes. The researchers examined whether participation in a professional learning community resulted in changes in teacher practice and increases in student learning, and what aspects of professional learning communities contributed to changes. The researchers report that teacher practice improved because of

student-centered learning. The teaching culture was also enhanced because of the increased collaboration, teacher empowerment, and continuous learning that characterized the professional learning communities. Improved student outcomes were also found in the six studies that reported student outcomes. These results were attributed to the student centered aspect of professional learning communities. The researchers concluded that professional learning should focus on improving teacher knowledge through student focused learning in the context of professional learning communities. Further, the researchers suggest that empirical studies on professional development within professional learning communities include student achievement outcomes to further substantiate the positive effects of professional learning communities on teacher practice and student outcomes.

In a study on the sustainable elements of a five year professional development project offered to a district-wide professional learning community, Richmond and Manokore (2011) found that teachers participating in professional development in this district-wide professional learning community implemented five critical elements. First, *teacher learning and collaboration*: participants had established cultural expectations within their PLCs that encouraged a close examination of one's own knowledge along with the motivation to strengthen this knowledge base and to support the learning of others in the group" (p 559). Second, *community formation*: "participants leveraged each other's expertise and experiences in ways that suggested a kind of interdependence" (p 559). Third, *confidence in content and pedagogical knowledge and practice*: teachers were confident about their knowledge and teaching practices and regularly shared

practices with others. Fourth, *accountability*: participants created hybrid spaces that enabled them to achieve their group goals and at the same time meeting the demands of their school district. Finally, *sustainability*: two factors compromised sustainability, teachers' dependence on outside facilitators and voluntary participation in the project resulting in teachers at the various schools participating, but not grade level or department teams from the same schools. Teachers in this study valued the professional development and district-wide professional learning community, but “rarely had the opportunity to continue this work and find mutual and immediate support or collegial feedback where they spent most of their working lives—namely, at their school site” (p 565). Teachers lacked the on-site support and collaboration they needed during this study. This finding supports the view that job-embedded professional development creates optimal learning and sharing opportunities for teachers at the same school. The training provided to the participants in this study was not provided in the school context to a grade level team, but to a district-wide professional learning community eliminating opportunities for collective participation and collaboration of teachers at the same school.

Linder, Post, and Calabrese (2012) investigated the factors that supported successful formation of professional learning communities and how university personnel can support these formations. The highest rated components of professional learning communities reported in their findings were learning self-selected content in-depth indicating that content must be relevant to teachers' daily work in order for it to be useful and implemented. Teachers also reported high satisfaction with the knowledge that university personnel brought to the training including their ability to work with adult

learners, to facilitate, and the opportunity to meet regularly. The researchers found that the teachers developed a sense of energizing camaraderie because of common goals and interests. The researchers recommend that administrators consider professional learning communities as vehicles for professional development where teachers can self-direct their learning with other colleagues.

### ***Teacher Collaborative Groups***

Two empirical studies featured teacher collaborative groups, but the researchers did not define them as professional learning communities although they resemble them. They are included in this section due to the general nature of these groups. Both of these studies featured peer facilitators or collaborators.

Gallimore, Ermeling, Saunders, and Goldenberg (2009) found that teachers effectively improved practice and student outcomes through school based inquiry teams. Teachers participated collectively in collaborative inquiry with shared goals for student achievement that included regular progress monitoring and group planning and implementation of instruction. The researchers attribute the success of their program to “job-alike teams”, trained peer facilitators, inquiry focused learning, and stable settings. These four critical features for effective and sustained learning teams can be described as: 1) *job-alike teams*-grade level or subject area teams with shared goals; 2) *trained peer facilitator*-a teacher who guides the others through the learning while simultaneously learning the content; 3) *inquiry focused protocols*-a set protocol for learning and the process that will be followed to assess progress; and 4) *stable settings*-scheduled time and

place prearranged for learning. Through a recursive process of professional learning and improvement, teacher change was evidenced. The grade level teams described in this study incorporated many of the features of professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004; Hord, 1997), such as a focus on student learning and student academic achievement, a collective purpose, collaboration, supportive leadership, and supportive conditions.

Gersten and others (2010) used randomized field trials to test the impact of professional development in reading on teacher knowledge of vocabulary and comprehension and on teacher practice and student outcomes. The professional development model they used promotes the use of teacher study groups working collaboratively to learn and implement new learning. The authors compared and contrasted teacher study groups to professional learning communities noting the main differences are that teacher study groups are from the same school and the same grade level and the professional development is highly focused and structured in a sequence that will facilitate the implementation of strategies, therefore improving instruction and student outcomes. The authors suggest that some professional learning communities can include teachers from across the district and that they often lack a “focused, research-based scope and sequence” (p 701). The hallmark of the training provided in this study was the teachers’ collective participation and collaboration components. There were significant differences favoring the teacher study group on measures of teacher knowledge in vocabulary ( $d=0.73$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and in observed practice on both vocabulary ( $d=0.58$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and comprehension ( $d=0.86$ ,  $p<.05$ ). There were significant differences

in student outcomes for the teacher study group for oral vocabulary ( $d=0.44$ ,  $p<.10$ ). The researchers did not incorporate coaching into their design stating that teachers had expressed discomfort and did not see the value of coaches in a previous study (Gersten & Woodward, 1992). Instead they built into their design intensive peer collaboration (Gersten, Dimino, Jayanthi, Kim, & Santoro, 2010). Based on the results from this study the authors recommend using professional development that focuses on scientifically-based research, that is relevant to the curriculum of the school, and that fosters collegiality.

The findings from these two studies support the use of professional learning communities or similar groups for collaborative learning with collective participation of teachers with shared goals. Hord (1997) describes professional learning communities as staff who meet purposefully and collegially to improve teacher practice and student achievement. Although these two studies used different names to describe their groups, they fit the definition provided by Hord (1997) and support the use of professional learning communities for delivery of job-embedded professional development.

#### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES**

In principle, situating professional development within a professional learning community, provides the ideal context for collective participation, collaboration, active learning, and coaching that can improve teacher knowledge and practice and student outcomes (Carlisle et al., 2011; Desimone, 2009; Desimone, 2011; DuFour, 2004; McLeskey et al., 2012; NSDC, 2009). In effect, professional learning communities can

facilitate professional development when it is delivered within a functional collaborative environment of teachers experienced in working together on common goals. Professional learning communities also provide the context for collaborative dialog, planning, and implementation following professional development as most professional learning communities schedule time to meet regularly. The National Staff Development Council recommends that professional learning communities meet frequently and regularly to optimize teacher knowledge and practice. Successful implementation of professional learning communities requires commitment and dedication from the school staff (DuFour, 2004) that choose to meet purposefully and collegially to improve teacher practice and student achievement. In summary, professional learning communities can provide an ideal setting for job-embedded professional development if they focus on continuous improvement, collective responsibility for student outcomes, and alignment of team and school goals.

The interrelated components of professional learning communities and professional development that emerged from the researcher's review of the literature are represented in Figure 2.1. A professional learning community with its characteristic collaboration and collective participation can facilitate job-embedded professional development.



Figure 2.1: Professional Development Components.

### **Summary of Empirical Research Findings**

Several themes emerged consistently from this review of the literature regarding professional development. The majority of the research studies reported using recommended practices for professional development in the programs they delivered. Therefore, for this summary the focus is on the aspects of the studies that were reported as particularly effective or as constraints, bearing in mind that the five critical features of professional development were generally reported as being present. Interestingly, some of the researchers drew their own conclusions about essential features of professional development that they recognized were absent from their models. For example, McIntyre et al. (2010) concluded that lack of content focus and sufficient coaching were barriers to

successful implementation of the new practices and improved student outcomes. Similarly, Burbank and Kauchak (2003) acknowledged that a lack of common goals, shared vision, and content focus resulted in differences in content knowledge and experience levels between pre-service and in-service teachers. These findings support the need to differentiate professional development to meet the diverse needs of teacher learners.

Central to the focus of this framework are several themes that have emerged consistently from this literature review. First, professional development is most effective if it is *job-embedded* using this researcher's expanded definition. Second, *collaboration* is crucial to the success of professional development and requires a greater commitment of time by teachers that must be supported by administrators. Third, *coaching* following professional development facilitates the integration of research theory into practice. Fourth, *professional learning communities* provide the ideal foundation and collegial context for presenting professional development. Lastly, *time* is needed for increased opportunities for collaboration, to build collegial relationships, to allow for effective implementation, and to view changes in student outcomes.

These themes support the theoretical framework for this study and carry particular relevance in addressing the research questions that are the focus of this dissertation regarding the impact of job-embedded professional development on teacher knowledge and teachers' perceptions of this training. Specifically, the empirical studies included in this review reinforce the use of the five attributes of effective professional development, *content-focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation* (Darling-

Hammond et al., 2009; Desimone, 2009; Desimone, 2011; Garet et al., 2001; NSDC, 2009) as a framework for professional development. Yet, according to the literature, in order to affect teacher change and improve student outcomes, there also need to be *collaboration*, *coaching*, and a greater allotment of *time* for implementation, to observe changes in instructional practice and student outcomes.

*Collaboration* and *time* are interrelated; unless professional development efforts are structured in a manner that builds in time for collaboration between peers as part of learning, planning, and implementing, and unless coaching is part of follow-up to professional development to assist in or to observe implementation, the professional development may result in increased teacher knowledge, but little or no effect on teacher practice or student outcomes. One possible solution to this problem is situating professional development in professional learning communities where, as Hord (1997) describes, teachers meet purposefully and collegially to improve teacher practice and student achievement. The issues of *time* and *collaboration* can be moderated through professional learning communities because teachers are already meeting regularly in collaborative groups to plan instruction and to problem-solve. The issue of *coaching*, on the other hand, must be deliberately built into the professional development model and should continue until changes in teacher practice are evident. In this way the professional development becomes *job-embedded* as does the coaching.

Figure 2.2 illustrates a recursive process for job-embedded professional development. In this model the professional development takes place at the work site, which operates as a professional learning community and where collaboration already

occurs. Additional time is built into the model for coaching and increased collaboration in order to support implementation of professional development strategies.



Figure 2.2: Professional Development with Enhanced Collaboration and Coaching.

### **A Case for Professional Development in Reading**

Recent empirical studies of teacher knowledge create the impetus for professional development in reading to improve teacher knowledge and teacher practice. Research indicates that teachers lack the content knowledge to teach reading (Bos, Mather, Dickson, Podhajski, & Chard, 2001; Brady et al., 2009; Cunningham, Perry, Stanovich,

& Stanovich, 2004; Moats, 1994; Washburn et al., 2011). In working with teachers for the past twenty years and upon reflection of the work of others regarding teacher knowledge, practice, and the impact on student outcomes, Moats identified three skills needed to teach reading that all teachers must possess. They are: “efficient letter and word recognition, fast and accurate phoneme-grapheme decoding and encoding, and fluent recognition of syllables and morphemes” (Moats, 2009, p 383). Moats (2009) cited the work of Roehrig et al. (2008) who measured teacher content knowledge and found that only one third of teachers could identify the phonemes in the word *straight* and about half in the word *lodged*. Large gaps in teacher knowledge of morphology were also exposed by the survey. These findings were consistent with Moats’ previous work measuring teacher knowledge (Moats, 1994; Moats & Foorman, 2003). Moats argued that teachers need a substantial reading knowledge base, which cannot be learned casually. She calls for effective teacher education and professional development programs to impart this knowledge. Though, she cautions that acquiring the knowledge base for teaching reading will not necessarily create a linear relationship to teacher practice.

### ***Components of Effective Literacy Instruction***

In 2000, The National Reading Panel (NRP) published a report analyzing the literature on reading instruction and found some approaches that were considered to be necessary for literacy acquisition. The report indicated that there are five components essential to reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and

comprehension. These five skills are intertwined and necessary for successful reading.

Some of the NRP recommendations stemming from this report include:

- Phonemic awareness skills involving the manipulation of phonemes, individual sounds, in words should be taught explicitly and systematically in small groups if possible to better monitor individual student's progress.
- Phonics should be taught systematically by explicitly converting letters to sounds and blending sounds into words that are recognizable (synthetic phonics). This method is particularly effective for students with disabilities and for low achieving students.
- Fluency requires the reader to read with speed, accuracy and prosody. Two suggested approaches to improve fluency are guided oral repeated readings and silent sustained reading. Fluent reading is necessary to improve comprehension.
- Comprehension, the understanding of what has been read, is uniquely connected to vocabulary. Readers must know the words they are reading to understand what they have read.
- Vocabulary should be taught directly and indirectly. Repetition and multiple exposures to words should be provided. Pre-teaching of vocabulary before it is encountered in text was also suggested.

The National Reading Panel concluded that teachers need formal instruction in how to teach reading comprehension to students. Ideally, reading instruction should be provided to both pre-service and in-service teachers. The *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001) echoes the NRP's (2000) essential components of reading and promotes explicit

and systematic instruction. Furthermore, it allocates funds for low achieving schools for scientifically-based professional development in reading to adequately train teachers. NCLB sets strict guidelines for improving teacher quality, providing effective professional development, and holding schools accountable for improvement. NCLB has been at the forefront of educational reform and has focused professional development efforts on intensive, sustained, scientifically-based training in reading instruction to train highly qualified teachers and increase student achievement particularly for students at risk of school failure.

According to Foorman and Moats (2004), the NRP's greatest contribution was its strong empirical base for early intervention in phonemic awareness and phonics for beginning readers. The other three components of reading, although related and included in some of the studies, did not enjoy as strong a base. Foorman and Moats, also identified some critical elements for sustained, research-based improvements in reading instruction which included a collegiality within a grade level working with reading specialists to plan instruction using an explicit, systematic approach to teach phonemic awareness and phonics, and differentiating instruction based on student assessments. Teachers reported valuing professional development that was reciprocal, featuring modeled lessons, feedback, guidance, and team planning (Foorman & Moats, 2004).

Research has shown that teachers can acquire content knowledge and apply it to practice under certain conditions including intensive professional development (Brady et al., 2009; Podhajski, Mather, Nathan, & Sammons, 2009). Podhajski and colleagues (2009) provided professional development in phonemic awareness, phonics, and

comprehension to first grade teachers through a literacy course and found significant gains in teacher knowledge and student outcomes when compared to control teachers and their respective students. These findings indicate that teacher knowledge gaps in reading can be remediated through professional development in reading instruction. Improving teacher quality is evident when teachers increase their content knowledge and change their instructional practices in a way that positively affects student outcomes.

### ***Components of Effective Literacy Instruction for ELLs***

In 2006, the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth published a report titled *Developing Literacy in Second Language Learners* that reviewed studies on literacy instruction for ELLs. The conclusion drawn from this extensive report is that literacy instruction used for native English speakers will generally work for ELLs. Therefore, they recommend literacy instruction for ELLs in the five components of reading promoted by the National Reading Panel (2000). Francis and colleagues (2006) published a guide of research based recommendations for instructing ELLs. While their research supports these findings, they emphasize the need for ELLs to develop a strong academic vocabulary through exposure to print and through structured academic talk (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006).

### **Summary**

Relevant literature and research in the broad areas of professional development and professional learning communities were reviewed with special attention given to

studies which featured the key concepts pertaining to the research questions addressed in this study. These have helped to establish the theoretical framework guiding this study by providing empirical evidence supporting the use of job-embedded professional development for professional learning. This framework was used to deliver professional development in reading to first grade teachers within a professional learning community.

### **Chapter 3: Method**

This mixed methods study examined the effects of job-embedded professional development, with coaching, on four teachers' of ELLs content knowledge and instructional practice in the area of reading and analyzed their perceptions of this type of professional development. The study involved seven months of close collaboration with the participants, the first three months preceding the intervention as part of the larger study and four months during the intervention. Data-analysis strategies were used that were compatible with the data collected and that supported mixed methods analyses such as thematic analyses for qualitative data and descriptive statistics and t-tests for quantitative data.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected because this allowed for a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon from various perspectives. Quantitative data were used to describe teacher knowledge and change in their practice, whereas qualitative data was used to document the process. T-tests were the only statistic used due to the small sample size. The results of the t-tests were used to document changes in pre and post teacher knowledge surveys. These results have no explanatory value, therefore qualitative methods were used to try to explain the differences revealed by the tests. Finally, teachers' perceptions of the training on their learning and practices contributed to my understanding of the relevance of the content and of job-embedded professional development in bilingual classrooms.

Mixed methods were used to answer the following questions:

1. How does job-embedded professional development in reading influence first grade teachers' content knowledge about reading for English language learners?
2. How does job-embedded professional development in reading influence first grade teachers' reading instruction for English language learners?
3. How do teachers perceive a job-embedded approach to professional development in reading instruction?

### **Context of the Study**

This study was part of a larger four-year model demonstration project, *Establishing Successful Tiered Responsive Education for English Language Learners' Achievement (ESTRE<sup>2</sup>LLA)* investigating Response to Intervention approaches for English Language Learners (ELLs) in kindergarten to third grade. This national model demonstration project is funded by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, for the period from 2012-2015. One of the goals of the project is to improve reading achievement of K-3 ELLs with, or at risk of reading difficulties. First grade teachers were selected because the school principal wanted to strengthen the literacy instruction provided by the first grade team after having reviewed beginning of year student assessment data. This data indicated that 69% of first grade students were performing below grade level standard.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The demographic characteristics of the district and project school are described in the following sections.

### **School District**

A large urban school district in central Texas was selected for the larger study because it met the ELL enrollment criteria specified by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The participating district implements both one-way and two-way dual language program models (School District, 2012-2013). District demographic data are presented in Table 3.1.

District	
African-American/Black	9.5% (n=8,143)
Asian	3.3% (n=2,817)
Hispanic	60.3% (n=51,699)
Caucasian/White	24.3% (n=20,814)
Other	.4% (n=370)
2 + races	2.2% (n=1,854)
Total	100% (n=85,697)
Economically Disadvantaged	63.8% (n=54,675)
English Language Learners	28.6% (n=24,509)
At-risk	48.8% (n=41,820)

Table 3.1: District Demographic Data.

### School Selection Criteria

Elementary schools were eligible for participation in Project *ESTRE<sup>2</sup>LLA* if they were rated as “exemplary” or “recognized” by the state education agency during the 2010-2011 school year. Exemplary schools are those whose students earn a  $\leq 90\%$  passing rate on all state subject tests for all students and all student groups that meet minimum size criteria and have a 95% completion rate. Recognized schools are those whose students earn a  $\leq 75\%$  passing rate on all state subject tests for all students and all student groups that meet minimum size criteria and have an 85% completion rate.

Minimum size criteria for racial and ethnic groups of students were created by the state agency to ensure the validity of the state assessments.

The year prior to the first year of the project, the state implemented a new state assessment so ratings were not available for the 2011-2012 school year. Potential schools in the cooperating district had to:

1. Offer a Spanish-English bilingual education program for students in PK-5;
2. Have an ELL enrollment that was 40% or higher;
3. Enroll a minimum of 300 ELLs in grade K-3 to increase the likelihood that there would be at least three bilingual education teachers in each of these grades.

Schools meeting these criteria were identified by the research team, in collaboration with the District Research Department. The Department eliminated eligible schools that were involved in other studies or that might have difficulty participating because of other factors (e.g., those that had newly appointed principals). Administrators of the remaining schools were invited to participate in the study. The participating school was selected from the schools that responded positively to the invitation.

### **Participating School**

Lotus Elementary is a neighborhood school nestled in a residential area in the southwestern part of the school district. The school had been rated as “recognized” by the state education agency during the 2010-2011 school year. Although, the school was rated as recognized in 2010-2011, in first grade there was a problem; 69% of first grade students were performing below grade level. The school served 687 students,

predominantly Hispanic, in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Ninety-three percent of the students received free and reduced price lunch under Title I, 95% were student color, and 58% were ELLs. (Documents) Demographic information for the school is provided in Table 3.2.

Group	School
African-American/Black	2.9% (n=20)
Asian	<.01% (n=2)
Hispanic	91.3% (n=627)
Caucasian/White	4.9% (n=34)
Other	<.01% (n=1)
2 + races	<.01% (n=3)
Total	100% (n=687)
Economically Disadvantaged	93% (n=639)
English Language Learners	58% (n=398)

Table 3.2: School Demographic Data.

### ***Bilingual Program***

The participating school was in its second year of implementation of both a one-way and two-way dual language program models (Gomez, 2000). The goal of both program types is to support students to become bilingual, bicultural, and bi-literate. In

one way dual language programs, all students are ELLs while in two-way programs, there are both ELLs and native English speakers in the same class and instruction is provided in the target language and English to both groups.

The four participating teachers comprised two sets of dual language pairs. Approximately 38 students were assigned to each pair of teachers. Of these, 24 were native Spanish speakers or Spanish dominant and 14 were native English speakers or English dominant. Each teacher had between 18 and 20 students in her homeroom class. One teacher in each pair instructed students in Spanish while the other instructed students in English for all but one subject in the school day. Students received approximately one hour of instruction in the second language during science (English group) or mathematics (Spanish group) instruction. Reading instruction was provided in the students' dominant language.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

This study used purposeful convenience sampling i.e. a sample based on location and availability of respondents at a site (Merriam, 2009). According to Creswell and colleagues (2011), qualitative research involves selecting a small number of participants who have in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied and can address the research purpose and questions. The principal nominated the first grade team for additional professional development because of poor student outcomes on beginning of year assessments. The reading content was determined by the goals of the larger study

that focused on the reading instruction and interventions provided to Spanish-speaking English language learners.

The sample was comprised of the five first grade teachers, but only the four first grade teachers who provided literacy instruction to ELLs and who were part of the larger study. The following is a brief description of the participants.

***Debra***

Debra is a Caucasian female, 26 years old, with four years experience as a English-Spanish bilingual education teacher. She holds a bachelor's degree in education and bilingual education certification. She provides literacy instruction in English. She is a native English speaker who learned to speak Spanish in school beginning in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

***Carmen***

Carmen is a Hispanic female, 36 years old, with ten years experience as a English-Spanish bilingual education teacher. She holds a graduate masters level degree in education and bilingual education certification. She provides all of her instruction in Spanish. She is a native Spanish speaker.

***Dora***

Dora is a Hispanic female, 27 years old, with four years experience as a first grade teacher in English-Spanish bilingual education programs. She holds a bachelor's degree in education and bilingual education certification. She provides literacy and all

other content area instruction in Spanish. She is a native of Mexico and her first language is Spanish. She learned English in the United States where she attended school from age 12.

### ***Lisa***

Lisa is a Caucasian female, 30 years old, with six years experience as a teacher. She holds a bachelor's degree in education and English as a Second Language certification. She provides literacy instruction in English. Lisa is a native English speaker who acquired some Spanish in elementary school and studied Spanish in high school.

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

A mixed methods research design was most appropriate for this study because both numeric and text data were needed to adequately examine the effect of job-embedded professional development on teacher knowledge and practice. In this study a quantitative strand was embedded within a qualitative study to answer the three research questions. A mixed methods approach allowed for a qualitative exploration of the process of job-embedded professional development in a bilingual context and a quantitative explanation of the outcome of the training. The multiple sources of data used in this study converged to give a more complete picture of the process and provided evidence of the effects of job-embedded professional development on teacher knowledge and practice. This complex phenomenon had to be measured both quantitatively and

qualitatively to understand the process and the complexity of this phenomenon dealing with teachers.

### ***Role of the Researcher***

Qualitative research by definition is interpretative and I was positioned as the inquirer “involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants” (Creswell, 2003 p 21). I was the primary trainer for professional development and acted as the reading coach. Furthermore, the *researcher as instrument* was “the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2009 p 15). This role allowed me to be immediately “responsive and adaptive” to the needs of the participants (Merriam, 2009 p 15). I gathered information in the field from formal and informal meetings to enrich the data collected.

My perceptions of teaching and professional development have been shaped by my personal experiences as a teacher, a reading specialist, an instructional coach, and by working with teachers for 20 years. I have teaching certification in general education, bilingual education, and English as a Second Language in pre-kindergarten to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I also hold a multicultural special education masters degree. I have taught bilingual elementary grades and have been a reading specialist for kinder to fifth grade. As the primary trainer for the job-embedded professional development, there were potential influences associated with these experiences and biases that potentially influenced the analyses for this study.

Having been a teacher of ELLs who attended regular professional development, I learned information that was sometimes relevant, but that did not always change my instructional practices because of the difficulty I encountered in incorporating it into my existing instruction. Because there were fewer workshops available specifically for teachers of ELLs, much of the traditional professional development I attended focused on topics relevant for general education and were not germane to teaching ELLs. At times, I would adapt the new knowledge for use with ELLs, but would have benefitted from guidance from trainers. In addition, I rarely attended trainings with my grade level team. Usually only one person per grade level was sent to trainings essentially eliminating opportunities for collective participation and collaboration.

Later, my competency as a reading specialist was developed primarily by peer coaches (Stover et al, 2011), although I did attend extensive traditional professional development. My implementation changes were driven by daily observations and working closely with more knowledgeable peers who could guide my learning on the job. This effort was facilitated because we shared the same classroom, the intervention learning lab. Although most of this learning came from teachers who were not bilingual educators, I was able to incorporate my background knowledge and experience as a bilingual educator into much of what I learned. The key difference between this learning and my previous experience was the modeling and coaching I received. Both of these facilitated implementation of new knowledge and changes in my instructional practices. I augmented that with relevant professional development in bilingual education that could fill knowledge gaps in my content knowledge about reading instruction and interventions

for ELLs. As a graduate student, I have worked on various research studies in education and have been a bilingual instructional coach. I believe all of my experience and my understanding of the field of education enhanced my awareness and sensitivity to the challenges teachers face in their daily work. I made every effort to be objective in the way I viewed, collected, analyzed, and interpreted data.

My personal beliefs about literacy instruction support the inclusion of the five components of reading in literacy instruction (NRP, 2000) and explicit and systematic instruction. I have successfully used these in my literacy instruction with a similar population of students in the same area. I also believe that instruction needs to be differentiated to meet the needs of struggling learners. In regards to bilingual education, I support native language instruction for ELLs with an emphasis on academic vocabulary. I believe that English and Spanish literacy is approached differently because of the differences in the languages. Spanish is a transparent language with one-to-one letter-sound correspondence; therefore, it requires a different approach and a different scope and sequence for phonemic awareness and phonics. Because all of these beliefs are supported by research, they influenced my presentation of content for professional development and my analysis and interpretation of data.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

### **INSTRUMENTS**

#### ***Teacher Demographic Profile***

The *Teacher Demographic Profile* (Appendix A) was developed for the larger study, *Project ESTRE<sup>2</sup>LLA* (2012). It consists of 17 questions about the level of education, experience, and historical background of each of the participants.

#### ***Response to Intervention Questionnaire***

The *Response to Intervention Questionnaire* (Appendix B) was also developed for the larger study, *Project ESTRE<sup>2</sup>LLA* (2012). It consists of 55 questions developed to determine teachers' level of knowledge about Response to Intervention and the processes used by teachers to help struggling readers. Only the sections of this questionnaire containing information about core instruction and instructional grouping were used for this study. For example, questions about which core reading program is used for instruction.

#### ***Observation Form***

This observation form (Appendix C) was developed for use for the *Project ESTRE<sup>2</sup>LLA* (2012) study. It was used to document if and how the five components of reading (NRP, 2000) were addressed during literacy instruction.

### ***Teacher Knowledge Survey***

The *Teacher Knowledge Survey* (Cirino, Pollard-Durodola, Foorman, Carlson, & Francis, 2007) conducted in English and Spanish measures participants' content knowledge about teaching reading (Appendix D). This instrument was developed for use on a previous project, DELSS (2003) and was used in its original form. It was administered twice to the participants, as a pre and post assessment of teacher knowledge about reading instruction. Each test consisted of five subtests: phoneme counting (6 items), syllable counting (6 items), and phoneme matching (5 items). The sound-symbol subtest includes 10 items consisting of either phoneme segmentation of words or identifying phonetically irregular words. The composition subtest involved analyzing student errors on two oral reading passages (8 items).

### ***Observation Log***

Observation Logs were used after every professional development session to record implementation of practices ranked from consistent to no use of newly learned instructional practices. Results were used to record successful implementation of new teaching practices and areas of for additional coaching. Teachers were rated on recommended instructional practices presented in professional development such as modeling, scaffolding, and brisk pacing (Appendix E). In addition, running records of observed practices used for literacy instruction were recorded as field notes during these observations. Copies of these forms were provided to the teachers following observations and were used to provide feedback to teachers.

### ***Fidelity of Implementation Observation Form***

A Fidelity of Implementation form (Appendix F) was used twice during the study period by *Project ESTRE<sup>2</sup>LLA* team members to record teachers' continued implementation of learned strategies. This document is more comprehensive than the observation log and consists of 16 items scaled from 0-2 indicating low to high implementation of learned instructional practices. Both *Project ESTRE<sup>2</sup>LLA* staff members and myself used it to establish inter-rater reliability.

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **Study Approval**

The larger study project proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board at the University of Texas at Austin for approval and was approved on July 2012. A supplementary project proposal for this study (Appendix G) was also submitted to the Institutional Review Board at the University of Texas at Austin for approval on February 2013 noting that information for this particular study was partially obtained from extant data obtained for the larger study and from data collected for this study.

Participants were fully informed about the study objectives, data collection, and data analysis at an initial meeting to discuss participation in *Project ESTRE<sup>2</sup>LLA*. During this meeting, potential risks and benefits of participating in this study were discussed. Participants also received this information in writing. Teachers were given the opportunity to ask questions. Teachers agreeing to participate in the present study signed

consent forms (Appendix H) prior to commencing the study. Participants understood that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. All documentary evidence including field notes were available to the participants throughout the study. In addition, the participants were assured anonymity. Pseudonyms for the participants were used in this study.

## **INTERVENTION**

For the purposes of this study, job-embedded professional development is defined as professional development provided to teachers of the same grade level team at their school (Gersten et al., 2010) during school hours; coaching is defined as individualized training provided by a coach who acts as *facilitator*, *collaborative problem-solver*, and as a *teacher* (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005; Stover et al., 2011).

### **Pre-intervention**

To understand the context, prolonged time was spent in the school setting before providing intervention. This involved immersion in the school by attending collaborative planning meetings, data meetings, and conducting multiple observations of each teacher's literacy instruction. This pre-intervention period helped in developing a better understanding of the context, the literacy instruction, and teachers' needs. Initial information on literacy practices was collected during these visits. This information was used to help plan the intervention.

At a meeting with teachers in December, a more formal working relationship was established that would include job-embedded professional development for the entire team. The teachers agreed to participate in the job-embedded professional development and a timeline for the training was created. They designated one day after school every other week for professional development; those dates were then placed on the calendar. Joint goal setting resulted from the collaboration and participation in planning meetings. In collaboration with teachers, topics for professional development were identified. The teachers asked for guidance and professional learning in the broad areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, guided oral reading, comprehension, academic language, and general effective practices for literacy instruction. Appendix I features a schedule of professional development provided to the teachers. They agreed that the most urgent need was explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics as indicated by beginning of year assessments. They said they were not currently teaching phonics, other than identifying a spelling pattern sound as shown in lesson plans for week 5 (Appendix J) and observed during instruction.

### ***Teacher Knowledge Survey***

A teacher knowledge survey in reading in English and Spanish was administered to the teachers to identify areas of need in reading content knowledge. Results of the pretests provided a baseline of teacher content knowledge in reading and helped identify topics for job-embedded professional development.

### ***Collaboration and Planning***

A total of 22 afterschool and daytime planning meetings and two all day planning meetings were attended during the job-embedded professional development series. Afterschool planning meetings for literacy instruction were held on Wednesdays. If planning was not completed at the end of that time, teachers continued during their planning periods. Sometimes planning for literacy instruction began during the teachers' planning period and continued into their afterschool planning time. At first, this involved observing and documenting practices in order to provide support in areas of need.

At the all day planning meetings, teachers planned and discussed instructional approaches and reviewed student data. Student data was reviewed and indicated that students were underperforming on the reading skills measured at the beginning of the year. Data showed that 69% of first grade students in participants' classrooms were performing below grade level in either English or Spanish on the three skills measured: phonological awareness, graphophonemic knowledge, and comprehension. Students were only tested in their language of instruction. Effective teaching strategies in phonemic awareness and phonics that would help improve student performance were discussed. (Field Notes)

At the second all day planning meeting, student data on the middle-of-year assessments (e.g., *TPRI*, *Tejas LEE*, *DRA*, and *EDL*) was reviewed. Students were grouped by reading level and language of instruction according to the *DRA* and *EDL*. Then student performance on the *TPRI* and *Tejas LEE* was reviewed to look for similar

reading skill needs. Then students were assigned to reading groups based on their reading level, their skill needs, and their language of instruction. (Field Notes)

Collaborative grade level meetings were held during the teachers' planning period to review instruction. One of these days was used to begin the language arts planning that would be continued on the designated afterschool day. During these sessions, teachers discussed what was working well and what needed to be changed in their lesson plans. They traded and shared materials that were designated for individual teacher use on certain days. These meetings also provided a time for teachers to discuss grade level issues and concerns, such as behavior issues with students, referring students for special education testing, and school-wide issues. (Field Notes)

### **Intervention**

Based on consultation and collaboration with teachers, job-embedded professional development in reading was provided to the teachers. The iterative process included professional development with modeling, observations, coaching with feedback, and classroom demonstrations.

### ***Professional Development***

A total of seven job-embedded professional sessions were provided to the participants. The sessions were held after school in teacher's classrooms and lasted two hours each. Each professional development session featured reading content and strategies for both English and Spanish literacy instruction. One session was on

instructional strategies and instructional time, two sessions were provided on phonemic awareness and phonics, two on comprehension/academic language, and two on guided reading. An important component of the professional development sessions was presentation of content and instructional strategies and provision of materials in both English and Spanish. The professional development was provided every 2-3 school weeks for four months

Professional development included presentation of reading content and instructional strategies to teach the content, modeling of these strategies, follow-up classroom observations to observe implementation of strategies, coaching with feedback, and classroom demonstrations. Each professional development session reinforced the previous training. First there was a review of prior learning with quick practice activities. Then, reading content and instructional strategies for the current topic were presented with discussion and questions to check for understanding. In addition, instructional strategies were modeled; modeling involved demonstrations done with only the teachers present either in the professional development session or during collaborative planning meetings. The professional development was job-embedded in the teachers' work day, at their school, and included classroom demonstrations with the teachers' students.

Ample time for discussion about the topics presented was built into the job-embedded professional development. Understanding of concepts was monitored through questioning strategies. Teachers were given plenty of opportunities to learn and practice strategies. This was evident when all of the teachers were practicing skills and strategies

correctly. The time between sessions allowed teachers opportunities to implement what they had learned.

### ***Materials***

Materials from different sources and websites were used to support the professional development content. Since many of these websites provided materials only in English, selected materials were translated for the teachers.

### **Follow-Up**

Following professional development sessions, classroom observations were conducted with coaching and feedback provided to teachers each time. Classroom demonstrations in the teachers' classroom with their students were provided to teachers as needed to support implementation of instructional strategies.

### ***Observations***

Classroom observations of each teacher's literacy instruction were conducted following each professional development session. The focus of the observations was on the most recently taught strategies. Teachers were observed 7 times each. Observations ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours. Data was collected with the Observation Log. Observations preceding the job-embedded professional development helped to differentiate professional development for the participants. Although all of the professional development sessions focused on the five components of reading (NRP, 2000), they had a specific focus on the topics requested by the teachers.

### ***Coaching***

Coaching was a regular component of the professional development and was used to provide feedback to teachers individually after observations. Any instructional practices requiring modifications were addressed during coaching sessions. Coaching was also provided during collaborative planning meetings when clarification of practices was requested or necessary. For example, if teachers needed clarification on instructional content or practices, content would be reviewed, retaught, or explained until it was understood. Coaching was provided based on individual teacher or group needs.

### ***Classroom Demonstrations***

In all, a total of five classroom demonstrations were provided to the teachers. Two focused on phonemic awareness and phonics with one in English and one in Spanish and three focused on guided reading with one in English and two in Spanish. Teachers requested the demonstrations to better understand how to implement the instructional strategies presented in professional development. Therefore, classroom demonstrations featured the instructional strategies that had been the focus of the corresponding professional development session. Each classroom demonstration was video-recorded by the teachers. They viewed those lessons later during their daytime meetings. Then, during afterschool collaborative planning meetings, they asked questions to clarify elements of the lesson, and requested additional modeling if needed.

## **After Intervention**

To determine the impact of the professional development on teacher knowledge and practice, the following data were collected.

### ***Teacher Knowledge Survey***

The teacher knowledge survey in reading in English and Spanish was administered a second time to the teachers to determine growth in reading content knowledge related to the job-embedded professional development in reading. Results of the posttests were compared to data from the pre-tests.

### ***Interviews***

Individual interviews were conducted to determine teachers' perception of the effect of job-embedded professional development on teacher content knowledge, instructional practices, and their overall perceptions of this type of professional learning (Appendix K).

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### **Qualitative Data**

According to Yin, "data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence, to draw empirically based conclusions" (Yin, 2009, p 126). To provide a detailed description of the setting and the phenomenon, data from field notes and observations were repeatedly reviewed and coded by organizing

material into categories using open coding, then grouping, labeling, and color-coding them using axial coding. Data was analyzed for themes or issues that emerged. The following steps were followed:

Early data analysis was conducted during participant observations as reflections were being made. Ongoing analysis allowed for documentation of insights that occurred as data was being collected. From this data, inferences were made that had to be verified. For example, the lack of explicit instruction could have been due to lack of teacher preparation, lack of content knowledge on how to provide this instruction, or different philosophical views regarding explicit instruction. Ongoing analyses allowed for logical conclusions to be drawn.

Prolonged time in the field lent credibility to the study's findings (Creswell, 2003) because it helped in developing a deeper understanding of the school, the participants, and the literacy instruction provided in English and Spanish. The time spent before and during the study allowed for multiple observations of each teacher's literacy instruction helping to clarify instructional practices. When isolated observations are conducted, it is difficult and potentially erroneous to make generalizations about the instruction from them. Multiple observations help create a better picture of the classroom routines and environment and a more accurate assessment of the literacy instruction provided.

Anecdotal field notes provided descriptive data of the behaviors, activities, setting, and processes of individuals and the school. Because field notes are not constrained by the space on a form, they can be lengthy and provide more description. Field notes helped capture activities not included on the lesson plans, interruptions in

instruction due to staff entering the classroom or phone calls, and other nuances that could not be noted on checklists. Field notes were reviewed and analyzed throughout the study. At times, field notes resulted in questions and topics for discussion during collaborative planning meetings.

Field notes were reviewed and analyzed throughout the study. At times, field notes resulted in questions and topics for discussion during collaborative planning meetings. Yin (2012) suggests that the researcher needs to be a good note taker and that informal notes must be converted into formal notes as soon as possible for later use to facilitate analysis of data.

The following steps were followed:

- Step 1 – Preparing of data for analysis. This included transcribing interviews, typing field notes, and sorting data and arranging by type: professional development, instruction, demonstration, observation, and coaching.
- Step 2 – Reading through all data to get a general sense of the information and its meaning. Writing notes in the margins of field notes to record general thoughts. Conducting a line-by-line examination of the interview text including highlighting information and making notes in the margins.
- Step 3 – Coding by organizing material into categories and labeling them. Sections of text representing similar ideas were organized into categories using open coding; then they were grouped, labeled, and color-coded using axial coding (Merriam, 2009). This detailed analysis and preliminary organizing scheme was

recursive and allowed for emergence of new categories and themes as data was analyzed. A list of codes is provided in Appendix L.

- Step 4 – Generating detailed descriptions of the people, events, and setting, as well as themes or categories. Data was systematically analyzed until themes emerged. This required combining or dividing themes to have a manageable amount. These themes were supported by quotations and textual evidence and were analyzed. A list of themes is provided in Appendix L.
- Step 5 – Discussion of the themes and how they relate to the research questions and to the process of job-embedded professional development. Visual models including tables, figures, and graphs that conveyed descriptive information about the themes and the participants help establish a holistic picture of the phenomenon and depict patterns in the data (Creswell, 2003). Relationships between themes were described.
- Step 6 – Interpreting and deriving meaning from the data. Patterns and themes from the data were used to draw conclusions. Implications and findings were reviewed.

### **Validity and Credibility**

Internal *validity* refers to how research findings represent reality. To enhance internal validity and strengthen the reliability of the study, triangulation of multiple sources of data were used to corroborate ideas and compare descriptions and to validate themes. Yin posits that “the most robust evidence may be considered to have been

established if the data from three independent sources all coincide” (Yin, 2012, p 104). Therefore, field notes, coaching logs, observations, and interviews were used. Member checks, or respondent validation, were utilized allowing participants to confirm the data and provide *credibility* to interpretations (Merriam, 2009). In addition, *reflexivity* was used throughout the process to curtail biases and assumptions in shaping perspectives and interpretations (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2012).

### **Quantitative Data**

Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to compare teachers’ overall pretest scores on the *Teacher Knowledge Survey* to the overall posttest scores on the test for both English and Spanish tests, and on differences in subtests of the tests. Additional descriptive statistics of these assessments were also provided.

Fidelity of implementation observation scores were calculated after each observation. A total 32 possible points could be earned during each observation with 2 maximum points for each of 16 items on the checklist. Scores were converted to percentages and means scores generated for the two observations.

Frequency counts of the instructional practices included on the observation log checklists were reported based on all the classroom observation data. Implementation of instructional practices were ranked from consistent to no use and tallied, by teacher, for all observations conducted during the professional development and at the end of the study for concluding observations. A summary of data collection and analysis is provided in Table 3.3.

Research Question	Data Needed	Data Source	Analysis
How does job-embedded professional development in reading influence first grade teachers' content knowledge about reading for English language learners?	Current teacher reading content knowledge compared to end of study teacher content knowledge in reading	Field notes <i>Pre/post Teacher Knowledge Surveys</i> <i>Observation Log</i> Interviews	Description of events within logic model Coding for themes Thematic Analysis Data displays <i>Pre/post Teacher Knowledge Survey</i> results Paired-Samples T-tests Descriptive statistics Frequency counts
How does job-embedded professional development in reading influence first grade teachers' reading instruction for English language learners?	Pre-PD observations of instruction in reading compared to post PD observations Documented number of coaching sessions and demonstrations	Field notes <i>Project ESTRE<sup>2</sup>LLA</i> <i>Observation Form</i> <i>Observation Log</i> <i>Fidelity of Implementation Observations</i> Interviews	Description of events within logic model Coding for themes Thematic Analysis Data displays Descriptive statistics Frequency counts
How do teachers perceive a job-embedded approach to professional development in reading instruction?	Teachers expressed responses to PD during the study Interview questionnaire responses	Field notes Interviews	Description of events within logic model Coding for themes Thematic Analysis Data displays

Table 3.3: Summary of Data Collection and Analysis.

## **Logic Model**

This mixed methods study chronicled the chain of events occurring throughout the process of job-embedded professional development. Creswell (2003) recommends using a logic model as a conceptual array of the phenomenon being studied. Yin (2009) submits that “a logic model deliberately stipulates a complex chain of events over an extended period of time” (p 149). As an analytical tool, logic models match “empirically observed events to theoretically predicted events” (Yin, 2009, p 149). A logic model depicting the process undertaken by this study is represented in Figure 3.1. The four boxes in the logic model represent the activities and events that comprised the job-embedded professional development and the expected outcomes. The inputs are the current teacher and student levels before the professional development; the activities are the components of job-embedded professional development (the intervention), the outputs are the short-term anticipated results; and the outcomes are long-term anticipated results.

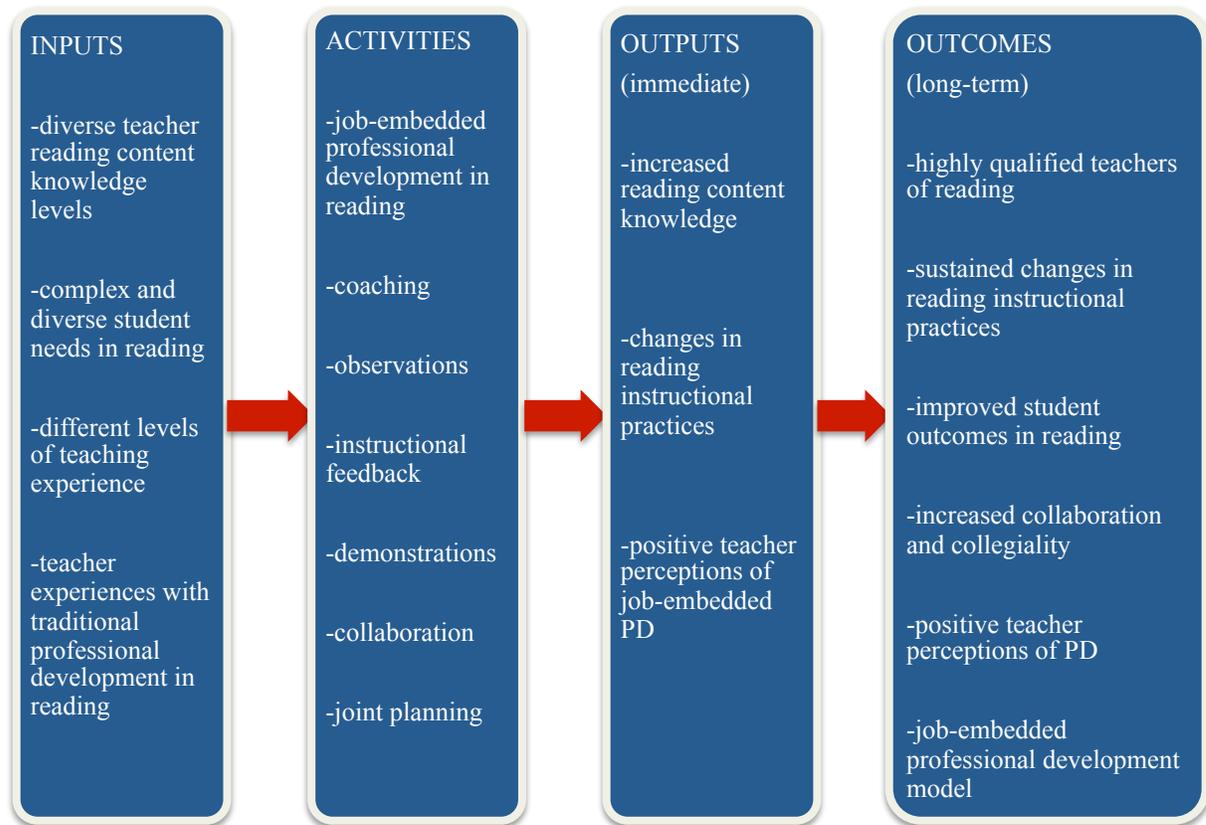


Figure 3.1: Logic Model.

The logic model was used to trace the job-embedded professional development over time and any subsequent changes in teacher content knowledge and practice. According to Yin (2009), the boxes in an organizational-level logic model should depict events that are “actually linked in real life” (p. 154). In this study, the boxes are linked chronologically and follow a sequence, whereby inputs led to activities (job-embedded professional development), which led to outputs (i.e. changes in teachers’ knowledge and practice) and outcomes (i.e. better trained teachers and improved student outcomes). This anticipated sequence of events for the delivery of job-embedded professional

development was compared to the actual sequence of events and was discussed with attention given to the relationships between job-embedded professional development, improved teacher content knowledge, and changes in instructional practices.

### ***Inputs***

The inputs featured in the logic model represent the existing situation in relation to literacy instruction provided to first grade students at Lotus Elementary School. These included the knowledge levels of the participants and their students at the beginning of the study. It also includes the teachers' work experiences and their experiences with professional development they participated in prior to this study. All of these features influenced the intervention that was provided to the teachers.

### ***Activities***

The activities in the logic model are components of the job-embedded professional development and support that was provided to the teachers. Each of those parts contributed to the overall experience and effects of the professional development. These activities were recursive presenting new information while building on prior knowledge.

### ***Outputs***

The outputs listed in the logic model represent the anticipated immediate effects of the job-embedded professional development and related activities. Relationships between the job-embedded professional development in reading, improved teacher content

knowledge in reading, and changes in reading instructional practices were explored in this study.

### ***Outcomes***

The outcomes listed in the logic model represent the expected long-term effects of the job-embedded professional development. Measuring these effects would require more time than is provided in this study period. The outcomes featured in the logic model represent the hypotheses for this study that teacher content knowledge gaps can be addressed through job-embedded professional development, leading to increased teacher content knowledge and improved reading instruction, leading to improved student outcomes.

### **SUMMARY**

Despite the current research regarding professional development, the majority of professional development opportunities provided in education today are of the traditional, “one shot” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) workshop type. Research suggests that professional development should be intensive, ongoing, collaborative, and connected to practice to be related to improved student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Furthermore, it should be job-embedded and provided to collaborative teams (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, et al., 2001; Lumpe, 2007; Wayne et al., 2008). This study explored the use of these recommended best practices through job-embedded professional development in reading

instruction with coaching and its effects on teachers' of ELLs knowledge and practice and their perceptions of this type of professional development.

## Chapter 4: Results

Professional development standards promulgated by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC, 2001) and Learning Forward (2011) recommend that professional development be delivered within professional learning communities and be embedded in practice. Further, professional development should be differentiated to address individual teacher needs, and build on their prior learning and experience (Stover et al., 2011). Providing guidance and support following professional development enhances the likelihood that teachers will acquire new knowledge and teaching skills.

A search of the professional literature identified seven studies of professional development in the context of general education that included components of job-embedded professional development, such as on-site training or coaching. No studies of this approach were conducted in the context of bilingual education creating the impetus for this study. Seven sessions of job-embedded professional development in reading were provided to four first grade teachers of ELLs in an elementary school in a large urban school district in central Texas. The professional development included modeling, teacher observations, coaching with feedback, and classroom demonstrations during the school day.

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How does job-embedded professional development in reading influence first grade teachers' content knowledge about reading for English language learners?

2. How does job-embedded professional development in reading influence first grade teachers' reading instruction for English language learners?
3. How do teachers perceive a job-embedded approach to professional development in reading instruction?

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to answer these questions. Teacher knowledge assessments and observation checklists were analyzed with paired sample t-tests and descriptive statistics. Observations, interviews, documents, and field notes were analyzed by conducting a thematic analysis of the data. Three overarching themes emerged from these analyses: understanding the context is important; job-embedded professional development is beneficial; and teachers have positive perceptions about job-embedded professional development. The following sections present the results of those analyses.

### **THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT IS IMPORTANT**

One of the goals of job-embedded professional development is to provide targeted professional development based on the needs of the participants. To do that, one must have a deep understanding of the context. Therefore, at the beginning of the school year, project staff devoted extensive time observing instruction in order to better understand the context of the classroom literacy instruction, including the instructional practices and routines used and the process for planning instruction. Participating teachers were not unaware of the process and reported that the early observations provided the observers an

understanding of the literacy context and of their specific needs for professional development. Dora stated:

..To get a feel of how the teaching is going, what the kids are doing, what type of materials we are using, what programs we are using before helping. I think that is important, watching the whole block and being able to understand what is going on with the group. (Dora, Individual interview)

From classroom observations, several topics were identified: time allocation, features of effective instruction, and components of reading instruction, challenges for teachers of ELLs, and building trust.

### **Classroom Observations**

Data from six formal observations, averaging 108 minutes each, helped me identify the reading instructional practices used by the four teachers of first grade ELLs.

Across observations of teachers in various settings, the following emerged: allocation of time, features of instruction, and components of reading instruction.

#### ***Time Allocation***

Time allocation decisions were made to accommodate guided reading groups. During the one-hour block for guided reading, teachers and other staff members worked with their small groups of students, while the remaining students worked independently, on average, 75 minutes daily. Because the teachers had agreed not to use literacy centers this academic year, they incorporated spelling activities and graphic organizers into the daily teacher-led read-aloud story activity. Students then completed the spelling and

reading response activities independently. Students were observed copying the teachers' responses on their graphic organizer and spending time selecting the colored markers and comparing their colored words to other students' colored words. Those who completed the spelling task, spent up to 35 minutes in independent reading or talking with other students. Teachers acknowledged having to keep their students busy with seatwork so they could teach their two small reading groups. (Field Notes, Observation)

Informal classroom observations revealed other examples of inefficient use of instructional time. For example, Debra used the guided reading time slot to assess the oral reading fluency of six students. In a 17-minute period, she assessed one student at a time, each assessment taking about 3 minutes, while the rest of the group sat and listened. Each student was disengaged for 14 minutes. Loss of instructional time also resulted from the lack of appropriate pacing during instruction where the delivery was slow sometimes causing lessons to end abruptly or that prevented individual turns for responses or discussion to support reading. Transitions often lasted 4-8 minutes. Transition times violated recommendations in the literature for smooth transitions between activities with as little lost time as possible to prevent student academic disengagement and misbehaviors (McIntosh, Herman, Sanford, McGraw, & Florence, 2004). (Observation)

### ***Features of Effective Instruction***

Table 4.1 presents features of effective instruction observed in the formal observations. Teachers connected content to prior knowledge in 4 of 6 observations,

monitored for understanding in 5 of 6 observations, and provided corrective feedback in 3 of 6 observations. Features observed 2 of 6 times include appropriate pacing, appropriate reading content and skills, and providing opportunities for students to practice skills and to use meaningful language. The features observed least often, 1 in 6 times, included use of direct and explicit instruction, modeling, and explicitly stating the instructional objective.

Features of Instructional Delivery	Debra <i>n</i> =1	Dora <i>n</i> =2	Carmen <i>n</i> =2	Lisa <i>n</i> =1	Total <i>n</i> =6
Direct and explicit instruction is evident		1			1
Teacher connects content to prior/background knowledge		2	1	1	4
Demonstration and modeling precede instruction and practice		1			1
Appropriate pacing maintains student engagement			1	1	2
Monitoring for understanding is evident		2	2	1	5
Students have enough opportunities to practice, in group and individually		1		1	2
Corrective feedback is provided at the appropriate time	1	1		1	3
Students are provided opportunities for meaningful language use			1	1	2
Appropriate reading content & skills are taught		1		1	2
Instructional objective explicitly stated		1			1

Table 4.1: *Project ESTRE<sup>2</sup>LLA* Observations.

### ***Components of Reading Instruction***

Daily instruction in three of the five components of reading (NRP, 2000), comprehension strategies, vocabulary, and fluency, were observed during literacy instruction. Comprehension was monitored using questioning strategies during read

alouds. The four vocabulary words targeted for the week were defined during the story presentation. Fluency was practiced during guided oral reading.

Observations and document reviews showed that two components of beginning reading instruction commonly implemented in first grade classrooms, phonemic awareness and phonics, were neither included in lesson plans nor taught by the participating teachers. (Observations)

When asked, the teachers indicated that they did not explicitly teach phonics and explained that they incorporated phonics instruction into spelling lessons. Typically, they presented a list of spelling words targeting a letter sound. For example, in lesson plans for week 5 (Appendix J) teachers presented the short *a* sound in English with words such as *man* and *cat* and the *a* sound in Spanish with words such as *salta* and *baja*. The Spanish spelling words did not follow a consistent pattern; instead they were related to the theme and storybook (e.g. *salta*, *pomo*, and *murciélago*). (Field Notes, Documents)

The teachers explained that they did not teach phonics because the school used a whole language approach to teach reading. They believed that immersing students in literature fostered a love of reading because of the exposure to rich, interesting text in different genres. Skills, such as phonics, would be acquired through the act of reading. Debra said that unlike the other first grade teachers, she used songs and internet videos to teach phonics. (Field Notes)

## **Planning Literacy Instruction**

At the beginning of the spring semester, the four teachers identified the themes they would teach based on the district curriculum guides for first grade. Some of the themes they covered during the course of the study were *Wants and Needs*, *Past and Present*, *Then and Now*, *Biographies*, and *Family Gatherings*. (Document, Field Notes)

Typically, Carmen and Lisa reviewed the curriculum guides provided by the district and the state reading standards while planning instruction. They also selected the skills they would target in instruction from among those required to be taught according to the guides. Once the teachers had selected a theme and a concept or skill, they brainstormed ideas for teaching these and selected materials and literature for English and Spanish reading instruction. They pooled resources that matched the themes, and discussed and agreed on which materials to use for the week's lesson. The teachers all used the same lesson plans to teach the following week. (Field Notes)

Lisa and Debra were responsible for the English literacy instruction so they selected the high frequency words, spelling words, and vocabulary words to be taught in English. Carmen and Dora did so for Spanish literacy instruction. Having identified the books they would use for instruction, the teachers would select vocabulary words from the texts in English and Spanish. For spelling and sight words, they would use words from the basal series. Sometimes they selected internet videos from *Brain Pop Jr.* or *United Streaming* that matched the literature they used. Often, Carmen and Dora created voice-overs in Spanish so they could use videos available in English only. Teachers read one book aloud each day, sharing the books across classes. They selected graphic

organizers to use for students' reading responses. This type of planning and preparation helped assure consistency and alignment of literacy skill instruction and thematic units.

(Field Notes)

Figure 4.1 represents a composite picture of instruction during the literacy block in these four classrooms. Lesson plans typically included four activities during the literacy block: read aloud of a book from the weekly theme, reading response to develop a comprehension skill, spelling, and read-to-self. The read aloud and reading response activities were teacher-led whole group instruction. During the second half of the period, students worked independently on completing a graphic organizer, spelling tasks, and read-to-self, or were involved in small guided reading groups.

Typical Pre-Professional Development Classroom Observation			
Time	Activity	Skill	Anecdotal Notes
8:15-9:00	Read Aloud	<i>Story book</i> Focus: Story elements (character analysis, problem/solution)	Teacher asks pre-reading questions to activate prior knowledge; Teacher reads to students. Book displayed on projector. Teacher asks questions about story elements. Few students provide responses.
9:00 - 9:25	Reading Response	Graphic organizer on projector with teacher's responses pre-filled out for character, setting, problem, solution, etc. Students copy teacher's responses.	Seat work is assigned. Partner work is allowed for graphic organizers. Students at different levels of completion throughout this time on the various activities. Noise level high. Some students talking, not working.
9:30-10:30	Spelling	<u>Independent Seatwork</u> Make picture of words for week. Write words 5 times each in word journal.	Students work at different rates of speed. Some students talking and working. Others are not working. Students copying each others' work. Some finish quickly while others do not.
	Read to Self	Select books from classroom library and read.	Noise level moderate-high. Most students never reach this activity because they are not finished with the other activities. Lots of lost instructional time.
	Guided Reading	<u>Teacher-Led</u> Small group reading.	Two groups of 4-6 students (30 minutes each)

Figure 4.1: Pre-Professional Development Literacy Observation.

Observations confirmed that the teachers taught the same reading content and used the same lesson plans. This directly impacted the design of the professional development in that new content could be presented with a focus on differences in language of instruction and individual teacher skill level.

## **Challenges for Teachers of ELLs**

Observations of planning meetings and classroom instruction revealed several challenges faced by the teachers. First, weekly planning meetings revealed that the teachers were not using a good system to plan and as a result were challenged to align Spanish and English literacy instruction. It was difficult to find Spanish instructional materials that were equivalent to those used in English. Consequently, the teachers spent much of their weekly planning time searching for comparable materials or creating them. For example, teachers had to diverge from the basal scope and sequence to find comparable words or sounds to use for English and Spanish spelling. Next, Spanish reading instruction was being taught using syllables that also diverged from the alignment in English and Spanish literacy instruction the teachers of ELLs were trying to incorporate. Help was provided to the teachers during collaborative planning meetings to improve their instructional planning challenges. By agreeing to use the basal series for reading, the teachers were able to eliminate some of the time spent on creating materials for literacy instruction. In addition, having seen how teachers struggled to create materials in Spanish, it also supported the creation of ready-to-use materials in Spanish when providing professional development. All of the materials provided to the teachers during the job-embedded professional development sessions were translated, as needed, to Spanish and provided in both languages. The Spanish literacy teachers reported they appreciated receiving ready-to-use materials in Spanish that were equivalent to the English literacy materials.

The second challenge was the process for grouping students. Teachers used data to group students across classes based on their reading level and the language of instruction. Consequently, teachers did not always instruct their own students, when they did, it was a small subset of their class. Classroom teachers and other staff (e.g. reading specialist, student interns, and paraprofessionals) worked with these small groups during a designated time block that allowed for teachers to work with two small groups in the fall and one small group of students in the spring for 30 minutes each. Some students did not receive any small group instruction because there were not enough staff members to instruct the number of students in small groups and not enough designated time for small group instruction. Teachers reported feeling as if they did not really know all of their students' current performance level. During the guided reading professional development sessions, weekly progress monitoring materials were provided to the teachers for them to use during guided reading. These assessments helped teachers understand their students' current performance levels even if they were not their small group instructors. (Field Notes)

Another challenge was providing literacy-based seatwork for students to complete independently while the teachers provided small reading groups. During the small group instruction, the rest of the students in the class were assigned independent seatwork that often resulted in off-task behaviors or failure to complete assigned tasks. To reduce the amount of time that students spent on independent seat work, only one small reading group was assigned to each teacher or staff member in the spring. In addition, during the phonemic awareness/phonics professional development session, activities to use for seat

work that would support the five components of reading, primarily, phonemic awareness and phonics activities, were introduced to the teachers to help them provide literacy-based independent activities for students to complete during seatwork. (Field Notes)

This information about the instructional context helped in understanding the challenges teachers faced in providing literacy instruction for ELLs. Job-embedded professional development was then designed to be responsive to teachers' needs with professional learning differentiated for each teacher by their knowledge level and the language they used for instructing ELLs. Knowing how teachers planned their instruction, grouped students, and provided literacy instruction helped in understanding the context for literacy instruction for first grade ELLs. (Field Notes)

### **Building Trust**

The extensive time I spent observing the teachers helped me to build rapport with them and earn their trust. Teachers added me to their team email group and became comfortable asking for help, ideas, suggestions, about reading and other content areas. Debra stated that my presence in the classroom was “just like having one of the kids in the room.” (Debra, Individual interview)

Dora reported:

[Linda] having taken the time to be in the classroom from the very beginning has been really helpful in terms of making us feel comfortable, I think everything has been great. (Dora, Individual Interview)

Without collegiality, trust, and respect, teachers might not have been as open to suggestions, to changes, to professional learning, and to my frequent presence in their

rooms. Teachers shared their struggles with teaching classes in which the majority students were reading below grade level while also implementing a dual language program. They felt pressured to improve student outcomes having been criticized because their students were performing below grade level in reading when they entered second grade. The teachers were dissatisfied with their students' reading performance last year and were prepared to make changes. The teachers felt they were being held accountable for the results of their current students' beginning of year reading assessments although these, in actuality, reflected kindergarten year outcomes. The teachers expressed needing help and were open to new ideas that would improve their instruction. They agreed to try new instructional strategies and activities, but wanted help planning these and wanted demonstrations for implementation of these practices. Activities for teaching phonemic awareness skills, such as blending, segmenting, and deletion of initial and final phoneme, were discussed. These were the areas that the first grade students had performed below grade level on the beginning of year benchmark assessments. After reviewing these activities, classroom observations for implementation were scheduled. (Field Notes)

## **Summary**

The time I invested observing literacy instruction in the participating teachers' classrooms helped me develop an in-depth understanding of their challenges with selection of materials, planning, and grouping for instruction, their strengths, and gaps in their knowledge about reading and literacy practices for ELLs. This, in turn, helped me

design the reading-related professional development I offered them and to differentiate it in response to respective needs. Teachers repeatedly indicated they appreciated the time I took to get to know their classroom environment, their routines, and their students. In response to what was most helpful about the job-embedded professional development provided to them, teachers stated:

...The observations, just coming and being in our classrooms, and there for our planning; being part of the team, really understanding what it was we were doing, and where we were with our kids, and really what we were ready to do. (Lisa, Individual interview)

I really liked how, at first, [Linda] kind of just sat back and listened to us plan; then got more involved, asking questions; then brought the professional development and modeling for us. (Debra, Individual interview)

## **THEME 2: JOB-EMBEDDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS BENEFICIAL**

Teachers were provided job-embedded professional development. Components of job-embedded professional development included need-based content, coaching, feedback, and classroom demonstrations during the school day. Teachers reported that this comprehensive approach made the professional development beneficial. They stated:

[Linda] would give us the professional development, allow us time to implement it in the classroom, come in and model it for us, observe us following the professional development, and then we would get feedback. I think that is probably the most effective way of professional development because it's in the job! (Carmen, Individual Interview)

From the job-embedded training sessions, two main topics were identified: benefits of the professional development for teachers (i.e. increase in teacher content knowledge and changes in teacher practice) and factors contributing to changes in teacher content knowledge and practice (i.e. customized professional development, comprehensive approach to professional development, and teacher reflections).

### **BENEFITS OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS**

The benefits of the professional development were evidenced through increases in teachers' knowledge and changes in their instructional practice for ELLs. As teachers acquired content knowledge, their instructional practices changed. The teachers planning and instructional practices were transformed by the process of job-embedded professional development.

#### **Increase in Teachers Content Knowledge**

All four teachers of ELLs completed a *Teacher Knowledge Survey-English Reading* at the beginning and at the end of the study. All but Lisa, who is not bilingual, also completed the *Teacher Knowledge Survey-Spanish Reading*. Results are presented in Table 4.2 for the English assessment. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare teachers' overall pretest and posttest scores on the *Teacher Knowledge Survey*. There was a significant difference between the English pretest ( $M = 68.00$ ,  $SD = 8.12$ ) and posttest ( $M = 89.00$ ,  $SD = 10.30$ ) scores;  $t(4) = 3.98$ ,  $p = .028$ .

Paired-samples t-tests were also conducted to compare teachers' pretest and posttest scores on the subtests of the *Teacher Knowledge Survey* in English. There was a significant difference in the pretest and posttest on the sound-symbol subtest scores, pretest ( $M = 62.50$ ,  $SD = 15.00$ ) and posttest ( $M = 95.00$ ,  $SD = 5.77$ );  $t(4) = 6.79$ ,  $p = .007$ .

Subtests	Debra		Dora		Carmen		Lisa	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Phoneme Counting	50%	100%	67%	67%	83%	100%	83%	100%
Syllable Counting	67%	100%	83%	100%	100%	100%	67%	100%
Phoneme Matching	40%	100%	60%	60%	80%	80%	100%	100%
Sound-Symbol	70%	100%	50%	90%	50%	90%	80%	100%
Composition	75%	88%	63%	50%	38%	88%	75%	75%
Overall Score	63%	97%	63%	74%	66%	91%	80%	94%

Table 4.2: Pre and Post Scores on *Teacher Knowledge Survey-English*.

The overall scores on the English pre-test ranged from 63% to 80%. The lowest scores were on the sound-symbol correspondence ( $M = 63\%$ ) and the composition subtests ( $M = 63\%$ ). The overall scores on the English post-test ranged from 74% to 97% ( $M = 89\%$ ). The lowest score was on the composition subtest ( $M = 75\%$ ). The greatest gains were on the sound-symbol subtest from a pretest mean score of 63% to 95% on the posttest, and on the composition subtest from a pretest mean score of 63% to 75% on the posttest. The patterns of performance varied across teachers.

Descriptive statistics revealing differences between pretest and posttest scores on the English assessment are presented in Table 4.3.

Test	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Pretest	4	63	80	68	8.12
Posttest	4	74	97	89	10.29
Difference				+21	+2.17

Table 4.3: Score Difference on Teacher Knowledge Survey-English from Pretest to Posttest.

The overall mean scores for the English test increased 21 percentage points from 68% to 89%.

Results are presented in Table 4.4 for the Spanish assessment. Mean score gains were compared between the pretest and posttest scores on the subtests of the *Teacher Knowledge Survey*. Paired-samples t-tests indicate a significant difference in the pretest and posttest scores on the composition error analysis subtest, pretest ( $M = 50.33$ ,  $SD = 12.50$ ) and posttest ( $M = 91.67$ ,  $SD = 14.43$ );  $t(3) = 9.54$ ,  $p = .011$ .

Subtests	Debra		Dora		Carmen	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Contando Fonemas	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Contando Silabas	100%	100%	100%	100%	83%	100%
Conocimiento de los Sonidos	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Sonido-Letra	90%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Composición	63%	100%	50%	100%	38%	75%
Overall Score	89%	100%	89%	100%	83%	94%

Table 4.4: Pre and Post Scores on *Teacher Knowledge Survey*-Spanish.

The overall scores on the Spanish pre-test ranged from 83% to 89%. The highest scores were on contando fonemas (phoneme counting) and the conocimiento de los sonidos (phoneme matching) subtests ( $M = 100\%$ ), while the lowest score was on the

composición (composition) subtest ( $M = 50\%$ ). Scores on 4 of 5 subtests were 94% or higher, indicating a higher overall knowledge of Spanish reading. The overall scores on the Spanish post-test ranged from 94% to 100% ( $M = 98\%$ ). The lowest score was on the composition subtest ( $M = 92\%$ ). The greatest gains were found for the composition subtest from a pretest mean score of 50% to 92% on the posttest.

Score differences from pretest to posttest on the Spanish assessment are presented in Table 4.5.

Test	$n$	Minimum	Maximum	$M$	$SD$
Pretest	3	83	89	87	3.46
Posttest	3	94	100	98	3.46
Difference				+11	0

Table 4.5: Score Difference on *Teacher Knowledge Survey-Spanish* from Pretest to Posttest.

The overall mean scores for the Spanish subtest increased 11 percentage points from 87% to 98%. All three teachers performed better overall on the Spanish version of the test ( $M = 98\%$ ) as compared to the English scores ( $M = 89\%$ ). Results of t-tests documented, but did not explain, changes in teacher knowledge as measured by the English and Spanish reading knowledge surveys. Qualitative data were analyzed to try to explain these changes.

All four teachers were concerned about their performance on the pretest *Teacher Knowledge Survey-English*. They said they had guessed the answers to many of the items. For example, Debra stated:

I was really frustrated [with]....that survey at the beginning, about phonics....because I don't know how to do any of this stuff. (Debra, Individual interview)

### **Changes in Teacher Practice**

Teachers changed their instructional practices in a number of ways. In particular, in terms of how they viewed instruction for English Language Learners and in regard to their implementation of a preventative approach to core instruction guided by student data to meet their diverse needs. A preventative approach to core instruction was emphasized because of the lack of supplemental instruction at the school for students who were struggling. The school had adopted a new model to strengthen core instruction that eliminated the opportunity for supplemental instruction because available staff helped with core guided reading groups.

### ***Features of Effective Instruction for ELLs***

Classroom observations revealed that job-embedded professional development in reading directly influenced teachers reading instruction for ELLs. The features of effective instruction that were presented in the initial professional development were reinforced throughout the professional development series and were the focus of classroom observations. Seven instructional practices were rated as consistently,

sometimes, rarely, and never. The ratings, rarely and never, were combined in this table because practices were not observed or were not applicable to the activities being observed. In addition, the *model, lead, test* item was counted if any modeling was observed because that strategy is not applicable to some skills and modeling in general is important and should be noted. (Observation log)

Individual teacher results for observed instructional practices are presented in Table 4.6.

Features of Instructional Delivery	Consistently				Sometimes				Never/Rarely			
	Debra	Dora	Carmen	Lisa	Debra	Dora	Carmen	Lisa	Debra	Dora	Carmen	Lisa
Task was explained	4	4	5	5	1			1		1		
Model, lead, test pattern was used	2	2	4	4	2	2	1	1	1	1		
Consistent language was utilized	5	5	5	5								
Provided individual turns	5	4	3	5		1	2					
Scaffolding/turns to students who made errors	4	4	5	5	1	1						
Brisk pacing of lesson maintained	1	3	4	4	4	2	1	1				
Corrective feedback was provided	4	4	5	5	1	1						
Total	25	26	31	33	9	7	4	3	1	2	0	0

Table 4.6: Results of Observed Instructional Practices during Professional Development.

Two different observation forms were used, one for the early observations and another for observations conducted during the professional development; however, they did have four items in common and changes on those items are presented. Use of modeling improved from pre-observations to post observations from 16% to 60%; maintaining a brisk pace from 33% to 60%; providing corrective feedback from 50% to 90%; and providing individual turns from 33% to 85%.

In addition, observation ratings indicated that multiple features of effective instruction were implemented *consistently*. Consistent use of language was rated as *consistently* evident in all 20 of the observations, indicating that instructional language was comprehensible, not confusing to the student, and enabled the student to recognize the skill being targeted. Explaining the task, providing scaffolds, and providing corrective feedback were rated as *consistently* in 18 of the 20 classroom observations. Providing individual turns was rated as *consistently* in 17 of 20 observations. Modeling and maintaining a brisk pace during instruction were the areas of least consistent implementation across the group observed in 12 of 20 observations. (Observation log)

Lisa's ratings indicated the most consistent use of the seven recommended instructional practices, with a consistent rating of 33 of 35. A maximum consistent score of 35 was possible (e.g. 7 instructional practices observed on 5 occasions). Similarly, Carmen received a consistent rating of 31 of 35. Debra and Dora exhibited the least consistent use of recommended instructional practices, with consistent ratings of 25 of 35 and 26 of 35 respectively on the seven practices.

Anecdotal notes documented smooth transitions, brisk instructional pacing, use of gestures, better use of instructional time with brisk instructional pacing and modeling, features that were not observed consistently in the early observations during the professional development. The observation log was used to provide affirming feedback to teachers that supported appropriate implementation of new instructional strategies taught in the professional development sessions. Teachers received a copy of the observation log during feedback sessions. (Observation log)

### ***Components of Reading Instruction***

Numerous differences were observed between the pre and post professional development observations. All five components of reading were featured in the professional development sessions and teaching of these components was observed during the post classroom observations. This differed from the pre-professional development observations when instruction in only three of the five components, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency was observed. After receiving professional development, teachers were observed explicitly teaching phonemic awareness and phonics. Further, teachers used explicit instruction to teach reading. This was a stark difference from the early observations where explicit instruction was absent.

Anecdotal notes were recorded during classroom observations to capture components of reading instruction used during literacy instruction. Teachers were observed twice each when they taught phonics and phonemic awareness. Observations showed all four teachers explicitly taught their students to blend and segment phonemes.

Debra explicitly taught her students to place a wave under each sound in a word to segment spelling words. She also provided a systematic review of *silent e*. Carmen placed waves under syllables to segment syllables in words. Lisa and Dora explicitly taught deletion of initial and final phonemes in words and provided scaffolds for students who struggled. (Observation log)

Each teacher was observed once teaching comprehension. All four of the teachers successfully used the anticipation guides I provided them to help students comprehend text better and make predictions. Lisa also had students use them to draw conclusions. Debra used them to teach cause and effect and incorporated academic language stems to elicit students' responses in complete sentences. Dora pre-taught vocabulary, set the purpose for reading, and made connections between the story and prior learning in science during her lesson in which she used the anticipation guides. Carmen used the anticipation guide for her shared reading lesson and incorporated a strategy for making inferences she learned in the professional development. Teachers used the shared reading time to review vocabulary words for the week. Vocabulary was also addressed using the academic language stems. (Observation log)

Observations following the first professional development on guided reading showed that teachers covered 1-2 word work activities during guided reading. With each subsequent observation, the number of activities increased, with 3-5 word work activities documented in latter observations. Activities to develop fluency were incorporated into

the guided reading lessons. Teachers were observed using repeated reading strategies such as whisper reading fade-in/fade-out reading, and fluency phrases.

The teachers were observed using many of the strategies presented during the job-embedded professional development sessions, including partner reading, comprehension questioning strategies, word work for guided reading, and phonics and phonemic awareness (e.g., blending and segmenting). A marked difference in instruction between pre and post professional development observations was observed particularly in the use of explicit instruction in all of the components of reading. A description of the literacy block, post professional development, is presented in Figure 4.2. The five components of reading were taught during the literacy block and explicit instruction was used for each of the literacy components.

Post Professional Development Classroom Observation			
Time	Activity	Skill	Anecdotal Notes
8:00-8:15	PA/ phonics  Spelling	Obj: Bossy R /ir/ / er/ /ur/	<u>Explicit instruction</u> PA words-phonemes; segmentation Phonics (shirt, burn, herd, dirt) <i>Spelling words used for PA/Phonics:</i> bird, dirt, herd, burn, hurt, person, shirt, curl
8:15-8:40	Shared Reading	Basal Story Obj: Retell	<u>Explicit Instruction</u> Vocabulary: preview vocab read aloud whisper read book on document camera
8:40-8:50	Reading Response /Story Chart	Book  Obj: story elements; author's purpose	<u>Explicit Instruction</u> Comprehension: Activate prior knowledge, predictions, relate story to previous reading, author's message, problem/solution Lots of questions
8:50-9:10	Shared Reading	Book Obj: sequence	Discussion as book is read
9:10-9:15	Writing	Journal writing	Doc cam used with prompt story starter
9:15-9:25	Guided Reading	Word work	<u>Explicit instruction</u> PA/Phonics sight word flash cards beat the teacher –sight words PA: how many sounds in _ ?
9:25-9:35		<i>Book</i> <i>Guided Reading</i>	<u>Explicit instruction</u> Fluency: finger tracking; T reads; T & S read; Individual students read; whisper read; T takes anecdotal notes of students reading T reviews events in story/sequencing T gives students a sequencing worksheet they will fill from memory
9:35-9:45		assessment	High frequency word assessment fluency phrases
9:45			Picture walk of tomorrow's story

Figure 4.2: Post Professional Development Literacy Observation.

### *Preventative Approach to Teaching English Language Learners*

Teachers learned how to target instruction to the individual needs of students. One teacher remarked that, after the job-embedded professional development, she moved away from a “general” approach to instruction to using a more “intervention,” differentiated instruction approach. She stated that she saw the value of identifying and teaching to each student’s needs to ensure success for individual students and, consequently, that of the whole class. (Dora, Individual Interview, Field Notes) Debra stated:

Starting out as a teacher, how do you differentiate for all of these different needs? Use different strategies. If they don’t get it, you need to try a different way. Linda has helped to show us what those different ways to get the kids to learn and to get it. (Debra, Individual Interview)

Early observations revealed that teachers provided students the same core instruction and that they did not differentiate with respect to students’ individual needs. Dora described this as a “one size fits all” approach. (Field Notes) Teachers articulated how they learned to differentiate instruction to scaffold learning for students.

I did learn that sometimes when you are teaching, the kids aren’t always going to get it. [We learned] those different ways to get the kids to learn and to get it. I have learned more about how to do the re-teaching part and how to differentiate strategies for kids. That was something I was not so great at. Now it comes a little bit easier. (Debra, Individual interview)

Dora remarked that she now understood exactly what her students knew and did not know, and that monitoring a student’s progress using the progress monitoring

assessments I had provided her taken the guesswork out of planning differentiated instruction for ELLs. (Field Notes)

Teachers learned the importance of using data to plan instruction. They received assessment materials to guide them in targeting instruction to the individual needs of the students within core instruction. Teachers reported:

[I learned] what skills to teach the strategies, how long it should take, when to move students on, [and] how to scaffold [instruction]. I feel that [my reading instruction] has gotten stronger. I am able to pinpoint more what my students need and where to take them from there. (Carmen, Individual interview)

Dora remarked that it was so easy to incorporate the materials provided for assessment into her daily instruction because they measured exactly what she was teaching, and therefore it was effortless. (Dora, Individual interview)

During one demonstration on guided reading in Dora's classroom, all five students were quickly (in about 7 minutes) assessed during the partner reading segment using an assessment of letters and sounds. Students were assessed individually while the other students read with a partner. Dora was surprised to discover from those assessments how many letters and sounds her students knew: (Field Notes)

[I learned] how to identify better, objectively, what each student needs or what each group needs so that we can make interventions [instead of] generalizing to the whole group... to objectively say this student, this group, can work with this better. (Dora, Individual interview)

[We] have more targeted interventions. It has taught me how to [identify] interventions better with my students. Having that continuous assessment of the kids, the progress monitoring, has been very strict. That has been one part that has been very, very different from what we have done before. (Dora, Individual interview)

## **FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGES IN TEACHER KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE**

Multiple factors contributed to the changes in teacher knowledge and practice. Teachers benefitted from the customized learning, comprehensiveness, and reflection promoted through the job-embedded professional development. They changed the way they approached reading instruction and how they planned.

### **Customized Professional Development**

Professional development was customized in terms of topic selection, specific needs, and level of support, to address the unique needs of the team and each of the four teachers of ELLs. Teachers jointly selected topics for professional development based on their content knowledge needs and asked for direction on how to teach this content effectively. (Field Notes) Lisa stated:

[Linda] said what do you guys feel like you need? Where can I help? We were able to express our concerns and immediately get feedback about those specific things. She built all of our professional development off of that. It is different from anything else that we have done because it is more supportive and it's more comprehensive. (Lisa, Individual Interview)

Teachers described the customized professional development as being specific to their needs:

It's tailored to what your team needs. It's data driven too, so looking at the data and saying these are the things that we see that you need and where do you guys feel like you are and sort of going from there. It hasn't felt intrusive. It has always been very supportive. (Lisa, Individual interview)

I really like how Linda brought the professional development to exactly what we need. (Debra, Individual Interview)

[Job-embedded professional development] is specific to what you are teaching in your classroom, specifically your grade level. It's specific to what we need and we get feedback. (Carmen, Individual Interview)

Teachers received differentiated instruction and scaffolds that served as a model of how to differentiate instruction for their own students. Teachers acknowledged the benefits of approaching professional learning in similar ways to student learning:

You know as teachers, we always know that we have to give feedback and we have to model for students, but I mean it also works for us, as well. (Carmen, Individual interview)

Just like the kids, you understand better the concept because now you know how to do it because it is being modeled. (Dora, Individual Interview)

The teachers recognized that the professional development was designed specifically for them, teachers of ELLs, and not simply adapted for them. Many of the instructional materials were translated to Spanish for the Spanish literacy teachers and all of the materials were provided in both languages.

### ***No Judgment***

Teachers were very concerned about their content knowledge and fearful of making mistakes. For example, Debra stated:

This year is my first year teaching English language arts so, I was completely clueless. At the beginning, I was like *word families*, what is that? I had no idea about the scope and sequence of phonics and PA and all that stuff. (Debra, Individual interview)

To help overcome their self-consciousness about their level of knowledge about reading, we adopted the norm, “no judgment,” which became a mantra at the collaborative planning meetings over the course of the professional development. Teachers could ask questions and present data, without fear of criticism or negative judgment. Because teachers had to be willing to allow me to examine their literacy instruction closely, I assured them that I was there to help and not judge their knowledge level, experience, or current practices. I could recommend instructional practices, but they had to be open to the dialog and to change. Lisa stated:

If you are not willing to accept someone coming in and helping in that way and observing and open to change, then you are not going to get better. If I had not been open to the changes that were being made and open to that, not necessarily criticism, but just someone looking at feedback and looking at what you’re doing in your practices, then my kids probably wouldn’t be where they are right now and they wouldn’t be making that progress. (Lisa, Individual Interview)

Teachers understood that the goal was to improve the literacy instruction for ELLs and not to point out shortfalls. Teachers reported that they benefitted from training and feedback provided in a non-threatening, supportive manner.

The information we were given through feedback, planning and observations was always supportive of our teaching. We were able to work new content into our schedule in a meaningful, effective way and then receive feedback on how to continue improving. (Lisa, Individual interview)

### **Comprehensiveness of Approach to Job-Embedded Professional Development**

Data showed that teachers had multiple areas of need, such as time management, knowledge of reading, delivery of instructional planning. A series of workshops would

not have solved these problems because many issues had to be addressed. Some of the needs were interrelated. This information was used to design comprehensive professional development tailored to teachers' needs. Professional development addressed gaps in knowledge and practice through content presentations. Modeling and demonstrations allowed teachers to see what effective instruction looked like in practice. Then they were observed to assure fidelity of implementation and to provide constructive feedback. The process had to be cyclical. They agreed that in contrast to one day workshops, training in content followed by supports such as demonstrations and modeling throughout the process made everything more effective and meaningful. (Lisa, Individual interview)

Teachers' comments validated the importance of a comprehensive approach:

Having Linda come and model for us...It's been really good to watch her [teach]. To model the lesson and that way you have the opportunity..... I've recorded every time that she has come into my room. It is a good opportunity to go back and review what she is telling us, what she is doing. (Dora, Individual interview)

I said 'I don't know what I'm doing,' so [Linda] came in and ... modeled phonics for me and PA. Then with guided reading, I said, 'I would love to see you do it because I am more of a like you show me and then I'm going to imitate you.' I think somebody showing you what to do [helps]. (Debra, Individual interview)

The professional development had built-in supports, recursive training, and featured my embedded participation at all levels. Together, this comprehensive approach facilitated changes in practice.

I feel like having [Linda] then come back after the professional development and observe us [and say] these are the things that I saw you were doing. Especially being able to have that feedback form [observation log] of these are things that I saw that were really great and then suggestions on how to move on from that. Then she would also meet with us and talk about what that would look like in more specifics. Yeah, I think that was very beneficial. (Lisa, Individual Interview)

Teachers reported benefitting from the comprehensive approach to professional development.

I had acquired all this knowledge, all this learning, but when Linda came in and gave us the professional development it just affirmed everything and then some because she really was explicit in showing us, teaching us how we are supposed to teach reading. I already had knowledge of it, but she just made it more explicit and that's very helpful! (Carmen, Individual interview)

The things [Linda] has taught us! I guess it's like she took the time to summarize the very important key points that we had learned in college, but are very difficult to [use] once you're teaching; to go back and look through, and pick out the little things that you really need to put together to have successful teaching in the classroom. It is just great! (Dora, Individual Interview)

### ***Recursive Cycle***

The recursive cycle of job-embedded professional development included training, observations, modeling, coaching and feedback. Topics such as phonemic awareness, phonics, and guided reading were repeatedly reviewed to ensure continued implementation of practices. Teachers appreciated the cyclical nature of the training and that new knowledge built on prior knowledge. The teachers stated that this cycle was beneficial and supportive.

It's always ongoing. That's what I really like about it. The whole circle has been the most helpful. I liked how she saw us and then said what do you need help with? We got to tell her what we needed help with; then she planned professional development for us; then she would watch us implement it; then give us feedback....the whole circle! (Debra, Individual interview)

We felt more successful and definitely more supported. Due to the support and coaching, we have grown as a team, as teachers, and our kids are showing the benefits as well! (Lisa, Individual Interview)

Scaffolds for learning were provided individually to ensure that each teacher improved their reading content knowledge and reading instruction for ELLs.

We've had more one-on-one, more opportunity to ask questions. I think this has a lot to do with the success that we have had with the skills that she has taught. (Dora, Individual Interview)

All of the components of job-embedded professional development contributed to changes in instructional practices recorded in classroom observations.

### ***Embedded Participation***

Through my embedded participation in the entire process of job-embedded professional development, support for changes in instructional practices was provided. Being on-site at the school allowed many opportunities for me to provide additional support that would have been absent without my full immersion in the process. Teachers found the guidance I provided to them through this embedded participation beneficial.

During collaborative planning meetings, content-related discussions provided opportunities for me to provide support and coaching. Teachers asked questions and

received suggestions related to the reading content and instructional practices presented in the training sessions. (Field Notes)

When we plan, the conversations are longer and Linda really makes us think about, why would you do that or why would you use that strategy? Or, how to use different strategies instead of our just normal [approach]... 'here [are] our objectives, here [are] the activities; we are done planning'. (Debra, Individual interview)

Teachers reported that being able to talk through ideas while learning and thinking aloud about how something works or how to implement a strategy improved their practice because it allowed them to ask questions and resolve any potential problems with implementation before presenting to their students. (Field Notes)

[Linda] always has a lot of suggestions and if we have questions she always has an answer for us. If she doesn't have it she will research and find it and bring it back to us. (Dora, Individual Interview)

### **Teacher Reflections**

During the course of the study teachers reflected on their practice and on how job-embedded professional development was helping them. They were very thoughtful about their instructional decisions and changes they were making to their instructional practices.

### ***Reflections on Practice***

Teachers improved the way they thought about and reflected on their instructional practices. They were more thoughtful about why and how they taught. The first grade

teachers understood the importance of using explicit instruction, but were uncertain how to do so. Lisa stated that in her reading methods class, phonics had been discussed, but that the emphasis was on whole language instruction and direct or explicit instruction was essentially ignored and even discouraged. (Field Notes) Teachers stated:

We have known for a long time that something has to be done in the primary grades, but I feel like now that has been answered. What do we need to do well? We need to be explicitly teaching them. (Lisa, Individual interview)

We really think more about how [instruction is] going to look in the classroom and how [it's] going to transfer to the kids comprehension and to their reading abilities. (Debra, Individual interview)

We were not doing explicit phonics and phonemic awareness instruction.... This school had moved sort of away from that. When we looked at our scores and we started working with Linda, she said I really feel like this is why, so we changed that. I think going through and really talking about syllable types and the order, what that should look like when we're teaching, and what we need to make sure we cover before we move on was really helpful. (Lisa, Individual interview)

### ***Reflection on Professional Development***

Having the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the new practices, resulted in changes to instructional practices that were not producing expected outcomes. After reviewing the necessary components of an effective literacy block, teachers realized that to include all the components covered in the job-embedded professional development and to use research-based practices they were learning they had to reassess their practices. They reflected on changes they made:

[Linda asked] what if we took this block of time and made it look like this? Working that into what we already had. It was really valuable to us to have her come into our rooms and see what was already in place and where we really could fit something. She helped us figure it out. I feel like it helped all of us understand what we are teaching in a deeper way so that we can teach that better. (Lisa, Individual interview)

[Job-embedded professional development] helped us take what we were already doing with our kids and make it more effective, so we were using our time better, so there was less time in transitions, less instructional time lost, and then making the most of the blocks of time that we did have. (Lisa, Individual Interview)

During planning meetings, the teachers indicated they had varying levels of knowledge about, or preparation to teach, decoding skills explicitly.

I do not understand much about the sounds of words, so I just do my best when I separate phonemes. I know I make mistakes. I feel more comfortable showing you my words to make sure I have segmented them correctly so I do not teach them wrong. (Field Notes)

Carmen stated that she did not remember having been taught explicit phonemic awareness or phonics instruction in either her undergraduate or graduate degree programs. She recalled learning about phonics, but not how to explicitly teach this skill. She said she has learned phonemic awareness and phonics concepts through her teaching experience, but was never formally instructed or coached how to teach these skills explicitly. Dora stated that explicit instruction in phonics was not part of the first grade team's approach to reading. (Field Notes)

We have moved to actually doing more explicit reading instruction like phonics and PA, which I think has helped tremendously. I really feel like we moved from a whole language...the idea that you just give the kids' books and they will learn how to read just like that, to explicitly teaching reading, which I like a lot better. (Debra, Individual interview)

Through continuous reflection on instructional practices and skills learned in professional development changes were made that improved instruction.

## **SUMMARY**

Taking a comprehensive, customized approach to professional development with reflection and follow-up supports, through my embedded participation increased learning and implementation of newly learned instructional practices. In addition, teacher collaboration was strengthened through extensive discourse. The teachers all stated in their exit interviews that the comprehensive approach to professional development was very beneficial. The differentiation of instruction and demonstrations during the professional development sessions supported teachers' learning. They were able to observe implementation and better understand how to implement strategies themselves and change their instructional practices.

I liked how we had the professional development with her and she goes over everything, but then she actually came back to the classroom and showed me...with my kids. So, I could see how it would work for me specifically with this group of kids and the classroom dynamics. That was my favorite part!  
(Debra, individual interview)

Teachers transformed the way they thought about and planned instruction for ELLs by reflecting on their instructional practices and assessing whether what they were doing was working for ELLs and making changes if their practices were ineffective.

### **THEME 3: TEACHERS HAVE POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS ABOUT JOB-EMBEDDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Participation in job-embedded professional development led to positive teacher perceptions about job-embedded professional development.

I have just been very happy with all the help provided us. It's really opened up my eyes to teaching reading and just learning as a teacher. I have just enjoyed it! (Carmen, Individual Interview)

Several topics were identified related to positive perceptions of professional development: enthusiasm toward professional development, proximity to daily practice, different than traditional professional development, and team growth.

#### **Teacher Perceptions of Professional Development**

Teachers perceived job-embedded professional development to be positive and beneficial. Through analysis of the data, the following topics emerged: enthusiasm to learn, proximity to practice, team growth and difference from traditional professional development. Teachers reported positive perceptions about professional learning.

I definitely think all the time that we have taken to do the professional development has been totally worth it. It's paid off really well and we enjoy having you in the classroom. I would definitely say that [with job-embedded professional development] you're going to have 100% enjoyment and growth. You are going to grow! (Dora, Individual interview)

It [job-embedded professional development] totally raised the bar on the other professional development that we have had. If we had the opportunity to have more people model for us, what that looks like, and what to expect, and the expectation of how to teach it, [that] would be a key component of all the other professional development sessions that we would like to have or go to. (Dora, Individual Interview)

### ***Enthusiasm toward Professional Development***

The participants' perceived job-embedded professional development positively as indicated by their enthusiasm toward the professional development activities. This enthusiasm was reflected in their comments about professional development and in their active engagement in training activities.

I have just been very happy with all the help that you have provided us. It's really opened up my eyes to teaching reading and just learning as a teacher. (Carmen, Individual Interview)

I think that Linda's help has really enforced my thinking of reading and my belief of reading. I was really skeptical of teaching English at the beginning of the year. She really helped and now I really like it so that has changed. (Debra, Individual Interview)

It [job-embedded professional development] just reaffirms everything that I believed as a teacher. I still have to continue learning even though I have been teaching for so many years. It never stops. I always have to continue learning because it's not only that I get a very different group of students every year, but just learning different techniques every year, just learning different ways of how to maybe help students learn how to read better and more effectively. (Carmen, Individual interview)

Their enthusiasm was also reflected in their commitment to ongoing training and compliance with scheduled trainings. The time commitment was significant over the

course of five months. From the beginning, they agreed to designate one day after school every two weeks for the ongoing professional development. They recognized that they were investing in their own professional growth. (Interviews, Field Notes) They stated:

I wish that we had more time. I wish we could have you more often and I wish that it wasn't just for reading. That would be great! If it was across the board, you know. But that is not really something, the time part, we always want more time. It would really be nice to have, maybe before next school year, a day or half a day to really get in and dig deep into the professional development. (Debra, Individual interview)

Dora's last comment at her individual interview was, "When are we having our next professional development?" (Dora, Individual Interview)

### ***Proximity to Daily Practice***

Teachers acknowledged that the proximity to practice helped them solve problems as they occurred.

Previous professional development doesn't really help to answer the specific questions or problems that we are encountering in the classroom. (Carmen, Individual interview)

It really helps to have [Linda] in our planning meetings to double check our words. I have noticed that through practice I make fewer mistakes. Now, I really pay attention to the words and the rules to try to minimize mistakes. I want to give my students a good model. (Debra, Field Notes)

Teachers were able to address problems of practice during the professional development series in ways that were immediately transferable to practice.

I can take what I learn and use it immediately. (Debra, Individual interview)

It's specific to what you are teaching in your classroom, specifically your grade level. (Carmen, Individual interview)

Teachers expressed an appreciation for the proximity to practice when they spoke about the usefulness of the modeling in their classrooms. Debra stated that being able to see how the strategies worked with her own students through modeling in the classroom was the most beneficial for her because of its proximity to her daily practice. Dora expressed a similar view:

The modeling is a big part of it. We get to really see and take notes on what she is trying to teach not only on paper, but we get to receive a better idea of how that looks like. I think that is a big part of learning. (Dora, Individual Interview)

This proximity to daily practice strengthened the teachers' views of the professional development. (Interviews, Field Notes) Proximity to practice is exemplified in these comments:

It is just so much more effective if it is here in the classroom, specifically to what we are working on, and then coming in and coaching us, and giving us feedback, and giving us the strategies that we need and the techniques. I think that it was very, very helpful. Your classroom [is used] to teach, to give the coaching, the feedback, [and] the modeling. (Carmen, Individual interview)

I just really like the way that it is embedded into what we are already working on in the classroom. I just feel that this is probably the most effective way: it's job-embedded. (Carmen, Individual interview)

The proximity to practice allowed me to help teachers solve problems related to guided reading groups, delivery of instruction, proper modeling for students, selection of independent work activities, and answering questions that arose during the instructional day.

### ***Different than Traditional Professional Development***

Job-embedded professional development was perceived as more effective than traditional professional development by the teachers. The teachers reported that all of the follow-up support offered with the job-embedded professional development made it more effective for them.

The length of time that she has been with us is very different from any other professional development that we have had before. (Dora, Individual Interview)

Lisa stated in her individual interview that although she had been to a week-long training in the summer on math, she had not received the follow-up support that she expected and, therefore, did not implement the new learning because she had questions and no answers. Debra echoed this sentiment when she said she attended a week-long in-service over the summer on guided reading and had observed some interesting strategies, but, without the guidance to implement, she had not utilized any of the strategies. (Field Notes) Teachers stated:

When I go to other professional developments, it's very general. What's being presented might not necessarily apply to what I'm doing in the classroom. I still have to come back and I have to modify it because it was presented in some entirely different context. This is very different. I am able to learn something and apply it immediately (Carmen, Individual interview)

I think that the biggest thing is just being with us. Most of the time that we do any sort of professional development it is a meeting or a day. We are given all this information. Sometimes we are given ways time to figure out how this can fit into our classroom, but then after that there is very little support. It's been different than any other sort of professional development that we have had. (Lisa, Individual interview)

With [other] professional developments that I have gone to with the district, they would tell us this is what it's supposed to look like, but it wasn't as structured. It wasn't as detailed. [This] gives me more guidance as to how I can teach reading. The job-embedded solidified everything. (Carmen, Individual interview)

If we went to professional development, you take all the paper work, all the notes and bring them back to the classroom. Then you go over them and you implement whatever is there in your own ideas. Having this professional development has really helped in understanding how to implement things and how to really get things to work as opposed to just having the philosophy on paper. (Dora, Individual interview)

Teachers reported that job-embedded professional development was different than other professional development they had attended.

[When] going to trainings throughout the year... you go to a training and usually they are [presenting] this information...and you are not getting a chance to implement it, or try it out, or see how it would work in your classroom. (Debra, Individual interview)

### ***Team Growth***

Teachers perceived growth in reading content knowledge and instructional practice for the entire team through job-embedded professional development. They expressed their perceptions of how the team improved:

I would say we are a different team than we were at the beginning....to the team that we are now.... I think our teaching has definitely improved. The strategies that we are using and the skills that we are teaching have served for better comprehension of our students, better word work activities that we have implemented in our guided reading groups. It has been really, really helpful. (Debra, Individual interview)

I do believe that as a team we have really grown and strengthened as far as being able to teach reading. I think we are more confident in being able to say this is how we do it and this is why we are doing it. Just the act of teaching reading itself, what skills to teach, the strategies, how long it should take, when to move students on, [and] how to scaffold. I do think that it was beneficial to our team. (Carmen, Individual interview)

### **Summary**

Through job-embedded professional development in reading, teachers developed positive perceptions about job-embedded professional learning. Teachers reported changes in their reading content knowledge and improvement in their instructional practices. They attributed changes to the proximity to daily practice and the type of support job-embedded professional development provided that was different than other professional development they had received. They recognized the differences between this type of learning and traditional professional development in terms of duration, support, their collective participation as a grade level team, the differentiation for their specific needs, etc. Each participant grew in content knowledge as did the grade level

team and their instructional practices reflected implementation of this new content knowledge. Their continuous improvement in reading content knowledge and skill throughout the study helped bolster their positive perceptions of the job-embedded professional learning.

### **OTHER IMPORTANT FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHERS OF ELLS**

Several classroom and school factors affected teachers' experiences in the job-embedded professional development. Specifically, the teachers of ELLs were influenced by the student performance data from the beginning of the school year. This data indicated that 69% of all first grade students were performing below grade level standards. Of the students performing poorly, 84% were ELLs. This created a sense of urgency for teachers to improve student outcomes. This was one of the driving forces behind the selection of professional development topics. The five components of reading were covered in the professional development, but were prioritized by student need (i.e. phonemic awareness and phonics) with an emphasis on explicit instruction in reading.

In addition, the first grade teachers of ELLs were implementing a dual language program in support of school-wide biliteracy and bilingual initiatives. The dual language program supported native language instruction. However, there were more students requiring Spanish literacy instruction than English literacy instruction in first grade. Teachers were adapting new grouping practices based on language and reading level combining all students then grouping them. The grouping method created imbalanced

groups with English literacy groups including 11-13 students for each teacher while the Spanish literacy groups included 24-26 students for each teacher.

Another school-wide initiative was promotion of biculturalism and respect for all cultures. For the first grade teachers of ELLs, that meant infusing the curriculum with themes and practices that supported cultural pluralism and that reflected the cultures of the students and that of other cultures. All of the teachers of ELLs supported biliteracy and bilingualism and valued the diversity of their students who brought with them experiences and knowledge from their home cultures. When possible, teachers tried to incorporate these experiences into the classroom discussions and learning.

Although teachers were enthusiastic about learning, they felt pressure to improve their practice and student outcomes and were approaching learning with optimism and the opportunity to completely change their instructional practices. They had to overcome tendencies to continue using practices they were comfortable with, but that were ineffective, and try new approaches to literacy instruction that could affect changes in student outcomes. They were learning and implementing new reading strategies while also trying to implement a new dual language program and new grouping methods. All of these factors played a role in their job-embedded professional development experience.

#### **FIDELITY OF IMPLEMENTATION**

Fidelity of Implementation observations were conducted twice by *Project ESTRE<sup>2</sup>LLA* team members. On the *Fidelity of Implementation Observation* form, a running record of practices was kept in addition to a checklist of observed instructional

practices. Fidelity observations conducted in January 2013 focused on phonemic awareness and phonics instruction. Anecdotal field notes taken during these observations revealed that teachers were providing explicit instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness. Teachers were observed teaching students to blend phonemes, segment phonemes, and delete initial and final phonemes in words; each of these skills presented in the job-embedded professional development. These observations matched and supported the practices observed and recorded on the Observation Logs during classroom observations. Information documented in the observation logs included practices that were used less often such as modeling and maintaining a brisk instructional pace. (Observation)

In addition, all of the instructional practices on the Fidelity of Implementation Observation checklist were observed. Table 4.7 presents the fidelity of implementation scores for both observations.

	Fidelity of Implementation Observation 1	Fidelity of Implementation Observation 2	<i>M</i>
Debra	90	94	92
Dora	84	97	90
Carmen	88	100	94
Lisa	100	97	98

Table 4.7: Fidelity of Implementation Scores.

In late March 2013, a second set of fidelity of implementation observations was conducted by two team members following the same procedure. This time the entire literacy block was observed. Observers noted that teachers were using explicit instructional practices to teach reading. Teachers taught phonemic awareness and phonics, used shared reading, guided reading, read books aloud, kept anecdotal records of student responses, and conducted progress monitoring assessments in guided reading. All of these were instructional practices covered in the professional development. Results from these observations were consistent with results of analysis of the observations documented on the Observation Logs. (Observation)

#### **LOGIC MODEL**

Relationships between the job-embedded professional development in reading, improved teacher content knowledge in reading, changes in reading instructional practices, and positive perceptions about the professional development were found in this study. The outcomes listed in the logic model represent the anticipated effects of the job-embedded professional development and related activities. Examining all of the long-term outcomes of the job-embedded professional development in reading provided to the teachers is beyond the scope of this study. However, based on the findings from this study, we can posit the following:

1. Teachers with greater content knowledge in research-based reading instructional practices are better qualified to teach students.

2. Those who have been provided demonstrations of effective reading instructional strategies, with coaching, are more likely to implement those strategies.
3. Sustained change in instructional practices will improve student outcomes in reading.
4. Job-embedded professional development is an effective model for professional development that can produce positive teacher perceptions and increased collaboration.

The following quote from Carmen captures the relationship between the activities, outputs, and outcomes in the logic model.

I would, if I could, have all my professional developments in this manner. I think that I would be probably 100 times better at teaching everything. It's just, the feedback, the coaching, and the modeling, all of that works together to just help me improve as a teacher and help the students in return. I really have enjoyed it! I really have! (Carmen, Individual interview)

## CONCLUSION

The themes that emerged from this study have been presented. They include: understanding the context is important, job-embedded professional development is beneficial, and teachers have positive perceptions about job-embedded professional development. All of these themes were factors that contributed to the success of the job-embedded professional development provided to the bilingual first grade teachers at Lotus Elementary School.

Significant data has been provided to address the three research questions guiding this study. *How does job-embedded professional development in reading influence first*

*grade teachers' knowledge about reading instruction for English language learners?*

Findings indicate that individual teacher's content knowledge in reading improved through job-embedded professional development. Improvement of teachers' reading content knowledge was found in the *Teacher Knowledge Survey* results, was observed in teachers' delivery of instruction, and it was captured through field notes and individual interviews. All of the teachers reported that they were more knowledgeable about reading content at the end of the study than they were at the beginning of the study. Furthermore, they were more confident about their reading instruction. (Interviews, Field Notes)

*How does job-embedded professional development in reading influence first grade teachers' reading instruction for English language learners?* Findings indicate that individual teacher's reading instruction improved through job-embedded professional development. Significant changes were observed in teachers' instructional practices in reading from the beginning of the study to the end of the study. Teachers changed the way they thought about and planned instruction. Specifically, they changed the way they approached instruction for ELLs and how they used data to inform their instruction. They adopted an explicit, systematic approach to reading instruction using a preventative approach to school failure for ELLs. (Field Notes)

*How do teachers perceive a job-embedded approach to professional development in reading instruction?* All of the teachers reported positive perceptions of job-embedded professional development in reading. They reported how beneficial job-embedded

professional development was to their overall teaching. Teachers commented that the time commitment to participate in this ongoing professional development was paying off.

(Field Notes)

Job-embedded professional development in reading enabled the teachers of ELLs to participate in intensive, continuous, professional learning that was differentiated to their individual needs. Meeting regularly to plan, teach, and reflect on job-embedded professional development topics resulted in a deeper examination of content, research-based instructional strategies, and improved lesson plans. The recursive cycle of job-embedded professional development in reading resulted in a deeper understanding of literacy instruction and teacher instructional practices. Teachers' perceptions of job-embedded professional development in reading were positive.

Now, I want all professional development to be like what we have with Linda. I want somebody to come in my room show me how to do it then we can talk about it and then I can do it and they can watch. I mean that's like the best case scenario. (Debra, Individual Interview)

In summary, job-embedded professional development in reading provided in this study increased teacher content knowledge, improved instructional practices, and resulted in positive perceptions of this type of professional learning. Changes in teacher knowledge and practice can be summed up with this quote from a *Project ESTRE<sup>2</sup>LLA* team member who performed an observation at the conclusion of the study:

I had observed this teacher last fall, and it was honestly hard to believe I was in the same room. The majority of students participated in teacher-directed instruction during the time I was present rather than doing 'independent work.' The amount of time used productively has increased greatly. There was continuity of content throughout the literacy block and guided reading; the words above had been drawn from the story the guided reading group as well as being the focus of the lesson I saw and the spelling words. Students seemed to be 'getting it,' rather than guessing their way through guided reading. I was impressed! (Observation Notes)

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

This study examined the effects of job-embedded professional development on teacher knowledge and instructional practices in the area of reading. Participants were four first grade teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs) in a large central Texas school district. Professional development was provided based on results of a survey of their knowledge of Spanish and English reading and their own reported needs. Topics covered in job-embedded professional development included the essential components of Spanish and English reading and research-based instructional practices for ELLs. Follow-up support included observations, coaching, feedback, modeling, and demonstrations. Participants were provided opportunities to share and discuss their ideas and beliefs about teaching and learning with a focus on reading instruction for ELLs. Findings suggest that job-embedded professional development is an effective approach for improving reading instruction provided by teachers of ELLs. The factors that contributed to its success have been documented in other studies of professional development in general and job-embedded professional development specifically. As such, they provide guidance for those responsible for professional development aimed at improving the reading instruction for English Language Learners.

### **Understanding the Context is Important**

Providers of job-embedded professional development must get to know the instructional context by observing teachers' classroom instruction. Understanding how

teachers approach literacy instruction and their level of understanding and experience in teaching ELLs helps identify areas of need and instructional challenges. These, in turn, help in the selection of relevant topics that are in close proximity to practice. Recognizing the participants' instructional needs, helped inform the use of modeling and demonstrations during professional development to show teachers how to deliver effective instruction. In addition, it supported follow-up coaching and frequent feedback to guide instructional changes.

### ***Relevance***

According to NSDC (2001), less than half of teachers who attend professional development find it of any value to them (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Some of the reasons given for the dissatisfaction were brevity, poor quality, and not meeting their individual content knowledge needs. Nearly 60% of teachers received fewer than two days of professional development in their content area (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Job-embedded professional development must focus on the learners and their needs and offer extensive supports so that all participants are assured success. This implies taking a proactive approach to teacher professional learning where all participants succeed because of the carefully designed components built into the training. Teachers need to learn new content, observe its implementation, and implement it themselves to create changes in instructional practice. Implementation is more likely to occur if follow-up activities are provided such as observations, coaching, demonstrations, and feedback

One-size-fits-all approaches to delivery of professional development are unlikely to be successful (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2009; Stover et al., 2011). Instead, tailoring professional development to the needs of teacher and their students increases its relevance and assures that it has immediate applicability in their own classrooms. In this study, training needs were identified through assessment of teachers' content knowledge about reading and effective instructional practices for ELLs and through classroom observations. However, this information was supplemented by asking teachers to share their perceived needs and dialogues about the nature and type of training they wanted. A wide array of potential training topics were identified through these various data sources. By engaging participants in mutual selection of topics, I assured that training would be relevant, but also enhanced teachers' commitment to training (Hawley & Valli, 2000; Stover et al., 2011).

Although the teachers were the recipients of professional development, the end goal was to improve student outcomes. Therefore, reviews of student data helped identify topics that should be addressed through professional development. This activity also revealed that teachers needed training in how to analyze data and how to use results to inform their instruction. Teachers in this study were feeling pressure to improve their practice and student outcomes because of poor student achievement at the beginning of the year. They were, thus, invested in improving reading outcomes for their own students and those of their colleagues.

### ***Proximity to Practice***

Relevance is enhanced when professional development addresses daily learning needs and resolves issues that may arise in the classroom (Hawley & Valli, 2000). The proximity to practice of the job-embedded professional development allowed opportunities for professional learning through classroom demonstrations that can only be encountered in the natural setting. In contrast traditional, “episodic” workshops preclude these opportunities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). With job-embedded learning, teachers were able to see first-hand how practices are implemented correctly and they can see how their students respond to the new content. They were able to learn, model, practice, and evaluate new knowledge as it is implemented (Hawley & Valli, 2000). In addition, teachers were able to readily access student data and voice concerns receiving immediate support (Porche et al., 2012). This implies that job-embedded professional development provides teachers with opportunities to learn new content, implement it, and receive support when they need it.

Situating professional learning in the classroom during the instructional day allowed the teachers to address immediate instructional needs and any problems they were encountering. They received clarification during coaching and observations to implement new learning (Hawley & Valli, 2000). This proximity to practice made learning new content directly translatable to changes in their instruction (Hawley & Valli, 2000) and improved the literacy instruction for ELLs.

## **Comprehensive Approach**

Job-embedded learning allows for active learning that includes teacher observations, feedback, analyzing data and student work, and training sessions (Learning Forward, 2011). The comprehensive approach taken in this study allowed for differentiated training and scaffolding, participation without fear of judgment, ample investment of time in the training, and a review of the resources being used by the teachers to provide literacy instruction to ELLs.

## ***Differentiated Training and Scaffolding***

The literature suggests that without follow-up support, professional development may not be valued by the teachers. If they feel that it is a waste of their time (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; NSDC, 2009; Richmond & Manokore, 2011), it is unlikely that the training they receive will result in changes to instructional practices (Cohen & Ball, 1999; Desimone, 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Hawley & Valli, 2000; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Yoon et al., 2007). It is thus important that, once needs are identified, professional development be differentiated commensurate with teachers' current knowledge and experience and support should be provided based on teachers' needs. In this study, effective reading practices were demonstrated during professional development sessions; these were followed by demonstrations in the teachers' classrooms, with their students. Teachers were then coached as they attempted to implement the practices themselves, an important aspect of differentiating training. These strategies helped assure fidelity of

implementation and ultimately the success of the job-embedded professional development (e.g., Showers & Joyce, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Porche et al., 2012).

### ***Participation without Fear of Judgment***

For professional development to be successful, teachers must feel valued and respected and must be comfortable sharing ideas and asking questions. A “no judgment” norm established by providers of professional development can put teachers at ease and allow them to participate without fear of criticism or judgment (Stover et al., 2011). Under such circumstances, they will also be more willing to take risks and try new ideas (Stover et al., 2011).

### ***Time Invested in Professional Development***

Adequate time must be committed to understanding the context and the needs of teachers prior to designing professional development activities. It allows customization of the training for participants. In the current study, time was committed to differentiating the instruction for the teachers and resulted in individual and group growth (Gandara et al, 2005; Stover et al, 2011). The job-embedded professional development provided in this study was ongoing, of a long duration (NSDC, 2009), with follow-up support. Teachers felt that there was a vested interest in their professional development and reacted in kind as evidenced through their dedication and commitment to their professional growth.

Time is also crucial to build trust with participants and to assure they develop requisite knowledge and that they are able to implement recommended practices in the context of their classrooms (Stover et al., 2011). Through the relationship of trust built with the teachers, the foundation for professional development was enhanced. Other researchers have reported time as a confounding issue for teachers (Burbank et al., 2003; McIntyre, 2010; Penuel et al., 2007). Teachers of ELLs have expressed needing more time to learn new instructional strategies, to observe demonstrations, and to collaborate with colleagues (Gandara et al., 2005). Allowing time to build relationships, get to know the context, and to provide ongoing professional development must be part of the design of professional development and not incidental. Teachers of ELLs and their students will benefit from the extended time and continuous learning that will positively enhance the academic outcomes of ELLs.

### ***Adequate Resources***

At Lotus Elementary School, Spanish materials were limited in comparison to English instructional materials. When materials are only provided in English, teachers of ELLs must translate the materials in order to use them. The participants in this study needed adequate materials to provide quality instruction in the native language for ELLs. Teachers reported that one of their greatest challenges was the lack of appropriate materials to instruct ELLs, and therefore, they were eager to receive and use appropriate materials in Spanish when they received them. In other studies, teachers have reported

the same problem (Gandara et al., 2005). The materials provided to the teachers in this study were provided in ready-to-use form in the language(s) of instruction for ELLs.

At the beginning of the study, the participants were not using the basal series provided to them in English and Spanish. As a result, they were spending a lot of time trying to find adequate materials for their instruction. In addition, since they were piecing together their curriculum, they were not following a scope and sequence. Therefore, their phonics instruction operationalized through spelling was fragmented. They were teaching spelling patterns sporadically without a structured sequence. This type of instruction can result in gaps in ELLs' learning. They eventually began using the basal and saved planning time they had been dedicating to obtaining or creating materials.

Teachers of ELLs should use all the instructional resources available to them to provide the best literacy instruction for ELLs. Understanding the content and skills that need to be taught is the first step. Then, teachers need to select appropriate materials and make informed decisions for their literacy instruction for ELLs with careful planning so that there are no gaps in instruction that can result in instructional deficits for ELLs. Following a sequence for explicit phonics instruction helps to avoid gaps in learning.

Finally, to produce changes in instructional practice, professional development should last more than 20 hours (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). According to the NSDC (2009) report, the cumulative study of content has a direct effect on student learning, improving student achievement by approximately 21 percentile points. The impact of

professional development on student learning is heightened when the duration of professional development is increased.

### **Job-Embedded Professional Development is Beneficial**

Analyses of data showed that teachers increased their knowledge of Spanish and English reading as documented by results of pre- and post-assessments. They implemented explicit, systematic instruction in the five components of reading and restructured the way they used time during the literacy block. Finally, they expressed enthusiasm toward job-embedded professional development, repeatedly requested more training sessions and stated that their knowledge and practice was improving. These results suggest the effectiveness of a job-embedded approach to professional development.

### **Teachers Have Positive Perceptions about Job Embedded Professional Development**

Teachers, who feel supported, are motivated to learn, and develop positive perceptions about the training (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Hawley & Valli, 2000; Stover et al., 2011). This was the case for the teachers of ELLs in this study. Teachers reported benefitting more from job-embedded professional development, in contrast to traditional approaches, because it was customized to their unique needs and offered extensive supports to ensure they acquired targeted skills and were able to implement new practices in their classrooms. This is consistent with literature that shows that teachers are motivated to learn when learning is connected to the assessment and

improvement of their daily practice and when they see improved student outcomes (Hawley & Valli, 2000). Positive perceptions can facilitate teacher learning and how they implement what they learn. Changes in teacher knowledge and improvements in implementation of effective teaching strategies will improve core instruction, teacher quality, and student achievement outcomes.

## **Related Issues**

### ***School Leadership***

Providing quality core instruction for ELLs has been a long-standing problem in the United States where a substantial achievement gap in English reading exists between ELLs and non-ELLs (Aud et al., 2011). When the problem is as widespread as it was in the current study, with 84% of ELLs performing below grade level, strengthening core instruction across grade levels will be important to improve the academic outcomes of ELLs. Lack of effective core reading instruction was a problem in the current study and may explain why the majority of ELLs in participants' classrooms did not perform on grade level. The problem was due, in part, to the teachers' lack of content knowledge and instructional practices recommended for ELLs who struggle to read. However, this problem was not isolated to the grade level as students entered first grade with large instructional deficits. This indicates that core instruction needs to be strengthened for the kindergarten grade level team as well. Strengthening core instruction for ELLs requires well-trained teachers who understand how to target instruction and use

interventions for the specific needs of ELLs who struggle to read. Addressing these issues requires strong leadership by the principal.

School leaders must develop a school culture that encourages and rewards continuous learning (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers, & Killion, 2010). They should set priorities for professional development such as improving teacher quality, improving instructional practices, improving student achievement, or aligning the curriculum at the school. Vertical alignment and cross-grade interaction can help address issues like teachers blaming teachers in the previous grades for low performance and failure to fill in gaps in student learning identified at the beginning of the year. School leaders should expect teachers to participate in ongoing job-embedded professional development.

Teachers of ELLs have to be afforded the time, space, structures, and supports to engage in job-embedded professional development (Croft, et al., 2010). Administrators can facilitate this by scheduling these opportunities and encouraging their bilingual teachers to attend. This may require providing substitute teachers to teach their classes. In this study, the school was organized as a professional learning community and teachers met regularly to discuss student data and to plan instruction. It is important to have these opportunities as grade level teams, but to assure that in these meetings, the specific issues faced by teachers of ELLs are addressed. This was done explicitly in this study with break-out sessions during the trainings and planning meetings allowing the bilingual teachers the time and space to address their specific issues related to literacy instruction.

## ***Sustainability***

Sustaining change in teacher practice can be difficult. It requires the professional development presenters to build follow-up support into the training (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005). The intensity and duration of the professional development is worthwhile because of the impact on teaching and professional learning (Linder et al., 2012), and sustainability of changes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Learning Forward, 2011; Stover et al., 2011).

If follow-up support is not available from professional development presenters, a staff member, or resident expert, such as the literacy specialist at the school could be trained to provide the follow-up support to the teachers (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005). Schools such as Lotus Elementary may already have a highly trained staff member that can provide job-embedded professional development for school staff. School administrators should identify and use the expertise available to them among qualified school staff members, if any are available, before seeking help from outside experts. The literacy specialist in the study school participated in all of the job-embedded professional development trainings. She learned alongside the teachers and acted as a participant and as a peer-coach during the sessions. This collaborative learning positioned her as a learner and coach with the participants. The collaborative dialogue that the group engaged in will facilitate future peer coaching from the literacy specialist at the school. In a related study, teachers of ELLs have expressed wanting to learn through collaboration with more knowledgeable teachers onsite (Gandara et al., 2005).

Another option is to use external experts, but to have them first observe implementation and offer necessary support. External experts can be used if they have the skill set school leaders would search for in facilitators. They should have content knowledge and expertise in the area they will offer support. The external experts should be familiar with the instructional goals the teachers are trying to achieve and the achievement goals they have set for their students.

A third option is to leave behind structures for sustainability such as instructional guides featuring all of the components of the training provided that can be used for reference and support. If professional development is intensive and ongoing, it can reach a level of completion when the teachers feel fully trained and confident implementing new knowledge and skills with fidelity. Full implementation will be observable during classroom observations for implementation. Fully trained teachers, in this case, a group of first grade teachers of ELLs can potentially sustain change (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). The teachers of ELLs in this study may be able to extend the training to others or offer peer support to those who shared in the training at the school. They can serve as peer coaches to each other and other teachers, but may not necessarily be able to deliver professional development to other teachers without further training.

### ***Professional Development Facilitators***

Job-embedded professional development is driven largely by the expertise available in a school (Croft, et al., 2010). School leaders should be familiar with the competences needed by facilitators and should inventory the skills of teachers, related

staff, and administrators to identify potential facilitators. They should use this knowledge to identify personnel on their campus who have the skills to serve in these roles or who could develop these with support. Facilitators should have an important set of skills: content knowledge, presentation skills, expertise in teaching, ability to demonstrate effective practice, ability to coach, and effective communication skills, not only to present but to provide feedback in constructive ways to keep teachers engaged (Croft, et al., 2010).

Facilitators have to be able to address the needs of ELLs. This means recognizing that teachers of ELLs must address language and literacy in two languages. Teachers of ELLs need support in determining if students' academic problems are related to literacy or language. They need to understand the language acquisition process and how skills in one language can have cross-linguistic transfer. In order to support teachers of ELLs, facilitators must have a firm understanding of these issues specifically related to ELLs. They must understand that literacy instruction in English and Spanish differs. Spanish is a transparent orthography and can be taught at the syllable level. English is more complex with nearly twice as many phonemes, with many irregularities, and should be taught at the phoneme level. Understanding the differences among these orthographies is key to effective literacy instruction for ELLs who may generalize literacy skills in Spanish to English and encounter problems.

## **Social Validity**

The professional development provided in this study was designed specifically for the teachers of ELLs and their identified needs as recommended in the literature (Stover et al., 2011). The teachers found the relevance of the training suited for their specific needs and recognized that this differed from other training they had received. As indicated previously, job-embedded professional development that involves participants in the identification of needs, and considers them in the presentation of content, can increase their motivation and commitment to professional learning (Hawley & Valli, 2000). Stover et al. (2011) posits that teachers need to have a stake in their learning for meaningful change to occur.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Future research is needed on other groups of teachers of English language learners in additional contexts to determine how job-embedded professional development supports sustained teacher changes and how participation in job-embedded professional development in reading impacts long-term student outcomes. Other contexts may include a smaller or larger school or a different type of bilingual program (e.g. one-way dual language). Different contexts provide a different set of instructional challenges for the providers of job-embedded professional development. It is important to study sustained instructional change over a longer period of time beyond an academic year. It would help to have return visits to the school for fidelity of implementation the following year(s) and

to review student achievement outcomes. This would reveal the effect of job-embedded professional development on student achievement.

Additional research is needed with a larger sample size to assess the benefits of job-embedded professional development with coaching and follow-up supports with more participants. Increasing the number of participants may result in fewer supports because of the time required by researchers to provide the support. For example, training sessions can be designed for multiple grade levels such as kindergarten to third. These grade levels can be presented with the same content, e.g. comprehension, and then breakout sessions by grade level could provide specific skills and strategies to the particular grade. This type of training can reinforce the use of both horizontal and vertical alignment of content to improve instruction school-wide.

## **LIMITATIONS**

The findings in this study support the research literature on effective practices for professional development. They extend previous research on job-embedded learning because the job-embedded participation provided in this study exceeded the intensity of other studies found in the literature. In addition, they extend previous findings because of the applicability to teachers of ELLs who benefit from professional development that is job-embedded and offers follow-up supports, that promotes collaboration that is about topics relevant to ELLs, and that is differentiated to teachers' individual needs. Although this research illuminates the potential benefits of providing job-embedded professional

development and offers an example of job-embedded professional development in reading at one elementary school, there is still much to be learned.

The small sample size allowed for extensive individualized attention for the teachers and additional follow-up support. Results would likely have been different if there had been more participants or multiple grade levels, or additional schools participating. An excessive amount of time was devoted to this research study that was funded by a federal grant. This level of intensity and duration may have been cost prohibitive in another setting. Schools may not have the resources to provide this level of support.

## **SUMMARY**

Teachers are expected to be experts in teaching reading. Meeting the diverse needs of ELLs with varying levels of language and achievement in the native language and English can be challenging. Acquiring the expertise needed to ensure successful student outcomes in reading necessitates effective job-embedded professional development focused on teacher content knowledge, instructional practices, and student achievement. Becoming experts in content and implementing new learning requires a focused effort on learning with the end goal of improving student outcomes. As affirmed in the literature and in findings of this study, teacher learning in professional development occurs through job-embedded, content-focused, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation of collaborative grade level teams. It should incorporate follow-up support such as observations, coaching, feedback, and

demonstrations. These components worked in concert with the others and likely would not have been as effective in isolation. Together they provided supportive conditions necessary for success in improving teacher practice and student outcomes (Gallimore et al., 2009; Stover et al., 2011). Job-embedded professional development was recursive with all learning building on previous learning (Gallimore et al., 2009). Job-embedded professional development in reading is an effective method for improving teacher content knowledge and instructional practice and ultimately English language learners' achievement.



## Appendix B: Response to Intervention Survey



PROJECT ESTRE<sup>2</sup>LLA

### Response To Intervention Educator Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### Universal Screening Process

##### Reading

1. How would you describe a universal screening instrument?
2. Please list the screening tools, if any, that you use to assess reading skills:
3. Which students are screened for reading?
  - All students, including ELLs
  - Only students who are in Special Education
  - Only native English-speaking students
  - Only English language learners
4. In which languages are reading screening measures administered?
  - English only
  - Spanish only
  - English and Spanish
5. Who administers reading screening measures (check all that apply)?
  - Classroom teacher
  - Reading specialist/Instructional Coach
  - Volunteer
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
6. How often are screening measures administered to the students in your class? Please write when they are administered on the line (e.g. BOY, MOY, Spring, etc.)
  - Don't know/doesn't apply
  - Never
  - Once \_\_\_\_\_
  - Twice \_\_\_\_\_
  - Three times \_\_\_\_\_
  - More than three times \_\_\_\_\_
7. How are screening data used to inform decisions about reading instruction for your students?
8. What other data are used to inform decisions about reading instruction for your students?
9. How are these other data used to inform decisions about reading instruction for your students?

## Appendix C: Project ESTRE<sup>2</sup>LLA Observation Form

Reading Instruction Observation Form — Project ESTRE <sup>2</sup> LLA					
Observer:	Language of Instruction:			Start time of Observation:	
Teacher:	Date:	Grade level:	# of students:	Finish time:	
Whole Group Instruction		Start Time:		Finish Time:	
Content (Circle all that apply):		Phonemic Awareness		Phonics	
Instructional Delivery (Check all that apply):		Fluency		Vocabulary	
<input type="checkbox"/> Direct and explicit instruction is evident <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher connects content to prior/background knowledge <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstration and modeling precede instruction and practice <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate pacing maintains student engagement <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring for understanding is evident <input type="checkbox"/> Students have enough opportunities to practice, in group and individually <input type="checkbox"/> Corrective feedback is provided at the appropriate time <input type="checkbox"/> Students are provided opportunities for meaningful language use <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate reading content & skills are taught		<input type="checkbox"/> Instructional objective is explicitly stated: (if yes, please record below):  # of students in small group:		Comprehension  # of students working independently:	
Content (Circle all that apply):		Phonemic Awareness		Phonics	
Instructional Delivery (Check all that apply):		Fluency		Vocabulary	
<input type="checkbox"/> Direct and explicit instruction is evident <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher connects content to prior/background knowledge <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstration and modeling precede instruction and practice <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate pacing maintains student engagement <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring for understanding is evident <input type="checkbox"/> Students have enough opportunities to practice, in group and individually <input type="checkbox"/> Corrective feedback is provided at the appropriate time <input type="checkbox"/> Students are provided opportunities for meaningful language use <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate reading content & skills are taught		<input type="checkbox"/> Instructional objective is explicitly stated: (if yes, please record below):  Independent Work:  # of students in small group:		Comprehension  # of students working independently:	
Content (Circle all that apply):		Phonemic Awareness		Phonics	
Instructional Delivery (Check all that apply):		Fluency		Vocabulary	
<input type="checkbox"/> Direct and explicit instruction is evident <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher connects content to prior/background knowledge <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstration and modeling precede instruction and practice <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate pacing maintains student engagement <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring for understanding is evident <input type="checkbox"/> Students have enough opportunities to practice, in group and individually <input type="checkbox"/> Corrective feedback is provided at the appropriate time <input type="checkbox"/> Students are provided opportunities for meaningful language use <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate reading content & skills are taught		<input type="checkbox"/> Instructional objective is explicitly stated: (if yes, please record below):  Independent Work:  # of students in small group:		Comprehension  # of students working independently:	

## Appendix D: Teacher Knowledge Survey



**DELSS PROJECT**  
Beginning of Year Teacher Survey

42133

School:

Teacher Last Name:

Teacher First Name:

Date:  /  / 200 Grade:

**Please answer all of the questions below. If you are unsure of a response, please provide the response that reflects your "best guess".**

**PHONEME COUNTING**

Please count the number of speech sounds or phonemes that you perceive in each of the following spoken words. Remember the speech sounds may not be equivalent to the letters. For example, the word "spoke" has four phonemes: /s/, /p/, /o-e/, /k/. Write the number of phonemes in each word on the line next to the word.

ring       shrimp       sawed

dirt       wrist       know

**CONTANDO FONEMAS**

Favor de contar los sonidos (fonemas) en cada una de estas palabras habladas. Por ejemplo, la palabra "tierra" tiene cinco fonemas: /t/, /i/, /e/, /r/, /a/. A veces, los sonidos hablados no son equivalentes a las letras. Escriban el número de fonemas de cada palabra en la línea correspondiente.

gato       botella       queja

padre       lugar       hielo

**SYLLABLE COUNTING**

Please count the number of syllables that you perceive in each of the following words. For example, the word "higher" has 2 syllables, the word "threat" has 1 and the word "physician" has 3.

spoil       decidedly       shirt

walked       recreational       lawyer

10/06/03
BL\_OBS\_BOY\_XXX\_04\_X\_X
Page 1 of 11

## Appendix E: Observation Log

### Observation/Coaching Log

Teacher:		School:	
Date:	Observer:		Beginning Time:
Purpose of Visit:    Observation    Modeling    Co-teaching			Ending Time:
Instruction Format (Circle all that apply):    large group    small group    intervention			
Instructional Objective:			

#### Instructional Practices

		Consistently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	Task was explained				
2	Model, lead, test pattern was used				
3	Consistent language was utilized				
4	Provided individual turns				
5	Scaffolding was evident with turns to students who made errors.				
6	Brisk pacing of lesson was maintained				
7	Corrective feedback was provided				

**Code:**    **Consistently:** practices were observed repeatedly; **Sometimes:** practices were observed the majority of the time; **Rarely:** practices were observed less than half the time; **Never:** practices were not observed

#### Notes:

Successful Teaching Practices: 1.  2.  3.
Follow-up items: 1.  2.

Was feedback given at the time of observation?    YES    NO    Was feedback given later?    YES    NO

## Appendix F: Fidelity of Implementation Form

Reading Fidelity of Implementation Checklist				
TEACHER INFORMATION				
Teacher:	School:			
Date:	Observer:	Beginning Time:		
Instructional format:	<i>small group</i>	<i>whole group</i>	Ending Time:	
Instructional Objective:				
INSTRUCTION/PRESENTATION				
Area	Level of Implementation			Comments
	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>	
<i>Set-up</i>				
Teacher and student materials ready	2	1	0	
Teacher organized and familiar with lesson	2	1	0	
<i>Instruction</i>				
Models skills/strategies appropriately and with ease (Circle areas(s))	2	1	0	
PA                  Phonics                  Comprehension                  Other				
Model, lead, test pattern used	2	1	0	
Uses appropriate signals and gestures	2	1	0	
Utilizes consistent language	2	1	0	
Provides students many opportunities to respond	2	1	0	
Presents individual turns	2	1	0	
Provides corrective feedback	2	1	0	
Scaffolds instruction with turns to students who made errors	2	1	0	
Maintains brisk pacing	2	1	0	
Moves quickly from one exercise to the next	2	1	0	
Monitors student work	2	1	0	
Ensures students understand content before moving forward	2	1	0	
Smooth transition between activities	2	1	0	
<i>Student Progress</i>				
Students engaged in lesson	2	1	0	
Students successful at completing activities	2	1	0	

## Appendix G: Study Approval



OFFICE OF RESEARCH SUPPORT  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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P.O. Box 7426, Austin, Texas 78713 · Mail Code A3200  
(512) 471-8871 · FAX (512) 471-8873

FWA # 00002030

Date: 03/27/13

PI: [REDACTED]

Dept: Special Education

Title: Job-Embedded Professional Development in Reading for  
Teachers of ELLs

Re: IRB Exempt Determination for Protocol Number 2013-02-0133

Dear [REDACTED]

Recognition of Exempt status based on 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

Qualifying Period: 03/27/2013 to 03/26/2016. *Expires 12 a.m. [midnight] of this date.*  
A continuing review report must be submitted in three years if the research is ongoing.

### Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator:

Research that is determined to be Exempt from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review is not exempt from ensuring protection of human subjects. The following criteria to protect human subjects must be met. The Principal Investigator (PI):

1. Assures that all investigators and co-principal investigators are trained in the ethical principles, relevant federal regulations, and institutional policies governing human subject research.
2. Will provide subjects with pertinent information (e.g., risks and benefits, contact information for investigators and IRB Chair) and ensures that human subjects will voluntarily consent to participate in the research when appropriate (e.g., surveys, interviews).
3. Assures the subjects will be selected equitably, so that the risks and benefits of the research are justly distributed.
4. Assures that the IRB will be immediately informed of any information or unanticipated problems that may increase the risk to the subjects and cause the category of review to be reclassified to expedited or full board review.
5. Assures that the IRB will be immediately informed of any complaints from subjects regarding their risks and benefits.

## Appendix H: Consent Form

### CONSENT FORM

#### Response to Intervention Model Demonstration Project for English language learners with or at risk of having a disability

You are invited to participate in a Response to Intervention (RtI) model demonstration project. My name is [REDACTED] Ph.D., and I am a professor at The University of Texas at Austin. **Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate at any time for whatever reason without any penalty whatsoever.**

The purpose of this project is to adapt, evaluate, and disseminate a Response to Intervention model in three schools in the [REDACTED] School District to determine if, and to what extent, the framework: (a) helps improve the language development and reading achievement of K-3 English Language Learners with, or at risk of having a disability; and (b) is useful in assisting educators to determine if English language learners who are experiencing reading difficulties have a disability. Your school is one of the three schools in [REDACTED] that will be adapting and refining this multi-tier framework and, in doing so, we expect to help English language learners develop their language and reading skills effectively. Project staff from The University of Texas at Austin will be working with you and other school personnel during three school years, beginning in 2012 and ending in 2015. We expect to have around 60 teachers and other district personnel involved for the duration of this project.

If you agree to participate:

- You will receive professional development on a RtI model and English language learners during the summer and during the school year. This training will be planned in collaboration with [REDACTED] and will follow [REDACTED] professional development protocol.
- Trained members of the project team will also provide coaching and different types of instructional support in your classroom throughout the study.
- You will also be asked to complete surveys and participate in interviews and focus groups conducted by staff members concerning the implementation of a RtI model with English language learners. These interviews and focus groups will last between 30 and 90 minutes and will be audiorecorded. These audio files will be transcribed and coded.
- Your instruction will also be observed by project staff and it may be videotaped. These audio files will be transcribed and coded.

To ensure confidentiality, your name will be removed from all forms related to the study and will be replaced by a number. Further, we will keep all project information in our locked offices at The University of Texas. Following the completion of the project (Dec 2015), all materials will be destroyed. *Only summarized group information will be used in reports of our project and might be shared with your district or school, though your name will never be identified.* Thus, any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and members of the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review the research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law.

We see no risk associated with your participation and you may benefit from receiving professional development on important topics like RtI and English language learners.

If you decide to participate, it will not cost you anything, and *you will not be provided any monetary compensation for your participation.*

Prior, during, or after your participation you can contact the researcher, Dr. Alba Ortiz, at [PHONE NUMBER] or send an em to [EMAIL ADDRESS]. This study has been reviewed and approved by The University Institutional Review Board and the stu number is -----.

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

You are making a decision of participating in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate in the study. If you later decide that you wish to stop participating in the study, you may discontinue your participation at any time. You will be given a copy of this document.

## Appendix I: Professional Development Topics

<b>Schedule of Job-Embedded Professional Development Sessions</b>		
Specific Focus of Job Embedded Professional Development in Reading	Skill Targeted	Date
Instructional Strategies Instructional Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• task was explained</li> <li>• model, lead, test pattern</li> <li>• consistent language</li> <li>• Individual turns</li> <li>• scaffolding</li> <li>• brisk pacing</li> <li>• corrective feedback</li> </ul>	November 12, 2012
Phonemic Awareness Phonics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explicit instruction</li> <li>• phoneme blending</li> <li>• phoneme segmentation</li> <li>• initial sound deletion</li> <li>• final sound deletion</li> <li>• phonics scope and sequence</li> </ul>	December 13, 2012
Phonemic Awareness Phonics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explicit instruction</li> <li>• phoneme blending</li> <li>• phoneme segmentation</li> <li>• initial sound deletion</li> <li>• final sound deletion</li> <li>• diphthongs</li> <li>• digraphs</li> </ul>	January 8, 2013
Comprehension Academic Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explicit comprehension strategy</li> <li>• deep questions</li> <li>• inferences</li> <li>• making predictions</li> <li>• text details</li> <li>• cognitive reading strategies (prompts &amp; sentence starters)</li> <li>• turn and talk</li> <li>• partner rules (4 Ls)</li> <li>• academic English sentence starters</li> </ul>	January 28, 2013
Comprehension Academic Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explicit comprehension strategy</li> <li>• anticipation guide</li> <li>• metacognition</li> <li>• make predictions</li> <li>• make inferences</li> <li>• academic language</li> </ul>	February 5, 2013
Guided Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explicit instruction</li> <li>• word work</li> <li>• print concepts</li> <li>• guided reading</li> <li>• academic language</li> </ul>	February 19, 2013
Guided Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explicit instruction</li> <li>• word work</li> <li>• print concepts</li> <li>• guided reading</li> <li>• academic language</li> </ul>	March 7, 2013

## Appendix J: Week 5 Lesson Plans

### Appendix J

First Grade Lesson Plan Week 5 9/18/12 3:31 PM

#### Spelling

English: man, ran, can, cat, hat, mat, that, flat, sat, fan, rat, pat

Spanish: salta, sube, baja, ama, mapa, mopa, papa, pomo, puma, sábana, murciélago, pensar

#### Robust Vocabulary:

English ( ): enormous, grumbled, scolded, telescope, seasons

Spanish ( ): impermeable, refunfuño, las estaciones, autorretrato, criaturas

#### MONDAY -FRIDAY

- Read aloud: Franklin
  - Character Analysis
  - Discuss author's purpose and personal connections to Franklin
- Reading Response Journals: character analysis
- Spelling/Word work journal (black): write spelling words 5x, display spelling words on chart paper
- Read to self

#### WRITING

##### MONDAY-WEDNESDAY

Free writing (green journals)

testing

##### THURSDAY

SEL

##### FRIDAY

Spelling Test

7:30-8 LOD (language of the day) activities, calendar, morning message, songs

8-9:30 Reading

9:30-10:10 Writing

## Appendix K: Interview Questionnaire

### Interview Questionnaire

Hi \_\_\_\_\_.

Thanks for agreeing to participate in our research study and in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to understand your experience receiving job-embedded professional development with coaching in reading and how you perceived this process. There are 11 questions in this interview and it will take approximately 1 hour. At any time, if there's a question that's unclear, let me know and I can rephrase it. Also, at the end of the interview, if you have questions, I'll be happy to answer them. I'm going to record our conversation so that I can make sure I capture all of what you say. I'm starting the recorder now...

1. What did you find was the most helpful?
2. Did job-embedded professional development help you improve your reading content knowledge? In what way?
3. Has your reading instruction changed? In what way?
4. How did job-embedded professional development support your teaching?
5. Compared to other kinds of professional development, what did you think of the professional development?
6. Based on your participation in job-embedded professional development with coaching, how would you describe your experience to someone unfamiliar with the process?
7. How was participation beneficial to you and/or your team?
8. What part of the process would you change or modify?
9. How has participation in this process changed or modified your beliefs about teaching reading?
10. How has participation in this process changed or modified your beliefs about teaching and learning? About professional development?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share that would help me to understand your experience with job-embedded professional development with coaching?

# Appendix L: Codes and Themes

## Codes, Categories, Themes

### JEPD Beneficial

- Helpful
- Improved teacher content knowledge
- Improved student outcomes
- Enhanced existing instruction
- Reinforced prior learning
- Team changes

### Motivation to Learn

- More Job-embedded PD
- PD Provided sooner
- PD More often
- PD All year
- PD Beginning of school
- Summer PD
- Duration
- Motivation

### Understanding Context

- Contextualized to classroom
- Get to know routines
- Teachers comfortable
- Early observations helped understand context
- Proximity to Practice
- Situated in classroom
- No substitute
- No travel time lost

### Differentiation

- Differentiated for teachers
  - Individual growth
- Topic selection
- Research-based
- Presented most important components of literacy instruction in English and Spanish
- Great materials/Ready to Use
- Lots of Resources
- Designed for team
- Differentiation for ELLs
- Data-driven

### Explicit instruction

- Restructured literacy block
  - Word work

- PA/phonics
- Guided reading
- Shared reading
- Time management
- Progress monitoring

### Collaboration & Dialog

- Collaborative planning
- Increased dialog
- Reflect on teaching
- Analyze teaching

### Comprehensive Approach to PD

- Recursive Cycle
- Observations
- Feedback
  - Implementation
- Coaching
  - Helped implementation
  - Helped growth
  - Made teachers feel successful
  - Made teachers feel supported
  - Benefitted students
- Modeling
  - Most helpful
  - Contextualized
  - Clarified implementation
  - Helped implementation
  - Supported teaching
  - Key component
  - Situated in context
  - Main reason for success
  - Used actual students
  - Differentiated for teachers' students
- Constant guidance and support

### Beliefs

- Teacher beliefs
- Better than traditional PD
- Professionalism

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