

SWIMMING THROUGH MURKY WATER, TRYING TO FIND YOUR WAY:  
TEACHING PEDAGOGIES AND PERCEPTIONS THAT HELP EXPLAIN STUDENT  
UNDERPERFORMANCE AT AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SERVING  
LOW-INCOME, PREDOMINANTLY LATINO STUDENTS

By

CHERYL S. VANATTI

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2017

© 2017 Cheryl S. Vanatti

*for my cherished family*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Above all, I begin with family. Thank you for all of the support that you have given me during the whole of my doctoral studies, but especially during the dissertation phase when I thought that I could no longer think or type or care. Each of you, in one way or another, reminded me that I could do this. I love you all: Bill, Kirk, Fayth, Kraig, Mom, and Sherry. Thank you...

To the five teacher participants who volunteered to inform my study; there are not adequate words to express my gratitude for the selfless giving of your time. As I told you at the start of this journey, you are amazing and dedicated educators. Please know that I respect each of you and the stories that you told me. They are valid and enlightening.

To the professional educator scholars of UF Cohort Three, thank you for the unwavering encouragement, the Facebook smiles, and the intellectual pushes you gave me. My reliance on your wisdom and friendship will not end with the conferment of a degree.

To my UF doctoral professors for your support, kind words, and guidance through the whole of this scholarly pursuit. Dr. Adams, your love of the CTTE program is infectious; you'll hear no greater testimonial to its excellence than from me. Dr. Dana, your encouragement, as my toes first dipped into practitioner inquiry, gave me first confidence that I would one day be called a 'scholar.' Dr. Vescio, your insightful understandings and guidance of not only social justice, but simple decent humanity, changed the way in which I completely view the world. To my committee members, Dr. Coady and Dr. Puig, your belief in me helped to bring this task to reality.

To Dr. Bondy, my committee chair and Zen master, I absolutely do not know what I would have done without your calm reassurances and directed phraseology when I went off on tangent after tangent. Thank you for being such a warm demander.

To my great friend, personal cheerleader, and principal, Kelly Maldonado. Our paths first crossed in a student car-rider loop in Broward County, Florida, as we quickly pushed kids into cars so that we could go back to our classrooms and yak and yak about education. More than twenty years and many schools later, I am so thankful that we are still yakking.

To the professional educators that I have had the pleasure of working and learning with over the years and to the ones who stand out among the many: Linda, Stacey, Traci, Brian, Heather, Jayne, Matt, Judy, Latasha, Corey, Jennifer, Nicole and Kim. Your dedication and contribution to the profession can never be underestimated. Remember to never stop believing that overused and cheesy, but true, phrase: Teachers Touch the Future.

To the hundreds of students that have passed through my life. You have taught me more than any professor, any book, or any college degree ever could.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	4
LIST OF TABLES .....	9
ABSTRACT .....	10
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY .....	12
Historical Context .....	12
Local Context .....	14
School Context .....	15
Background of the Study .....	16
Purpose and Research Questions .....	20
Significance of the Study .....	21
2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	23
Introduction .....	23
Realities of the Social, Cultural, Political Landscape of the Case .....	24
Poverty .....	24
Minoritized Students' Perceived Opportunity Gap .....	27
Teaching in Low-Income, Latino Schools .....	29
Deficit Thinking Toward Students from Low-Income, Latino Families .....	30
Teaching Emergent Bilingual Students in a Predominantly English-Speaking Society .....	32
Teacher Professional Development for Diversely Populated Classrooms .....	34
Teaching with Cultural Relevancy & Responsiveness .....	36
High Performing Low-Income, Latino Schools .....	40
Realities of Standards-Based Instruction and Assessment .....	42
Coaching Toward Improved Instruction .....	43
Conclusion .....	46
3 METHODOLOGY .....	47
Purpose of the Study .....	47
Selection of Participants .....	48
Description of Participants .....	49
Context of the Study .....	50
Data Collection .....	51
Interviews .....	52
Interview 1: Generative interview .....	52
Interview 2: Clarification interview .....	53

Coaching Observations.....	53
Data Analysis.....	56
Interview Data Analysis.....	57
Observation Data Analysis.....	58
Interview and Observation Common Themes Analysis.....	60
Researcher Subjectivity Statement.....	61
Enhancing Trustworthiness.....	63
4 FINDINGS.....	65
Teacher Perceptions of Teaching in Their School.....	66
Perceptions of Teacher Value and Autonomy.....	70
Teacher Perceptions Conclusion.....	73
Teacher Knowledge of Instructional Practices for Emergent Bilingual Students.....	73
Teacher Knowledge of Instructional Practices for Low-Income, Latino Students.....	76
Teacher Knowledge of Rigorous Instruction and Standardized Assessments.....	78
Teacher Knowledge Conclusion.....	82
Observed Teacher Instructional Practices.....	83
Rigorous, Standards-Based Instruction.....	84
Strategies and Behaviors for Teaching Content.....	86
Clarifying Learning Goals for Students.....	87
Strategies for Purposeful Discussions.....	88
Strategies for Low-Income, Emergent Bilingual, Latino Students.....	89
Looking Across Interviews and Observations: Possible Factors in Student Underperformance.....	89
Misinformed Standards-Based Instruction and Unclear Learning Goals.....	90
Lack of Rigorous Instruction.....	91
Lack of Attention to Specific Needs of the Students.....	91
Teacher Perceptions That Some Grade Level Assignments Are More Valued Than Others and Teacher Efficacy.....	92
5 DISCUSSION.....	94
Introduction.....	94
Implications for Practice.....	94
Rigorous, Goal-Aligned Instructional Practices.....	95
Cultural Relevance and Responsiveness: An Assets Orientation.....	97
Toward an Assets Orientation.....	98
Teaching with Cultural Relevance and Responsiveness.....	99
Teaching Emergent Bilingual Students.....	100
Leadership Focused on Building Teacher Efficacy.....	102
Limitations & Considerations.....	105
Next Steps.....	107
Finding Resources for Teaching Emergent Bilingual Students.....	107
Providing On-Going Opportunities for Teachers to Become Culturally Responsive ...	108
Coaching Teachers to Improve Rigorous, Goal-Aligned Instruction.....	108
Conclusion.....	109

APPENDIX

A PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT LETTER .....110

B RANDOM SELECTION TOOL .....112

C GENERATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....113

D CLARIFICATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....114

E MARZANO TEACHER EVALUATION MODEL .....117

F INTERPRETATION OF INTERVIEW DATA TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS  
EXAMPLE .....118

G INTERPRETATION OF INTERVIEW DATA TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS  
EXAMPLE .....119

H INTERPRETATION OF OBSERVATION NOTATIONS DATA EXAMPLE .....120

I INTERPRETATION OF OBSERVATION: MARZANO TEACHER EVALUATION  
MODEL DATA .....121

LIST OF REFERENCES .....124

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH .....136

## LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>page</u>
2-1 Qualitative case study data related to factors that explain underperformance .....	51
2-2 Cross analysis of interview and observation common themes .....	61

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School  
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

SWIMMING THROUGH MURKY WATER, TRYING TO FIND YOUR WAY:  
TEACHING PEDAGOGIES AND PERCEPTIONS THAT HELP EXPLAIN STUDENT  
UNDERPERFORMANCE AT AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SERVING  
LOW-INCOME, PREDOMINANTLY LATINO STUDENTS

By

Cheryl S. Vanatti

December 2017

Chair: Elizabeth Bondy  
Major: Curriculum and Instruction

This qualitative case study explored the factors contributing to student underperformance as measured by standardized assessments in a predominantly Latino, low-income public elementary school in the southeastern United States. Findings from teacher interviews and observations with five voluntary teacher participants revealed that despite excellent amenities, services, and a dedicated staff, student performance may still be impacted by teacher perceptions and valuations of themselves and their students as well as imprecise instructional practice. Findings from teacher participant interviews indicated incidences of deficit thinking and inattention toward the predominantly low-income, Latino, emergent bilingual population of the school. Interviews also revealed perceptions of a widespread devaluation of teachers assigned to primary grade-levels. Classroom observational findings indicated deficiencies in rigorous, goal-aligned standards-based instruction.

Although schools have sought to address the realities of low-income children and families with meal programs, extended school days, parent engagement incentives, and a host of other wrap-around services, the gaps in student achievement, as measured by standardized tests, remain relatively unresponsive. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to

broader understandings of not only specific instructional practices that may aid teachers in better serving the needs of emergent bilingual, low-income, Latino student populations, but also underscore the complexities involved in teaching and learning in an era of high-stakes, standards-based accountability.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

With all of the blaringly negative news about impoverished and minoritized public schools, it is easy to picture collapsing, wretched buildings filled with miserable students and unfortunate teachers. Headlines and educational best sellers referencing words like failing, gap, crisis, savage, and death all contribute to this picture. This is the stereotyped picture painted of public schools that enroll minoritized and low-income students. These stereotypes underscore the single-minded deficit thinking aimed at saving failing schools instead of embracing students' strengths and diversity in order to assist them in better construction of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006; Valencia, 2010). For decades, we have been conditioned to frame impoverished and minoritized public schools by perceived gaps in achievement based upon the results of standardized assessments; perceptions that drive our educational policies, in essence, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. The intense focus on standardized, high-stakes testing, and the achievement gap it fashioned between various demographics, has diverted educators' attention from the multiple factors that have contributed to that gap.

### **Historical Context**

In order to frame a broader understanding of the term 'achievement gap,' which underlies not only the root of this study but also the last fifty plus years of the American educational landscape, a historical context is merited. In 1965, in response to the War on Poverty, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Title I of ESEA specifically set aside funds for the education of children living in conditions of poverty in an effort to close the observed literacy and math achievement gaps of low-income students, when compared to their wealthier peers. This congressional act is considered to be the impetus for the decades-long federal government involvement in local public school policy.

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan, concerned that American public schools were failing to provide the nation with a competitive workforce, formed the National Commission on Excellence in Education that published *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). This publication shifted the federal government's involvement and focus in public school education away from mere funding to a federal reform agenda (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Marzano, 2003; Ravitch, 2010). Over the next twenty years, and through many alterations and reauthorizations by otherwise politically dissimilar presidents, ESEA energies toward reforming, rather than supporting, our nation's public schools increased.

The reform through accountability approach took no greater leap than with President George W. Bush's reauthorization of ESEA to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Imagined as a refocused effort to equalize the effects of poverty and inequity, NCLB established annual school progress reports based upon standardized test scores. These reports, sometimes simply referred to as 'school grades,' have become so entrenched in our definition of quality schools, property valuations can now be attributed to them (Black & Machin, 2011; Clapp, Nanda, & Ross, 2008; Nguyen-Hoang & Yinger, 2011). In 2015, when President Barack Obama retooled NCLB to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), there was optimism that a decrease in the focus placed on testing would relieve some of those realities (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2016). However, though it attempted to shift focus away from standardized testing, ESSA's attention to teacher monetary incentives tied to student test scores heightened the high-stakes accountability focus.

All this attention to high-stakes testing diverts pedagogical attention away from the realities impacting students. Latino students are affected by poverty at double the rate of their

Non-Hispanic white peers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Students who speak English as a second language make up more than 9% of our public schools (McFarland et al., 2017). America continues to grow more diverse and teachers may not be fully prepared to consider the unique challenges in teaching students whose cultural resources vary widely from the white, middle-class, European public school model (Merryfield, 2000). Pedagogical decisions, like effective practices for emergent bilingual students or culturally responsive practices for diverse student populations, may take a backseat to test preparation when the focus on achieving a strong school rating and garnering teacher bonus monies is so intense (Amrein & Berliner, 2002).

Finally, it is also important to note that evidence of an achievement gap is available in data other than standardized test measures. Gaps in achievement also exist in measures of grade point average as well as high school and college completion rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Further important to note, an achievement gap is not unique to the United States, but exists in other developed countries as well (Darling-Hammond, 2015). For the purpose of this study the achievement gap is defined as “gaps [that] occur when one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant” (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Whether this gap is the result of years of inequitable opportunity is not at odds with this definition; it is unquestionably due to years of inequitable opportunity and resources (Barton & Coley, 2009; Darling-Hammond 2007). That the gap even exists is the motivation for further and continued study.

### **Local Context**

Florida has been a leader in the accountability reform movement (Amrein & Berliner, 2002). Under Governor Jeb Bush’s 1998 educational reform model A+ Plan for Education, the state made great gains in reading and math on the state’s Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT). These gains in test scores were seen across demographics. Teachers got really

good at teaching FCAT; students got really good at taking FCAT (Florida Department of Education, 2017).

Less considered were the side effects that the years of intense high-stakes focus on FCAT wrought. Merit pay for teachers and students in schools that garnered higher state grades typically went to higher socio-economic schools; minoritized and poverty impacted schools closed in favor of charter schools, mandatory third grade retention disregarded concerns about the social-emotional impact on children; teachers left the profession and young people avoided entering the profession altogether (West & Chingos, 2009). Florida became a state so obsessed with test scores that teacher pay bonuses are now awarded on the basis of a teacher's high school SAT score (Florida HB 7069 Education, 2017). While federal and state reform efforts may have begun with good intentions of righting impoverished inequities, the focus on standardized test accountability has narrowed our students' skills and diminished the teaching profession in ways that are now affecting young people's interest in ever becoming or remaining a teacher (Berliner, 2011; Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Rubin, 2011). With each federal dollar given, accountability-driven motivations, like high-stakes tests and the ability to master them, has become the primary focus of schooling (Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2006; Ravitch 2010). This is especially true in states like Florida that embraced the accountability movement in its earliest years.

### **School Context**

After exposure to years of blaringly negative news about impoverished and minoritized public schools, perhaps I walked into my new school assignment with some stereotypes of the low-income, Latino students I would meet. Perhaps I thought the building would be without every imaginable modern marvel, its teachers despondent wrecks of ineptitude, its students somehow less than. Instead, I was greeted by happy, well-cared for children and dedicated

teachers. The school wasn't the dilapidated cesspool of news reports. It was modern and sparkling clean with materials readily available. Yet, my new elementary school was not performing at the level its leadership felt that it could, having earned middling state standardized assessment scores for the past few years. I quickly began to wonder what might explain this performance in a school that appeared to have so many resources available to support student learning.

My initial conversations at the school were contradictory. These conversations included beliefs that student underperformance problems were somewhere situated in low expectations for the low-income Latino students or in teachers needing to better comprehend the state's standards. Common educational pigeonholing, that low-income, minoritized schools with higher populations of emergent bilingual learners were simply lower performing, was also present. Either way I looked, my reality was that until I better understood the community I was charged with supporting as an instructional literacy coach and reading specialist, I was not going to be able to cultivate a plan to aim that support.

### **Background of the Study**

This qualitative case study explored a single public elementary school located in the heart of a large, urban Florida city that serves over 200,000 students. These students represent 197 countries that speak 168 language varieties. The public elementary school serves approximately 600 students in grades Pre-K to 5 and was rebuilt in 2011 as a modern and well-equipped U-shaped campus that includes a primary wing and an intermediate wing each cordoned out from a central hallway. This center hub is a bustle of activity with administrative offices, well-equipped art and music rooms, a vibrant media center at the curved axis, and a welcoming all-purpose room used for cafeteria, auditorium, and community-building activities. The outside center of the U-shape includes a large grassy area with space for classroom gardening, a covered pavilion, two

playgrounds, a basketball court, and three little-league styled baseball fields. The front entry is spacious and decorated with a beautiful mural of the school's panther mascot; parent information flyers and notices are prominently available in both English and Spanish. The classrooms all include electronic white-boards and seven desktop computers. There are five computer laboratories, each with enough modern computers for an entire class. Students have up-to-date curricular materials and the adopted learning programs are commensurate with the state's high expectations.

The student body of approximately 600 students in Pre-kindergarten to fifth grade is not an especially large number compared to most schools in the district. Eighty percent of students identify as white Hispanic/Latino, 13% identify as white Non-Hispanic/Latino, 3% identify as Black/African-American, 3% identify as Asian/Pacific Islander and 1% identify as Multi-Racial. Of the total student population, 33% of the students are emergent bilingual learners and 20% are identified as Exceptional Education Students (ESE).

The school receives full Title I funding where all students are offered free breakfast and lunch as well as dinner for those attending after-hours activities. The cafeteria includes a 'share' refrigerator where students can get additional food items if they are still hungry. There are opportunities for families to get assistance with clothing and school supply needs throughout the year. The majority of students walk to school or are dropped off by their parents, with only one bus arriving from beyond the two-mile limit and one bus for a small number of ESE students.

This public elementary school is truly a neighborhood school, and as such, family involvement is strong. Open House, Meet the Teacher, Conference Night and the annual Fall Multicultural Festival are all well attended. There is an active parent-teacher organization and school advisory committee. The parents have opportunities to attend parenting 'academies' that

assist them in maneuvering the school's various systems and evening English for Speakers of Other Languages classes are offered free of charge, with babysitting provided.

Students have numerous opportunities to participate in free clubs and tutoring activities outside of school hours. Clubs include art, chorus, guitar, math, kinetics, karate, and book discussion. Three afternoons each week and every other Saturday there is free tutoring; twice a week there is Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art and Math (STREAM) tutoring. The media center, with access to thirty computers, is open to families two nights a week until 7:00 pm. The school has a Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM) grant, where additional coaches arrive to manage all-day STEM activities in every classroom once a month. An enrichment program, aimed at academically excelling students, meets several times each week. Thirty minutes of protected intervention and enrichment time is allocated daily. Between clubs, tutoring, intervention and enrichment offerings, students are offered many opportunities to extend their learning past the typical classroom space.

According to school data, the 47 teachers' average level of experience is ten years with only two first year teachers. 42% of the teachers hold master's degrees. The student to teacher ratio is 13:1. There are 30 classroom teachers in grades K-5 and 2 classroom teachers in Prekindergarten. The remaining 15 teachers serve in support positions in the arts, physical education, exceptional education, media and coaching capacities. The leadership team includes the principal with a bachelor's degree in elementary education, a master's degree in educational leadership, and experiences teaching in both elementary and secondary schools. The assistant principal holds a bachelor's degree in business, a master's degree in elementary education, a doctorate in educational leadership, and experience teaching elementary school. The administrative dean holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education, a master's degree in

educational leadership, and elementary teaching experience. There are three instructional resource teachers. The curriculum resource teacher has taught both elementary and secondary school and holds a bachelor's in elementary education. The math/science instructional coach holds a master's in educational leadership, a bachelor's in elementary education and has taught primarily in all Title 1 elementary schools. I am the school's literacy coach and reading specialist. I have taught elementary, as well as secondary English/language arts and reading, and served as a literacy instructional coach in both elementary and middle schools. My bachelor's degree is in elementary education; my master's degree is in reading education. All six members of the leadership team have served their entire teaching careers in public schools.

Reading and language arts curriculum is aligned to the Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS) which are Florida's interpretation of the broader Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Although a few teachers may occasionally give directions in Spanish to native Spanish speakers, the text, oral, and computer delivered curriculum are all conveyed in the English language. All students in grades K-3 take the national norm-referenced test, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), in English. However, MAP is not factored into the state's performance grading of the school. All students in grades 3-5 take the state standardized achievement test, Florida Standards Assessment (FSA), in writing, reading, and math annually in the spring. All 5th grade students take the FCAT Science exam annually in late spring. In addition to measuring student performance, the FSA and FCAT tests are used to measure school performance, reward teachers and purchase additional student materials with monetary bonuses.

This public elementary school has earned the middling letter grade of C with the state of Florida for the preceding three years. The principal's leadership team discussed the hiring of a literacy coach/reading specialist at the end of the last school year when the school's reading

proficiency on the state standardized assessment dropped to 44% from 53% the year prior. I was hired over the summer with an expressed charge to increase student literacy achievement as measured by the state's standardized tests. Once the school year began, time was allocated so that each grade level of teachers had one hour per week of literacy professional collaboration with me (in addition to an hour with the math coach with the same charge). These professional collaborations occurred within the structure of professional learning communities (PLC) which were focused almost exclusively on discussing and implementing the state standards through the district's adopted curriculum. In addition to weekly PLCs, I used classroom observations to engage teachers in professional development coaching aimed at improving overall instructional practices as well as increasing the focus on effective literacy practices. These observations were conducted using the district's adopted framework, the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model (Marzano & Toth, 2013).

It is important to understand factors impeding student performance at a school that defies the stereotypical picture painted of failing schools. And while the school's middling C performance grade should not be deemed a failure, my initial observations and conversations before the formal study even began, suggested that stakeholders had resources and a desire to be a much higher performing school, perhaps even an exemplar of high performing urban schools serving low-income, predominantly Latino students.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this case study was to identify factors contributing to lowered student performance, as measured by the state's standardized tests, so that the school level leadership, including myself, could provide resources for teachers and students to improve performance. It is important to find ways to navigate the expansive goals of the standards-based accountability landscape while maintaining focus on each student's inherent potential and individual strengths.

The end goal is increased student learning and capability, not higher test scores. Yet, the realities of the standards-based accountability landscape remain.

I began my study building upon more than twenty years as a professional educator with expertise in literacy instruction. I knew that factors connected to students lived societal realities, such as poverty and language rights, might contribute to underperformance on standardized tests. However, I was seeking to find ways to ameliorate those inequities through pedagogical resolutions. I theorized that I might encounter factors related to teacher perceptions of their students, as well as misapplied or ignored pedagogies. Because the school appeared to be far removed from the stereotypical depiction of low-income minoritized schools, I questioned the standardized-test rating of what appeared on many levels to be a stellar public elementary school.

The question I asked as a practitioner scholar seeking to better understand my new school and, consequently, strengthen my practice as an instructional literacy coach was: *What factors may help explain the underperformance of learners on standardized assessments?* The scope of potential factors impacting student achievement is broad and fluid. However, as a practitioner scholar, I sought to better understand the teacher perceptions and instructional pedagogies in place so that I might better serve as the school's instructional literacy coach and reading specialist, and thus, have a positive impact upon student performance. In addition to the regularly scheduled coaching observations I was already involved with, I further hoped that speaking with colleagues about perceived instructional factors might inform my ambitions. Therefore, I wondered: *How might teacher perceptions inform my understandings of student underperformance? How might teaching practices contribute to student underperformance?*

### **Significance of the Study**

Something was going on at my picturesque elementary school that was more than just numbers on a page. Simply looking at school data showed one picture: minoritized,

predominantly Latino, emerging bilingual, low-income, students who scored 44% proficiency on the state's measure of academic performance in reading, the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA). Looking at the school culture and community showed another: beautiful well-equipped building, happy well-cared for children, strong family involvement, thoughtful educators, and leadership support. I was unable to marry these two realities in order to forge a path of action to guide the school towards higher performance in my role as its instructional literacy coach and reading specialist. Whether an explanation of underperformance would emerge as a convergence of dynamics or a single factor was yet to be determined, but I hoped that the story of my stellar elementary school might also have implications for other schools serving low-income, emergent bilingual, Latino students. At the time, I did not anticipate that my study would also shed light on what happens when years of intense focus on test scores undermine resources and time allocations for relevant instructional pedagogies for diverse learners and create issues surrounding teacher efficacy. Therefore, this study offers not only significant considerations for the leadership of my school, but also for schools serving similar populations, and policymakers that seek insight into how a focus on standardized testing leaves less room for instructional capacity building.

## CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### **Introduction**

Although my school is a contemporary, well-equipped building, one cannot ignore the fact that the students who inhabit it are touched by poverty and societal minoritization. Statistical data on the exact number of low-income families the school serves is skewed because once the free and reduced lunch applications reach 87%, schools no longer keep specific data, but rather report that 100% of students are receiving free breakfast and lunch. Needless to say, the school's students are offered free breakfast, free lunch, and free dinner for those students staying for after-hours programs. It is also an important fact that 33% are considered emergent bilingual students and 80% identify as Hispanic/Latino, a typically minoritized population in the United States.

The socio-cultural and political dynamics intersecting at my school involve ways that the teachers who work there interact and understand, or fail to understand, the ways in which their students have been minoritized by societal normalized expectations and structures. Insight into literature that describes the abilities, expectations, and stereotypes of teachers in schools with low-income, minoritized students was warranted. Teachers may also ignore or misapply pedagogies for diverse populations, especially emergent bilingual learners and those culturally marginalized. Attention to the ways that effective teachers use cultural relevance and responsiveness were also considered. Policies concerning school realities in an era of high-stakes testing additionally inform the study. Teacher satisfaction, efficacy, and professional development have all been tied to the accountability reform movement (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000; Jones & Egley, 2004; Rubin, 2011). To frame the story of my case, schools matching similar demographics that successfully maneuver the standardized testing high performance expectations also offer added insights. Finally, examining literature on ways that

instructional coaches make effective changes to school improvement and teacher effectiveness is applicable. My efforts as a practitioner scholar and instructional literacy coach within the setting required an enhanced understanding of research on effective teacher coaching methods and professional development approaches. I began my review with literature that helped to frame the landscape of my school.

### **Realities of the Social, Cultural, Political Landscape of the Case**

As much as the United States likes to pride itself as a melting pot, one cannot ignore statistics on the minoritization of races and cultures outside of the dominant American archetype. Latino students, especially emergent bilingual students, may find it difficult to navigate public schools built on English language and culture. They may be labeled as less-than based upon standardized tests that do not measure their knowledge and skill, but rather, their ability to understand English. Adding to these school realities is the societal reality that minoritized races and cultures are touched by poverty at a far-greater rate than the dominant race and culture; while this rate still continues to increase (Kochhar & Fry, 2014).

### **Poverty**

The United States economy has become increasingly divergent from the manufacturing jobs that once supplied a solid middle-class economy and has evolved to a more inequitable duality of low-skill/low-wage service and production jobs and high-skill/high-wage information and finance jobs; thus, educational attainment has become increasingly essential to earning better wages (Reardon, 2013). Income inequality has been growing at such a rate that children born into poverty in 2001 have roughly a 30-40% larger gap in measures of achievement than previous generations; this income gap is twice as large as the more frequently studied black-white gap (Reardon, 2013). Higher-income families are able to spend almost seven times as much on their children's development than lower-income families, a gap in opportunity that has

been continually widening, up from four times as much in 1972 (Kornrich & Furstenberg, 2013). Realities surrounding income inequality are certainly a cause for concern for many public-school children.

When thinking about students impacted by poverty, it is important to understand that low-income families are as diverse as the many and varied cultures they represent. Low-income people do not share common values or behaviors; they are not a culture (Gorski, 2008). All races and cultures are impacted by poverty even though stereotypes abound regarding low-income people. Paul C. Gorski's (2013) work studying low-income families finds four common stereotypes of low-income people: lack of parental involvement and support, laziness, substance abuse, and language deficiency. The statistical realities are quite different. The reality is that many low-income people work the equivalent of 1.2 jobs in labor-intensive and harsh conditions, many times without benefit of vacation days or sick leave afforded their wealthier peers (Waldron, Roberts & Reamer, 2004). Involvement in illegal drugs is evenly distributed across societal incomes and alcohol abuse is actually less likely in low-income families than wealthier families (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2004). Despite the societal obstacles that low-income parents face, they are no less attentive and responsible for their children's care (Gorski, 2013). While it is true that low-income and minoritized students are more likely to have English reading skill insufficiencies, the reasons why illustrate more about their access to literacy resources rather than anything about race and/or culture (Dupere, Leventhal, Crosnoe & Dion, 2010; Milner, 2013).

Because these societal stereotypes exist regarding students from low-income families, one must consider how these might impact classroom dynamics. In 1970, Ray Rist's seminal research on the ways in which schools reinforce societal class systems in society helps us better

understand that social organization patterns and behaviors modelled by teachers become ingrained within the classroom (Rist, 1970). Rist further found that

school strongly shares in the complicity of maintaining the organizational perpetuation of poverty and unequal opportunity. This, of course, is in contrast to the formal doctrine of education in this country to ameliorate rather than aggravate the conditions of the poor” (p.37).

Yet, much of the educational research surrounding poverty is limited in conceptualization and defines poverty around school free and reduced lunch programs and test scores, a limited view of the condition (Milner, 2013). Further, educational research related to low-income students tends to offer feeble recommendations for improvement of instruction (Milner, 2013). In other words, we know that schools are impacted by poverty-related stereotyping, but how to alter our understandings is less clear.

Reading scores, like those I am charged with improving, exhibit disproportions across income levels, but many of those disproportions can be clarified when the quality of the institutions in which students have access are compared (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gorski, 2013). Federal involvement in reading instructional practices for low-income students has emphasized specific pedagogical approaches, like phonics instruction into the intermediate and secondary grade levels, that have resulted in teacher-centered and inflexible classrooms while ignoring the National Reading Panel’s recommendations related to the importance of reading engagement, a more student-centered approach, as a predictor of achievement (Cummins, 2007; National Reading Panel, 2000). Ignoring educational research in the development of federal policies aimed at closing achievement gaps that were created by institutionalized systems of

inequity will not solve the problems created by that inequity, but rather create cyclical malpractice.

Still, the societal realities that low-income students face on a daily basis cannot be ignored while we wait for our institutions to play catch up. Schools need to find ways to counter rather than perpetuate these inequities. Programs such as Head Start, aimed at reducing the links between social inequalities and academic opportunities, are much needed (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). Growing evidence that programs extending school hours may help to narrow academic gaps is another area where schools can make inroads for educational attainment equality (Kaplan & Chan, 2012). Although institutionalized systems of inequity may never be made fully equitable, aligning our efforts and understandings is a step in ameliorating the systematic disadvantages low-income families face. My elementary school has begun a mission to counter income inequalities with programs for free pre-school, free daily meals, and extended hours for after school and Saturday tutoring, though it still faces many other inequitable realities of its minoritized students lived experiences.

### **Minoritized Students' Perceived Opportunity Gap**

The term 'achievement gap' lends itself to a deficit mindset that places blame for perceived academic failure on the student and/or their families. In reality, schools are facing an 'opportunity gap' where students who fail to meet expectancies on tests written and designed to measure the values of the dominant society are labelled as failures when what is really being measured is the lack of access to educational resources and societal opportunities (Carter & Welner, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gorski, 2013). The perceived gap is based upon society's consensus of what knowledge is most highly esteemed and whose values are most worthy. Student achievement is a socially constructed notion where the dominant power structures place value on particular behaviors and outcomes over others; one singular example

includes ways of valuing certain subject areas as superior to others (Counts, 1978; Milner, 2013). At my elementary school, this perceived gap is based upon monolingual assessments for students still in various stages of emerging bilingualism, a form of further systematic minoritization.

Adding to the perceived gaps in student performance for minoritized students is the emphasis placed on testing accountability and the labels that come with it. Low-income students who are labeled as below level, appear to be influenced by their labels in ways that may impact their later decisions to enroll in college (Papay, Murnane, & Willett, 2011). For students identified as emergent bilingual, how they are labeled and tracked proves to be a greater predictor of academic performance than their language acquisition efforts (Callahan, 2005). Students assigned to lower tracks simply do not perform as well as their peers placed in higher tracks (Oakes, 1985). De-tracking, with high expectations and curriculum, can be an effective strategy for increased student performance (Burriss, Wiley, Welner & Murphy, 2008). The leaders at my school have worked hard to eliminate student tracking and promote a more heterogeneous learning environment where all students are mainstreamed into general education classrooms, even those in the very beginning stages of bilingualism.

School environments that label and track students according to this perceived gap, ignore the funds of knowledge each student brings to the classroom (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006). An intense focus on narrow accountability assessments at the cost of ignoring student accomplishment makes social injustices even more pressing for minoritized students as they are deemed unworthy, their schools and teachers labeled failures. When these labeled failures shift the focus to students' perceived deficits, instead of students' funds of knowledge and ways to diminish inequalities, you have an educational system of misperceived ability as well as missed possibilities (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006).

In order to better understand these ‘gaps’ showing up in our school communities, we need to also consider the societal gaps such as teacher quality, teacher training, new and challenging curriculum, disparities in school funding, access to technology, employment opportunities, affordable housing, childcare, and healthcare availability (Irvine, 2010). Although segregation orders seem a thing of the past, six decades of research on segregation and educational opportunity demonstrate that separate remains unequal and neighborhood schools, like my elementary, face opportunity segregations due to societal minoritization based upon race and income (Orfield, Kucsera, & Siegel-Hawley, 2012). Studies of successful teaching practices for diverse learners must include a broad look at societal patterns of inequity and the ways teachers navigate those realities. Teacher consideration for and understanding of their students lived experiences as well as a critical ability to recognize the societal impacts upon classroom learning are essential (Hammond, 2015; Howard, 2003; Milner, 2013).

### **Teaching in Low-Income, Latino Schools**

There is a growing plea to prepare teachers for the twenty-first century’s increasingly diverse classrooms through critical lens (Banks et al., 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Gay, 2010; Gorski, 2013; Hammond, 2015, Ladson-Billings, 1995; Milner, 2013; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). The American classroom is predominantly led by white, female teachers with negligible professional preparation aimed at navigating, let alone challenging, the pressures of molding culturally, economically, racially, and linguistically diverse students into the dominant culture’s expectations (Aud et al., 2012; Banks et al, 2001; Cochran-Smith, et al., 2005; Sleeter, 2001). In addition to the lack of diversity in the teaching force, teachers in low-income, low-achieving, and minoritized schools are more typically less skilled or experienced (Barton & Coley, 2009; Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2002). Though most schools encourage or provide ongoing teacher professional development, trainings that teachers

receive are not well-aimed at classroom realities of society's growing diversity and instead tend to focus on the high-stakes testing's perceived importance (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000; Jones & Egley, 2004).

### **Deficit Thinking Toward Students from Low-Income, Latino Families**

Teacher and school practices may include stereotypes, bias, and deficit thinking toward low-income, Latino students. These attitudes are hard to overcome for non-dominant populations, lacking the social or political institutionalized power to transform these deficit narratives (Gorski, 2013). Thus, the narratives appear as truths to the dominant society. Confronting one's bias and stereotyping is a first step in overcoming deficit thinking and seeing students with asset-based eyes.

Adding another layer to the difficulty many teachers face in confronting their own biases are popularized pedagogical perspectives resting upon notions that low-income and minoritized peoples are in some ways inferior and need to be cured of their deficits. This deficit ideology is a view that justifies academic outcome inequalities by pointing to standardized test scores or levels of educational attainment as evidence of deficiencies within minoritized communities (Gorski, 2011; Valencia, 2010). For many years, teachers have been led to believe in deficit characterizations of low-income people without supporting anthropological, sociological or pedagogical research on poverty or race (Bomer, Dworin, May, & Semingson, 2008; Gorski, 2013; Valencia, 2010). This deficit ideology contributes to attitudes where student performance outside of dominant norms is viewed as lacking, weak, problematic, or a pathology to be remedied (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valencia, 2010).

Unfortunately, my district has perpetuated some of the popularized pedagogies related to deficit thinking through various instances of Dr. Ruby Payne's professional development offerings. Dr. Payne's book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, has been widely criticized

for its treatment of poverty as an abnormal pathology to be remedied through teacher intervention (Bomer, et al., 2008; Gorski, 2013; Payne, 2005; Smiley & Helfenbein, 2011; Ullucci & Howard, 2015; Valencia, 2010). Deficit ideology justifies inequality, using examples of bias and stereotype to explain away the inequality (Gorski, 2013). This creates a mindset of low expectation that not only justifies discriminating practices, but also lessens a teacher's sense of responsibility to their student (Bomer, et al., 2008; Pollack, 2012). If teachers can justify that their students' deficiencies are the result of some outside factor, they can justify their low expectations and absolve themselves of responsibility for continued cycles of poor academic performance.

Teachers who are trained toward equity theories, like social justice and cultural relevance and responsiveness, view inequities as the result of less opportunity and not a particular flaw due to income or culture and focus on the assets of their students instead of the deficits (Gorski, 2013; Halvorsen, Lee, & Andrade, 2008). Equity-oriented teachers do not subscribe to societal myths such as 'pulling oneself up by their bootstraps,' 'welfare queens,' 'not ready to start school,' and other stereotypes that attempt to mold everyone into a common ideal (Ullucci & Howard, 2015).

Finding ways to assist teachers in examining their own deficit thinking, as well as overcoming their bias and stereotyping, may help guide teachers who work with minoritized student populations toward seeing their students' funds of knowledge as a culturally relevant foundation (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Valencia, 2010). Teachers who use culturally relevant and responsive practices understand that culture is a resource to be harnessed, building upon family strengths that respect and value culture (Hammond, 2015; Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999).

## **Teaching Emergent Bilingual Students in a Predominantly English-Speaking Society**

In addition to ways that teachers may hold deficit ideologies toward their low-income students, teachers may also hold negative views regarding the emergent bilingual students in their classrooms (Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004). Considering the growing number of emergent bilingual students that teachers will be charged with teaching, this proves problematic. Since the 1974 *Lau v. Nichols* decision that schools must take steps to overcome language barriers for emergent bilingual students, the percentage of students enrolled as English Language Learners (ELL) has continued to grow (*Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563, 1974; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). For the 2013-14 school year, 4.5 million of the United States' students were emergent bilingual. Florida ranks as one of the states serving the greatest number of emergent bilingual students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016).

In Florida, emergent bilingual students take the state standardized test each year in English and their scores begin to count toward school ratings during their third year in attendance. This is despite the fact that bilingual research establishes a three to five-year timetable for emergent bilingual student proficiency in English, even under the best educational circumstances (Baker, 2011; Hahta, Butler, & Witt, 2000).

On top of a lack of consideration for bilingual research, there is a glaring problem when measuring the emergent bilingual subgroup's academic performance: the subgroup of ELL students never remains static (García, Arias, Murri, & Serna, 2010). The ELL subgroup is not a stable measure because schools systematically remove emergent bilingual students from the subgroup as they reach English proficiency, or bilingualism; thus, the ELL subgroup will always remain 'low-performing' as they are working to acquire English all the while being measured with tests administered in the dominant society's language (García et al., 2010). Further, measuring emergent bilingual student ability is problematic in that students may hold more

knowledge than they are able to articulate in English (Abedi & Lord, 2001). Schools that serve large emergent bilingual populations will have difficulty moving past the low performance label due to these inequitable measurement barriers.

Adding to the inequitable subgroup assessment of emergent bilingual students are the attitudes and skills their teachers bring to the classroom. Teacher attitudes about having emergent bilingual students in their classrooms can be negative; teachers cite lack of time, lack of preparation for, and inaccurate information about emergent bilingual students as their reasoning for this negativity (Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004). Calderón, Slavin, and Sánchez (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of research on schools that successfully teach emergent bilingual students and found that quality instruction was what mattered most when helping emergent bilingual students achieve.

Yet, it is simply not enough to lump emergent bilingual teaching expertise into a set of all-purpose teaching practices; emergent bilingual students have unique language acquisition needs that must be explicitly addressed (Gersten & Baker, 2000; Harper & de Jong, 2009). Teachers must have emergent bilingual pedagogical knowledge along with English language and reading pedagogical knowledge (Bunch, 2013; Gersten & Baker, 2000; Harper & de Jong, 2009). It is important to provide support for emergent bilingual students' increasing skill in language acquisition, while also valuing and extending the students' home language abilities, in order to effectively implement the standardized curriculum (Bunch, 2013; Gersten & Baker, 2000).

At my school, English language acquisition is coordinated by a trained specialist who annually reviews each student's English language acquisition level using ACCESS 2.0 for ELLs, a standardized English language proficiency assessment (WIDA Consortium, 2014). Emergent bilingual students are placed in regular, heterogeneous classrooms. Teachers in the state of

Florida are required to obtain an endorsement of skill for working with emergent bilingual students within five years of their initial teaching certification (Florida Department of Education, 1990). The large percentage of emergent bilingual students at my school makes up more than three times the national average. Many students outside of the identified 33% emergent bilingual population have shown English language proficiency at a level to be exited from the state's classification as an ELL student. However, the reality for many of the students at my elementary school is that a language other than English is their primary/home language and English is their secondary, and oftentimes school only, language. A further reality, that 80% of the students identify as a societally minoritized population, Hispanic/Latino, intersects with the single language school barrier. Simply having one person oversee the management of such a large number of bilingual and emergent bilingual students is not enough. The teachers must also be well trained in pedagogies for teaching the non-dominant languages and cultures represented in our school (Dixon, et al., 2012; Fillmore, 2014).

### **Teacher Professional Development for Diversely Populated Classrooms**

Recent efforts to aim ongoing teacher professional development toward teaching diverse learners may hold some promise and it is laudable to note that teacher professional development aimed specifically at impacting diverse learners is increasing (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Adamson, 2010). Yet, several studies have reported that teachers, even if they have had some preparation for teaching a diversity of students, feel unprepared for societal issues their students face (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011; Nieto, 2013).

While pre-service and in-service teacher preparation has been much more focused on teaching a broader student population, teacher preparation programs appear to divide pedagogies according to 'regular pedagogy' and 'pedagogy for diverse learners,' when teachers should be reflecting on more inclusive, rather than divisive, practices (Florian & Linklater, 2010; Ladson-

Billings, 1999). This divisiveness maintains a narrative of the typical, white, middle-class, monolingual teacher as regular, or without culture; it implies that she is normal, and thus, people unlike her are abnormal (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Other common narratives, like ‘Horatio Alger’ stories implying that if we work hard enough we can all one day be president, perpetuate dominant societal thinking that contradicts realities of our public-school classrooms. In reality, evidence tells us that unless we are worth a million bucks, went to an ivy-league school, are male, and of European descent we have a greatly diminished chance of becoming president (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Ullucci & Howard, 2015). Some realities of our institutionalized structures cannot be ignored away and since public schools are lauded as a means to bridge inequitable systems, professional development opportunities for teachers need to consider the realities of low-income, minoritized students and ways to ameliorate inequities.

Most teacher education programs require related courses in the field of psychology yet fail to examine educational theory through an anthropological or sociological lens (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Professional development opportunities for both pre-service and in-service teachers need to address the complexities and intersections of race, culture, language and social class as they influence student learning (Banks et al., 2001). Effective teachers of diverse students are continual learners themselves, seeking to better understand their students’ diversity and ways to utilize that diversity to their advantage (Banks, et al., 2001; Hammond, 2015). It is essential that professional development opportunities guide teachers in understanding these complexities as well as ways in which race, ethnicity, language, and social class interrelate. If professional development is aimed solely at strategies and methodologies, instead of examination of teacher beliefs and relationships with their students, teachers might be led to believe that students are solely responsible for their own underperformance (Bartolomé, 1994).

One of the most important changes that teacher professional development must embrace is shifting away from stereotypes that place blame on individual students rather than broadening teacher understandings of societal inequities (Ullucci & Howard, 2015). Teacher professional development aimed at increasing collective responsibility for the school may hold some promise (Halvorsen, Lee, & Andrade, 2008). In low-income and minoritized public schools where teachers have high levels of collective responsibility for all student learning, reading achievement is positively influenced (Halvorsen, Lee, & Andrade, 2008; Hollins, McIntyre, DeBose, Hollins & Towner, 2004). Teachers with a high level of collective responsibility recognize the challenge as well as the positive rewards of their work; they expend more preparation time, hold more frequent parent conferencing, set high expectations for students, and are inclined toward continual professional learning (Halvorsen, Lee, & Andrade, 2008). Recent trends toward reflective, critical professional development in the areas of cultural relevance and responsiveness may hold another key to balancing an effective classroom (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2015).

### **Teaching with Cultural Relevancy & Responsiveness**

Teachers carry their own lived experiences into classroom in ways that may unintentionally impact their professionalism. Because schools reflect the larger society, they value the skills, languages, and behaviors of the dominant society (Books, 2007). Teachers, often part of the professional-class and dominant society, may have difficulty noticing the ways that schools marginalize diverse students' experiences (Banks et al., 2001; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Teachers may have internalized dominant societal attitudes, bringing them directly into their classrooms (Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Teacher bias seeps into the classroom under the guise of low expectations and less rigorous curriculum. Student performance expectations may be based upon perceptions of student background rather than

actual abilities (Nieto & Bode, 2012). Teacher bias in the form of lowered performance expectations may result in student performance that appears to justify stereotypes about students' capacity to excel (Pollack, 2012).

Cultural relevance and responsiveness are pedagogical theories that embrace relevant knowledge and skills of diverse students in order to make students' learning environments validating and authentic (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Culturally relevant and responsive teaching theory seeks to overcome both educator bias, unconscious and normalized attitudes, and stereotypes, so that they may empower student thinking about the realities of their world (Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1992). Culturally responsive pedagogies help students preserve their cultural identities while helping them navigate the dominant culture's systems (Ladson-Billings, 1992). Culturally responsive teachers are conscious of the sociocultural realities of teaching and learning and have affirming, rather than deficit, outlooks on students who differ from the dominant culture (Gay, 2013; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Before relevant instructional planning and responsive action can occur, a teacher must be able to critically reflect on understandings, beliefs, attitudes, and stereotypes about diverse populations and how these stances have seeped into their classrooms (Gay, 2013; Hammond, 2015). This is not an easy task. Teachers begin moving to critical responsiveness by increasing their equity literacy toward eventual recognition, counter stances, and answers to situations where marginalized students are denied equitable educational access (Gay, 2013; Gorski, 2013). Teachers learning to become culturally responsive must have an understanding of the socio-political power structures impacting their students' lives and view themselves as agents of change (Hammond, 2015; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In addition to critically examining the

complexities of their own attitudes and responses, culturally responsive teachers must continually expand their understanding and knowledge of cultures (Hammond, 2015; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Culturally responsive teachers understand that there are many ways that students think, know, behave, and learn, some outside of the dominant culture's expectations of what learning should look like (Hammond, 2015). For instance, teachers who employ culturally responsive practices are aware that some cultures value collectivism over the more dominant American trait of individualism and they understand that oral tradition and performance-based knowledge mastery are features of many non-dominant cultures (Hammond, 2015). Culturally responsive teachers take genuine interest in their students' lives and plan instruction that builds on students' funds of knowledge, using these funds to stretch their students beyond their known experiences (Moll & González, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). These teachers help their students use lived experiences in order to frame new knowledge (Gay, 2013; Hammond 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1992). Teachers who use culturally relevant and responsive practices believe that their students are capable of academic success and use the internal strength of diverse students to their advantage, designing instruction that builds upon their students' strengths (Gay, 2013; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1992). Culturally responsive teachers work hard to earn the right to be tough, stretching their students past a foundation of the familiar, using culture as a bridge (Hammond, 2015; Kleinfeld, 1975; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). They do this through community building focused on shared and collective responsibility, creating environments where learning is a socio-emotional partnership of critically examined, group constructed, and communal knowledge (Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009) They offer opportunities for students to be independent learners and give asset-based feedback that not only affirms their

students' hard work, but also cultivate academic mindsets that recognize mistakes as opportunities for progress (Hammond, 2015).

Teachers who act with cultural relevance and responsiveness also recognize how learning theory and cognitive science can assist them in building their students' intellectual potentials (Hammond, 2015). They have an understanding of the way the brain constantly works to scan for and avoid threats, move toward rewards, and pursue safety (Hammond, 2015). Most importantly, they use to their advantage the pillars of neuroscience by harnessing the brain's desire to form attachments and seek safety in order to create environments for student learning (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2015). In other words, they know that creating a safe, inviting classroom is more than just a behavior management concern; it is learning theory tied to brain research (Hammond, 2015).

Culturally relevant and responsive teachers also tie their instruction to meaningful lived experiences. In many instances marginalized students have formed dependent learning capacities due to years of underestimation and lack of opportunities to productively struggle with knowledge construction (Hammond, 2015). Culturally responsive teachers negotiate the ways that their students construct schema by building on what they know in order to work toward higher-order thinking (Hammond, 2015). They attempt to balance rigorous instruction and support so as not to activate their students' threat avoidance (Hammond, 2015).

Research on culturally relevant and responsive teaching is still in its infancy and evidence of an explicit relationship between culturally responsive instruction and student outcomes is still somewhat unclear (Scanlan & López, 2012). The idea that teaching is, in and of itself, a transformative political act (Freire, 1970) indicates that teachers must realize that their pedagogical decisions have far-reaching social justice implications for marginalized students. As

the dream-keepers of society, teachers must examine ways to reach and teach all students (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

### **High Performing Low-Income, Latino Schools**

Although schools that teach students from impoverished and minoritized backgrounds seem to dominate the negative news cycle, there are high-performing schools that match my schools demographic that successfully navigate the standardized testing expectations for their students. It is important to consider that state assessments do not distinguish schools that have been labeled ‘high-performing’ relative to their instruction and learning versus their social class so the examination must begin with high-performing low-income, minoritized schools, which, unfortunately, are a rare exception to the typical high performing school (Elmore, 2004).

High-performing low-income, minoritized populated schools share a consistent focus on improved instruction (Herman et al., 2008). Learning environments in these schools focus on excellence by having high expectations for every student (García et al., 2010; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). Teachers in these high-performing schools believe that their students are as capable as any student, regardless of societal minoritization (Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). Instruction is strongly focused on academics, is active versus passive, student-centered and cooperative; attention to rigorous instructional curricula take priority (García et al., 2010; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). Instructional emphasis is placed on making meaning and understanding; math is conceptually connected to the concrete and reading is thematically connected to experiences (Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). A determined focus on English language proficiency is explicitly persistent (Gerstein & Baker, 2000; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). Instructional considerations are, very simply, a priority.

Teacher autonomy and confidence are present in high-performing low-income, minoritized schools (Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). Teachers are interested in their own professional development and are enthusiastic about their profession (García et al., 2010; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). They work to continue their own learning in strong collaborative teams that share a targeted goal and vision; if something isn't working they seek out other successful practices (Elmore, 2004; Johnson & Asera, 1999; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). Professional development that focuses on teaching diverse populations is essential and embraced (Banks et al., 2001; Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011).

Teachers also share a deep sense of collective and internalized responsibility for all students in the school (Elmore, 2004; Johnson & Asera, 1999; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). In addition to this sense of being responsible for all children, an ethic of care and nurturing is also present in high-performing low-income, minoritized schools (García et al., 2010; Noddings, 2013; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). Everything that transpires in these schools is energized by student need (Johnson & Asera, 1999; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). Teachers encourage student self-responsibility and honorable behavior for all students within the school (García et al., 2010; Johnson & Asera, 1999). In essence, these teachers remember that their professional duty is to enhance the lives of children.

It is not just the teachers who impact high-performing low-income, minoritized schools; characteristics of the leadership in these schools provide further insights. Principals in high-performing schools serving diverse students view themselves as the primary resource provider for both students and teachers (Johnson & Asera, 1999; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). They are highly visible, enthusiastic about their role, and have a clear vision that is communicated well with all stakeholders (García et al., 2010; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-

Scribner, 1999). Principals articulate their expectations for student learning and have a strong sense of urgency in high-performing schools (Elmore, 2006). Principals in high-performing low-income and minoritized schools have high expectations for not only the students, but also the teachers, who they view and trust as capable professionals (García et al., 2010). They are intentional in their recruitment of teachers, always on the lookout for instructional leadership to share collective decision-making for the school (García et al., 2010; Herman et al., 2008; Johnson & Asera, 1999). Building a committed and strong staff is a priority for principals in high-performing low-income, minoritized populated schools (Herman et al., 2008).

In addition to care, concern, high expectations, and strong instructional leadership, high-performing schools with low-income minoritized students also operate in ways that support diversity. Culturally relevant and responsive instruction is present (Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). Culture and first languages are valued in ways that incorporate student interest and tap into their funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). By embracing the larger cultural community, staff in these schools build respect and confidence that lead to an increase connectedness with parents (Johnson & Asera, 1999; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). High-performing low-income, minoritized schools have open lines of communication between the school and the parents or caregivers (Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). Staff members understand the inequities students face and take measures to overcome them by finding ways to help with the greater needs of the community (García et al., 2010).

### **Realities of Standards-Based Instruction and Assessment**

In addition to research related to the instruction in high-performing, low-income, minoritized schools, research surrounding the ways in which these schools approach the state standardized assessment provides further insight into the complexities of measuring student

performance. These schools see the state standardized assessment as a starting point, but also incorporate a variety of assessments to observe student performance (García et al., 2010; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999). Empowered teachers in these schools are given independence to develop and implement varied assessment measures based upon their students' needs (Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999).

Yet, the reality of my school, located in the high-stakes testing state of Florida, is very different. The tested standards are the focus of most instruction, creating a narrowed curriculum (Berliner, 2011; Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014) that limits teacher autonomy and efficacy (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Rubin 2011). Even more unfortunate, this narrowing of curricular choice is more often found in low-income schools (Darling-Hammond, 2010) and limits the time spent on culturally relevant and responsive teaching. Most unfortunate, all of this focus on standardization and assessment has failed to increase student achievement (Hursh, 2007; Nichols & Berliner 2008). Thus, while high-performing low-income, minoritized schools used state standardized assessment along with a variety of assessments to observe student performance, this is no longer the case in high-stakes testing environments like those in Florida where teacher pay, school ratings, and property values are tightly linked to student performance on the state standardized assessment (Black & Machin, 2011; Clapp, Nanda & Ross, 2008; Nguyen-Hoang & Yinger, 2011).

### **Coaching Toward Improved Instruction**

Because this entire study revolves around my role as both a practitioner scholar and an instructional coach, examining the ways that effective coaches navigate landscapes of standardized assessment pressures and low-income, minoritized settings seems warranted. Instructional coaches are teachers who work with other teachers to increase effective instructional practice in classrooms (Knight, 2007). School-based coaches provide job-embedded

professional development, working alongside teacher colleagues to uncover and address problems of practice specific to their school and students (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan & Powers, 2010).

The work of an instructional coach rests upon relationship building; I cite my nine years of experience in defense of that statement. In order for the work of increased student performance to occur, a trusting and non-evaluative relationship must be built (Knight, 2007). Once this relationship has been established, coaches can have a positive impact on teacher attitudes, skill, efficacy, and student achievement (Cornett & Knight, 2008). When coaches are seen as facilitators and not an extension of administration, teachers view the coaches as a collaborator and not a boss (Vanderberg & Stephens, 2009). This facilitative coaching model is the one I work hard to employ.

Coaches can also be instrumental in demonstrating instructional practice, explaining theory, and providing feedback on observed classroom practice (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Further, coaches can have positive impacts on teacher attitudes; thus, schools focusing on socio-cultural issues around low-income, minoritized students may benefit from instructional coaching (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Teemant, Wink, Tyra, 2011). When coaches enact performance-based coaching that focuses on socio-cultural pedagogy, such as cultural relevance and responsiveness, improvements in teacher skill can be seen (Teemant, Wink, Tyra, 2011). That said, in order for performance-based coaching to work, coaches need to have more expertise than the teachers they are coaching and the ability to articulate what they observe in classrooms (Dole, 2004). Therefore, it is important to remember that coaches are teachers and learners too. Coaches need time to learn and experience new pedagogies in order to mature into strong teacher leaders (Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010). In other words, instructional coaches have

potential for far-reaching influence within the school so long as they are effective and knowledgeable educators themselves.

Coaching requires specialized knowledge in not only content and instructional pedagogy, but also an understanding of how to work closely with adult learners (L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010). Coaches must be able to navigate through teacher resistance. In a study of 33 teachers at an urban, low-income elementary school, issues surrounding conflicting curriculum and instructional methodologies impacted the effect that coaches had on curricular and instructional implementation (Al Otaiba, Hosp, Smartt, & Dole, 2008). Considerations for the district-adopted standardized curriculum and the ideologies my colleagues have of their autonomy are a near-constant tightrope. In addition to respecting their autonomy, I have to find ways to bridge their professional endeavors alongside my district leadership's expectations.

Instructional coaches who are also reading specialists, like myself, have specialized knowledge in reading instruction that may help the many levels of reader ability in low-income, minoritized schools, (Dole, 2004). My reading expertise is one way that I am able to create that bridge. When a reading coach is a component of school-based professional development in high-poverty schools, reading achievement can improve (Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2006; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2007). Teaching practices are impacted when a teacher spends time with an instructional coach; thus, time spent with teachers should be the primary focus of a coach (Cornett & Knight, 2008; L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010). The leadership members of my school value my coaching efforts and the majority of my time is spent with teachers.

The school leadership often employs my efforts to launch new initiatives. In addition to curricular and instructional impacts, coaches can also help colleagues' implement new policies

and procedures (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Cornett & Knight, 2008). School-based coaching helps to transfer training objectives into practice, contributing to collegiality which builds risk-taking that is necessary for teachers to try new pedagogical approaches (Joyce & Showers, 2002). In the end, the most important consideration regarding coaching is that instructional coaches have a positive impact on student achievement by increasing the capacity of teachers (Cornett & Knight, 2008). Coaches can be a strong component towards building a high-performing school.

### **Conclusion**

To contextualize this study, I reviewed literature on perceptions of teaching and learning, as well as effective practices for, and conditions similar to, the realities of my school. Final literature considerations for the circumstances of high-stakes standardized assessments and effective coaching practices helped to guide my work. The purpose of this study was to determine teacher perceptions and pedagogies that were factors in student performance on the state's standardized assessment. Teachers were interviewed and observed in an effort to isolate specific areas that I could address as an instructional literacy coach and reading specialist at the school. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology of this study, including data collection, data analysis, as well as a description of my role as a practitioner researcher within the school setting.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

A qualitative case study methodology was used to explore teacher perceptions and instructional factors that might be impeding student performance on standardized measures of assessment at an urban, public elementary school of approximately 600 predominantly Latino, low-income students located in the state of Florida. Time limitations inhibited the use of all 47 teachers; a voluntary sample of teacher participants was used. Purposive sampling guidelines regarding length of time the teacher participants had served within the school added trustworthiness to this study (Creswell, 2013). In addition, cross-analyzed data from both interviews and observations were examined to find common themes related to teacher perceptions and practices of the case.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study of a low-income, predominantly Latino public elementary school was to explore instructional factors and teacher perceptions that might be impeding student performance on standardized measures of assessment in order to aim my support and expertise as the school's new instructional literacy coach and reading specialist. In addition, school-based leadership expressed an interest in providing resources that might increase student performance, as measured by the state's standardized tests.

I chose an exploratory case methodology as it lent itself to my desire to better understand a school with a distinct demographic: urban, predominantly Latino, low-income, and serving a large number of emergent bilingual students. Case study design assists in studying real-life, small-scale, contemporary systems through collection of multiple and detailed sources of data to confront problems (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1988). By exploring the distinctive features to the single case of my public elementary school, through two detailed

data sources, I hoped to reveal instructional factors and teacher perceptions that might be contributing to student underperformance on standardized measures of assessment. Because case studies are heuristic, the study's intended elucidation of specific and previously unrevealed problems might assist me in postulating theories and aiming actions to improve student performance, both features of effective case studies (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1988).

### **Selection of Participants**

Purposive selection was used to choose participants from among all classroom teachers, those charged with the day-to-day instruction of students. Purposive selection is used in qualitative studies to isolate participants that potentially increase or deepen understanding of the case to be studied (Creswell, 2013). Three purposive selection criteria were central for this case study: length of time at the school, equal distribution across grade levels, and willingness to participate. The time criterion was based upon the idea that teachers who had been at the school for more than two years would have greater familiarity with the school and students than a new teacher, and thus, a richer understanding of instructional pedagogies and community perceptions that might contribute to student underperformance. The purpose for selecting teachers across grade levels was two-fold. The primary and intermediate wings are physically isolated from one another and the grade levels work in PLCs. These features of the physical context may add to common perceptions and practices among teachers who work in close proximity and/or in grade-level professional learning communities. By spreading the conversations across grade levels, it was hoped that a richer picture of the case would emerge. Finally, all eligible participants were given an informed consent form, approved both by the University of Florida's Institutional Review Board and my district's Department of Research and Accountability ([Appendix A](#)). The informed consent form was distributed to eligible participants during a weekly literacy PLC meeting; teachers were

instructed to either place the signed willingness to participate form in my school mailbox or bring it to my office in an effort to keep their participation anonymous. These three purposive criteria were meant to increase the depth of meaning related to the entire case by isolating teachers who had a rich knowledge of and a willingness to discuss our school.

### **Description of Participants**

Of the 47 instructional personnel, 30 were classroom teachers involved in the day-to-day instruction of students. Of those 30, nine had been at the school less than two years. From the remaining 21 purposively sampled teacher participants, 12 volunteered, two of the 10 eligible primary teachers and 10 of the 11 eligible intermediate teachers. No participants from kindergarten volunteered. Because I was a practitioner scholar within the setting, I was aware of and wanted to decrease any bias or orientations, good or bad, that I may have had towards the volunteering teachers (Merriam, 1988). Therefore, I decided to randomize the selection of each grade level so that no bias would occur through my selection of the participants. The single first grade teacher participant and single second grade teacher participant volunteers were each selected as no randomization was possible. Five of six eligible third grade teacher participants volunteered; two of two fourth grade teacher participants volunteered; and three of three fifth grade teacher participants volunteered. The website, [www.random.org](http://www.random.org) was used to randomize the participants by inputting all of the eligible grade level teacher participants' anonymous numerical identities into the program that ordered the numerical identities; the top recorded numerical teacher participant was the random selection ([Appendix B](#), single sample). All teacher volunteers were notified by sealed letter, both those selected and those not selected, of their status as a selected participant. The letter informing those selected included a copy of their signed informed consent form so that they always had the information available should they

desire to leave the study. At the beginning of both interviews, participants were reminded of their voluntary participation and ability to remove themselves from the study if they so desired.

### **Context of the Study**

The public elementary school studied is located in a large, urban school district in Florida. The community poverty is such that all students receive free meals at the school daily. During the school year preceding the study, only 44% of the 3rd - 5th grade students met reading proficiency and 45% met math proficiency as measured by the state's standardized assessments. The approximately 600 students are predominantly Latino (80%) and many are considered emergent bilingual students (33%). The school, though established many years ago, was renovated in 2011 and has modern technology access and a well-stocked library. Access to the arts and recess are protected within the daily schedule. There is a strong sense of community as evidenced by parent involvement in the numerous opportunities offered to families.

There are 30 classroom teachers in grades Pre-K to five. The additional instructional staff includes three exceptional education teachers, a behavioral specialist, a behavior classroom teacher, a physical education teacher, an art teacher, a music teacher, a gifted education teacher, and eight paraprofessionals. There are five clerks to assist with secretarial needs. The school's leadership team includes a principal, an assistant principal, an administrative dean, the media specialist, the staffing specialist, and three instructional coaches. Frequent visits from the district's area director and area superintendent occur as well as regular, weekly coaching sessions led by the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) department. Curriculum is up to date with the state's standards; instruction is delivered in English.

The underperforming students are identified within this study as those students not considered proficient on the reading portion of the state standardized assessment. In reading, 56% of the students in grades 3-5 were not considered proficient.

## Data Collection

I relied on two primary sources of data to inform this exploratory case study: interviews and classroom coaching observations (Table 2-1).

Table 2-1. Qualitative case study data related to factors that explain underperformance

Data Source 1	Collection	Analysis	Rationale for Data
Interviews with 5 Teachers	Two semi-structured, in-person, one-on-one, audio-recorded interviews: a generative first interview and a second clarification interview Interview 1: Generative interview: Purposeful questions seeking to generate themes that might explain underperformance for the case ( <a href="#">Appendix C</a> ). Interview 2: Clarification interview: Purposeful questions seeking to expand and clarify themes, both individual and collective, from the generative interview ( <a href="#">Appendix D</a> ).	Interviews were analyzed using 4-step inquiry analysis method (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Interview 1 was analyzed through description and sense-making steps before the second interview in order to create expanding and clarifying questions for the second interview. However, step 3 (Interpretations) & step 4 (Implications) of interviews were not completed until all data from both interviews were collected	Interviews are useful to uncover unobservable perspectives of teachers. Semi-structured interviews assist in uncovering topics identified in the literature and specific to the single case. The second clarification interview contributed to the trustworthiness of emergent themes by asking participants specific clarifications as well as questions regarding common themes across participants. This form of member-checking further increased trustworthiness.
Classroom Observations of 5 teachers	Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model: A meta-analysis of effective teaching pedagogies delineated into 41 classroom strategies and behavior elements along with detailed linear notations (Marzano & Toth, 2013); ( <a href="#">Appendix E</a> ).	Classroom observation notations data, lean-coded into common themes ( <a href="#">Appendix H</a> ). Observed elements numerically counted into a frequency and scale-scored matrix ( <a href="#">Appendix I</a> ). From identified elements and notations, common instructional themes were noted, (Creswell, 2013; Marzano & Toth, 2013).	Examining observation data may reveal patterns of instruction, as defined by the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model. By examining these patterns, the instructional factors impeding student academic performance emerge.

## **Interviews**

Following advice outlined for conducting interviews by Creswell (2013) and Merriam (1988), audio-recorded interviews were conducted with five teacher participants, one from each grade level, first through fifth (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1988). Interviews were written so as to uncover teacher perceptions of the school community and their responsibilities within it, as well as typical instructional pedagogies. The interviews were semi-structured with the first interview being generative toward unearthing common themes (Creswell, 2013). The interview questions were created from my personal understandings as a participant observer in the school and my scholarly understandings from literature, taking into account the factors of the student population and underperformance. All interviews were transcribed using a transcription service and checked for accuracy during the first reading of interviews at the very start of the data analysis phase (Creswell, 2013).

### **Interview 1: Generative interview**

Although I began with prepared questions, every initial interview continued in a generative manner as each interview unfolded organically. This helped to establish rapport and bring about natural reflection regarding the teacher's perceptions of the school (Creswell, 2013). Each generative interview lasted approximately 40 minutes and was conducted at the discretion of the teacher participants ([Appendix C](#)).

I read each participant's first generative interview in full without making any notations, while listening to the audio recording to check for accuracy. On the second reading, I examined each individual participant's responses according to the interview questions: English Language Learners, Exceptional Education students, low income, cultural relevancy and responsiveness, instructional pedagogy perceptions, and school perceptions. From each initial participant's comments, I created individual clarification questions for the second interview to elicit further

explanation and increase the trustworthiness of the eventual findings through member checking (Creswell, 2013).

### **Interview 2: Clarification interview**

Noting that participants were not being precise in the descriptions of their instructional practice I added a broad question, related to their perceptions of exemplary teaching practice, as well as a question related to unanticipated comments regarding teacher efficacy ([Appendix D](#)). The second interview was thus a clarifying interview based upon participants' responses to the first interview. I included teacher participant quotes from the first interview in order to contribute to trustworthiness through member checking. Each clarification interview lasted approximately 40 minutes and was, once again, scheduled at the discretion of the participants. While it was important for the generative interview to evolve somewhat organically, the clarification interview was more structured. Several times I repeated my understanding of the participant's intent, to confirm that I indeed understood the participant correctly. These validation efforts aimed to add trustworthiness to my eventual interpretations of the data (Creswell, 2013).

### **Coaching Observations**

One of my responsibilities as an instructional coach is to conduct observations of all classrooms using the 2014 Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model ([Appendix E](#)). For the purpose of coaching, the model is meant to direct instructional coaching conversations in an effort to build greater teacher capacities. Although administrators use the same model to evaluate teacher performance, my observations are non-evaluative and cannot be viewed by administrators, keeping the essential issues of trust and collegial relationships separate from performance evaluation while also maintaining the anonymity of participants in the study. I have been well-trained on the use of this model, have implemented it into my coaching for five years, and have recently been recertified in inter-rater reliability using the model.

The Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model was developed by Dr. Robert Marzano through a meta-analysis of research on effective teaching practice (Marzano & Toth, 2013). The model involves four domains: classroom strategies and behaviors, planning and preparing, reflecting on teaching, and collegiality and professionalism. Although teachers may request feedback in any of the domains, coaches' efforts are concentrated around the first 41 elements that gauge effective classroom strategies and behaviors. For this study, I included only the 41 elements listed in domain 1, classroom strategies and behaviors, since those were the elements routinely used within my established coaching observation relationships and because they constituted the bulk of elements related to instructional practice. Each of these 41 elements is scored in one of five ways: not using, beginning, developing, applying, or innovating. Without a lengthy discussion on the foundational development of Dr. Marzano's model, I will quickly summarize the scaled ratings; for further inquiry into Dr. Marzano's extensive research on teacher effectiveness, one would need to read the many books he has written and peruse his extensive website, [Effective Educators](#) (Marzano & Toth, 2013). The lowest rating a teacher can receive on an element is 'not using,' which is recorded when a teaching element should be executed, but is not being executed. A 'beginning' rating is recorded when a teacher is attempting to execute a strategy, but it is not being fully executed to the desired effect (Marzano & Toth, 2013). A 'developing' rating is for when a teacher is using the strategy effectively, but she is not monitoring the desired effect in most of her students. 'Applying' is given when the teacher is using the strategy correctly and is monitoring her students to make sure that the desired effect is occurring with the majority of the students. The 'innovating' rating is reserved for when a teacher not only uses the strategy correctly and monitors the majority of her students but also adapts and/or creates a new strategy

based on the unique needs of her students or a unique situation that occurs (Marzano & Toth, 2013).

The Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model does not include specific elements for cultural relevance and responsiveness or emergent bilingual students. Therefore, in a targeted study of the large emergent bilingual population of my school, this model might not have been the best choice. However, because I anticipated observing instances related to my school's low-income, Latino demographics, I dedicated the section of the model related to "Communicating High Expectations for All Students" for when I observed any instances of specialized practices related to emergent bilingual students or diversity practices aimed at our specific student population (Marzano & Toth, 2013).

Additionally, my district has placed an emphasis on instructional rigor as an essential component of instruction. Dr. Marzano's guidance, that thirteen of the forty-one elements in the domain 1 section of the model constitute the essential classroom strategies and behaviors for instructional rigor, guided my observational knowledge (Marzano & Toth, 2014). Teachers in my district have been exposed to this guidance on the thirteen rigorous elements contained within the model, though I was unsure of my participants' familiarity with the concept of instructional rigor.

In addition to using this model consistently, as other coaches in my district are charged to do, I regularly keep detailed linear notations in a Word document as I conduct the observation. I transfer these notations to an electronic database which automatically emails teachers, notifying them of my coaching observation. These linear notations assist me in coaching teachers through the instructional elements that I have observed. For the purpose of this study, these notations served as an additional window into the actual scale-scored pedagogies observed, resulting in a

much richer picture of the participants' practices. This more detailed picture assisted in guiding my direction toward improved student performance.

Because teachers are accustomed to being observed with the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model, this form of data collection was not intrusive for the participants, but rather a regular part of their daily work. I had hoped to complete four observations per teacher, but was unable to do so due to observation time limitations set by my district. I had two participants who did not meet the four-observation goal, one owing to our conflicting schedules and another who turned me away on two occasions. A third participant ended with five observations due to my being in her classroom more frequently at the request of the principal. Two participants had the expected four observations, for a total of eighteen classroom observations for the five teacher participants.

### **Data Analysis**

My goal for this study was to uncover factors that helped to explain student underperformance at my public elementary school in order to tailor my instructional literacy coaching and increase student achievement, as measured by student performance on standardized assessments. I used practitioner inquiry methods of sense-making coding, research question interpretation, and thematic implication to arrive at my findings (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). During the sense-making and coding phase, broad themes were broken down into smaller categorical themes through a color delineation lean-coding process based upon the teacher responses to each question and/or observation, looking for common broad themes across participants (Creswell, 2013; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). In order to interpret the research questions with the emerging themes from the first coding process, a secondary coding of the data aligned to the research questions helped to further narrow common themes across participants (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Once these themes had

been extracted through sense-making, lean-coding, and research question interpretation, I arrived at findings by “triangulating” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251) themes individually extracted from both sources of data, interviews and observations, in order to cross-analyze the common themes that had emerged so that I could isolate findings toward actions as a practitioner scholar (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014).

Data analysis was a three-stage process. I first analyzed only the interview data without examining any of the observation data, resulting in common themes central to the interview data only. I then moved into the observation data without comparison or reexamination of the interview data, resulting in common themes central to the observational data only. Once I had identified the distinctive themes within each data source, I created a cross-analysis chart related to themes from each data source, looking for associated pedagogies and perceptions that emerged as contributing factors to student underperformance on standardized assessments from both data sources (Table 2-2 below).

### **Interview Data Analysis**

Once all data were collected, I began the sense-making phase by reading each participant’s interview transcript, both generative and clarifying, as an individual set, while listening to the actual audio-recording in order to check transcription accuracy (Creswell, 2013; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2011). I next created an Excel spreadsheet, where I listed each interview question, both generative and clarifying, as well as direct quotes from the teacher participants’ response to that question, reading through the interviews a second time in order to record responses to each interview question. Once all interviews had been added to the spreadsheet, I read across interview questions to look for common themes related to each specific interview question, noting them at the end of each interview question row ([Appendix F](#)).

Once each participant's themes had been noted, I reduced the individual teacher participant's themes to common themes across the five teacher participants, using color-coding ([Appendix F](#)).

I repeated this process on another Excel spreadsheet, this time using the three research questions as my guide ([Appendix G](#)). Each time I encountered a response that appeared to answer one of the three research questions, I paraphrased responses directly next to that research question. Once all interviews had been added to this second research question focused spreadsheet, I read across research questions to look for common themes related to that research question, noting them at the end of each research question column. I once again used color delineation to extract common themes across the five teacher participants in a secondary analysis of emerging themes, this time related to answering the research questions and as a secondary check of developing themes.

Using the color delineated common themes that had emerged from both analysis of the individual interview questions and the three research questions, I created Word documents for each theme. I next copied exact quotes from the teacher participant transcripts that supported the larger common themes. These thematically quoted Word documents served as support and direction for the findings section of this dissertation. This process was not based upon any particular rationale other than my own organizational style, but served me well during the writing phase where I did not have to return to the lengthy interviews to extract quotes to support my findings.

### **Observation Data Analysis**

At the end of this study, I had observed the teacher participants eighteen times. I first transcribed the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model classroom strategy and behaviors observational data stored electronically onto my original dated classroom notation documents, making sure I had all of the data from each observation into one document. This allowed me to

have both the coaching notations I had made during the actual observation and the scale-scored elements in one central document. Later observations, though already scale-scored using the model, had not been placed into the electronic database, but remained in original linear notation form due to my district's guidance on end dates allowed for classroom observations. However, most teacher participants agreed to my observations past the district's date, excepting one teacher who turned me away after two observations.

Once all electronic submissions were transcribed onto the original dated observation documents, I began data analysis of the classroom strategy and behavior observations by reading each individual teacher participant's multiple observations as an entire set before moving to the next teacher participant. In doing so, I hoped to gain a broader understanding of each individual and her practice. Much like the interview data, I created an Excel spreadsheet for each teacher participant with the main research question as the guiding identifier for factors that might be contributing to student underperformance on standardized assessments. Under each research question, I paraphrased notations that might help to answer the research question. At the end of each participant's column, I recorded common themes related to the coaching notations I had made while observing. From these individual common themes, I again used color delineation to extract common themes that emerged across all teacher participants ([Appendix H](#)).

The eighteen observations resulted in ninety uniquely scored classroom strategy and behavior elements using the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model (Marzano & Toth, 2013). These scale-scored elements were counted and sorted on an Excel spreadsheet according to frequency, assigning a letter equivalency of NU for Not Using, B for beginning, D for developing, and A for applying ([Appendix I](#)). There were no innovating ratings recorded. Average scale-scores were

computed for each of the elements to ascertain an average level of implementation for each classroom strategy or behavior element by assigning a numerical equivalency from 1 for not using, to 5 for innovating.

Because I understood that there were thirteen specific elements related to essential classroom strategies and behaviors for instructional rigor, I then isolated frequency and scale-scored averages for those elements by highlighting them in yellow. I next calculated percentages related to the total times teacher participants were engaged in the thirteen specific elements related to essential classroom strategies and behaviors for instructional rigor, their average score while in those elements, the amount of time spent in those elements compared to all elements and the number of elements related to essential classroom strategies and behaviors for instructional rigor that were not observed. Since I was additionally concerned with classroom strategies and behaviors related to my school's more homogenous low-income, Latino demographics, I highlighted the section of the model related to "communicating high expectations for all students" in green.

### **Interview and Observation Common Themes Analysis**

I began the cross-analysis of interviews and observation by first listing the common themes from the interviews ([Appendix F](#) and [Appendix G](#)) against the common themes of the observations ([Appendix H](#) and [Appendix I](#)), yielding a comparison of the common themes across interview and classroom observation data (Table 2-2). By comparing the interview common themes to the observation common themes, I arrived at common themes across both data. Below this table, I created findings statements that became central topics for the findings chapter.

Table 2-2. Cross analysis of interview and observation common themes

	Common Themes					
	A	B	C	C	C	D
Interviews	Standardized Assessments	Instruction (Rigor and Goals)	Deficit Thinking	Teaching Emergent Bilingual Students	Teaching Diverse Student Populations	Teacher Efficacy
Observations	Off Standard, Clear Goals	Elaboration/ Processing, Low Rigor, Clear Goals		Guided Discussion	Diversity Strategies	

- Findings statement A: Misinformed standards-based instruction and unclear learning goals may be a factor in student performance.
- Findings statement B: Lack of rigorous instruction may be a factor in student performance.
- Findings statement C: Lack of attention to the specific needs of students may be a factor in student performance.
- Findings statement D: Teacher perception that some grade levels are more valued than others may affect teacher efficacy and, in turn, student performance.

### **Researcher Subjectivity Statement**

Because of my role as a practitioner researcher for this study, I was careful to examine the ways in which my participation as a member of this learning community could impact my lens. I am a member of the dominant group of white females that are typical of elementary school teachers. This fact may have granted me access to conversations because other white females may conclude that we have a shared culture, where meanings and values are similar. I may have also encountered resistance from minoritized teacher participants who doubt my sincerity or understanding of their lived experiences when conversations about race or Latino heritage developed. Building relationships and developing my listening abilities, without interjection of opinion, was critical to both establishing myself within the learning community, as well as performing my job as an instructional literacy coach.

I also encountered decreased trust issues because of my closeness to the principal and leadership team. My past history working closely with the principal, as both a teacher and instructional leader, may have prompted at least one teacher participant to question my trustworthiness, which may have, in turn, impeded her full honesty in fear of my closeness to her employment supervisor, the principal. Reminders of confidentiality were given at the beginning of each interview and at times when it naturally occurred during the interviews. In addition, I remind my colleagues that they were neither required to participate nor required to remain in the research effort at the start of each interview.

It was very important that I conveyed my status as an observer rather than an experimenter. Case study research does not involve experimentation, but rather exploration of a specific case. No changes were made to the school as a result of this study. Any coaching conversations that occurred with the teacher participants were part of the school experience and not shaped by anything I saw specifically related to an observation or interview for this study. The goal of the study was to better understand our community, not manipulate it. Any recommendations that develop from this study are an outgrowth of my membership within and responsibility for our school community; I want my colleagues to understand this emphatically.

Finally, acknowledgement of my own membership within the dominant society of privileged, white, middle-class citizens was an important step in addressing my subjectivity. Over the last ten years of my twenty-two-year professional life, I have developed a passion for righting the marginalizing employed against students based upon their perceived reading deficits. From this indignation grew an interest in social justice and cultural relevancy. These factors, as well as some personal goals, ignited my interest in a doctoral program with a social justice foundation like the one this dissertation completes. Therefore, acknowledging that passion along

with my increased scholarly understandings of the societal and systematic inequities the students in my low-income, predominantly Latino school face both informs me and frames my endeavored subjectivity.

### **Enhancing Trustworthiness**

The greatest counter I have to my own bias was the multiple data forms and the cross-analysis validation of that data (Creswell, 2013). Cross-analysis was a lengthy process with two sources of data, but I considered it an important component in order to answer my research questions and strengthen the trustworthiness of my findings. The interviews served as a means to explore both teacher participant perceptions and stated practices while the observations served to support or contradict those perceptions and/or stated practices. Using two data sources increased the credibility of the findings, outside of my stated passions and bias, especially since common themes emerged across both data sources (Creswell, 2013).

My credentials as a practitioner scholar undertaking this study include twenty-two years as a career educator, a master's degree in reading education, and seven years as an instructional literacy coach. I was one of the first in my district trained in the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model and have continued trainings and recertification each year toward the district's goal of inter-rater reliability with the tool. Use of the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model, which was already embedded in the school's culture, additionally enhanced trustworthiness since I am experienced with the tool's scale-scoring features and the teachers are accustomed to being observed with this tool. In addition to my knowledge and experience related to reading and literacy scholarship, I have extensive training in effective instructional practices and teacher professional development. I have served on school leadership teams for over ten years in multiple settings, both secondary and elementary. My scholarly understandings of job-embedded

professional learning that utilizes questions of ongoing problems of practice is a skillset I draw upon as well.

Given that this case study was also concerned with the ways in which social structures shape the education of marginalized populations, my doctoral-level concentrations in critical pedagogical and social justice theory added another layer of trustworthiness. My deep interest in ways to impact student achievement through culturally relevant and responsive teaching was a continued lens throughout the study.

I conducted an ongoing search for literature on the implications of possible societal factors influencing student academic performance throughout the study including the topics of socio-cultural and political realities, the realities of teaching in similar demographic settings, high-performing schools that shared my school's demographics, and best practices of coaching. Topics within this literature included the ways in which poverty, marginalization, deficit thinking, language barriers, and the realities of high-stakes testing impacted student achievement. Positive instances of high-performing schools including professional development practices, cultural relevant and responsive teaching, and effective coaching were also explored. I sought additional literature on effective interviewing and coding techniques used in qualitative research, especially case studies, to build on the knowledge I held from my doctoral classes and years in the social science field of education (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1988; Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

## CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

For this study, I explored the teaching practices and perceptions of teacher participants in a low income, predominantly Latino, urban elementary school. The main research question guiding the study was: *What factors may help explain the underperformance of learners on standardized assessments?* The two related sub-questions were:

1. How might teacher perceptions inform my understandings of student underperformance?
2. How might teaching practices contribute to student underperformance?

I collected two kinds of data to answer the research questions: teacher interviews and observations. There were five teacher participants chosen randomly from a voluntary sampling of teachers. In an effort to maintain anonymity, I have assigned letter pseudonyms to each of the teacher participants: A, B, C, D and E. To facilitate writing clarity, all teacher participants will be referred to as ‘she,’ though not all teacher participants were female.

I begin a description of the findings using the interview data to address the sub-question of how teacher perceptions might inform my understandings of student underperformance. I continue the description of findings using the teacher observations to address the sub-question of how teacher practices might inform my understandings of student underperformance. Finally, using these two data sources, I cross-analyze common findings in order to answer the primary research question.

Although I anticipated that the participants’ interviews would yield teacher perceptions that might help to answer the research questions, I had not anticipated that the interviews would also yield indications of teacher knowledge. These insights into teacher knowledge, or lack thereof, played a prominent role in the findings. Therefore, I divided the interview findings section into two parts: teacher perceptions and teacher knowledge.

## **Teacher Perceptions of Teaching in Their School**

The catalyst for this study was to explore inconsistencies I initially observed when I began working as an instructional literacy coach at the school. In addition to the positive physical features of the school, I observed what appeared to be a dedicated and caring staff. Throughout the interviews, I continued to trust that my initial observation of the staff was accurate. All five participants expressed pleasure in teaching at the school. Teacher E stated, “I love teaching here.... It is so rewarding for me to work here. I love the people that we work with... I literally don't feel like I work. I really don't, and we work really hard.” Teacher B stated, “I love this school. I love these kids. The staff members, we have a familial-like relationship and a lot of us try really hard to help each other.” Teacher A stated, “I love being a teacher at this school. This is home.” Teacher D, in response to a question regarding the diversity of the student population stated, “I like a challenge. So, I accept the challenge. I embrace the challenge of a student. . . . It's a melting pot.” Although less effusive than the other participants, when Teacher C was referring to how challenging her job was compared to her friends at other schools, I mentioned that she had stayed at the school for more than fifteen years and she stated, “Exactly. I have, and I like this area.” The fact that all of the teachers expressed pleasure in teaching at the school lends credence to my initial observations of a dedicated and caring staff. Yet, my initial question still remained, if the teachers are dedicated and the building is a modern beauty, what factors could be contributing to student underperformance on standardized assessments?

I begin the description of findings by first exploring the common perceptions that emerged from the teacher participants' interviews. These perceptions represent the collective voice of the teachers in this low-income, predominantly Latino, public elementary school (Creswell, 2013). Thematic coding of interview data revealed that teacher participants expressed instances of deficit thinking regarding low-income students and their families as well as

struggles with teacher efficacy. These common perceptions may help to answer the first sub-question: *How might teacher perceptions inform my understandings of student underperformance?*

The first common theme related to teacher perception derives from interview responses that included instances of deficit thinking, ways that teachers viewed students and their families as lacking due to poverty, culture, or language. Four of the participants expressed deficit thinking, though some were more pronounced than others. Even when pressed, through questions aimed at diversity and cultural relevance and responsiveness, teachers consistently described deficits that were impeding their students' performance. Teacher D expressed ways that poverty impacts home-life and, in turn, a student's ability to learn:

A lot of families living together, and I think with that, they're sharing rooms. You might have a three-bedroom house with multiple families living in there. Kids don't have their own bedrooms. Kids don't, they can't find a place to read. So, from right away, they're not able to do the basics. The reading, writing, math basics, and they're not finding the quiet time, or the place that's their own nook to learn, to study at home. And, I don't know if the parents understand. I think they're just trying to make money, and survive, and feed their children, and I don't think that . . . I'm not saying education isn't a priority to them, but I think the basic need of living and eating....

Like Teacher D, Teacher C felt that parents were mostly focused on providing food and shelter. When I asked her what it would take to improve student performance at the school, she replied, "I don't know, because I feel like there's something missing." She wondered,

if that missing part is something that's beyond our control, if it's the home, the parents. I think that makes a difference. If they have high expectations of their own children, expect them to graduate and go on and do something more, they'll do that, but when the parents don't have that expectation because they're just trying to survive. . . . I don't know. I mean, I don't know if they're too busy thinking about putting food on the table and a roof over the head, education kind of gets pushed.

Later, she spoke of parents who viewed school as the teacher's responsibility, but not theirs, "I think a lot of their parents are so focused on providing the needs, that education becomes a want.

It's not a need. It's not the necessity. So, it's kind of like you do school at school, and that's the teacher's responsibility.”

This emphasis on what parents were not doing continued with other participants; for example, Teacher A said, “Their parents don't take them places or they don't get opportunities a lot of kids have.” Speaking of what it is like to teach at the school, Teacher C stated, “It's tough, because I mean, I have friends that teach at other schools, and they're posting their stacks of gift cards they get for Teacher Appreciation Week, and I'm like- [throws hands up].”

Teacher B also wanted parents to be more involved, and she believed that Latino culture played a part in what she viewed as their lack of involvement. When I asked what we could do to help emergent bilingual students instructionally she stated,

A lot of parental involvement though, definitely. Just making sure that the parents understand that we are partners and I know that from just speaking with a lot of people who I know who are Latino or Latina, that in that culture they let the teacher handle everything and they're very much so hands-off. That's something that, where as Americans, we're not used to that. Our parents are involved in everything.

Later, she went so far as to imply a lack of parental care, and even possibly love, related to poverty when she said,

That's probably the reason why I work in title one schools is because those are the kids who need the most love... Sometimes we're the only people who they get any affirmation from, any attention from, any kind of conversation from so I think just making sure they know that this is a safe place and I'm here for them, whatever they need.

This assigning of poor performance due to culture and poverty was echoed by Teacher D,

You know whatever the culture of the Hispanic community is. They can sometimes value their child's education, they can also sometimes not care because they're trying to just eat... sometimes you get people that immigrate, migrate here from a different country, and they don't understand America's values about education, that if you do well now, it will pay off in the long run, so then there's that.

She continued by explaining the importance of changing the students' "mindset" shaped by poverty: "Our goal..., for these students, this clientele, is to get them two years better, every year. That's how far behind they are because of their poverty, because they walk into us without the silver spoons. So, they just start at such a low mindset. You gotta' just change that."

Throughout the interviews, the teachers regularly made references to deficits in students' vocabulary. In short, they failed to fully consider the students' language acquisition realities in this school with an 80% Latino demographic. Teacher B noted,

They don't have the vocabulary that other students might have who are in a higher socioeconomic area. When the teacher is using this language or these academic terms, if they're not explicitly teaching it, [the students] have no clue what's going on and what they're talking about. I think that it does play some part in it and I think that is something that we should look at and it should be a factor when it comes to standardized testing or just instruction in general.

In addition to income, Teacher A linked vocabulary competence to intellect when she said, "If they came from a home where there's really low vocabulary or, intellect is the best word I can say, ... they [have] five years of catch up."

While teachers appeared to understand the realities of the low-income families they served, they did not often mention ways in which they could draw upon family abilities and culture, instead focusing on deficits based on white, middle class, English-speaking expectations. Teacher E, the lone participant without an explicit deficit orientation, teetered at the edge of deficit thinking, but she also understood how language might be a barrier to parent participation, she explained,

I think that parents who may want to be involved have a hard time feeling comfortable getting involved.... I think that parents don't necess- I don't want to judge the parents, I hate to do that, because parents are parents, and they love their children, and so you hate to say anything negative against that. I wonder how many are afraid to come in for things because they don't speak the language, and so do they themselves feel insecure in coming in and trying to speak English or asking for the translator.

I do not want to believe that the teachers intended to marginalize their students' culture or language, or that they thought less of their students due to the realities of living in poverty.

However, teachers did hold some deficit views of students and their families that have the effect of marginalizing through a privileged lens of dominant society's ostracizing gaze.

### **Perceptions of Teacher Value and Autonomy**

The second common theme related to teacher perception came from interview responses that revealed teacher beliefs of their own value and autonomy within the school. Four of the teacher participants held strong beliefs regarding the decreased value in teaching primary grade levels, and both of the primary teachers held similar beliefs about the lack of autonomy afforded them. Based on my literature review, I had anticipated teacher comments related to student performance on standardized assessments and the kinds of instructional practices teacher were or were not using. However, I had not considered the role of teacher efficacy and how the emphasis on standards-based instruction tied to tremendous testing pressures might impact the teachers' perceptions of themselves and their colleagues. In order to maintain anonymity, for this section only, I will switch from identifying teacher participants by their letter pseudonyms and simply refer to all as "a teacher participant."

One primary teacher described her loss of autonomy this way, "You're made to teach a certain way or what someone perceives as the right way, which is not the right way because everybody has their own way of teaching." Later I asked her to clarify how this feeling affected her pedagogical decisions. She said, "If I know you're coming in, I'll do what I have to do, but I'm not going to . . . There was a lot of things I was not allowed to do. So, I lock the door and do what I want to do." When speaking of her district's scope and sequencing aligned to the state's testing assessment and calendar for delivery, she asserted that the curriculum alignment was cause for concern,

A lot of the [district curriculum], to me is garbage... We're giving them 14 days. So, you're not even getting the whole amount of time for them to make it into a habit. . . . If you just follow the [district curriculum and pacing], you're sure your kids are not going to pass.

Another primary teacher echoed this sentiment when she said, "I have struggled with working in public school systems in that they have a timeframe for everything and they want you to be done with this by that time." Referring to the district's choice of instructional decision to focus more on the reading comprehension standards she further elaborated, "We were upset about that because they did have foundational skills embedded in the [district curriculum] before and then they rewrote them, [and] took out all the foundational skills."

Two teachers made comments regarding their perception that primary grade teachers were less capable than intermediate teachers. One stated,

Every year we'll get a dud. Last year we got a dud, and we moved her. That same teacher that we moved is down now in the primary level, so that's what happens, I believe. I've always been of the opinion that if you're a bad teacher you teach second grade, if you're not effective. Not a bad teacher, but not effective. In the intermediate levels you go down to primary. So that's the philosophy of everybody, not our principal, but everybody, you gotta' put them somewhere. So, what happens is, you get a constant build-up of ineffective teachers in the primary levels.

This coincides with another participant's perception that she, "got moved [from intermediate to primary] because I didn't know how to teach, and was told that." This left her feeling demoralized as she indicated when she said, "I think that people don't know or don't care to know how hard teachers really work. . . you're just moved. . . . We were a great team and that wasn't good enough."

In addition to being surprised by the themes of devaluing primary teachers and a lack of autonomy, I perceived that some teachers were holding back due to my close association with the administrative team. One teacher said as much when she commented, "[Being a primary teacher] hasn't been valued. I think it's across the board." She trailed off and stated, "I know you're a part

of the administrative team. . .” before she stopped talking. In addition to the comments made during the first interview and my feelings that some teachers were holding back from full disclosure, I had observed a large discrepancy in voluntary participation in the study between the primary and intermediate teachers. Therefore, I added the following question for all participants during the clarifying interview: “Out of the available intermediate participants for this study 90% volunteered to participate; out of the available primary participants for this study 20% volunteered to participate; why do you think that intermediate participants were more willing to participate?” One teacher responded,

Because we on this hallway [primary] have been feeling so beat down and so, you know, like nothing we do is right and you know . . . we're just treading water. And we're just trying to survive. And you know we just feel like we've been so put down that I think that it has come to a trust issue in all honesty.

I clarified by asking, “And so you feel intermediate hasn't been under that same pressure?” To which she replied, “Yes. Yes.” The other primary grade level teacher was also forthcoming,

I volunteered because I felt bad because I knew no one would; we're not appreciated here and so we all know it. We know that we're second class citizens and we're babysitting. And it's been put to us that way many times before you got here. It's been going on for several years that we are just not very important. You get worn down after a while and a lot of people don't volunteer because they just don't . . . what do you need my opinion for? It doesn't matter. And I think that that's what a lot of people think that

She further elaborated on the feelings of her primary colleagues, “I think it's the majority is in primary because we've been the target for a long time.” She also acknowledged that the movement of teachers had predated the current administration when I asked her if the previous principal also moved teachers in the same way as her current administration did, she replied, “He broke up a bunch of teams. He moved people . . . moving fifth grade teachers down and fourth grade teachers.” A fourth teacher participant held negative perceptions regarding primary teaching also, as evident by her comment,

I think that it's more about the job, down there [in primary]. That's more like what I get the vibe from...I'm not saying they don't care about the kids between those hours but it's more about, 'What am I contracted to do...' That's what I get from them.

### **Teacher Perceptions Conclusion**

Interview themes help to explore the question: *How might teacher perceptions inform my understandings of student underperformance?* From the thematic coding across the ten interviews, teacher participants had common perceptions regarding both themselves and their students. They spoke multiple times, across both interviews, about things their students lacked due to poverty, culture or language, seeing their student through a lens of deficits, rather than funds of knowledge and culture to be tapped (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006). Teacher participants cited home life, cultural expectations, background knowledge, and parental involvement as reasons for lowered student performance. Even as I probed about factors related to instructional practice, teachers returned to deficit thinking.

Additionally, and to my surprise, teacher efficacy issues related to autonomy and their perceptions of the value of teachers assigned to primary or intermediate grades emerged as prominent. These issues of teacher efficacy were underscored by comments related to the greater worth and value of intermediate teachers whose students were subject to the high-stakes, standardized assessments.

### **Teacher Knowledge of Instructional Practices for Emergent Bilingual Students**

The third common theme derived from interview data centers around the teacher's knowledge, or lack thereof, of specific instruction for low-income, emergent bilingual, Latino students. During the interviews, teachers were not clear about teaching strategies for emergent bilingual students. When they did refer to a strategy, they did not explain how they used it with students, rather merely listing typical instructional practices. Because of the school's 80% Latino

population and the 33% of students categorized as emergent bilingual, I asked the same three questions of all teachers during the first interview in hopes of generating discussion related to instructional practices and/or perceptions of teaching students at various stages of English language acquisition. I used the term English Language Learner (ELL) as it is the commonly used acronym for emergent bilingual students in my district. These questions were:

- Are there any considerations related to the high number of ELL students that might be influencing the student's performance on the state standardized test?
- What are some pedagogies you use when working with ELL students?
- Have you felt prepared to work with diverse student populations? Why or why not?

Imprecise descriptions of instructional practice for emergent bilingual students were present several times throughout both interviews despite my efforts to elicit details of instruction. When I asked Teacher C about specific pedagogies she used for emergent bilingual students she replied, "I just incorporate it in with everything, so I don't feel like I do anything extra special, but it's just explaining, using pictures when needed, and I do that with all of them." Later, she added that one of her teaching practices for emergent bilingual students included the use of an English-Spanish dictionary but added,

I tried to show him, but the only Spanish-English dictionary I have is, I mean, it's a big one, you know? And it has too many words for him to even find. He was like, "What? What am I doing with this thing?" And I didn't know how to explain how to use it, and none of my students could figure out how to explain how to translate. . . . I only have, the one I have, it's big, and there are little tiny words.

This same teacher had told me only moments before that she had everything she needed to be successful. "I feel like we have everything we need. We're given the same stuff that I feel like my friends at other schools that I talk to, we teach the same grades, and they have the same materials that we have," she explained. Not only are translation dictionaries a standard practice for emergent bilingual students, they are a requirement of the state during standardized

assessments. It would then seem to be a necessary instructional practice for emergent bilingual students to be fluent in using a translation dictionary.

Teacher B was concerned that teaching English spelling and sound patterns had little effect on her Spanish-speaking students' abilities. She said "I mean it's a Spanish accent all the way and I teach spelling patterns. I teach them to think about the words you're going to say, say it out loud so you hear the sounds, then write a letter for each sound and that still doesn't do anything." Perhaps she is blurred in her understanding of accents versus Spanish - English cognates. Students in various stages of language acquisition may frequently confuse cognates and a bilingual accent is not indicative of vocabulary mastery or reading comprehension.

Teachers D and E discussed the importance of providing emergent bilingual students with opportunities to talk in a safe, classroom community of learners. Teacher E was the most articulate about specific strategies she incorporated for emergent bilingual students, listing picture representations, copying, peer tutoring, showing her own vulnerabilities at Spanish language learning, a computer assistance program, and word association. However, Teacher E failed to examine the ways in which these strategies assisted her emergent bilingual students. Instead, her responses were a laundry list of common instructional strategies based upon the desire to make her students feel comfortable and willing to talk, not necessarily designed to increase language proficiency or deliver content through intentional strategies for emergent bilingual students. Perhaps Teacher D best expressed the absence of specified instructional strategies for emergent bilingual students when she said,

We get our students. We don't really have a choice. I don't really think trying to dissect the ELL student as much as all the higher-ups would wanna' look at it. I think you need to just accept the fact that we are, we're America and we take on everybody from the world. . . . So, I don't think, really, trying to analyze them with the, and try to align it to any standardized test.

Teacher D's statement appears to imply that what is good for primary English language learners is just fine for emergent bilingual learners. She fails to consider cognitive demands of learning a second language while also learning new content and skill. Further, she doesn't appear to be considering the ways that her emergent bilingual students will be academically assessed, and many times tracked and marginalized, according to ancillary language.

### **Teacher Knowledge of Instructional Practices for Low-Income, Latino Students**

Prior to the study, I wondered about teachers' knowledge of their students' funds of knowledge and their knowledge of culturally relevant and responsive practice. The generative interview included two specific questions with regard to teaching culturally diverse populations. They were:

- Have you felt prepared to work with diverse student populations? Why or why not?
- Tell me what you know or think about culturally relevant and responsive teaching.

I anticipated that some teacher participants might be unfamiliar with the terms culturally relevant and responsive teaching, so I prepared a definition beforehand using seminal researcher Gloria Ladson-Billings' definition of "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp.17-18). Four of the five participants asked for the definition.

Three of the five participants stated that they felt prepared for working with diverse student populations. Teacher B, the lone participant with a working knowledge of cultural relevance and responsiveness, was adamant in her response that she had not felt prepared stating, "Absolutely not. No way..." She continued with the catalyst for the title of this study, "... it's kind of like swimming through murky water trying to find your way." Teacher E was a bit more diplomatic in her response, "Surprised, no, because I knew what I was walking into when I came this way and got the job . . . Prepared, probably not. I don't feel overwhelmed, though, at the

same time.” Perhaps ironically, the two teachers who stated that they had felt unprepared to work with diverse student populations, were the two participants who spoke closest to an understanding of cultural relevance and responsiveness.

**Cultural relevance and responsiveness.** Even though I anticipated that some teachers might need a definition of culturally relevant and responsive teaching, I was not prepared for the responses that appeared to devalue their students’ culture. After I defined the term to Teacher A, she was certain that her instruction included instances of it, such as when she told her students,

Don't be using the slang. You write correctly because people look at your writing and they think how stupid you are or how smart you are. They think about when you speak to them if you're speaking correctly or you're using street talk... Like you can go out on the street, if you go out on the playground you can talk to each other any way you want. When you get in my line and you're walking back in we don't speak like that to each other.

She further described how she had once taught a sheltered class of all emergent bilingual students, insisting,

If you said a Spanish word in my room, you got in trouble . . . You need to go home and speak in Spanish to Mommy because you want to still be Spanish. Read in Spanish with Mommy. Learn that. But you also need to read in English to Mommy so she learns it.

Most teachers identified cultural relevance and responsiveness with surface-level instances of multiculturalism, citing instances where they acknowledged other cultures. Teacher D even tied it to specialized monthly celebrations, “So, every month there's always . . . there's Black History Month. There's Women's History Month. Whatever month it is, I try to find a lot of my reading material.” Teachers B and C also gave examples where they chose multicultural text. Teacher B stated, “I look at these stories and I'm like, ‘These kids are not going to connect with this. They won't even want to read this. It won't be interesting to them. Let's find something that's a little bit more geared toward them.’” Teacher C gave an example of a Latino text she used, but when

pressed further, she added that the selection was really based on the text matching the standard and the addition of a Latino person within it was simply a happy bonus, she said,

No, I don't know if I particularly picked it for that. It was in our reading book, and it met the standards, and it was one of those things, I was like, this would be a good one, because this is someone that they've probably heard of. . . . But did I pick that story . . . I don't know. That might've just been a story that matched the standards, and it was in the reading book, so it was easy.

After hearing the definition, she stated, “I feel like I've heard that term, but listening to that, I'm like, okay, that makes sense, but I can't think of an example of what would be an example of teaching with.” Teacher E also used the selection of multicultural text as an example:

I tend to try to get things that I know the students will be interested in reading, so if it is any student, low income or not . . . how does that, does it relate to them? Does it make them feel part of a community, as opposed to feeling like, well, this is about, ‘I don't understand this. This is about a school I would never go to, or a community I don't live in, or something that's not important to me.’

Although Teacher E, communicated some insight into culturally relevant and responsive teaching, she did not appear to know enough to use it as a lens to guide instruction. All in all, teachers failed to consider ways to both embrace and build upon their students’ knowledge or skill through culturally relevant and responsive instructional decisions.

### **Teacher Knowledge of Rigorous Instruction and Standardized Assessments**

Teacher participants were not explicit in their instructional practices for the low-income, Latino and emergent bilingual students in our school. I attempted to push the teachers thinking about specific practices for our school population of students several times throughout both interviews. Yet, the teachers did not respond with specific instructional pedagogy, typically falling back to conversations on deficits. In addition to overlooking the realities of their students’ precise instructional needs, broad instructional practices for overall rigorous instruction as well as considerations for standardized assessments that would measure their students’ performance were not evident.

Although Florida teachers are not allowed to see the actual standardized assessment their students will take, they are given test specifications and example questions to help guide their instruction. In addition, my district has spent a considerable amount of time offering professional development opportunities to increase teachers understanding of the Florida Standards. While I do not know how many professional development opportunities the particular teacher participants may have attended, in my estimation as a member of this district for over eight years and a teacher in the state of Florida since 1994, the terms “standard,” “standardized assessment,” and “rigor” should be well embedded in a Florida teacher’s regular vocabulary. Nevertheless, the interviews revealed teachers’ striking lack of knowledge about the assessment to which their students were working toward. They did not appear to have a clear understanding of their end goal for student performance.

I began the generative interviews by asking the teachers if they felt that the state’s standardized assessment was an accurate measure of the school’s student performance. Four of the five teacher participants felt that standardized tests were an accurate measure of the school’s student performance, but they held several misconceptions regarding standardized assessment. Teacher A was at first confused, but later claimed, “I don't know. I'm just confusing it in my head . . . I don't think it's hard. It's accurate. It shows how much they grow, what they're learning and stuff . . . I think it's a little more difficult than kids from different populations, which makes it unfair.” In her clarifying interview, I asked her to explain how standardized tests are unfair to specific students. She explained, “It is unfair if they don't have the background . . . I think there are some things that they don't have the background knowledge. You ask them about building a snowman, they don't even know how to do that.” Teacher A’s comments indicate that she is confusing test validity with a student’s ability to master a reading standard. The ability to use

context clues and infer meaning from a text is a universal standard that all students need to acquire in order to be strong readers, regardless of income level.

Another misconception was offered by Teacher D, who believed that the state standardized test measured intelligence: “Yes. I believe the new FSA test leans more toward an intelligence test. I believe it aligns to an IQ test. . . . It measures their intelligence.” If a teacher believes that a test measures intelligence, and she does not view her students as intelligent, she may believe that her instruction will have little impact on her students’ ability to perform well on the test. Teacher participant A was concerned with the number of standards that students had to master, “I think, a thing that really frustrates teachers . . . there's so many more standards.”

Teacher C, though still unsure about the standardized assessments, appeared to understand the special challenges the tests posed to her emergent bilingual students: “I'm not sure if it's really accurate . . . I'm not sure if it's, like the vocabulary. A lot of these students, I feel like, they don't have the academic vocabulary that maybe other kids do that come from a home where they use it, because English is their first language.” However, when I later asked her if she spent time explicitly teaching academic vocabulary, she replied, “I probably don't do as much as I should. That's one of my weak areas.” By her own acknowledgement, she was not aligning her instruction to help her students master the skills needed to pass the standardized assessments. Teacher E observed that some of her colleagues struggled with standards-based teaching when she said,

[they are] sort of set in their ways about what they believe they're doing is right. Maybe it is or maybe it was, but not being open enough to say, as an example, standard based instruction, deconstructing of a standard. Showing the students what the standards are. They don't want to do it for whatever reason . . . I think, they think they are protecting the kids, but at the same time, the world has changed. You have to change with it, otherwise you're not really protecting them and helping them. The kids will then get to a test.

**Instructional rigor.** Teacher perceptions of their colleagues also revealed opinions on the complexity of instruction, or rigor, that teachers were using to instruct students in the school. Rigorous instruction requires that teachers provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge, build inferences regarding that knowledge, make and defend claims with evidence, all while being asked to validate the accuracy of their own thinking (Marzano & Toth, 2014). Teacher D believed that lack of instructional rigor was impacting student performance at the school, she stated,

You know, those higher-level Bloom's taxonomies . . . I just don't see the opportunity being given to the students. I still see low level . . . it's recall. It's listing. It's not hypothesizing; it's not evaluating; it's not given. And I don't know if teachers understand that.

She elaborated with, "I think it's just because, you know, they don't bring the rigor." Teacher E mentioned that she felt some good intentioned teachers were only presenting students with texts and tasks that they were able to do out of a misguided attempt to build on student success. She said,

I think that there's a lot of teachers who, that I've heard say to me, or that I've heard say in general, 'If they can't do it,' meaning that if a student doesn't read at grade level and you're giving them only grade texts, the students feel not successful because they don't understand it, which I do see, but I think if that's all you're doing, is giving them the [lower] grade texts to try to make it easier for them, then those students are naturally going to struggle because they haven't even been exposed to anything.

Teacher C had a different opinion of her colleagues. When asked if there were any specific factors that might be impeding student performance on standardized assessments, Teacher C mentioned that she felt her colleagues held the students to high expectations: "I feel like everyone seems to have high expectations of their students. They have the expectation that they can do it, the teachers that I'm familiar with." When pressed further regarding what these expectations were, she stated,

I think just in the conversations that we've had with my different colleagues, not necessarily . . . I guess even in the PLCs, hearing what they're wanting their kids to do, what they're giving them. . . . Then, just hearing talking among . . . I'm trying to think.

Trying to get her to further elaborate, I asked her what it would take, given that she thinks the expectations are there, to improve student performance, and she replied, “That's the thing. I don't know.” Teacher A was angry that students at higher socio-economic schools were given more rigorous instruction than her students. She declared “I've seen my kids and what they've got in elementary school and it pisses me off. It makes me so angry.” I clarified that she meant her biological children, and she said,

Right, it makes me so angry the education that my children got. I know they were ready and I know that they had the basics and everything, but if you walk into their classroom and you'd see they were working on this project or they got to do this wonderful activity, and these kids don't get these opportunities because we're so busy cramming basics that they never got at home.

In her comment, she reveals that her own instruction may not include instances of ‘projects’ or ‘wonderful activities’ because her students are not capable without ‘basics’ they are lacking, basics that must be ‘crammed.’ This deficit thinking, as mentioned earlier, creates a cyclical process where her lowered expectation impedes her instruction which reinforces low expectations for student performance (Pollock, 2012).

### **Teacher Knowledge Conclusion**

Teachers communicated vague knowledge of specific instructional practices for the demographic they served. Even as I pushed for more information about instructional practice for low-income, Latino, emergent bilingual students, the teachers tended to point to deficits that had to be overcome before instruction could succeed. Teacher E did offer some examples of cultural relevance and responsiveness with regard to building an inclusive classroom community when she said, “I'm not Latino, so I think that that helps to bridge the gap, as well, that I'm learning

and they're learning, and we're creating, again, that community where this is a place to feel safe, to feel like you have a voice.” Nevertheless, the teachers’ comments indicated a profound lack of knowledge about the abundant strategies that are available to support their students’ learning. Additionally, and not surprisingly given the deficit ideologies the teachers revealed when pressed for detail about instructional practices, teachers provided little evidence of rigor in their instruction. In short, teachers appeared to have a murky knowledge of the instruction required to enable their students to perform well on standardized assessments.

### **Observed Teacher Instructional Practices**

In my district, instructional coaches are required to observe teachers teach and provide instructional coaching on a regular basis. My district uses the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model, a guide for effective teaching, to direct coaching conversations in an effort to build greater teacher capacities (Marzano & Toth, 2013). The model consists of four domains: classroom strategies and behaviors, planning and preparing, reflecting on teaching, and collegiality and professionalism. Although teachers may ask coaches for feedback in any of the domains, a coach’s concerted efforts rest mainly in classroom strategies and behaviors. These are the elements most obviously present when one would observe lesson execution. For this study, I included only the 41 elements listed in the classroom strategies and behaviors domain 1 section ([Appendix E](#)). At the end of the study, I had observed the teacher participants eighteen times resulting in ninety uniquely scored strategy and behavior elements. All elements were counted and sorted on an Excel spreadsheet according to frequency and scale-score ([Appendix I](#)). Average scale scores were computed for each of the scored elements to ascertain an average level of performance on each element.

In order to focus on instruction relevant to my school’s low-income, Latino population, I decided that the section of the model reserved for “Communicating High Expectations for All

Students” would be where I recorded practices specifically related to effective teaching of our student population (Marzano, 2014). Additionally, Dr. Marzano has stated that instructional rigor is essential when preparing students for the expectations of a college and career ready citizenry, so I decided to use his guidance which pointed to thirteen indicators of instructional rigor within the model (Marzano & Toth, 2014). Teachers in my district have been exposed to this guidance, though I was unsure of my participants’ familiarity with it.

Finally, in addition to using the Marzano scoring ratings during my coaching observations, I kept detailed linear notations while I was observing instruction within classrooms. Typically, these comments serve as a conversational aide when I am coaching teachers through the instructional elements that I have observed, but for the purpose of this study they also provided a more detailed window into the actual teaching practice as it occurred, a much deeper observation than just an element scale-scored model. Using both data, Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model elements and my notations, I sought answers to my second research sub-question: *How might teaching practices contribute to student underperformance??*

### **Rigorous, Standards-Based Instruction**

As stated earlier, rigor is an important focus when one considers the intensity of the standards students are expected to master in our efforts to send them off as college and career ready citizens. Using Dr. Marzano’s definition of rigor and the thirteen indicators located within the model, I found that teachers were attempting to use the thirteen rigorous elements 34% of the time ([Appendix I](#)). However, looking more closely, one sees that the scale score for those thirteen elements averaged only a ‘beginning’ level of execution. This indicates that the attempted strategies were used either incorrectly or with missing parts (Marzano & Toth, 2014).

Because rigor is closely tied to a standard, what a student should be able to do, the most frequent notations I made were regarding the standard itself. Notations included, “does not

appear to be tied to the standard,” “not certain she gets the depth of this standard,” “standard being taught is unclear,” and “assignment is below level and not tied to standard.” In some instances, teacher participants were teaching a lower grade level standard, and in other instances teacher participants were having students’ complete tasks that were not related to standards, such as a coloring activity.

Other notations included comments about the teacher doing too much of the work instead of allowing students to productively struggle. “The teacher could be doing less work” and “what more could have been accomplished with this assignment with less dependence on the teacher” were two comments regarding ways that teacher participants missed applying rigorous instructional practices. Still other times, I noted instances where the teacher gave the students a task too easy or not at the depth of the standard. Regarding my thoughts on the rigor of a mathematics computational practice task I recorded, “Only one student missed the answer.” During another observation where students were completing a grammar workbook page, I noted, “several students get it done quickly and look for work to complete.” Another time I observed anchor charts the teacher participant was using to aide her instruction, noting “many anchor charts displayed, but most are at a lower grade level expectation.” Even independent tasks were not always rigorous. For instance, I noted, “independent book readers could be stretched more.”

Observation notations regarding times when students should have been more actively engaged in the strategy were also noted, such as, “Could there have been a way to have students at their desk also working the problems? This was basically just ‘come to the board and solve’ when it could have been much more,” and “a lot of down time while students did the computation at the board,” and another observation notation of, “students are idle with marker boards.” Still other times I used the word “rigor” itself in observation notations indicating that,

“The activities were very low in rigor.” These classroom observational notations serve as a means to further scrutinize the 34% of instructional practices spent on strategies and behaviors that met the criteria for “rigor,” yet only at the beginning level of execution (Marzano & Toth, 2013).

### **Strategies and Behaviors for Teaching Content**

Dr. Marzano clusters instructional strategies for teaching content and skills into the center section of his model: Lesson Segment Addressing Content (Marzano & Toth, 2013). This section of the model is made up of eighteen of the forty-one elements that are effective classroom strategies for teaching content or skills to students. The other twenty-three elements concern instances when the teacher is conducting routines, attending to classroom management, engaging students, and/or addressing relationships with their students. While all of these classroom strategies create an orchestra of effective teaching, my primary focus as an instructional literacy coach is on the strategies for teaching standards-based content and skills. Therefore, and because of the common themes I observed, I averaged the scale scores for just the eighteen content and skill elements ([Appendix I](#)).

When examining the elements surrounding teaching content and skill, elements six through twenty-three, I found that teacher participants were most frequently executing these strategies and behaviors at a beginning level. This indicates that the teacher participants were most frequently either executing the delivery of content and skill strategies and behaviors incorrectly or with missing parts (Marzano & Toth, 2013). Furthermore, out of the fifteen times where teachers should have been executing a strategy, but were not using it, six were during the teaching of content and skills. That is, 40% of the time they were supposed to be using a classroom strategy element related to the content, they were not. Clearly, teachers were more effective at strategies involving conducting routines, attending to classroom management,

engaging students, and/or addressing relationships with their students and not as effective at the strategies for teaching content and skills.

### **Clarifying Learning Goals for Students**

The most frequently scored classroom strategy was element 1: Providing Rigorous Learning Goals and Scales. In other pedagogical jargon, a learning goal might be called an objective or some other such word. No matter the choice of words, every lesson needs a clearly defined goal for students. Of the eighteen observations that I conducted on the five teacher participants, nine of them included scoring and notations regarding element 1. In several of the observations, my notations include referents to students being unclear on the intent of the goal, such as, “[the teacher] goes over directions multiple times, students continue to ask why” and “several students asked for reminders about what the assignment was asking them to do.” One notation, where the strategy was not only unclear to the students, but also unclear to me, was during an observation of silent reading: “Teacher asks entire class, now supposedly silently reading, why they aren't using ‘box’ strategy. Students do not answer, the teacher does not model.” If the learning goal had been to use a particular reading strategy, I would have expected to see a referent to it either visually or modeled when she noticed they were not using the stated goal. These notations coincide with the average rating of ‘beginning’ that teachers scored on this element, indicating that the strategy was either incorrectly executed or missing parts. When teachers do not provide clear learning goals, students are likely to misunderstand or fail to understand what to do and for what purpose.

Other times, there was an absence of a goal altogether. As I observed a teacher at the beginning of a guided reading lesson, I noted that, “I would have expected to see preloading of the goal, vocabulary review, and essential questioning/metacognition loading.” Yet another time I noted almost the same when I wrote, “Teacher does not give explicit or direct expectations.” A

third observation noted that the teacher had no learning goal posted and, “[did] not offer instructional direction.” These instances, when the learning goal was not stated or clearly executed, were noted during eight of nine observations. Considering the importance of having a clear goal before execution of a standards-based lesson can proceed, these data are disquieting.

### **Strategies for Purposeful Discussions**

One of the most noticeable common themes across observations was an absence of opportunities for students to participate in purposeful talk (Allington, 2002; Zweirs, 2013). The emergent bilingual and language realities of the students make the absence of purposeful talk particularly concerning. Elements 7 and 15 concern ways that teachers organize students to interact with content. Elements 10 and 11 concern ways that teachers help students process and elaborate and element 18 has teachers helping students examine their reasoning. All but element 15 are considered rigorous elements that may include student grouping and discussion (Marzano & Toth, 2014). There were 22 instances where teachers were teaching within these instructional elements. However, teachers were most commonly practicing the element at the beginning level. This indicates that the attempted strategies or behaviors were used either incorrectly or with missing parts (Marzano & Toth, 2013).

Looking further into my notations, I saw numerous instances where I had expected to observe opportunities for student discussion: “could have been accomplished in partners with some added discussion,” “I would expect text discussion,” “the teacher is circulating versus student discussing, she is working harder than the kids!” In addition to instances where I expected to see discussion but did not, I also made notations regarding an absence of guided discussion strategies that might have enhanced the attempted discussion: “Students are working in groups to talk about their activities, but there is no accountable talk or direction to their conversations” and “the teacher tells the students to ‘talk about their habitat’ but she gives no

sentence starters, accountable talk, etc. . . . strategies to do this. Thus, the groups are a mix of on and off task conversation.” Much of the peer discussion observed was simply where students were asked to ‘talk’ with their peer without purpose or direction. With small modifications, the discussion could have been enriched: “Text discussion needs to be tied to the writing, then they could look back to summarize with their partner, even if they were given sentence stems to aide poor writers.” Along with instances of low rigor and unclear learning goals, these observed strategies and behaviors, relating to providing students an opportunity for purposeful discussion, were far from accomplished practices needed in order to positively impacting student performance.

### **Strategies for Low-Income, Emergent Bilingual, Latino Students**

Because the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model did not explicitly include effective teaching strategies and behaviors for emergent bilingual students, I reserved the portion of the model pertaining to ‘Communicating High Expectations for All Students,’ to note instruction related to the school’s high incidence of emergent bilingual students, this includes Design Question 9, elements 39, 40, and 41. Of the ninety times that I scale-scored elements, six were scored within this domain, and two of these were related to ESE student accommodation. I made no notations related to bilingual accommodations in these classrooms with a Latino population of 80%. In short, teachers used few, if any, strategies specifically designed for their emergent bilingual students. In addition to weak effective teaching strategies and behaviors for all students, the emergent bilingual student considerations appeared even more deficient.

### **Looking Across Interviews and Observations: Possible Factors in Student Underperformance**

Listening to the teacher participants’ perceptions was both enjoyable and informative. It was abundantly clear that they cared deeply for their students and their profession. The mere fact

that they had volunteered to participate in my study helped me recognize this, but it was even more apparent when I heard them refer to students as “my kids” and point to examples of success with students. Examining the transcripts for this study, I was reminded of the joy that filled their interviews. In examining the observation data, I found that two of the highest scaled-scored elements were for Demonstrating Value & Respect for Low Expectancy Students and Using Verbal and Nonverbal Behaviors that Indicate Affection for Students (Marzano & Toth, 2013). Again, this matches my initial impressions at the start of this study and the teacher participants’ voices throughout their interviews. But while those initial impressions regarding teacher dedication were made evident through both conversation and observation, I still needed to answer my primary research question related to perceptions held by teacher participants and the pedagogies they employed: *What factors may help explain the underperformance of learners on standardized assessments?*

### **Misinformed Standards-Based Instruction and Unclear Learning Goals**

Across interviews and observations, common themes indicated that teachers held misunderstandings and implemented weak pedagogies related to standards-based instruction and clear learning goals. Misunderstandings related to standardized assessments and a deficit-oriented view of students and their ability to master standards may impede teachers’ practice. Imprecise execution of standards-based instruction provided further evidence of teachers’ misunderstandings about the assessments students would be required to take along with perceptions of their ability to master those standards. In addition, observations revealed that 51% of the time, when teachers should have been using an instructional strategy or behavior to assist students in mastering content, they were either not using it or using it incorrectly. Learning goals were either unclear or not present 78% of the time. Taken together, the interviews and classroom

observations painted a murky picture of teachers' understanding of and ability to implement high-quality instruction around standards-based learning goals for their students.

### **Lack of Rigorous Instruction**

Across both the interviews and observations, common themes indicated that a lack of rigorous instruction may be a factor in student underperformance. Interviews revealed that some teachers might try to protect students by giving them lower-level instructional texts. Interviews also revealed the perception that students lacked 'basics' and required more instructional effort toward making up for perceived missing skills instead of rigorous, standards-aligned instruction. Classroom observations revealed that teachers attempted rigorous instruction 34% of the observed time, but that attempts at rigorous instruction was either used incorrectly or missing parts. Various notations across multiple classroom observations indicated that instruction was not rigorous, including many instances where discussion between students was present, but not directed or effective. Taken together, the interviews and classroom observations consistently showed instances of instruction that lacked the rigor necessary for students to process content at the level the Florida Standards require.

### **Lack of Attention to Specific Needs of the Students**

Across the interviews and observations, common themes indicate that teachers' lack of attention to the specific needs of their students could be a factor in student underperformance. Interviews revealed that strategies for low-income, emergent bilingual, Latino students were imprecise or non-existent. Teachers held perceptions that many of the same instructional strategies they used for all students were adequate for their emergent bilingual students. They misunderstood students' Spanish accents as an indication of poor reading ability. Teachers were not familiar with culturally relevant and responsive practices and, instead, confused them with multiculturalism. Probably most startling were the instances of deficit thinking and cultural

devaluation revealed in the interviews. Observations revealed very few strategies aimed at meeting the needs of the distinct student population of the school, especially strategies for emergent bilingual students. No notations were made regarding any specific observed instances, and one incidence was noted where an emergent bilingual student needed specific instructional intervention and was not offered. Taken together, the interviews and classroom observations displayed a staggering lack of attention to the specific and unique instructional needs of the students.

### **Teacher Perceptions That Some Grade Level Assignments Are More Valued Than Others and Teacher Efficacy**

Interviews revealed that both primary and intermediate grade level teachers had the perception that teaching primary grade levels is less valued than teaching intermediate grade levels. This perception appeared to be due to the fact that intermediate grade levels were subject to high-stakes testing, and therefore the strongest teachers were placed in these classrooms. This perception of the devaluation of the primary grade level teachers was held across four of the five participants and was simply not mentioned by the fifth teacher participant, thus it is unknown whether she held the same belief. The two primary teachers clearly felt devalued and believed they had less autonomy than their intermediate peers, mentioning specific instances of being placed in a primary grade as a punishment. Intermediate teachers spoke of instances where they had a ‘dud’ teacher that was moved to primary, and that primary teachers viewed teaching as merely ‘a job’. This perception not only has implications for school culture, but also teacher efficacy and the ways in which that efficacy, both individual and shared, impacts teacher instruction and student performance.

The four findings that emerged from this exploratory case study present targets for assisting my school in overcoming the previously middling performance on standardized

assessments. Through targeted coaching and professional development opportunities aimed at increasing teacher capacities, as well as supportive administrative understandings for the needs of the professional educators charged with increasing student performance, we can create an action plan to move our school to the stellar example it is meant to be.

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

### **Introduction**

I began my study hoping to isolate factors related to teacher perceptions and pedagogies influencing student underperformance on standardized assessments. Any discussion around performance on standardized assessments must be framed around the fact that perceived underperformance is a judgmental reality for low-income, Latino, emergent bilingual students, as well as other minoritized populations. In the United States, we refer to this underperformance as an ‘achievement gap,’ but that verbiage is incorrect; what we really measure is an ‘opportunity gap’ (Carter & Welner, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gorski, 2013). Schools, such as my own, have made attempts to overcome these opportunity gaps with wrap-around services aimed at balancing the disadvantages of minoritized populations. In some instances, we can call these wrap-around services a great success, instances where hungry children get fed, where parents who want to learn English can, and where teachers work in modern-equipped buildings with resources aplenty. These beautiful stories, like my elementary school’s story, are a success by almost all measures, excepting that of a letter grade assigned to them by a standardized assessment.

Still, my work as an instructional literacy coach and reading specialist requires greater pedagogical scholarship than a beautiful, well-equipped public elementary school façade can provide. On testing day, my students will be judged and tracked and further marginalized by their inability to perform on standardized tests. It is toward this end that I aim my work.

### **Implications for Practice**

This study provides instructional coaches and school leaders with a story of a low-income, predominantly Latino, public elementary school. Specifically, it reveals instructional

practices that are lacking in rigor and goal-aligned instruction due to teacher misconceptions about effective instructional strategies and behaviors (Marzano & Toth, 2014). The study also documents ways in which those instructional practices were weak due to, at least in part, teacher misperceptions about and lack of knowledge of their students and the strategies that could help them excel. Finally, this study uncovered surprising issues surrounding teacher efficacy as related to the pressures of a high-stakes setting. From the four broad findings, I have identified three targets connected to student underperformance that help me to aim my work toward improving instruction at my school.

### **Rigorous, Goal-Aligned Instructional Practices**

As a member of the community and practitioner scholar, I can affirm that our district has made efforts at teacher professional development in the many instructional areas pertaining to this study. However, I can also affirm that the majority of those were one day, sit and get, lecture-styled trainings, not the type of long-term, job-embedded, coherent trainings that have been shown as effective for improving practice and, ultimately, student achievement (Desimone, 2009; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). Although my district has discussed the term ‘rigor’ for many years, by examining my teacher participants’ data one would be hard-pressed to find evidence of district efforts.

In both interviews and observations, factors related to misconceptions and lack of knowledge around standards-based instruction and rigor were present. Rigorous curriculum and instruction is a strong predictor of student achievement (Barton & Coley, 2009). My aim as an instructional coach and practitioner scholar within my school is to improve the rigor of instruction such that students reap the benefits.

Teachers mentioned the importance of rigor throughout our conversations, but frequently gave their students low-level learning tasks during the classroom observations. Since the

Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model includes thirteen elements that constitute rigorous classroom strategies and behaviors and is an embedded lexicon within my district, it would seem wise to continue teacher training focused on the elements that address rigorous delivery of the content and standards through this model (Marzano & Toth, 2014). By continuing with the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model, my professional development aims will remain coherent, a core feature of effective professional development delivery (Desimone, 2011; Garet et al., 2001).

Another core feature of effective professional development is active learning; therefore, opportunities for the teachers to learn, execute, and reflect on specific strategies and behaviors recognized as effective for increasing the rigor of the lessons should be offered to teachers (Desimone, 2011). Effective strategies and behaviors related to rigor should center around the way students process and elaborate on knowledge and learning, such as guided peer discussion and tasks requiring critical-thinking skills (Marzano & Toth, 2014). Offering the teachers professional development opportunities in strategies that improve peer discussion and instructional rigor would be advantageous in improving student underperformance.

Even though my district began the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model by initially training teachers on creating clear learning goals and performance scales, there appears to be a disconnect in knowledge application. Teacher participants were routinely unclear on the goals they expected their students to complete, and students frequently sought clarifications. Yet, even with clarification, the tasks given to students continued to be either unclear or not aligned to the actual standard. Time spent in professional learning communities, aligning the tasks teachers are asking their students to perform with the standards the tasks are expected to measure would be a beneficial use of time (Dufour, 2004; Dufour & Eaker, 2009; Kannapel, Clements, Taylor, & Hibpshman, 2005). There is a strong connection between the tasks that are given to a student and

that student's ability to demonstrate mastery (Wolf, Crosson, & Resnick, 2005). In-depth discussion of the standard's intent might be the first step in this process, as high-performing schools work to review and align curriculum and tasks (Kannapel et al., 2005). By more explicitly considering their students' goals, aligned to the standard's intent, student performance will be positively impacted.

Teacher beliefs around rigorous standards-based, goal driven instruction indicated that the teacher participants felt that their students were lacking, the standards were too difficult, or that the pacing was inappropriate for their students to be able to master the standards. These beliefs may have transferred to the delivery of their lessons. In other words, the average scale-score of 'beginning' on the thirteen rigorous elements may partially be explained by the teacher participants' perceptions that students are not capable of more rigorous instructional strategies. When teachers are not clear about learning goals, students are likely to be confused, thereby reinforcing teacher perception that students are not ready for rigor. In some ways, this may form a cyclical dynamic where the teacher perceptions become the reality (Bartolomé, 1994). Therefore, in addition to professional development opportunities aimed at increasing rigorous, goal-aligned lesson planning and execution, helping teachers to develop an assets orientation toward their students is also warranted.

### **Cultural Relevance and Responsiveness: An Assets Orientation**

The ways in which the teachers viewed their students as less capable due to poverty, language, or culture may have impacted their teaching practice. Observational data related to the strategies and behaviors teachers practice to build opportunities for critical-thinking are contained within the model in elements 21, 22, and 23: Helping Students Generate and Test Hypothesis (Marzano & Toth, 2013). Only one incident of critical-thinking instruction was recorded in ninety scale-scored elements and it was at a beginning level. Further, only two

instances were noted where teachers probed incorrect answers with low expectancy students, this being meant to include both students with disabilities and emergent bilingual students.

Considering the low level of rigor also observed, this lack of strategy instruction applied to unique student need may have more to do with the low-level work students were given. Yet, it could also be due to the teachers' lack of consideration for the diverse needs of the students within their classrooms, especially when considering the lack of responses given regarding diverse needs in interviews.

I am compelled to add that the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model's terminology of 'low expectancy' gives credence to the very same deficit thinking the teacher participants displayed (Marzano & Toth, 2013). That is, perhaps the model inadvertently reinforces teachers' deficit thinking with this choice of language. Nevertheless, the observational data bears witness to the lack of responsiveness teacher participants had for their students' unique needs.

### **Toward an Assets Orientation**

Considering the evidence of deficit thinking, aiming professional development toward developing an assets orientation is necessary. Professional experiences that help teachers recognize and reflect upon their own deficit thinking is urgently warranted as almost all teacher participant data reflected a deficit ideology. My district was a strong adopter of the Dr. Ruby Payne professional development series and through multiple discussions, I have observed many teachers, even outside of this study, expressing the same deficit views. Critical examinations of this popular professional development series have uncovered its strong contribution to deficit thinking and a perpetuation of marginalizing, rather than embracing, minoritized students (Bomer, et al., 2008; Gorski, 2013; Payne, 2005; Smiley & Helfenbein, 2011; Ullucci & Howard, 2015; Valencia, 2010). Helping teachers to unlearn entrenched beliefs and practices based upon this ideology will be difficult.

Teachers also stated that they believed that the state standardized test was an accurate measure of their students' performance. Given that this measure was a grade of C, I must conclude that the teachers believe their students are only capable of a C. One way to begin this hard discussion is through our PLC meetings, using a structured dialogue framework or protocol to address the ways in which we view inequity and opportunity compared to ability, building our collective responsibility for the students within our school (Dufour, 2004; Dufour & Eaker, 2009; Hollins et al., 2004). Helping teachers to identify and consider the ways in which their students bring untapped funds of knowledge and cultural assets to the classroom is an effort that might go a long way to overcoming deficit thinking (González, Moll, Amanti, 2006). Once our stereotypes, bias, and miscalculation of our students are out in the open, perhaps professional development in cultural relevancy and responsiveness is a next step.

### **Teaching with Cultural Relevance and Responsiveness**

All students arrive at school with ways of knowing, and the extent to which teachers build upon these capabilities determines their ability to cultivate and sustain student achievement (Gay, 2010; Hammond 2015). Finding ways to recognize and build upon students' rich cultural knowledge while opening inroads to the dominant society's expectations is the modern teacher's dilemma (Grant & Sleeter, 2006). Culturally responsive teachers begin by creating a classroom community of learners where knowledge construction is the community goal (Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995). These teachers use cultural relevance to not only maintain their students' sense of identity, but also connect their lived experiences to the greater world and the content they need to learn in order to be deemed successful by school standards (Gay 2013; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Rutherford 1999).

Becoming a culturally responsive teacher requires that teachers embrace learning about their students' cultures and lives while also acknowledging the realities of the socio-cultural and

political inequities that shape their realities (Banks et al, 2001; Hammond, 2015; Howard, 2003; Milner 2013). This learning includes an examination of how our American ideal of individualism impacts cultures of collectivist learning stances, through oral traditions and performance-based skill mastery (Hammond, 2015). As teachers become more culturally responsive, they challenge the inequities their students face and explicitly broaden their students' understanding of social systems that perpetuate inequity (García, et al., 2010; Gorski, 2013).

Professional development opportunities that build culturally responsive teachers should include examinations of the way the brain learns through cultural understandings as well as neuroscientific biological function (Hammond, 2015; Wolf, 2008). Culturally responsive teachers understand that the reason for creating safe learning environments has as much to do with learning theory and neuroscience as it has to do with managing behavior (Hammond, 2015). Valuable sources of information for me to consider for professional development sessions aimed at increasing cultural responsiveness are the websites, [Teaching Tolerance](#) and [Rethinking Schools](#), and the book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond ([www.teachingtolerance.org](http://www.teachingtolerance.org); [www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org); Hammond, 2015).

### **Teaching Emergent Bilingual Students**

In addition to professional learning opportunities aimed at unlearning deficit thinking, cultivating an assets orientation, and creating culturally responsive teachers, I must additionally consider the large population of emergent bilingual and Latino students who are being ignored. What the teachers did not say during interview data was informative. Despite my pushing and probing, teachers said little about how they addressed the instructional needs of their emergent bilingual students. Thus, I inferred that they lacked understanding of their students and knowledge of how to teach them. When teachers provided examples of practices for emergent bilingual students, they indicated a laundry list of generic practices that were not tied to specific

instructional goals. In a Florida case study of English language arts teachers, Harper and de Jong (2009) found that, “Despite the progressive pedagogy and inclusive rhetoric, ELLs continue to be marginalized in mainstream contexts and [emergent bilingual] teacher expertise has been reconstructed as a set of generic good teaching practices appropriate for a broad range of diverse learners” (p.137). This insight is important because the quality of instruction received by emergent bilingual students is a strong predictor of their performance (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011). Literacy skill in one’s primary language correlates with English literacy skill, thus ignoring or diminishing the primary language as instanced in the interviews and classroom observations seems injudicious (August, Shanahan, & Escamilla, 2009). The teachers I interviewed appeared to know little about quality instruction for their emergent bilingual students.

Further concerning were comments related to the devaluation of the emergent bilingual students’ primary language. Negative attitudes regarding ELL students have been observed across various schools regardless of the communities they serve (Walker, Shafer, Iiams, 2004). As in the incident of the teacher participant who told her students “no Spanish” and “you teach Mommy English,” teachers may view primary language as a deficit to be fixed rather than an asset to build upon (Hoff, 2013; Ruiz, 1984).

Hopefully, professional learning opportunities tied to cultural relevance and responsiveness will have an impact on deficit ideologies regarding emergent bilingual students. However, teaching emergent bilingual students requires explicitly planned curricular and instructional delivery decisions (Gersten & Baker, 2000). Although my personal expertise does not lie in pedagogical scholarship for emergent bilingual students, effective professional development for teachers with emergent bilingual students needs to be thorough, ongoing and

include instances of technique mixed with personalized coaching (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011). Our state and district has adopted the WIDA framework, which includes specific descriptions of performance for varying stages of emergent bilingual students aligned to standards at all grade levels (WIDA Consortium, 2014). However, at least at my school, trainings on this framework were consistently overlooked in favor of professional development opportunities aimed at increasing standardized test scores. Administrators would be wise to add professional learning opportunities aimed at the specific pedagogies related to teaching emergent bilingual students to our teachers' professional development offerings.

### **Leadership Focused on Building Teacher Efficacy**

Like deficit thinking, common themes around teacher self-efficacy may be contributing to the underperformance of students at my school. Though comments surrounding devaluation and loss of autonomy are much harder to tie to student underperformance on standardized assessments, teacher participants' comments around their perceived valuation must be considered due to the role it may play in classroom dynamics (Halvorson, Lee, & Andrade, 2008; Ross, 1992). Also, in examining the observational data, I found that scaled-scores for all primary teacher elements were much lower than their intermediate colleagues ([Appendix I](#)). I question if this is a cause or an effect of the teacher participants' perception that the primary grades are less valued.

Long term effects of moving teachers from the high-stakes assessment grade levels to grade levels outside of the high-stakes assessment environment, appear to create a perception of decreased value within the school. Even after I asked clarification questions related to these perceptions with participants who mentioned these views, teachers stood by their claims that primary teachers were perceived as less valued. As an instructional coach in the school, my primary role is to impact instruction, especially related to literacy practices. While the improved

instructional practice that I intend to facilitate might have a positive impact on teacher efficacy, school administrators will need to carefully consider their role in improving teacher efficacy at our school.

Under the intense pressure to increase student achievement on high stakes assessments, school administrators may inadvertently damage teacher efficacy and weaken school culture. In one study, most principals reported that they had not received much guidance on teacher assignment as part of their leadership training (Paufler & Amrein-Beardsley, 2014). This same group of principals also reported that they used pedagogical strengths as a measure when assigning teachers to classrooms, rejecting the idea of random assignment of teachers as illogical (Paufler & Amrein-Beardsley, 2014). Within school sorting, based upon teacher perceived competencies has the potential to hurt both individual and collective school efficacy. Principals who create supportive and non-threatening environments can impact teacher self-efficacy, enhancing teacher commitment to students (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Collective teacher efficacy in a school has the power to impact student achievement (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000). Ignoring these perceptions, and continuing their practice, may be a contributing factor to student underperformance.

Research into principal decisions regarding teacher sorting and placement is very limited. In a review of additional literature after the surprising finding related to primary teacher devaluation was revealed, I found little research tied to within school teacher sorting based upon grade level perceptions of value. Most of the research on within-school teacher assignment was focused on studies looking to debate the validity of the value-added measurement (VAM) of teachers or issues related to inexperienced teacher placement in minoritized classrooms (Dieterle, Guarino, Reckase, & Wooldridge, 2015; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004; Rivkin,

Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). A Florida study did reveal evidence that principals reported giving highly effective teachers their choice of classes (Cohen-Vogel & Osborne-Lampkin, 2007) and another found that giving effective teachers their choice of assignment was one way principals hoped to retain teachers perceived as effective (Dieterle, et al., 2015). Even though it sought to answer questions surrounding VAM, findings relevant to the idea of matching teachers to specific grade levels based upon their perceived effectiveness was evident in one study (Dieterle, et al. 2015). However, the study did not explore the specifics regarding which grade level placement occurred, merely finding that teachers were placed into specific grades based upon effectiveness perceptions (Dieterle et al., 2015).

Specific studies around staffing strategies for high-stakes versus low-stakes classrooms are a recent response to the high-stakes testing environment of public schools. Cohen-Vogel (2011) found that some principals report moving teachers from high-stakes classrooms to low-stakes classrooms if the teacher's students showed inadequate performance on standardized tests. Cohen-Vogel has named this "staffing to the test" (p.483). A study using administrative data from Florida found that teachers with lower VAM scores were less likely to be reassigned to high-stakes classrooms (Chingos & West, 2011). A similar study in North Carolina also found that grade switching was related to pressures of NCLB (Fuller & Ladd, 2013). The act of moving an ineffective teacher to a low-stakes grade level may prove beneficial in the short term, but hold deleterious consequences for long-term reform efforts (Grissom, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2017).

Principals and district leadership personnel need to consider the broad and long-term effects that the pressures of high-stakes testing have created. Although the pressure to increase achievement is great, administrators would do well to carefully consider the impact their placement decisions may have on teachers. Perhaps the most important point for principals to

consider is their responsibility to cultivate school faculty as a collegial community of learners who are dedicated to improving their practice so as to serve students. Doing so requires attention to teacher efficacy, which can surely suffer in the often-toxic environment of high stakes testing.

### **Limitations & Considerations**

It is important to remember that this study is a single case exploration of a low-income, predominantly Latino, public elementary school. The study took place over a limited time period and was conducted at the end of the school year, when tensions and demands on teachers are high. Not all points of view were considered; the administrators, families, students, and teachers teaching less than two years at the school were not asked to participate. In a narrower study, perhaps explicit practices for rigorous standards-based instruction for emergent bilingual students would have been further explored. In a study considering the predominance of emergent bilingual learners within this school, one would need a different observation tool from the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model as it not only lacks specific pedagogies for emergent bilingual students, but further marginalizes these students with deficit-oriented language (Marzano & Toth, 2013).

The 20% of exceptional education students represented in the school were also not considered as part of the underperformance factors. This percentage is above the national level of 13% (McFarland et al., 2017). Exceptional education students also require specialized instructional practices that may be factors in student underperformance at the school. While the school employs several specialized ESE teachers, their perceptions and pedagogies were not explored. An analysis of the performance of the higher than average ESE student population may be revealing and instructive.

This study used the state's free and reduced lunch rate to determine that the school was considered low-income and received Title 1 designation. However, this definition fails to

account for family size, multiple family incomes, or family resourcefulness. The term “poverty” has a negative connotation for many people, and might imply to teachers that our students are somehow “less, than,” a foundational premise of deficit thinking. The ways in which this word is used within educational settings, based upon a single measure of free and reduced lunch rate, should also be carefully considered and perhaps altered (Milner, 2013).

This study does not add to the literature on cultural relevance and responsiveness, other than to note its absence from a school that sorely needs it. Further research is needed regarding high impact professional development for cultural relevance and responsiveness, especially when moving a faculty from a deficit mindset to an assets orientation. Although many of the practices in Zaretta Hammond’s book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, offer a starting point, I did not find much literature related to coaching teachers in this effort. Rather, I found calls for more research on cultural relevance and responsiveness in general (Scanlon & Lopez, 2012; Sleeter, 2012).

This study also has implications for other leaders serving schools with similar demographics in a high-stakes, standardized assessment environment. Similar schools would benefit from examining their own teachers’ perceptions of themselves and their students, and how those perceptions might shape their instructional practices.

Finally, it is important to avoid the implication of a causal effect of teacher efficacy on instructional practice. That is, I am not suggesting that low teacher efficacy led to inadequate instruction. The teacher efficacy issues revealed in the study surprised me, and I am sure they would surprise the school administrators. They are worthy of further study, particularly given the high anxiety and high stakes era in which schools operate.

## **Next Steps**

This qualitative case study sought to better understand the perceptions and pedagogies that are factors in student underperformance at a low-income, predominantly Latino public elementary school in order for me to better serve its teachers and students as their instructional literacy coach and reading specialist. Findings indicate that considerations for the way teachers view their students through a deficit lens needs to be refocused to an asset-oriented lens. Instructional practices were often lacking in rigor and do not align goals to the standards-based expectations. Additionally, instructional practices related to the high number of emergent bilingual students were vague or absent.

As an instructional coach, much of my daily effort is aimed toward providing effective professional development opportunities for my colleagues. Sometimes this takes the form of PLC conversations, structured professional development opportunities, or gathering of resources to facilitate teacher learning. As a result of conducting this practitioner research, my primary attention will be focused upon planning and facilitating professional development opportunities for my colleagues based on the findings of this study. This will involve a three-pronged effort.

### **Finding Resources for Teaching Emergent Bilingual Students**

Findings indicated that instructional practices related to the high number of emergent bilingual students were vague or absent. Teachers will need ongoing professional development in specific instructional strategies and behaviors related to teaching the many emergent bilingual students we serve. The needs of our emergent bilingual students are broader than my own expertise; thus, finding experts either within our district's multicultural education office may be helpful. In fact, I may need to draw on expertise outside of our singular district as this issue is an important and distinct one for our school. Investigating state level resources aligned

to the adopted WIDA is one direction to investigate further (WIDA Consortium, 2014). While literacy coaches have taken on a plethora of responsibilities, knowing when to call for the experts in specified instructional practice is an important responsibility of being an effective instructional coach.

### **Providing On-Going Opportunities for Teachers to Become Culturally Responsive**

Findings also indicated that teachers viewed their students through a deficit lens. In order to refocus the teacher's views to a more asset-oriented viewpoint, professional development in culturally relevant and responsive practices is merited. Beginning with any attempt at explicitly changing deficit ideologies could be met with resistance; therefore, a focus on the students' assets and ways to incorporate relevant teaching while building on those assets will be used to help change the deficit views. Finding articles and reflection opportunities, as well as specific strategies for culturally responsive instruction, will help to build an asset-based lens that may, in turn, reverse deficit ideologies. Professional development opportunities delivered through weekly PLCs need to center around culturally relevant and responsive practices that focus on the predominant Latino student population and the assets that they bring to school daily.

### **Coaching Teachers to Improve Rigorous, Goal-Aligned Instruction**

Findings further indicated that instructional practices were often lacking in rigor and do not align goals to the standards-based expectations. As the teachers' deficit ideologies begin to shift toward a more asset-oriented view due to these PLC experiences, their practices may begin to change also. Paying close attention to rigorous instructional practices and standards goal alignment during classroom observations will be helpful in determining if this altered viewpoint changes practice. However, individual coaching sessions with teachers, including instructional strategy modeling, practice opportunities, and reflection, may be helpful in increasing the students' chances to practice and deepen their knowledge at the critical thinking level.

This three-pronged approach, garnering resources for professional development, integrating asset-based attention around cultural responsiveness in PLCs, and individualized coaching opportunities toward improved instructional practice will assist in successful instruction and have a positive impact on the school.

### **Conclusion**

*“It's kind of like swimming through murky water, trying to find your way.”*  
–Teacher B

Based on the findings of this qualitative case study, improving low-income, Latino student performance may indeed be like swimming through murky waters for some teachers. My role as an instructional coach and a practitioner scholar offered me the opportunity to explore issues that help me better understand the underperformance of the students I serve. Teacher interview and classroom observational data were well aligned, showing that teacher perceptions, knowledge, and instructional practice were all factors toward which I can aim my efforts as a facilitator of increased teacher knowledge and improved practice. When reading coaches facilitate quality professional development opportunities for teachers in low-income, minoritized schools, improved student reading performance can be achieved (Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011). It is my hope that this study assists me to distill some of that the murky water.

APPENDIX A  
PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

**Informed Consent**

**Protocol Title:** Teachers' pedagogies and perspectives that may explain student underperformance on standardized tests in a low income, predominantly Latino elementary school

*Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.*

**Purpose of the research study:** The purpose of this study is to explore the factors contributing to low student performance with the goal of addressing those factors and improving student performance.

**What you will be asked to do in the study:** You will be asked to participate in two audio-recorded interviews about your teaching. The audio-recordings will be assigned an anonymous number and destroyed at the end of the study. I will observe you teaching four times as part of the normal coaching process already in place, continuing use of the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model (Marzano & Toth, 2013). This model is the current coaching observation tool used as part of your coaching observations. It cannot be viewed by administrators and does not count toward your effectiveness score. These observations are the normal observations I conduct as my role as your literacy instructional coach. No additional observations will be added, unless requested as part of our coaching process. I will also conduct a brief post-observation meeting with you, also part of the current coaching process. I will document observational field notes during and following these coaching meetings.

**Time required:**

45-60 minutes for each of the two interviews

10-15 minutes for the post-observation coaching

80-160 minutes for the four observations that are a typical part of my coaching role

**Risks and Benefits:** You are unlikely to experience more than what is referred to as “minimal risk” by participating in this study. In fact, you are likely to enjoy the opportunities to talk about your teaching and to contribute to the improved performance of our students. Nevertheless, I do not anticipate that you will benefit directly by participating in this study.

As a practitioner scholar, I am a member of the school community being studied. This may present some potential discomfort on the part of the participant. If the participant becomes uncomfortable at any time, even after the study has concluded, the participant may request to withdraw from the study. Participants may additionally refuse to answer any question that may make them feel uncomfortable during the interviews.

**Compensation:** You will not be provided compensation for participating in this research.

**Confidentiality:** Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your interviews and observation will be assigned a numerical code. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list and the audio recordings will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report and I will not disclose any information that would breach the anonymity of the participants in this study. Individual components of this research will not be discussed with any member of the school community. The overall findings and implications from this research will be used to provide resources to faculty and plan future staff professional development.

**Voluntary participation:** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

**Right to withdraw from the study:** You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

**Who to contact if you have questions about the study:** Elizabeth (Buffy) Bondy, Ph.D. (faculty advisor), School of Teaching and Learning, College of Education, Norman Hall, University of Florida.; [bondy@coe.ufl.edu](mailto:bondy@coe.ufl.edu), 352-273-4242, ext.2215

**Who to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study**

IRB02 Office

Box 112250

University of Florida

Gainesville, FL 32611-2250

Phone: 392-0433.

**Agreement**

**I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.**

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B RANDOM SELECTION TOOL

# RANDOM.ORG

Google Cust



True Random Number Service

Do you own an iOS or Android device? [Check out our app!](#)

### What's this fuss about *true* randomness?

Perhaps you have wondered how predictable machines like computers can generate randomness. In reality, most random numbers used in computer programs are *pseudo-random*, which means they are generated in a predictable fashion using a mathematical formula. This is fine for many purposes, but it may not be random in the way you expect if you're used to dice rolls and lottery drawings.

RANDOM.ORG offers *true* random numbers to anyone on the Internet. The randomness comes from atmospheric noise, which for many purposes is better than the pseudo-random number algorithms typically used in computer programs. People use RANDOM.ORG for holding drawings, lotteries and sweepstakes, to drive online games, for scientific applications and for art and music. The service has existed since 1998 and was built by [Dr Mads Haahr](#) of the [School of Computer Science and Statistics at Trinity College, Dublin](#) in Ireland. Today, RANDOM.ORG is operated by [Randomness and Integrity Services Ltd.](#)

As of today, RANDOM.ORG has generated [1.55 trillion random bits](#) for the Internet community.

True Random Number Generator

Min: 3001

Max: 3005

Generate

Result: 3002

Powered by [RANDOM.ORG](#)

### Research Randomizer Results:

1 Set of 5 Yes Numbers Per Set

Range From 3001 to 3005 – No

Set 1

3002

3003

3001

3004

3005

## APPENDIX C GENERATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Pre-Interview discussion:

- Explain purpose of the interview and approximate time needed
- Remind about confidentiality and IRB guidelines
- Explain interview format (recorded, transcribed, open-ended discussion)
- How many years teaching? How many at school?
- Ask if there are any questions before we begin

### Questions to generate expanded discussion:

- Do you think the state standardized test measure of the school's student performance is accurate? Why or Why not?
- What instructional factors might be influencing the student's performance on the state standardized test?
- Are there any considerations related to being a low-income school that might be influencing the student's performance on the state standardized test?
- Are there any considerations related to the high number of English language acquisition students that might be influencing the student's performance on the state standardized test?
- What are some pedagogies you use when working with ELL students?
- What are some pedagogies you use when working with ESE students?
- What are some pedagogies you use when working with low-income students?
- Have you felt prepared to work with diverse student populations? Why or why not?
- Culturally relevant and responsive teaching is "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Tell me what you know or think about this concept...
- What is your perception of teaching at ----- Elementary?
- Are there any other things that I, as your instructional literacy coach, need to consider about teaching and learning at ----- Elementary?

APPENDIX D  
CLARIFICATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**Clarification Teacher A**

- You mentioned that standardized tests, like FSA, are unfair to students from different populations. Can you explain how these tests are unfair to specific students?
- You mentioned a discrepancy between new teachers who only focus on the scope and sequence and the standards assigned to specific dates and yourself, a veteran teacher, who focuses on in your words "...we're going to do this today but we're also doing this, this and this because I saw something." Can you elaborate on this thought?
- You mentioned that you feel pressure to teach a certain way based upon "what someone perceives as the right way." How does this impact your pedagogical decisions?
- Out of the available intermediate participants for this study 90% volunteered to participate. Out of the available primary participants for this study 20% volunteered to participate. Why do you think that intermediate participants were more willing to participate?
- If an observer were talk to walk into your room on a great day, what would they see?

**Clarification Teacher B**

- You mentioned that assisting students with computer skills, when we were talking about you know what would help with student's performance, you mentioned that computer skills was something that was lacking. Can you elaborate further on how we might help with this?
- You stated that home influence was "so big." Can you tell me how home influence might impact performance and/or your pedagogical decisions?
- You also mentioned that you were, I'm quoting again, not a big fan of moving on before your students are ready to move on. We talked a little bit about scope and sequence. Elaborate or give me some examples of what you mean by not being a fan of moving on before the students are ready.
- You were the only participant that had actually heard of the terms "cultural relevance and cultural responsiveness," stating that you had hoped to get into a district training on the topic. Does it surprise you that you were the only colleague that actually knew of this term? Why or why not?
- Out of the available intermediate participants for this study 90% volunteered to participate. Out of the available primary participants for this study 20% volunteered to participate. Why do you think that intermediate participants were more willing to participate?
- What practices do you see as contributing to student underperformance at our school?
- If an observer were talk to walk into your room on a great day, what would they see?

**Clarification Teacher C**

- You mentioned academic vocabulary as being a weakness when it comes to student performance on FSA. Do you do a lot of explicit teaching of academic vocabulary? Do you think your colleagues focus on academic vocabulary?
- You mentioned, with regard to student performance, that some students surprise you and pass, while others go the other direction. We just got our reading scores, was this the case again this year?

- You mentioned that you are given the same stuff that your friends at other schools have available. Are there any specific needs related to this particular school that might be different from your friends in other school's needs?
- You mentioned that you wish there was better parent participation. Can you elaborate on that further?
- You also mentioned that you feel like teachers have high expectations at this school. What makes you think that? Give me some examples of things, like conversations or things you've seen.
- What would it take to improve student performance at ---?
- Out of the available intermediate participants for this study 90% volunteered to participate. Out of the available primary participants for this study 20% volunteered to participate. Why do you think that intermediate participants were more willing to participate?
- What practices do you see as contributing to student underperformance at our school?
- If an observer were talk to walk into your room on a great day, what would they see?

#### **Clarification Teacher D**

- You mentioned quite a few of your personal beliefs about instruction. The importance of talk, the importance of community building, and safety.... Are there any other pedagogies you can think of that are essential to good, strong teaching?
- You mentioned a geographical component of the school's location, and the demographics with relationship to the demographics of our kids. In what ways does this geographical demographic inform your practice?
- Do you consider the design rigorous instruction? If so what does that look like?
- Do you think that teachers in low income minority schools need to incorporate any unique pedagogies, or do they just need to teach like students who are being taught at higher, and more English proficient schools teach?
- Out of all of the available intermediate teachers that I asked to participate in this study, 90% of them volunteered to participate. Out of the available primary teachers that I could have chosen for this study, 20% of them volunteered to participate in my study. Why do you think the intermediate participants were more willing to participate in my study?
- [This administrator} brought in things you said were positive: instructional opportunities for professional development, and did you feel like some people didn't embrace those opportunities?
- Any last things that you haven't told me that might be a factor in student under performance?

#### **Clarification Teacher E**

- I noticed two central themes running through our previous conversation: rigor and care. You spoke of having high expectations and presenting the students with rigorous instruction, you also spoke of creating a classroom of caring. Would you say that these ideas are central to your teaching? Why or why not?
- Do you see having a caring classroom at odds with having high expectations?
- Also, related to your comments on a caring community style classroom, I wonder about a final comment you made that you don't "baby" them but that you also know that they aren't old enough to make selections, like independent reading choices, completely on their own. Can you speak further about this balance...

- You mentioned a reluctance to ascribe academic performance to low income status due to your previous personal experience with low income family members who became successful adults. Could you elaborate further on the idea of low-income and academic performance?
- But, are there some low-income factors you take into consideration when planning or executing instruction?
- You mentioned that seeking out answers was important to improving your craft. Do you think this is true of most of your colleagues?
- What role does having an inquiring mindset have in teacher professionalism?
- Out of the available intermediate participants for this study 90% volunteered to participate. Out of the available primary participants for this study 20% volunteered to participate. Why do you think that intermediate participants were more willing to participate?
- You talked a lot about rigor and care. Talk about those examples in a broader sense than just your classroom. The perception of rigor and high expectation, how is that, or not, contributing to the performance of the students on the standardized tests?

# APPENDIX E

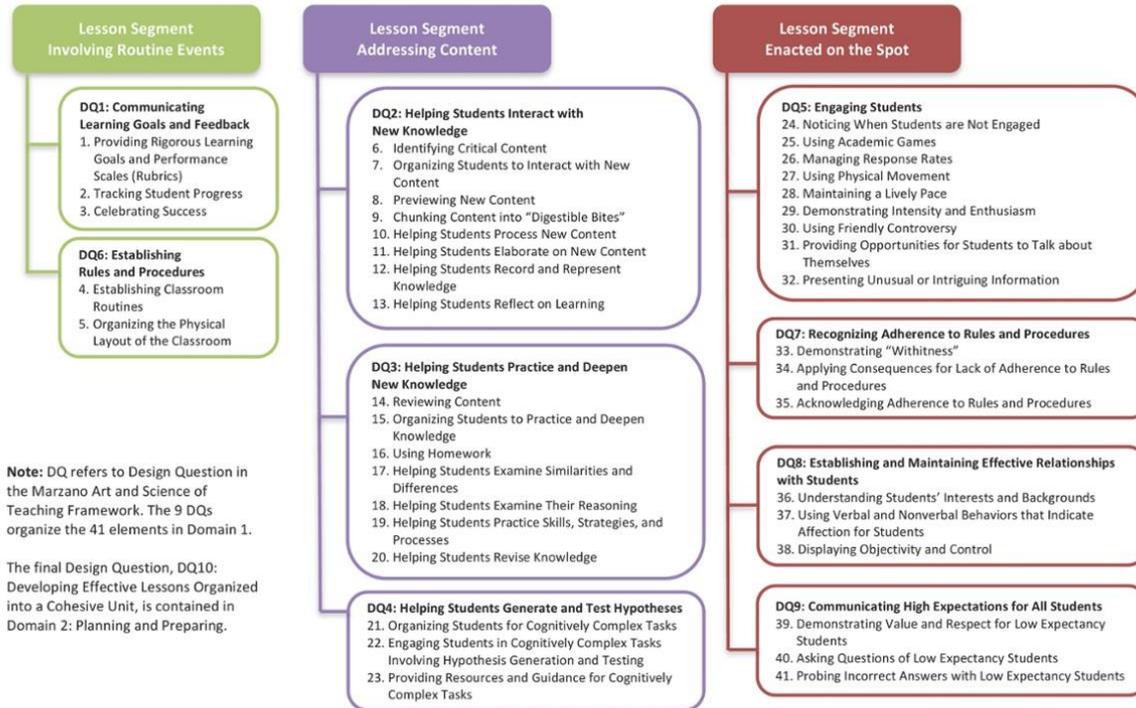
## MARZANO TEACHER EVALUATION MODEL

### 2014 Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model Learning Map



#### Domain 1: Classroom Strategies and Behaviors

Domain 1 is based on the Art and Science of Teaching Framework and identifies the 41 elements or instructional categories that happen in the classroom. The 41 instructional categories are organized into 9 Design Questions (DQs) and further grouped into 3 Lesson Segments to define the Observation and Feedback Protocol.



APPENDIX F  
INTERPRETATION OF INTERVIEW DATA TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS EXAMPLE

	<i>Do you think the state standardized test measure of the school's student performance is accurate? Why or Why not?</i>	<i>What instructional factors might be influencing the student's performance on the state standardized test?</i>	<i>Are there any considerations related to being a low-income school that might be influencing the student's performance on the state standardized test?</i>	<i>Are there any considerations related to the high number of English language acquisition students that might be influencing the student's performance on the state standardized test?</i>
Question Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aware that it is more difficult for some</li> <li>• 4/5 feel accurate</li> <li>• <b>vocabulary mentioned by 2</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• made to teach a certain way</li> <li>• <b>don't push them too hard</b></li> <li>• <b>they came without and are trying to catch up</b></li> <li>• computer manipulation abilities</li> <li>• question &amp; answer strategies</li> <li>• lack of teacher ability</li> <li>• <b>rigor and expectations</b></li> <li>• <b>reading as much as possible</b> (all teachers gave different responses here)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>push them harder to make up what they don't have</b></li> <li>• teach them about hardships</li> <li>• <b>missing background knowledge</b></li> <li>• <b>vocabulary lacking, especially academic</b></li> <li>• don't have basic needs met</li> <li>• minds are focused on life circumstances, not school</li> <li>• born without</li> <li>• lacking supplies</li> <li>• no place in home to call own, to read</li> <li>• <b>not able to do basics</b></li> <li>• <b>parents just trying to survive</b></li> <li>• <b>parents can't be involved as much</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary language still spoken at home 2</li> <li>• <b>Spelling/ Sound pattern difference</b></li> <li>• Home influence is big</li> <li>• <b>Vocabulary</b></li> <li>• Struggle</li> <li>• Need to not analyze, embrace it</li> <li>• <b>Harder for parents to be involved</b></li> </ul>

APPENDIX G  
INTERPRETATION OF INTERVIEW DATA TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS EXAMPLE

619

<i>What factors may help explain the underperformance of learners on standardized assessments?</i>	<i>How might teaching practices contribute to student underperformance?</i>	<i>How might teacher perceptions inform my understandings of student underperformance?</i>	P Participant Big Ideas	Participant Themes: Color Codes: FSA, Teacher Autonomy, Deficit Thinking/Expectations, Parents/Home influence, Instructional Strategies, Vocabulary
Q1: believes FSA is accurate, rigor & challenge regardless of reading level Q2: rigor, exposure to standards no matter reading level (clarification) high expectations, safe place, pushing requires care	Q5 & 6 : lists many strategies: open communication in all languages, community building, teacher learning with them, note, AVID, copy/transcribing, programs, pictures, hands-on Q7: low-income, make sure texts are relatable (also mentions Cultural R&R examples without naming) (clarification) gives examples of how she offsets low income obstacles Q9: Cultural R & R works to build class community, bridge gap(s), feels safe, gives voice Q11: academic vocabulary, get kids to read, have high expectations, students too young to not offer firm guidance (clarification) feels that some teachers do not have high enough expectations, doesn't want students from some teachers - students should not grow 150 (50 target) in her room - shows previous lack of expectations by colleagues	Q3: parental obstacles due to time/poverty/ language barriers (clarification) doesn't believe in "Can't's" excuses, believes your thoughts become your realities, won't allow it an an excuse, finds ways to overcome obstacles, provides ways to overcome Q4: ELL factors are a huge impact, 2 different languages being learned/used, also impeded parent participation Q8: surprised about how the school was better than her perceived expectations, exhibits desire to learn/do more for students (quote "ultimately about kids") (clarification) feels some colleagues do not have learning mindset/stuck in ways, feels this is "horrible" for their students, should lead by example Q10: loves teaching here, thought she would move closer to her home, but likes it so much she isn't leaving Q10: Int wants to help, naturally curious, love what they do , not shocked by low number in primary, more of a job to them, they don't listen, example of disparity in paired classroom celebrations and her lead by example attempt at changing primary involvement	P E feels that FSA is accurate measure of student performance on standards, feels that he/she exhibits rigor & high expectations needed to increase student performance ,is able to articulate, many strategies for diverse populations embedded in instruction, feels safety and care are needed in order to have high expectations, embraces cultural R & R without really knowing it, sees academic vocabulary PD as a need, realizes there are some parental obstacles, feels poverty should not be excuse, provides ways to overcome, positive mindset , feels lower grade teachers are not as dedicated, do not have a learner mindset, wants students to learn to read more proficiently in lower grades, loves teaching at this school and these kids, far from home but not changing	FSA Accurate, Loves this school & students, Primary teachers lacking high expectations and learning mindset, Rigor & High Expectations, Poverty not excuse, Parental Involvement, Strategies for Diverse Pop., BasicSafety / Care / Community, Cultural R & R, Academic Vocabulary, Reading emphasis needed

APPENDIX H  
INTERPRETATION OF OBSERVATION NOTATIONS DATA EXAMPLE

TP	# of observations	What factors may help explain the underperformance of learners on standardized assessments? <b>Notations from observations</b>	Common Instructional Practices by TP
Participant E	4 Observations	needs student progress monitor, students understanding is not monitored	progress monitor
Participant D	4 Observations	off task with intensity and enthusiasm, Students need to be monitored	progress monitor, pacing
Participant C	3 Observations	idle/down time without active learning, only 1 wrong answer entire time (low rigor), discussion, but dependent upon teacher , off standard, does not use needed strategy for diverse, students unclear about goal, no exemplars posted, data wall seems static, off task, below standard, computer students not engaged, students finish quick (low rigor), no exemplars or data present	low elaborate/process x4, low rigor x2, off standard x2, guided discussion, diversity strategies, clear goal x3
Participant B	5 Observations	monitoring not evident, needs randomization strategy, student idle time without engagement, lack of evidence (rigor), wait time too short, does not attend to struggling, goal/ directions not clear, below level charts displayed, teacher is abrasive & haphazard, students are not monitored for performance or compliance, off standard / too difficult for many, teacher unsure of standard, off task talk, directions unclear, vocabulary strategies not used, weak writing, shared reading ineffective / off-task, discussion not tied to task/standard, needs sentence stems to prompt better discussion, students disengaged / teacher out of view, long wait time / idle, teacher yells / abrasive, gives little direction for talk time , makes examples of students who don't follow rules / room seems dejected, teacher doesn't know standard, discussion is ineffective between students, much off task behaviors / disengagement	monitoring progress x2, low elaboration/processing x6, low rigor x3, off standard x3, diversity strategies x2, unclear goals x3, management x3, guided discussion x4
Participant A	2 Observations	standard uneven, learning goal is not apparent, expectations not clear, gives too much assistance, students too dependent upon teacher, high achieving students need pushed, learning goal is not clear, students dependent on teacher management, no accountable talk, tasks low rigor	off standard, unclear goals x3, low rigor x4, high achieving enrichment, guided discussion

APPENDIX I  
 INTERPRETATION OF OBSERVATION:  
 MARZANO TEACHER EVALUATION MODEL DATA

Element	Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Participant D	Participant E	#	Average Scale-Score
DQ1E1 Providing Rigorous Learning Goals and Scales	B, NU	B, B, B	B, B	A	D	9	2 B
DQ1E2: Tracking Student Progress	NU	NU, B	NU	A, A		6	2 B
DQ1E3: Celebrating Success							
DQ6E4: Establishing Classroom Routines		A		A	A	3	4 A
DQ6E5 Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom	A					1	
DQ2E6: Identifying Critical Content	NU	B, B, B	NU	A		6	2 B
DQ2E7: Organizing Students to Interact with New Content	B	D, B	NU	D		5	2 B
DQ2E8: Previewing New Content							
DQ2E9: Chunking Content into "Digestible Bites"							
DQ2E10: Helping Students Process New Content		D, D	NU			3	2 B
DQ2E11: Helping Students Elaborate on New Content	B	B, B	NU	B	A	6	2 B
DQ2E12: Helping Students Record and Represent Knowledge							
DQ2E13 Helping Students Reflect on Learning				A		1	
DQ3E14 Reviewing Content		D	B		A	3	3 D
DQ3E15 Organizing Students to Practice and Deepen Knowledge	B		A, D, A		A, D	6	3 D
DQ3E16: Using Homework							
DQ3E17: Helping Students Examine Similarities and Differences							
DQ3E18 Helping Students Examine Their Reasoning		NU	D			2	2 B

Element	Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Participant D	Participant E	#	Average Scale-Score
DQ3E19 Helping Students Practice Skills, Strategies and Processes	D		B		A, A	4	3 D
DQ3E20: Helping Students Revise Knowledge							
DQ4E21: Organizing Students for Cognitively Complex Tasks							
DQ4E22: Engaging Students in Cognitively Complex Tasks Involving Hypothesis Generation and Testing							
DQ4E23 Providing Resources for Cognitively Complex Tasks	B					1	
DQ5E24 Noticing When Students Are Not Engaged	A	NU, A, A	NU	A, A	A	8	3 D
DQ5E25: Using Academic Games			B			1	
DQ5 E26: Managing Response Rates		B	A			2	3 D
DQ5E27: Using Physical Movement							
DQ5E28: Maintaining A Lively		B	D		A	3	3 D
DQ5E29 Demonstrating Intensity and Enthusiasm				D, D	A	3	3 D
DQ5E30: Using Friendly Controversy							
DQ5E31: Providing Opportunities for Students to Talk about Themselves							
DQ5 E32 Presenting Unusual or Intriguing					A	1	
DQ7E33: Withitness		NU, B		A	A	4	3 D
DQ7E34: Applying Consequences for Lack of Adherence to Rules & Procedures							
DQ7E35: Acknowledging Rules & Procedures							
DQ7E36: Displaying Objectivity and Control							

Element	Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Participant D	Participant E	#	Average Scale-Score
DQ8E37 Using Verbal and Nonverbal Behaviors that Indicate Affection for Students	A	NU		A, A	A, A	6	4 A
DQ8E38: Displaying Objectivity & Control		B					
DQ9E39: Demonstrating Value & Respect for Low Expectancy Students			A, NU		A, A	4	3 D
DQ9E40: Asking Questions of Low Expectancy Students							
DQ9E41 Probing Incorrect Answers with Low Expectancy Students	D				A	2	4 A

<b>Total scored elements</b>	90						
<b>Total scored intermediate</b>	51						
<b>Total scored primary</b>	39						
<b>Rigor total elements scored</b>	31						
<b>Rigor average times out of all scored</b>	34% total time spent in rigorous elements						
<b>8 of 13 rigor elements have scoring</b>	5 rigorous elements not used						
<b>Rigor average score for elements scored</b>	2 B						
<b>Design Questions 2, 3, 4: Content Instruction</b>							
<b>Not Using</b>	<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Applying</b>	<b>Innovating</b>			
6	13	9	9	0			
<b>Primary Versus Intermediate Teacher Efficacy</b>							
<b>Scale-Score</b>	<b>Not Using</b>	<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Applying</b>	<b>Innovating</b>		
average @ each level	P 8/39; I 7/51	P 20/39; I 6/51	P 6/39; I 8/51	P 6/39; I 30/51	0		

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Abedi, J., & Lord, C. (2001). The language factor in mathematics tests. *Applied Measurement in Education, 14*(3), 219-234.
- Allington, R. L. (2002). What I've learned about effective reading instruction: From a decade of studying exemplary elementary classroom teachers. *Phi Delta Kappan, 83*(10), 740-747.
- Al Otaiba, S., Hosp, J. L., Smartt, S., & Dole, J. A. (2008). The challenging role of a reading coach, a cautionary tale. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 18*(2), 124-155.
- Amrein, A. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2002). High-stakes testing & student learning. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 10*, 18.
- Aud, S., Hussar, W., Johnson, F., Kena, G., Roth, E., Manning, E., Zhang, J., Notter, L., Nachazel, T., & Yohn, C. (Eds.). (2012). *The condition of education 2012*. (NCES 2012-045). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED532315.pdf>
- August, D., Shanahan, T., & Escamilla, K. (Eds.). (2009). Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth. *Journal of Literacy Research, 41*(4), 432-452.
- Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (5th ed.). Bristol, UK: Multilingual matters.
- Banks, J. A., Cookson, P., Gay, G., Hawley, W. D., Irvine, J. J., Nieto, S., Schofield, J.W., & Stephan, W. G. (2001). Diversity within unity: Essential principles for teaching and learning in a multicultural society. *Phi Delta Kappan, 83*(3), 196-203.
- Barksdale-Ladd, M. A., & Thomas, K. F. (2000). What's at stake in high-stakes testing: Teachers and parents speak out. *Journal of Teacher Education, 51*(5), 384-397.
- Bartolomé, L. (1994). Beyond the methods fetish: Toward a humanizing pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review, 64*(2), 173-195.
- Barton, P. E., & Coley, R. J. (2009). *Parsing the achievement gap II*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service. Retrieved from: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED505163.pdf>
- Berliner, D. (2011). Rational responses to high stakes testing: The case of curriculum narrowing and the harm that follows. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 41*(3), 287-302.
- Black, S., & Machin, S. (2011). Housing valuations of school performance. In E. A. Hanushek, S. Machin, & L. Woessmann (Eds.), *Handbook of the economics of education* (v3, pp. 485-519). Amsterdam, Netherlands: North Holland.

- Bomer, R., Dworin, J. E., May, L., & Semingson, P. (2008). Mis-educating teachers about the poor: A critical analysis of Ruby Payne's claims about poverty. *Teachers College Record, 110*(12), 2497-2531.
- Books, S. (2007). *Invisible children in the society and its schools*. London: Routledge.
- Bunch, G. C. (2013). Pedagogical language knowledge preparing mainstream teachers for English learners in the new standards era. *Review of Research in Education, 37*(1), 298-341.
- Burris, C. C., Wiley, E., Welner, K., & Murphy, J. (2008). Accountability, rigor, and detracking: Achievement effects of embracing a challenging curriculum as a universal good for all students. *Teachers College Record, 110*(3), 571-608.
- Callahan, R. M. (2005). Tracking and high school English learners: Limiting opportunity to learn. *American Educational Research Journal, 42*(2), 305-328.
- Calderón, M., Slavin, R., & Sánchez, M. (2011). Effective instruction for English learners. *The Future of Children, 21*(1), 103-127.
- Carlisle, J. F., & Berebitsky, D. (2011). Literacy coaching as a component of professional development. *Reading and Writing, 24*(7), 773-800.
- Carter, P. L., & Welner, K. G. (Eds.). (2013). *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Chingos, M. M., & West, M. R. (2011). Promotion and reassignment in public school districts: How do schools respond to differences in teacher effectiveness? *Economics of Education Review, 30*(3), 419-433.
- Clapp, J. M., Nanda, A., & Ross, S. L. (2008). Which school attributes matter? The influence of school district performance and demographic composition on property values. *Journal of Urban Economics, 63*(2), 451-466.
- Coady, M., Harper, C., & de Jong, E. (2011). From preservice to practice: Mainstream elementary teacher beliefs of preparation and efficacy with English language learners in the state of Florida. *Bilingual Research Journal, 34*(2), 223-239.
- Coburn, C. E., & Woulfin, S. L. (2012). Reading coaches and the relationship between policy and practice. *Reading Research Quarterly, 47*(1), 5-30.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2004). *Walking the road: Race, diversity, and social justice in teacher education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Cochran-Smith, M., Villegas, A. M., Abrams, L., Chavez-Moreno, L., Mills, T., & Stern, R. (2015). Critiquing teacher preparation research: An overview of the field, part II. *Journal of Teacher Education, 66*(2), 109-121.

- Cohen-Vogel, L. (2011). "Staffing to the test" are today's school personnel practices evidence based? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 33(4), 483-505.
- Cohen-Vogel, L., & Osborne-Lampkin, L. T. (2007). Allocating quality: Collective bargaining agreements and administrative discretion over teacher assignment. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 43(4), 433-461.
- Cornett, J. & Knight, J. (2008). Research on coaching. In J. Knight (Ed.), *Coaching: Approaches and perspectives* (pp.192-216). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Counts, G. S. (1978). *Dare the school build a new social order?* Carbondale, IL: SIU Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crocco, M. S., & Costigan, A. T. (2007). The narrowing of curriculum and pedagogy in the age of accountability urban educators speak out. *Urban Education*, 42(6), 512-535.
- Croft, A., Cogshall, J. G., Dolan, M., & Powers, E. (2010). *Job-embedded professional development: What it is, who is responsible, and how to get it done well*. Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED520830)
- Cummins, J. (2007). Pedagogies for the poor? Realigning reading instruction for low-income students with scientifically based reading research. *Educational Researcher*, 36(9), 564-572.
- Dana, N. F., & Yendol-Hoppey, D. (2014). *The reflective educator's guide to classroom research: Learning to teach and teaching to learn through practitioner inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). *The right to learn: A blueprint for creating schools that work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, 8(1). Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v8n1.2000>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2007). Race, inequality and educational accountability: The irony of 'No Child Left Behind.' *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 10(3), 245-260.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2015). Want to close the achievement gap? Close the teaching gap. *American Educator*, 38(4), 14-18.

- Darling-Hammond, L., & Adamson, F. (2014). *Beyond the bubble test: How performance assessments support 21st century learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Bae, S., Cook-Harvey, C. M., Lam, L., Mercer, C., Podolsky, A., & Stosich, E. L. (2016). *Pathways to new accountability through the Every Student Succeeds Act*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.
- Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *Educational Researcher*, 38(3), 181-199.
- Desimone, L. M. (2011). A primer on effective professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(6), 68-71.
- Dieterle, S., Guarino, C. M., Reckase, M. D., & Wooldridge, J. M. (2015). How do principals assign students to teachers? Finding evidence in administrative data and the implications for value added. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 34(1), 32-58.
- Dixon, L. Q., Zhao, J., Shin, J. Y., Wu, S., Su, J. H., Burgess-Brigham, R., Gezer, M.U. & Snow, C. (2012). What we know about second language acquisition: A synthesis from four perspectives. *Review of Educational Research*, 82(1), 5-60.
- Dole, J. A. (2004). The changing role of the reading specialist in school reform. *The Reading Teacher*, 57(5), 462-471.
- DuFour, R. (2004). What is a "professional learning community"? *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 6-11.
- DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (2009). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Dupere, V., Leventhal, T., Crosnoe, R., & Dion, E. (2010). Understanding the positive role of neighborhood socioeconomic advantage in achievement: The contribution of home, child care, and school environments. *Developmental Psychology*, 46(5), 1227-1244.
- Elmore, R. F. (2004). *School reform from the inside out: Policy, practice, and performance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Elmore, R. F. (2006). What (so-called) low-performing schools can teach (so-called) high-performing schools. *Journal of Staff Development*, 27(2), 43-45.
- Fillmore, L. W. (2014). English language learners at the crossroads of educational reform. *TESOL Quarterly*, 48(3), 624-632.
- Florian, L., & Linklater, H. (2010). Preparing teachers for inclusive education: using inclusive pedagogy to enhance teaching and learning for all. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 40(4), 369-386.

- Florida Department of Education (1990). *Consent Decree*. Retrieved from <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/eng-language-learners/consent-decree.shtml>
- Florida Department of Education (2017). *Scores and Reports*. Retrieved from <http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/history-of-fls-statewide-assessment/fcat/scores-reports/index.shtml>
- Florida HB 7069 Education. CH. 2017-116 Laws of Florida (2017) (enacted).
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Fuller, S. C., & Ladd, H. F. (2013). School-based accountability and the distribution of teacher quality across grades in elementary school. *Education*, 8(4), 528-559.
- Gallucci, C., Van Lare, M. D., Yoon, I. H., & Boatright, B. (2010). Instructional coaching: Building theory about the role and organizational support for professional learning. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47(4), 919-963.
- García, E., Arias, M. B., Murri, N. J. H., & Serna, C. (2010). Developing responsive teachers: A challenge for a demographic reality. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1-2), 132-142.
- Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B. F., & Yoon, K. S. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), 915-945.
- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. (2013). Teaching to and through cultural diversity. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 43(1), 48-70.
- Gersten, R., & Baker, S. (2000). What we know about effective instructional practices for English-language learners. *Exceptional Children*, 66(4), 454-470.
- Goddard, R. D., Hoy, W. K., & Hoy, A. W. (2000). Collective teacher efficacy: Its meaning, measure, and impact on student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 37(2), 479-507.
- González, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2006). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. New York: Routledge.
- Gorski, P. C. (2008). The myth of the "culture of poverty". *Educational Leadership*, 65(7), 32.
- Gorski, P. C. (2011). Unlearning deficit ideology and the scornful gaze: Thoughts on authenticating the class discourse in education. *Counterpoints*, 402, 152-173.
- Gorski, P. C. (2013). *Reaching and teaching students in poverty: Strategies for erasing the opportunity gap*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Grant, C., & Sleeter, C. (2006). *Turning on learning: Five approaches to multicultural teaching plans for race, class, gender, and disability*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Grissom, J. A., Kalogrides, D., & Loeb, S. (2017). Strategic staffing? How performance pressures affect the distribution of teachers within schools and resulting student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*. doi:10.3102/0002831217716301
- Hahta, K., Butler, Y. G., & Witt, D. (2000). *How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency?* Davis, CA: University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED443275)
- Halvorsen, A. L., Lee, V. E., & Andrade, F. H. (2008). A mixed-method study of teachers' attitudes about teaching in urban and low-income schools. *Urban Education, 44*(2), 181-224.
- Hammond, Z. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Harper, C. A., & de Jong, E. J. (2009). English language teacher expertise: The elephant in the room. *Language and Education, 23*(2), 137-151.
- Herman, R., Dawson, P., Dee, T., Greene, J., Maynard, R., Redding, S., & Darwin, M. (2008). *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools* (NCEE 2008-4020). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.
- Hoff, E. (2013). Interpreting the early language trajectories of children from low-SES and language minority homes: implications for closing achievement gaps. *Developmental Psychology, 49*(1), 4.
- Hollins, E. R., McIntyre, L. R., DeBose, C., Hollins, K. S., & Towner, A. (2004). Promoting a self-sustaining learning community: Investigating an internal model for teacher development. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 17*(2), 247-264.
- Hollins, E. R., & Guzman, M. T. (2005). Research on preparing teachers for diverse populations. In M. Cochran-Smith & K. M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education* (477-548). New York: Routledge.
- Howard, T. C. (2003). Culturally relevant pedagogy: Ingredients for critical teacher reflection. *Theory Into Practice, 42*(3), 195-202.
- Hursh, D. (2007). Assessing No Child Left Behind and the rise of neoliberal education policies. *American Educational Research Journal, 44*(3), 493-518.
- Irvine, J. J. (2010). Forward. In Milner, H. (Ed.), *Culture, curriculum, and identity in education*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

- Johnson Jr., J. F., & Asera, R. (1999). *Hope for urban education: A study of nine high-performing, high-poverty, urban elementary schools*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Jones, B. D., & Egley, R. J. (2004). Voices from the frontlines: Teachers' perceptions of high-stakes testing. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 12, 39. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v12n39.2004>
- Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Kannapel, P. J., Clements, S. K., Taylor, D., & Hibpshman, T. (2005). *Inside the black box of high-performing high-poverty schools*. Lexington, KY: Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. Retrieved from <http://www.prichardcommittee.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/02/Inside-the-Black-Box.pdf>
- Kaplan, C., & Chan, R. (2012). *Time well spent: Eight powerful practices of successful, expanded-time schools*. Boston, MA: National Center on Time & Learning.
- Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction*. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press.
- Kochhar, R., & Fry, R. (2014). *Wealth inequality has widened along racial, ethnic lines since end of Great Recession*. Retrieved from Pew Research Center website <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/12/racial-wealth-gaps-great-recession/>
- Kornrich, S., & Furstenberg, F. (2013). Investing in children: Changes in parental spending on children, 1972 to 2007. *Demography*, 50(1), 1–23.
- L'Allier, S. K., & Elish-Piper, L. (2006). *An initial examination of the effects of literacy coaching on student achievement in reading in grades K-3*. Paper presented at annual conference of the National Reading Conference, Los Angeles, CA.
- L'Allier, S., Elish-Piper, L., & Bean, R. M. (2010). What matters for elementary literacy coaching? Guiding principles for instructional improvement and student achievement. *The Reading Teacher*, 63(7), 544-554.
- Ladson-Billings, G. J. (1992). Reading between the lines and beyond the pages: A culturally relevant approach to literacy teaching. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(4), 312-320.
- Ladson-Billings, G. J. (1994). What we can learn from multicultural education research. *Educational Leadership*, 51(8), 22-26.
- Ladson-Billings, G. J. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465-491.
- Ladson-Billings, G. J. (1999). Preparing teachers for diverse student populations: A critical race theory perspective. *Review of Research in Education*, 24(1), 211-247.

- Ladson-Billings, G. J. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in US schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3-12.
- Ladson-Billings, G. J. (2009). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2002). Teacher sorting and the plight of urban schools: A descriptive analysis. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24(1), 37-62.
- Lau v. Nichols, 414 U.S. 563 (1974).
- Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.
- Marzano, R. J., & Toth, M. D. (2013). *Teacher evaluation that makes a difference: A new model for teacher growth and student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.
- Marzano, R. J., & Toth, M. D. (2014). *Teaching for rigor: A call for a critical instructional shift*. West Palm Beach, FL: Learning Sciences International.
- Merriam, S. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merryfield, M. M. (2000). Why aren't teachers being prepared to teach for diversity, equity, and global interconnectedness? A study of lived experiences in the making of multicultural and global educators. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16(4), 429-443.
- McFarland, J., Hussar, B., de Brey, C., Snyder, T., Wang, X., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Gebrekristos, S., Zhang, J., Rathbun, A., Barmer, A., Bullock Mann, F., and Hinz, S. (2017). *The Condition of Education 2017* (NCES 2017- 144). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2017144>
- Milner, H. R. (2013). Analyzing poverty, learning, and teaching through a critical race theory lens. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1), 1-53.
- Moll, L. C., & González, N. (2004). Engaging life: A funds of knowledge approach to multicultural education. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed., pp. 699-715). Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Banks.
- National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform* (Gov. Doc: ED 1.2:N 2). Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED226006.pdf>

- National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Rockville, MD: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health.
- Nguyen-Hoang, P., & Yinger, J. (2011). The capitalization of school quality into house values: A review. *Journal of Housing Economics*, 20(1), 30-48.
- Nieto, S. (2013). *Finding joy in teaching students of diverse backgrounds: Culturally responsive and socially just practices in US classrooms*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Nieto, S., & Bode, P. (2012). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Nichols, S. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2008). Why has high-stakes testing so easily slipped into contemporary American life? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89(9), 672-676.
- Nichols, S. L., Glass, G. V., & Berliner, D. C. (2006). High-stakes testing and student achievement: Does accountability pressure increase student learning? *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 14(1), 1-172.
- Noddings, N. (2013). *Caring: A relational approach to ethics and moral education*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Nye, B., Konstantopoulos, S., & Hedges, L. V. (2004). How large are teacher effects? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 26(3), 237-257.
- Oakes, J. (1985). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Orfield, G., Kucsera, J., & Siegel-Hawley, G. (2012). *E pluribus... separation: Deepening double segregation for more students*. The Civil Rights Project. Retrieved from The Civil Rights Project [website] <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8g58m2v9>
- Papay, J. P., Murnane, R. J., & Willett, J. B. (2011, June). *How performance information affects human-capital investment decisions: The impact of test-score labels on educational outcomes*. (NBER Working Paper 17120). Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w17120>
- Paufler, N. A., & Amrein-Beardsley, A. (2014). The random assignment of students into elementary classrooms: Implications for value-added analyses and interpretations. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51(2), 328-362.
- Payne, R. K. (2005). *A framework for understanding poverty* (4th ed.). Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.

- Pollack, T. M. (2012). Unpacking everyday "teacher talk" about students and families of color: Implications for teacher and school leader development. *Urban Education, 48*(6), 863–894.
- Ravitch, D. (2010). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. New York: Basic Books.
- Reardon, S. F. (2013). The widening income achievement gap. *Educational Leadership, 70*(8), 10-16
- Reyes, P., Scribner, J. D., & Paredes-Scribner, A. (Eds.). (1999). *Lessons from high-performing Hispanic schools: Creating learning communities*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Rist, R. (1970). Student social class and teacher expectations: The self-fulfilling prophecy in ghetto education. *Harvard Educational Review, 40*(3), 411-451.
- Rivkin, S. G., Hanushek, E. A., & Kain, J. F. (2005). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement. *Econometrica, 73*(2), 417-458.
- Rubin, D. I. (2011). The disheartened teacher: Living in the age of standardisation, high-stakes assessments, and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). *Changing English, 18*(4), 407-416.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ruiz, R. (1984). Orientations in language planning. *NABE journal, 8*(2), 15-34.
- Scanlan, M., & López, F. (2012). ¡ Vamos! How school leaders promote equity and excellence for bilingual students. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 48*(4), 583-625.
- Scribner, J. D., Young, M. D., & Pedroza, A. (1999). Building collaborative relationships with parents. In P. Reyes, J. D. Scribner, & A. Paredes-Scribner (Eds.), *Lessons from high-performing Hispanic schools: Creating learning communities* (pp. 36-60). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sensoy, Ö., & DiAngelo, R. (2012). *Is everyone really equal? An introduction to key concepts in social justice education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2001). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools research and the overwhelming presence of whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education, 52*(2), 94-106.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2012). *Keepers of the American dream: A study of staff development and multicultural education*. New York: Routledge.
- Smiley, A., & Helfenbein, R. J. (2011). Becoming teachers: The Payne effect. *Multicultural Perspectives, 13*(1), 5-15.

- Teemant, A., Wink, J., & Tyra, S. (2011). Effects of coaching on teacher use of sociocultural instructional practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(4), 683-693.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Barr, M. (2004). Fostering student learning: The relationship of collective teacher efficacy and student achievement. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 3(3), 189-209.
- Ullucci, K., & Howard, T. (2015). Pathologizing the poor: Implications for preparing teachers to work in high-poverty schools. *Urban Education*, 50(2), 170-193.
- United States Census Bureau. (2016). *Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2016*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2017/income-poverty.html>
- United States Department of Health and Human Services. (2004). *National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2004* (ICPSR 4373). Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR04373.v4>
- Valencia, R. R. (2010). *Dismantling contemporary deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Vanderberg, M., & Stephens, D. (2009). *What teachers say they changed because of their coach and how they think their coach helped them*. Urbana, IL: Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse. Retrieved from [http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/briefs/what\\_teachers\\_say\\_about\\_coaching\\_1.2.09.pdf](http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/briefs/what_teachers_say_about_coaching_1.2.09.pdf)
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 20-32.
- Waldron, T., Roberts, B., & Reamer, A. (2004). *Working hard, falling short: America's working families and the pursuit of economic security*. Chevy Chase, MD: Working Poor Families Project.
- Walker, A., Shafer, J., & Iiams, M. (2004). "Not in my classroom": Teacher attitudes towards English language learners in the mainstream classroom. *NABE Journal of Research and Practice*, 2(1), 130-160.
- Wei, R. C., Darling-Hammond, L., & Adamson, F. (2010). *Professional development in the United States: Trends and challenges* (Vol. 28). Dallas, TX: National Staff Development Council.
- West, M. R., & Chingos, M. M. (2009). Teacher effectiveness, mobility, and attrition in Florida. In M.G. Springer (Eds.), *Performance incentives: Their growing impact on American K-12 education* (pp. 251-271). Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press.
- WIDA Consortium. (2014). *The WIDA Standards Framework and its theoretical foundations*. Madison, WI: Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System.

- Wolf, M. K., Crosson, A. C., & Resnick, L. B. (2005). Classroom talk for rigorous reading comprehension instruction. *Reading Psychology, 26*(1), 27-53.
- Wolf, M. (2008). *Proust and the squid: The story and science of the reading brain*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Yendol-Hoppey, D., & Dana, N. F. (2010). *Powerful professional development: Building expertise within the four walls of your school*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Zigler, E., & Muenchow, S. (1992). *Head Start: The inside story of America's most successful educational experiment*. New York: Basic Books.
- Zwiers, J. (2013). *Building academic language: Essential practices for content classrooms, grades 5-12*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Cheryl S. Vanatti earned a Doctor of Education degree in curriculum, teaching, and teacher education from the University of Florida in 2017. Cheryl also earned a Master of Science degree in reading education from Florida International University in 2006. The bulk of her elementary education Bachelor of Science degree was completed at Indiana State University in Terre Haute, Indiana, but was conferred at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 1995.

Cheryl began her education career teaching seventeen retained first-graders in Broward County, Florida. There, she also taught sheltered bilingual second and third graders, high achieving and gifted third graders, as well as heterogeneous third and fifth grade classrooms. Following the appraisal of a principal who once told her she would be the perfect teacher if she could just add an ounce of her reading lesson enthusiasm to her math lessons, Cheryl decided to teach Reading and English Language Arts to middle school students while pursuing her master's degree in reading education. She later served as a reading specialist, providing reading intervention instruction to third, fourth and fifth grade students. In 2009, she moved to Orlando, Florida, where she currently serves as a reading specialist and instructional literacy coach.

Cheryl is committed to a scholarly interest in the ways that schools marginalize students through tracking and ill-formed practices meant to overcome reading skill abilities. It is her firm belief that until we start viewing our students from an asset-based and individualized perspective, little will change with regard to perceived educational "gaps." Her further scholarly interests are aimed at building teacher capacity, efficacy, and autonomy through instructional coaching and professional development in an effort to advance respect for professional educators like herself.

Cheryl's outside interests mirror her scholarly energies, as reflected in her teacher-focused children's literature weblog: [www.readingrumpus.com](http://www.readingrumpus.com).