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Leading Inclusive ELL: Social Justice Leadership for English Language Learners

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Abstract

Purpose: This article attempts to build a better understanding of the leadership necessary to create socially just schools for English language learners (ELLs) by addressing these questions: In what ways do principals create asset-based, collaborative, and inclusive learning opportunities and services for ELLs? What do varying approaches of these services and the leadership necessary look like in practice? **Research Design:** This article reports on the instrumental case studies of two urban elementary schools and the principals involved in school reform that resulted in inclusive ELL services. **Findings:** The first principal led her school to adopt a dual certification approach, where the staff engaged in professional development around ELL. They combined federal, state, and local resources to eliminate pullout ELL programs and reduce class size so elementary teachers would take sole responsibility for building community and instructing ELL and all students. The second principal led his school to adopt a coteaching approach where teams of general education and English as a second language (ESL) teachers planned as a team and cotaught all students. They eliminated pullout ELL services and focused on community building, professional development, and collaboration. Student achievement at both schools, and in particular the

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achievement of ELL students, greatly improved, as did the connection with ELL families. The cross-case analysis provides a comparison between the cases of inclusive ESL reform. **Conclusions:** The authors propose implications for school leaders that build on the literature, social justice leadership, and the work of the principals, staffs, and communities at the schools from the case studies described here.

Keywords

English language learners, inclusion, inclusive reform, leadership, principal, social justice

Students whose first language is not English now compose close to 20% of all public school students (Meyer, Madden, & McGrath, 2005). With them they bring hundreds of different languages to the classroom (Kindler, 2002). Although large numbers of immigrants have traditionally settled in large urban areas, they are now putting down roots in cities, suburbs, and rural areas across the entire country (Kindler, 2002; Meyer et al., 2005; Zehr, 2008). As a result, English language learners (ELLs) are now enrolled in schools and classrooms that have not traditionally served linguistically diverse learners. With the ELL population anticipated to double by 2050, most, if not all, teachers are likely to teach ELLs in the coming years (Meskill, 2005).

Recent data reveal that the nation's ELLs are not faring well academically on state accountability measures (August, 2006). Drop-out rates higher than those reported for other sectors of the school-age population have been documented for ELLs, especially for those who were foreign born (Cartiera, 2006; Crawford, 2004). With educators unaccustomed to working with linguistically diverse learners and their families and largely unprepared to do so (Giambo & Szecsi, 2005), these less than adequate academic outcomes for ELLs come as little surprise. This article reports on the work of two school leaders who advocated for the ELLs served by their schools and implemented successful inclusive reform efforts that promoted their academic achievement.

Conceptual Framework—Leadership, Social Justice, and English Language Learners

Championing the needs of students who have been historically marginalized is a central premise of the growing call for social justice leadership (Dantley &

Tillman, 2006; Scheurich & Skrla, 2002; Theoharis, 2007a).¹ Scholars and practitioners argue that students who are learning English have been marginalized with respect to access to the curriculum, the achievement of the curriculum, and their social standing within the public schools in the United States (Crawford, 2004; Walquí, 2000). A central tenet of social justice leadership is that school leaders must act as advocates in their schools and communities and, specifically, as advocates for the needs of marginalized students (Anderson, 2009; Powers & Hermans, 2007; Theoharis, 2007b). This advocacy stance is inherently connected to the growing ELL population and the historic marginalization of these students and their families. Taking up the charge of ensuring equitable and excellent education for ELLs is an essential component of social justice leadership.

The Principal and Social Justice Leadership for ELLs

One of the most critical attributes of effective schools for ELLs is strong school leadership (August & Hakuta, 1998; Reyes, 2006; Shaw, 2003; Walquí, 2000). Although such leadership may come from a variety of sources within the school community, the principal stands out as the one person who can most influence the long-term success of programs for ELLs (Reyes, 2006). In particular, effective principals demonstrate leadership for ELLs by promoting justice in schools (Shields, 2004), raising issues concerning equity (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005), and supporting inclusive practices to meet the needs of a diverse student population (Riehl, 2000).

Working within the various definitions of social justice provided by educational scholars (Blackmore, 2002; Bogotch, 2002; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Marshall & Ward, 2004), this article relies on the definition of leadership for social justice Theoharis (2007a) presents:

These principals advocate, lead, and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States. This definition centers on addressing and eliminating marginalization in schools. (p. 223)

Theoharis (2007a) along with Frattura and Capper (2007) contend that social justice cannot be achieved for ELLs without creating inclusive services. Inclusive service delivery for English as a second language (ESL) involves valuing students learning English and positioning them and their families,

languages, and cultures as central, integral aspects of the school community. It necessitates creating school structures where ESL services are brought to the students in heterogeneous general education classrooms, eliminating pullout and separate ESL classrooms and services.

The term *inclusion* in many people's minds comes from the field of special education. We need to make clear that the needs of ELL students are distinct from those of students with disabilities and that language diversity is not being constructed as a deficit or disability. We use the idea of inclusive service to exemplify a philosophy that needs to undergird school policy and services. Sapon-Shevin (2003) explains, "Inclusion is not about disability. . . . Inclusion is about social justice. . . . By embracing inclusion as a model of social justice, we can create a world fit for all of us" (pp. 26, 28). This philosophy is built on the belief that all students should be valued for their unique abilities (i.e., language, etc.) and included as an essential part of a school community that is purposefully designed to accept and embrace diversity as a strength, not a weakness. Several definitions of inclusion exist that embrace inclusive services not as a special education program but as a philosophy. Kunc (1992) defines inclusion as

the valuing of diversity within the human community . . . and in doing so, begin to realize the achievable goal of providing all children with an authentic sense of belonging. (pp. 38-39)

Udvari-Solner (1997) uses another definition of inclusion:

Inclusive schooling propels a critique of contemporary school culture and thus, encourages practitioners to reinvent what can be and should be to realize more humane, just and democratic learning communities. Inequities in treatment and educational opportunity are brought to the forefront, thereby fostering attention to human rights, respect for difference and value of diversity. (p. 142)

Both of these definitions frame what inclusion means for this study. We define inclusive education as providing each student the right to an authentic sense of belonging to a school classroom community where difference is expected and valued. Rethinking school structures (i.e., student placement, teacher placement, and coteaching) along with bolstering instructional techniques (i.e., ESL methods, community building, differentiation) make this possible.

Asset-Based Orientations and Knowledge of the Research

Principals who effectively enact social justice leadership for ELLs are informed and buoyed by two sources: an asset-based orientation toward language and knowledge of the research on second language acquisition. Language orientations, according to Ruíz (1984), are dispositions that mirror one of two conflicting public sentiments: that language is a problem or that language is a right. When principals view language as a problem, they consequently view language learners as having problems that need to be fixed (Crawford, 2004), an orientation that has the potential to negatively affect the quality and type of service they are provided (Reyes, 2006). When principals view language as a right, they promote social justice for ELLs and work to provide them equal access to educational opportunities (Crawford, 2004). Ruíz (1984) proposes an alternative orientation—language as a resource—as one that enhances the social justice perspective. Principals who view language as a resource consider ELLs' first language skills to be a relevant asset that contributes not only to their learning but also to the classroom in general.

Although an asset-based language orientation motivates principals to examine their schools' programs for ELLs and impasses them to seek change, it is a sound knowledge base that informs the examination of ELL services and shapes their vision for achieving social justice for ELLs. As Suttmiller and González (2006) point out, deep knowledge of the theory and research on second language acquisition allows school leaders to be able to analyze and reframe how the school addresses ELLs' educational needs. It has been found that the schools in which ELLs are most successful are those where principals know and use this research (Montecel & Cortez, 2002).

Collaborative Program Planning for ELLs

The vision for a successful program for ELLs cannot be the principal's alone. A consistent finding in the literature is that the most effective programs for ELLs have emerged from comprehensive, schoolwide efforts that involve principals as well as teachers and staff (August & Hakuta, 1998; Coady et al., 2008; McLaughlin & McLeod, 1996; Suttmiller & González, 2006). Through informed inquiry and collaborative planning, all of these educators take charge of their educational programs (Shaw, 2003) and customize learning environments for ELLs in a way that reflects local contextual factors as it addresses the learners' diverse needs (August & Hakuta, 1998).

Although exemplary programs for ELLs have adopted diverse educational approaches, they converge on a key characteristic: the learner is the priority (August & Hakuta, 1998; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 2004; Suttmiller & González, 2006). To keep ELLs at the heart of the educational program, educators may need to redefine their roles and relationships (Shaw, 2003). New relationships among teachers and staff have the potential to ensure ELLs' full social and academic participation (Freeman, 2004; Mosca, 2006), erase deficit perspectives of these learners (Freeman, 2004), and create learning opportunities for educators (Haynes, 2007; Mosca, 2006).

Principals in effective programs for ELLs respond to the new demands on both teaching and nonteaching staff by offering appropriate and ongoing professional development (August & Hakuta, 1998; Calderón & Carreon, 2000; Coady et al., 2008; Echevarria, 2006; Haberman, 1999; Lucas et al., 2004; Reyes, 2006; Stritikus, 2006; Walker, 2005; Walquí, 2000). Professional development prepares nonteaching staff to deal more effectively with ELLs (Lucas et al., 2004); for teachers, it aims to improve the quality of instruction for ELLs with the goal of increasing the students' learning and achievement (Stritikus, 2006). Principals report that teachers and staff who are prepared together to work with ELLs share language and understandings that contribute to a coherent and collaborative program for ELLs (Echevarria, 2006). As instructional leaders, principals must also ensure that teachers have the time to work together in developing challenging and culturally responsive curriculum and instruction for ELLs (August & Hakuta, 1998; Lucas et al., 2004; McLaughlin & McLeod, 1996; Shaw, 2003; Walker, 2005). In effective schools for ELLs, principals find the necessary time for staff to engage in concerted efforts to meet ELLs' needs (Echevarria, 2006; Genesee, 2006; Walquí, 2000), even if it means reconstructing class schedules and instructional time (McLaughlin & McLeod, 1996).

Curriculum plays a critical role in ensuring that ELLs receive consistent, coherent, and well-articulated instruction within and across grade levels (August & Hakuta, 1998; Genesee, 2006). When there is a smooth transition from grade to grade, ELLs are more likely to realize significant academic and literacy achievement (Genesee, 2006). A locally designed curriculum is one place where high expectations for ELLs' achievement can be made concrete (Lucas et al., 2004). It is a fundamental statement of belief in ELLs' capabilities to meet high standards (McLaughlin & McLeod, 1996) and a commitment "to improving the life chances" of diverse learners (Shaw, 2003). When curriculum is designed locally, it can be matched to the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the learners (McLaughlin & McLeod, 1996). As a result, ELLs are able to access their full linguistic and conceptual repertoires as they

learn (Gibbons, 1991). Principals who understand the critical role the home language plays in ELLs' learning seek to hire bilingual educators who can communicate with these learners (August & Hakuta, 1998; McLaughlin & McLeod, 1996; Walker, 2005). Bilingual educators who themselves are ELLs recognize the challenges ELLs face in learning in a second language in ways others may not (Lenski, 2006).

Principals in effective schools for ELLs place a high value on ensuring that the school is connected to ELLs' families and these families to the school (August & Hakuta, 1998; Calderón & Carreon, 2000; Coady et al., 2008; Haberman, 1999; Lucas et al., 2004; McLaughlin & McLeod, 1996; Montecel & Cortez, 2002; Stritikus, 2006; Walker, 2005; Walquí, 2000). They facilitate these families' involvement in innovative ways (McLaughlin & McLeod, 1996) and in their home languages (Lenski, 2006; Wenger et al., 2004). Bilingual educators who communicate fully and authentically with ELLs' families help them mediate home-school differences and empower the families to be able to participate more fully in their children's education (Lenski, 2006; Wenger et al., 2004).

Inclusive Services for ELLs

Over the past several decades, educational programs for ELLs have been conceived of in more and less inclusive ways. Immersion—also referred to as “submersion” or “sink or swim”—“includes” ELLs in general classrooms, but without any linguistic support (Crawford, 2004). Subsequent to the 1974 *Lau v. Nichols* Supreme Court decision that ruled this practice illegal, English-only sheltered or structured immersion approaches emerged. Although these approaches adjust the language of instruction to make it comprehensible (Crawford, 2004; Short & Echevarria, 2004; Zmak, 2008), they often segregate ELLs from their English-speaking peers until their “language problem” is remedied, a practice philosophically rooted in the language-as-problem orientation (Crawford, 2004; Ruiz, 1984). A less segregated approach, ESL pullout, removes ELLs from the general classroom for part of a day for targeted language instruction (Crawford, 2004; Handscombe, 1989). Handscombe (1989) cautions, however, that this practice frequently results in the erroneous assumption that ELLs' learning needs have been fulfilled for the day during the short time spent with the ESL teacher.

Bilingual education programs, especially maintenance and dual-language models, provide ELLs home language support for a substantial period of time, thus making it possible for them to become both bilingual and biliterate (Crawford, 2004; Ovando & Collier, 1998) and achieve academically

(Cummins, 1981, 2000; Lindholm-Leary, 2006; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005). Some argue, however, that bilingual education creates a barrier to ELLs' full participation in the school (Crawford, 2004) and serves to isolate responsibility for these learners to a few specialized teachers (Freeman, 2004; Leistyna, 2002).

Some scholars suggest that including ELLs in the general classroom has the potential to provide these learners equitable access to resources, curricula, and services (Coady et al., 2008; Freeman, 2004; Handscombe, 1989). Unlike immersion, which focuses on curriculum and instruction, inclusion focuses on the learners and their needs (Freeman, 2004). Ensuring equity for ELLs, however, requires providing them appropriate linguistic support, including home language support from the classroom teacher, ESL teacher, or bilingual paraprofessional (Gibbons, 1991; Handscombe, 1989).

Platt, Harper, and Mendoza (2003) qualitatively studied perceptions of ELL inclusion in Florida public schools after it was mandated by a Consent Decree in 1989, the state's response to an equal educational opportunity lawsuit brought on behalf of Latino and African American families. Interviews with 29 ESL administrators familiar with both policy and program implementation for ELLs revealed dueling perceptions of the success of ELL inclusion. Administrators who perceived the inclusive model to be successful were those who worked in buildings that valued a school community of learners and considered ELLs their shared responsibility. These schools understood the need for flexible and alternative teaching and learning strategies and saw reciprocal benefits for ELLs and their native English-speaking peers. The administrators indicated that the inclusive educational policy had resulted in asset-based attitudes and practices toward ELLs in their schools. On the contrary, administrators who expressed concern with the inclusion policy cited inadequate support and commitment for ELLs' learning. They also pointed to a lack of time, preparation, and resources. The outcomes in these buildings were inconsistent program implementation and unmodified teaching and assessment practices for ELLs. The results of this study appear to indicate that the success of ELL inclusion depends on the full and consistent pedagogical and attitudinal commitment of all educators.

One school district that has successfully implemented an inclusive program districtwide is the St. Paul School District in Minnesota (Zehr, 2006). The district places ELLs in classrooms with their native English-speaking peers, where they receive differentiated instruction and home language support from a collaborative team consisting of a general classroom teacher, an ESL teacher, and bilingual staff members. The educators, with support from the district, pool their knowledge and resources to deliver highly tailored

instruction for ELLs “without the children even knowing it” (Zehr, 2006, p. 27). As a result, the achievement gap between ELLs and native English speakers has closed significantly.

Situating This Study in the Larger Debate About Language, Culture, and ELL Programs

We recognize that the long-standing national debate on how to educate students whose home language is not English is contentious, political, and messy. Advocating for ELL students is a central component of creating more socially just schools, yet the needs of ELL students and authentic attention to their families have too been often left out or marginalized across the history of schools in the United States (Reese, 2004). We also recognize the empirical research (Thomas & Collier, 2002) demonstrating the efficacy of two-way dual-language instruction. We situate this study as an example of schools that place the needs of ELL students and their families at the center of discussion, planning, and instruction but do so through an inclusive philosophical lens. However, the schools studied and discussed in the cases below had an ESL program and not a bilingual program because of state guidelines in respect to the numbers of ELL students and the languages they spoke. It is important to note that ESL is a distinct academic discipline and different in both service delivery and teaching methods from bilingual education (de Jong & Harper, 2004). This article is about changing ESL services; it is not about bilingual education. ESL is often used when diverse languages are spoken at the same school and there are not enough students who speak the same home language to offer a bilingual program.

Recent research has shown the possibility and promise of carefully planned instruction for ELLs that takes place in the general education classrooms (Zehr, 2006, 2010). This article builds on that tradition in situating the needs of ELL students and an inclusive philosophy as central to creating more just schools.

Research Questions

Clearly, much is already known about the essential principal role in schools that are successful at educating ELLs and the potential power of asset-based orientations, collaborative programming, and inclusive services for ELLs. However, the wealth of literature raises important questions that this research addresses as there is, at best, limited research on the ways in which schools create inclusive structures for ESL programs and the role leaders play in leading

this type of reform. Thus, this research, through the use of case study, seeks to begin to attend to those gaps by addressing two questions: In what ways do principals create asset-based, collaborative, and inclusive learning opportunities and services for ELLs? What do varying approaches and the leadership necessary for asset-based, collaborative, and inclusive programming for ELLs look like in practice?

Method

This article reports on two elementary schools involved in school reform that resulted in inclusive ELL services. A case study method (Creswell, 2002; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003) was utilized to provide “an in-depth exploration of a bounded system” (Creswell, 2002, p. 484). More specifically, a multiple or “collective case study” approach was integral in the research design “to provide insight into an issue” (Creswell, 2002, p. 485). We see this in Stake’s (2005) description of instrumental case study:

The case is of secondary interest, it plays an important role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else. The case is still looked at in depth . . . here the choice of case is made to advance understanding of that other interest. (p. 445)

In this research the issue or “other interest” is operationally defined as inclusive ELL services, and the “cases” are two elementary schools and their leadership—specifically principal leadership.

Initial data collection at each school spanned three academic years. At Bay Creek Elementary, data collection began in the winter of Year 1 (1998) and continued there the next two consecutive years (Years 2 and 3, 1998–1999 and 1999–2000). The following year (Year 4, 2000–2001), data collection began at Green Tree Elementary School at the beginning of the school year and lasted through Year 6 (2002–2003). After the 3 years at each school, additional visits and interviews were held to seek clarifications, to check back about how changes have been maintained, and to discuss the findings and analysis (2004–2008). Thus, these cases take place from before the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) until near present. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) describe this method of data collection, saying, “Most qualitative researchers do not do fieldwork at more than one site at a time. They do their fieldwork for one case and then move to the next . . . they may return to earlier sites to collect additional data” (p. 63).

The schools were selected using purposeful sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Maxwell, 1998) because of the principals’ interest in equity and justice

issues (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Theoharis, 2007a). Leaders were nominated for this study by faculty in a research university school of education as well as by district administrators. Principals and their schools were nominated because of their reputation for leadership around equity issues, their understanding of inclusive practices, and having an ESL program. A total of nine leaders and their schools were nominated over the duration of the research study. Three criteria were used to select leaders and their schools: (a) it was a public school, (b) the school had an ESL program, and (c) the leader demonstrated a commitment to moving toward inclusive ESL services. The third criterion meant working to change traditional pullout or separate instruction for students receiving ESL services.

Of the nine total leaders and sites that were nominated, three met all three criteria. The six that did not meet criteria all failed to do so for not having an interest or intention to create inclusive ESL service, thus not meeting the third criterion. Specifically for this research, the leaders and sites were selected because these leaders demonstrated a commitment to and interest in creating inclusive services for ELLs, a pioneering process in their district.

More information is provided about the context and specifics of each school in the section on the description of the schools. Bay Creek and Green Tree Elementary Schools are urban schools located in the same school district in the Midwest. Pseudonyms are used for the schools and for all students, staff, and administrators discussed here.²

Data collection at each site took the form of multiple interviews with the principals, weekly classroom observations by the lead researcher, a detailed field log, an ongoing review of documents, and focus group interviews with teachers and staff at each school. In addition, the data collection included participant observations at faculty meetings, parent meetings, professional development activities, school improvement meetings, and district-level administration meetings. The constant comparative method was used for the data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process utilized both deductive and inductive coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The Cases

Bay Creek and Green Tree Elementary Schools have unique features about their school contexts, the ways they moved to inclusive ELL services, and leadership, but both schools undertook schoolwide reform to restructure the way services were provided to all students and, in particular, ELL students. Both schools operated in the same urban school district under the same state regulations. Neither of these schools met the state requirements to run a

bilingual program; thus, both operated ESL programs before and after the reform. Both schools met state regulatory requirements in terms of the amount of time and services ESL students should receive and in many cases exceeded them. Although both principals were very interested in running bilingual programs, their district had not moved in that direction at the time of study.³

To provide the necessary context for understanding the inclusive services for ELL models and the leadership involved in creating and sustaining these models, we begin with a description of each school. The focus of this article and our use of case study methodology are meant to better understand inclusive ELL services through the use of two schools or cases; hence, we provide a brief description of each school as a way to examine social justice leadership in connection with inclusive ELL services.

Through these case studies, we gained a practical understanding of two distinct approaches to serving ELL students in inclusive ways. In each case, the inclusive ELL service approach is described as a part of a larger school restructuring. For both schools, we describe what the services looked like and how the staffing was structured prior to and after the inclusive reform. Each school is presented in this section as its own case. These cases include a contextual description of the school as well as the process and leadership involved in creating their inclusive services for ELLs.

Bay Creek Elementary School

Bay Creek ELL services in context. Bay Creek is a kindergarten through second grade elementary school in a midsized urban district. All elementary schools in this district were and still are neighborhood schools with prescribed attendance area boundaries. In 1985, the school board and district administration created a plan to pair city schools as a means of addressing the reality of neighborhoods that were increasingly segregated by race and by income. This pairing took one school from a neighborhood that was becoming predominantly students of color with a growing number of low-income families and paired it with a school that was largely middle to upper income and primarily White. In determining schools to pair, the district selected schools in geographic proximity. This resulted in creating one larger but contiguous attendance area for the two paired schools. One school became a primary school, kindergarten through second grade, and the other became an intermediate school, third grade through fifth grade. The district created three pairs of schools, affecting six schools, in 1985. Bay Creek became the primary school and was paired with Vilas School, which housed the intermediate grades.

Table 1. Bay Creek Demographic Information

Demographics	Percentage of Student Population
African American	10
Asian	15
Latino	11
Native American	<1
White	64
Low income	30
English language learner	16

Although these schools have remained paired through the present day, there are mixed perceptions of the success of the pairings. The superintendent conveyed what we also learned through discussions with parents and staff around the city:

The Bay Creek and Vilas pair has been in some people's mind the most successful because the families in each of the paired neighborhoods have "bought in" to each school. Whereas with other pairs, the White families have bought into really only the school in their neighborhood.

The Bay Creek–Vilas pairing created what we experienced as a very warm, welcoming, and child-centered primary school, perceptions we formed from the way we were greeted to how we observed parents treated, from the abundance of student art to the excitement in student voices, from the manner in which staff talked to and about students to the way teachers addressed each other. The Vilas community is near a major research university, and the neighborhood is reputed to be largely university families. The heart of the historic African American community is in the Bay Creek neighborhood.

Bay Creek has about 380 students. Racial and economic demographics have remained fairly constant since the pairing relative to the percentage of students from low-income families and the percentage of White students (see Table 1). The most notable change has been an increase in ELL students. At Bay Creek, the Latino and Asian populations have grown steadily over the past 20 years, not as a result of the pairing but as a result of families moving into the neighborhood. The ELL students at Bay Creek are almost exclusively Latino or Hmong. The Latino families, who hail primarily from Mexico, speak Spanish. The Hmong families, who were forced to flee Laos because of the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, have come in waves to the

United States and to the Bay Creek neighborhood. Although some of the Hmong parents were born in Laos, others were born as their families fled (in refugee camps or other temporary settlements) and still others were born in the United States. These families speak Hmong as their home language.

Bay Creek Elementary School has utilized a multiage philosophy so that children have two classroom teachers across their 3 years at the school. The majority of students move from kindergarten to a first and second grade multiage classroom. Others begin in a kindergarten and first grade multiage classroom and then move to a second grade room.

Inclusive ELL services—Dual certification approach. When Principal Lea started at Bay Creek, she was instructed by the central office administration to engage the community in a needs assessment as a means of keeping the paired school communities together. This involved surveys, community meetings, focus groups, and numerous discussions. Principal Lea stated, “The main result of this year long process was a resounding call for smaller classes. This came from families across the community and from teachers.” In looking at all the data collected, it appeared that families were very happy with Bay Creek but were particularly interested in smaller classes. Teachers also supported class size reduction. Given that this article is specifically about ELL services, we focus on these here. It is important to note that this was Principal Lea’s first principal position. In her first year she led the needs assessment and, in her second year she led the restructuring process, with implementation in her third year at Bay Creek and third year as principal.

Mary, a veteran teacher, summed up the general sentiment of many of the teachers at Bay Creek: “If I could have fewer students, and I alone was responsible for their learning instead of the ESL, Title I, and other programs, I could do a better job.” In addition, many teachers identified that students who were pulled from their classrooms for ESL and other special programs were becoming “marginal community members” in their primary classrooms. Prior to NCLB, an unwritten but commonly understood policy implemented by school staff for ELLs at Bay Creek and many other schools was to not give ELLs state and local assessments. Although this was not official policy, it was widely known and accepted at Bay Creek prior to Principal Lea’s tenure. Principal Lea stated, “That in general, [the ELL students] were not assessed because no one thought they could pass the assessment, so basically many people felt that we had none of our ELL students reading [English] at grade level.”

Although Principal Lea did not have a background in ELL instruction, she made it a point to learn about the unique needs and challenges facing ELLs to be able to better facilitate the restructuring process for these learners. In

the words of an administrative colleague, “[Principal Lea] worked to gain her own knowledge about valuing home language and cultures, about connecting with families in respectful and meaningful ways, and in aspects of good ESL instruction as well as language development.” She did this through her own graduate work in educational leadership, by engaging in study groups with principals about ELLs, and by participating with her staff in professional development on ELL conducted by university faculty. While gaining this knowledge, Principal Lea drew on her newly developed knowledge base along with the results from the needs assessment as she reassessed Bay Creek’s current program for ELLs.

Prior to restructuring, Bay Creek had two full-time ESL teachers and two bilingual paraprofessionals—one who spoke and translated Spanish and the other Hmong. The ESL teachers and paraprofessionals pulled students out of their classrooms for about an hour a day. The ESL instruction was not connected to the classroom curriculum. It focused largely on English reading skills and vocabulary development. Under the former service plan, the bilingual paraprofessionals worked under the direction of the ESL teachers with students in the ESL classroom. Spanish- and Hmong-speaking students were placed in almost every classroom in an attempt to create heterogeneous and racially integrated classes.

Armed with her belief in inclusive services, the results from the needs assessment, and the knowledge that ELLs were not yet full members of the school and classroom communities, Principal Lea led her staff in tackling systematic restructuring of the school. Although Principal Lea was responsible for the vision and much of the behind-the-scenes work, the leadership team and, at times, the entire staff joined her in the planning process. This involved seeking and securing one of the first Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) grants, a Title I waiver from the U.S. Department of Education, permission from the school district to use discretionary talented and gifted allocations in new ways, and permission from the state ESL coordinator to use ESL resources differently. Seeking all these different approvals for the reform required a significant amount of time for meetings with each agency and writing and submitting the required paperwork. Principal Lea explained, “People had no idea how much work it takes to pull together this kind of creative plan. . . . It is hard to imagine having the energy to do this again if I ever was moved to another school.”⁴

Although the vast majority of staff at Bay Creek supported this plan, it was not without opposition. A few staff members openly displayed resistance to the proposed changes. One ESL teacher took her concerns to the families of students receiving ESL services in an attempt to “have them demand a stop

to the new plan.” This ESL teacher wanted to maintain pullout ESL programming, believing it was in the ELLs’ best interests. This necessitated Principal Lea holding a number of additional meetings with ELL families to ease fears and to explain how students were going to be, from her perspective, better served. In reality the ELL families at Bay Creek did not object to the inclusive service plan, but the ESL teacher’s efforts to keep the pullout program added to the time and energy Principal Lea needed to devote to this reform.

The aforementioned ESL teacher and another particularly vocal dissenter ultimately chose to leave the school to teach elsewhere. Teachers from other schools within the district engaged the teachers union to investigate the legality of the plan. Although there was no merit to the claim, this again required Principal Lea’s time and energy. In addition, a group of White parents objected to what they believed was a “taking away of services” from ELL students and created a stir in the community that took significant time and energy by Principal Lea and many staff members to quell. Ultimately, the plan and restructuring were implemented, but it is important to recognize the turbulent process and transition.

It is important to note two things about this turbulent process. First, the teachers who opposed the change to inclusive services primarily did so to protect what they saw as long-sought-after resources and support for ELL students and saw this as a moral or ethical position. Second, Principal Lea and supporters of creating inclusive ESL services recognized the social justice of providing rightful resources and support to ELLs, but also recognized that scholars such as Thomas and Collier (2002) had shown pullout services to be among the least effective and that the inclusive plan was not eliminating support. Instead, the inclusive reform was designed to provide ESL services in an authentic, meaningful, and classroom-based manner.

Despite the turbulent process, the majority of staff supported this inclusive reform. A second grade teacher captured the general sentiment of the staff: “We are trying something new, but it just makes sense. We may not all be experts in ESL yet, but having few students in class without the disruption of coming and going, just makes sense.”

The schoolwide restructuring that pooled teacher allocation from previously separate programs resulted in four full-time teachers. These teacher allocations were then reconfigured as general classroom teachers who were added to the number of general kindergarten through second grade teachers typically allocated by the district. This created a net gain of four classrooms across the school at the same time as it eliminated pullout Title I, ESL, targeted assistance for students of color, and talented and gifted programs. In other words, the classroom teachers were now responsible for delivering all

instruction, including support for the ELL children within their classrooms. Class size was reduced from 21 to 24 students per class to approximately 16 students per class.

Kristine, a classroom teacher, explained a perspective many teachers shared about the impact of the reduction of pullout: "After the restructuring, all students are the sole responsibility of the classroom teacher. There were no disruptions from teachers and students coming and going, and we each had to take real responsibility for a smaller number of students." Although it appeared to us that the teachers at Bay Creek were invested in their students before restructuring, Kristine explained what many people felt. When students are coming and going to receive specialized services, there is a feeling that "there is someone else responsible for those students," and "the students that are constantly removed from the classroom are the ones that need the most consistency—not fragmented curriculum and fragmented responsibility" (Kristine).

A primary goal of this restructuring was to serve ELL students inclusively. To comply with state regulations and to raise staff capacity to better meet the needs of these students in the classroom, Bay Creek did extensive professional development in the area of ELL. Principal Lea arranged for an ESL professor from the local university to offer university courses at Bay Creek that would lead toward an ESL teaching certification.⁵ Nearly 90% of all staff at Bay Creek voluntarily participated in substantial professional learning about ELL, including the office secretary, the custodian, art, music, and physical education teachers, the principal, paraprofessionals, and classroom teachers. Principal Lea used money from the CSR grant to support this professional development for all staff. In the end, about 10 teachers became dually certified in early childhood or elementary and ESL. In addition, during staff meeting and whole school professional development time, the staff engaged in regular and ongoing discussion and learning around issues of language, culture, and race. This ultimately allowed staff to develop shared understandings and vocabulary for working with and speaking about ELLs.

The bilingual paraprofessionals were reassigned to the general classrooms under the direction of the classroom teachers in addition to their newly assigned schoolwide or administrative work, which took the form of communicating with families and arranging meetings. ELL students were "slightly clustered" in some rooms at each level along with peers and bilingual paraprofessionals who spoke their home language. The district recommended that ELLs should not exceed 60% of the class. Given that 16% of the population was ELL students, each cluster ranged from 10% to 30% of the total class. Approximately four classes at each level had students learning English. To enhance home

language support for Spanish-speaking students, teachers proficient in Spanish had a cluster of students who spoke Spanish. During our time at Bay Creek and in the year following, this grew from one teacher fluent in Spanish to as many as five. From Year 2 of this research through the end of data collection 6 years later, all teachers hired at Bay Creek were required to have dual certification in elementary education and ESL or bilingual education or agree to get provisional dual certification and work toward receiving permanent certification within 2 years. Principal Lea was adamant about this. She felt this not only kept the restructured approach “alive” but also allowed her to hire only people committed to practicing inclusive ELL services. In addition, when Principal Lea hired new teachers for the school, she made a point to recruit and select teachers who could speak Spanish or Hmong. After restructuring, although as many as 10 teachers were also certified in ESL, there were years when 5 of those teachers were also fluent in Spanish. There were never any teachers who spoke Hmong at Bay Creek.

With a sufficient number of dually certified teachers, Bay Creek was able to replace its pullout model of instruction for ELLs and have all ELLs receive uninterrupted, meaningful, and targeted instruction alongside their English-speaking peers in general classrooms with small class sizes. The teachers embraced community building within each classroom and integrated it throughout the school day. Bilingual paraprofessionals at Bay Creek provided home language support in the classroom for the Spanish- and Hmong-speaking learners in the course of working with all learners. At a learning center, for example, paraprofessionals helped all students while providing targeted assistance for ELL students. During a whole-class read-aloud, paraprofessionals read or translated the story to ELLs’ home language as the classroom teacher read in English. Although some may question if orally translating stories is best practice, given limited picture books they had available in Spanish and Hmong, this was a strategy used. One paraprofessional commented,

It was very important for all the students to hear and value the Hmong language, both the Hmong students and their classmates. . . . Being in the classrooms also meant that I knew what was going on there, and I got to know the teachers. With this knowledge, I could better support the teachers when I worked with families in the community.

Although there were many ongoing opportunities of home language instruction with teachers and paraprofessionals who spoke Spanish, aspects of the Hmong language permeated classrooms through the use of paraprofessionals who led some instruction in English and Hmong. In addition, English-speaking students

learned a little Hmong. Students of all cultures represented at Bay Creek could regularly be heard counting in Hmong, Spanish, or English together. The school song sung by all students had verses in English, Hmong, and Spanish.

As described previously, it is important to note that because of state regulations Bay Creek operated an ESL program and now provided inclusive ESL services, not a bilingual program. Although Principal Lea and the staff recognized the power of dual language, they could not offer what is commonly understood as a dual language, nor did the principal and teachers describe these services as a sheltered instruction program. However, we want to be clear there were significant efforts to infuse the home languages of Spanish and Hmong within each classroom, to make content accessible to ELL students, and to be explicit about linking the teaching to students' background and experiences—all of which align with the broader goals of dual-language and sheltered instruction.

When Latino and Hmong parents communicated the wish to learn more about the school and to have their particular concerns heard, teachers at Bay Creek set up "Parent Empowerment Groups." This meant that, in addition to the regular parent-teacher organization (PTO) meetings, there were regular (at least quarterly) meetings specifically for Spanish-speaking families and other meetings specifically for Hmong-speaking families. These meetings were held in Spanish and Hmong with the bilingual paraprofessionals facilitating communication among families, the principal, and teachers. The principal always attended these meetings, whereas two to eight teachers attended or assisted with child care on a voluntary basis, and the bilingual paraprofessionals—who were paid for their services—were regular attendees.

Some White families in the community voiced objection to this practice stating, "These [Parent Empowerment Group] meetings do not integrate the community but only further keep us separate." Although some White families in the Bay Creek community disagreed with the idea of separate meetings for different racial groups and used the position that this structure was "exclusive" and "segregating" and did not align with the inclusive school reforms, Minow (1990) argues that the efforts of Principal Lea and her staff align with a broader understanding and spirit of inclusion in that diverse families can attain more meaningful access to school and benefit from school involvement when the school finds ways to connect with and listen to more families. Principal Lea supported these meetings as "a way to better connect with families that, in this city and around the country, are denied access to their children's schooling." These meetings have been maintained.

Prior to holding Parent Empowerment Group meetings, there were no Latino or Hmong families and one or two African American families who

attended or were active in the PTO. The Parent Empowerment Group meetings regularly involve 20 to 50 Latino parents and 15 to 25 Hmong parents. Being in the school in the evenings when these meetings were held brought a feeling of energy and excitement. Families historically not involved in the school streamed into the school, and the children went off to child care while the adults met in the library. The meetings were held in the home languages, and almost every adult contributed to the discussion.

There are now a number of Latino parents active in the PTO, and both Latino and African American parents are PTO officers.⁶ It is important to note that, in speaking with other principals in this same urban district, the changes in the kind of involvement and the quantity of active families of color seen at Bay Creek were not evident in their school or in their parent organizations. In the vein of Minow's (1990) argument that finding ways to listen to and connect with diverse families furthers a socially just and inclusive agenda, the Parent Empowerment Groups increased access that ELL families had with the school and increased authentic interaction between school and home. Principal Lea described this:

Once we explained the changes to our [ELL] families and got the Parent Empowerment Grouping going, they were nothing but supportive and enthusiastic about an authentic relationship with school and the kinds of integrated or inclusive services their children were receiving. Our ELL families loved this!

It is also important to discuss the changes in accountability for and achievement of ELL students at Bay Creek. Principal Lea explained that when she arrived at her school and prior to restructuring there was no documentation or achievement records for any of the students learning English. In talking about ELLs' achievement at grade level or not, she stated,

Well, we had no idea if they were at grade level. It's sort of irrelevant because we didn't pay attention. So my guess would be that they weren't at grade level but basically we just didn't treat them with any kind of responsibility. I mean the biggest disparity is you basically don't even count them like you count the rest of the kids at your school. They're treated so separately, and separate isn't equal, so they totally get left out, and so we'll say we're delivering these special services, but we're not going to pay attention to whether or not they're effective. Who monitors this? Nobody is accountable. When we started we had no data on our ELL kids.

Principal Lea shared that after the restructuring, every child at her school—including ELL students—had a portfolio. In addition to student work, the portfolio includes achievement data recorded at least three times a year. Local teachers designed the assessments, aligned them with state and local standards, and administered them individually or in small groups. This is a result of a district push to use these assessments at least once a year. At the onset of their restructured services, however, Principal Lea decided that Bay Creek would use the assessments three times a year to tailor instruction and track student progress. As part of Bay Creek's focus on professional development, teachers were provided with training in the assessments and engaged in ongoing conversations about how to make sense of the assessment data. A wealth of information came from the assessments that allowed the teachers to individualize their curriculum and design instruction adapted to the needs of all of their students and, in particular, ELL students.

As stated previously, prior to restructuring, there was no documentation about the achievement of ELL students, and no ELL students were given state standardized tests. Principal Lea commented, "These students were excluded from the test because people did not think they could achieve on the test. If people thought they would have done fine they would have taken the tests." This also meant that ELL students were always "scored" or reported as not meeting the proficient standard. Within 4 years of the restructuring, more than 80% of Latino students (all of whom were now taking the state tests) were passing the reading and language arts state assessment. After 8 years, more than 90% of Latino students were passing the state reading test. Hmong students after 4 and 8 years were not achieving as well as their Latino peers, but they were performing as well as other Hmong students in the district and across the state. In some years, the Hmong students at Bay Creek outperformed their district and state Hmong peers on state and local measures. This meant that, on average, 50% to 60% of the Hmong students were passing the state test, in comparison to 0% prior to restructuring. This case study is not attempting to prove that the inclusive ELL services caused achievement gains at Bay Creek but rather to give a picture of achievement and accountability before and after inclusive reform.

Green Tree Elementary School

Green Tree ELL services in context. Green Tree is a kindergarten through fifth grade elementary school located in the same urban district as Bay Creek. Green Tree was built in 1967 on the west side of a growing midsized city. When the school opened, the neighborhood was predominantly young urban

Table 2. Green Tree Demographic Information

Demographics	Percentage of Student Population
African American	31
Asian	9
Latino	11
Native American	1
White	48
Low income	55
English language learner	18

professionals living in single-family homes, new duplexes, or “yuppie” apartment complexes. The demographics of the school at that time were approximately 95% middle to upper income and roughly 95% White.

Around 1990, the housing patterns in the neighborhood changed. The duplexes were no longer seen as new and “fancy” and became low-income housing. A number of what had been “yuppie” apartments were converted to low-income and public housing. With the shift in housing patterns, the demographics changed steadily over the 1990s through to today. At the conclusion of the data gathering, the school was diverse in every sense. There were wealthy families, middle-income families, and families struggling economically. In driving through the neighborhood, the diversity of housing was evident. Green Tree families spoke 12 different home languages, but the vast majority of ELL students spoke Spanish or Hmong. Given the diversity of housing in the immediate neighborhood (rental duplexes, large low-income apartments, small single-family homes, large and exclusive single-family homes), 90% of the students walked to school, meaning that those representing the breath of diversity at Green Tree live together in the same neighborhood. The demographic information for the final year of data collection is included in Table 2.

Green Tree has seen what one parent described as “White flight.” One active White parent stated, “Every year there are a few more families who leave Green Tree and either move to other schools or send their children to private schools. This is not a huge crisis but an ongoing issue.” Green Tree has used traditional graded classrooms (kindergarten, first grade, etc.) but in the final year of data collection moved to multiage rooms for second through fifth grades. This meant creating second and third grade rooms and fourth and fifth grade rooms.

Inclusive ELL services—Coteaching approach. When Principal Luke began at Green Tree Elementary, he jokingly described it as a “pullout magnet school.” He continued,

As the school became more diverse, more and more separate programs were added. There was no coherency or collaboration among the programs. Students needing help in reading were pulled out, students with disabilities were pulled out, students learning English were pulled out, student needing speech and language support were pulled out, students with “special talents” in reading and math were pulled out. If you had some sort of “special” need you were pulled out.

Principal Luke possessed dual teaching certifications, one in K–6 elementary teaching and one in ESL. Principal Luke worked with the entire staff and, in a more concerted effort, with the school improvement team to understand the realities of the programming for ELLs and other students who were traditionally marginalized. Principal Luke began this process his first year as principal and implementation followed the next year. The reading coach summarized what became clear to her and the school improvement team as a result of this effort: “In most cases, the students being removed from the classroom were receiving fragmented curriculum and their achievement was unacceptable.” The school improvement team was a new structure the district wanted in each school and one with which Principal Luke worked closely in making schoolwide changes.

In examining ELL achievement and services, Principal Luke explained that “only 18% of ELLs were at grade level based on local or state assessments and that all ESL services were provided by removing students” from their general education classes to work with an ESL teacher or a bilingual paraprofessional for about an hour each day. He continued,

I mean, come on, you cannot argue that our current pullout ESL model is producing equitable or just outcomes. And, removing the same ELL students from their classroom day after day is no way to create a cohesive classroom community. Our ELL students are receiving a fragmented and lesser education.

A classroom teacher stated, “We have no idea what happens in the ESL room, and so how could it possibly relate or support what we are doing in here?” Principal Luke reported that there was no connection between the general classroom curriculum and the ESL instruction that was taking place during the pullout ESL services. Observing students receiving ESL pullout services drove this point home. The ESL teacher would appear at the door of classrooms picking up students for ESL instruction. This would interrupt what the students were doing in their classrooms, and then they would walk

down the hall to the ESL room. One ESL teacher shared, "We pull students from every room in the school, so it is not possible to collaborate with each teacher." Observations revealed that what happened in the ESL room did not relate to the curriculum in the general education classroom.

Starting in December of his first year, Principal Luke led the entire staff—certified and noncertified—through a 6-month process of examining how services were provided to diverse learners. Although the entire staff engaged in this discussion and examination, the school improvement team was generally responsible for making decisions and presenting ideas. Through the process, the entire staff looked at staffing, student placement, and the impact of current and potential service delivery approaches on the daily schedule. There were one and a half ESL positions and two part-time bilingual paraprofessionals on staff. Of the paraprofessionals who worked under the direction of the ESL teachers, one spoke Hmong and the other spoke Spanish. There was access to district interpreters who spoke languages other than Spanish and Hmong present at Green Tree. With only one or two students who spoke languages other than English, Spanish, or Hmong, interpreters in these cases were used for family communication rather than daily instruction.

This 6-month staff examination led to reconfiguring all the services within Green Tree School. Principal Luke communicated that moving to inclusive services was nonnegotiable, but it would be up to the school improvement team and the staff to decide how that would look and what that would involve. Their efforts resulted in inclusive services for ELLs, students with disabilities, students needing additional support in reading, and students identified as "gifted." For this article, we focus on the ELL services and how they changed.

The schoolwide reform involved reconfiguring resources to create inclusive services for all students with diverse needs. The staff at Green Tree chose to adopt a coteaching approach to serve ELL students inclusively. This choice was made after a number of staff meetings, professional development days, and leadership team meetings to consider the pros and cons of the current approach and three basic service options: a dual certification model similar to Bay Creek, a consultation model where ESL teachers would work with teachers in planning and consultation with limited teaching contact with students, and coteaching. During these meetings, everyone who attended was active in participating and sharing ideas.

Principal Luke explained the teams and how they were created:

Teams were created for each grade level, consisting of one or two teachers at each grade level paired up with an ESL teacher. These teams worked together to coplan and coteach all of the students within their

classrooms together. Most of the teams were formed autonomously; in cases where team members did not step forward, I met with teachers to decide on how best to create teams.

Over the time we studied Green Tree, in the case of both autonomously created groups and those formed under the guidance of Principal Luke, some teams developed into lasting partnerships, whereas others opted to reconfigure their teams at the end of the year.

The foundational principle of the coteaching approach is inclusion: the inclusion of ELLs with their English-speaking peers and the inclusion of ESL teachers and their expertise in the planning and delivery of all instruction for ELLs. Teachers used ongoing community-building activities to help the learners come to value and understand one another. The team teaching approaches they used mirrored those found in inclusive practices for learners with special educational needs, such as station teaching, tag-team teaching, and parallel teaching (Friend & Cook, 2006) where both teachers share responsibility for determining goals, instruction, and assessment to address children's needs.

General classroom teachers and ESL teachers were provided blocks of time to coplan and subsequently codeliver instruction for all learners. This was not just a change in space where the ESL teacher taught the ELL students at the "back table," but rather both teachers worked together, shared responsibility, and worked with heterogeneous groups of students. This involved time, planning, and trying new roles and responsibilities. For some, this change seemed easier than for others. A number of teachers, both general education and ESL specialists, went to Principal Luke to "complain" about having to coteach. The complaints of the general education teachers largely revolved around personality conflicts or perceptions of the ESL teachers' styles or skills. The ESL teachers expressed concern about not feeling a part of teams. Principal Luke explained that he felt the ESL teachers were "very scared" to have to teach in front of and with other teachers. ESL teacher Whitney expressed that she did not like this inclusive reform but explained how she became resolved to be a part of it, "I realized that I would be doing an entirely different job. My old job was gone, and I had to see my role entirely differently."

Both the planning and implementation of this inclusive ELL service approach were messy and brought some dissent from particular staff members. Some teachers, including the ESL teachers, were content with continuing to deliver services in the same manner as in the past. In addition, although the general education teachers were very positive about ELL students and

their presence at the school, Principal Luke explained, "There was apprehension about collaborating and coteaching with teachers and paraprofessionals with whom they had not worked before and with whom they did not see eye-to-eye on instructional issues." Principal Luke had numerous meetings with instructional teams to mediate conflicts. He set the tone that the way services were delivered needed to change, and the staff needed to play a role in configuring a collaborative approach. Green Tree moved forward with a coteaching approach, but both the planning and implementation were neither easy nor without resistance.

To facilitate teachers' transitions to a coteaching approach, Principal Luke worked with the district office and garnered a state grant to bring in a part-time collaboration facilitator for 3 years. This facilitator, paid for by state grant money, was a district teacher on a special assignment who had extensive experience with collaboration and coteaching and skill in facilitating adult learning. The facilitator worked with three schools at a time for a 3-year period. Both ESL and classroom teachers worked with the facilitator to develop skill in collaborative teaching. The facilitator provided the professional development around coteaching and collaboration. In addition, professional development opportunities offered by the literacy coach or the district math instructional specialists, which had previously been offered exclusively to classroom teachers, were now extended to ESL teachers. Principal Luke shared,

It was essential for teams to develop skills in coteaching and working together, this is not something that many teachers were good at initially. . . . In addition to collaboration, as our school and district moved forward with new reading and math directions, all teachers [general education, ELL, and special education] needed to have the same professional development.

All staff engaged in ongoing professional study and dialogue (some voluntary and some during required staff meetings for professional development) about issues of culture, language, and race in education to better understand ELLs and their families. Principal Luke saw that the outcomes of this work were largely attitudinal. Paired with the other professional development initiatives of collaboration, literacy, differentiation, and math, it became evident that the staff was now inclined to think about students and instruction differently. The new model of instruction and professional development involved and valued all teachers—specialists and general education teachers—as they sought to educate all learners together.

Principal Luke provided time for half-day planning meetings for all teams who were interested. He pieced together “little pots of money” to pay for substitutes to make these half-day planning meetings available. These “little pots” included three meager budgets: a small professional development fund provided by the district, an even smaller principal’s discretionary fund provided by the parent organization, and a small budget using federal money for school improvement. Roughly 75% to 80% of all teams took advantage of this additional time and support for planning.

The new teaching model resulted in ELL students being “slightly clustered” into one to two general classrooms at each grade level depending on the number of students learning English at the grade. Prior to this reform, ESL teachers typically worked with students from 13 to 14 different rooms out of 27 rooms in all. After the restructuring, the full-time ESL teacher cotaught with four to five classroom teachers and the half-time ESL teacher cotaught with two to three. In this restructuring, particular attention was paid, according to the collaboration specialist, to “not overloading any one classroom and to maintain close to the natural proportion of the school.” Given that ELL students made up about 18% of the school, this cluster meant that 10% to 30% of a given class could have ELL students. Green Tree teachers and administration felt, much like the staff at Bay Creek, that ELL students should be placed with a classmate who speaks their home language whenever possible. Although there were 12 languages spoken at Green Tree, the most common were Spanish and Hmong; as a result, clusters of at least two Spanish- or Hmong-speaking students were created in the designated classrooms.

Green Tree staff dedicated a number of meetings each spring to class placement as creating balanced classrooms was an essential part of their inclusive reform mission. Before the inclusive reform, class placement took about 30 minutes per grade level and only the general education teachers participated. After inclusive reform, the placement meetings typically involved all teachers (general education, special education, ESL, therapists, etc.) who worked with the students in that grade and often lasted 2 to 4 hours. These meetings sometimes took place over multiple days and were often contentious. “These meetings were so pivotal to the success of our inclusive and collaborative approach, but boy were they tiring” (Principal Luke).

The bilingual paraprofessionals were assigned specific times to work in classrooms in which there were students who spoke their same language. Under the general classroom teacher’s direction, bilingual paraprofessionals tutored students, ran centers, pretaught concepts, and translated stories. As was also the case with Bay Creek, the paraprofessionals were not responsible

for the education of the ELL students, the teachers were. The paraprofessionals worked with all students. This allowed for greater time and attention from the teachers for the ELL students, and sometimes the paraprofessionals worked with ELL students on specific activities in a tutoring capacity under the direction of the teachers. In addition, bilingual paraprofessional time was devoted to schoolwide communication with families. To facilitate this, Principal Luke and the bilingual paraprofessionals set up a system of communication to relay information from classroom teachers and from the school office to Hmong- and Spanish-speaking families. Although the bilingual paraprofessional resources existed prior to the restructuring, there had never been a formal system for communicating with Spanish- and Hmong-speaking families. Principal Luke described the newly designed system:

Our communication involved a) a plan to have schoolwide notes and information translated or relayed to families, b) arranging conferences with Hmong- and Spanish-speaking families at each marking period to discuss student progress, and c) sending recorded messages to Spanish- and Hmong-speaking families in their home languages using the automated phone system.

Principal Luke also described the reaction from ELL families to the new communication system and the new service delivery.

We got a lot of very positive feedback from our [ELL] families. They loved that we had much better communication. They loved the quarterly conferences, and they expressed their appreciation for their children being integrated and an authentic part of their elementary classrooms.

Principal Luke, like Principal Lea, initially found little assessment data, either local or state mandated, on many of his marginalized students and specifically on his ELL students. He stated,

When I started, about a third of our students were not being assessed in any consistent manner. Many of these were our ELL students. The sentiment was, "We feel bad for 'those' kids, and 'those' kids will never achieve at grade level, and we are giving them help. That is good enough."

As he talked about working with his staff to obtain local and state assessment data on every child, Principal Luke proudly continued,

Table 3. Green Tree Statewide Reading Test Student Achievement Data

Category	Before Inclusive Restructuring (%)	After 3 Years of Inclusive Services (%)
Total students tested	70	98
All students—Proficient or advanced	50	86
English language learner (ELL) students—Proficient or advanced	17	100
Latino students—Proficient or advanced	18	100
Asian students—Proficient or advanced	47	100

Note. The students at Green Tree who spoke Spanish are included in both the ELL data and the Latino data. The students who spoke Hmong are included in the ELL data and the Asian category. In both cases, the Spanish-speaking students and the Hmong-speaking students do not make up the entire “Latino” or “Asian” population at Green Tree.

So, we went from roughly a third of our kids not being tested and with really no serious documentation on their achievement to having data on 100%, and with that info, we really focused, we really changed how we taught reading, and we gave more focus to actually teaching kids at their level but in heterogeneous groups, because we knew where they were academically. It was a matter of keeping track of that data, using that information with a lens of inclusion, and we saw huge growth.

Table 3 shows the achievement data at Green Tree over the research period, including data from before and after the inclusive services reform. The data presented in Table 3 are from the statewide reading test, but the results are consistent across all subject areas and on local measures as well.

Cross-Case Analysis

Both cases provide insight into the realities of inclusive ESL reform and the leadership required. This data collection produced a wealth of information. The purpose of this article is to provide understanding of the ways schools reformed to create inclusive ESL and the leadership involved in this work; thus, the cases and the cross-case analysis focus on those issues. Although specifics of the professional development, the classroom pedagogy, and the larger community are certainly relevant, they are not the focus of this analysis. First, even though both cases were situated within the same urban district,

this cross-case analysis provides a discussion of the ways in which the cases were alike and how they differed. Second, this section provides analysis about the principals who led inclusive ESL reform—specifically their beliefs, knowledge, and skills.

Looking Across Both Schools

As was stated in the method section, the purpose of this case study was not the schools themselves but using these locations to better understand reform focused on creating inclusive services for ELLs. An integral feature of this analysis is comparing the experiences at Bay Creek and Green Tree schools. Table 4 describes the ways in which these efforts at these schools were similar and the realities that differed.

The comparison between the cases illuminates common elements present at each school. These elements are not a prescriptive list of how to create inclusive ESL but an understanding of key features that two schools with similar goals shared. This comparison also presents the ways in which inclusive ESL was situated within specific local contexts that manifested different experiences and realities.

For these schools, inclusive ESL reform was not viewed as one more thing that needed to be addressed by an already full agenda; rather, it was an integral goal of their broader agenda and vision. Both schools reformed their ESL model. After the implementation of their restructuring, they still technically operated an ESL program not dual-language programs, as per district and state guidelines. Yet both schools took strides after this reform to increase the use and presence of both Spanish and Hmong home languages within the school day. These schools were ordinary elementary schools with strengths and blemishes. They operated in systems that were not designed for inclusive ESL and in bureaucracies that were generally not supportive of innovation. In spite of these potential barriers and real struggles, their successes demonstrate that this work is possible. What made it possible were the collaborative efforts between staff and administration, the communication between the school and ELL families, and the driving force of committed principals.

Leadership for Inclusive ESL

Taking a purposeful lens to the principals is another necessary aspect of these cases. Although the two principals in this study differed in their personalities and in their leadership styles, they shared common beliefs, knowledge, and skills. Table 5 describes these commonalities.

Table 4. Comparison Between Cases of Inclusive English as a Second Language (ESL) Reform

Similarities	Differences
Adopted structural changes so that ESL students received all services within general education classroom	<i>Service delivery approach:</i> Bay Creek: Dual certification Green Tree: Coteaching
Changed staff responsibilities so all teachers would be responsible to plan for ESL students within the context of general education curriculum and setting	<i>Professional development:</i> Bay Creek: Focus on ESL methods Green Tree: Focus on collaboration
Professional development for teachers to build community with and among students was a part of each classroom and expectations that each classroom would engage in this	<i>Visibility of reform:</i>
Ongoing system of communication with families whose home language was other than English	Bay Creek: Needed permission from federal, state, and district administration to restructure, which made the reform hyper-visible
Staff valued ELL students	Green Tree: Needed no special permission and undertook reform largely unnoticed by stakeholders outside of immediate school
Used balanced literacy, constructivist math, and hands-on science curriculum approaches	<i>Resistance:</i>
Faced resistance to change from ESL teachers	Bay Creek: Vocal group of White families, federal, state, and district leaders and policies, ESL teacher, bilingual paraprofessional
Bilingual paraprofessionals were scheduled into general classrooms and followed the direction of the classroom teachers	Green Tree: ESL teachers, some general education teachers expressed dislike of coteaching with an ESL teacher, and general staff resistance to inclusive service delivery mainly aimed at special education not ESL, some staff content with previous approach
Inclusive ESL was part of larger vision and agenda—not a separate or add-on initiative	

(continued)

Table 4. (continued)

Similarities	Differences
ESL teacher(s) transferred to another school after the planning and prior to implementation	<i>ELL student cultures in the curriculum:</i>
ELL families were very supportive of changes	Bay Creek: Latino and Hmong cultures a part of yearly curriculum in small and significant ways
Increased involvement of ELL families with the schools	Green Tree: ELL student cultures not substantially integrated into curriculum
Individual conferences with ELL family for each report card marking period in home language.	<i>Pedagogy:</i>
Principal leadership set the inclusive ESL agenda and led the reform effort	Bay Creek: Mainly child-centered, hands-on, language-rich teaching style
Improved ELL student outcomes: academic and social	Green Tree: Mix of traditional large group instruction, work sheets, and child-centered hands-on activities

The purpose of these cases was not to prove that these beliefs, knowledge, and skills are what ultimately led to improve student social and academic outcomes, nor could two cases substantiate a claim like that. However, the intent of the research is to better understand the realities of inclusive reform for ELLs and the leadership involved. Understanding the beliefs, knowledge, and skills that these two leaders held provides an important vantage point in thinking about what is required to accomplish such reform and academic improvement. Seeing these commonalities has implications for future research and for leadership development.

When both principals discovered that the ELLs in their schools were underserved and underachieving, a key aspect of these leaders is that they felt they could and needed to take action. Committed to the stance that *all* learners can succeed with appropriate and adequate support, they prepared themselves and their staffs to critically examine ELL services and make well-informed decisions about educating ELLs (Coady et al., 2008; Freeman, 2004; Handscombe, 1989). They understood that serving ELLs well would necessitate moving beyond comfortable, routine practices and, therefore, secured necessary resources and support to be able to make and sustain change. Ultimately, the leadership of these two principals created a rich environment for ELL achievement as it ensured social justice in education for ELLs and their

Table 5. Leadership Beliefs, Knowledge, and Skills Around Inclusive English as a Second Language (ESL)

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

families—deeply resonating with the literature on asset-based orientations (Crawford, 2004; Ruíz, 1984).

We used the case study methodology of two schools as a way to understand how school leaders and their staffs were able to create asset-based, inclusive services for ELLs. Marshall and Ward (2004) and Theoharis (2007a) argued for the need for constructive and practical ideas and approaches of social justice leadership—in this case for ELLs.

We recognize that this study does not address social justice issues relating to ELLs from a systems perspective at the district or policy level. However,

this study provides important grounding and a window into understanding the ways in which social justice leadership can intersect with ELLs at the school level. It provides a starting place for taking these approaches to the district or policy level.

The leaders at these schools who demonstrated social and academic success with ELLs possessed an asset-based orientation toward language and had beliefs that inclusive services benefited ELL students and their peers. They had knowledge of ELL research, professional development, and the danger of pullout instruction. These leaders possessed the skills to facilitate a collaborative planning and implementation process, to create new ways of delivering services, to provide necessary and focused professional development, and to maintain communication with all stakeholders: teachers, paraprofessionals, students, families, district administrators, state departments, and so on. In addition, these principals held the belief that they were responsible for ensuring that ELLs received an equitable, excellent, and inclusive education. They had an ability to imagine services and plans they had not seen in practice before and a sense of agency that they could actually create a better school for all learners.

These beliefs, combined with knowledge and skills, allowed these leaders to develop and maintain a vision for educating ELLs inclusively and to high levels. This vision positioned the needs of ELLs front and center in the mission and daily operation of their schools, valued and utilized home languages, made ongoing substantial connections with families of ELL students, and necessitated a new conception of inclusive services for ELLs and their peers.

With their social justice vision for educating ELLs, the leaders collaboratively planned and delivered inclusive ELL services. This meant the principal, general education teachers, ESL teachers, bilingual paraprofessionals, and other school personnel had to learn new skills and new roles. This required time for meetings and for collaborative planning of instruction as well as sustained professional development. Developing an inclusive approach to ELL required a concerted effort to deepen home-school connections with ELL families and a focused plan and implementation of home language support for ELLs at school.

In sum, we argue that social justice leadership has a necessary connection to creating more equitable and better services for ELL students and their families. Going back to Theoharis's (2007a) definition of social justice leadership, it allows us to see that the leaders at these schools kept the needs of traditionally marginalized students and families central to their vision and practice—in this case ELLs. We position this as equity and social justice work in light of the way that these leaders and their schools accomplished social

and academic achievement for ELLs, something that has eluded a great many schools across the country. In creating inclusive ESL services, these leaders and their schools eliminated separate, fragmented, and segregated instruction for students learning English. By not pulling out the ELL students from their general education classrooms, these leaders dismantled the racially segregated grouping of the previous pullout-based ESL program and the fragmented and separate educational experience that went with it. They replaced it with bringing ESL methods and techniques to the general education classroom. This was not sink-or-swim immersion. This required leaders to possess the core beliefs, knowledge, and skills that enable them to create and disseminate an equity-oriented vision for educating ELLs from an inclusive philosophical standpoint. This vision drove the collaboratively planned and delivered inclusive services that, in the end, provided for ELL achievement—both advancing and improving social and academic achievement.

Implications for the Development of Future and Current Leaders

There are clear implications for school leaders from this work. First, we do not believe that Table 5 provides a recipe for developing social justice leaders for ELLs. The beliefs, knowledge, and skills that were common between the two leaders can provide an important place of discussion and reflection for leadership preparation and development. This can be used with the growing body of scholarship on developing critical consciousness, knowledge, and skills (McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008; Tillman, Brown, Campbell-Jones, & Gonzalez, 2006) that provides insight into developing the many qualities these leaders required.

In part, a key element to both Principal Lea and Principal Luke's work was the sense of responsibility and agency that drove ELL program restructuring. This sense of personal responsibility and agency (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008) was instrumental in giving the leaders courage and momentum to make changes. This is in stark contrast to the many school leaders who abdicate responsibility for special programs for ELLs to the ESL or bilingual education teachers. However, according to both principals, that sense of agency was not enough. Both of these principals held a knowledge base of research in the area of ELL and, therefore, a confidence in thinking, speaking, and ultimately leading when it came to issues of ELL. Both principals cited their knowledge and ELL experience as key in their credibility in leading these reforms in that they could speak insider jargon about ESL with ESL teachers and administrators. Their knowledge and comfort with ELL gave

them the confidence that they were moving in the right direction to better serve ELLs. This knowledge combined with their sense of agency appeared to be instrumental in their abilities to lead the transformations of their schools.

Finally, these principals came to their asset-based views of students and families, collaborative process, and valuing and connecting with home languages and families from the lens of inclusivity. This builds from the initial framing of effective leadership for ELL but takes the call from Frattura and Capper (2007) and Theoharis (2007a) that inclusion is key to enacting social justice, through students' social and academic inclusivity, teacher inclusivity, family inclusivity, and language inclusivity. Future and current leaders can benefit from this lens; it positions issues of inclusion beyond classroom membership to valuing and involving all members of a school community.

Conclusion

These principals did what Frattura and Capper (2007) describe as integrated comprehensive services: They saw the human resources in their school holistically and rejected the notion that targeted services must be provided in separate and segregated manner. Both principals merged the resources in their school (mainly the human resources) to create services for ELL students where trained teachers worked with heterogeneously grouped students.

In some ways, Principal Lea pushes beyond Principal Luke with the restructuring of ELL services. This glimpse further down the inclusive and inherently socially just continuum relies on multiply certified educators with general and specialist knowledge and skills who take sole responsibility for the education of a smaller number of students. Both approaches blur the distinction between general educator and specialist, eliminate separate programs, position responsibility for teaching and learning within the general classroom, and create small communities of students for teachers to actually reach. In blurring these lines, these leaders create inclusive services that benefit traditionally marginalized ELL students as well as their peers.

We conclude this article with the argument that social justice and inclusion for ELLs are inherently linked. By looking at and across the reforms enacted by the principals in this study, it becomes clear that there is not one fixed destination or set approach to inclusive, socially just services for ELLs. By looking at the successful outcomes at each school, we realize that socially just practices are possible for ELL students when school leaders are willing to actively engage in the struggles and often difficult processes that lead to inclusive practices and mind-sets. The work of these two leaders and school communities, therefore, serves to provide new directions for social justice

leadership. Their example brings hope and clarity to the field by redefining integrated, inclusive services for ELLs and promoting the ongoing evolution of socially just ways to meet the needs of ELLs and their families.

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Notes

1. Lopez (2001) operationally defines the term marginalized as being “often used to describe people, voices, perspectives, identities, and phenomena that have been left out or ‘excluded’ from the center of dominant society (Hudak, 1993)” (p. 417). In this article, we use the term to describe individuals who have been labeled “outsiders” (Lopez, 2001) based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, and ability or disability.
2. Pseudonyms for the principals are Principal Lea and Principal Luke. These are chosen intentionally as both principals were young, now in their 30s, but when they began as principals were 28 years old and, in their words, “from the Star Wars generation.” They worked in the same district and knew each other well. Although the Lea and Luke Star Wars reference implies they are siblings, these principals are not but, in fact, are very close friends. Lea and her son stayed over many nights with Luke and his wife when Lea’s partner was out of town. Principal Lea and Principal Luke also discussed that they shared the same counselor and therapist whom they referred to as “the Princess”—in reference to Princess Lea from Star Wars.
3. The district has since opened a bilingual school and operates two-way bilingual programs at a number of elementary schools.
4. A year after this study concluded, Principal Lea was transferred to a new elementary school, and she led a similar inclusive reform there. We are not studying that school; however, it is important to recognize that she is taking on inclusive English as a second language (ESL) reform again and currently has both inclusive ESL and two-way bilingual programs at her school.
5. This professor was new to this city the year Bay Creek was planning their inclusive reform. She shared that she was supportive of the idea of the Bay Creek plan but was not a part of planning process and not a part of this research. After the reform was implemented, she did conduct her own collaborative research with teachers at Bay Creek about their pedagogy and ESL practices.

6. One of the African American parents ran for and was elected to the citywide school board. He has been reelected to that position. Although there were no Hmong parents who were officers in the parent-teacher organization (PTO), one Hmong father ran and was elected to the citywide school board. His term has since ended. Although we are uncertain whether the Parent Empowerment Group meetings were the cause of the emergence of families of color active in school, on the PTO, and on the school board, it is important to note that the quantity of active families of color seen at Bay Creek were not evident at other schools or in their parent organizations across the same urban district.

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