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Teacher and Evaluator Perspectives on the Teacher Evaluation Process for Teachers of English Language Learners: A Policy Advocacy Document

Nancy Martinez
National-Louis University

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Teacher and Evaluator Perspectives on the Teacher Evaluation Process for Teachers of
English Language Learners

A POLICY ADVOCACY DOCUMENT

Nancy Martinez

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
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in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

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This document was created as *one* part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is on teacher evaluation systems. I examine the various teacher evaluation system currently implemented in Florida. These teacher evaluation frameworks approved by the Race to the Top initiative use protocols that do not provide opportunities for differentiating instructional practices specific to English Language Learners. The results from this analysis in combination with the wealth of research available on instructional practices for ELLs suggest a need for a change. This paper supports the need for a revision of the current teacher evaluation frameworks to include differentiation of ELL-specific indicators in the current teacher evaluation system that would allow effective ELL teachers to be recognized and identify those who need professional development.

PREFACE

This study stems from extensive research confirming the challenges of teaching English Language Learners. With the advent of the new teacher evaluation system required by the Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative, many districts have created evaluation systems based on RTTT requirements. As a result of personal experience with the new evaluation system, I became concerned about the fairness of this practice.

To inform this project, I drew on what I learned from the extensive literature I reviewed, in conjunction with the multiple surveys and interviews I conducted. This experience allowed me to visit other districts and speak with teachers and administrators to learn their opinions on current teacher evaluation practices. I was able to appreciate their differing views on this subject. This experience has led to the improvement of my leadership abilities. It particularly taught me how to better receive and consider other people's views without imposing my own.

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SECTION ONE: VISION STATEMENT

For many years, research has been conducted on the efficiency of instructional practices for English Language Learners (ELLs). Laws and policies have been created to ensure this student population is not left behind. New academic programs and interventions have been implemented in an effort to meet ELLs' needs. It has been repeatedly established that the process of language acquisition requires the use of very specific strategies when delivering instruction and monitoring for learning.

When we talk about policy, it is important to have an understanding of its definition. In his book, Fowler (2009) provided seven different definitions of the term *policy*. I prefer the one where he quotes Lindblom's definition (as cited in Fowler, 2009): "A policy is sometimes the outcome of a political compromise among policy makers, none of whom had in mind quite the problem to which the argued policy is the solution... And sometimes policies are not decided upon, but nevertheless 'happen'" (p.4). Many policies and regulations are approved by those who have no understanding of the reasons behind them. Therefore, it is important that those of us who are out in the field, testing new theories, programs, and practices, are diligent in our efforts to discover the truth, and assertive in sharing our work with those who create them.

In my policy proposal project, I researched current teacher evaluation processes and protocols in classrooms where ELLs are present, in order to identify possible changes that would make the process more objective, fair, and specific to the teachers being observed, to create a more effective, differentiated, and relevant learning environment for the students. I also collected data about the perceptions and experiences of administrators

and teachers in order to depict a more accurate picture of the various perspectives regarding current evaluative practices.

My policy proposal incorporates personal reflections, planning, and research on current educational practices. These include local, state, and national policies and programs related to my purpose of developing educational leaders who are willing to take risks and utilize knowledge to lead progress toward positive policy reform regarding performance evaluation for those teachers instructing ELL students. My vision statement outlines the changes I am advocating, how they should be implemented, and the projected outcomes of their implementation.

During the time I was teaching reading and developmental language to newcomers, students who had just arrived to the United States, but did not speak English, I discovered a new truth. I realized that many of the strategies I had used in the past, in my mainstream reading classes, were not as effective with my newcomer students. Conversations with colleagues who asked me for strategies that would work with their non-English speaking students concerned me and made me question how fair we were being to these students regarding the level of education we were providing. I realized that most of my colleagues were not prepared to face the challenge of effectively instructing the ELLs in their classrooms. I also noticed the lack of support from the district and the school.

As an ELL myself, I know what it is to learn a second language. It was during this time that I realized the lack of attention this issue was receiving and how it did not appear to be a priority in my school and district's agenda. While teaching newcomers at a district high school, I was able to make a few changes in my classroom and lab that benefited my

students. I also made recommendations to my school leaders for improvement based on my personal knowledge and experiences, but unfortunately they were disregarded and turned down. Recently, the State of Florida, through legislation and Department of Education regulations, moved to a new teacher evaluation system and a related performance pay component. These public policies became very controversial.

When the controversy about teacher observation began and the new evaluation system was implemented, I noticed that I was being evaluated using the same metrics applied to the Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Honors program teachers. I remember wondering at the time, why would they not make accommodations to evaluate ELL teachers, when we are mandated to accommodate our ELL students in our classrooms? How can teachers without ELL issues in their classrooms be evaluated with the same protocols as I am?

While working on my Program Evaluation Proposal (PEP), I learned from mainstream classroom teachers how they felt about having ELLs in their classrooms. ELL students are placed in regular classrooms for core subjects with teachers who do not have, in many instances, the correct certification to teach ELLs. These teachers expressed that they did not feel equipped to teach ELLs effectively on their own and expressed their dissatisfaction with the way these students were placed in classrooms, and with how the English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program for ELLs was implemented in their school. The teachers indicated that ELL paraprofessional support in their classrooms was not sufficient or effective, and that they wished there was professional development and other support so that they could better serve these students. Combining my personal teaching experience, performance evaluations, feedback from students and teachers, and

the information I retrieved from my research, I decided to further investigate and analyze the teacher evaluation process in classrooms where ELLs are present.

I reflected on why ELL teachers were observed and evaluated using the same metrics as the ones used with non-ELL teachers in classrooms where ELLs are not present and language acquisition is not an issue. For example, one of the components of the final teacher evaluation score is student academic growth. This is measured using the results from standardized testing. The only difference between mainstream students and ELLs is the amount of time students are allowed to complete the assessment. ELLs are allowed extended time to finish the test. Although it is a necessary accommodation, it is not very effective and does not actually improve their results.

I have administered the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) to ELLs many times. I have seen how these students struggle to the point that they give up and fall asleep. Others do not take advantage of the extended time because they want to leave the testing room and join their friends in the cafeteria. The effects of extended time on the standardized testing scores for ELLs is something I would have to research further, but it makes me question the reliability and impact of these scores on the teachers' evaluations. There are many factors that can affect negatively the performance evaluation scores of ELL teachers. The value-added portion of the score is supposed to balance the results, but we do not know how accurate it might be.

Teacher evaluation is a very controversial part of educational reform in the United States. Issues regarding the purpose and the structure of teacher evaluation, as well as the resources available to support it, are some of the reasons for this controversy (Duke, 1995). There has been a strenuous effort to improve public education at the

national, state, and local level (Duke, 1995). As part of the federal Race to the Top (RTTT) grant, states are required to evaluate teacher effectiveness and create fair and transparent teacher evaluation systems (RSN, 2012). As a result, several evaluation systems have been created to determine teacher effectiveness based on student performance and growth.

During the past five years, many modifications have been made to teacher evaluation systems across the nation. Local education agencies (LEAs) have been working with different districts to create teacher evaluation guidelines, changing who is responsible for conducting the evaluations, determining the frequency for teachers to be observed, establishing methods of data collection, and setting performance rating levels. A study conducted by the Reform Support Network (RSN, 2012) examined data collected from 11 RTTT grantees and presented how these states conducted teacher evaluation. The information was compiled and presented in a brief to 11 states. The purpose was to provide them with the different guidelines and the policies other states have used in their teacher evaluation system implementation.

The study focused on the specific requirements for classroom observations and identified common aspects among 11 state teachers' evaluations. The commonalities found were the frequency of observations based on teacher seniority, warning teachers ahead of time about the upcoming observations, incorporating student work as a component of the teacher evaluation, and providing feedback on the teacher evaluation process. Unfortunately, the report did not address how these states evaluated ELL teachers, or whether there are any commonalities among these states regarding the evaluation and classroom observation of ELL teachers. Although research has been

conducted on the effectiveness of teacher evaluation systems, the experiences of ELL teachers was not specifically addressed.

It is believed that the most influential factor for increasing or decreasing student achievement is the teacher (Goe & Stickler, 2008). Therefore, teachers should be provided with maximum support to help them develop their instructional practice in the most effective, efficient, and differentiated way. As part of the evaluation process, we should take into account those successful strategies, and give credit to the teachers who implement them and professional development to those who do not. If classroom strategies, teachers' instructional practice, and student growth comprise the biggest portion of teacher evaluation scores, then we must ensure that ELL students are served in the most effective and differentiated way. One way we can make this possible is by providing teachers with the meaningful and relevant professional development they need to move their ELL students to the next level, while supporting them throughout its implementation. If the delivery of instruction for ELLs has to be done differently, then their teachers' evaluations should be approached differently as well.

There are a few unanswered questions that concern me about the level of effectiveness, objectivity, and fairness of the teacher evaluation protocols currently used. For example, how reliable can an observation of an ELL teacher be? What is the level of training of the teacher evaluators? What knowledge of language acquisition and ELLs do evaluators of ELL teachers have?

In the constant effort to level the playing field in our educational system in order to serve all of our students equally, we seem to forget the diversity of the population we serve. I see this as analogous to how people do their laundry. For some people, washing

their clothes is nothing special. They do not follow the care instructions on the garment. They do not care about materials, or using the right water temperature. The result sometimes is disastrous and sometimes items get destroyed beyond repair. Other people are more careful with how they do their laundry, taking their time taking their time to read the labels and sort their items by category using different temperatures and different detergents. They stop and think about the different care instructions they must consider. Those things they care about the most because they are very delicate and expensive are taken to the cleaners for a special wash. I think there is a huge effort in our country to take the best possible care with our children's education; however, we do not appear to ensure we address those differences and exceptions that can potentially negatively impact their academic success and future. My vision is to one day have an evaluation system that effectively and fairly evaluates ELL teachers and helps them develop the knowledge and skills needed to insure ELLs learn what is necessary to continue their education, find meaningful employment, and become contributing citizens.

SECTION TWO: NEEDS ANALYSIS

My intent with this Policy Advocacy Document is to propose the implementation of additional and modified observation procedures and instruments that would allow evaluators to assess ELL teachers' level of performance in a more accurate, objective, and differentiated manner. Many educators agree that ELL teaching strategies model good teaching practices and should be used in all classrooms. This generalization presumes that all students learn the same way, and that if those ELL teaching strategies are used in mainstream classrooms, effective teaching will take place. However, there are instructional strategies that are specific to the ELL student population that require close involvement of the teacher, specific planning, and one-to-one instruction. Most mainstream teachers do not have the training, the knowledge, or the need to use these strategies with their students.

Much research has been conducted regarding the learning process of ELLs and the instructional methodologies particular to these students. In my opinion, modifying evaluation protocols for teachers of ELLs would allow for a more objective and equitable teacher evaluation. Doing so would also hold ELL teachers accountable for the implementation of these specific ELL instructional practices, as they would be directly linked to their performance scores, and, ultimately, to their continued employment and level of compensation.

In the field of education, student achievement is the number one priority. However, teachers' needs are also important. In order for teachers to perform to their maximum capacity, it is imperative that we provide them with the tools they need to get the job accomplished effectively and efficiently. If we want to hold them accountable for

the way they perform their job, we must use protocols and measurement tools that are equitable, specific, and objective.

Moral/Ethical Needs

Everything about education has moral and ethical repercussions. As professionals in the field of education, we need to ensure that our actions are guided by specific ethical principles that will guarantee the safety, and physical and mental development of the clientele we serve. However, the task is not easy and can be challenging to many education practitioners. The teacher evaluation system is one area where ethical responsibilities and moral values can be tested and violations are possible. The results of these evaluations can have positive and negative effects for all parties involved. It is critical that the ethical principles of evaluation are followed and implemented in an objective, unbiased, and transparent manner.

My research is specific to ELLs. There are specific rules and regulations that protect this group of students and if they are not followed properly, the results can affect not only the student, but the teacher, school leaders, and district administration. The fact that current evaluative practices have not included consideration of the level of differentiation this population requires, concerns me. In my opinion, it is violating the ethical principle of equity for both the teacher and the students.

Educational Needs

Receiving specific ELL instruction is critical to our ELL students. Without a mastery of the English language, it is difficult for students to meet the requirements of continuing education, work, and citizenship. Critical to this need are teachers who have the necessary knowledge and skills to help students meet their educational objectives.

This requires special instructional strategies and skills, along with a teacher monitoring and assessment system to ensure students' needs are being met. It is important that the system be equitable and effective.

This need for differentiated ESOL instruction was recognized in Florida even as early as 1990 (*League of United Latin Americans Citizens (LULAC) et al. v. State Board of Education et al.*). The Consent Decree is an agreement reached in August 1990 between the State of Florida and a coalition of eight groups represented by the Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy, Inc. (META) regarding the identification of ESOL students and the services provided to them. It states, in part: "The Florida Department of Education shall develop or identify standards and criteria for evaluating the appropriateness of Basic ESOL instruction in each district. These standards shall be consistent with state-required curriculum frameworks and student performance standards" (*LULAC et al. v. State Board of Education et al.*, 1990). This is not the only provision which supports the points I raise in this Policy Advocacy Document.

The Consent Decree also addresses the responsibility of districts to provide adequate educational opportunities to ELLs despite funding concerns. One subsection specifically observes: "Lack of ESOL funding eligibility does not relieve districts of any obligation they may have under state or federal law to continue to provide appropriate services to LEP [Limited English Proficiency] children beyond the six years of state ESOL program funding" (*LULAC et al. v. State Board of Education et al.*, 1990). Although newcomer programs increase the opportunity for improving the academic

performance of ELLs, the lack of adequate funding limits their implementation (Harvard Law Review, 2007).

These obstacles are not insurmountable. Immigration and education are two topics in which voters are interested (Harvard Law Review, 2007). On one hand, illegal immigration is seen as one of the reasons for crime, drugs, terrorism and the poor performance of our schools. On the other, citizens are sympathetic to those who work hard and earn a living in a decent manner. They see the importance of providing immigrant students with the proper education. There are many advocates for the education of immigrant children that would support proposals for funding for programs that would involve both immigration and education (HLR, 2007). A way to solicit funding and secure the implementation and continuity of newcomer programs is by acquiring backing from the community and businesses. These groups can lobby and support educational programs to benefit newcomers. Another option for the funding of newcomer programs is Title I and Title III (HLR, 2007). In any case, schools have a responsibility to provide differentiated ELL instruction and cannot cite a lack of funding as an excuse not to adequately meet the needs of ELL students and teachers.

Social Needs

There is a growing number of ELLs in our schools. In my district, there are 37 different native languages other than English spoken by the students. The societal downside to not meeting the educational needs of these students is a continuing number of dropouts who will lose the opportunity for continuing education and meaningful employment. This road leads to social isolation and government dependency.

The rapid growth of the ELL student population in our schools, and the current placement process of these students in the classroom, are resulting in more teachers being required to accommodate their instructional practices in an attempt to meet the ELLs' academic needs as well as social needs. Many of these teachers may not have the proper level of cultural knowledge required to understand the diverse behaviors, values, and perspectives of these students and their families. They may not understand the social cost in failing to meet the educational needs of these students. In many cases, they have very limited knowledge of effective ELL teaching strategies, as well as ineffective or poor proficiency in implementation of these strategies. This lack of understanding and skill can be very detrimental to the academic experience of ELL students, as well as negatively affect their future opportunities for a better and independent life.

In my opinion, placing a higher level of importance on the specific instructional practices needed for ELLs will result in more carefully developed teacher training. I think it would lead to more differentiated observation protocols, and fairer evaluation results. Ultimately, placing increased value on these areas will lead to enhanced student learning and greater future educational and work opportunities for ELLs.

Political Needs

My district's teacher evaluation system has recently been revamped as a result of the requirement of a federal RTTT grant. Across our nation, teacher unions have voiced their disapproval of the new evaluative practices. One component of the final teacher score is student performance based on standardized assessments. "Using student test scores to judge teacher effectiveness, for example, puts teachers who serve in low-income

and minority classrooms and schools at a disadvantage and, as such, generates perverse disincentives for them to teach in those settings” (Weiss, 2013, p. 45).

The new requirements are still a topic of heated discussions among educators. My research findings on teacher evaluation practices, particularly those relevant to ELL teachers, may generate ample political resistance. Considered a minority group, ELLs, and the challenges surrounding their educative process, may not appear to be of high importance in the political arena. In my attempt to change current evaluative practices that fail to address the needs of this student population, I am well aware of the politically-based opposition I will be facing. Adding one more requirement to an already much-questioned teacher assessment system will be subject to further criticism.

Economic Needs

Based on a few personal experiences, I have learned that when a new program is considered or an idea is presented to administrators, the most common concern or question is how much it will cost. Rarely is the administration willing to invest more money to reach the desired learning outcome. When it comes to the education of minorities, in this case ELLs, administrators tend to appear hesitant and often unwilling to pay the extra cost.

If we want to pursue changes that will make a difference for the neediest youth, we must think outside of the box and understand that everyone involved has to change. If we want teachers to perform at their best, we must support them and provide them with the additional training that will enable them to understand and implement effective strategies. The new teacher evaluation system promotes this approach. As a result of a teacher observation, a determination is made about the professional development needs of

the teacher and the steps that will follow to support the teacher. In the end, a more effective teacher will produce higher student achievement. Unfortunately, for many ELL teachers, instructional effectiveness in working with ELL students is not adequately assessed in the present evaluation system. The same is true for those ESOL teachers who are very strong and effective in the use of specific instructional strategies with their ELL students. The present system does not account for these teachers' effective strategies and implementation.

In order to implement a modified and differentiated teacher evaluation system, an abundance of training would be necessary. Teachers and evaluators will need far more specific professional development than what is normally covered during the state mandated trainings. Modifications to the current evaluation system will need to be made. "While better decisions often can be made with more complete information, the costs of added information should be justified by the resulting incremental value of desired outcomes" (Hoenack, 1990, p. 390; see also Monk, 1990).

The cost would likely be minimal as we already know the best strategies and it would be just a matter of including them in an evaluation matrix. The other cost would be staff development and this perhaps could be done online at minimum cost to the district. However, it is difficult to determine the costs one would avoid by having a more equitable and effective evaluation system for teachers of ELL students and the resultant student success. The economic benefit to society of lowering the ELL dropout rate would be represented in the cost avoidance of related incarceration and public assistance payments, which would more than justify the cost of implementing my new component to

the evaluation system and providing the needed related teacher and teacher evaluator training.

SECTION THREE: ADVOCATED POLICY STATEMENT

Florida educational reforms require the implementation of a comprehensive evaluation system for teachers and principals (Hallgren, James-Burdumy, & Perez-Johnson, 2014). The evaluation must be based on student performance and observations of instructional practice. The results from such evaluations are to be tied to teacher compensation. The state requires the evaluation systems to be rigorous, transparent, and equitable. Evaluators must use multiple rating categories and take into account data on student growth in order to differentiate the effectiveness of the teachers and principals. These evaluations must be conducted annually and include timely and constructive feedback (USDOE RTTT Executive Summary, 2009). With the stated requirements in mind, my policy proposal is for the evaluation system to incorporate a provision that requires special procedures for teachers of ELL students. I recommend the policy state that any teacher who teaches any number of ELL students be assessed, in part, based on the effective use of the instructional strategies that research shows are essential and considered to be best practices for teaching such students.

My Policy Advocacy Document focuses on the area of teacher evaluation for those who teach ELL students. The RTTT program requires that state educational reforms be designed in a comprehensive manner, while considering the local context and implementation of the most effective and innovative approaches that meet the needs of the district educators, students, and families. I believe that current teacher evaluation practices are inequitable and do not take into account the specific roles of teachers or the context in which they teach. Current practices do not include instructional practices specific to ELL students. The evaluation does not require the evaluator to identify those

teachers who are effectively implementing ELL instructional techniques nor those who are not. Therefore, as a tool used to identify professional development needs, current teacher evaluation practices are inadequate to ascertain which teachers require further training to improve their delivery of instruction to ELLs.

Goals and Objectives of the Policy

The goal of the policy I am advocating is to improve the teacher evaluation system to include provisions that are equitable and effective for teachers of ELL students, leading to improved teacher performance and learning success for ELLs. The objectives are the inclusion of ELL indicators on teacher evaluation protocols. I am proposing the modification of the current teacher evaluation protocols to require evaluators to account for instructional practices and techniques that are specific to ELLs.

The Alliance for Education of the New Teacher Center at the University of California developed six key strategies for teachers of ELLs to meet the needs of ELL students. These strategies are organized in six different categories. The first one is vocabulary and language development, the second is specific to guided instruction, the third addresses metacognition and authentic assessment, the fourth is explicit instruction, the fifth is the use of meaning-based context and universal themes, and the sixth is the use of modeling, graphic organizers, and visuals (Alliance for Education, 2010). I am proposing these strategies be used as guidelines to modify current teacher evaluation protocols.

A great challenge facing ELL teachers is that many ELL students do not have the basic literacy skills necessary to comprehend what they are being taught, and need additional support during instructional time. In order to understand and learn, ELLs have

to continuously double their efforts when compared to native speakers. Not only do ELLs have to learn the language, but also learn the content and context. For those ELLs who have little or no education in their first language, the learning task is even more challenging. They have to learn the language, the content, the context, and learn the portions they have missed. The inclusion of ELL-specific teaching strategies in the teacher evaluation protocols not only will address teacher accountability for responding to these students' specific needs, but also will allow school leaders to identify those teachers in need of professional development on instructional skills specific to ELLs.

The policy I am advocating will require the differentiation of teacher evaluation processes in order to capture teachers' actions and instructional practices specific to the effective instruction of ELLs. Currently, the state of Florida mandates that ELL students have equal access to education. The specifics of this requirement are stated as follows:

Equal access to appropriate programming shall include both access to intensive English language instruction and instruction in basic subject matter areas of math, science, social studies, computer literacy which is (1) understandable to the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) student given his or her level of English language proficiency, and (2) equal and comparable in amount, scope, sequence and quality to that provided to English proficient students. (*LULAC et al. v. State Board of Education et al.*, 1990, Section II)

Teachers are legally mandated to implement accommodations that provide ELLs equal opportunities for learning in the classroom. When an ELL student is placed in a particular classroom, there is no guarantee the teacher is capable of providing an equal opportunity for learning. Many times, teachers are teaching out-of-field and have not completed their ESOL certification or endorsement. Therefore, they may not implement the necessary specific instructional strategies or provide the support and attention that ELLs need.

Districts have adopted research-based evaluative practices that promise to help teachers grow professionally. These practices also provide schools with the information they need to support and develop their teachers and increase the academic achievement of their students. There are several teacher evaluation models that are being implemented in different school districts in the state of Florida. In order to assess the classroom performance of teachers and evaluate their knowledge and skills, Florida has adopted comprehensive research-based frameworks for effective practice. The two most commonly used in Florida are the models set out in *The Art and Science of Teaching* (Marzano, 2007) and *Framework for Teaching* (Danielson, 2012). Both approaches are very similar and systematically categorize research-based effective instructional practices. These frameworks provide guidance to teachers and administrators on effective instruction. Each framework is like a “road map through the territory, structured around a shared understanding of teaching” (Danielson, 2012, p. 2). In my opinion, they both lack differentiation in their observation protocols that would identify research-based instructional strategies and components specific to ELLs. Neither one of these evaluation systems take into account the specific roles of teachers in regard to the needs of ELLs.

Effective teachers positively affect student achievement. Research was conducted to determine the effects of the teacher on classroom performance and student achievement (Goe & Stickler, 2008). There is a direct connection between teacher quality and student learning. A report written by The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future indicated that what teachers know and can do in the classroom has the most influence on what students learn. It also stated that school reform cannot be successful unless its focus is on providing teachers with the conditions under which they

can teach, and teach well. The claims presented in this report support the objectives of the policy I am advocating. The addition of a section on ELL strategies to the present teacher evaluation will allow teachers to identify what they are missing in order for them to teach more effectively. It also will allow those who are teaching ELLs effectively to receive credit and positive evaluations.

In the end, the ultimate goal is to meet ELL students' needs. Through a differentiated teacher evaluation system, this goal can be achieved and teacher accountability for the effective instruction of ELLs can be established. Recognizing and accounting for the unique contributions and roles of ELL educators is critical, especially if states have designed evaluation systems using value-added measures based on student scores, classroom observations, student and teachers portfolios, and/or self-assessments (Goe & Stickler, 2008).

Stakeholders Related to the Policy

Whose Needs?

Every day, educators face the challenge of teaching the continuously growing population of ELLs (Gargiulo, 2010). The U.S. Department of Education estimates that approximately 4.5 million ELLs are enrolled in public schools across the country. This student population has increased by 50% in the last decade and still continues to grow (Ferland, Sypniewski, & Hull, 2012).

Except for slight decreases in 2008-2009, the percentage of ELL students in Florida's public schools has continued on a long-term upward trend for the last decade (FLDOE, 2013). The increase during this period amounts to 54,837 students (from 197,059 in 2003-2004 to 251,896 in 2012-2013), a cumulative increase of 27.8 % in 10

years (FLDOE, 2013, Data Report). One of every five students in Florida's K-12 public schools is classified as an ELL. Spanish (71.3%) is the most common language among Florida's ELL population, and is followed by Haitian-Creole (11.4%). Overall, ELL students represent 257 countries and speak more than 200 different languages (McDonald, 2004).

Based on the above statistics, one can assume that at some point in time, every classroom teacher in the state of Florida will be delivering instruction to ELL students. Teachers must be professionally trained to effectively accomplish this task. Adding components to current teacher evaluation protocols that would identify effective ELL instruction will ensure this student population's needs are addressed. It will help develop a sense of urgency among teachers and administrators that would bring about appropriate, differentiated, and effective instruction for these students. It also will help in identifying areas of improvement for these teachers, as well as creating professional development opportunities that could help them be more effective in delivering instruction to ELLs. In my opinion, the general evaluative instruments currently in place do not suffice. The current practice is not meeting the needs of our teachers or our ELL student population.

Students live in two separate worlds; at home and at school (Freeman & Freeman, 2011). For ELLs, the two worlds are very different. At school they are bombarded with mainstream cultural experiences and surrounded by an unknown environment. At home, they are in a familiar setting where everything seems natural, normal, and effortless to them. It is important to understand that our ELL students need time to learn how to transition from one world to the other every day that they attend school. For some ELLs, the transition is easy, while for others it is a daily struggle and a frightening experience.

Whose Values?

The United States is a very diverse country (El Nasser, 2012). It is considered the land of opportunity where anything is possible. People come to this country for many reasons. For some, it may be the only way to get out of poverty and live more comfortably. For others, America means freedom of speech and protection from persecution. Regardless of the reasons why they enter and stay in this country, immigrant children have the right of equal access to education. Many of our ELL students may not have the necessary support and structure at home that most of our native speaker students have. Many ELL parents have multiple jobs or work late shifts and cannot provide the care, support, and supervision the schools expect. Often these children's families do not see education as a priority and cannot comply with the expectations of the schools. However, despite the home and family circumstances of our ELL students, we have the obligation to properly educate them and put forth the same effort, if not more, to successfully meet their academic needs. These children are here to stay and we need to ensure that we prepare them to be successful and productive citizens.

The task of educating ELLs is challenging and can be accomplished only if we make it a priority and include them when designing processes and implementing new policies. We must value the education of this student population and support everyone that in one way or another can impact their level of success. Teachers must be equipped to provide ELLs with the proper instruction and have their professional development needs met when there is a deficit.

ELLs have legal rights that protect them and must be respected. The 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title VI provides:

No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. (42 U.S.C. § 2000d)

Another legal protection that guarantees immigrants the right to an education in the United States is the U.S. Supreme Court Decision in 1982 in which the court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in the case *Plyler v. Doe*. This court case went beyond protecting the rights of citizens from other countries who are ELLs and addressed the rights of illegal aliens:

The illegal aliens who are plaintiffs in these cases challenging the statute may claim the benefit of the Equal Protection Clause, which provides that no State shall ‘deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws’.... The undocumented status of these children *vel non* does not establish a sufficient rational basis for denying them benefits that the State affords other residents.... No national policy is perceived that might justify the State in denying these children an elementary education. (457 U.S. 202)

These legal protections guarantee the right to public education for immigrant students regardless of their legal status. They reify the value of the education of these children. Since 1990, the Consent Decree that Florida has enforced provides that each ELL student should have access to programming that is “appropriate to his or her level of English proficiency, academic achievement and special needs” (*LULAC et al. v. State Board of Education et al.*, 1990, Section IIA). The primary goal of such programming is “to develop as effectively and efficiently as possible, each child’s English language proficiency and academic potential” (Section IIA). Through the policy I am advocating, I intend to support these laws as well as promote the value of educational rights for ELLs.

My proposed policy focuses on equity for both students and teachers. Current teacher evaluation practices do not promote fair access to instruction for ELL students

and do not allow for the fair evaluation of their teachers. One could argue that these children's right to have access to a quality education is not being valued and enforced. It is vital, in order to reach these children and meet their educational needs, that teachers are held accountable for the implementation of the research-based techniques, strategies, and accommodations that are required and have been proven to work with ELLs.

Accountability is necessary in order to ensure that the education of ELLs is equally valued. It also is important to send the message that teachers who do not deliver appropriate instruction to ELLs will be held accountable.

My policy would identify those teachers who need additional support and training on how to teach ELL students. It also would determine the level of training evaluators need in order to be effective and accurate in the conduct of their classroom observations. This level of accountability can make an impact on the way the school community sees this group of children. This policy could affect perceptions of this student population. Through the shift advocated by this policy, teachers would deliver their instruction effectively and receive the appropriate training needed to do so. Evaluators would be trained properly to be able to recognize effective ELL teachers and hold accountable those who are not effective.

The present teacher evaluation system links student performance to teacher salaries. If the way teachers instruct ELLs is assessed as part of their evaluation protocol, teachers would make sure that those techniques and strategies are exercised and are evident in their classrooms. Consequently, ELLs would be supported through their academic experience and could acquire the English language skills that will enable them to comprehend classroom content and perform well. Ultimately, if our ELL students

perform well, school grades will increase, graduation rates will be elevated, and teachers will be rewarded with better salaries. It is a chain of positive effects that would most likely result in the development of productive citizens and a reduction of the negative statistics associated with this student population.

According to utilitarian philosophy, all human behavior is determined by self-interest (Fowler, 2009). Fowler (2009) analyzed the basic values in U.S. politics. The policy I am advocating directly implicates self-interest. The implementation of this policy would directly advance the interests of teachers, administrators, students, and parents. Many people are motivated almost entirely by their own economic interest or by the economic interest of a group with which they identify (Fowler, 2009).

The teacher evaluation process has the main purpose of ensuring that effective instruction is occurring in the classroom and that students are learning. Student performance can be measured to ascertain how effective or ineffective a teacher was during the school year. If the results are positive, the teacher is compensated based on that success, students move to the next grade, and all stakeholders are satisfied. If the outcome is negative, the teacher is at-risk of losing her job, students fall behind academically and need remediation, and all stakeholders are dissatisfied.

This policy will also promote the values of economic interest and growth. Although this policy is mainly focused on ELLs, its implementation could benefit everyone involved in their education and, indeed, everyone in their communities. By making this group of students a priority on our educational agenda, and ensuring that ELLs are instructed effectively, implementation of this policy ensures that ELL students continue to advance and succeed in school. Their chances to finish high school will

increase as they will qualify to participate in programs that will better prepare them for secondary education. ELL students will have a better chance to acquire scholarships, attend college, and ultimately, become successful and productive citizens.

Teacher accountability; the possibility of not earning a salary increase or receiving a low score in their evaluation, may be the determining factor that motivates teachers to ensure that the proper instruction for ELLs takes place in their classrooms. If proper instruction takes place and is specifically accounted for in the evaluation protocol, then effective teachers will be recognized and rewarded, ELL learning will occur, academic achievement will increase, school grades will improve, students will graduate and become productive community members, and their quality of life will improve.

Equality of opportunity is another significant value this policy promotes. My policy focuses on equality and equity. Most immigrant families come to the United States in search of a more balanced and equitable life (Shah, 2014). They have already experienced inequality in many aspects of their lives back home; therefore, there is no reason why they should continue the experience on American soil. Equal opportunity has always been a major issue in U.S. education policy (Fowler, 2009). The battle for equality of educational opportunity has been a perpetual goal of educational policy. Since the 19th century, many policies have been implemented that provide every child access to a public education and the desegregation of schools. Educational policy in the United States has made progress toward greater equality and become more inclusive by progressively providing more access to minority children, girls, and those with physical and mental disabilities, to the many school programs (Fowler, 2009). However, the efforts to address the problem of unequal education still have a way to go. Chaltain

(2011) wrote that if Thurgood Marshall was alive today, he would urge us to stop celebrating our symbolic victory in *Brown v. Board of Education*, and start accepting that the public education system is, clearly, still separate and not equal. My policy sends a clear message of refusal of this status quo. The crusade for equity and equality will continue in the name of those who do not have a voice. My advocated policy speaks loudly for those children who continue to be left behind. ELL students, if provided with the proper instruction, can have a better and brighter future.

Whose Preferences?

The preferences promoted by this policy are supported by the expertise of the research community and the work of educational entities advocating for the educational rights of ELLs. Some of these ELL advocates conduct studies and research in order to determine the most effective ways of delivering instruction to ELLs (Calderon, 2012; Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Hill & Flynn, 2006). Other advocates' preferences derive from the experiences they have acquired while working with ELLs and their own experiences of learning a second language (Calderon, 2012; Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002).

On August 12, 2010, the Latino Elected and Appointed Officials National Taskforce sent a letter to the U.S. Secretary of Education. In this letter, the members of the taskforce expressed their concerns regarding the level of commitment of participating states to closing the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs (NALEO, 2010). This sentiment correlates with the preferences expressed in this policy. This lack of a sense of urgency regarding the education of ELLs demands a response in the form of rigorous research for effective instructional practices, advocacy for their rights, policy change

proposals, and ways to reduce the achievement gap between ELLs and mainstream students.

Another preference of this policy derives from the findings of the research on teacher evaluation (Danielson, 2012; Marzano, 2007; Millan & Darling-Hammond, 1990; Schwab, 1990). Current frameworks for teacher evaluation practices target the improvement of teacher instruction in order to increase student learning. The results of current teacher evaluations are mired in measuring the effectiveness of teachers; ranking, categorizing, and rewarding those with high scores; and punishing those with low scores. In my judgment, this approach fails to accomplish the core purpose of teacher evaluation, which should be to strengthen the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and classroom practices of professional educators (The New Teacher Project [TNTP], 2010).

Rationale for the Validity of the Policy

According to Browder (1995), the advocated policy's goals and objectives should prove to be appropriate and good. In the world of education, the goal is the academic achievement of all students (Danielson, 2012; Marzano, 2007). In order to accomplish this goal, teacher instruction must be differentiated and specific to the learner. Teacher preparation programs and district professional development opportunities must be at the center of research on teacher effectiveness (Gulamhussein, 2013). One of the goals of the new teacher evaluation practices is to help teachers reach their full potential through receiving feedback, professional development, and opportunities to reflect on their instruction (Marzano, 2007).

To this end, TNTP (2010) created a document, *Teacher Evaluation 2.0*. This document proposes six guiding standards that effective teacher evaluations must meet in

order to meet the needs of teachers, school leaders, and students. Those standards are annual process, clear and rigorous expectations, multiple measures, multiple ratings, regular feedback, and significance (TNTP, 2010). I used these standards as a guide for the analysis and validation of this policy. I also utilized the Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS), the Florida Consent Decree, and available research on language acquisition as a rationale for the validity of this policy.

The current focus on teacher evaluation and greater accountability grew out of the RTTT program created by the U.S. Department of Education (2009). RTTT is a 4-year grant program designed to encourage and reward the states that show innovation and reform, achieve significant growth, show substantial gains in student achievement, reduce student achievement gaps, increase high school graduation rates, and ensure students are prepared for success in college and careers (Weiss, 2013). Applicant states were awarded points based on how they met the requirements. One of the categories that offered states the biggest amount of points was the category “Great Teachers and Leaders.” This category required a commitment from the states to develop a teacher and principal evaluation system that would use student achievement and growth as the main factor to determine teacher and principal performance.

As a result of this federal RTTT competition, districts across the country began to modify their old evaluation systems. At the same time, teacher advocacy groups began to develop frameworks and guides to assist districts with these modifications. TNTP’s six design standards were intended to provide such guidance. For the purpose of validating the goals and objectives of this policy, I focused on Clear, Rigorous Expectations (Standard 2), and Significance (Standard 6).

There is a clear disconnection between current evaluation frameworks and TNTP's guiding principles. While most evaluation frameworks currently implemented include expectations, many of these expectations are vague, general, and do not take into consideration the context in which teachers are teaching, nor the specific needs of all their students. According to TNTP (2010), observation rubrics should be aligned closely to performance expectations, address specific observable student behaviors, and be built around observable evidence that students are actively engaged in the lesson.

One of the standards that validate this policy is Significance. TNTP (2010) recommends that an evaluation process have meaningful implications, both positive and negative, in order to earn sustained support from teachers and school leaders, and to contribute to the systematic improvement of the teacher workforce. The goal of my policy of adding a section for evaluating how teachers are meeting the needs of ELL students is validated by this standard. One of the purposes of my policy is the development of teachers in the area of ELL instruction.

The goals of my policy also are validated by the Florida Principal Leadership Standards. Student Learning as a Priority (Standard 2), Instructional Plan Implementation (Standard 3), Faculty Development (Standard 4), and Professional and Ethical Behaviors, are based on the principle of meeting the needs of all students.

The Florida Consent Decree supports the objectives advocated by my policy. This state mandate protects ELLs, ensuring equal access to appropriate programming (*LULAC et al. v. State Board of Education et al.*, 1990). Aside from the legal obligation to this student population, there is also a moral obligation to ensure these students are instructed

effectively, and their teachers are evaluated in a manner in which specific and differentiated instruction is captured.

The available research on language acquisition includes among traditional approaches to teaching that which Krashen and Terrel (1985) referred to as the natural approach philosophy of teaching. They identified several implications for positive classroom practices. According to Krashen and Terrel, the purpose of the classroom is to provide comprehensible instruction and it should occur in an environment where anxiety is low. Krashen and Terrel also indicated that instruction must be comprehensible, interesting, relevant to the student's life, and delivered in an environment where students are "off the defensive" (p. 32). This theory validates the goals and objectives of my policy. The addition of indicators specific to ELLs in the evaluation protocols is necessary to ensure that the appropriate instructional practice is implemented and ELLs are taught effectively and in a more differentiated manner.

SECTION FOUR: POLICY ARGUMENT

In recent years, students arriving in our schools speak little or no English (NCES, 2004). By the year 2000, the number of people over the age of 5 in the United States who spoke a language other than English in their home comprised 14% of the total U.S. population (U. S. Census Bureau, 2002). The American Community Survey (ACS) is currently the primary source of language data (Ryan, 2013). In its 2011 survey, ACS determined that, of 291.5 million people aged 5 and over, 60.6 million, or 21% of this population, spoke a language other than English at home (Ryan, 2013, p. 2). For many, their basic skills, even in their native languages, are minimal. When these students enter their American classrooms, they are often perceived as a problem, requiring additional work, and many teachers resent the possibility that these students may affect their performance evaluation and pay (Boyd & Landford, 2003).

My policy supports the addition of indicators specific to ELLs to the teacher evaluation protocols. These specific and differentiated indicators would allow school administrators to identify those teachers who effectively meet the needs of ELLs. My policy also would enable administrators to identify those who are not meeting the needs of ELLs and may need support and professional development. Nevertheless, the implementation of new policies evokes positive and negative responses and views (Yilmaz & Kikcoglu, 2013). Regardless of the positive intention of a policy, organization members often react to reform efforts negatively and resist change (Yilmaz & Kikcoglu, 2013). Therefore, the pros and cons of my policy are important to consider.

Pros

There are many factors that affect the way ELLs learn in this country (Miller & Endo, 2008). They are a subgroup that needs special attention. They need instructional delivery that is differentiated and takes into consideration how the changes they are experiencing are affecting their education (Miller & Endo, 2008). The policy I am advocating would provide a tool that would enable school administrators to assess the strategies specific to that kind of instructional practice. It would allow for a more accurate and fair evaluation of teachers. Through this new policy, teachers would be able to recognize which ELL instructional strategies they need to meet the instructional needs of these students. As a result, more relevant professional development can be offered to teachers of ELLs. Through the implementation of this policy, I believe ELLs' academic achievement will increase; they will adapt faster to the new environment, and their level of comfort and sense of belonging will increase, thereby improving their disposition toward their studies.

Cons

One negative aspect that may affect the implementation of this policy is the uncertain financial impact of changing current evaluative practices. The most recent teacher evaluation system has been implemented in several phases. As per the RTTT grant, winning states had four years to roll-out the new teacher evaluation system. The 2014-2015 school year is the last year for districts to fully implement this new system. Much has been invested in the planning and implementation of the current system. It is difficult to calculate the exact cost of adding procedures and retraining staff. However, this added cost should be minimal in comparison to the cost avoidance of lost learning

opportunities and the resulting academic failures, as well as the cost of increased numbers of students with limited education and job opportunities, and their greater dependence on public support and the potential related crime and incarceration costs.

Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) is one of the districts selected by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as part of the Partnership Sites to Empower Effective Teaching. In 2009, this partnership awarded HCPS a \$100 million 7-year grant to implement the new teacher evaluation system (Chambers, De los Reyes, & O'Neil, 2013). HCPS has already spent \$24.8 million. The HCPS teacher evaluation system is based on a value-added model (VAM) of student achievement and classroom observations (Chambers, De los Reyes, & O'Neil, 2013, p.9). HCPS has spent over 80% of their evaluation system expenditure on classroom observations (Chambers et al., 2013). The modification to current evaluative practices my policy is advocating could be incorporated into the protocols districts have already implemented. Thus, the implementation would involve revisions or additions to evaluation systems already in place rather than the origination of an entirely new system. This approach would reduce the costs of implementing the advocated policy.

Another potential barrier to the implementation of this policy is the lack of buy-in from teachers (Yilmaz & Kilicogul, 2013). It is uncommon for teachers to know how to implement effective ELL strategies, and for many, it is not a priority, since it is not part of the evaluation protocol (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). Often, when teachers are evaluated and paid based on particular criteria, they generally focus their performance on that criteria. The implementation of my policy could result in the requirement of learning and

implementing these strategies, and for most, this would result in more work and more effort on the part of teachers.

SECTION FIVE: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Haddad and Demsky (1995) defined policy as “an explicit or implicit single decision or group of decisions which may set out directives for guiding future decisions, initiate or retard action, or guide implementation of previous decisions” (p. 118). Prior to the implementation of any policy, it is important to evaluate the forces for or against change in the event that policy changes need to be made (Haddad & Demsky, 1995). As a preventive measure, it is wise to consider the different stakeholders who would support and/or resist the implementation of the policy. A powerful strategy is to identify those groups with relevant interest in the benefits of the policy. Regarding this policy, those groups are parents, students, teachers, school administrators, and district officials. Another important element in policy analysis is to understand the interests of the educational bureaucrats, and to recognize that these are not always identical with those of teachers and other educational professionals or consumers (Haddad & Demsky, 1995).

Research-based instructional and evaluative practices clearly indicate that differentiating instruction is the key to meeting the needs of all students (Tomlinson, 2001). My advocated policy stems from evidence indicative of what is transpiring in our schools; ELLs are performing at a much lower level than our native speakers. Haddad and Demsky (1995) identified the incremental mode as one approach to generate policy. This approach occurs after a problem of public debate is identified. The problem is usually part of a system that is already in place. An advocacy group presents the problem and creates forces pressuring the educational system to consider a solution. In order to

adjust the situation, policymakers often promote an adjustment or improvement to the current system in which the problem is located (Haddad & Demsky, 1995).

I used the incremental mode to determine the system, the problem and the policy to be implemented. For the purpose of the advocated policy, the teacher evaluation protocols represent the system in which the problem is located. The lack of differentiated instruction specific to ELLs represents the problem.

I will recommend that my policy be introduced as a pilot program. I will determine criteria to identify the district and school where this policy will be tested. These criteria should include a high number of ELLs, free and reduced lunch, and assessments identifying a high number of low performing ELLs in reading and math. I will help develop new evaluation protocols, including indicators representative of effective ELL instructional practices. It will create a framework that includes measurement components that are supported by research. Data supporting the academic improvement of ELLs also will be necessary to justify the implementation of my policy. I will seek collaboration and feedback from teachers during the first phase. This will ensure teachers' ideas are considered and could increase the buy-in from the school community and encourage support from stakeholders (Zimmerman, 2006).

Another area that I will structure carefully is the professional development component. In order to ensure that teachers understand how to implement the ELL specific strategies, my policy will provide for professional development and continuous support. Professional development opportunities also will be provided to administrators with the goal of equipping them with the strategies they would need to assess ELL instructional strategies and conduct informed observations and equitable evaluations. It is

critical that effective instructional strategies particular to the needs of ELLs are identified accurately so teachers can improve. To be successful, this policy must enable evaluators to identify effective ELL teachers. Through the addition of ELL-specific instructional strategies to current evaluative instruments, teachers' areas of strength and weakness can be identified. I will design professional development aspects of this policy to meet the needs of teachers, administrators, and students. The results will be evidenced by improved academic testing results and the closing of ELL achievement gaps. Training teachers how to effectively teach ELLs, will help them positively impact students' academic achievement.

It will be necessary to allocate funds to pay for the design and reproduction of the rubrics that will be used to evaluate the teachers of ELLs. Also, it will be important to secure funds for developing and implementing professional development opportunities for teachers and school administrators. Another very important part of the implementation of this policy is to involve the teachers' union, first in the development process and then the actual implementation of the policy. This revision to the teacher evaluation system must be, first and foremost, approved by the superintendent before it can be implemented.

The policy implementation is a challenging process. No matter how well it is designed and how well we anticipate results, a surprise factor is always a possibility. Introducing this policy as a pilot study will allow for adjustments, re-evaluation of the plans for implementation, and possibly review of the policy decision itself (Haddad & Demsky, 1995).

SECTION SIX: POLICY ASSESSMENT PLAN

Educational reform in the United States has been influenced greatly by those seeking greater accountability for improved educational results and the more effective use of taxpayers' dollars. An era of accountability has been initiated in every aspect of the educational arena and there is an evaluation attached to every educational policy or program that is implemented. The rule of thumb is to assess a policy prior to its initiation, monitor during implementation to see if it is working, make adjustments when necessary, and evaluate it after implementation to determine if the goals of the policy have been achieved. The results of these assessments, positive or negative, will determine the life of the policy. We are living in times when our livelihood and future depend on the outcome of evaluations.

Whenever policies are established, they must be evaluated. According to Fowler (2009), a policy evaluation is a type of applied research in which the practices and rigorous standards of all research are used in a specific setting for a practical purpose: determining to what extent a policy is reaching its goals. Like every other implemented policy, this policy will include an assessment plan. The intent of evaluating this policy is to monitor its progress, determine whether the goals and objectives of the policy were accomplished, and to gather data regarding the proper implementation of the policy.

Fowler (2009) discussed four broad categories that should be considered when assessing educational evaluations. These categories are usefulness, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. These categories will be included in the assessment of the advocated policy. According to Fowler (2009), a policy is useful when its purpose meets the needs of all stakeholders, and the data collected relates to the purpose of the evaluation and is

specific rather than general. The policy should be feasible, meaning that it can be implemented without creating disruption of the professional responsibilities of the educators involved, and also can be completed within the required time frames (Fowler, 2009). The policy should be legal, ethical, and without conflict of interest or personal gain. The policy also should be accurate, taking into consideration the setting in which the policy has been implemented, as well as the cultural and socioeconomic characteristics of all stakeholders.

The methodology that I will use to evaluate this policy fits the holistic evaluation model (Fowler, 2009). The holistic evaluation model includes both quantitative and qualitative data. In order to have a more comprehensive evaluation of the advocated policy, multiple indicators will be used. Examples of these indicators include test scores from state standardized tests and the Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment (CELLA), increasing or decreasing levels of ELL participants in the multi-tier benchmark assessments, discipline numerical data, attendance data, student and teacher surveys, classroom observations, pre- and post- teacher evaluations, parent surveys, parent-teacher conferences, evidence of professional development in the area of ELL instruction, content area teacher surveys, lesson plans, and student grades.

Consideration of political issues connected to evaluations is important in order to minimize or eliminate the impact they may have on the policy evaluation process. In the politics of evaluation, there are four major groups whose personal interests can be affected by the outcome of the policy's evaluation: (a) policy makers, (b) policy implementers, (c) the clients, and (d) the evaluators. These four groups can have a positive or a negative impact in the life of the policy (Fowler, 2009).

Policy makers will support the policy and view the evaluation of the policy in a positive light as long as it is popular among its constituents, particularly if they have the possibility of re-election. The policy implementers are those who insure the policy is implemented according to plan and adjust actions based on evaluative results along the way. The district and school administrators as well as teachers are at the forefront of the policy implementation. The policy implementers also have personal interests in the implementation of the policy. They will support it if the evaluation of the policy indicates that it benefits children. Also, because of their personal interests, such as reputation, career advancement, and job security, they can be positively or negatively propelled, based on the evaluative finding of implementation. The clients, meaning parents and children, are also a critical group in the evaluation of the policy. This group's main focus is whether the policy directly benefits their children. The last group is composed of the evaluators, who also have personal interest in the outcome of the evaluation. This group's intention is to provide results that allow for sound policy decisions, but also to produce reports with positive results that would lead to improved career status (Fowler, 2009).

The advocated policy potentially can be perceived as an obstacle for these groups' personal interests. In order to avoid negative assumptions, the policy's goals and objectives must be shared with all groups. The first phase will be to gradually share with all stakeholders as much information as possible regarding the new policy, with continuous updates throughout the implementation process. For the advocated policy, this is very important. It is critical to share information regarding the policy's benefits for ELLs, as well as how its implementation, through the use of evaluations, will support and enable teachers to be more successful in their instruction for this particular group of

students. Keeping stakeholders informed increases the level of trust and buy-in. As part of the assessment plan, it will be necessary to inform all stakeholders early in the process regarding the type of indicators that will be used to monitor the implementation of the policy, as well as providing them with opportunities to give feedback and have involvement with the policy evaluation system.

The evaluation of the advocated policy should not require multiple changes. This policy involves a modest modification of the evaluative instruments currently used in teacher evaluation practices. For this reason, the plan to assess the policy will focus on the selected indicators to ensure they will generate data in alignment with the policy's goals and objectives. The clients will be ELLs and their parents. The policy implementers will be the ELL teachers and school and district administrators. The evaluators will be the same now used by participant districts to evaluate teacher evaluation systems that are currently in place.

Patton (2008) presented the utilization-focused outcomes framework. Its purpose is to conceptualize outcomes that are meaningful and measurable for use in facilitating an outcomes-oriented management, monitoring, and evaluation system. This framework uses six elements, which are focused on participant and client outcomes. The six parts include a specific participant target group, a desired outcome for that group, one or more outcome indicators, a performance target, details of data collection, and specification of how findings will be used (Patton, 2008). This method perfectly aligns with the goals and objectives of the advocated policy. Table 1 presents each element aligned to the outcome that will guide the policy evaluation.

Table 1

Framework Element and Participant/Client Outcome

Framework Element	Participant/Client Outcome
Specific participant or client target group	English Language Learners
Desired outcome for that target group	Improve comprehension of content, language acquisition
One or more indicators for each desired outcome	Indicators specific to ELLs added to current teacher evaluations
Details of data collection	Test scores, classroom observations, parent conferences, surveys
How results will be used?	Teacher accountability for their instructional practices with ELLs.
Performance targets	Increase Academic Achievement of ELLs

In order for a policy to be implemented successfully, the collection of relevant data is necessary. It is important for stakeholders to relate the outcomes of the evaluation to the goals and objectives of the policy, as well as to their personal interests. If the resulting data validates their personal interests in some way, support for the advocated policy is more likely to spread across all stakeholder groups.

SECTION SEVEN: SUMMARY IMPACT STATEMENT

My policy impact statement is aligned with the methodology known as communicative language teaching (CLT). This approach can be defined as a set of principles about the goals of language teaching; how learners learn a language, the kind of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom (Richards, 2006). CLT is the most current approach to course design and methodology. It originated in the 1970s as a new method to teach a second language in which the focus shifted from teaching grammatical competence to teaching communicative competence (Richards, 2006). After several proposals for change to this approach, the CLT approach turned its attention to classroom teaching methodology. It prompted debates regarding the way learners learn a language, and the benefits of learning language through the process of communicating in a meaningful way rather than focusing on learning grammar.

ELLs need more specific and specialized instruction than their non-ELL peers. Due to the rapid increase in immigration and the consequent elevated ELL population, teachers have a greater possibility of having ELLs in their classrooms. This requires a strong knowledge and array of skills to be able to meet the unique needs of all students, particularly, the needs of ELLs (Samson & Collins, 2012). The reason this policy is the most appropriate is the urgency of meeting the academic needs and learning gaps of the ELLs who have settled in this country and continue to arrive at our American schools.

Another important reason that makes this the most appropriate policy is the need for teacher professional development. Teachers of ELLs need to be prepared to effectively deliver instruction in a differentiated and specific manner. It is critical to

consider how to best prepare mainstream, or general education, teachers to work with this student population. Given the importance of language development for academic success, all teachers with ELLs in their classrooms must understand the principles and best practices of supporting their unique needs. A mainstream classroom teacher, who is versed in the content and pedagogy to teach non-ELLs, will also need to have specific knowledge and skills to deliver instruction to ELLs (Samson & Collins, 2012).

The values at the center of this policy revolve around the educational needs and rights of ELLs. Education is the key to success and provides individuals with the tools to become productive members of society. Education is the platform to improve our lives academically, professionally, and personally. Supporting the values of our ELL students and teachers can have a great impact on the quality of life of all stakeholders.

My policy advocates the protection of the democratic, social, and economic values and the rights of ELLs and their teachers. By differentiating teacher evaluative practices, we can increase teacher effectiveness and, as a result, increase the academic achievement of the ELL student population. This approach supports the democratic value of equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity exists when everyone has a similar chance to get a good education or find a decent job, regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, handicapping condition, age, or national origin (Fowler, 2009).

My advocated policy reflects general social values: “the development of human potential and improved social functioning for all is consistent with social value work” (Allen-Meares, 1990, p. 285). Adding evaluative criteria to the teacher evaluation instruments that is specific to ELLs supports the social value of individualism. The economic values of this policy are represented by the value of efficiency. Student and

teacher accountability plays a major role in the educational system. Accountability measures, such as teacher evaluations, are designed to improve efficiency. Fowler (2009) defined efficiency as obtaining the best possible return on an expenditure or investment. The implementation of this policy will result in better instructional practice and better student performance.

The force that drives the vision of this policy is the moral obligation to provide ELL students with equal access to a quality education that will prepare them to become productive citizens in the future. To accomplish this goal, we must implement the necessary changes to teacher evaluation practices to accommodate the needs of the ELL student population. The revision to the teacher evaluation practices this policy is advocating is in alignment with its implementation process. Concurrently, the vision of this policy is to meet the needs of the teachers of ELLs. Providing ELL teachers with the necessary professional development on ELL instructional strategies is also a significant component of this policy. However, it is of utmost importance that teachers are evaluated for the implementation of those strategies as well as for their students' academic performance.

The vision of this policy should be shared by most stakeholders because its results would impact the whole community. As ELL academic performance improves, the achievement gap in schools should decrease. It is the community's moral duty to support initiatives that would allow its members to develop their abilities and knowledge to their maximum potential. Better educated ELLs could have an economic impact on the quality of living in their community. A recent study completed by McKinsey and Company analyzed the attributes and economic impact of the education achievement gap (Miller,

2009). The report equated the academic gap to a permanent national recession, and, for students, described its tragic consequences leading to lower earnings, poor health, high unemployment, and higher rates of incarceration. The underutilization of human potential in our society imposes high costs on all of us if we do not use every opportunity available to help ensure every American has a chance to realize their potential (Miller, 2009).

Statistical reports indicate evidence of the rapid growth of the ELL population in the United States. In 2010-2011, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2,981,610 students (6.0%) in reporting states and the District of Columbia were ELLs. In the same timeframe, 229,758 students (8.7%) in Florida were ELLs (FLDOE, 2013). The percentage of ELL students in Florida's public schools has consistently shown a rising trend. In the past 10 years, there has been a cumulative increase of 27.8%. Eleven of the reporting districts showed 10% or more of their enrollment as ELLs (FLDOE, 2013).

The racial achievement gap is reflected in the performance of the increasing number of ELLs in our school system. My advocated policy targets one component, which has been proven to be critical to the academic performance of ELLs. The way in which teachers deliver content to ELLs can have a positive or a negative impact on the academic achievement of this student subgroup. This, along with the existing evidence of rising growth of this student population should raise red flags to indicate that we are not doing enough. Using current evaluative practices to assess teachers of ELLs will not capture the gaps in the delivery of instruction with which ELLs continue to struggle. It will not be until specific accountability for the instruction of ELLs is implemented, that

schools and districts will see more positive statistical evidence of the academic achievement of this minority subgroup.

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