PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES ON

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

PROGRAM REFUSALS

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Lisa Sama-Barreto

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Samuel F. Fancera, Ed.D.
Chairperson of Doctoral Committee

Michelle Hinkle, PhD
Member of Doctoral Committee

Giovanna Irizarry, Ed.D.
Member of Doctoral Committee

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine how principals' perspectives and experiences influenced the type of support they provided to students in their schools after parents refused English as a Second Language services for their eligible children, and if comprehensive programming impacted English language instruction when parents refused services. The researcher followed a qualitative research design and interviewed principals to conduct this study. Data collection and analysis relied heavily on the phenomenological research method. The data collected included open-ended semi-structured interview questions and anecdotal notes. The researcher interviewed six principals from three counties in New Jersey. The principals described themselves as being culturally responsive, and shared how they advocated for their students while combating systems of oppression. The research shows that the principals' individual backgrounds, such as having experience teaching or leading English as a Second Language students, mattered and influenced their response to parental refusals of students who qualify for English as a Second Language services. The research also shows that comprehensive programming does not impact the academic support principals provide students of program refusals, but it is the principals themselves working with other key stakeholders in their districts that ensure students are supported and information is communicated effectively to parents. Implications from this research suggest the need for an adequate academic support plan for students whose parents refused services and the importance of effective communication being key.

Keywords: English Language Learners, communication, partnerships, programming, refusal, instructional considerations

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my paternal and maternal grandparents:

Andrea Sama

Francesca Codispoti Sama

Andrea Lijoi

Maria Bressi Lijoi

This is where my family's immigrant story began. I thank my grandparents for taking a leap of faith, with my teenaged parents in their hands, and leaving all they ever knew behind, in Sant'Andrea Apostolo dello Ionio Calabria, Italy, in the hopes of creating better lives for their families in the United States of America. I thank my grandparents for dreaming big and beyond imagination. I thank them for their bravery, their fortitude, their perseverance, their grit, their tenacity, and their determination. These familial characteristics are directly correlated to who I am to the core of my being, and I have relied on these strengths throughout my doctoral journey. I thank my grandparents for forging a path that opened a world of opportunities for me, and for the many generations to come hereafter.

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LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction

As the number of immigrants entering the United States continues to grow, so do the demands of the public school system to provide specialized English as a Second Language services for the children entering our schools. In 2016, over 70,000 New Jersey students were identified as English Language Learners (New Jersey Department of Education Guidance for Enrollment of Newcomers, 2018). As this trend continues, there is a need to effectively prepare our schools to support this population. The United States of America has often been referred to as the Melting Pot as many different cultures, religions, races, and ethnicities have come together to live within this country (Maddern, 2013). As families enter the country, so do their K-12 school-aged children. When these families determine residence, their children are registered within the public school district and have the right to an education. Parents must complete a home language survey which provides the school district with preliminary data to determine whether a student should be screened for English as a Second Language (ESL) programming (NJDOE Guidance for Enrollment of Newcomers, 2018). If the school determines eligibility, the child's family is informed within a specified time limit. With the family's consent, the student is placed in the district's ESL program. It is then incumbent upon the principal to work with ESL teachers and classroom teachers to create an academic schedule for this student to ensure academic support for these learners.

When children are eligible to receive academic support through ESL services, school districts expect parents would embrace the opportunity. Some parents refused services without explanation. There are several factors contributing to why parents refused services (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015). A lack of a clear understanding of what it meant for students to be identified as eligible for services, and also what it is meant to be in an English as a Second Language program

proved problematic for parents' understanding (Lueck, 2010). Some families refused services because of misinformation being communicated. In some cases, parents thought that their children had to complete an ESL program before they are mainstreamed within a typical classroom (Kipchumba, 2017). There were also concerns from families that participation in an ESL program could potentially stigmatize their child. There were also fears surrounding immigration and the idea that consenting to services for their child may cause the school district to take a closer look at their family. Whatever the reasons, refusal of English as a Second Language services for eligible students is of great concern.

Students whose families refused English as a Second Language services remain registered in school and placed into general education classrooms. The responsibility of supporting refusal students is placed on the school district (Implementing ELL Programs, 2016). Teachers who are properly trained and certified to effectively instruct eligible students can positively affect the academic achievement of their students (Genesee, 2015). When parents refuse services, students are not instructed by specialized English as a Second Language teachers, but rather by general education teachers who may not have the required skills to support these learners. Districts should maintain a level of training for their teaching staff relative to supporting English Language Learners (ELL) in their classrooms including refusals. Schools are obligated to provide continued training for classroom teachers which could be focused on ELL students. An example would be sheltered instruction because refusal students would still require additional support in the classroom from their primary teacher (de Jong et al., 2018; Lhamon & Gupta, 2015).

Strategic placement of English Language Learners and ensuring students have equal access to educational opportunities is of the utmost importance (Oliver, 2021; Theoharis &

O'Toole, 2011). Principals are in the position to create educational opportunities for students to succeed. Instructional considerations of classroom placement is an example. There are endless possibilities such as groupings of all English Language Learners in one classroom, smaller cohorts of the same native language spread throughout the grade level, and also the possibility of grouping students of the same level of academic readiness (Genesee F., 2006). If families refused services, these students may not be considered for these specialized program placements. Ensuring that families understand the value of English as a Second Language programming is crucial. Effective communication with immigrant families in their native languages about programming and eligibility should be considered. School districts should have an established parent organization and bilingual advisory committee available to families. This would allow for principals to further investigate any issues that exist with communicating ESL programming with families and also reach out to the families of those who refused services (Implementing ELL Programs, 2016).

Districts are obligated to monitor student progress, follow up with families and continue to offer support to the identified English Language Learners (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015). If students whose parents have refused services are not making adequate educational progress, school districts should connect with parents and reoffer enrollment in ESL programming (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015). These guidelines are set forth by the state of New Jersey Department of Education, yet understanding if principals have followed through with these protocols is key in perhaps ensuring students whose parents refused services are supported in the classroom. Gathering information on whether principals follow up with immigrant families or if school districts have adequate dual language speakers to communicate with families could help to support the desire for equal and equitable opportunities for immigrant student success.

Background of Researcher

Becoming an educator felt natural to the researcher as she was drawn to education because of her immigrant parents and their academic struggles. Upon entering middle school, the researcher's parents could no longer help her with homework or projects. It was not because they did not want to, but rather it was because they did not acquire the educational skills to support secondary educational learning. The researcher felt she was on her own at a very young age where her formal education was concerned. This experience motivated the researcher's interactions with her students and their parents during her professional career as a K-12 educator.

Throughout the researcher's teaching career, she made connections with hundreds of children within the communities in which she served, many of whom came from immigrant homes, or they themselves were immigrants. As an elementary school teacher, the researcher requested to teach the English Language Learners because she felt drawn to this population, and sought the knowledge of the ESL teachers and asked for strategies to use in the classroom. It was the researcher's mission to support these learners during the school day when they were not with their English as a Second Language teachers. When the researcher became a principal, she realized that she had an even greater ability to support ELL students through providing training opportunities for teachers, creativity with scheduling, and her effect on the overall English as a Second Language programming.

Determining English Language Learner Status

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) under the Title III & Bilingual ESL

Education department defines an English Language Learner (ELL) as a student for whom

English is not their native or first language. School districts must have procedures in place to

identify ELL students. At minimum, school districts are required to utilize a home language

survey during enrollment which allows for the district to gather information about students

whose primary language at home is another language other than English (Implementing English

Language Program Services in New Jersey, 2016). Once initial data are collected, school districts

must create a screening process based upon the data from the home language survey. At

minimum, a survey is conducted by a certified ESL teacher to further determine whether students

have English Language Proficiency (ELP) and require no further testing. Once students are

identified as possible English Language Learners, an additional assessment approved by the

NJDOE must be administered along with close inspection of additional data such as the ability

for students to read English, review of previous academic performance and teacher input, if

applicable (Implementing English Language Program Services in New Jersey, 2016). If a

determination is made that a student is eligible for services, school districts must draft a letter

explaining eligibility criteria and notify parents within 30 days of testing (Implementing English

Language Program Services in New Jersey, 2016).

Importance of English as a Second Language Support

Students in need of ESL services enter New Jersey schools every day and become part of

school communities. Upon receiving their home language surveys and students partaking in

initial screenings to determine eligibility for ESL programming, students become eligible for

services, yet parents have the autonomy to refuse. When children are found eligible for services

during the primary years, early intervention is key with a need to focus on early childhood education particularly on reading and language acquisition and the importance of culturally responsive literacy in the classroom. For example, a focused view on literacy in a preschool classroom as a socio-cultural process whereby critical analysis of literacy is embedded in daily social interactions would aid in the creation of a culturally responsive classroom environment (Dajani & Meier, 2019). The opportunity for cultures and home languages could be honored through discussions, stories, literature and academic discourse discussions (Dajani & Meier, 2019). Small changes in material choice along with discussion and questioning techniques allowed for children to have a broader understanding and engage in richer and culturally responsive discussions.

ELL children at the kindergarten level who entered school and are already partially proficient in English fell even farther behind over the school year on English Language Arts assessments than that of their peers (Fitton et al., 2018). Academic growth at the primary level is significant and happens rapidly during kindergarten through second grade. A balanced literacy approach is important to the growth and development of all primary students while a strong focus on phonics and reading instruction should be the primary focus. "During shared book reading, an adult reads with one or more children and may use interactive practices such as dialogic reading techniques to engage the children or reinforce specific words or ideas from the text" (Fitton et al., 2018, p. 713). During shared reading, ELLs have the opportunity to work closely with their teacher and peers. Explicit, targeted instructional delivery and the choice of text with pictures as scaffolds is also very important to the success of shared reading time for ELLs. These experiences allowed for students to have the opportunity for small group discussion and dialogue with their peers which allowed for growth in both reading and spoken language.

There was a strong correlation between both oral language skills and reading, and the importance in identifying ways in which to improve oral language skills among ELs, "for young ELs, shared reading interventions are among the most common early language focused interventions reported in the early intervention literature" (Fitton et al., 2018, p. 714).

Students who are identified as ELLs are generally placed into a classroom among native and English speaking peers. Homeroom teachers may create their small groups based upon data gathered via baseline assessments and then through formative assessments throughout the year. Students have the opportunity to meet with intervention groups throughout the school day in the general education setting. Students who are eligible for ESL services have the opportunity for support given by ESL teachers who bring additional skill sets to instruct this student population. Small group instruction delivered by ESL teachers during the course of the school day could further supplement the support needed for students to succeed. With this being said, parents still refused services for various reasons and those children who were eligible to receive services were left in their classrooms without the additional support (Lueck, 2010; Monzo, 2016).

Being a bilingual student, competent in two languages, has significantly grown in the world over the past several years (Prevoo et al., 2016). Students who are bilingual with an immigrant background face many challenges and did not fare well in school in comparison to their monolingual peers due to several factors including lack of support in their education (Prevoo et al., 2016). During the elementary years, students perform better with both oral language proficiency in both speaking and understanding because of the exposure to early literacy initiatives which include multisensory structured phonics programs, a balanced literacy approach, and primary mathematics. Although there are data that supported bilingual students show strength with certain cognitive advantages more so than their monolinguistic peers, those

children with an immigrant background who are bilingual score significantly lower in

standardized tests in both reading and math (Prevoo et al., 2016). There was also a correlation

between socio economic disadvantaged immigrant families to those students who have either

been retained or have decided to drop out of high school before their graduation date due to lack

of academic support and access to information and resources (Monozo, 2016; Prevoo et al.,

2016). Starting at the elementary level, parents faced obstacles such as understanding

placements, knowing their child's programming options, interpreting grade reporting, and

supporting homework overall (Monozo, 2016). Students who have grown proficient in oral

language were able to perform stronger in school and have better outcomes than their

peers. "The attention for oral language proficiency should be continued throughout children's

school career, because the importance of oral proficiency is higher at higher grade levels with

more focus on reading comprehension" (Prevoo et al., 2016, p. 265).

Rationale and Motivation

A principal is in a position of power to positively affect change and directly combat

systems of oppression to influence opportunity for the historically minoritized immigrant

students within their community whose parents refused ESL services. Whether they are

employed in diverse communities where there is already a large immigrant population, or as

demographics change over time, principals have the opportunity to collect data in several areas

of student achievement. As a school leader, there is an opportunity to help support the English

Language Learner population of students through specialized scheduling, programming, and

delivery of instruction. Whether a student is labeled as a newcomer, or has been enrolled in ESL

for a few years, there are ESL students who would benefit from specialized academic

programming to support their needs. There are also students who are eligible for services whose parents refused extra academic support.

While the researcher understood the need to further research the reasons why parents refused services, the researcher was of the position that it was the principal who can affect change and was instrumental in supporting students of refusals in schools. Culturally responsive principals must protect and promote the practices that include minoritized students and the spaces in which they exist (Khalifa, 2021; Rivera-McCutchen 2014; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). Social justice principals who served in diverse towns in terms of socio economics, race, ethnicity, culture and immigrant status have a duty towards supporting the immigrant population of students who qualified for services. The qualifying students who are found to be eligible have the right to be supported through additional programming even though their parents refused services, but it is up to the principal to ensure these practices are being implemented.

> The question we must ask ourselves as school leaders and answer in meaningful ways is how do we meet the academic and social needs of young people who enter our schools with different sets of values, beliefs, socioeconomic experiences, behaviors, world views, home languages, as well as degrees of ableness? (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 18)

Principals, as leaders in a school building, affected and influenced long term successes of academic programming for students identified at ELLs (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). Principals worked beside English as Second Language teachers and ensured best practices are shared with general education teachers for those students who would not attend ESL classes. ESL departments, curriculum directors, and principals could discuss how to strategically maximize additional services for qualifying English Language Learners whose parents refused services. In

a school building, principals have the autonomy to create instructional considerations for students whose parents refused services and affect change in areas such as scheduling. Principals can also affect the recruitment, selection, and hiring of teaching staff as a way to create support for ESL students whose parents refused services.

Principals also have access to multiple methods of assessment data and can put forth a collaborative effort with ESL teachers and district level leadership to ensure proper support and grouping for this unique population. In reviewing scheduling and programming, school leaders and ESL teachers have the potential to make it a practice to review consent forms for eligible students. If there are refusals, ESL teachers and principals should engage in conversation surrounding the refusals. As part of best practices, principals and teachers should have an already established family support group or partnership for families to gain information about programming. Principals should also establish a method of communication in order to contact families to inquire about their decisions about refusals in the hopes that parents would change their minds and consent to services.

Maintaining accurate records at the onset of the new school year of refusals would help to organize the efforts of parent contact. Students who enter our school districts and who qualify as English Language Learners have the right to services and resources available to them to support their learning in the classroom. Newcomer immigrant students have services available for their needs if they are found eligible. Immigrant children already face many adversities and injustices. Having the added layer of academic support is an advantage these students have, yet because of parental refusals, many students are not given the chance. By putting a solid plan in place principals have the ability to affect change for this historically marginalized and oppressed group of children. The researcher was hopeful that through this study, she would be part of affecting

change for eligible students in neighboring communities, and, ultimately, at the state level whose parents refused services offering research to support this community.

Statement of Problem

English as a Second Language program refusal occurred for varying reasons (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015). School districts are obligated to provide all students with an education regardless of socioeconomic status, race, religion, color, or national origin (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015). Students who were eligible for ESL services had the opportunity for additional support from specially trained staff. ESL instruction happened in a variety of ways including in small groups with peers who have scored in the same educational range or share the same native language (Genesee et al., 2006). Yet, although there are students who are eligible for services, parents refused services without fully understanding the impact the decision might have on their child's educational success (Thomas & Collier, 2002).

There were many factors that could be attributed to the reasons why parents refuse services (Kipchumba, 2017; Lhamon & Gupta, 2015; Lueck, 2010; Thomas & Collier, 2002). The importance of effective communication between the school and families became paramount to ensuring student participation in ESL programming occurred. A strong connection between the home and school that can foster a good working relationship that supports the ELL population to thrive is needed for the success of programming. When parents refused services, it caused students to be left without additional scaffolds in the classroom.

Research Questions and Goal of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how principals' perspectives and experiences influence the type of support they provide to students in their schools after parents refuse English

as a Second Language services for their eligible children. There were two primary questions

with each primary question having two supporting secondary questions that guided this work:

Primary RQ1- How do principals' perspectives and experiences influence their response to

parental refusals of students who qualify for ESL services?

- **Secondary RQ1-** How do principals communicate with families who refuse ESL

  services?

- **Secondary RQ2-** How do principals recruit, select and hire staff to support

  ESL/Bilingual students whose families refuse services?

Primary RQ2- How does comprehensive programming impact English language instruction

when parents refuse services?

- **Secondary RQ3-** What programs and partnerships do principals develop or offer

  families who refuse ESL services?

- **Secondary RQ4-** What types of instructional considerations are principals putting

  in place to support students whose parents refuse services?

Findings from this study provided principals with researched information to begin

addressing the urgent need for districts to be consistent in their methods in communicating

information and community building opportunities to support students and their families who

have refused services for their eligible children. Findings from this study provided a spotlight on

the importance of continuing to continue offering these students academic support. Also, the

findings from this research provided information related to the importance of hiring practices and

the teachers who have direct contact with students of refusals to have the proper training and

access to curriculum needed to maximize their educational impact with this population to support

academic success. The researcher was hopeful that by placing emphasis on this study, additional

steps are taken to ensure that the students whose parents refused ESL services received the additional support needed to be successful learners.

Assumptions and Biases

The researcher brought certain assumptions and biases to this research. The researcher assumed that principals followed up with students of refusals and that information regarding ESL programming was properly communicated to families. The researcher also assumed that principals were communicating with families who refused English as a Second Language services. It was also an assumption that all parents advocated for their children's education and want them to successfully learn academic English. Additionally, it was an assumption that parents of immigrant newcomers do not fully understand the importance of specific English as a Second Language program targeted instruction. The researcher also assumed that principals were meeting with teachers to review data and create a plan of action to contact families of refusals.

Conceptual Framework

The researcher examined how principals' perspectives and experiences influenced the type of support they provided to students in their schools after parents refuse English as a Second Language services for their eligible children through the lens of equity, fairness, and social justice. Principal leadership styles, experiences, and characteristics likely influenced the procedures these leaders established for students whose families refused ESL/BIL services.

This study also specifically examined the comprehensive programming and procedures principals developed for these students that are focused on (1) family programs and partnerships; (2) communication strategies with families; (3) staff recruitment, selection, and hiring practices; and (4) instructional considerations. Figure 1 depicts how the researcher conceptualized this study.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ Equity, Fairness,│
                    │    and Social    │
                    │    Justice for   │
                    │   ESL/Bilingual  │
                    │     Students     │
                    └─────────────────┘
                             │
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │   Principals'    │
                    │ Perspectives and │
                    │  Experiences as  │
                    │  Social Justice  │
                    │     Leaders      │
                    └─────────────────┘
                             │
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │    Principal     │
                    │  Procedures for  │
                    │    Refusal of    │
   ┌──────────┐     │   ESL/Bilingual  │     ┌──────────────┐
   │ Programs │     │     Programs     │     │ Instructional│
   │   and    │─────│                  │─────│Consideration │
   │Partnerships│   └─────────────────┘     └──────────────┘
   │with Families│      │          │
   └──────────┘  ┌────────────┐ ┌────────────┐
                 │Communication│ │ Recruitment,│
                 │with Families│ │  Selection, │
                 │            │ │ and Hiring  │
                 │            │ │  Practices  │
                 └────────────┘ └────────────┘
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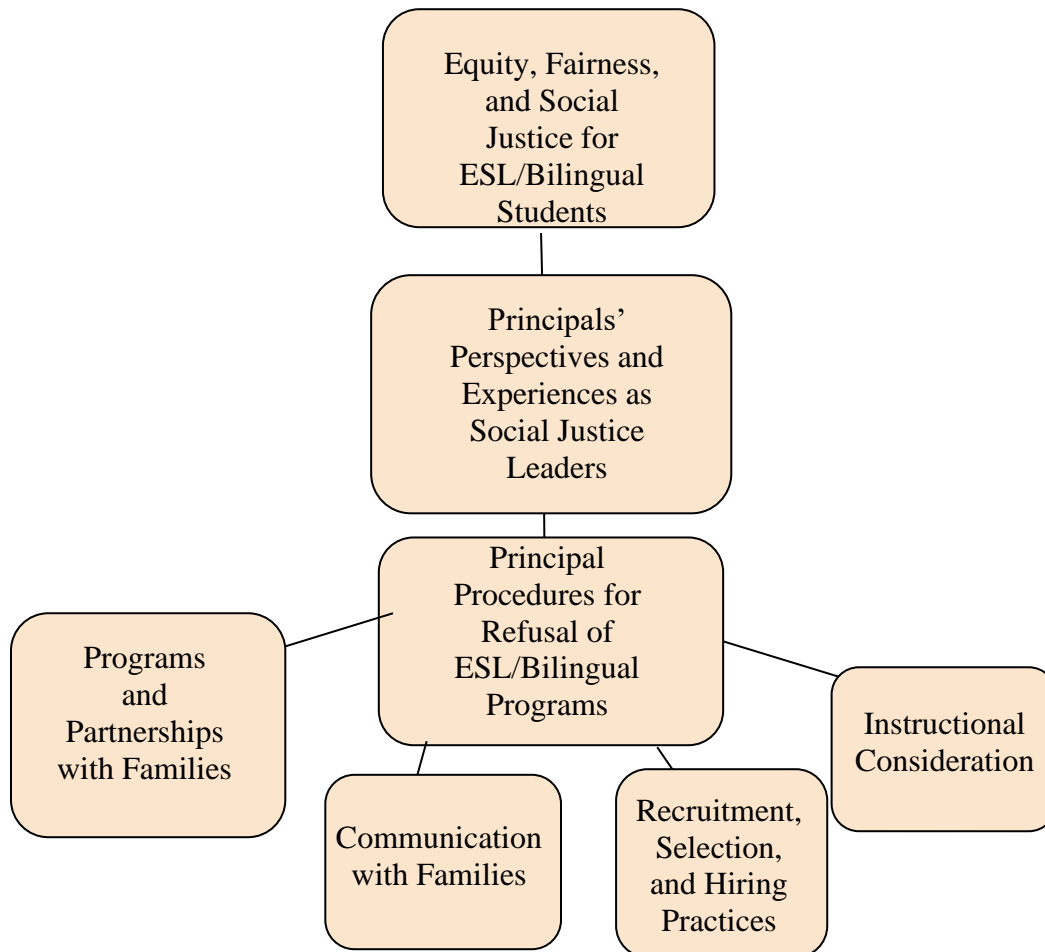
Summary

In this chapter, the researcher has introduced a research topic which was focused on examining how principals' perspectives and experiences influence the type of support they provide to students in their schools after parents refused English as a Second Language services for their eligible children. The researcher has established the purpose and goal of the study, their role as a researcher, assumptions and biases, determining English language status, rationale and

motivation, statement of problem and their background in respect to the study. Chapter 2

provides a review of the literature as it relates to the research topic.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The English Language Learner population of students has grown exponentially throughout the past several decades within the K-12 school system. The largest rise in ELL population happened in suburban and rural school systems. "It is estimated that by 2030, 40% of K-12 students in the U.S. will have varying levels of English language proficiency" (Forte & Blouin, 2016, p. 782). Students in need of ESL services continue to enter New Jersey schools every day and become part of school communities requiring additional programming. "As a result, school administrators, teachers, and staff are confronted with issues concerning the integration of language minority students into a predominantly white school culture" (Oliver, 2021, p. 1). While this trend continues to rise, the need for a spotlight on public education in English as a Second Language (ESL) programming cannot be ignored. There are many steps in the process before a student is found eligible to participate in the ESL program, and even then, families can refuse services. School districts, particularly principals, have an enormous responsibility in building strong community relations with parents in order to convey the importance of ESL programming to ensure that all eligible newcomer immigrant students participated and received services.

Equity, Fairness, and Social Justice for ESL and Bilingual Students

Nimmo et al. (2021) noted social justice leaders "encourage the various stakeholders to expand their perspective beyond a focus on their own interests to being able to empathize with and see other points of view and the big picture of how one's actions intersect with those of others" (p. 22). Immigrant students are part of marginalized and minoritized groups and come to our schools with significant needs. Social justice leaders believe they have a moral obligation to address the marginalization of groups and provide equal access to educational opportunities

(DeMatthews et al., 2021; Mavrogordato & White, 2020; Oliver, 2021; Rivera-McCutchen, 2014; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). They operate with a wide lens open-focused approach on implementing policy which can create an equitable opportunistic environment for all groups (Mavrogordato & White, 2020; Minkos, et al., 2017). Social justice leaders also have ethical obligations to lead by example and set norms. "Ethical leaders have the ability to set normative appropriate behavior. This enforces social learning by extrinsically motivating followers to pay attention to proper conduct" (Steinbauer, et al., 2014, p. 382).

Along with creating inclusionary spaces for minoritized students, all students' identities should be welcomed in schools. According to Khalifa (2021) culturally responsive social justice leaders promote a school environment that protects these identities and are mindful not to continue the historically oppressive treatment of minoritized communities in schools. According to Northouse (2018) culturally responsive social justice leaders have a moral and ethical responsibility to address all forms of oppression:

> Although all of us have an ethical responsibility to treat other people as unique human beings, leaders have a special responsibility because the nature of their leadership puts them in a special position in which they have a greater opportunity to influence others in a significant way. (p. 429)

A social justice leader's mission is to foster a safe and diverse environment in which each individual student feels a sense of belonging. They are culturally responsive, advocate for their students, and combat systems of oppression (Oliver, 2021). They confront bias, acknowledge its existence, make a concerted effort to challenge stereotypes, and combat implicit bias (Duguid & Thomas-Hunt, 2015; Minkos, et al., 2017). Through open communication, inclusivity, guidance, and support, each member of the school community has the right to feel empowered to strive to

achieve their highest emotional and intellectual potential, including students whose parents have refused ESL services. It is the role of the principal that can greatly affect the school community as a whole. "Recognizing the historical, oppressive structural barriers that minoritized communities face is a necessary first step to realizing culturally responsive leadership" (Khalifa, 2021, p. 47).

Social justice leaders are critical reflective change agents (Rivera-McCutchen, 2014). School leaders are in positions of power to directly address systems of oppression. "Critical self-reflection allows leaders to see how oppression and marginalization is happening…and to catch it as it newly positions itself in organizations" (Khalifa, 2021, p. 62). Social Justice leaders must continue to grow a cultivated environment in which all students have an equal and equitable opportunity to be active members within their school community. Oliver (2021) described the notion that what leaders do matters most. As leaders conduct themselves as positive change agents, and led by example, they can move the needle by creating access to culturally responsive professional development, mentorships, and committees among their staff. By doing so, all staff members could share a connected understanding and work towards common goals of developing themselves as future social justice leaders for the betterment of their school community.

Principals' Perspectives and Experiences as Social Justice Leaders

Principals' perspectives and experiences depend upon their own path to leadership. Whether it be policy, procedure, or use of resources, implemented inclusionary practices in ways that are effective within one's context supported success (Leithwood, 2021). Principals are required to complete rigorous leadership programs, some of which were created with a social justice theoretical framework to prepare and cultivate them as social justice leaders, yet many leadership programs are inadequate in design (Rivera- McCutchen, 2014). Additionally,

principals' individual backgrounds, such as having a knowledge base, experience teaching, or having led historically marginalized or oppressed groups, matter regarding building credibility behind being a social justice leader (Mavrogordato & White, 2020; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

> Leadership preparation programs must highlight structural inequities and aid students in identifying their own biases and assumptions in order to build the capacity of future generations of social justice leaders so that they may avoid the pitfalls of reproducing the very conditions they decry. (Rivera-McCutchen, 2014, p. 750)

Principals are in positions to affect change and should conduct themselves in a manner in which promotes student equity as social justice leaders. The research reported various ways in which principals can lead by example by understanding culture and context; recognizing diversity as an asset for learning; ensuring equitable access to key academic resources; creating fair policies to address student misconduct; confronting bias; preparing students for a diverse, global society; acting with cultural competence and responsiveness; addressing equity and cultural responsiveness (Minkos et al, 2017). It was important that principals hold high ethical and moral standards as the standard of learning in their institution while being culturally responsive and modeling cultural competence for all groups (Rivera-McCutchen, 2014). Terrell et al. (2018) described cultural proficiency as a principal's approach and the way in which they interact with people regardless of their backgrounds. As a principal, it is imperative to display culturally proficient characteristics and work towards becoming culturally competent. Terrell et al. (2018) provided five guiding principles to follow as a "moral compass for culturally proficient action." The following are the essential elements for culturally proficient leadership:

"assessing cultural knowledge; valuing diversity; managing the dynamics of difference; adapting to diversity; and institutionalizing cultural knowledge" (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 33). As these five essential elements pointed out, principals must continue to be focused on creating opportunities in which their staff understands the student population they are teaching.

Becoming culturally competent is acknowledging that there are differences between yourself and others and then working towards a common ground to bridge those differences. Additionally, principals need to be self-reflective, and be aware that all actions, programming and processes within the school should be inclusive. "Educators must ask how we are personally responsible for reproducing oppressed practices, we must also critically examine the role of our school programs, departments, hiring practices, enrichment courses, and other school structures" (Khalifa, 2021, p. 60). Minkos et al. (2017) explained the importance of school leaders "confront[ing] and alter[ing] institutional biases of students marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language…" (p. 1,263).

Principal Procedure for Refusal of English as a Second Language Program Refusals

When students become eligible for additional support in the classroom, parents have the right to refuse services. This fact is concerning because students do not have access to programming that is available to their peers whose parents accept services. Principals are in the position to contact parents to discuss the educational concerns surrounding a refusal. "Parents who refuse bilingual/ESL services for their children should be informed that their children's long-term academic achievement will probably be much lower as a result, and they should be strongly counseled against refusing bilingual/ESL services when their child is eligible" (Thomas & Collier, 2002, p. 333).

A lack of a clear understanding of what it meant for students to be identified as eligible for services, and what it is meant to be in an English as a Second Language program proved problematic for parents' understanding and has contributed to program refusal (Lueck, 2010; Monzo, 2016). Parents may already be concerned about their child in school and not being given information about programming would not help the situation. Some families refused services because of misinformation and parents thinking that their children have to complete an ESL program before they are mainstreamed within a typical classroom (Kipchumba, 2017). Another reason why parents refused services is the idea that their children would be pulled out of the mainstream classroom and into a small group or that only certain schools in the district have subgroups of ELL identified students which would send their child across town to a different school other than the one in their neighborhood (Kipchumba, 2017). Parents also feared separation from neighborhood peers and their children missing out on events. Studies show students who are eligible and are enrolled in an ESL program can successfully compete with their grade level peers in their overall academic performance (Genesee et al., 2006). Principals conveying this information to families of refusals could provide the proper guidance for families to retract their decision and enroll their children in the correct programming.

There are other factors that contributed to parental refusals such as (a) problematic district practices such as school personnel steering families away from EL programs; (b) providing incorrect or inadequate information to parents about the EL program, particular services within the program, or their child's EL status; (c) noncompliance where school personnel have recommended that families decline EL programs due to insufficient space in such programs; (d) because school districts served only EL students with a basic or emerging level of English (e) school districts not adequately address parental concerns expressed about the quality

of the EL program; (f) parents their lack of confidence in the EL program; (g) program offered because the school district was not able to demonstrate the effectiveness of its program, or (h) their belief that their child did not need EL services (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015). Thomas and Collier (2002) highlighted the concern of refusal of services and how it affects the students overall academic achievement regarding retaining students, dropping out of high school and poor attendance over their school careers. By effectively communicating with families and providing information, principals are in the position to be change agents and advocates for their students.

Programs and Partnerships with Families

When families enter a new town as immigrants, they face many challenges. They may not be able to communicate through spoken or written language. They may feel fear towards the culture of the newly adopted country. Whatever the case, if these families do not have a group of people already settled in the area from their own culture who can guide them, they may not be aware of the number of resources their new community can offer. It is not because they do not want to know, but rather, they lack the resources to be informed. Without parental involvement, the children enrolled in schools may not be given the proper support or provided with the proper resources to succeed (Grant et. al, 2022; Rodriguez, 2020). Principals have the opportunity to become culturally proficient and supportive of their school communities providing immigrant families with the ability to partner with schools and become involved in programs. School-parent partnerships programs fostered positive relationships and provided parents with tools to support their children at home (Grant et al., 2022). Clark-Louque et al. (2019) brought forth a systematic approach to guide principals to work towards being culturally proficient and partnering with families through engagement. They referred to the 7 Cs which are identified as collaboration, communication, caring/compassion, culture, community, connectedness, collective

responsibility, and courageous engagement. As a principal, being directly involved with the school community through these seven principles could create opportunities for relationships which could further the possibilities of open communication when refusals occur.

Perhaps the correlation between the immigrant paradox and student successes begins with family engagement and their support of educational programs. Duong et. al. (2016) asserted "immigrant parents are thought to be especially optimistic about their children's prospects of success, and immigrant children correspondingly exert more effort in school" (p. 5). When there is parental involvement in a child's education, students succeed. When immigrant parents do not fully understand what is available, their children may not have the necessary support needed for academic success. Immigrant students may be aware of the fact that their parents are not in touch with the state of affairs in the United States and can be categorized as internalized oppression (Monzo, 2016). There is a need for schools to engage in the daily experiences of students and be in contact with their families about the ways in which their communities are identified as being unknowing and powerless. Schools and teachers can support students and their families through learning about customs and support the idea of collaboration, collectivity, and interdependency (Monzo, 2016; Grant et al., 2022).

There is an obvious need to ensure that immigrant parents are fully aware of educational programs available to their children such as English as a Second Language, the issue may be that school districts are unable to make connections with each family who have refused services as a follow up. Ensuring the engagement and partnership of parents may be the key to putting an end to refusals. Gaitan (2012) provided insight into the importance of the community being connected to the schools as an important part of a culturally responsive approach to partnering with families. Different generations of immigrants have vastly different experiences in schools.

For example, first generation immigrants might have less mastery over the English language than that of their later generation peers (Duong, et al., 2016). The researcher cannot help but wonder if ESL program refusals contribute to these statistics. It is critical that students who are eligible for additional ESL services be granted the opportunity for additional support.

Social capital can be held by leaders within their school communities. "Student social capital is when students or their families have relationships or are a part of networks that end up being educationally or socially beneficial to them" (Khalifa, 2021, p. 116). Some communities have developed programs that provide information and build a bridge towards the creation of social capital. The California Department of Education created the Census Ambassador Program. Ramakrishnan et al. (2021) asserted the ambassadors had been ESL students themselves, came from multiple backgrounds, completed training, and then went out into the community to inform citizens about various resources available to them. "Students played a critical role in ensuring that accurate and understandable census information reached recent immigrants and those with limited English proficiency" (p. 50). The ambassadors formed relationships with several families within the community and created social networks. This program spoke to the importance of communication with families. Another program in California was created to inform the immigrant population how to be more engaged with their local government. Informing these families of resources within their communities allowed them to participate as community members (Ramakrishnan et al., 2021; Shiffman, 2019).

Communication with Families

Immigrant Paradox is described as when historically marginalized groups of students are living in poverty and attending schools in lower socioeconomic districts where access to curricular materials and teacher to student ratios are not conducive to academic success (Duong

et al., 2016). Previous research suggested immigrant students were found to be in better health, had more positive behaviors, and overall academic successes than that of their native-born peers (Duong et al., 2016). An integral part of our immigrant families' consent to ESL services is providing understandable information. Principals must bring forth ways in which they communicate with these families to accommodate all aspects of their community (Khalifa, 2021). Boundary spanning is referred to as "serving an important function in school system interactions with the community and in connecting with immigrants to other community's resources" (Shiffman, 2018, p. 4). The components of boundary spanning are brokering information, building bridges, and navigating organizations. In order to broker information, it requires a person to be able to summarize, interpret, and communicate information to those who need direction. It also allows for all stakeholders to come together and make connections between formalized organizations within education and connections with the greater community it serves (Shiffman, 2019; Grant et. al, 2022). Whether a bilingual ambassador delivers the information as it was done in a study in California, or through written correspondence, the critical piece is that parents are in the know. It is important when communicating effectively with immigrant families, "slowing [your] speaking, defining vernacular ahead of time, using visuals and role plays as well as providing language support as needed to ensure complex ideas are clearly understood" (Ramakrishnan et al., 2021). When building bridges, families need to feel a sense of trust with the organization and having the ability to build bridges within the context of understanding the diversity of the community creates the possibility of building quality relationships (Miranda, 2014; Shiffman, 2019).

There was the importance of building connections so that programming can be understood. It was equally important to be able to effectively communicate with families so that

they could provide pertinent information regarding their child's educational experiences, struggles, and exposure to the English language. Success can be found when there is a strong partnership and close collaboration between families and the school district allowing for more involvement, student engagement, and program coordination (Miranda, 2014; Minkos, et al., 2017; Ramakrishnan et al., 2021). The final piece of boundary spanning is navigating organizations. Shiffman explains that for immigrant families to utilize resources within their community, they needed to be able to traverse through the establishment. "Negotiating organizations requires a deep understanding of the organizational context, an ability to move easily within and across organizations, and to be recognized as legitimate by individuals in organizations" (p. 5).

To establish these immigrant family groups, there needs to be an establishment of community trust, credibility and understanding between the school and students' families. Khalifa (2021) explained "trust between schools and Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other minoritized communities has traditionally been low due to historical and current practices of marginalization" (p. 172). The more organizations found ways to communicate with immigrant families, the more the possibilities of family engagement and trust can begin. Sibley and Dearing (2014) asserted it was essential to understand how immigrant families support their children's learning. "Following the historic flow of immigrant families…schools are faced with increasing heterogeneity in family culture and parenting practices. Understanding the ways…parents are involved in their children's education may be critical…to promote the life chances of immigrant children" (p. 15). High levels of parental involvement were one of the key factors in students reaching high levels of achievement. By providing families with the ability to make connections with other families provided additional ways to feel supported and find their

place within the school community. Parents who held a positive attitude towards education and supported their children was a strong indication of how these students might fare in the classroom (Riley, 2015; Ramakrishnan et al., 2021). Engagement of families and communication of information about English as a Second Language programs was critical especially during the primary years (Leuck, 2010; Ramakrishnan et al., 2021; Sibley; & Dearing, 2014).

There are generational differences in immigrant students and disproportionate advantages and disadvantages within this group. Duong et. al. (2016) asserted it was critical for families of students who entered school and were eligible for ESL services at the elementary level to receive information they can understand about programming. "A coherent understanding of immigrant achievement would not only guide schools and policymakers in meeting the unique educational needs of this rapidly growing population, but also advance theories explaining the integration process" (p. 4).

Recruitment, Selection, and Hiring Practices

School principals play a significant role in the relationship between immigrant families and the school. "The principal stands out as the one person who can most influence the long-term success of programs for ELLs" (DeMathews, 2015; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). Northouse (2021) stated an inclusive leader creates opportunities for historically marginalized groups, strives to create a more diverse workforce while maintaining legal compliance consistent with equal opportunity employment, and emphasizes the involvement of everyone in the group. It is imperative that the principal is inclusive in hiring practices and hires teaching staff that reflects the school community. It is also important for the principal to gain a deep understanding of the community's culture. In leading from a social justice lens, the hiring practices of principals was an urgent focus in supporting students enrolled in ESL services. There was an importance of

ensuring that candidates fit into the fabric of the culture and climate of the school and can adjust and meet the needs of the community (Miranda, 2014; Rivera-McCutchen, 2014). It was equally important to hire faculty members who resemble the community and who can offer a multitude of skills such as being bilingual which would bring new perspectives and support to the educational setting. Rivera-McCutchen (2014) asserted the importance of the vetting process and onboarding educators:

> Selecting staff members who understood and were aligned with the principles of equity that they themselves cherished…includ[ing] creating an institution that was committed to providing students with equitable access to and opportunities for acquiring a first-class education primarily through being responsive to the needs of the community. (p. 754)

Principals should be cognizant of hiring a diverse population of ESL and general education teachers who are bilingual themselves. This would provide an additional layer of support and added communication between parents and the school community. Students whose parents refused services and are in need of support would benefit from a bilingual classroom or small group setting where they can practice and learn in both their native and secondary language. Prevoo et al. (2016) stated it is important to stimulate students' oral language proficiency in both their native secondary language. This process could prove to be significant in improving the school outcomes of bilingual children with an immigrant background.

Teachers played a significant role in the success of ESL programming and building trust with immigrant families. Whether the teachers are formally trained and certified as ESL instructors or general educators, the possibility of an ELL student being placed in their classrooms is high. Kang and Veitch (2017) noted the importance of general education teachers

trained, "Scholars in teacher education have been calling for a need to prepare mainstream teachers to work with ELs…the concept of teacher knowledge encompasses the dynamics of language that students are engaged within their homes and communities" (p. 2). Proper training for all teachers to support the ELL population helped the success of the teachers and the students. Nimmo et al. (2021) asserted the importance of the principal being critically aware of their surroundings. "The leader's knowledge of how inequities are both perpetuated and challenged, along with a clear understanding of the context of their program, forms the basis for supporting teacher professional development" (p. 22).

Placing ELLs who required additional support in the mainstream classroom is happening at a higher rate. As an educator, the researcher has experienced small subgroups of students who were part of ESL programming. Today, due to the large influx of non-English speakers, there has been an exponential growth of the English Language Learner (ELL) student population in the United States (Forte & Blouin, 2016). These groups continue to grow and come with more diverse backgrounds. There is a need to be sure our teachers are prepared to work effectively with this student population (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011; de Jong et al., 2018). Training programs for teachers of ELL students vary from state to state. There is a need for training, but a closer look at University level teacher preparation programs and how they are structured to train teachers in specialized content areas such as an ESL program so they understand how to effectively support ELLs in their classrooms (Coady et al., 2011; de Jong et al., 2018; Minkos et al., 2017). Universities across the country may need to rethink their general education course requirements for those who choose education as a major. There are some states in the union that are progressive in their thinking where ESL programming is concerned. De Jung et al. (2018) highlighted the state of Florida's educational programs, "Florida is one of five states…with a

comprehensive framework for the preparation of mainstream teachers to work with ELLs. Professional development requirements…have been in place…and the state also require[s] that teacher[s]…graduate with an ESL endorsement" (p. 5). Kang & Veitch (2016) added, "the language-related knowledge base essential for preparing mainstream teachers to work with ELs…is directly related to disciplinary teaching and learning and situated in the particular contexts where teaching and learning take place" (p. 2).

The importance of teachers of ESL programs who are bilingual and can communicate with our families would also support the establishment of trust. In Texas, there was an increase in students who qualified for the ESL program. "The growth in the ELL population has resulted in an increased demand for bilingual teachers. Colleges of education seeking to assist districts…encounter a number of challenges both when recruiting and retaining preservice bilingual teachers" (Riley et al., 2017, p. 406). Brokering has been referred to in this study as a way of disseminating information to families in order to educate about ESL services. Cultural brokers assumed different roles such as communication, translation, and advocacy (Coady, 2019; Grant et. al., 2022). School districts with staff who possessed the language skills necessary to communicate with families are of value to the process of communicating with families.

For parents to communicate with teachers to fully understand how to support their children at home, it would be essential for a teacher who speaks their native language. Parents could feel isolated which would cause them to stigmatize themselves further. Consideration on the recruitment, selection, and hiring practices of teachers is paramount. Immigrant parents often deal with low self-esteem and are not confident in initiating conversations with the school or their children about school related concerns because they simply do not understand. It is then in the hands of school districts, and principals, to examine what their school can do to ensure that

hiring bilingual teachers to communicate with families is a focus (Sibley & Dearing, 2014; Riley et al., 2017). There should also be a focus on establishing norms for continuing education and the support of ESL teachers or those teachers who have groups of students whose parents have refused services in their classrooms. It is equally important to create a community of support for these novice bilingual teachers as they are often one of a group placed alone in an elementary school to service all of the ELLs. It is often that bilingual teachers are not given the same support that their general education colleagues receive (Riley et al., 2017). One way to support bilingual teachers is to establish a routine check in and to create professional development opportunities such as professional learning community (PLC) meetings to foster teacher collaboration (Riley et al., 2017; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

Immigrant newcomer students' educations are delicate and vulnerable situations. Oftentimes, students entered schools with minimal exposure to an American educational system while also lacking the understanding of the English language. Along with these immigrant newcomer students comes their parents who are also not versed in the American educational school system and can cause misunderstandings and misinterpretations when presented with asking for parental consent for ESL services. "Immigrant youths are highly diverse in their English proficiency, language and culture of origin, parental educational and socioeconomic background, and other factors associated with academic achievement" (Duong et. al. 2016, p. 4). While it seems that there is much need in the area of communication with various families who speak many different languages, there may be a way to still support these students by ensuring that principals follow protocols to support students whose parents' refused services.

Instructional Considerations for Students

School principals are instrumental in creating educational spaces where all students can succeed. DeMatthews et al. (2021) described research focused on effective schools and credited principals as the people who can make a difference. "Principals who foster change in support of sustainable inclusion classrooms increase achievement" (p. 11). Placing English Language Learners into smaller subgroups in their classes allows for ESL teachers to collaborate with classroom teachers and schedule their instructional time with their students. When families refused services for their eligible students, principals were placed in a precarious position. Students whose parents have refused services may not receive the instructional considerations their eligible grade level peers receive adding to the deficits they already face by being an English Language Learner. Riley (2015) suggested this very idea and that differing opportunities "..might increase existing inequalities if educational opportunities and resources were denied over time…" (p. 662). Additionally, ELL students could be placed in classes that are not suitable for their levels due to lack of parental participation and teachers' misinterpretation of support or lack thereof and may not be placed in the proper environment with the proper educational opportunities to succeed (Riley, 2015).

Students who are identified as ELLs are generally placed into a classroom among native English-speaking peers. Homeroom teachers inform their small groups based upon data gathered via baseline assessments and then through formative assessments throughout the year. Students who struggle may have the opportunity to meet with intervention groups throughout the school day in the general education setting. Students who are eligible for ESL services have the opportunity for support given by ESL teachers who brought additional skill sets to instruct this student population. Students whose parents have refused services do not have access to the

correct placements and programming for their education, disrupting their learning. "Immigrant students who experience common structural constraints and isolation may self-eliminate from competing academically…" (Przymus, 2016, p. 2). In a utopia, it would be supportive if there were opportunities to schedule students whose parents have refused services with teachers who are bilingual and speak their native language. The researcher wonders about specific instructional considerations for students of refusals.

Summary and Focus of Research

In the literature review surrounding parent refusals, the researcher explained the importance of ESL services for the growth of students especially in the primary years. The researcher also provided information relative to the importance of partnering with families and providing support and information to immigrant families. Information was provided as to the possibility of why parents refuse services. The literature review also illustrated the importance of the school leader being an advocate for the immigrant families and conducting themselves as a culturally responsive inclusive leader. Finally, the last point made in the research is the emphasis on the principal's hiring practices. The researcher understood that it would be difficult to gather information from each immigrant family as to why they refused services. The researcher interviewed elementary principals to examine how their perspectives and experiences influence the type of support they provided to students in their schools after parents refused English as a Second Language services for their eligible children. The researcher also inquired as to what type of support was being offered for these students after refusals occurred. It was the researcher's focused intent to understand how principals follow up with families who refuse ESL services so that these students can be academically supported in the classroom. Chapter 3 covers the research design including study sample, subject recruitment, data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Design Overview

When children are eligible to receive an additional layer of support through English as a Second Language (ESL) services, school districts might expect parents to embrace the opportunity. Some parents do refuse services. There could be many reasons for the refusals due to troublesome district practices ranging from school districts not fully communicating the scope of what an ESL program can offer their children, or families being concerned that participation could potentially stigmatize their child. In some cases, school districts have steered parents away from ESL programs or have provided inadequate information. There has also been evidence of school personnel informing families not to give consent for ESL services because there is not enough space for their child, or their program only serves students with basic or emerging levels of English (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015). There could also be concerns surrounding immigration and the idea that consenting to services for their child may cause the school district to take a closer look at their family. Refusal of ESL services for eligible students should be of great concern as these students have a need for additional academic support to be successful.

Regardless of the reasons why parents refused services, from the perspective of a school leader, there was concern associated with refusals. School districts are responsible for supporting students whose parents refused services. Schools are obligated to provide additional support such as continued training for classroom teachers in what is called sheltered instruction. Refusal students would still require additional support in the classroom from their primary teacher. Districts should maintain a level of training for their teaching staff relative to supporting students of refusals (Hespe et. al., 2016). Effective communication with immigrant families in their native languages about ESL programming and eligibility with immigrant families is also crucial in conveying the proper information. The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE)

also suggested that school districts should work with their already established parent organizations and bilingual parent advisory committee to further investigate any issues that exist with communicating ESL programming with families and also reach out to the families of those who refuse services.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine how principals' perspectives and experiences influence the type of support they provided to students in their schools after parents refused English as a Second Language services for their eligible children. There were two primary questions with each primary question having two supporting secondary questions that guided this work:

Primary RQ1- How do principals' perspectives and experiences influence their response to parental refusals of students who qualify for ESL services?

- **Secondary RQ1-** How do principals communicate with families who refuse ESL services?

- **Secondary RQ2-** How do principals recruit, select and hire staff to support ESL/Bilingual students whose families refuse services?

Primary RQ2- How does comprehensive programming impact English language instruction when parents refuse services?

- **Secondary RQ3-** What programs and partnerships do principals develop or offer families who refuse ESL services?

- **Secondary RQ4-** What types of instructional considerations are principals putting in place to support students whose parents refuse services?

Research Design

There was a need for principals to have a deeper understanding of the way students whose parents refused ESL services need to be supported in the classroom. A qualitative research design was conducted for this study. Qualitative research focuses on individual meaning and allows for reporting of complicated situations, and finds deeper understandings of behaviors, feelings, and motives that lie beneath the surface. Qualitative research purposefully selects participants and sites, documents, or visual material to help the researcher understand the problem and the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This study consisted of a convenience sample and participation in the study was voluntary. The targeted participants were elementary principals in New Jersey. For this study, an elementary school was defined as any school that includes kindergarten through grade five. For example, if a school had a preschool through grade eight configuration, it met the criteria for this study. The researcher focused on three northern New Jersey counties: Essex, Morris, and Passaic. There were 144 elementary schools in Essex County, 94 elementary schools in Morris County, and 96 elementary schools in Passaic County. Essex County was where the researcher is currently employed as a school leader, Morris County was where the researcher resided, and Passaic County was where William Paterson University was located. The researcher searched the NJDOE database for elementary schools with at least 10 or more students who were assessed by the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) which would indicate the possibility of students being enrolled in an ESL program. The researcher anticipated the interview sample size of 6-9 participants.

The researcher relied heavily on the phenomenological research method. Phenomenological research is a way for the researcher to describe the lived experiences

of a group of individuals who have all experienced a phenomenon to gain a deeper understanding

of those experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldana, 2016). The

researcher chose this method to have a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of the common

or lived experiences and perspectives of principals in order to develop procedures to support

students of program refusals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data were collected during individual

interviews. The personalized interview process provided principals with the opportunity to

discuss their perspectives and experiences as principals supporting ELL students, the processes

in which they followed to help support students who are eligible for ESL services whose parents

refused services, and the opportunities they provided their families in their school communities.

The interview process also allowed for the researcher to analyze the stories being told by the

participants and discover how those participating in the study view their human experience

differently (Creswell & Poth; Moustakas, 1994).

The Researcher

The researcher was a 23-year veteran teacher and school leader in the K-12 public school

setting who held a Bachelor of Arts in English Writing and a Master's of Education in

Educational Leadership. The researcher had experience with English Language Learners in both

a classroom setting as a teacher and in a school setting as a building Assistant Principal and

Principal. The researcher also had experience with qualitative research during her M.Ed.

program where she conducted an action research project. Through employment experiences, the

researcher had been involved with conducting interviews, collecting data through surveys and

questionnaires, and had observed subjects utilizing standardized rubrics while writing narratives.

The researcher held no personal relationships with the participants who may take part in this

study.

To design this study, the researcher read peer reviewed literature to gather information. The researcher utilized a qualitative method and focused on interviews. At the beginning of this process, the researcher of this study considered connecting with parents to learn more about why they refused ESL services for their children. Although this information would have proved to be important to gather, the researcher decided a more in-depth study of the principals' perspectives and shared lived experiences with parents who refused ESL services for their students would be beneficial in adding to the overall body of work available on this subject. The decision to focus on interviewing principals was because the researcher was also a sitting principal and could empathize with the role and understands the possibility of influencing change for these students as a social justice leader. The researcher had also had experience with students whose parents refused ESL services and had felt helpless because students were not receiving equal services to those of their eligible peers. The researcher was cognizant to be aware of Epoche´when interviewing participants. Epoche´is when the researcher sets aside their experiences, or prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas, as much as possible, to focus on a fresh perspective about the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The researcher was aware of their own lived experiences with the subject matter; the researcher made a conscious effort to bracket out their own views before proceeding with the experiences and perspectives of others by listening to her participants open-mindedly through their spoken dialogue as if everything was being heard preliminarily (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Study Sample

The study focused on principals in the state of New Jersey in three specific counties: Essex, Morris and Passaic. The sample was limited to elementary school principals. Participants

could have been principals in various elementary school structures as they are delineated according to the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) which may have included grades preschool through grade 8. The researcher focused on grades Kindergarten through grade five as the study focused on elementary school principals. Participants were from varying demographics throughout the state. Principals of middle schools or high schools in the state of New Jersey were excluded from this study as the majority of ESL eligibility is targeted at the elementary level.

Principals who participated were required to have students identified as English Language Learners enrolled in English as a Second Language programming in their schools. The researcher gathered data through the New Jersey Department of Education database. The researcher focused on three northern New Jersey counties: Essex, Morris, and Passaic. Essex County was where the researcher is currently employed as a school leader, Morris County was where the researcher resided, and Passaic County was where William Paterson University was located. It is to be noted the school district in which the researcher was employed was excluded from the study. There were 144 elementary schools in Essex County, 94 elementary schools in Morris County, and 96 elementary schools in Passaic County. The researcher searched the NJDOE database for elementary schools with students who have been given the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) which would indicate enrollment in an ESL program. The target sample size was 6-9 participants for the individualized interviews. The study consisted of a convenience sample and participation in the study was voluntary.

Subject Recruitment

The goal of this study was to determine actions taken by principals to ensure students whose parents refused services were supported in the classroom. A convenience sampling

method focusing on the maximum variation of elementary principals in Essex, Morris, and Passaic counties in New Jersey ensured a wide range of data collection.

A letter was created and sent via email to participants informing them of the research topic, the timeframe in which the study was being conducted, and the responsibilities should the participants agree to consent to an individual interview. Contact information for the researcher was provided to the participants in the event that individuals needed to withdraw from the study or would have further questions before consenting. A letter of consent was written and sent to each participant to be signed. All interview data collected was kept confidential.

Ethical Standards

In terms of ethical conduct, no ethical conflicts existed since the researcher had no prior relationships with the participants, and the school district in which the researcher was employed was excluded from the study. To avoid ethical conflict, the researcher was certain to explain the purpose of the study with participants and what was done with the data collected.

To conduct the study, the researcher received International Review Board (IRB) approval and followed the criteria set forth by the review board. The researcher began the participant recruitment process shortly thereafter. The researcher ensured ethical practices were in place by explaining expectations to participants for both the interview process. The researcher communicated the process of data collection, built a professional rapport with participants, and explained that confidentiality was of the utmost importance.

Data Collection

The characteristics of qualitative research are as follows: utilizing a natural setting, the researcher as a key instrument, and gathering multiple sources of data (Creswell & Creswell 2018). The study utilized an interviewing method with designated instruments being the

researcher as the interviewer and the principal participants as the interviewees. Interviews were conducted via google meet due to the availability and location of participants. Interviews were recorded both with audio and via google meet. As part of the phenomenological research process, the researcher asked two overarching questions that focused attention on gathering data that led to a textural and structural description of the principals' experiences and provided an overall understanding of the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interviews followed a guide and included open-ended semi-structured interview questions related to the research questions. The purpose of the interview was to examine how principals' perspectives and experiences influenced the type of support they provided to students in their schools after parents refused English as a Second Language services for their eligible children. The researcher estimated that the interviews would be approximately 30-45 minutes in duration.

The individualized interviews were the researcher's primary source of data. During the interview process, the researcher recorded anecdotal notes about their own experience with the process. Creswell and Creswell (2018) refer to sufficient reflexivity as a way for the researcher to utilize the anecdotal notes to aid in reflection about how the overall experience may help in interpreting results yet caution the researcher not to overly discuss experiences to not interfere with the study. The interviewer recorded the body language, expressive language, and pauses of the participants as a secondary source of data. As the interview progressed, there were occasions when the interviewer needed to ask for further detail and added or repeated the questions as a way to elicit full understanding of the interviewees' perspectives. All interviews were transcribed. Transcriptions of interviews were coded. Participants of the study were not included in the analysis of the data or the reporting of results.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the purpose of analyzing data in a qualitative study is to gather information from participants and make sense out of text. The data was analyzed, and conclusions and inferences were drawn about the interviews. The researcher followed both narrative and thematic analysis. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) asserted, narrative research allows for information from interviews to be analyzed and retold while using structural devices such as story elements. Thematic research is utilized to analyze patterns of meaning, as a way to interpret narrative data, or to build additional layers of complex inquiry.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) qualitative data analysis is used as a process in which multiple sequential steps are followed. As a first step towards data analysis, after the interviews took place, the researcher transcribed audio recordings of the responses. The researcher followed a specific coding procedure and began to code data looking for themes. According to Saldana (2016), coding is not an error-free science, but rather an interpretive act. The researcher was aware that there were unknown possibilities when coding. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), three categories of codes were to be considered: expected codes, surprising codes, and codes of unusual or of conceptual interest. Expected codes were codes the readers would expect to find based upon the literature review and common sense. Surprising codes were codes that were not anticipated to be found before the study began. Codes of unusual or of conceptual interest are codes that emerged that become an unexpected but important theme in the analysis of the study. The researcher took care in analyzing both transcriptions of interviews and anecdote notes from secondary source data.

The researcher followed In Vivo coding as a means to analyze data during the initial cycle of coding. As stated by Saldana (2016), In Vivo coding directly quotes the exact words or

phrases found in data records from the participants. As part of the coding process in phenomenological research, the researcher followed this process: horizontalization, clustering, and textualization. Moustakas (1994) described the first steps of horizontalization as each statement having equal value, but then omitting those statements that are irrelevant to the study revealing the "horizon" or textual meanings. The researcher assigned a color to each principal participant as a way to organize the data. The researcher printed each interview on paper. The researcher created anchor charts and titled each chart with each interview question. The researcher cut each participant's response to each interview question and added the response to the poster in color order. The researcher then assigned all posters by research questions as a way to organize the data in a secondary fashion. The researcher then read the transcriptions line by line to identify recurring words or phrases related to the experiences of each individual principal participant. When repeated themes or phrases were identified, the researcher highlighted the words, rewrote the direct quotes in organized columns on the chart paper, and began gathering raw data. The researcher created preliminary codes relating to the language used by the participants.

Clustering, or finding common themes, was the next step in the phenomenological data analysis process. The researcher began looking for themes or similar language that occurred across multiple interviews. For this round, the observer used a color-coding system to keep track of data to help as a visual aid in organizing data into categories. During the second-round data analysis, the researcher was sure to refer back to the interview questions and reread entire responses of the participants to ensure themes being compared across interviews were responses from the same questions. The researcher coded all rounds of data analysis manually. The final step in the coding process for phenomenological research is textualization. Creswell and Poth

(2018) described how the researcher writes a description of what was experienced and the meaning of the data.

Methodological Integrity

To ensure methodological integrity, the researcher utilized several protocols such as triangulation data, member check in or participant feedback on findings, and in-depth thick description. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted triangulation of data from multiple data sources provides corroborating evidence to validate themes or perspectives. Triangulation data was collected through multiple source data such as interviews, anecdotal notes about the researcher's own experience with the process, and the body language, expressive language, and pauses of the participants. Member checking or participant feedback via google meeting or phone call on findings allowed for an ongoing dialogue between the researcher and the participants. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained this approach allows for participants the opportunity to "judge the accuracy and credibility" of the study (p. 261). Allowing for participant feedback supported the researcher's interpretation and understanding of the meaning of the data. In depth thick description is the way in which the researcher writes in order for the readers to develop their own understanding of the meaning of the study through the words of the participants. According to Creswell and Poth (2018) detailed, rich, thick description provides many associated details and allows for readers to "transfer information to other settings" and decide if the findings can be transferred due to similar details (p. 263).

Use of Research Outcomes

With the findings from the study, the researcher intended to present to principals and key stakeholders at a professional conference. The researcher hoped a dialogue began to address the urgent need for principals to be consistent in their approach to contacting families of students

whose families' refused services and the importance of offering these students support in the

classroom albeit parental refusal. The research intended to provide information regarding the

importance of teachers who have direct contact with students of refusals, have proper training

and access to curriculum so they can maximize their educational impact with this population to

support academic success. The researcher intended that by placing emphasis on this study,

additional steps were taken to ensure this historically marginalized group of students received the

support needed. Chapter 4 includes the researcher's findings related to the participant's

interviews.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine how principals' perspectives and experiences influenced the type of support they provided to students in their schools after parents refused English as a Second Language services for their eligible children. The researcher followed a qualitative research design and interviewed principals to conduct this study. Data collection and analysis relied heavily on the phenomenological research method. Phenomenological research is a way for the researcher to describe the lived experiences of a group of individuals who have all experienced a phenomenon to gain a deeper understanding of those experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldana, 2016). The researcher chose this method to have a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of the common or lived experiences and perspectives of principals who have worked with ESL students in order to develop procedures to support students of program refusals (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Findings from this study provided principals with researched information to begin addressing the urgent need for districts to consistently contact families of students of refusals and the importance to continue offering these students support albeit parental refusal of services. Also, the findings from this research provided information related to the importance of the teachers who have direct contact with students of refusals have the proper training and access to curriculum needed to maximize their educational impact with this population to support academic successes. The researcher is hopeful that by placing emphasis on this study, additional steps will be taken to ensure that the students whose parents refused services received the additional support needed to be successful learners.

The study examined principal's perspectives and experiences to gain a deeper understanding of how principals support students whose parents refused English as a Second

Language (ESL) services. There were two primary questions with each primary question having two supporting secondary questions that guided this work:

Primary RQ1- How do principals' perspectives and experiences influence their response to parental refusals of students who qualify for ESL services?

- **Secondary RQ1-** How do principals communicate with families who refuse ESL services?

- **Secondary RQ2-** How do principals recruit, select and hire staff to support ESL/Bilingual students whose families refuse services?

Primary RQ2- How does comprehensive programming impact English language instruction when parents refuse services?

- **Secondary RQ3-** What programs and partnerships do principals develop or offer families who refuse ESL services?

- **Secondary RQ4-** What types of instructional considerations are principals putting in place to support students whose parents refuse services?

The first section of this chapter will provide background information related to the principal participants regarding their years of experience in education, their cultural backgrounds, and their personal history as it relates to working with students enrolled in ESL programming. The second section will focus on the results of the interviews and subsequent responses that focus on the researcher's four secondary research questions. Common themes will be noted which will provide information relative to how the principals' perspectives and experiences influence how they responded to program refusals, their communication practices with families, how they onboarded staff, comprehensive programming, programs and

partnerships for families, and instructional considerations made for students whose parents refused ESL services.

Participant Experiences, Background, and Personal History

Six principals were interviewed for this study via google meet. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Participants were willing to share their professional experiences, backgrounds, and personal histories with the researcher as it related to their careers and experiences with the English Language Learner population. All of the participants shared common experiences, perspectives, and understanding of how to support students in ESL programs despite their varying levels of involvement in education and/or as a principal. Participants were interested in the topic and answered questions directly. They sought clarification when needed and asked for questions to be repeated as necessary.

Table 1 provides a brief demographics of the participants and their schools which has been taken from the New Jersey Department of Education New Jersey School Performance Report. The demographics include the county in which each participant is currently a sitting principal, each school's configuration, the total enrollment for each school according to data from the 2021-2022 school year, the percentage of total English as a Second Language enrollment, the dominant language spoken in each school other than English, the total years each participant has been in education including teaching or certified support personnel, and the amount of years they have been a principal. To protect each participant and their anonymity, each participant will be referred to as Principal A, Principal B, Principal C, Principal D, Principal E, and Principal F.

Table 1

Participant and School District Demographics

Principal Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	County	School Configuration	Enrollment 21-22 School year	ELL % 21-22 school year	Most Dom. Lang. other than English	Years in Education	Years as Principal
Principal A	Female	Black	Essex	K-5	450	5.0	Spanish 10.0%	24	3
Principal B	Male	White	Passaic	PK-5	400	14.0%	Arabic 16.0%	24	14
Principal C	Female	White	Passaic	K-5	400	11.0%	Arabic 4.0%	19	1
Principal D	Female	White	Passaic	PK-5	570	23.0%	Spanish 50.0%	16	6
Principal E	Female	White	Passaic	K-5	250	13.0%	Turkish 6.0%	26	9
Principal F	Male	White	Morris	K-4	300	7.0%	Spanish 12.0%	16	2

Note. Values for enrollment, Percent of ELL, and dominant languages were rounded to the nearest whole number to protect participants' anonymity.

Principal A: Principal A has been in education for 24 years. She began her educational career as a paraprofessional and became a preschool and elementary school teacher before becoming an assistant principal and then principal. She spoke about her cultural background and being part of a marginalized group and that this perspective helps her to recognize the need to help other marginalized and diverse groups. Principal A spoke comfortably about her experiences throughout her years in education and had an open manner. When discussing her personal history related to working with ELLs, Principal A referenced her usage of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and how her knowledge of this language and its usage is similar to that of a student learning a new language and she relates to ELL students. Principal A explained her

fortune in being trained in sheltered instruction throughout her years as an educator and how she pursued more training personally through online courses via Coursera. She also referenced learning other languages through Duolingo and how Google Translate helps her now in her role as principal with her families.

Principal B: Principal B shared he has been in education for 24 years. He was a teacher for 10 years and has been a building principal for 14 years. During the interview, Principal B was direct and answered questions insightfully. He shared that it was unfortunate he never had experience teaching ELL students during his teaching career. Once he became the principal of his school, an ESL magnet school where he receives students from other elementary schools in his district, he was able to support this population. Principal B shared his unique perspective on his personal history and described himself as "an American" with no claim to a cultural background other than his paternal grandfather being an Italian immigrant. He explained that although this is his history, he shared that he is married to a Spanish speaking first generation born woman who is a bilingual teacher. He explained that through this relationship he is able to gain insight. Principal B was reluctant to share that he has received no formal training that focuses on supporting the ELL population but that he has ESL supervisors and teachers who he leans on for support. Principal B shared that he would have liked to be given more formal training.

Principal C: Principal C has been in education for 19 years. She was a teacher for over 10 years, began her teaching career in a different state, and relocated to New Jersey during her time in the classroom. She then became a Math supervisor and Elementary Assistant Principal for a total of 8 years before becoming a principal for the past year. The school in which she leads is targeted as a receiving ESL school; other schools in her district send students to receive ESL instruction. Principal C was very reflective during the interview and gave a pause before keenly answering

questions. Principal C shared that during her time as a teacher she did not have the opportunity to support ELL students. Once she became a math supervisor, and ultimately a principal, she had the opportunity to work with ESL programming. Principal C shared her connection to her maternal grandmother who was a Russian immigrant. She shared that she grew up only speaking English as a child and wasn't sure how much her grandmother influenced her outside of the fact that as an educator supporting her ELL students to succeed comes naturally. Principal C spoke highly about training she has received throughout her time as an administrator in her current district. She referenced a special services person who oversees ESL programming who provides the district with targeted professional development. This individual also partnered with Principal C on a project to add dual language books to her media center. Principal C also shared that she seeks information informally from other principals and ESL teachers in general.

Principal D: Principal D has been an educator for the past 16 years. She was a classroom teacher for 10 years where she had the opportunity to service students who had exited the ESL program and who were closely monitored. She has been principal for the past 6 years of a bilingual magnet school where she receives students from other elementary schools in her district and services ESL students. Since having experience as both a teacher and principal working with ELL students, Principal D answered the interview questions with thick, rich description. She was genuine and forthright. Upon asking Principal D about her cultural background, she was happy to share she is a first generation American and the daughter of Italian immigrants. She shared that her first language was not English, and she struggled in school because her family was the only family who spoke a second language that she can remember. Principal D thinks her own personal experiences influence the way she supports and understands her ELL students. Outside of Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training as a teacher, Principal D has not had

any formal training besides working with the bilingual supervisor and assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction.

Principal E: Principal E has been in education for the past 26 years. She was a teacher for 15 years, served as assistant principal for 2 years and has been a principal for the past 9 years. The school in which she leads is targeted as an ESL school and other schools in her district send students to receive ESL instruction. Principal E had an easy manner and responded to the interview questions effortlessly. She was wise and had a keen sense. Principal E is a first generation American and the daughter of Italian immigrants. She was happy to share that as a young child, she entered school not knowing how to speak English and it was because of her wonderful teachers that she was able to "persevere through anything". Principal E shared that she could associate her personal experiences as similar to that of her ELL students. Principal E has experience with training related to the ELL population from her school district through an outside consultant from a university in her early years as principal. She shared her dismay with the fact that this partnership no longer existed.

Principal F: Principal F has been in education for 16 years. He was a teacher for 11 years, an assistant principal for 3.5 years, and has been a principal for the past 1.5 years. Principal F shared he never thought about how his cultural background might influence the way in which he supports ELL students and became very pensive and thankful for the opportunity to respond. He shared that he was always interested in learning multiple languages even though his primary language is English. He studied Spanish for four years in high school and then for four years in college. He worked in the food industry during college which allowed him to practice speaking Spanish. He shared that these experiences supported his ability to communicate with his families

who speak Spanish in his community. Principal F has had training over the years but not recently as it relates to the ELL population.

Participant Common and Shared Experiences

All of the principal participants from this study were leading schools with actively enrolled students in an English as a Second Language programming. All principal participants shared their experiences with either teaching English Language Learners early on in their educational careers, leading schools with English Language Learners, or both. These commonalities of having a background in supporting English Language Learners provided a solid sample for this study.

The principal participants spoke at length about their perspectives, experiences, and how these factors, and, their extensive backgrounds as seasoned veteran educators, provided them with a strong foundation to continue their work as principals in support of this historically marginalized group. Collectively, the principals shared that because of their understanding of English Language Learners unique needs, they were well aware of their responsibilities to support these students in their schools and make every effort to seek support of key stakeholders in their districts. The participants spoke at length about being fortunate to be supporting this group of students and how their knowledge continues to grow in this area.

As the interviews continued with the principal participants, their common experiences and perceptions were evident. Common themes emerged which included principals' perspectives on refusals and advocacy for students whose parents refused ESL services. Additional themes that emerged were effective communication, community building opportunities, academic support plan, and mindful hiring and are noted in the following section.

Data Interpretation

When interpreting data from the interviews, the researcher frequently referred to the following to ensure each question was answered with accuracy. The first primary research question (PRQ1) How do principals' perspectives and experiences influence their response to parental refusals of students who qualify for ESL services; and the two subsequent secondary research questions that support the first primary research questions: (SRQ1) How do principals communicate with families who refuse ESL services?; and (SRQ2) How do principals recruit, select and hire staff to support ESL/Bilingual students whose families refuse services? The researcher also referred to the second primary research question (PRQ2) How does comprehensive programming impact English language instruction when parents refuse services?; and the two subsequent secondary research questions that support the second primary research questions: (SRQ3) What programs and partnerships do principals develop or offer families who refuse ESL services?; and (SRQ4) What types of instructional considerations are principals putting in place to support students whose parents refuse services?

Principals' Perspectives on Refusals

As part of the interview, the researcher asked the participants their experiences with students whose parents have refused ESL service for their eligible children. All participants have had experience with refusals but in varying ways. Of the six participants, four principals led schools in large districts with multiple elementary schools. Because of this configuration, their schools are designated as magnet schools where all of the ESL eligible students are sent to their buildings. In some cases, there was more than one school designated for ESL programming in these school districts. Of these principals, they have had some experience with refusals but have had little experience with refusals due to the design of the districts in which they currently

work. Principal E captured this when she stated, "So fortunately, because we have ESL programs, [refusals] don't happen often. It only happened once to us…and [the student] lost out on a lot of support…" The other two principals had ESL programming within their schools but were not designated as the ESL buildings in their district because their districts were not as large in population. The participants shared a collective concern with students who did not receive services because of refusals and referenced the word support often when speaking.

In speaking about refusals, the principals went on to share their perspectives on why they thought parents refused services for their children. All participants referenced the idea that parents may refuse services because they do not fully understand what ESL support truly means. Principal A, Principal D, and Principal F referenced how parents might view ESL programming as a stigma that could be attached to their children. Principal F highlighted some points, "I don't know if parents feel there is a stigma with the program. I don't know if they feel that they're being labeled in some way. I don't know if they would prefer their kiddos to be with the general population instead of being pulled." Principal B and Principal C felt parents did not necessarily understand what the program had to offer while Principal D and Principal E spoke about families being worried about their children being bussed across town to their magnet schools for ESL services. Principal E shared, "[parents] don't want [their children] to leave their home school. They want them to stay. Four other schools send to us and when parents refuse, you can understand they don't want them to leave their friends in their neighborhoods." Principal C also explained her thoughts on refusals based upon her experiences as a district wide administrator and now as the principal of a magnet school. "The places we see refusals most often sit in buildings that don't offer [ESL] services because they don't want [their children] to leave their home school."

It was interesting to hear the principals share their perspectives on what they thought the primary reason was for program refusal. Two points of reference dominated the conversation creating an even split between participants. Three principals spoke passionately about parents being misinformed as being the primary reason for parents to refuse ESL programming. Principal F shared, "It's just a lack of familiarity of what is being done in the classroom with the ELL instructor to support the students in the classroom. It's like anything, when they don't have a firm understanding of what's being done, it's easy to say they don't need [ESL support]. If we could give those parents a tour of the classroom, maybe those parents would realize what is being done." The other three principals shared the reason being parents do not want their children to leave their neighborhood schools. Principal B noted, "I just think the biggest factor for them is that this is not their neighborhood school. When they put their child on a bus and it's going across town…I think the biggest factor is the distance and the fact that their child is further away." Principal C, whose school is designated as a magnet school, added to this point, "...not leaving their homeschool. I know I don't have refusals sitting right now, so they just accept the help here…" Participants spoke passionately about their thoughts on factors contributing to program refusals and expressed their overall frustrations with the fact that students who were eligible may not have the support they need to succeed.

Collectively, the principals noted in different ways that no matter the reasons and because of their individual backgrounds and years spent in education, they were well aware of their responsibilities to support their students whose parents refused services. Principal A shared, "…I want everyone to have a chance at success…being a marginalized person myself, I recognize the needs of other people and [it] is what drives why I want to help everyone in need." Principal E added, "We try to give as much support as we can…working together with all ELL

teachers and other schools…it gives ideas." Principal D discussed the need to be sure that all stakeholders in the community work together to support the students whose parents refused services, "It's working together…and just trying to make those small gains…so we can scaffold on that." The participants continued to share the need to advocate for their students Principal C discussed when knowing the possibility of having a refusal the importance of pooling all resources, "Having the ESL teachers touch base with classroom teachers…and now that we have Google Meets [if the refusal is in another school] it's so much easier to get support. It's just giving teachers strategies and support…" Principal A spoke about her understanding her responsibility to advocate for her ESL students as a leader, "Every year I sign up another teacher for the sheltered instruction [training] because my hope is to have every last teacher trained in sheltered instruction…so it doesn't [fall] on one person." Principal F echoed the same as Principal A, "[some of the staff] are SIOP trained so they know about differentiation…I'm more looking at how do I support my teachers to put the things that are talked about in these trainings into their classrooms [for students]."

Effective Communication

Effective communication was a theme that emerged when speaking with the participants about how they communicate with families of students whose parents refuse services and it was viewed as critical. The principals went on to explain their experiences with follow up procedures when parents refused services. They collectively spoke about the importance of making contact with the parents being key a factor to ensuring they are informed of the additional support their children will have through ESL programming. Principal C highlighted the importance of effectively communicating with families in their native languages to build positive relationships, "We have used staff members to translate. Which is good. It's hugely helpful in the

communication piece. I think it also helps to build trust with the families." The principals who lead magnet schools had some additional perspectives related to helping parents to understand that it was okay for their children to be sent to their buildings. They spoke about receiving support from the sending school's principals or other district administration as a secondary point of contact with families. Principal E explains, "Our ELL teachers really work with the parents and have discussions with them and say it's temporary and she understands [they] don't want to send them to a different school, but they'll get the support they need. Then after that, the principal at their school will also try to have a conversation." The principals also spoke about the importance of communicating correct information about ESL programming to ensure all had been done to try to help parents understand the significance of the instructional support. Principal B added, "The follow up procedures really are a meeting with [the parents] to really try to answer any questions they may have, ask them why they're refusing, and a lot of times, they're just given misinformation by someone outside of school…so we want to make sure they have the correct information."

The participants also collectively spoke about the importance of having access to information in their native languages. Principal D shared, "Our bilingual department holds four meetings a year for our families to kind of check in with the families and provide resources and updates. We ensure that every meeting that we have is translated. We also have the bilingual aspect of teachers working together with our families." The principals spoke about the ways in which they translated important information to ensure parents were provided with the proper information regarding programs by utilizing various translation programs. Principal E adds, "We want to make sure that our parents have the same access as someone who speaks English, and when parents come in, we always make sure we have a translation service that we use…we

always make sure that we offer translation services…so they are an active participant in meetings for their children." Principal C also spoke about building trust with her families and the ways in which she is sure to communicate, " I nab someone in the building who speaks that language to talk with parents. Which is good. It's hugely helpful in the communication piece. I think it also helps to build trust with families…We also have a translation service that we use." Principal F shared his desire to continue to learn the dominantly spoken language in his school in order to support and communicate staff, students, and families, "I took Spanish in high school for four years and in college for four years and I was fairly well immersed…I loved learning about the culture that was associated with it, too…[I can continue] with Rosetta Stone…one of the best things I can do professionally."

Community Building Opportunities

Community building opportunities was a common theme that emerged among participants when asking about programs and partnerships and the principal participants spoke at length about their experiences with supporting ELL students. The principals often referenced the importance of ensuring their families felt they had access to information, felt supported, and felt included while their children were in their schools. The principals spoke about programs their districts offered parents to educate them regarding resources available in their communities. The principals also spoke about how important it was for parents to know about other resources outside of school that could provide their families with what they need to be successful. They collectively shared how students and their families move into town not knowing the language or how to find the support they needed and how the schools have ways of sharing resources such as directing them to outside organizations that can provide a layer of support. Principal D explained, "some challenging things are it is very transient with students arriving every day with

trauma. We want to help our families [to access] those resources and counseling services and just understand we are a safe haven here for them, too. We also provide connections to outside nonprofit organizations that focus on helping families if they are in need of clothing, food, or medical services...they can connect with them and just help them navigate being new to the country and getting the resources they need." Principal F also referenced an "expo" where his school offers tutoring for parents on accessing the parent portal, the public library, and other resources available to them. "These are just resources they may not be able to [know] without the familiarity with the English language."

The principals collectively spoke about the importance of providing social engagements and events for their families so that they felt like they were part of the greater community. The participants referenced events like multicultural night, heritage months, family field trips, and Home School Association (HSA) events for families. Principal E felt strongly about ensuring her families felt a sense of belonging and how she ran a multicultural night at her school. "We are very lucky here and we have so many different languages spoken and different cultures. We just make sure that everybody knows that we're all just who we are. We just come with [different] backgrounds and we all have something different to offer. We try to make sure that we are sensitive to other languages spoken. We make sure that parents can access everything that we have to offer." The principals continued to speak about ensuring their families felt comfortable and welcomed in their schools. Principal A described a school wide initiative to welcome her families as soon as they enter her building by simply providing an artistic visual. She shared, "three years ago, we looked at all of the languages that were listed by parents and we asked them to send their greetings to us. We have a big board in the hallway with all the greetings and the different languages that are spoken here." Collectively, the principals shared belonging as a

critical component in terms of partnerships with families. Principal E spoke strongly about how her events were important for her families, "It allows for our parents to connect with each other who might not have known each other because we find that parents are embarrassed, and they don't want to come and they don't understand what's going on. They don't necessarily want to participate. So, this allows them to make connections with other families and staff." One of the most interesting responses came from Principal B. He echoed the sentiments of the other principals about the importance of families feeling a sense of belonging, providing access to information in their native languages, and how social engagements help to support families. Principal B spoke at length about how his school holds social capital in his community. Khalifa (2021) described a term called social capital. "Social capital is when students or their families have relationships or are a part of networks that end up being educationally or socially beneficial to them" (p. 116). Principal B spoke about how he doesn't necessarily have a formal program, but his teachers are well known in his community and parents feel comfortable seeking their guidance. He stated, "sometimes [parents] will go talk to [teachers] before they speak to me. They just feel more comfortable because they can communicate with them [in their native language]. I want people to feel comfortable coming and talk to us and anything we can do to help. We are very open about letting them know that from the moment they show up at our school. We have created a school culture based on all of the diversity we have here including our ESL students and special needs students."

Academic Support Plan

The need for a strong academic support plan for students emerged as a theme when participants engaged in conversations about instructional considerations. Principals were very eager to provide information regarding instructional considerations for students whose parents

refused services for their eligible children. As the principals spoke, their passion about supporting students of refusals was present they did share they weren't aware of any formal support protocol in place in their districts. Some principals paused for a while before answering. The principals explained when they have a refusal of services, they make sure the classroom teacher knows, and that they try to give these students as much support as possible. Some principals shared that they placed the students into the classrooms of teachers who are Sheltered Instruction (SIOP) trained, if possible, as an added layer of support. Principal A explains, "A lot of my teachers are sheltered instruction trained, so then we'll place that child in that classroom. Even if they don't go out for ELL support, they still get support within the classroom. It's not as intense as if they are going out for different levels there is some instruction that takes place." Principal D spoke at length about the importance of SIOP training for teachers to support students of refusals who are placed in general education classrooms with no formal ESL support. "[The teachers] will use SIOP where you will see a classroom with labels around the room, and then they break down the content a little bit for them." Other principals spoke at length about how they relied on their ESL teachers to act as informal coaches to support general education teachers who may not be formally trained. They explained the ESL teachers may enter classrooms to informally observe students to provide strategies to teachers. The principals explained they realized the students weren't receiving official services but that their teachers "do their best" when faced with a refusal. Principal E shared, "The ESL teachers coach and support the teachers of [refusals]. So, they'll spend time with them and give them some ideas of what they can do and how to help the kids." A slightly different perspective was shared from those principals who lead ESL magnet schools where they have ESL instructors available in their schools. They were pensive and shared concerns about the students from the sending schools

whose parents refused services and those principals who do not have ESL instructors to support

teachers. They explained that there are some ESL supervisors or instructors that may provide

intermittent check-ins at the sending schools. Principal B stated, "I mean honestly, they go back

to their schools and they're in general education and they're expected to do their best that they

can and learn the language parallel to learning the information that every other student is

learning. We do have some support staff in the district that goes out, but it's few and far

between." Principal C echoed the same thoughts about having the support in her ESL magnet

school when students refuse services, "If you are here in my building, where I have two ESL

teachers, it's easier, right?" Overall, the principals were concerned with providing students with

the support they needed to succeed and shared their discontent with not having a formal

guideline.

It was interesting hearing the perspectives and thoughts from the participants when asked

about creating a universal support protocol for students whose parents refused ESL services. The

principals spoke about the potential of students being entered into Intervention and Referral

Services (I&RS) to be closely monitored by a committee of educators. This committee made up

of various educators typically meets once a month to discuss academic, social, and/or emotional

concerns for students. Teachers submit a written request stating a need for support with a student

when they have exhausted all strategies within the general education classroom. Principal F

explains, "Put [the students] in I&RS and have the ESL instructor as part of the committee. Just

keep them on watch…come up with interventions…that might be something that can be

beneficial." Some principals shared ideas about setting up a check-in protocol that would closely

monitor the students of refusals. They also shared the idea of communicating with families when

they find students are struggling to, hopefully, revisit the conversation about the refusal and the

potential for opting into ESL programming. Principal B shared, "Ideally, I would like to have somebody do a check-in…ideally someone who speaks their language… to find out how they are adapting. You may have somebody who travels from school to school and checks up on the students. What their challenges are and maybe reach out to the parents… let them know their child is struggling." One of the principals focused on the fact that before a protocol was put into place, more training would be needed to be offered to teachers in general education or regular coaching support to guide teachers to help these students. She shared that providing training to teachers and explaining the continuum of learning and development of ESL students would be beneficial overall. When the participants were asked to envision the ideal way to support students of refusals, the responses were genuine and heartfelt. The principals shared that, in an ideal world, it would be beneficial for all teachers or staff to speak the languages of their students so that all students would feel supported. Teacher A adds, "This is ideal, right? But to also remind the teachers that they can use technology to help them. There's talk to text to translate…" Another principal spoke about the ability to pull the students out into small groups and support their needs regardless of status. One principal also shared that ultimately, they would not want parents to refuse services. She also spoke at length about the importance of being sure parents understood that regardless of ESL status, their children would still be required to sit for the WIDA Access state assessment. She also referred to the WIDA Access data as a point of reference to perhaps create a protocol. Principal C explains, "Our refusals still take the [WIDA Access], so we want to look at those areas and use the data to support some of the areas to see where the students are growing and not growing…" Overall, the principals collectively shared that there was a definite need for adequate support for students whose parents refuse services.

Mindful Hiring

      The theme of mindful hiring emerged when participants discussed their hiring and recruiting practices. The participants shared their thoughts on how they recruit, select, and hire teacher candidates. All of the principals focused on how they selected general education teachers and also ESL certified teachers. They all referred to the typical practices of their districts posting openings on various educational platforms and how all applications filter through a program that they accessed in their districts. They described vetting resumes, reviewing experiences, ensuring certifications align with job descriptions, and interviewing with a selection committee. Some principals explained that they have help from department leaders to vet applications. Some principals shared the importance of hiring diverse candidates for their schools. Principal D explained how she was always thinking ahead about potential openings and how she partnered with a local university and supports the mentorship of student teachers. "I like to take a lot of student teachers, especially bilingual student teachers, so that we can kind of pair them up with a bilingual teacher that's already here, and then train them that way." This principal shared she has been successful with this practice because she has hired teachers through this process. Principal E shared her thoughts on hiring diversity, "I really want to make sure that they have the sensitivity to diverse backgrounds culturally…they are able to connect best with the kids because they come with a different lens…"

      Participants shared whether their hiring practices would differ if they had refusals. The answers were well thought out and surprising. Some principals shared their practices would not differ because they would continue to have a committee of professionals interview the candidates and follow their procedures. Two of the principals spoke at length about tailoring their interview questions in a different way if they had many refusals to ensure the teachers, they were

considering for employment had a knowledge of and a background in differentiation. Principal E explained, "Each week we get more [ESL] students from sending schools…Having teachers that have toolboxes with different ideas of how to best help those kids definitely influences when we're hiring." Principal C added, "Some of the questions I ask are aimed at solving problems that I have. I want to see how they would encourage families, make families feel comfortable, and communicate with families." For the most part, the principals explained that they were looking for candidates who were invested in supporting and educating children. Principal D stated, "I just think that communication with families and building relationships is most important…a lot of our teachers who are bilingual have an understanding of what our families are going through. I can tell you; they really will do anything to support our kids."

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine how principals' perspectives and experiences influence the type of support they provide to students in their schools after parents refuse English as a Second Language services for their eligible children. All of the principal participants from this study were leading schools with actively enrolled English as a Second Language students. During the interview process, principals shared their perspectives on English as a Second Language program refusals. Additionally, four themes emerged from the secondary questions which included effective communication, community building opportunities, academic support plan, and mindful hiring. All of the principals felt strongly about the importance of effectively communicating with parents when a refusal occurred to ensure parents had the correct information about programming. The principals added their beliefs that misinformation may be directly tied to the reasons for parents' refusal of services and that proper communication was critical. Community building opportunities was also a theme found during the interviews. The

principals shared the importance of their families, feeling that they had access to information, felt supported, and felt included while their children were in their schools. Collectively, the principals shared the attribute of belonging as a critical component in terms of partnerships with families so that parents would want their children enrolled in academic programming in their schools. Another theme that emerged was the need for an academic support plan. The principals shared ideas regarding a check-in protocol that would closely monitor the students of refusals by gathering academic data. They also continued to share the idea of communicating with families when they found students were struggling to, hopefully, revisit the conversation about the refusal and the potential for opting into ESL programming. Lastly, the principal participants referred to the importance of mindful hiring to support students whose parents refused services. The principals shared how important it was to be mindful of the communities in which they serve and how this perspective was paramount when considerations were being made about new hires and for their hires to be reflective of the community.

The researcher hoped the findings from this research addressed the urgent need for districts to consistently contact families of students of refusals and the importance to continue to offer these students support albeit parental refusal of services. Also, the findings from this research provided information related to the importance of the teachers who have direct contact with these students have the proper training and access to curriculum needed to maximize the educational impact with this population to support academic success. The researcher hoped that by placing emphasis on this study, additional steps were taken to ensure that the students of refusals received the additional support needed to be successful learners.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings, Limitations, and Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine how principals' perspectives and experiences influence the type of support they provide to students in their schools after parents refuse English as a Second Language services for their eligible children. The researcher followed a qualitative research design and interviewed principals to conduct this study. Data collection and analysis relied heavily on the phenomenological research method. Phenomenological research is a way for the researcher to describe the lived experiences of a group of individuals who have all experienced a phenomenon to gain a deeper understanding of those experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldana, 2016). The researcher chose this method to have a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of common or lived experiences and perspectives of principals (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The researcher interviewed a total of six principals from three counties in New Jersey: Essex, Morris, and Passaic. The six participants had a wide range of experience in education and as principals, and all had experience with students enrolled in ESL programming during their time as principals. The researcher was interested to discover whether or not the principals' lived experiences and backgrounds with students in ESL programs influenced the way they would academically support students whose parents refused services. Data was collected in the form of individualized interviews which was the researcher's primary data source. The researcher recorded anecdotal notes about their own experience during the process, and also recorded the body language, expressive language, and pauses of the participants as a secondary source of data. All coding was done manually by the researcher. The interview data were analyzed by following In Vivo coding by recording direct quotes or the exact words or phrases found in data from the participants. As part of the second round of the coding process while being guided by

phenomenological research, the researcher followed the process of horizontalization, clustering, and textualization.

The study examined principal's perspectives and experiences to gain a deeper understanding of how principals support students whose parents refuse English as a Second Language (ESL) services. There were two primary questions with each primary question having two supporting secondary questions that guided this work:

Primary RQ1- How do principals' perspectives and experiences influence their response to parental refusals of students who qualify for ESL services?

- **Secondary RQ1-** How do principals communicate with families who refuse ESL services?

- **Secondary RQ2-** How do principals recruit, select and hire staff to support ESL/Bilingual students whose families refuse services?

Primary RQ2- How does comprehensive programming impact English language instruction when parents refuse services?

- **Secondary RQ3-** What programs and partnerships do principals develop or offer families who refuse ESL services?

- **Secondary RQ4-** What types of instructional considerations are principals putting in place to support students whose parents refuse services?

There are two key findings from this study and four themes that emerged that helped to support and answer the two primary research questions and subsequent four secondary research questions. In reference to the first primary question, how do principals' perspectives and experiences influence their response to parental refusals of students who qualify for ESL services, participant principals' perspectives and experiences do influence the participants'

perceptions of their responsibilities to support students whose parents refuse services. The principals described themselves as being culturally responsive and advocated for their students while combating systems of oppression. The principals' individual backgrounds, such as having experience teaching or leading English as a Second Language students, mattered and influenced their response to parental refusals of students who qualify for English as a Second Language services.

In reference to the second primary question, how does comprehensive programming impact English language instruction when parents refuse services, all of the principals shared a common position that there was a need for a formal guideline in order to support students whose parents refused ESL services. The principals shared ideas regarding a check-in protocol that would closely monitor the students of refusals by gathering academic data. They also continued to share the idea of communicating with families when they found students are struggling to, hopefully, revisit the conversation about the refusal and the potential for opting into ESL programming. In this study, the principals collectively shared that there was a definite need for an adequate academic support plan for students whose parents refuse services yet there was not a formal protocol that exists. Comprehensive programming does not impact the academic support principals provide students of program refusals, but rather it is the principals themselves working with other key stakeholders in their districts to ensure students are supported and information is communicated effectively to parents.

Four themes emerged from this study as it related to the secondary research questions. *A dominant theme* was the importance of effective communication with parents to ensure their understanding of what ESL programming can offer their eligible children. This theme recurred throughout the interview process while discussing the other questions. *A second theme* was

community building opportunities and how bringing the parent community together can make the difference in communicating information for parents especially in their native languages. *A third theme* was the need to create an academic support plan. The principals discussed the various ways a support plan could be designed. *The fourth theme* was being mindful of hiring practices and how the decision making for onboarding staff was critical. Especially when considering the English Language Learner population and the need for support.

Equity, Fairness, and Social Justice: Findings Related to Conceptual Framework

The researcher examined how principals' perspectives and experiences influence the type of support they provide to students in their schools after parents refuse English as a Second Language services for their eligible children through the lens of equity, fairness, and social justice. Whether it be policy, procedure, or use of resources, principals implementing inclusionary practices in ways that are effective within one's context supported success (Leithwood, 2021). Social justice principals who serve in diverse towns in terms of socio economics, race, ethnicity, culture, and immigrant status have a duty towards supporting the immigrant population of students who qualify for services. The qualifying students who are found to be eligible have the right to be supported through additional programming even though their parents refuse services, and principals are in positions to ensure practices to support these students are being implemented. The researcher also chose phenomenological research to have a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of the common or lived experiences and perspectives of principals in order to develop procedures to support students of program refusals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The six principals who participated in this study were willing to share their professional experiences, backgrounds, and personal history with the researcher as it related to their careers and experiences with the ELL population. As Mavrogordato and White (2020) and

Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) stated it seems principals' individual backgrounds, such as having a knowledge base or experience teaching or leading historically marginalized or oppressed groups matters regarding building credibility behind being a social justice leader and the findings from this study support these works. All of the principals shared they have had the opportunity to educate students in varying demographics during their careers as educational support instructors or as teachers. Upon becoming principals, the participants had already accrued many years of experience in education and were able to rely upon their knowledge and awareness of supporting students. Two principals spoke from personal experiences describing themselves as being first generation American and the daughters of Italian immigrants. These two principals spoke of the struggles of entering school not speaking English during their first school experiences and how they could empathize with their ESL students and how they are directly connected to immigrants in their own lives.

As a collective group, not all of the principals have had formal training to support English Language Learners. None of the principals hold an ESL specialized certificate. They also explained that although some of them participated in training with outside consultants, they all shared that much of their learning about how to support ESL students came by way of their individualized lived experiences and working with ESL supervisors, ESL teachers, or other administrators. Despite their varying levels of experiences as principals, the participants shared a clear understanding of their roles as building leaders and how they can influence programming, partnerships, communication, and hiring practices. Mavrogordato and White (2020) and Minkos et al. (2017) report that social justice leaders operate with a wide lens open-focused approach on implementing policy which can create an equitable opportunistic environment for all groups and finding from this study support this work. The participants shared a collective concern with

students who do not receive services because of refusals and referenced the word support often when speaking. All of the principals shared that their lived experiences and perspectives in education help them to recognize the need to help this historically marginalized and diverse group of students and will often seek the support of ancillary staff to ensure best practices when supporting ESL students. Related to the research, the participants' perceptions of their responsibilities are aligned to that of a social justice leader's mission which is to foster a safe and diverse environment in which each individual student feels a sense of belonging and supports the findings as stated by Oliver (2021). The principals collectively have shown they are culturally responsive by ensuring best practices are implemented in their schools in terms of community building opportunities and effectively communicating with their families. The principals also advocate for their students by mindfully hiring a diverse staff as a way to work towards combating systems of oppression. The participants all also shared they feel fortunate to be principals in their buildings and in their communities and shared they are thankful for the opportunities to serve their students.

Findings Related to the Literature

Chapter 4 presented a detailed explanation of the results of this research study. The interview data and anecdotal notes supported the researcher's desire to answer the two primary research questions with accuracy: (1) How do principals' perspectives and experiences influence their response to parental refusals of students who qualify for ESL service? and (2) How does comprehensive programming impact English language instruction when parents refuse services? As part of the study design and in order to ensure the primary research questions were fully answered, the researcher included four secondary research questions: (1) How do principals communicate with families who refuse ESL services?; (2) How do principals recruit, select and

hire staff to support ESL students whose families refuse services?; (3) What programs and partnerships do principals develop or offer families who refuse ESL services?; (4) What types of instructional considerations are principals putting in place to support students whose parents refuse services? Four themes emerged from these secondary questions: Effective Communication; Community Building Opportunities; Academic Support Plan; and Mindful Hiring. The interpretation of the results are as follows.

Effective Communication

Effective communication was a theme that emerged from all of the principals in terms of delivering information about ESL programming and program refusals. It was imperative that parents had a full understanding of the importance of ESL programming so that they did not decide to refuse services for their eligible children. An integral part of our immigrant families' consent to ESL services is providing understandable information. As Khalifa (2021) reported, principals must bring forth ways in which they communicate with these families to accommodate all aspects of their community and the findings from this study support this work. Consistent with the literature, and related to SRQ1, how do principals communicate with families who refuse ESL services, all six principals expressed the utmost importance of communicating effectively with families as a way to ensure information is properly conveyed regarding ESL programming. The principals also felt that it was the responsibility of the school to ensure miscommunication does not occur. All principals spoke about the various ways in which effective communication could occur via specialized computer programs or a translation service. They also collectively spoke about their concerns when others in the community provide information to families who are seeking knowledge about programming who are misinformed themselves thereby creating layers of confusion. In line with the research, principals spoke about

building relationships of trust and that it is equally important to be able to effectively communicate with families so that they could provide pertinent information regarding their child's educational experiences, struggles, and exposure to the English language. Miranda (2014) and Shiffman (2019) reported that families needed to feel a sense of trust with the organization and having the ability to build bridges within the context of understanding the diversity of the community creates the possibility of building quality relationships and the findings of this study support this work. The principals also spoke about the importance of building connections so that programming could be understood.

The principals added their beliefs that misinformation may be directly tied to the reasons for parents' refusal of services and that proper communication is critical. The findings in this study showed that the principals' ideas and perspectives about communication and how it was directly correlated to program refusals were comparable to the literature when looking at the research. Lueck (2010) and Monzo (2016) reported that a lack of a clear understanding of what it meant for students to be identified as eligible for services, and what it is meant to be in an English as a Second Language program proved problematic for parents' understanding and the findings of this study supported these works. All participants referenced the idea that parents might refuse services because they do not fully understand what ESL programming truly means which supports the importance of effective communication being a key component in ending refusals. In addition, some of the principals also referenced the idea that parents refused services because their eligible students would need to leave their neighborhood schools and attend their particular schools which are designated for ESL programming. With miscommunication already a factor, one could understand the additional concern parents might have about leaving their neighborhood school. Kipchumba (2017) reported a possibility why parents refused services

was the idea that only certain schools in the district have subgroups of ELL identified students which would send their child across town to a different school other than the one in their neighborhood and the findings from this study support this work. Consistent with the literature, the principals emphasized this point. By effectively communicating with families and providing information, principals are in the position to be change agents and advocates for their students.

When asking further questions regarding follow-up procedures and contacting families when there was a refusal of services, all six principals shared a common message. Consistent with the research, they highlighted the importance of communicating correct information about ESL programming to ensure all has been done to try to help parents understand the positive impact of the additional instructional support. Thomas and Collier (2002) reported that parents who refuse bilingual/ESL services for their children should be given information that the long-term academic achievement success for their children will likely be much lower due to program refusal, and they should be advised not to refuse bilingual/ESL services when their child is eligible and the findings from this study support this work. The biggest challenges the principals faced were ensuring they had the capacity to communicate information in their families' native languages. The principals spoke about the ways in which they translated important information to ensure parents were provided with the proper information regarding programs by utilizing various translation programs. The principals felt that all resources should be considered and every effort should be made to make contact with parents who refused services for their children. In this study, the principals all felt that misinformation was a key reason why parents refused services for their eligible children.

Community Building Opportunities

All principals referenced the importance of offering community building opportunities and the engagement and partnership of parents as a way to strengthen trust with families, and, perhaps, being instrumental in putting an end to refusals. As the literature suggests, principals have the opportunity to become culturally proficient and supportive of their school communities providing immigrant families with the ability to partner with schools and become involved in programs. Grant et al. (2022) reported that school-parent partnership programs fostered positive relationships and provided parents with tools to support their children at home. Consistent with the literature, and related to SRQ3, what programs and partnerships do principals develop or offer families who refuse ESL services, the principals shared the importance of their families feeling that they had access to information, felt supported, and felt included while their children were in their schools. Leuck (2010) and Sibley and Dearing (2014) and Ramakrishnan et al. (2021) reported that it is important the engagement of families and communication of information about English as a Second Language programs is critical especially during the primary years and the findings from this study support these works. Consistent with the literature, the principals, too, shared the attribute of belonging as a critical component in terms of partnerships with families which is included in the research.

The principals referenced social opportunities such as multicultural night, heritage months, family field trips, and Home School Association (HSA) events for families. They also spoke about not only the importance of social opportunities, but also ensuring that families are aware of programs their districts offer parents to educate them regarding resources available in their greater communities. Rodriguez (2020) and Grant et al. (2022) reported that without parental involvement, the children enrolled in schools may not be given the proper support or be

provided with the proper resources to succeed which was and the findings from this study support these works. All participants spoke about the importance of providing their families with information regarding resources outside of school which may provide them with the necessary tools to be successful and empower them to feel part of the community. Gaitan (2012) provided insight into the importance of the community being connected to the schools as an important part of a culturally responsive approach to partnering with families and the findings from this study support this work. All principals shared their concerns about not being able to communicate and invite their families in for these events causing the inability to make connections with each family. Especially when thinking about those families with refusals, they shared that the importance of ensuring all information is communicated in each language so that information is accessible to all. In this study, the principals demonstrated positive attitudes towards providing opportunities to their families for community building opportunities.

Academic Support Plan

When addressing SRQ4, what type of instructional considerations are principals putting into place to support students of refusals, the principals referenced a definite need for a student academic support plan which emerged as a theme. The principals explained they realized it was their responsibility to check in with students when they aren't receiving official services and ensure support is provided. Overall, the principals were concerned with providing refusal students with the assistance they need to succeed and shared their discontent with not having formal guidelines. The research highlighted the necessity of creating an effective school environment that supports student learning by crediting principals as the people who can make a difference. The design of the learning environment was critical in creating learning opportunities for students to succeed, yet students of refusals were not given adequate support due to lack of

access to programming. Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) reported principals are the leaders in a school building who can affect and influence long term successes of academic programming for students and the findings from this study support this work. The principals shared their processes of placing refusal students into the classroom and that they do their best to place the students into the classrooms of teachers who are Sheltered Instruction (SIOP) trained as an added layer of support whenever possible. If this placement was not available due to classroom sizes being too large or not having any teachers who are trained, the students were placed into a general education classroom with general education teachers. The principals shared they support teachers as much as possible. Related to the first theme, effective communication, the principals continued to reference the importance of deliberate communication with parents when refusals occur to avoid these situations because they acknowledged placing ESL eligible students into a general education with no support is not optimal. Consistent with the literature, there is always concern when students whose parents refused services were placed in classes that are not suitable for their levels due to lack of parental knowledge or participation in school. Riley (2015) suggested that there were also concerns with teachers' misinterpretation of support for the students, or lack thereof, and the students may not be placed in the proper environment with the proper educational opportunities to succeed and the findings from this study support this work. The literature aligns with the principals and their overall concerns about not having the proper placement and supporting students of refusals.

As the principals continued to share their ideas about academic support plans, they referenced the idea of general education teachers having specific training, such as sheltered instruction (SIOP), to support the needs of students whose parents refused ESL services who might be placed into their classrooms. They also discussed providing training to general

education teachers and explained the continuum of learning and development of ESL students being beneficial overall. The principals spoke at length about how they relied on their ESL teachers to act as informal coaches to support general education teachers who may not be formally trained. They explained that the ESL teachers may enter classrooms to informally observe students to provide strategies to teachers, but also shared their concern with their ESL teachers burning out due to overloaded responsibilities. Kang and Veitch (2017) suggested the same, noting the importance of general education scholars to train teachers to be prepared to work with ELL students which was supported by the findings in this study. While the participants collectively shared these perspectives, the principals that lead ESL designated schools provided an additional viewpoint. Since they had ESL teachers in their schools, the idea of placing refusal students into classes and having ESL teachers consult with general education teachers was possible, but what happens to the students whose parents refused services and they are sent back to their neighborhood schools where there aren't any ESL teachers. These principals shared that there are some district level ESL supervisors or instructors that provided intermittent check-ins at the sending schools, but they were not certain. All of the principals shared their thoughts on creating an ideal academic support protocol for students whose parents refused services and referenced an ultimate desire that none of their families refuse services. The principals shared ideas regarding a check-in protocol that would closely monitor the students of refusals by gathering academic data. They also continued to share the idea of communicating with families when they find students are struggling to, hopefully, revisit the conversation about the refusal and the potential for opting into ESL programming. In this study, the principals collectively shared that there is a definite need for an adequate academic support plan for students whose parents refuse services.

Mindful Hiring

Consistent with the literature, the principals shared how important it is to be mindful of the communities in which they serve and how this perspective is paramount when considerations are being made about new hires. They echoed the notion that it is imperative for the principal to be inclusive in hiring practices and hire teaching staff that reflects the school community. In leading from a social justice lens, the hiring practices of principals is an urgent focus in supporting students enrolled in ESL services. Miranda (2014) and Rivera-McCutchen (2014) reported that there was an importance of ensuring that candidates fit into the fabric of the culture and climate of the school and can adjust and meet the needs of the community which was supported by the findings in this study. As the principals addressed SRQ2, how do principals recruit, select, and hire staff to support ESL students whose parents refuse services, they referenced the typical hiring practices of vetting applications and assembling interview committees. They also spoke about how they think about their communities, being sensitive to the varying backgrounds, and how it was equally important to hire faculty members who resembled the community who can offer a multitude of skills which would bring new perspectives and support to the educational setting. Related to the research question, the principals shared the idea of tailoring their interview questions around refusals and supporting students in the classroom to see whether teachers have an understanding of, or a background in differentiation.

Bilingual teachers were discussed amongst the participants as being an important factor in hiring for their schools whether the position is for a general education teacher or ESL teacher. One of the principals shared her foresight and how she is always thinking ahead about potential openings thereby partnering with a local university offering to support their bilingual

mentorship programs in the hopes of securing a teacher who would be trained in her school and could be a potential hire if a position becomes available. Aligned to the research, and tied back to the theme, effective communication, principals shared their feelings about bilingual teachers having an understanding of what their families are going through because they themselves may have experienced specialized programming. The principals recognized that schools with staff who possess the language skills necessary to communicate with families are of value. Coady (2019) and Grant et al. (2022) reported those who possess the language skills to effectively communicate are individuals who can be considered cultural brokers and can assume different roles within the community such as communicators, translators, and advocates and the findings from this study support these works. Rivera-McCutchen (2014) reported that by being responsive to the needs of the community, and creating a concrete vetting process by onboarding educators who are aligned with and understood the principles of equity it would contribute to the overall creation of a school that is committed to ensuring students have equitable access to education which was supported by the findings in this study.

Surprising and Novel Findings

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), three categories of codes were to be considered in this study: expected codes, surprising codes, and codes of unusual or of conceptual interest. Expected codes were codes the readers would expect to find based upon the literature review and common sense. Surprising codes were codes that were not anticipated to be found before the study began. Codes of unusual or of conceptual interest are codes that emerged that become an unexpected but important theme in the analysis of the study. As a surprising code, the researcher found that with some of the principal participants whose schools were designated as receiving schools, the participants did not have experiences with refusals. Their experiences

with refusals were due to the partnerships they had with the sending school principals when refusals occurred. They explained how they would partner with the sending school principals and their school's key stakeholders to contact families whose parents refuse services. This code was surprising, and not expected for the researcher. A novel finding from this research was the shared position of the six principal participant for the need for an academic support protocol or academic support plan for students whose parents refuse services. The check-in protocol could be universally utilized to closely monitor students whose parents refused services by gathering academic data to support students who are placed into the general education classroom and are left without English as a Second Language services.

Implications for Practice

The researcher has provided various factors that may result in supporting English as a Second Language qualifying students whose parents refuse services. The research from this study confirmed the need for effective communication between the home and school regarding programming and educational practices being of greatest importance. Principals have an enormous responsibility in building strong community relations with parents in order to convey the importance of ESL programming to ensure that all eligible newcomer immigrant students can participate and receive services. In listening to the principals share their perspectives, they demonstrated their understanding that it is imperative that all resources should be considered and every effort should be made to make contact with parents who refused services for their children to ensure they have a comprehensive understanding of the importance of ESL programming so that they do not decide to refuse services for their eligible children.

This study also highlighted the importance of instructional considerations being a top priority and an academic support plan or support protocol being developed. As the literature

suggests, principals are the leaders in a school building who can affect and influence long term successes of academic programming for students (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). When listening to participants share their thoughts, it was evident that they were aware of their responsibilities to support this student population when they aren't receiving official services, but shared their concerns with being unable to fully provide the assistance the students need. They shared their worry about not supporting the students enough to be successful and shared their discontent with not having a formal guideline to follow. In addition, the findings in this study clearly acknowledged the differences between schools that are designated as ESL elementary magnet schools within their district and those that have ESL teachers in each elementary school. Although the size of the school district can be a determining factor, the results from this study indicated this arrangement could be a significant factor for why parents refuse English as a Second Language services for their eligible children. Moreover, with miscommunication already a concern, one could understand the additional distress parents might have about leaving their neighborhood schools. Consistent with the literature, the principals emphasized the possibility why parents may refuse services is the idea that only certain schools in the district are designated schools that house ESL eligible students which would send their children across town to a different school other than the one in their neighborhood (Kipchumba, 2017). Although the reality of budgetary constraints may be a determining factor, consideration needs to be made regarding the students of refusals and the impact on their learning due to program refusals. Key stakeholders at the school district level leaders such as business administrators and superintendents can discuss ways to forecast spending to hire additional ESL teachers to be available in these types of districts or place an emphasis on professional development for general education teachers to be trained in best English as a Second Language best practices.

As the finding of this study shared, principals of students whose parents refused English as a Second Language services for their eligible children do their best to place students with teachers who have some English as a Second Language program training as an added layer of support whenever possible. Some students are placed into a general education classroom with general education teachers. This study can provide the New Jersey State Department of Education with insight on education teacher preparation programs at the university level. As Coady et al. (2011); de Jong et al. (2018) and Minkos et al. (2017) suggested, things to consider are how the programs are structured to train general education teachers as well as teachers in specialized content areas such as an English as a Second Language programs, so they understand how to effectively support ELLs in their classrooms. There could also be a focus on establishing norms for continuing education and the support of ESL teachers or those teachers who have groups of students whose parents have refused services for their eligible children.

Limitations

The researcher was reflective when considering the limitations of this study. The researcher was a sitting principal at the time of this study and realized her experiences could have influenced the way the interview questions were asked. The researcher acknowledged the limitation of being in the same position as the participants and was aware of Epoche´when interviewing participants. The researcher made a concerted effort to bracket out her own views before proceeding with the interviews by being introspective, acknowledging her own implicit biases, and suspending judgement. The researcher acknowledged that bracketing takes practice and made a conscious effort with each of the six principal participants to keep an open mind when participants were interviewed.

The researcher acknowledged that there was a wide range of principal experiences amongst the participants. This could have been a limitation in gathering perspective data from experienced principals. The researcher could have set criteria for years served as a principal for interview participation. The percentage of ELL enrollment in each school could also have been a limitation because those schools who have a lower percentage of students may not be affected by refusals.

The study sample of principals was decided by analyzing data from the New Jersey Department of Education and criteria for recruitment was based upon whether the schools had World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Access scores posted. The researcher did not consider whether the principals had experiences with students whose parents refused services. As an example of this, the researcher interviewed principals whose schools were receiving schools and did not have personal experiences with refusals, but supported sending schools in their districts when refusals occurred. Although the researcher used a convenience sample, and the principals who participated were required to have students identified as English Language Learners enrolled in English as a Second Language programming in their schools, the researcher could have set specific criteria in the recruitment letter stating that principals must have had experiences with refusals in the schools that they led.

The decision to only focus this study on three counties in New Jersey limited the researcher's ability to recruit a larger sample size of participants. Member checking or participant feedback was also difficult to gather. After the researcher transcribed the interviews, multiple emails were sent to the six principal participants. One participant responded to their transcription and was able to send feedback to the researcher which was minimal. The researcher was unable to attain any feedback from the other five participants. The principal continued to

make multiple efforts to reconnect with the participants. During the interview process, the researcher followed a guide and included open-ended semi-structured interview questions related to the research questions. The researcher acknowledges that the questions could have been more open-ended and generalized than specific in terms of answering the research questions with specificity.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is the recommendation of the researcher to focus a future study on the reasons parents refuse English as a Second Language programming and the effects the refusals have on their children's academic progress. Perhaps a mixed methods study could be conducted. While focusing on the same counties in New Jersey from this study and gathering data from the New Jersey Department of Education regarding program refusal occurrences. The researcher could focus on WIDA Access scores to measure the academic progress of the students of refusals in comparison to their grade level peers who are enrolled in English as a Second Language programming. Interviews of parents who have refused services could be conducted as well and could be compared to the results of this study. The purpose would be to further understand the reasons for parental refusals, and to find if program refusals have an effect on overall students' academic progress during the elementary years.

In addition, the researcher also recommends a future qualitative focused study on the possibility of the creation of an academic support plan for students whose parents refused services which could include follow-up procedures and check-ins with students from various school district stakeholders. A focus on the effectiveness of the plan in terms of academic success could be conducted as to whether students who are part of the academic support plan are

academically successful than that of their academic peers who are not receiving additional support.

Conclusion

A focus on whether principals' perspectives and leadership experiences as social justice leaders influenced the way they offer support to students whose parents refuse English as a Second Language services for their eligible children was the primary focus of this study. The participants in this study were identified because they were elementary principals and led schools with students who received English as a Second Language services. This study provided findings regarding the critical need for principals to be consistent in their approaches to communicate effectively with families of students of refusals and to be mindful of hiring practices. Additional findings offered insight on the importance of providing these students additional academic support in the classroom albeit parental refusal of services. This study also revealed the idea that it is equally important that the teachers who have direct contact with students whose parents have refused services have the proper training needed to maximize their educational impact with this population to support academic success. The researcher is hopeful that by placing emphasis on this study, additional steps are taken to ensure this historically marginalized group of students receive the support needed regarding the most efficient programs for English language learners.

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Appendix A

Dear Principal,

I am a doctoral candidate enrolled in the Doctorate of Education in Leadership program at William Paterson University which is located in Wayne, New Jersey. The purpose of this email is to ask for your participation in my research.

The purpose of this is to examine when parents refuse English as a Second Language (ESL) services for their qualifying children, what procedures do elementary school leaders have in place to ensure students are supported in the classroom. The design of this study requires me to ask elementary school principals to participate in individual interviews that will occur either via zoom or in person depending upon the location and availability of participants.

The individual interviews will occur after daily school operating hours. The interviews will follow a guide and will include open-ended semi-structured interview questions related to the research questions. The researcher estimates that the interviews will last approximately 30-45 minutes in length. A copy of the interview transcript will be provided to each participant to be reviewed for accuracy. A follow up phone call or virtual meeting will occur as part of the process.

Principal participation is completely voluntary and all data analyzed from interviews will remain anonymous. Risks associated with participation in the interviews are minimal, meaning the risks involved are no greater than those encountered in everyday life. A benefit of participating in this study is an enhancement of the general knowledge of this study area.

If you would like to volunteer to participate in this study, please review and sign the attached informed consent form and return it to me via email (samabarretol@student.wpunj.edu).

Additionally, please share this email with your elementary school principal colleagues who service ESL students in their schools.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience if you have any questions about this research. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Lisa Sama-Barreto

Doctoral Candidate

Department of Educational Leadership and Professional Studies

William Paterson University

1600 Valley Road

Wayne, NJ 07470

samabarretol@student.wpunj.edu

Appendix B

William Paterson University
Project Title: Principal's Perspectives of English as a Second Language Program Refusals
Principal Investigator: Lisa Sama-Barreto
Investigator's Phone Number:
Department: Educational Leadership and Professional Studies
Protocol Approval Date:
 I have been asked to participate in a research study entitled Principal's Perspectives of English as a Second Language Program Refusals. The purpose of this is to examine when parents refuse English as a Second Language (ESL) services for their qualifying children, what procedures do elementary school leaders have in place to ensure students are supported in the classroom. I understand that I will be asked to respond to questions during an interview that is approximately 30-45 minutes in duration. I understand a copy of the interview transcript will be provided to me to be reviewed for accuracy. I understand a follow up phone call or virtual meeting will occur as part of the process. I understand that my participation in the interview is entirely voluntary, and I may end my participation in this research at any time.

Risks associated with participation in the interviews are minimal, meaning the risks involved are no greater than those encountered in everyday life. A benefit of participating in this study is an enhancement of the general knowledge of this study area, and I accept it.

 I understand that any data and recordings collected as part of this study will be stored in a safe and secure location, and that these data will be destroyed when this research is completed. I understand that I will be audio-recorded and/or video-recorded and that these recordings will be destroyed when the research is completed. I understand that my identity will be protected at all times and that my name will not be used without my separate written permission. I understand that the results of this study will not be reported in a way that would identify individual participants.

 If I have questions about this study, I may call the principal investigator, Lisa Sama-Barreto, listed in the heading of this document. If I have any questions or concerns about this research, my participation, the conduct of the investigator or my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at 973-720-2122.
By signing this consent form, I am agreeing to participate in this research study.
 Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant_____Date:_____

Name of Investigator: **Lisa Sama-Barreto** Signature of Investigator: _____

Appendix C

1. How many years of experience do you have working with the ELL population?

    a. As a teacher or educational specialist?

    b. As an administrator ?

2. Can you please describe how your cultural background influences your work with the ELL population?

3. What aspects of your personal history are related to working with the ELL population of students?

4. Please share the types of training you have participated in that focused on the ELL population.

5. Please describe your experiences with the ELL population as a principal.

6. Please talk about your experiences with students who have refused ESL services in your school.

7. In your experiences, why do parents refuse services?

8. What do you think is the biggest factor why parents refuse services?

9. Of these reasons that you just spoke about, what do you think is the primary reason?

10. Please describe your follow up procedures with parents who refuse ESL services.

11. Please talk about the kinds of support your school offers to students whose parents refused ESL services.

12. If you could develop a support protocol, what would it look like?

13. In reference to the previous question, why don't you use this support protocol?

14. How do you envision the ideal way to support students of refusals?

15. What types of instructional considerations do you follow when students refuse services?

16. Please talk about programs or partnerships you have with your families.

17. How do you recruit, select, and hire teachers?

18. If you have refusals, how would your recruitment, selection, and hiring practices differ?

19. Would you like to share anything else on this topic?

VITA

Lisa Sama-Barreto

Education: Doctor of Education, William Paterson University of New Jersey, 2024

Master of Education, William Paterson University of New Jersey, 2010

Bachelor of Arts, William Paterson University of New Jersey, 2000