

The Effect of a Community of Practice on
English Language Development Teachers

by

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ABSTRACT

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) empowered a task force to design a new instructional model for English Language Development (ELD) students. The task force created a four-hour, language intensive instructional model which required ELD-identified students to be immersed in grammar, reading, pre-writing, vocabulary and oral English conversation. This model also mandated that a specific number of instructional minutes were to be assigned to each of the model's five components. Moreover, these instructional minutes were to be accounted for by ELD teachers as they developed lesson plans to teach these students.

To address the substantial professional development requirements entailed by these mandates, Wenger's Community of Practice (CoP) framework was employed. A CoP was formed to assist nine ELD teachers to (a) meet the mandates of this instructional model, (b) participate in professional development opportunities to gain language-based instructional strategies, (c) plan lessons together and eventually, (d) allow them to become more efficacious in their abilities to meet and implement the mandated ADE Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) instructional model developed by the ADE task force.

Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered throughout the study by means of a pre- and post-questionnaire, audio taping and transcribing the CoP sessions, and field notes.

Findings suggested the CoP served as an effective forum for increasing the ELD teacher's sense of efficacy towards becoming an effective ELD teacher.

Moreover, the time teachers spent together in the CoP helped them to increase their understanding of the requirements of the instructional model and allowed them the opportunity to participate in professional development opportunities specific to their needs. Finally, the CoP's affect on the ELD teachers' efficacy was due in large part to the collaboration that took place among teachers as they worked through these diverse issues together.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my two wonderful children who have provided support and encouragement throughout my journey in obtaining my doctorate and to the nine fabulous ELD teachers who participated in this study for their commitment to their profession and the students that they serve.

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Chapter 1 Context

I am in my tenth year of being an administrator, serving two years as an assistant principal and eight years as a principal; all of which were in urban Title I schools that had 36% or more, English Language Development (ELD) students. Prior to going into administration, I had nine years of teaching experience that included third, fourth and fifth grades and gifted and talented positions. I am currently enrolled as a doctoral student at Arizona State University West and I am enjoying the growth and challenges it has presented.

This study was conducted at a K-3 campus in an urban setting in Glendale, AZ, and included nine ELD teachers; all of whom were kindergarten through third-grade teachers. This school is one of seventeen schools within the district. The school has a high level of commitment among the staff to see that students are successful. In fact, this K-3 school has been successful at meeting AYP requirements, and maintaining a “Performing,” or higher proficiency label under the criteria established by the ADE since the inception of the designations. Until the fall of 2008, the ELD students at this school had been served in regular education classrooms. Having up to 56% of the students identified as ELD, regular education classrooms averaged between 50-60% of the class being ELD students, depending on distribution. Classroom demographics changed drastically during the 2008-2009 school year and the change was directly related to the mandated implementation of the Arizona Department of Education’s new SEI instructional model. Per this requirement, ELD students had to be clustered for

four hours of the day based on their ELD category, which is determined by AZELLA (Arizona English Language Learner Assessment) scores.

In August of 2008, ELD teachers across the state of Arizona were provided the state- mandated model by which they were to instruct ELD children but they received minimal training in implementing the model. Among the teachers at this K-3 school, the teachers assigned to these newly-configured classrooms expressed extreme frustration and concern about not being properly prepared or trained for teaching the newly mandated ADE program. Hearing the teachers express their doubt of being adequately prepared to teach the students what they needed to learn, let alone understanding what was required of them in those four prescribed hours of instruction, I saw the need to develop a Professional Learning Community (PLC) for this particular group of teachers. The PLC focused on developing an understanding of the model, learning how to block out the components that were required within the mandated four-hour block, and what lesson plans needed to look like. Additionally, it provided a support system for all as we moved towards implementing the SEI instructional model as well as determining how to also integrate the Arizona State Standards.

After securing a better grasp on the fundamentals of ADE's SEI instructional model, the intent of this study was to move from a PLC format to that of a Community of Practice (CoP). Moreover, in the CoP, the group would determine the component of the SEI model with which they were least comfortable. Then, they would work on how to increase both their skill, comfort and confidence level in providing instruction in that area. Wenger (1998, p.7)

contends, “Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”

Being mindful that the purpose of this study was to determine how implementing a CoP with ELD teachers would influence their efficacy in implementing the ADE SEI instructional model, the overriding research questions were:

- How does a Community of Practice affect teacher efficacy for instruction in the ELD classroom?
- How does a Community of Practice affect the way the teachers plan, teach and conduct assessments in their ELD classrooms?

Chapter 2 Theoretical Perspectives and Research Guiding the Project

“Over the past decade a growing number of educational researchers have identified teachers' perceived sense of efficacy in teaching and learning situations as a powerful variable in studies of instructional effectiveness” (Guskey, 1987, p. 41).

Community of Practice

Research. The quote from Guskey's (1987) work illustrates how confidence in one's teaching ability influences teaching performance. Previously, teachers' confidence levels for teaching in the classrooms were being eroded because they were not provided with clear, instructional procedures from the ADE about how to implement the new SEI instruction requirements. Having limited direction and preparation for implementing ADE's SEI instructional model, teachers across the state, including those at our school, were experiencing a great deal of angst in implementing this new instructional model. School days needed to be blocked out differently, lesson planning took on a more complex and scaffolded process and instruction went from focusing on the Arizona State Academic Standards to the English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards. Because of the layers of complexity involved in the implementation and due to the uncertainty exhibited by the teachers, creating a CoP was essential for the teachers.

Etienne Wenger, who is credited with developing the CoP approach, provides research suggesting the development of a CoP is based on a common need and pertains to something that is important to those involved in the group

(Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder 2002). Further, Wenger (1998) established three dimensions for supporting a CoP:

1. Understanding the purpose behind the CoP; meaning that there is a collective understanding of the reason for the group and that focus is continually being reviewed by the participants.
2. Understanding how the CoP functions; meaning that the participants equally participate and that the members cement themselves as a social entity.
3. Understanding the CoP's capability; meaning that within the group, resources are shared, ideas and insight are shared with each other over the development of the CoP.

Further, Wenger et al. (2002) cogently argue there are three essential criteria that differentiate a CoP from other small groups found within organizations. Those criteria are its domain, its community and its practice. Within its domain, a CoP's membership is "defined by a shared domain of interest", the community "engages in joint activities and discussions, help each other and share information" and its members are practitioners who, over time, "develop a repertoire of resources" (p. 152-153).

Wenger draws on a theory of social learning and shows how it aligns with the CoP framework and demonstrates how learning takes place within a CoP.

Wenger created a model to demonstrate how this form of collaboration would assist the CoP members. The model shows how participants develop a meaningful learning experience in which they can practice and experience mastery of the

concepts being studied. This form of social learning enables CoP members to create a community framework and develop an identity based on socially working and belonging to a group with a common focus. The more meaningful success a CoP experiences, the stronger the community becomes.

Wenger (1998) further suggests a CoP benefits both the individual participants as well as the collective community to which the participants belong. Wenger notes that individually, learning takes place by participating in and adding to the “practices of their community” and collectively, each member helps refine and strengthen their practices as well as “ensuring new generations of members” (p. 7). Because the participants in this study were trying to gain insights about teaching using the SEI framework and to refine their instructional strategies to better meet that needs of their ELD students, a CoP was a logical method by which to deal with this issue.

In their research on CoP, Wenger and his colleagues McDermott and Snyder found that a CoP involves “groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion” (p. 139). Moreover, such a group is a viable organizational tool to be used in regards to influencing the participants to transfer best practices, and further develop professional skill. In this same book, these authors also note that a CoP generates new knowledge among its members, the members “renew themselves” and refer to this process as the group “giving you both the golden egg and being the goose that lays them” (p. 143).

Application to study. The absence of adequate preparation and need to develop an understanding of how to implement the ADE’s mandated, prescribed

SEI instructional framework resulted in a high degree of frustration among the participating ELD teachers. A PLC, which later became a CoP, was established to help address ELD teachers' concerns about implementing the new model and adequately preparing their students in their grade level standards. Participants collectively expressed a desire to work together to figure out the new instructional model and how to best implement it. Aligning with Wenger's CoP framework, the teachers developed a sense of belonging as they were all experiencing the same thing, being both an ELD teacher and mutually struggling with the components of the new instructional model. Additionally, they have had the opportunity to learn from each others' practices as they actively engaged in instruction as well as observing each other teaching the Discrete Skills Inventory (DSI) component of the model. Together, their experience had the potential of helping them develop more meaning out of this particular component, and influencing their self-efficacy about their degree of success in implementing the new SEI instructional model. The CoP allowed the participants to develop an understanding of the SEI model's five components, led them to choose to work on other issues related to the ADE's ELD instructional framework, and aided development of their instructional delivery to the point in which their classrooms became the district's model ELD classrooms.

Self-Efficacy

With teacher self-efficacy being at the center of this study, it was imperative to address this topic concisely. To begin with, it is important to

acknowledge Bandura's efforts in self-efficacy. Bandura (1994) defines self-efficacy as:

people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave (p. 2).

He reports that the level of support one receives while actively engaging in novel or uncomfortable activities, directly affects participants' levels of efficacy towards successfully completing the assigned task. Bandura's work showed the more support individuals received, the higher the participants' level of efficacy became, which also decreased the degree of opposition and defensiveness. In his book, *Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control*, Bandura (1997) remarks on the importance of self-efficacy and how its level can influence a variety of aspects of one's life. Included areas are choosing one's own path and the degree of willingness to exert efforts towards success, the degree in which a person is willing to persevere in overcoming adversities and one's own level of "resilience to adversities" (p. 3). Bandura's research results support that building self-efficacy is connected with the participants' opportunities to experience success. Bandura argues the strongest method for developing one's self-efficacy is to participate in successful mastery experiences. These experiences build upon the person's competency with regards to a particular area. According to Bandura, more mastery experiences lead to the development of individual, meaningful learning which influences self-efficacy. He also suggests that providing positive

models, placing participants in purposeful and positive experiences that will reinforce knowledge and success rates and growth is measured by self-improvement and not by “triumphs over others.”

In his book, Bandura (1997) describes two formats for assessing self-efficacy. The first format is called a dual format assessment. It requires the participants to evaluate whether they can perform the desired performances being considered and they are also asked to judge the level of proficiency of those performances. By comparison, the second format for assessing self-efficacy is called a single-judgment format and this process requires participants to respond, on a scaled-format, rating their efficacy towards each item within specific domains.

Along with Bandura, Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk and Hoy (1998) are recognized as leading scholars on self-efficacy: specifically teacher self-efficacy. In their research, Tschannen-Moran et al. specifically chose to focus on the influence self-efficacy has on teachers. In their work, these researchers first examined the important self-efficacy groundwork that was established in the 1977 Rand Corporation studies, which analyzed teacher self-efficacy with respect to teaching reading. Tschannen-Moran et al. trace the development of efficacy research including the foundational work of Rose and Medway, Guskey, and Gibson and Dembo who developed early measures of teacher efficacy.

Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) found a correlation between the level of teacher efficacy and the status of their school’s organizational health. In particular, they noted the stronger a school’s commitment to academic success and its principal’s

willingness to use his or her influence to benefit the teaching staff at the school, the more its teachers believed in their ability to help their students academically succeed. Further, they found the integrity within the school's commitment to support its teachers directly influenced morale, which Hoy and Woolfolk declared directly affected teacher efficacy.

Pajares (2000) offers reasons for the decline in self-efficacy. He suggests that the most influential source of self-efficacy beliefs comes from one's mastery experiences. He suggests the experience is the "interpreted result of one's own performance" and it is the level of success one experiences that determines the level to which one's self-efficacy rises. Bandura (1994) further expands on the impact of mastery experiences by stating how those mastery experiences also lead to individuals being willing to approach more difficult tasks as their mastery level increases; including a willingness to set more challenging goals, remain task-focused and think strategically through these more challenging goals.

In fact, when implementing a new instructional innovation, research by Wheatley (2000) suggests it is, in fact, a teacher's doubt in his or her efficacy that could result in failure in implementing a new program. Lack of confidence heightens the need for learning and, as the previously mentioned research, the more positive exposure to the area of focus, the more opportunities a teacher has to increase his or her own sense of efficacy.

Application to study. Without a doubt, this group of teachers had their self-efficacy towards being an effective instructor adversely influenced by having to implement an instructional model for which they weren't adequately or

appropriately prepared nor in which they believed. Because the initial experience in implementing this model was not positive and because the teachers didn't have an understanding of what was expected in implementing the new ADE's newly mandated SEI instructional model, their confidence towards successfully structuring their instruction was challenged. Further, this decreased their self-efficacy towards implementing this new instructional framework. However, in working towards developing a better understanding of the model and how it was to be implemented, their confidence in blocking out the four hours, writing lesson plans, etc. grew. The growth and change in attitudes towards their efficacy in implementing the model aligns with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory as he stated that "self-efficacy beliefs influence the course of action people choose to pursue, how much effort they put forth in given endeavors, how long they would persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, their resilience to adversity, whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-aiding, and the level of accomplishments they realize" (p. 3).

As we continued to work together in our CoP, the participating ELD teachers' began to better understand how to implement the SEI instructional model as well as becoming more comfortable and confident in their understanding of the model and how it should be implemented. Nevertheless, confidence levels continue to be challenged in specific mandated components such as grammar as well with respect to instructional strategies. Continual modifications required by ADE and unforeseen issues that cropped up within the day-to-day implementation of the four-hour mandated block of instruction continue to present challenges for

the ELD teachers. Finally, the set-backs that the participants experienced, and their influence on the teachers' confidence level in making progress with the instructional model is consistent with the findings of Pajares (2000) and Bandura (1994) who indicated that negative experiences reduced teacher efficacy; where positive experiences both reinforced and increased teaching efficacy in the area of focus.

English Language Learner Instruction

Because this study is focused on teacher efficacy and ELD instruction, it is important to review three areas of scholarship that have a direct relation to the proposed project. These three areas are the SEI instructional model, the development of the mandated four-hour ADE SEI instructional model and “best instructional practices” for ELD students.

Sheltered English Immersion (SEI). A thread that recurs throughout the current research pertaining to ELD instruction is the Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) model. SEI is an instructional model in which instruction is conducted in English and has a desired outcome of immersing and teaching students the English language. Ideally, SEI is to be instruction that is both language sensitive and leads to the acquisition of English as well as grade level objectives for ELD students. Its purpose is to teach English as quickly as possible to ELD students and was developed by Keith Baker and Adriana de Kanter (1983). Baker and de Kanter, along with other language scholars, such as Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2000) strongly believe that this model is superior to that of bilingual instruction and it has become the mandatory model of ELD instruction in California, Arizona

and Massachusetts. This model is also known as structured immersion (Gersten & Woodward, 1985) and requires prioritization of explicit teaching of English and the grade level content materials being the conduit through which English is taught, meaning all instruction and instructional materials are in English. SEI also requires teachers and students speaking only in English, and discrete grammar skills are taught.

Along with the specific components of this instructional model, SEI also has two main goals: increasing the English fluency of the ELD students as quickly as possible and of moving them into “mainstream” educational settings (Haver, 2003, p.15-16). Frequently, the desired time frame is for a student to be in such a program for one year and then move to mainstream classroom.

Application to study. Where SEI instruction is to provide ELL students with a language-rich, scaffolded learning experience, one of the first things I saw was the importance of providing our ELD teachers with adequate resources. These include realia items, picture cues, adequate reading and grammar instructional materials, listening center supplies, etc. Second, with the emphasis in an ELD classroom being the instruction of the English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards, the CoP needed to determine effective instruction that would allow for ELD students to gain fluency as well as working toward knowledge of grade level content.

4-hour, ADE ELD instructional model. In trying to understand the reasoning behind both the creation and requirement of the 2008 SEI instructional model, it was important to lay the groundwork from which this instructional

framework evolved. In 2000, Arizona voters passed an initiative which “required all English language learners to be educated through structured English immersion” (Clark, 2009, p. 42). Clark suggests that despite the research controversy that continues to embroil immersion programs, that this was the type of program the state of Arizona selected and that it has the “potential to accelerate ELDs’ English language development and linguistic preparation for grade-level academic content” (p. 42). He also notes three reasons for the implementation of this program. They are: a law was passed which restricted bilingual education, the “added incentive for schools to get students’ English proficiency” to a level in which they are prepared to take grade-level state assessments that are given only in English, and the “burgeoning subpopulation of ELD students who reach an intermediate level of English competence after a few years - and then stop making progress” (p. 43).

Arizona’s English Language Learner Task Force was formed and began meeting in 2006. It is this committee that developed the ELD instructional model upon which study is focusing. According to Clark, the committee determined an effective SEI instructional model that included the following:

- 1.) Significant amounts of the school day dedicated to explicit teaching of the English language and that students are grouped for this instruction according to their level of English.
- 2.) English language is the main content of instruction, stating that academic content plays a supporting, but subordinate, role.

- 3.) Students and teachers are expected to speak, read, and write in English.
- 4.) Teachers use instructional methods that treat English as the foreign language.
- 5.) Students learn discrete English grammar skills.
- 6.) Rigorous time lines are established for students to exit from the program. (2009, p. 43-45).

These are the criteria that were used to establish the framework of the SEI instructional model being implemented and examined in this research study.

Keeping these components as the guiding benchmarks for creating the instructional framework, the committee created a structure that mandates a four-hour, daily, instructional period in which the ELD students are grouped together by their level of English proficiency. Further, the task force required that instruction had to be provided by a highly qualified teacher and that within that four hour timeframe, the teacher is required to provide his or her students with sixty minutes of reading, vocabulary, and grammar instruction but the conversation and writing components vary in time based on the students' level of proficiency, with the range being from 15 to 45 minutes (Arizona Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition Services, 2008). Students were to be clustered according to their English proficiency level. These levels include pre-emergent, which would represent a student who has little to no English, emergent, basic, intermediate and proficient. Although a school is to cluster students by proficiency level first, it is permissible to cluster pre-emergent and

emergent together, and basic and intermediates together, etc. The only exception to this rule is when there are twenty or fewer ELD students in three consecutive grade bands. When that is the case, Individual Language Learning Plans, otherwise known as ILLPs, may be written for each of those children. The ILLP operates under the same premise as Individual Learning Education Plans (IEPs) do with special education students. Individual goals are developed for each student and must be monitored and reviewed throughout the year.

Concerns have been raised that this instructional framework is likened to segregation but ADE cites the court case of *Casteneda v. Pickard* which states “Thus as a general rule, school systems are free to employ ability grouping, even when such a policy segregates ELD students, so long, of course, as such a practice is genuinely motivated by educational concerns and not discriminatory motives” (ADE Website, 2008).

Application to study. Because this study surrounds this instructional framework, it was imperative to understand the reasoning behind the creation of this instructional model. Moreover, it is necessary to understand the required elements to be in compliance with ADE requirements for this four-hour instructional block. Finally, it is necessary to see CoP members must work collaboratively to implement the model with both integrity and the desire to implement it in the manner which would be beneficial for students. With this state-wide mandate affecting the classroom demographics, separating ELD and non-ELD students, this instructional framework places a heavier emphasis on the teacher being the only English role model in the classroom, removing peer

modeling of academic English. As a result, discussion within the CoP on how to maximize both the explicit modeling of English as well as daily opportunities for the students to practice using the English language in an academic setting will be necessary.

Best ELD practices. Although ADE imposes their four-hour ELD model, other research studies suggest alternative approaches are required to best meet the needs of ELD students. These studies focus on classroom environment, the length of time allocated for learning the English language, and recognizing the difference between the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) levels are warranted with respect to acquiring a new language at an academic level.

To begin analyzing what constitutes best practices within ELD instruction, one must first begin with the classroom environment. Because students within these classrooms must develop English language, one of the first things that schools must ensure is that these children have the opportunity for extensive dialogues. These can only occur when schools maintain low student to teacher ratios, which provides situations where students are continually being barraged by language-rich learning opportunities. Once the recommended classroom environment has been established, the next step for a school is to analyze the “best practices” for teaching ELL students.

Seeing themselves as advocates for ELD students, Harvard professors Mark LaCelle-Peterson and Charlene Rivera (1994), questioned, although established with good intentions, the benefits ELD students will reap from similar

reform programs such as the one implemented in Arizona. Within their studies, they admit that ELD students quickly learn “survival English,” but it takes longer to develop the academic vocabulary these students will need to be successful within school settings (p. 2). LaCelle-Peterson and Rivera (1994) note that data gathered from studies conducted by respected language researchers Cummins, Krashen, McLaughlin and Ramírez support that language is best learned when taught in one’s home language; however, immersion programs continue to be the “program of choice” across the country (p. 3-4). This mismatch of effective instruction is significant because according to the 1992 United States Department of Education, the ELD student population is growing and has, in fact, increased by over fifty-one percent.

With the large number of ELD students entering schools across the country, LaCelle-Peterson and Rivera (1998) specifically advocate moving from an immersion model to one which includes the following four elements to provide both “excellence and quality” programs for these children. These elements include accessing a full range of the content knowledge valued by the school, community, and society, students and teachers participating in meaningful interaction on learning challenging subject matter, and the opportunity to maximize the development of their native language. Further, these authors cogently argue that there is a direct correlation to an ELL student’s proficiency in the English language and the level of educational goals an ELD student achieves. Understanding that it takes longer for an ELD student to master an academic level of English, ELD students lag behind their non-ELD grade level peers in regards to

mastering grade level material and these students simply cannot afford to wait to develop that academic level of English proficiency.

Contrary to the ELD instructional model that is currently, and frequently, being used across the country, LaCelle-Peterson and Rivera (1998) advocate the implementation of a program in which ELD students participate in meaningful learning that should have similar educational goals as their monolingual peers and that these children should be both encouraged and supported in maintaining their native language. If such integrity is provided to English Language Development learners, LaCelle-Peterson and Rivera advocate that not only will these criteria support a child's mastery of the English language, but that it would also help produce students who have been prepared to compete in the global market as they enter adulthood.

With respect to mastery of the English language, it is important to differentiate between what linguistic specialist Jim Cummins (1999) delineated as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) levels of ELD students. In developing these terms, Cummins refers to BICS as being the level of language acquisition which allows for informal conversations (conversations with peers on the playground, speaking to family, etc.); whereas CALP (specific content academic vocabulary) refers to academic language acquisition. What Cummins and other linguistic researchers found was that there was an assumption that if an ELD student was able to hold a conversation in English (BICS) that the child should do well in school (CALP). This misinterpreted assumption has, according to Cummins, resulted in

students being inappropriately moved into mainstream English classrooms. Cummins' work suggests fluency in the BICS level occurs first, with the CALP level following. However, scholars August and Hakuta (1997) found that such is not an absolute and is based on how each were acquired. Finally, Cummins (2003) reiterated that the purpose for these two distinctions with respect to language acquisition is to develop an awareness of the differences and to understand that the BICS level typically occurs within the first two years of acquiring a new language whereas CALP levels take between five to seven years to master.

Application to study. With the ADE's task force establishing stringent mandates both in what can be taught and the amount of minutes that will be assigned to the constructs, we, as a CoP, must remain within the parameters that were established for teaching our ELD students. However, in reviewing ELD best practices, we integrated some of those components into our ELD students' day. Specifically, we can ensure that students being served in one of our ELD classrooms were engaged in meaningful learning and that we continued to refine our abilities to utilize the AZ state standards as the vehicle by which to teach the ELP standards. The research also points out the importance of knowing both the BICS and CALP levels of the students so as we participated in both professional development and lesson planning activities as a CoP, we were ensuring that we were planning in a manner that met the students' needs and built a rich, academic vocabulary.

Previous Action Research

The participants in this study began working together towards the implementation of ADE's SEI instructional model in the fall of 2008. This was the first year ADE mandated its implementation and we found ourselves ill-prepared to implement the model as prescribed by ADE. Highly efficacious teachers found themselves feeling at a loss about what was expected of them and not understanding the prescribed four-hour model they were to implement. In the first round of action research, I brought the ELD teachers together to determine whether such a learning community would influence their sense of efficacy with respect to understanding the components of the new instructional framework. Teachers were experiencing difficulty knowing how to block instructional time, managing the degree of detail required in lesson planning, and determining how to focus on teaching the ELP Standards first and not the grade level AZ K-12 State Standards, which they had done previously. Our work began using a PLC model, but it quickly became obvious that it was the teachers who needed to guide the focus of our work. Therefore, it was collectively agreed upon that we would use a CoP framework. As a result, our ELD CoP consisted of meeting twice a month, throughout the year, for an hour to an hour-and-a-half, to examine how to implement the ELD requirements. After the first couple of meetings, it became apparent that it was important to invite our district's language acquisition and curriculum and instruction directors to join our group so that they could be a part of the critical dialogues that were taking place at each session. At the close of each session, participants were asked what they found helpful, what could be

improved and what the focus should be for the next meeting. Because the ELD teachers found lesson planning and the allocation of the prescribed minutes so challenging, that became the major focus of the first year in our CoP. The group also needed to contend with modifications that continued to come from ADE so these were also addressed in our sessions. By the end of the first year, the participating ELD teachers felt that they had a better grasp of the framework and, although still experiencing inadequate time to meet the ELD, state and district instructional requirements, were experiencing increasing success in managing their new classroom expectations. Their efficacy was increased and they all volunteered to return as an ELD teacher for the 2009-2010 school year.

One of the recurring themes from our CoP sessions was that lesson planning required much more time than when they were regular education teachers. As we began our second year of being an ELD CoP, participants were sharing that they were spending between four to five hours each week just in planning and then additional time was required to locate resources to teach in the SEI manner which they knew was best for their students. This included involving as many senses as possible during instruction. Teachers were also incorporating techniques such as bringing in realia, providing opportunities for physical connections within lessons, locating picture cues, etc. Although these are excellent strategies for ELD instruction, it required ELD teachers to take additional time within an already hectic schedule. With our sessions only running an hour or more, we could see that our meeting time really needed to honor the needs of the participants. As a result, our second round of action research

continued to focus on ADE's new SEI instructional model and its impact on teacher efficacy, but we modified the timeframe in which we met. Although we continued to have meetings that were an hour in length, we also moved to having full-day CoP meetings in which the morning sessions were spent on professional development which focused on the area of concern identified by the participants and the afternoon was spent by the ELD teachers collaboratively planning lessons. Participants in the study began to develop lesson plan templates which allowed for easier planning as well as helping them to ensure they accounted for the required minutes for each of the focus areas in the program. The teachers also had the opportunity to increase their understanding of vocabulary and reading instruction through the professional development training that took place in the morning portion of these day-long CoP sessions. The ELD teachers continually remarked how appreciative they were to simply have the time to talk to each other about how things were working in each other's classrooms, what was working for individual teachers, as well as struggles that each of them were still experiencing.

Throughout the second year of action research, our focus remained on the implementation of ADE's SEI instructional model and the participating ELD teachers were gaining more expertise in its components. As in the first year, we met as a CoP and participants directed the topics for discussion from session to session. Throughout these sessions, information continued to resurface about the challenges they were experiencing with the DSI component of the ADE's SEI instructional model. DSI refers to Discrete Skills Inventory and it is a handbook that was designed by the language acquisition department at the ADE. This tool

breaks down the grammar components into appropriate ELD language proficiency levels. Through the CoP discussions, it was discovered that there was a mutual uneasiness among the participants in their abilities to effectively teach the grammar components required in the DSI due to lack of resources and foundational understanding of the grammatical structure within the English language. Therefore, the focus of the group for the next round of action research was on how the CoP would increase its efficacy with respect to instructional strategies for DSI instruction.

Research Questions

Based on the previous action research and the issues noted for the next round of action research, two research questions were developed.

- How does a Community of Practice affect teacher efficacy for teaching ELD content and students?
- How does a Community of Practice affect the way the teachers plan, teach and assess ELD content and students?

Chapter 3 Method

Setting

The school in which this study took place was a K-3 campus in an elementary school district that has 17 schools and is located in Glendale, AZ. Both the school and the district qualify as urban and it has a Title I designation. It currently has a staff of 75 and houses 26 classrooms. At each grade level, the configurations of its classrooms consist of regular education, gifted cluster, and ELD classrooms. Its current population is 632 students and of those children, 89.9% meet the federal criteria as living in poverty. Additionally, 85% of its students are Hispanic, 7% African American and 8% Caucasian. Over 30% of the students qualify as ELL and the number of students being served in the kindergarten through third-grade ELD classrooms constitutes between 20% to 40% of the student population, with kindergarten having close to 50% of its students being ELD and progressively decreasing in percentage by grade levels.

Participants

Participation in this study was on a voluntary basis and consisted of all nine ELD teachers on the campus. The teachers were all female and vary in years of teaching experience. Among this group of teachers, there was a teacher who had over 30 years of teaching experience and had served as a classroom teacher, a Title I teacher, a reading interventionist, and finally, as an instructional coach. She was in her third year of teaching in one of this school's ELD classrooms. The remaining ELD teachers had between three to five years of teaching experience, but were also in their third year teaching in an ELD classroom. Of those

remaining teachers, seven began their teaching careers at this school. One of these nine teachers had previous experience teaching ELD students in another urban elementary school prior to coming to teach at this K-3 campus. However, her previous teaching experience took place prior to the introduction of the ADE ELD instructional model.

Within this group of teachers, there were five Caucasians, three Hispanics and one Brazilian. The three Hispanic and Brazilian teachers were all bilingual, two of the five Caucasian teachers had a limited grasp of the Spanish language and the three remaining teachers had minimal knowledge of the Spanish language. These nine teachers also had an array of educational backgrounds, with the three of the ELD teachers holding Master's degrees in reading and the remaining ELD teachers holding their Bachelors of Arts degrees.

Instruments

In a mixed-method approach, both qualitative and quantitative instruments were used to gather data. Although there are differences between the two approaches, both qualitative and quantitative approaches, according to researchers Sechrest and Sidani (1995, p. 78), “describe their data, construct explanatory arguments from their data, and speculate about why the outcomes they observed happened as they did.” Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) established that in utilizing a mixed-methods approach to research, the researcher “mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study,” with the goal of legitimizing “the use of multiple approaches in answering research questions, rather than restricting or

constraining researchers choices” (p. 17). The positive aspects of the mixed-method approach led to its utilization for the purpose of collecting, analyzing and reporting data for the project. The quantitative and qualitative instruments that were used to gather data throughout this study are described in the next section.

Questionnaire. To begin, a pre- and post-intervention questionnaire instrument was created to determine the degree of efficacy, among the participating ELD teachers, with respect to their level of preparedness for teaching ELD students. This questionnaire had a Likert scale ranging from 1-4, with a score of 1 indicating *A Great Deal* of efficacy to a 4 showing *Not at All*. It focuses on the three constructs of (a) lesson planning, (b) the use of the Discrete Skills Inventory tool, and (c) their ability to integrate the Arizona State Standards and the Arizona English Language Proficiency Standards into their ELD instruction. The sentence stem for each question was “How confident are you in...” and then the teacher was provided statements that focused on three constructs within the ELD instructional model. Examples of the questions asked within this survey are “How confident are you in creating lesson plans that incorporate the required number of minutes in Oral Language and Conversation (one hour), Grammar (one hour), Writing (one hour), and Reading (one hour) required in the AZ ELD Instructional Model?” and “How confident are you in knowing how to differentiate DSI instruction as your ELD students’ progress in their language development?” See Appendix A for all the items.

These items are illustrative of items from the lesson planning and DSI constructs. The questionnaire was created because no questionnaire specifically

addressing the concerns of this study was available. The instrument was field tested in a spring 2010 pilot study with ten, K-3 ELD teachers at two other schools within the same district as the school in which this study was conducted.

Transcriptions of CoP sessions . Along with the pre- and post-intervention questionnaire that was administered in this study, I transcribed audio-tapings of the CoP sessions. These transcripts served as the primary source of qualitative data in the study. The transcribed audio tapes for this study were obtained during the CoP meetings. Upon permission of the participants, each of the CoP meetings was audio taped and later transcribed and analyzed to examine emerging themes.

Observational protocol. The researcher observed the ELD teachers' instruction throughout the study. The ELD Observational Protocol, which was created by Marsha Castillo, the participating school's district language acquisition director, incorporated a rubric scale and included the same criteria used by the ELD monitors from the ADE's Office of English Language Acquisition Department who monitor a school's SEI instructional model. Examples of the components on the protocol included whether both a content and language objective were posted, whether the DSI skill aligned with the students' grade and English proficiency levels, and whether the teacher was using one of the eight instructional methodologies required in the ADE framework. An open-ended comment section was provided for each of the reported areas on the protocol. I conducted observations two times throughout the study. The protocol was used during an observation at the onset of the study and then at the end of the study.

For the purpose of this study, observation data collected by me was used to assess the effectiveness of the implementation in teachers' classroom.

Intervention

The interventions used for this study were instructional strategies associated with improving grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, and conversation in ELD students. These strategies were disseminated in a CoP focused on strengthening teacher effectiveness with respect to instructing English Language Learner students according to the mandates established by the ADE. The CoP met for six sessions between August and December 2010, with two full-day sessions of eight hours each and the other sessions being one-and-one-half hours each. Concepts addressed during these eight sessions were determined based on pre-intervention questionnaire results of the participants in conjunction with students' standardized test scores.

At the onset of the study, a pre-intervention questionnaire was given to the nine participating ELD teachers in an effort to gain an understanding of their efficacy toward instruction and lesson planning in the five mandated instructional components, which include reading, writing, conversation and grammar, of ADE's new SEI/ELD instructional model. Additionally, questions were added on the pre-intervention questionnaire to determine the comfort level participants had in differentiating instruction using DSI and integrating the Arizona State Standards in with the English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards that are mandated in the instructional model.

The first CoP meeting was held within the first three weeks of the beginning of the school year to review the ADE's instructional framework for the ELD classrooms. Additionally, the members of this CoP reviewed spring 2010 AIMS, SAT 10 and AZELLA results to determine the academic and language levels of students in their classrooms. Calendar dates were agreed upon for the additional sessions.

The first of the two, full-day, CoP sessions were held within the first six weeks of the new school year. Based on spring 2010 data, student results demonstrated a need for increasing their grammar concepts, therefore, this first eight-hour session was divided equally between professional development and collaborative lesson planning. The morning was spent in professional development to refresh teachers' background knowledge in grammar as well as having teachers actively engaged in instructional strategies and activities for teaching grammar. Following this training, teachers collaboratively planned scaffolded grammar lessons to meet the needs of their emergent, basic, and intermediate level ELD students. Within their lessons, they needed to include both content and language objectives, specify which DSI skill they were going to focus on in each lesson and finally, include a means to assess individual student's level of meeting the objective.

The remaining CoP sessions for this study were evenly distributed throughout the twelve-week duration of the study. As per the definition of what constitutes a Community of Practice, members determined the focus of their learning, future agenda items revolved around teacher input on what area of ELD

instruction they felt would be most helpful in their instruction. However, the structure of each session remained the same throughout the study. Sessions began by reviewing the previous session and reflecting on implementation of the previous topic; identifying what worked and what didn't work, and making recommended adjustments. Then, the first half of each session was spent on professional development decided upon by participants responses to the questions listed below and the second half of the session focused on collaborative lesson planning. Finally, each session closed with gathering input from the members by asking the following questions:

1. What did you gain from today's session?
2. What could the Leadership Team have done differently to have made this session more effective?
3. What would you like the focus to be for our next CoP meeting?

Responses were used to determine topics for the next session.

Data Collection

As noted previously, three different instruments were used to collect data throughout this study. Data was collected at various points during the intervention and involved the use of a questionnaire, transcripts of CoP sessions, and data from an observational protocol. The study began and concluded with administration of the same questionnaire, which allowed for the participants to identify their sense of efficacy towards implementing the ADE's SEI instructional model, specifically in the three construct areas of (a) lesson planning, (b) the Discrete Skills Inventory and (c) the integration of the ELD and State standards.

This particular study over a period of twelve weeks and began in the August of 2010. Within those twelve weeks, additional data was collected through transcriptions of audio-taped CoP sessions. Data analysis was done with these transcripts to determine recurring themes.

Also throughout the fifteen weeks of this study, I observed participating teachers; once at the onset of the study and then near the end of the study. As stated previously, the ELD Observational Protocol, which was created by Marsha Castillo, the participating school's district language acquisition director, was the instrument utilized for collecting data from these observations. The instrument incorporates a rubric scale and includes the same criteria used by the ELD monitors from the ADE's Office of English Language Acquisition Department who scrutinize a school's ELD instructional model. Examples of the components on the protocol include whether both a content and language objective are posted, whether the DSI skill aligns with the students' grade and English proficiency levels, and whether the teacher is using one of the eight instructional methodologies required in the ADE's SEI framework. An open-ended comment section was provided for each of the reported areas on the protocol. For the purpose of this study, observation data collected was used to assess the effectiveness of the implementation in teachers' classrooms.

Procedure

After the first several weeks of school, I met with each participant to review the parameters of the study, asked if they were willing to continue to participate in our previously established CoP and provide them the opportunity to

ask any clarifying questions. Members were provided a consent form and participating ELD teachers' signatures were obtained.

The CoP meetings for this study consisted of two full-day CoP sessions and four -90 minute sessions that took place during the fifteen week period of the study. The first session was held within the third week of the new school year and time was spent reviewing norms, reviewing the work that has been done previously in our ELD CoP, discussing the language levels of current ELD classrooms and scheduling the remaining sessions. Because the 2009-2010 action research came to a close with identifying a need for specific grammar instructional strategies, we began our year with that being the focus of our second session. The second session was the first of the two full-day sessions. In the morning, participants engaged in professional development about grammar instruction and then during the afternoon, teachers collaboratively built lessons around the instructional strategies that they just learned while taking into account their students' DSI levels. Although the calendar date was set during our first CoP session, it took place within the first six weeks of the new school year. Session six had the participants completing their post-intervention questionnaire and then I analyzed the growth level between the pre- and the post-intervention questionnaire results. Although the study was completed after week 15, this CoP will continue to meet throughout the remainder of the school year.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed in the following way. Pre- and post-test means and standard deviations for self-efficacy

towards teaching using the new ELD instructional model were presented. This data were presented to describe the changes that occurred during the course of the project. Further, these data were examined to determine whether there were increases in the scores across the course of the project.

Qualitative data analysis. Qualitative data, including transcriptions of taped CoP sessions and observational protocols, were analyzed to determine emerging themes using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this procedure, open and axial coding was used to initially identify concepts and then develop subsequent categories that represent phenomena that emerge and were related to the data. After a theme was identified, quotes from the CoP session transcripts and the observational protocols were used to substantiate and support the theme. These qualitative data were used to augment and support the quantitative data.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this study was to be both a participant and facilitator of the ELD CoP. Although I wasn't teaching one of the ELD classrooms, I provided support throughout the CoP sessions, secured requested professional development opportunities, extended an invitation to appropriate experts to attend and participate in our CoP meetings, and facilitated sessions in a manner which encouraged participation and created an environment in which participants were comfortable to honestly share their needs. Personally, my goal was also to further refine my skills to successfully, and supportively, lead professionals through the change process.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect a CoP had on participating ELD teachers' sense of efficacy in regards to implementing the ADE ELD model. Within the context of the CoP, participating members collaborated for the purpose of meeting the needs of their ELD students as well as implementing the ADE's mandated ELD instructional model with integrity. Together, its members specifically worked to build a stronger foundation in grammar instruction but also identified instructional strategies that were beneficial to ELD instruction.

The research questions to be examined in this study were:

1. How does a Community of Practice affect teacher efficacy for teaching ELD content and students?
2. How does a Community of Practice affect the way the teachers plan, teach and assess ELD content and students?

Seeking answers to these two questions allowed further cohesiveness and collaboration to take place among the ELD CoP members. These sessions allowed for the development of cohesiveness and collaboration and enhanced members sense of efficacy in teaching ADE's ELD model by providing them the additional tools determined to be needed by the participants. It was also anticipated that the professional development, and rich dialogue would positively influence teacher participants' efficacy in the areas of content lesson design, pedagogical planning, lesson delivery, and assessment.

Finally, it was imperative that I understood my role as the researcher, facilitator and participant in this study. I had to relinquish my role as the instructional leader and become a participant in the CoP. This was critical for me to do so I did not inadvertently function in a supervisory role to avoid any sense of coerciveness.

Chapter 4 Results

Results from the study are presented in two sections. In the first section, results from the quantitative data are presented. Following the results for the quantitative data, results for qualitative data are presented. For the qualitative data, assertions are presented and supported through theme-related components and quotes from participants. Prior to presenting the results, a brief section outlining the data sources and data collection procedures is presented to provide some context for the presentation of the results.

Quantitative data were collected with a questionnaire consisting of three subscales that assessed the extent to which respondents felt confident in each of the following areas related to ELD instruction: (a) lesson planning, (b) integration of ELP and Arizona academic standards, and (c) knowledge and skills to use DSI (grammar) strategies. Data were collected at the first CoP session, August 26, 2010, and the last session, December 15, 2010. This pre- and post-intervention assessment allowed for the examination of change on these variables. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVA).

Qualitative data were gathered during the professional development sessions. The sessions were audio taped and transcribed. The qualitative data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In that procedure, open coding was initially conducted to identify ideas and concepts from the transcripts. Subsequently, those open codes were gathered into larger categories using axial coding. Those larger categories led to theme-related

concepts that suggested themes, which emerged from the data. The themes and theme-related components were examined and assertions were developed.

Results for Quantitative Data

Before the data were analyzed using the repeated measures ANOVAs, reliability analyses were conducted on each of the three subscales from the questionnaire. Recall the subscales assessed areas related to ELD instruction: (a) lesson planning, (b) integration of ELP and Arizona academic standards, and (c) knowledge and skills to use DSI (grammar) strategies. For each subscale, Cronbach's α was computed using SPSS to determine the reliability of the subscale. Based on the pre-test responses, the reliabilities for the subscales enumerated above were: .79, .51, and .81, respectively. The reliability coefficients for the lesson planning and DSI strategies are substantial and attest to the reliability of these two subscales, but the subscale that assessed integration of ELP and Arizona academic standards is not reliable since α does not exceed .70, which is a lower bound for acceptable levels of reliability. Closer examination of the items from the ELP and Arizona academic standards items showed they did not all tap one area of beliefs; instead, they assessed collaboration, adequacy of resources and preparing students for the Arizona Instrument of Measurements and Standards (AIMS) assessment.

Three individual repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted, one for each of the three subscales of the questionnaire. For lesson planning, the repeated measures ANOVA was statistically significant, $F(1, 8) = 41.36, p < .001$. The effect size for this measure was $\eta^2 = .838$, which is an extraordinarily large effect

size for a within-subjects design based on Cohen’s criteria (Olejnik & Algina, 2000). Pre- and post-test means and standard deviations for the lesson planning variable and the other two variables based on the questionnaire are presented in Table 1. The repeated measures ANOVA for integrating ELP and Arizona academic standards was statistically significant, $F(1, 8) = 13.46, p < .006$. The effect size was $\eta^2 = .627$, which is an extremely large effect size for a within-subjects design based on Cohen’s criteria. Care in interpreting this outcome must be made because the pre-test score reliability for this variable was only .51. Finally, with respect to knowledge and skills to implement DSI instruction, the repeated measures ANOVA was statistically significant, $F(1, 8) = 64.80, p < .001$. The effect size for this difference in means was $\eta^2 = .890$, which is an extremely large effect size for a within-subjects design according to Cohen’s criteria. It should be noted that for each of the variables there was a substantial increase in post-test scores as compared to pre-test scores. These substantial differences are reflected in the means in Table 1 and also account for the large effect sizes observed for these variables.

Table 1

Pre- and Post-test Scores on the Three Subscales of the Questionnaire

Subscale Perceptions about...	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Lesson Planning	2.91	0.39	3.84	0.26
Integrating ELP and AZ Standards	3.11	0.35	3.76	0.34
Knowledge and Skills about DSI	2.83	0.33	3.58	0.38

Results for Qualitative Data

The themes, theme-related components, and assertions developed from the qualitative data are presented in Table 2. In the next portion of the results section, each theme is briefly described and then more fully explicated by expanding on the theme-related components and by providing quotes to substantiate the theme.

Table 2

Themes, Theme-related Components, and Assertions

Themes	Theme-related Components	Assertions
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative efforts • Facilitative leadership support • Clarification • Development of a bond between the CoP members 	The CoP developed a strong, collaborative ethic built on helpfulness, leadership support, and development of robust bonds among members.
Lesson Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson planning • ELD components and required instructional minutes • Required instructional minutes affect on teachers • Arizona and ELP standards 	The CoP focused much of its effort on planning lessons that incorporated ELD requirements and Arizona academic standards.
Changes and Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure of 4- hour ELD instruction • Frustration and stress • Templates • New ELP standards 	The CoP sessions provided a means to identify changes and challenges being experienced and the opportunity to solve these problems together.
Efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a better understanding and command of the ADE’s ELD instructional model • Stronger ELD teachers • Increased confidence 	Teachers indicated they felt more efficacious due to the CoP group and professional development sessions.

Collaboration. *Assertion 1—The CoP developed a strong, collaborative ethic built on helpfulness, leadership support, and development of robust bonds among members.* As an overarching theme, collaboration is the process through which groups of people work together toward common goals. In this study, collaboration was a significant benefit that developed among nine English Language Development (ELD) teachers and the Leadership team at a K-3 elementary school. This group participated in a Community of Practice (CoP) developed around the common goal of gaining a better understanding of the Arizona Department of Education’s new Structured English Immersion (SEI) model of instruction to facilitate teaching efforts for their ELD students. Under the theme of collaboration, theme-related components captured the sense of the theme in a more fine-grained fashion. These theme-related components included strong collaborative efforts, facilitative leadership support, clarification and the development of a bond among the members of the CoP.

During the professional development sessions, the teachers and the leadership team showed strong collaborative efforts as they analyzed the model of instruction, discussed interpretation of the model, and together, developed a plan for its implementation. Teachers collectively selected the professional development they felt they needed to help them implement SEI for their ELD students. The teachers worked together in developing an understanding of the ADE lesson plan format as well as spending many hours planning lessons together. The depth of collaboration was expressed in participants' comments such as the one offered by teacher #6 who affirmed, “we have to work together to find

the necessary balance” (August 26). Another, teacher #8, offered, “I feel like as time goes by and we work together, I will get used to it and get faster and faster” (October 7). Further, when teachers were asked about the best aspect of the time individuals spent during the CoP sessions, collaboration was identified as one of the most valued processes. Sentiment regarding how much collaboration meant to the participants was quite evident during the September 9 CoP meeting when teacher #1 indicated she appreciated, “lesson planning and being able to talk out challenges I am having with fitting everything in.” Additionally, key phrases such as teacher #7 who said, “working with my peers” reflected an appreciation for collaboration (October 10). Further, teacher #9 suggested, “planning with my team mates” as a benefit of collaboration (December 15). Additionally, teacher #6 echoed, “going over the new ELD template together” (August 26) and teacher #8 maintained, “being able to talk out lesson ideas and prepare resources” (October 10) demonstrated the level of collaboration that took place in the CoP sessions.

CoP members indicated facilitative leadership support was evident and important in the professional development provided by the leadership team. Following each session, CoP members were asked to share what they would like the next session to focus on, as well as what additional training they felt would be beneficial. After requesting further training on sequential processing, teacher #5 shared, “The training on sequential processing was helpful, too, as it cleared up some things I was doing wrong” (October 7). Following a requested training on the use of the grammar walls and instruction on the different verb tenses, teacher

#8 sent feedback that she felt that she had a “better understanding of the grammar wall, verb tense, and concept charts” (November 9). In the same feedback, the teacher felt comfortable in requesting a further discussion at the next CoP session about how “... teachers are connecting DSI or what is guiding their planning with choosing what DSI skill to use” (November 9) thus demonstrating that the CoP members drove the focus of its sessions. Finally, the leadership team would bring in appropriate district expertise, which elicited the following comment from teacher #1 who said, “Hearing from Marsha [district language acquisition director] regarding the new ELP Standards was helpful” (December 15). Teacher #5 also offered, “Sharon’s training on multi-sensory grammar was what I needed” (August 26). These comments clearly attest to the fact that CoP members believed the leadership team supported the learning in which they were engaged.

Other comments demonstrated that collectively, a safe learning environment had been developed among the members, including the leadership team. For example, teachers appreciated being able to submit lesson plans to the leadership team as noted in the following comment from teachers #5 who confirmed, “[I was] glad that we can send our lesson plans to be analyzed so we can improve on it” (December 15). A safe, risk-free learning environment was also noted in a session reflection by another member, teacher #3 who said, “I would differ with that. Don’t you remember when...” (November 9), which demonstrated that members felt comfortable to professionally disagree with each other during their discussions. In another instance, affirmation was provided by the leadership team through positive statements such as when the academic

advisor declared, “That’s a celebration! That is huge!” (December 15). Finally, affirmations were made about the CoP, by the principal (October 7), who said, “What I am hearing from the consensus of the group is that unless someone wants to revisit it, and it is always up for discussion, as well as anything else you are needing, we can ...”; which provided encouragement and let the members know that the CoP would focus on the needs of the group.

The theme-related component of clarification came through as a very strong outcome from the CoP sessions. Clarification allowed participants to ask questions, seek input from others and process information with others; to achieve a deeper understanding of a particular topic. Seeking clarification with peers allows for increasing one’s level of understanding of the subject, clearing up misunderstandings, and solidifying a unified interpretation of what is required. As ELD teachers, participants understood they needed to gain a clear understanding of what was required of them to meet the mandates of the ADE SEI instructional model. Members expressed that collaboration between them allowed for continual clarification of those requirements. Clarification was exemplified in comments from teacher #1 who acknowledged, “I would like to see us have a follow-up on... we will probably have more questions on this ... addressing concerns [and] questions is so helpful” (December 15). These comments showed how the CoP valued the opportunities to clarify specific elements in the ADE’s SEI instructional model format. Further, clarification was demonstrated when members were discussing the change in how components needed to be blocked differently for instruction than they had in the previous school year. Interactive

dialogue helped team members determine why they were having difficulty fitting everything in within the four-hour ELD block of instruction. After discussion, teacher #5 verbalized her clarifications by echoing what her team members had shared. Her clarification came through when she acknowledged,

“I was counting writing and grammar together, but now I have to count them separately. That is where I am finding I am going over. I put my grammar and writing back-to-back so they can immediately use what we covered in grammar writing” (November 9).

Such situations provided members with the opportunity to obtain clarification on how to better implement the instructional model in a manner that meets the mandates and maximizes children’s learning.

Because a CoP is formed around a shared-passion, such a group began with a focus and it allowed the members to develop a strong bond with one another. When a group of individuals work closely around a particular goal or focus, spending many hours collaborating, relationships are bound to solidify and grow deeper. After collaborating with each other over a period of time, members in a CoP tend to develop a deeper level of commitment to each other, are willing to support each other, and have a desire for members to succeed.

Such a bond developed between the members of the CoP in this study. Throughout the sessions, members shared ideas and materials freely with each other. Team members offered comments about sharing such as the one provided by teacher #3 who said, “We are all using the same one [main objective] so we have one thing we are working on all week, but we just have to adjust it, with our

sub-objectives, a little each day ...” (August 26). Another example was provided by teacher #1 who noted; “I can send you my template and you can see if you can make it work for you” (November 9). Additionally, teacher #5 offered, “You are welcome to use my book” (November 9).

Lesson planning. *Assertion 2—The CoP focused much of its effort on planning lessons that incorporated ELD requirements and Arizona academic standards.* Lesson planning is a part of a teacher’s everyday responsibility. For regular education teachers, lesson plans include grade specific state standards and objectives that need to be taught using an ongoing continuum based upon student progress. However, for any Arizona teacher serving as an ELD teacher, their lesson plans are more complex to develop and implement. ELD teachers also must follow grade appropriate state standards, district objectives and district pacing guides. Additionally, ELD teachers are required to include the specific components mandated in ADE’s SEI model, including the compulsory time allocations associated with each component, while incorporating the ELP standards. The specificity required in developing lesson plans that met ADE requirements quickly made lesson planning a key part of every CoP session and resulted in a dominating theme, which appeared throughout the qualitative data.

Lesson Planning was something on which the CoP members chose to work each session. They consistently shared that they valued the time to collectively plan lessons. Together, they talked about the different components that they needed to include in their plans, helped each other in documenting the compulsory minutes for these components and shared instructional ideas. Jointly,

they strategized how to integrate ELP standards, Arizona academic standards, and district objectives, while planning to meet the suggested pacing guide provided by the district.

During CoP sessions, members communicated what was specifically helpful for them that day. In fact, during her feedback about the September 6 CoP session, teacher #3 concluded, “Please make sure we have time to lesson plan (sic) together. It is one of the best things about our CoP sessions!” Additionally, teacher #7 shared, “lesson planning together with her teammates” was beneficial and allowed her to “refine her lesson plans” (September 9). Similarly, teacher #2 expressed how planning lessons together was beneficial when she said, “collaborate on ideas for upcoming lessons” (October 10). Moreover, at the same session, teacher #3 expressed how collaborating on lesson planning helped her “walk away with so much accomplished and some great new resources to use.”

So, exactly what did the teachers find helpful about collaboratively planning together? As the analysis of the qualitative data progressed, it became increasingly clear an aspect of lesson planning teachers appreciated was the planning related to the compulsory instructional minutes that ELD teachers must assign to each one of the five state-mandated components: reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and oral English conversation. As ELD teachers, the members of this CoP were required to design their lesson plans to include the state-mandated instructional components and amounts of time associated with those components, which were to be taught within a daily four-hour instructional block.

In discussing lesson planning, teacher #6 expressed, “sharing what we were doing in our blocks” was helpful (August 26). Similarly, teacher #2 related the benefit of the CoP session was, “team planning time and finding resources” (September 9). Teacher #5 stated she appreciated, “looking at sample lesson plans” (October 10) to help organize her lesson plans. Similarly, teacher #6 observed, “talking things out with my ELD team” (December 15) benefitted her in the development of daily and weekly lesson plans. Additionally, as the cooperative planning on ELD and instructional minutes increased, the group planning enabled the members to block out the five mandated components more efficiently. For example, teachers #7, #8, and #9 engaged in cooperative planning efforts during the last CoP session. The beneficial results of this enterprise were reflected clearly when teacher #9 excitedly shared that their lesson plans were developed “through the end of January” (December 15).

Implementation of grammar and the integration of the DSI, which is the ADE tool to be used to guide the teacher’s grammar instruction in a sequential manner, was the component that provided the most challenge for the members of the CoP. Throughout the study, teachers reiterated the challenges that they were experiencing with grammar instruction and the desire for additional training in this area. Teacher #6 openly expressed a need for additional “grammar and verb tense resources” (August 26). This request was reiterated at the same session by teacher #4 who also requested, “grammar resources and resources for individual ELD classes” (August 26). Moreover, other CoP members expressed similar needs for support in grammar instruction as noted in teacher #7’s comments

when she avowed, “DSI and objectives [were her] long-term goals” for the year (September 9).

As a result, additional training in these areas was provided. After CoP members identified their need for additional training, multi-sensory grammar instruction and sequential processing training were offered. According to teacher #1 these sessions were helpful when she shared she was “more comfortable with adding DSI/ELP components” (December 15). Similarly, teacher #8 affirmed, “[she was] more comfortable since the multi-sensory grammar training” (December 15).

A third theme-related component was how the required instructional minutes of ADE’s SEI model of instruction affected instruction in the content areas, specifically mathematics. The data for this component were particularly evident in the last two CoP sessions, November 9 and December 15. Consistent with the SEI instructional model, ELD students must be engaged in a four-hour, language-rich instructional block with the goal being acquiring the English language as rapidly as possible. When the members of the CoP accounted for the four hours of language instruction, forty minutes for their students’ special area class (music, art or physical education), forty minute lunch and recess time, and a morning and afternoon restroom break, the team found that math needed to be reduced from our traditional ninety minute block to sixty minutes, leaving only ten minutes for attendance, using the restrooms and dismissal. Therefore, the team identified a need to share ideas on how to integrate the additional content areas throughout their instructional day. Along with adjusting their ELD blocks,

sequential processing was introduced by the district; thus adding an additional new thing to incorporate. The ideal timeframe for implementing the procedure would be thirty minutes per day, but because it was a new process for teachers, implementation was taking, on average, between forty-five minutes to an hour, depending on the individual teacher's rate of learning. Although we, as a CoP, could see the value of sequential processing, especially to the grammar component of the ELD framework, it still required additional training, planning and practice.

A final theme-related lesson planning component that recurred throughout the study was understanding how to meet the mandates of implementing the ELP standards while providing instruction of the grade-specific AZ state standards. The ELP standards focus heavily on language skills and emphasize the areas of reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary. These same language areas are a part of the AZ standards, but, within an ELD classroom, children are engaged in learning the language skills that are aligned with their language levels and not grade-level language requirements. Within an ELD classroom, the compulsory four-hour language instructional block takes precedent, leaving the remaining hour of instruction for grade-level teaching of mathematics, social studies and science content. Additionally, although it has been made clear that the primary responsibility of the ELD teacher is to teach the ELP standards, the teacher and students are held accountable for mastering their specific grade level standards on the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) tests, which is used by the

state to measure achievement with respect to the standards and to determine Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation.

In their commitment to provide rich instruction to meet the ELP standards and the grade-level academic standards, the members of the CoP held many discussions about how to attain this difficult balance. Teachers concerns about achieving this balance are captured in a comment from teacher #2 who referred to this predicament as a “Catch 22” (December 15). Again these concerns are reflected in an exchange between two CoP members, teacher #1 and teacher #2. Teacher #2 declared, “[I will] teach the grade level concepts, but I will do it in a scaffolded manner; using instructional level materials to teach the objectives” (December 15). In this same exchange, teacher #1 indicated her continuing concerns when she stated, “I know what needs to be included, but I am having trouble aligning grade-level standards and benchmarks at a pace that matches the language ability of my students” (December 15).

Consistent with their colleagues’ discussion, two of the members exchanged ideas on how to better align the demands of ADE’s SEI instructional model with the state academic standards and district objectives. In particular, while planning together, teacher #5 inquired of teacher #6, “The standards say that we are to have sixteen words learned. How is that possible?” (September 6). In her response, teacher #6 pointed out, “The district tells us ten words a week will get us to the three hundred some words by the end of the year.” Another teacher, teacher #3 offered, “Lesson planning and being able to talk out

challenges I am having fitting everything in” (October 1) was useful in helping her to weave the two sets of standards together in her instruction.

Changes and challenges. *Assertion 3—The CoP sessions provided a means to identify changes and challenges being experienced and the opportunity to solve these problems together.* Analysis of the qualitative data suggested a third theme of changes and challenges. With any new process, there is a natural learning curve for those who are implementing it. CoP members continued to struggle with structuring the four-hour ELD SEI instructional model and continued to refine lesson plans to meet ADE monitoring mandates. Throughout the study, the ELD teachers frequently exhibited frustration and stress with the excessive hours it was taking to write their ELD lesson plans, which adversely affected their time for gathering resources to teach those planned lessons. Additionally, during the study, the lesson plan template was changed by the ADE and, during the last CoP session for this study the teachers were introduced to the new ELP Standards; both of which added to their concerns. The group worked on processing these changes and challenges together and collectively engaged in problem solving behaviors to decrease or find remedies for these challenges and changes.

As noted earlier, participating ELD teachers found it challenging to deliver the required four hours of ELD instruction while also providing the students with appropriate content to meet the Arizona academic standards. They struggled because they were going over the required minutes due to high student engagement in language development, yet they lacked time for core content, such

as mathematics and science. Additionally, prior to this year, the teachers were able to weave the ELD component minute requirements throughout the day. However, beginning in the fall of 2010, reading, grammar, vocabulary and writing had to be provided during separate blocks of instruction. This change required CoP members to rethink how to plan, how to provide sixty minutes of isolated grammar instruction, and how to provide sufficient instruction in the content areas.

During an early CoP session, teacher #4 shared “[I am still] having trouble fitting everything in” (September 9). This sentiment was also expressed in other CoP sessions. For example, teacher #6 exclaimed, “[I] needed more help in figuring out how to fit everything in ... [and that I was] having a hard time fitting in guided reading let alone math!” (October 10). Teacher #6’s comments from the last CoP session also illustrate these challenges when she stated, “Another thing we have to figure out is this extra 40 minutes of conversation whereas last year it was 15 minutes. Of course we are speaking all day, but now there are 40 minutes that were taken away” (December 15). Teacher #5’s response to this statement indicated, “We were using that time last year to finish up our guided reading but now that time is taken away from us” (December 15). This discussion expanded with teacher #4 calling attention to her challenges when she noted, “I was counting writing and grammar together, but now, when I have to count them separately, that is where I think I am going over [the allotted time]” (December 15).

The discussions surrounding the challenges in successfully blocking out the four hour language block of instruction led participating ELD teachers to reflect on how they felt the constraints on their instructional minutes not only affected them, but adversely affected the students. Teacher #5 avowed, “I feel bad[ly] because they are little and we are [going] non-stop with them all day long” (December 15). Half-jokingly, teacher #6 sardonically added, “Okay kids, stop doing this, put all your papers away... we have to finish it because I have run out of my allocated time!” (December 15). Sadly, teacher #5 quoted one of her first grade students as saying to her, ““he was under a lot of pressure”” (December 15). Although teachers were exchanging both earnest and sarcastic comments regarding the challenges they were experiencing in terms of including all components into their instructional day, this same group of individuals worked diligently throughout the remainder of the December 15 CoP session. They examined each other’s plans and provided feedback that would better enable them to meet the instructional demands. Teacher #1 assisted teacher #5 in meeting required minutes in a collegial dialogue in which teacher #5 expressed, “I need to figure out this extra 40 minutes of conversation whereas last year it was only 15 minutes.” Teacher #1 then offered how she used *Moving into English* which was the adopted reading curriculum for ELD classrooms, and that it helped her incorporate those extra minutes. A similar exchange took place during the same CoP session when teacher # 5 noted, “I also wonder about vocabulary. The objectives don’t match. I don’t know about you guys, but I don’t have time to do academic vocabulary.” In a supportive response, teacher #3 suggested to her

colleague and fellow CoP members, that “I am doing “it” (academic vocabulary) during comprehension” (December 15). Such exchanges became the norm throughout the session while teachers were planning lessons collaboratively.

Given the depth and detail required in the revised ELD lesson plans, an additional challenge teachers encountered was the length of time it took to plan their lessons. This component was common to all CoP sessions. Depending on the teacher, planning lessons on the provided lesson plan template took between six and nine hours a week, and that total did not include the time needed for gathering the resources needed to implement the lesson plans they had developed.

When reflecting on the amount of time it was taking to plan, teacher #9 indicated, “it was up to eight hours on Sunday” (August 26). In the same session, teacher #6 retorted, “I don’t think anybody has a clue as to the amount of time that people had to take to do the lesson planning that we have had to do” (August 26). As the CoP sessions progressed and members were provided time to collaborate and collectively create shared plans, teachers indicated the amount of time had been reduced. For teacher #9, who acknowledged, in August, that planning took her eight hours, lesson planning had been decreased to approximately “three hours” a week (December 15). Teacher #3 shared with the group members that she had refined her planning to the point where it was now taking her “three hours on Sunday” (December 15). Although her planning time had decreased, she used more time during the remainder of the week as she concluded, “it was still taking over five hours and that didn’t include gathering the necessary resources” (December 15).

From the beginning session to the last one, the ELD teachers were sharing that their frustration in lesson planning extended to effectively only being able to start with the first part of the week planned so they could adjust the remainder of the week's plans based on the progress students made on the first two days' objectives. In discussing this matter, teacher #4 affirmed, "[I] couldn't get a whole week lesson plan. I need to go day-to-day as the needs of my students change" (December 15).

Compounding the frustration surrounding lesson planning was the use of multiple lesson templates that had been provided by the district's language acquisition director. The intention behind the templates was to ensure that all the ELD components have been accounted for and to standardize plans.

Nevertheless, the degree to which templates were helpful varied based on the visual, learning and organizational styles of the teachers. Teacher #2 expressed, "[the new template] simply does not work for me" (September 9). During the same session, teachers #5 and #6 indicated the same template that was frustrating teacher #2, was actually allowing them to complete planning more quickly. In fact, teacher #5 proclaimed, "The lesson plan template we received has helped us cut down the time we spend planning" (September 9). To meet the different needs within the group, teachers #1 and #2 created a lesson template organized in a different format, which teacher #2 used and she indicated, "[it] made more sense to me" (September 9).

The most recent challenge for this ELD CoP is becoming comfortable with the new ELP standards to be implemented beginning in the fall of 2011. The

final study session focused on these new standards during which the district's language acquisition director provided the team with individual copies and a presentation on the new ELP standards. The goal of introducing them at this time was to provide participants time to (a) review the document, (b) become familiar with similarities and changes, and (c) begin 'playing' with the new standards.

As the December 15 session began, teacher #4 stated, "[I] didn't know we were getting new standards." Throughout the discussion, members asked questions, brought up different concerns and began to analyze the new standards. Teachers #1 and #2 shared a high degree of concern that third- through fifth-grade ELL students had been clustered together for the new language section. This concern about increasing grade-level complexity was reflected as teacher #1 noted, "grade level delineation between third, fourth and fifth grades on the new ELP standards [should have been considered]" (December 15). Teacher #2 supported this comment when she questioned, "Why don't they have third grade with second? I know that this is a state decision, but the fourth- and fifth-grade grammar gets very complex" (December 15).

On the other hand, teacher #6 believed the new standards were going to benefit her as she stated, "[I will have] a better understanding of DSI and what needs to be taught." (December 15). Continuing in this same way, teacher #9 felt the new standards were going to provide clarity for grammar and vocabulary instruction when she indicated, "Grammar and vocabulary was always tricky to place into lesson planning because the vocabulary section was so abstract [and] lacking standards at all for grammar" (December 15). Others in the group

withheld judgment about whether the new standards would be beneficial. This cautious wait-and-see viewpoint was demonstrated by teacher #4 when she acknowledged, “I am going to have to try it first. I need to go into first- and second-grade grammar to start” (December 15). Teacher #5 reiterated similar sentiments when she noted, “It might be. I don’t know yet” (December 15).

Teachers faced a second challenge during the final session: the new lesson plan template was created to be aligned with the new ELP standards and it merged the former grammar and vocabulary components into one component. Although these areas were very similar to the previous template, the action of merging grammar and vocabulary together, on top of having to teach each ELD component separately, created one more, unwanted change for this group of professionals. Nevertheless, teachers were willing to take on the challenge as illustrated in the following comment from teacher #9 who indicated, “going over the template together as a team” was a good approach (December 15).

Despite the different opinions about what the new ELP standards will mean for them, members shared a consensus that being provided the information well ahead of time was greatly appreciated. Teacher #1 uttered her appreciation when she declared, “It was very helpful to get the new ELP standards and start using them to plan. It is better to ease into it and take some time to understand them before they fully come into effect” (December 15). Additionally, teacher #6 related “[I was] so glad that we got the ELP standards before we went to break. Today (sic), let us look at them, ask questions, and explore them” (December 15). Similar statements of appreciation followed as reflected in the comments of

teacher #9 who said, “Seeing [that] the new ELP standards are more concise and integrate more of the AZ standards [is helpful]” (December 15). Similarly, teacher #8 indicated seeing the “new standards, especially before break and when looking at January planning” (December 15) was especially advantageous for her. A final benefit of having an advanced preview of the new ELP standards was related in teacher #3’s proclamation when she acknowledged, “being able to see the standards helped to ease the stress level of having new standards in the middle of a school year” (December 15).

Efficacy. *Assertion 4—Teachers indicated they felt more efficacious due to the CoP group and professional development sessions.* The final theme emerging from the qualitative data was efficacy, which was the focus of this study. In general, efficacy means the perception of being able to affect something in a particular way, to engage in an action that results in a specific outcome. In the context of this study, efficacy would be the extent to which teachers believed they could implement the SEI instruction model and conduct appropriate ELD instruction using ELD and DSI approaches. Moreover, in the present context the issue is whether the series of CoP meetings provided learning experiences that enabled its members to feel more efficacious in their ability to successfully teach using the ELD framework. Three theme-related components of efficacy surfaced in the qualitative data: (a) teachers developed a better understanding and command of the ADE’s ELD instructional model, (b) they believed they had become stronger ELD teachers, and (c) participants increased their confidence in understanding the requirements for being an ELD teacher.

With any new instructional framework, there is a learning curve that must be overcome before one has a solid understanding of its implementation. Mastering the ADE SEI instructional model was no different. In fact, the complexity and multiple revisions extended the learning curve for the CoP members. Nevertheless, the CoP members came to a greater understanding of the different instructional components within the instructional model. They continually refined their ability to appropriately teach those components as well as determining how to best use the compulsory minutes associated with each component. As they conducted their efforts, they became more competent in (a) threading the Discrete Inventory Skills (DSI) throughout their instruction, (b) developing lesson plans, and (c) implementing the ELP standards and differentiating them simultaneously for the different levels of English development their students exhibited. Additionally, teachers became more capable in using the Arizona grade-level academic standards as the conduit by which to teach the ELP standards. Through these efforts, they ensured students were strengthening their language development and concurrently providing their students with content appropriate to the academic standards.

When members of this CoP began working together, they were at the very early learning stages with respect to understanding the ADE's SEI instructional model and how to plan and implement this instructional framework. As a result, we collectively learned about the five components in the instructional model. These included reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar and conversation. Additionally, the model prescribed the number of daily instructional minutes for

each of those components and that instruction had to incorporate the ADE's ELP standards. Taken together, this was a substantial amount of new information and it was also complex in nature.

The qualitative data indicated there was an increase in the depth of understanding the instructional aspects of the model, which was supported in comments such as the one offered by teacher # 9 when she shared, "I think I do have a stronger ELD foundation partly due to the CoP sessions because we have been able to bounce ideas around and brainstorm as a group on how to 'fix' problems or answer questions that we have" (December 15). During the final session for this study, teacher #2 recognized that she needed to improve her work when she stated, "[I am] a bit shaky because of the amount of changes and gear shifts," but she saw the framework as "more defined, which was helpful" (December 15).

Additionally, in a follow-up meeting with the district's language acquisition director who was also a frequent participant in the CoP sessions, she acknowledged, "The CoP sessions provided the participants with the interpersonal support and synergy necessary for effectively implementing the ELD instructional model" (January 4, 2011). She suggested teacher efficacy increased with these specific teachers because CoP sessions provided, "time to deepen learning (sic), and process new ways of thinking and self-reflection" (January 4, 2011).

Although the data corroborated the increase in teacher efficacy towards implementing the ADE SEI instructional model, it also supported the need for the CoP to continue to meet. This need became obvious based on teacher feedback

such as that provided by teacher #4 who suggested, “[I am] more familiar with the ELD model”, but she was “still not completely comfortable” (December 15).

Not only did the CoP members speak of gaining a better understanding of the requirements in the instructional framework, the qualitative data suggested teachers attained greater self-efficacy for the different components of the program. This outcome was achieved because professional development was provided in multi-disciplinary grammar instruction, sequential processing and other instructional strategies for these specific components during the CoP sessions. Through such training, follow-up discussion and implementation, CoP members expressed a better understanding of these five components. Following the October 10 session, which focused on grammar and DSI instruction, teacher #3 recounted, “I have a better understanding of the grammar wall, verb-tense, and concept charts.” Further, teacher #6 affirmed, “[I am] more confident in utilizing DSI and integrating it into reading and writing components” (October 10). Additionally, teacher #6 supported this contention when she noted, “discussing phonograms and the need for differentiation” was helpful for her grammar instruction component (December 15).

Finally, because half of each CoP session was spent on collaborative lesson planning, comments about lesson planning were present throughout all conversations. This is also true for the efficacy theme. When linking lesson planning to this particular theme, it must be noted that lesson format and length of time drastically changed when these ELD teachers implemented the ADE SEI instructional model. The format of their lesson plans became much more

complicated and, as a result, took many more hours to plan than what was required for a regular education classroom.

At the last CoP session, teachers expressed they were more efficacious when it came to lesson planning. However, this capability did not develop quickly. This progression of growth was exemplified in the September 9 CoP session when teacher #8 declared, “each attempt, meeting and training helps me better learn how planning should be organized. I have a clearer focus and direction for my planning.” Another teacher, teacher # 6 stated, “I feel like I know what is needed in a lesson plan, but it still takes me awhile to ensure all the parts are in my lesson plans” (September 9). This feeling of being more effectual in their planning is illustrated when teacher #7 shared, at the December 15 CoP session,

“I do feel like I have a better understanding of the ELP standards and how to put my lesson plans together.”

Finally, the increase in teachers’ efficacy was also noticed by the language acquisition director. She identified the increased efficacy when she acknowledged, “During the initial PLC sessions, teachers were including required ELD components into their plans because it was state mandated. Now, they’re incorporating in their lesson planning and teaching ELD strategies and resources because they know they work” (January 4, 2011).

The second theme-related component suggested participating members felt that they had become stronger ELD teachers. As teacher #1 affirmed, “I feel stronger as an ELD teacher because the collaboration with others has been

helpful. I've learned a lot from other ELD teachers across grades and when only meeting with third grade I wouldn't have had this opportunity" (December 15). Supporting her colleague's statement about being more efficacious as an ELD teacher, teacher 5 added, "I feel I have a much stronger ELD foundation because of our COP sessions. The time to collaborate and just think together was great." This same teacher also shared, "Without our CoP days, I think I would have felt much more frustrated, and overwhelmed. CoP days let us take time to really understand" (December 15).

Moreover, observations from the ELD Observational Protocol tool indicated that this group of ELD teachers were, in fact, more effective in their instructional delivery with data collection showing growth from the pre- to post-intervention observations conducted by the school's leadership team who were members of the CoP.

With respect to the protocol's description, "providing clear directions, meaningful examples, graphic organizers and other supplementary materials to make the lesson comprehensible," all nine teachers showed growth. Indicators for this growth were that the teacher was providing clear directions and utilized simultaneous multisensory strategies. By December, teacher #1 and #2 were infusing science instruction into their ELP standards instruction incorporating hands-on, inquiry-based activities for their students. Teachers #7, #8, and #9 were observed successfully implementing sequential processing, which requires listening, speaking and writing throughout the process. Teachers #5 and #6 had students using anchor charts to develop solid sentence formation and paragraph

building. The teachers also increased their use of modeling, having students speak at least fifty percent of the time and maintain 90—100% active engagement of their students.

In reflecting on their personal growth, teacher #5 discussed with her colleagues how she was making strides in implementing sequential processing instruction. At the onset of school, she shared with her ELD associates that it was taking her “approximately forty-five minutes to an hour to go through the entire process” (August 26) when teaching sequential processing to her students.” By comparison, at the last CoP session, she freely expressed, “I noticed that at the beginning, it would be an hour and a half. Now, the kids know the behaviors and process and it is becoming more automatic” (December 15). Further, teacher # 7 enthusiastically declared, “We have come a long way together! It doesn’t mean that we still don’t get frustrated, but at least we know we have the opportunity to express our frustrations and then problem solve (sic) together” (December 15). Other sentiments that support growth in their efficacy in implementing the ADE SEI instructional model were shared by teacher # 7 who confirmed, “I am not feeling so overwhelmed. I feel we as teachers, are moving along together and being very helpful to each other” (December 15). This teacher added, “I have learned a lot from other ELD teachers across grades.” Finally, the depth of the efficacy developed among the nine participating ELD teachers was summarized by our language acquisition director when she stated that this group of professionals; “are able to share success stories, lesson plans, and volunteer to be

videotaped to help support the rest of the group. They have assumed the role of leaders and advocates for the ELD program” (January 4, 2011).

Chapter 5 Discussion

The discussion is composed of three major sections: lessons learned from the action research project, implications for practice, and implications for research.

Lessons Learned

As we initiated our CoP work, the collective goal for our group was to develop a better understanding of the ADE's SEI instructional model and how to implement it with integrity and in a manner which would best meet the needs of our students. When we began meeting, we had neither an understanding of the instructional framework nor a sense of understanding how to implement it in the classroom. Nevertheless, the members of this CoP were committed to acquiring the knowledge and skills that would enable them to become more effective in implementing this instructional framework. Based on our efforts as a CoP, four themes; collaboration, lesson planning, changes and challenges, and efficacy, are woven throughout the sessions.

As a result of our work in the CoP five lessons have been learned. The first lesson pertains to how a Community of Practice can positively affect efficacy, one of the research questions. Efficacy refers to how effectively one perceives she can engage in a particular action to achieve some end. For the purpose of this study, efficacy was examined with respect to how the nine participating ELD teachers perceived their efficacy of being an ELD teacher.

Collaboration appears to be a major contributing factor in teachers becoming more efficacious in being an ELD teacher and implementing the ADE

SEI instructional model. Consistent with the tenets of CoP, individuals come together around a common passion and collectively develop a deeper understanding of their work. Throughout each session, participating ELD teachers indicate working together helps them gain a better understanding of ELD practices. Further, when they experience an area that causes concerns or challenges, the CoP provides opportunities to express those concerns as well as a means to clarify or learn the particular skills that are needed to resolve the concerns. With that said, it is clear that collaboration is critical in building new knowledge and confidence among CoP members. Collaboration creates a community that comes together and shares the workload, helps others work through challenges and provides a place of support and encouragement for each other.

A second component responsible for increasing efficacy is that the CoP framework also creates a risk-free learning environment in which members can openly express areas of concern, seek input from fellow members, and share the workload. A safe place is a place to share concerns regarding the central focus for which the CoP is created, moving from simply identifying challenges to solving problems. For this study, the risk-free environment makes it a comfortable place for the ELD teachers to come together and help others understand and refine their ELD instruction; subsequently increasing their efficacy about being effective ELD teachers.

An additional lesson that I learned is how a CoP has the propensity to develop shared leadership. As the group's sessions continue, members interact

with others and help others digest a continual flow of ever-changing information. Interactions with others become more fluid and collectively, participants contribute to others' successes. Further, a CoP provides its members with a place to share stories and interject humor, which evokes levity and fosters encouragement for others. CoP members become more efficacious through shared leadership because this framework allows different members to take turns in taking the lead. Participants feel comfortable with others stepping into the lead, which is often done in a natural and voluntary way. Shared leadership brings strength to a group and provides value to the focus of the CoP. Individuals share their strengths at appropriate times and as a result members build upon others' strengths and the collective knowledge of the group.

A second lesson learned is with respect to time. As a leader, I also experienced how challenging and critical the role of time is to the success of a CoP. There are times when CoP sessions are scheduled, but, due to various situations such as an inadequate number of substitute teachers, unexpected emergency situations, or an unexpected, district scheduled professional development day, are interrupted or cancelled. However, when such circumstances arise, the shared leadership has even greater value. When I, as the principal on the campus, would get called out due to an emergency, the group would continue on without me. The CoP can still function successfully because it is organized around shared leadership. No single person is in charge and members work collaboratively to overcome obstacles. As the commitment within a CoP grows, time constraints are easily adjusted through rescheduling, meeting outside

of school, and so forth. As a team, the CoP collectively addresses time constraints and interruptions and works around them.

Additionally, in regard to time, I learned it is important to align the CoP sessions with the school district's calendar. By strategically placing sessions throughout the year, teachers' long-range planning opportunities are maximized among the members. Moreover, the sessions can coincide with additional professional development opportunities so further application of the newly learned information can be incorporated into planning lessons. When scheduling CoP sessions, avoid district or state assessments and the end of grading periods, and times when a teacher is out of the classroom to attend another professional development opportunity. Finally, consideration must also be given to arranging sessions on our campus so they did not conflict with district training. Double scheduling causes difficulties in arranging guest teachers and it also takes the teacher out of the classroom too many days, which can adversely affect student learning.

In conjunction with time considerations, allowing the CoP to determine time allocated to content and other topics is crucial. This CoP would collaboratively discuss and select the professional development they need for the upcoming session. They also request that half of the session's time be spent collaboratively writing lesson plans. In honoring this request and devising an appropriate session structure, the quantitative and qualitative data clearly attest to teachers' satisfaction with allocation of time to planning lessons. The qualitative data support how this allocation of time leads to an increase in members' efficacy

in lesson planning and grammar instructional strategies as a result of our CoP sessions. Taken together, the data suggest allocating time for the identified needs will provide a beneficial outcome for the CoP

As I reflect on the benefits that this action research project, I see how it benefitted the CoP, the district, and me, professionally, as the leader of the campus. From the standpoint of the participating ELD teachers and the CoP, teachers grow from having a very limited knowledge-base of the ADE SEI instruction model to gaining both confidence and knowledge in implementing this model. Teachers who initially operate as individuals develop a very tight bond with others. They are willing to help others in whatever ways they can. I also saw members' angst decline as their knowledge level increased due to the collaboration that took place during sessions. Finally, teachers begin to work outside of the sessions in lesson planning, trouble shooting challenges they were encountering , helping each other locate resources, and forming smaller CoPs within the larger CoP.

An unexpected lesson I learned through this study was how a CoP not only can influence its members, but also can have far-reaching effects on others as well. Because a variety of district-level staff would join us to provide training, take part in our discussions, or simply see how our group was working together, our CoP's influence spilled over to district staff and ELD teachers. Due to the work of our CoP, members become confident participants and encourage other ELD teachers at district-level trainings. The same teachers share multiple instructional tools they mutually develop with our district's language acquisition

director and academic advisors who then, in turn, share them with ELD teachers across the district. Finally, due to working with our members and seeing their progress, many CoP members have been selected to be videotaped while teaching, and these videotapes are now being used as models of sound ELD instruction. Therefore, not only can a CoP positively affect its members' sense of self-efficacy, it can have additional, more far-reaching influence if its members are willing to share what they learn and create together.

Finally, this study has helped me grow as a leader. The processes and findings reinforce my previous beliefs about tapping into the talent and leadership of others to advance student achievement. It also shows me how collaborative efforts that focus on a collective goal, in a shared-leadership model, can create deeper relationships among the members and increase trust. Such a framework also helps to sharpen my skills in active listening, increase my conviction about the importance of actively engaging teachers in resolving issues on a campus and highlights the importance of providing time for such collaboration to take place during the school day.

This study also provided me a framework with which to approach similar situations in the future. The framework provides a method for leading staff through additional innovations and change we are likely to experience in the future. The CoP model teaches how to facilitate the efforts of a group of professionals to collaboratively seek solutions to a significant challenge. This forum also enables me to provide a group of professionals a structure for focused training in which they could immediately apply what they learn to their planning.

As I reflect on the two research questions for which I was seeking answers with respect to the depth of learning, I can confidently say that the answer to both questions is yes! Yes, the implementation of a CoP has a positive influence on the participating ELD teachers' efficacy towards teaching ELD content and students. And yes, our CoP has a positive influence on the way the teachers planned and teach ELD content and assess ELD students.

Implications for Practice

Although we initially came together as individuals separately tackling the same problem, CoP sessions quickly change the approach to a collaborative one. Members could see that others are experiencing similar challenges and that they can work together to overcome those obstacles. Based on observing strong teamwork, one implication is the potential to successfully apply the CoP framework to a variety of scenarios. For this particular study, the CoP framework help its members unwrap the ADE SEI instructional model and align their instructional endeavors in response to its mandates. Nevertheless, there is great potential for using this same framework and its processes to help staff learn any new curriculum, work with a community group to identify and resolve specific concerns, or in a multitude of other scenarios in which people come together around something about which they are passionate and work collaboratively towards the goals they establish.

In addition to seeing how a CoP can develop a cohesive, collaborative group of individuals that focuses on a particular goal, I also add that by involving a variety of individuals within its membership, a CoP has the potential to

influence its members as well as having broader influences on individuals and groups outside of the CoP. That is clear when we see the framework we are using began being emulated at other schools in the district. Moreover, its members have the opportunity to model instruction, share the instructional tools they collaboratively create and serve as supports for other district teachers who are building similar bridges as they implement the ADE model in their classrooms.

Another inference with respect to practice is the members of the CoP should determine the frequency and duration of the CoP meetings. As the study progressed, CoP members began to suggest that meeting more often would serve their needs better. When this decision making power is vested in the CoP, members are more likely to commit to the CoP, share valuable information, and benefit from its efforts.

Participants indicate a desire to continue meeting as a CoP. Taken together with the findings from our CoP sessions, it is important to examine the CoP and its actions as we move to our next round of action research. To begin, members suggest that meeting for four hours, on a more frequent basis, would be more productive for them than meeting less often for a full-day. Participants suggest that more frequent sessions would allow for more effective planning of lessons. Further, they also conclude they would be able to respond to students' needs more effectively because the data would be current. Moreover, it would be prudent for to provide members with time allocated to collaboratively plan lessons and to adjust the schedule to meet their recommendation for shorter, more frequent sessions. This is going to be especially critical during the Fall of 2011

because ELD teachers will be required to implement the new ELD standards and they will also be required to use a different coding system in their lesson plans. Just like anything new, there will be a learning curve with this change and mutual support will be critical to ensure the new standards and coding are being integrated into the lesson plans. Moreover, continued collaboration will be essential for maintaining the newly developed levels of efficacy for being an ELD teacher that have grown in this group.

A personal implication this study provides is reinforcement of my beliefs about the power of collaboration and the affect it can have on a school setting. Throughout this study, no single individual has all the right answers, but collectively we are able to accomplish our goal of developing a better understanding of the ADE's SEI instructional model as well as making it work for our students. Allowing the CoP members to determine their needs for each session made the time we spend together relevant and helps develop a set of common goals.

Although the study went very well, several challenges did arise. One challenge is the unexpected interruptions that can take place within the day-to-day life of a school. We had several occasions when I was taken away from a session. Although I missed a portion of the time, the benefits of a CoP really became evident on those days. Because a CoP is collectively driven and does not depend on just one person, the team carried on and I simply rejoined when I was able to do so. Therefore, in looking at implications these typical interruptions can have on the effectiveness of a CoP, I would advocate for establishing a flexible philosophy

among the members. This would include a discussion at the onset of the CoP about how to handle unexpected interruptions to the flow of the sessions and how the members would handle them.

Implications for Research

As this round of research comes to a close, it is imperative to analyze the effects this innovation has on the CoP members and how that will guide the next phase of our learning together. Additionally, it will be critical to assess the influence our collaboration has on ELD students' learning. Both qualitative and quantitative data show that through their participation CoP members increase their sense of efficacy as ELD teachers. This increase in efficacy is due to participants who (a) develop a better understanding of the ADE's SEI instructional model and its components, (b) collaboratively develop lesson plans that met all the mandates issued by ADE, (c) increase their knowledge through professional development, and (d) attack changes and challenges together.

There is a need to analyze the delivery of the lesson plans that are being collaboratively developed. This could be accomplished in several ways. For example, one effective approach would be providing more opportunities for members to observe others' instruction. In addition to observation of others' instruction, peers could provide others with constructive feedback following the observation. Then teachers could adjust the lesson based on the feedback, re-teach the lesson, and then return to discuss any positive outcomes resulting from the modifications. Such actions would be a logical extension in our next round of action research arising from our previous CoP sessions in which CoP members

established close bonds among the members. Thus, constructive feedback could be received in a non-threatening manner from familiar, caring peers. Additionally, equipping CoP members with the same observational rubric that is used by the ADE ELD monitoring team would be beneficial because members can refine their practices as well as ensure that they prepare for any visit from the monitoring team.

Along with observing others' instructional delivery, another modification that could be added to the next round of action research with this group of professionals is taking what we have learned together and studying how this work is making a difference in ELD student learning. Together, we would utilize a student growth model, specifically in the area of reading, to determine the effectiveness of instruction. As a group, specific lessons could be developed that focus on intensive, small group instruction that meets the needs of homogeneous groups of students within the classroom. Utilizing the existing district's instrument of Running Records, we could monitor student growth, collectively determine effective instructional strategies for specific needs and monitor how effective the specific instructional strategies are in supporting growth in students' reading. To blend our work effectively, peer observations could be conducted on these specific small group lessons, thus keeping our group's focus tight.

I would propose that we develop a research question that encompasses both instruction and student learning. Therefore, the research question I suggest that we explore in our next round of action research would be as follows:

- How does a Community of Practice affect ELD teacher instruction and student learning?

Conclusion

In reflecting on what the CoP means to the participants, Marsha Castillo, the language acquisition director for the district, summarizes what has happened among the members of this community of practitioners. In an email she sent on January 4, 2011, Ms. Castillo acknowledges, “the teachers are able to share their success stories, lesson plans, and volunteer to be videotaped to help support the rest of the ELD teachers.” Further, she explains that the teachers of the CoP have “assumed the role of leaders and advocates for the EL program”, concluding that I should be “proud of your [my] teachers!”

In all the data associated with this study, as well as personal experience and observation, it was clear that the criteria Wenger (1998) suggests for establishment of a CoP are achieved. Its members support each other, learn together and help each other become more efficacious in regards to being an ELD teacher. The sessions allow CoP members to share the challenges they are experiencing as well collaboratively working in developing resolutions to those challenges. Together, we are able to learn new strategies in areas such as grammar and writing, continue to refine planning of lessons and engage in some very difficult conversations related to ELD instruction. Sessions have focus and structure that allow for the development of deeper relationships, both professional and personal. Members of the CoP also expand collaboration and meet at other times during the school day as well as outside on their personal time. The work of

the study clearly supports the fact participating members saw value in others and drew upon others for increasing their knowledge and sense of confidence. This sense of purpose and alliance with each other continues despite the study coming to an end. Together, they continue to build a supportive community in which they are taking ownership of their professional development, learning and changing what is taking place in ELD classrooms across our campus.

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APPENDIX A
PRE/POST QUESTIONNAIRE

<i>How confident are you in ...</i>		A great deal	Some	Very Little	Not at all
1	...creating lesson plans that incorporate the required number of minutes in Oral Language and Conversation (one hour), Grammar (one hour), Writing (one hour), and Reading (one hour) required in the AZ ELD Instructional Model? L.P.	1	2	3	4
2	...understanding what the Discrete Inventory Skills are (DSI)? DSI	1	2	3	4
3	... preparing for your ELD students to participate in academic conversations? L.P.	1	2	3	4
4	... utilizing the Arizona State Standards as the vehicle for teaching the English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards? ELP/AZ S.	1	2	3	4
5	... knowing how to differentiate DSI instruction as your ELD students' progress in their language development? DSI	1	2	3	4
6	... preparing lessons which have your students actively engaged in the mandated components of the ELD Model of Instruction? L.P.	1	2	3	4
7	... identifying which ELP Standards incorporate the Arizona State Standards? ELP/AZ S.	1	2	3	4
8	... that you plan objectives which include learner evidence in order to assess student growth in the four mandated components of the ELD Instructional Model? LP	1	2	3	4
9	... that within this year, can prepare your ELD students to succeed in both the ELP Standards and the appropriate grade level Arizona State Standards in your class to take state-mandated, standardized achievement tests? ELP/AZ S	1	2	3	4
10	... being able to identify which level of DSI instruction is appropriate, under each category, for individual students and provide differentiated DSI instruction that meets their needs. DSI	1	2	3	4
11	...incorporating instructional techniques for your ELD students that your district and Arizona Department of Education want you to implement? LP	1	2	3	4
12	... that I have adequate resources to teach both the ELP and AZ State Standards. ELD/AZ S	1	3	4	
13	...having the necessary background knowledge to teach grammar to the depth required in Arizona Department of Education's ELD Instructional model? DSI	1	3	4	
14	...that collaborating with your fellow ELD teachers will be effective in better aligning the ELP and AZ standards ? ELD/AZ S	1	3	4	
15	...my role in providing feedback, guidance and reinforcement to my students as they are actively engaged in foundational grammar activities ? DSI	1	3	4	

*** Participants will receive a copy of the questionnaire without the constructs identified.

APPENDIX B

GESD ELD OBSERVATIONAL PROTOCOL

Date: _____ School: _____ Observer: _____

Teacher: _____ Grade: _____

Language Proficiency Levels (circle): PE E B I

ELD Subject area (circle): Reading Writing Grammar Oral Conv. Vocabulary

Indicators	Yes	No	Comments
1. Language Objective displayed and visually accessible to students.			
2. Language Objective has a DSI skill that is pulled out of the DSI document provided by ADE.			
3. The DSI skill is aligned to the grade level and language proficiency of student.			
4. Teacher refers to the Language Objective throughout the lesson delivery.			
5. Teacher uses accurate grammar.			
6. Teacher uses accurate pronunciation.			
7. Teacher uses minimal native language clarification.			
8. Teacher's instruction is in English.			
9. Classroom books and materials used by teacher to instruct are in English.			
10. Teacher's rate of speech is appropriate for proficiency level.			
11. Students respond in complete sentences or teacher prompts as needed.			

Indicators	Yes	No	Comments
12. Teacher scaffolds student response to model a higher level of language structure.			
13. Teacher provides students with feedback on their language output (oral or written).			
14. Teacher asks students higher order thinking /open-ended questions such as why, how, etc.			
15. Evidence of ELD training methodologies observed and/or listed in lesson plans for any of the following:(Mark those observed.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Verb Tense Study <input type="checkbox"/> Vertical Sentences <input type="checkbox"/> Reverse Questioning <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative Story Retell <input type="checkbox"/> Syntax Surgery <input type="checkbox"/> This or That <input type="checkbox"/> Language Warm-up <input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary Frames		Comments:

Criteria and Ratings			
Indicators	3	2	1
16. Teacher provides clear directions, meaningful examples, graphic organizers, and other supplementary materials to make lesson comprehensible.	Promotes learning with clear directions, simultaneous multisensory strategies. Provides meaningful examples, graphic organizers, or visuals that enhance learning.	Some directions are clear to students. Multisensory strategies are used but not simultaneously or all do not have access.	Directions or procedures are unclear and may contribute to confusion. Single or no modalities are used.
17. Teacher models tasks before students' independent practice.	Teacher explicitly models correct performance and labels steps or parts with explanation of thinking.	Teacher attempts to model correct performance and labels steps or parts with explanation	Teacher ineffectively models or does not model correct performance
18. Teacher uses the 50/50 rule of student/teacher speaking time.	Students verbalize their knowledge and thinking in student to student learning conversations 50% or more of the time.	Students attempt to engage in verbal interactions somewhat effectively 30–49% of the time.	Students do not attempt or ineffectively engage in student to student verbal interactions (0–29% of the time)
19. Teacher engages students throughout the lesson through activities or questions that promote the learning.	90-100% of students are engaged throughout the lesson.	50 – 89% of the students are engaged throughout the lesson.	Less than 50% of the students are engaged throughout the lesson or activities and questions do not promote the learning.

APPENDIX C
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To: Ray Buss
FAB

From: *lr*
cd Mark Roosa, Chair
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 07/01/2010

Committee Action: **Exemption Granted**

IRB Action Date: 07/01/2010

IRB Protocol #: 1006005225

Study Title: The Effect of a Community of Practice on English Language Development Teachers

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(1) (2).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

