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University of Nevada, Reno

**English Language Learning Students in Nevada: An Exploration on the Newcomer Center
in Wooster High School**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education and the Honors Program

by

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Table of Contents

• Abstract	ii
• Acknowledgements.....	iii
• Lists of Figures	iv
• Abbreviations.....	v
• Introduction.....	1
• Statement of Problem/Purpose of Study	3
• Background.....	4
○ Definition of ELL and LEP.....	4
○ Past Legislation.....	6
○ Common Core State Standards	7
○ Statistics	7
○ Types of Programs	10
○ Sheltered Instruction Methodology.....	14
○ History of the Newcomer Center	15
• Methodology.....	17
• Findings.....	18
○ Newcomer Center	18
○ State Performance	23
○ Effective Methods.....	28
○ Conclusions.....	29
• References.....	31

Abstract

The number of immigrants coming into the United States from Mexico has been increasing exponentially from year to year. Several states have prepared for this influx of Spanish speaking English Language Learner (ELL) students and, consequently, offer supplemental services to these students ensure the greatest degree of learning in terms of both the scholastic material as well as the English language. The question arises as to the level of assistance programs provide for the secondary level students, namely the Newcomer Center in Washoe County School District (WCSD). The main focus of this thesis will be to answer how these secondary ELL students are supported in such a Newcomer Center in WCSD.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Honors Program for giving me the opportunity to conduct research under their guidance and assistance throughout this process. I would not have been able to finish such a well-refined thesis without the help I received from the people in the Honors Office.

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List of Figures

Figure 1. ELL Density by State.....10

Figure 2. Course Structure for ELL Students at the Newcomer Center in Wooster
High School.....21

Figure 3. 2011/2012 Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives Report.....24

Figure 4. Title III Allocations.....25

Abbreviations

- AMAO: Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives
- AYP: Annual Yearly Progress
- ELL: English Language Learner
- ELS: Essential Learning Systems
- HILT: High Intensity Language Training
- HQSI: High Quality Sheltered Instruction
- LEP: Limited English Proficient
- TESOL: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
- WCSD: Washoe County School District

Introduction

A recent controversy in the education world has been the care and education of English Language Learner (ELL) students. ELL students are those that have been identified to have a first language other than English (Coady, 2003). These students have a difficult time learning the core material such as reading, writing, math, and sciences required in the state of Nevada simply because they are not literate in English at a fluent level. In an article titled *Developing Reading Comprehension and Academic Vocabulary for English Language Learners through Science Content: A Formative Experiment* the author explains that, “the acquisition of a second language requires the learning of an enormous number of words, word families, syntax structures, phonology, and inflections as well as the socio-cognitive dimensions of the language” (Taboada & Rutherford 2011). This complexity of learning a new language creates problems for both the students who wish to succeed and the schools that are trying to help such students. This thesis will explore the relationship between secondary ELL students in Reno in the state of Nevada who attend specific centers for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students and the success rate of graduating. The focus of this thesis will answer the following questions: How are secondary ELL students supported in a newcomer center in Washoe County School District? Why is the Newcomer Center recently available?

During the research portion of this thesis, the researcher will find data such as dropout rates, graduation rates, number of ELL students in the respective district, and attendance data. This thesis will use information that is available on the Public Policy,

Accountability and Assessment report published by school districts annually and from the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs), also made available publicly.

The anticipated results will show that these supplemental ELL centers in WCSD lead to higher graduation rates than those who do not.

The Newcomer Center program in Wooster High School will be researched and studied to answer the previously posed questions. This thesis will focus on the Newcomer Center in regards to how students qualify to gain admittance, why the center was created and who it is accountable to, how the teachers are chosen, and why Wooster High School was chosen for this center.

Statement of Problem/Purpose of Study

The purpose of this thesis is to synthesize information and research data showing the results of ELL students in Washoe County School District, namely the Newcomer Center located in Wooster High School. It will also discuss the importance this supplemental program offered to the ELL students in the state and its effectiveness. The main question of research will be, “How does Washoe County School District assist English Language Learning students in a Newcomer Center?”

Background

Definition of ELL and LEP

One in nine public school students in the United States is classified as an English language learner student (Goldenberg, 2008). English language learners are students whose first language is not English and/or speaks English either not at all or with enough limitations that he cannot fully participate in mainstream English instruction effectively (Goldenberg, 2008). This definition may seem broad, but it is also simple. Any student that fits into this category can benefit from additional structured instruction in English. The difference between the terms English language learner and Limited English proficient (LEP) is simply preference of the times; LEP was the previous title used for what is now deemed ELL (Uro & Barrio, 2013). Uro and Barrio went further to discuss the characteristics of ELL students in their article, *English Language Learners in America's Great City Schools: Demographics, Achievement, and Staffing* by explaining that ELL students are between three and twenty one years of age and enrolled or preparing to enroll in public school. Furthermore, these students were not born in the United States, have a native language that is something other than English, or are from an environment where a language other than English impacted the individual's level of English proficiency (Uro & Barrio, 2013). There are three main methods for determining whether a student is an ELL as outlined in the article. The first is that the student is assessed by state-developed instruments such as surveys and interviews. An example of this is the Home Language Survey in which parents of students are requested to fill out a survey explaining both their and their students' language of choice and fluency at home.

The second method is by using documents issued by state educational agencies or districts, these can be requirements set forth by the state educational department that would deem a student an ELL student. The last method is utilizing Title III programs according to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, in which national stipulations are outlined to determine the degree to which a student is an ELL (Uro & Barrio, 2013). In Nevada, the instrument used to determine if a student is an English language learner is the Home Language Survey (Uro & Barrio, 2013). This is simply a questionnaire delivered to the parents of new enrollees that asks the language used at home, if it is something other than English, the student is classified as an ELL.

Another degree of problem for these ELL students comes in the form of previous formal education. Students that are classified as ELL students who have no previous formal education are challenged much more because they lack literacy in their first language (Roy-Campbell, 2012). This is a logical connection, that there need be the background of education and formal teaching in order to learn a language more effectively. Furthermore, if the student had previous formal education, but it was interrupted, he or she will also have a more difficult time learning a new language (Roy-Campbell, 2012). It was explained in a research article in the American Educator that teaching these students to read in their first language will promote higher levels of reading achievement in English (Goldenberg, 2008), increasing the idea behind the theory that having a background of formal education will increase the amount of learning using formal education.

These complications need to be taken into effect by teachers who have these students in their classes because what is known as academic English is what these

students need to learn and use in their public schooling. These students need to learn not only regular English for their everyday conversations but also academic English for their communication of educational topics in school. In a research article on English language learning students, academic English is explained as a more abstract, complex and challenging form of English that will allow the student to participate in mainstream classroom instruction (Goldenberg, 2008). Further in this research it explains that having a separate period for English language development is more effective than integrating ELL students in mainstream classes and teaching them solely the content with no English supplements (Goldenberg, 2008).

Past Legislation

The article *A Brief History of Issues Relevant to English Language Learners and School Reform* began by explaining the importance of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1966. Title I of this act states that support will be provided for students overcoming cultural and language barriers through this Title in the form of funding (Coady, 2003). Two years later, in 1968, Title VII was written to provide funds for the establishment of programs in many large population cities across the United States. These programs, although they were not accepted as quickly as hoped, created a base for more programs to be created in the future (Coady, 2003). The Supreme Court case *Lau v. Nichols* in 1969 is the landmark case that occurred for ELL students. In this case, a plaintiff representing 1,800 ELL students in San Francisco who sued the School District for the denial of rights to equal educational opportunity that was guaranteed in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Five years later a ruling was published explaining that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act had indeed failed to provide proper language instruction to allow these

students to participate and benefit (Coady, 2003). Not only did this ruling raise awareness of ELL students in the United States but it also brought forth the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974 not denying equal opportunity to an individual based on race, color, sex, or national origin (Coady, 2003). This act is still a big player in school practices today, especially with the recent passing of the No Child Left Behind act of 2001 that allocates funds based on an algorithm of the ratio of ELL students to the general school population (Coady, 2003).

Common Core State Standards

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were proposed in 2010 by many State Boards of Education in order to create standards that are national and easy to understand and measure (National Governors Association, 2010). Teachers, administrators, subject matter experts and college alumni all worked together to create these evidence-based and research-based standards that 45 states currently follow (Rust, 2012). Nevada adopted the CCSS on June 22, 2010 (National Governors Association, 2010). These standards are used as benchmarks for students to achieve each year of their education and are therefore what is expected by the students at each grade level. These standards focus more on core conceptual understandings and procedures than defining exactly what the students need to know at a certain grade (National Governors Association, 2010). Other important components of these goals are problem formation, research, interpretation of communication, precision and accuracy (Rust, 2012).

Statistics

According to the Migration Policy Institute, “Nevada has the highest density of ELL [English Language Learner] enrollment [in the nation], at slightly over 31 percent”

(Batalova & McHugh 2010 & McHugh), ELL education is increasingly important in order to achieve Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) as legislated in 2001 under the No Child Left Behind Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2012 Title III). This act set forth requirements for the students in terms of standardized testing for each and every school district to achieve. If the school district does not accomplish the goals outlined in this act within four years, it is placed on a watch list and given four years to reach the set goals. Schools with high ELL student enrollment are not exempt from this act, therefore making it much more difficult for schools with high ELL student enrollment to achieve the proposed goals. The teachers in the Newcomer Center in Wooster High School that educate these students are not ordinary, they are specially trained to help these students understand and learn the aforementioned curriculum required by the newly adopted Common Core State Standards in Nevada while aiding these students in their English proficiency within the Newcomer Center as well. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is grounded on the basis that Nevada has a high percentage of ELL students compared to the rest of the country as shown in **Figure 1** on page 6.

This report shows that over the last decade the percent increase of ELL student enrollment increased in Nevada by 341.7%, easily three times higher than the next highest increase of 112.3% for Oregon (Batalova & McHugh 2010 & McHugh). The influx of mostly Spanish-speaking immigrant students has created a great need for following legislation in order to accommodate for both the learning of Common Core State Standards as well as the English language. Furthermore, the Reno Gazette Journal published an article stating that of the total 63,635 students in the 2007-2008 school year, 11,335 of them were classified as ELL students (Mullen 2008). Having one in every five

students be an ELL student as suggested in the article shows the need for these ELL student centers in order to aid these students to get the best education possible. Not only is there already a high number of these students in WCSD but it continues to grow; the ELL population grows at the fastest rate of any demographic group (Ruark 2010).

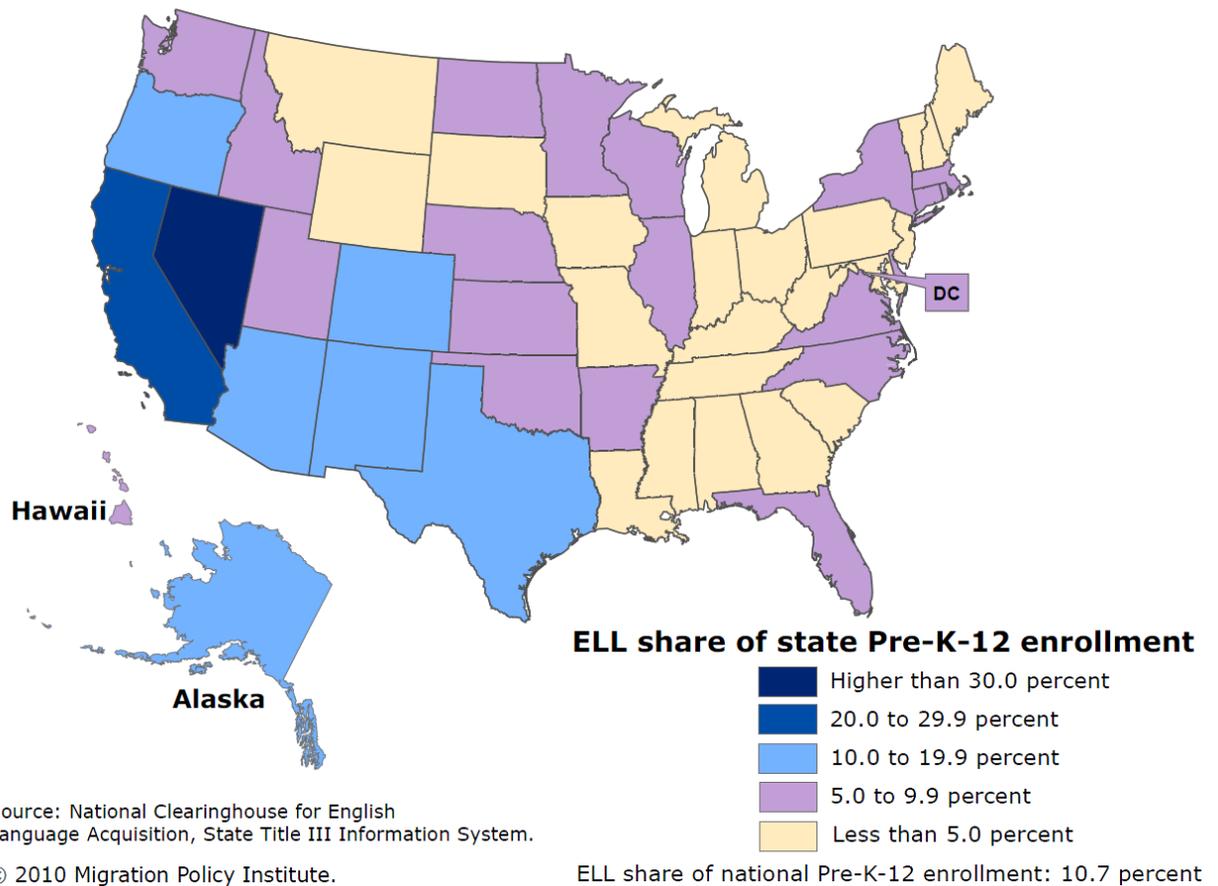
Last, the Migration Policy Institute ranked Clark County number six for the highest number of ELL students, just behind Houston, Miami, Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles in the 2007-2008 school year (Boyle et al. 2010). However, in the 2010-2011 school year, Clark County School District jumped to the second highest number of ELL students, behind Los Angeles (Curtis 2011), increasing the need for specialized teachers and programs to help these students. The Nevada Education Coalition discusses the difficulties ELL students in Nevada have had in the most recent years. Most recently, one in six students was classified as ELL, with about 70% of the ELL students in Clark County School District. With such a high rate of ELL students being part of the regular classroom, it is even more surprising that in a recent review of classrooms 69 out of 70 teachers in Clark County School District provided high quality ELL instruction, and most of the classrooms provided no instructional content specifically on English language development (Frehner 2013). It is evident that the reason ELL students perform lower than their English proficient counterparts is due to factors such as less effective teaching and absent language development instruction.

Perhaps the reason behind the lower test scores and graduation rate in ELL students is due to the fact that Nevada does not provide funding specifically for ELL students. Overall federal funding has decreased for ELL students as a whole, Nevada remains tied for last in receiving federal money for education with Montana and South

Dakota (Chambers, Levin, & Wang 2012). **Figure 1** below shows the density of ELL students by state, taken from the Migration Policy Institute in the 2007-2008 school year; It is from this school year because this is the most recent poll conducted available for access.

Figure 1: ELL Density by state.

States with the Highest ELL Student Density, 2007-2008



Types of Programs

As previously discussed, these ELL programs are influenced by the several variables taken into account by the school district. The three main variables causing this

influence are (1) the student population, (2) the individual student characteristics, and (3) district resources. The student population is important as mentioned above that each student is inherently different, but also that the density and type of ELL student in the district can be different while still in the same state, meaning that each student learns differently and therefore needs customized instruction. For example, some districts have a large population of ELL students that come from the same language background, making it mostly one language barrier to deal with. While on the other hand, different districts may have a proportionally smaller number of ELL students but these students come from many different language and culture backgrounds, indicating a higher number of specially trained professionals there to assist these students in their learning.

Furthermore, within these different culture groups are additional potential difficulties in different languages these students speak, in different grades, and in different schools. The second variable is how the individual students differ from one to another. The main focus here is the previous schooling of these children either in their native language or English. Generally speaking, students with previous schooling involving reading, writing, and mathematics have an easier time acclimating to the school system in the United States because they are used to the form and layout of a typical school. The last variable this work mentioned was the resources available in each district to start or maintain these English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. Every school district is very diverse from the next and therefore the problem arises that some districts are lucky enough to have trained ESL personnel while others teach their general education teachers simple skills that will help them to aid these students in the classroom (McKeon 1987).

As it was previously pointed out in this section, the funding available for the ESL programs in Nevada is very limited, as Nevada does not allocate funds specifically for the purpose of educating ELL students. Therefore, the most important variable affecting the programs available for these students is already at a less desired level. Funding is the most important due to the fact that, without funding, it is almost impossible to provide effective programs for these students. Although Nevada does not provide funding for these groups, the individual programs raise funds for themselves. The funding raised by individual programs determines which type of program it will be in terms of the methods employed. In Nevada, there are two main types of ESL programs: push-in and pull-out. The former is when specifically trained ESL teachers go to the mainstream classrooms to act as an aid to the general education teacher. These ESL teachers provide aid to the ELL students in the classroom in the sense that they provide help on the English Language Learning aspect while the general education teacher provides the assistance necessary for the core content. The latter is a separate room or facility where the ELL students are taken out of their general education classroom to receive higher intensity help in English Language acquisition while learning the core content at the same time. Many districts in Nevada do a combination of both, where the students are differentiated by level. The students in the higher level of English are given push-in assistance while the students in lower level of English are pulled out and taught specifically in an ESL classroom. In the two main school districts being researched in this work, Washoe County and Clark County, the same type of program (pull-out) is used at a secondary level but in different ways.

Within the scope of pull-out ESL instruction there are two major types of programs that effectively provide the help these students require in the secondary setting. The first is Sheltered English or Content-Based Programs in which an ESL trained teacher is providing instruction of core content (McKeon, 1987). These classrooms focus mainly on only one or two subjects and therefore it is possible that a student can have more than one of these sheltered classes in a day (especially if the student is attending solely an ESL school). The second program is called a High Intensity Language Training (HILT) program in which ELL students are taken for a portion of the day and receive high intensity training on English language (McKeon, 1987). The teachers that instruct these classrooms are also trained in ESL and provide almost exclusively ELL instruction to the students for a few hours a day.

Prior to May 2012, Washoe County School District had the “high school intake center” in which students were pulled out of school to attend this center full time (Boyson & Short, 2012). This center was somewhat similar to the Newcomer Center in place today, except it was found to not be as effective and helpful as it could be. There were many issues with this that led to its disposal in 2002 such as its complete isolation of the ELL students, no graduation credit given for classes taken, no consistency for transferring students to other sites and no course sequence or plan. These shortcomings brought about a meeting with many administrators and members of the ELL/ESL Department in which a great restructuring took place. After this restructuring came about the result of the current Newcomer Center located in Wooster High School in Reno. The restructuring of

the Newcomer Center has shown that Sheltered Instruction is useful in teaching ELL students.

Sheltered Instruction Methodology

Sheltered Instruction was created solely to meet the needs of English Language Learners and has been used throughout supplementary programs for ELL students. Sheltered Instruction is a form of content-based instruction in which the target language is taught simultaneously with the content (Fritzen, 2011). The main idea of Sheltered Instruction is that the target language is best learned when it is embedded in meaningful, comprehensible, and relevant contexts so that the mainstream curriculum is accessible to ELLs throughout the development of the language (Fritzen, 2011). This seemingly simple method becomes much harder when taking into account the idea that every student is different and therefore learns differently. Sheltered Instruction goes further than to simply teach the language and the content, it also goes so far as to teach general academic competencies such as critical thinking, study skills, and learning strategies that the students can transfer across all of their subject classes (Fritzen, 2011).

Another name for Sheltered Instruction is Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), which includes inclusion of language objectives in content, development of background knowledge, and emphasis on academic literary practice (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2010). SIOP is the newest form of Sheltered Instruction used because it is continuously updated and supported by the state. One of the co-creators of the SIOP teaching model stated that, "It's the only empirically validated model of instruction for English learners" (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2010).

History of the Newcomer Center

The Newcomer Center located in Wooster High School was created in May of 2012 as an improvement of the previous high school intake center designed to specifically help students that are new to the country with a first language other than English. This center was created because of the noticeably low graduation rate for the school district, to which the superintendant realized that ELL students was the lowest group for graduation rate (Washoe County School District, 2012). A “Newcomer” student is one whose primary or home language is not English and is a new arrival to the country (Washoe County School District, 2012). This is the criteria the Newcomer Center at Wooster High School uses for Newcomer student enrollment to the program.

Wooster High School was chosen to house the Newcomer Center because of its geographically centered location, therefore providing a more central location in the district. The Newcomer Center, since it is a program located within Wooster High School, is accountable to the high school itself, meaning that the graduation rates of the students in this program are combined with the students of the school as a whole (Washoe County School District, 2012). Also because of Wooster High School being in charge of this program it means that the teachers that work in this program are Wooster High School teachers that have been trained in SIOP methods and employ them when teaching ELL students. Currently there are two teachers that work with the Newcomer students in this program, but this number can be expected to increase as the student population in the program does (Washoe County School District, 2012).

The Newcomer Center program goes further than just helping these students academically, it goes so far as to help these students with social interaction and integration by providing an American culture and social culture class that the students have the opportunity to take (Washoe County School District, 2012). One method of integrating the students socially is having classes having a mix of ELL students and non-ELL students in the classes throughout the high school, so that the students have an opportunity to grow relationships with students who speak English fluently. Within these classes the SIOP method is used to aid both the ELL students as well as the non-ELL students, because, as mentioned previously, the SIOP method teaches study skills as well as the content and English (Washoe County School District, 2012).

Methodology

The process of writing began with the collection of data from many sources, including the Public Policy, Accountability and Assessment report of Washoe County School District as well as the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives for the state of Nevada. It then continued with an exploration into the supplemental centers offered solely to ELL students, namely the Newcomer Center in WCSD. After the collection of data, a review of the results brought about the significance of the different supplemental programs offered to this student population as well as the different methodologies utilized.

Findings

Newcomer Center

Washoe County School District is the second largest school district in Nevada. It was found that for the 2008-2009 school year WCSD had a dropout rate of 3.5% (U.S. Department of Education 2011 Report Card). Although this number is slightly above the other counties across the state, it is believed to be higher than other counties such as Lyon County and Pershing County due to the population size. Since 2009 the graduation rate in WCSD has risen an impressive 14% up to 70% (U.S. Department of Education 2011 Annual). In the last school year (2011-2012), the graduation rate has continued this growth to 71.3% (U.S. Department of Education 2011 Annual). Although this number does not reflect only the ELL students' achievement, it is a good reflection because ELL students are held to the same standards for graduation as all students are. Specific data for the graduation rate of the ELL students that are helped with their English Language acquisition could not be found due to the fact that these students will be a part of the Newcomer Center for one year after which they are then immersed back into their originally zoned school and counted as a student of the general population. Therefore, the overall graduation rate of the district will have already included the figure of ELL students.

Much more impressive is the graduation rate for the special student populations such as LEP or ELL students that are in supplemental programs similar to the Newcomer Center in WCSD. For example, at Wooster High School, which houses the main offices for the Newcomer Center, graduation rates increased from 59% to 75% in 2012 (U.S.

Department of Education 2011 Report Card). The principal, Leah Keuscher, remarked that this increase was due to the number of new supplemental programs that have, “allowed us to create before, during, after school, and weekend programs to tailor support for each student and their individual needs” (Campbell 2012). Although there is not a great plethora of information because the Newcomer Center was established at Wooster High School just recently in May 2012, it can be expected that the graduation rate increases can only continue to rise. This population of students is now required to get some sort of additional supplement program alongside their core curriculum teaching since the implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (Boyle et al. 2010). The teachers at the Newcomer Center, as stated before, are highly trained to help these specific students in both their English Language acquisition as well as core class material learning.

The Newcomer Center for ELL students in WCSD has its main office located in Wooster High School. At this center, Newcomer English Learners are defined to have limited formal schooling, low literacy skills, and/or varying levels of language skills in English. Further information gathered on the Newcomer Center has shown that it is used more as a model or program within a school that is, “part of an integrated ELL English language program at the site that includes structured English courses and inclusion of ELLs into non-ELL mainstream courses beginning a students’ first year in the program” (Boyson & Short 2012). This description paints a very good picture of the program in that it explains how the ELL students are taken in and given high intensity instruction in structured English courses as well as inclusion to mainstream classes, which ultimately is

the goal for these students. In addition to their intensive English courses the Newcomer Center program also has the students enroll in culture courses to help them adjust to a new country's culture, both in the school as well as in the community. Overall, this program allows these ELL students to take both courses they need for the graduation requirements in the district as well as academic and socio-cultural help they need to succeed in all areas of living in a new community.

This Newcomer Center is utilizing the pull out method for their students due to the fact that secondary students require much more intense instruction in acquiring a language than those at the elementary level. The pull out for these students lasts one year in which they receive intensive English instruction while also receiving instruction for core content. **Figure 2** below illustrates the course structure the Newcomer Center utilizes for its ELL Students. The students are placed in beginner, intermediate or advanced level according to their literacy level in English, after which they proceed through the program moving from a course schedule of mostly ELL courses moving to a schedule of almost all non-ELL courses, or mainstream courses. This program is formulated this way because it allows familiarity with the building and teachers, exposure to native English speakers in academic and non-academic settings, earning credit towards graduation, while reducing anxiety for a new environment (Boyson & Short 2012). After completion of this program the students are then placed back into their public school they are zoned for where they can receive occasional assistance from the on-campus ELL trained teachers if necessary. These students are given the option after one year of attending the Newcomer Center to remain at Wooster High School because they will

have built relationships not only with the students and teachers but also with the school culture and community that surrounds it.

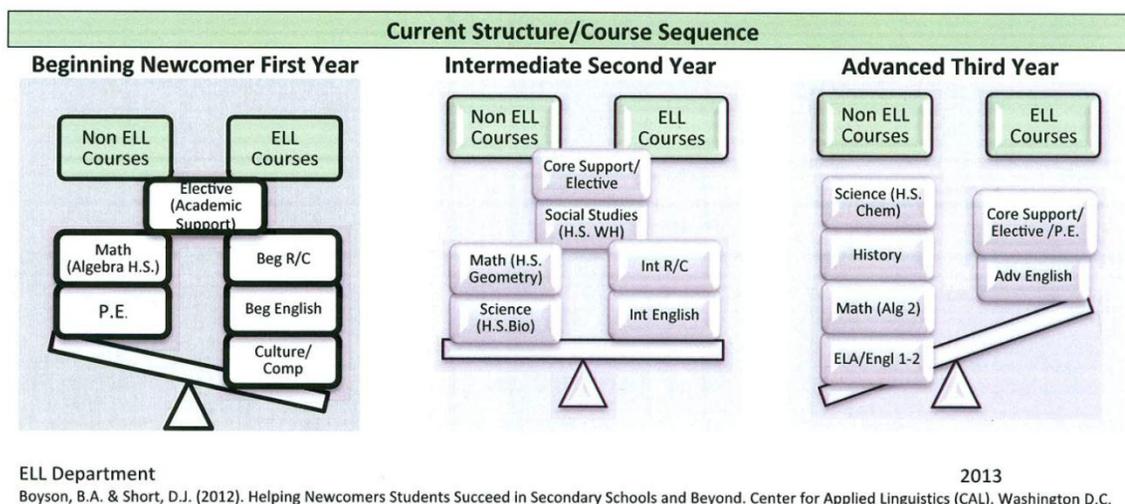


Figure 2: Course Structure for ELL Students at the Newcomer Center in Wooster High School

The Center for Applied Linguistics conducted a case study of Newcomer Centers and produced findings that delineated what an effective Newcomer Program needs to have. These aspects include having all of the ELL teachers be fully trained in Sheltered Instruction and follow their curriculum objectives closely, allowing an extra class period or summer school for the students, allowing class credits to be applied toward the graduation requirements, and having a trained staff available to teach ELL students (Boyson & Short 2012). The Newcomer Center in Wooster High School has made these qualities part of their mission statement in order to best assist these students with their immersion, inclusion, and English acquisition. Further in this case study the issues and concerns of the Newcomer Center were discussed (Boyson & Short 2012).

Things such as the *No Child Left Behind* accountability measures were too difficult to apply to these students. These measures are seen as a good motivational tool in that they increase the expectation for students but on the other hand the high stakes testing have negative effects on the students and reflect poorly on the school. Another item discussed was the students' emotional considerations, although this report did claim that the goal of the Newcomer Center was for academic assistance and that there are a number of counselors available for the ELL students.

In other schools in WCSD, sheltered content based instruction is used whereby the ELL student remains in the regular classroom but receives content instruction in English from a specially trained teacher to make the content most comprehensible for ELL students. On the WCSD website there is information on the implementation of the Sheltered Instruction used in public schools. It states that these classrooms, which include a mix of English speakers as well as ELL students, "integrate language and content while infusing socio-cultural awareness. Teachers scaffold instruction to aid student comprehension of content topics and objectives by adjusting their speech and instructional tasks, and by providing appropriate background information and experiences" (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short 2012). This is the program that ELL students would return to if they had attended a year at the Newcomer Center prior. Also on the website for WCSD it explained that every school is given the opportunity to take the Sheltered Instruction training either in chunks on given weekends or all at once over the summer. There are also three levels of training the district personnel can receive, from simple professional development to a summer long session that will allow those who

receive it to be able to teach and coach others in Sheltered Instruction methods (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short 2012).

State Performance

Research for the state of Nevada as a whole brought back interesting results including the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) report from the 2011-2012 school year, which shows a breakdown of the number of English Language Learner students in each county that were tested and achieved the test on different objectives of the AMAO report. As seen in **Figure 3** below, the counties with the largest number of ELL students were Clark County and Washoe County, both of which achieved AMAO, meaning that the students in these counties passed the standardized tests given to them within two attempts (U.S. Department of Education, AMAO, 2010). As can be seen in the figure, overall the state did not pass because all counties must achieve AMAO in order for the state to be classified as passing, which did not pass on the second attempt; the state is classified as not achieving on AMAO number two, or the second attempt. The large population of these respective counties accounts for much more funds being allocated to aid the supplemental programs for the success of ELLs and could therefore be a determining factor in the success of achieving AMAO. However, looking at the other counties with much smaller populations suggest that this is not true. The supplemental centers could be responsible for the success of all of these students in that they provide help for large numbers of students when a one on one relationship between ELL student and aid is unavailable.

**NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
2011/2012 AMAO Report**

District Name	# AMAOs Achieved	ELLs		AMAO #1			AMAO #2			AMAO #3
		Tested	2nd Test	# Achvd	% Achvd	Achvd	# Achvd	% Achvd	Achvd	Y/N
Carson	3	1287	974	664	68%	Yes	222	22.79%	Yes	Yes
Churchill	3	279	212	144	68%	Yes	40	18.87%	Yes	Yes
Clark	3	55,845	43,727	27,609	63%	Yes	8,312	19.01%	Yes	Yes
Douglas	3	304	231	159	69%	Yes	66	28.57%	Yes	Yes
Elko	3	1094	834	548	66%	Yes	202	24.22%	Yes	Yes
Esmeralda*	2	19	19	19	100%	Yes	8	42.11%	Yes	*
Eureka*	*	0	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Humboldt	3	424	314	212	68%	Yes	57	18.15%	Yes	Yes
Lander	3	101	71	56	79%	Yes	21	29.58%	Yes	Yes
Lincoln*	*	1	1	0	*	*	0	*	*	*
Lyon	3	586	428	323	75%	Yes	93	21.73%	Yes	Yes
Mineral*	*	0	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Nye	3	407	234	138	59%	Yes	43	18.38%	Yes	Yes
Pershing*	0	42	26	7	27%	No	2	7.69%	No	*
Storey*	*	2	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Washoe	3	10,788	8,935	5,776	65%	Yes	1,691	18.93%	Yes	Yes
White Pine*	2	45	35	20	57%	Yes	8	22.86%	Yes	*
Chrtr Aut*		30	0							
NV STATE	2	71254	56,041	35,675	64%	Yes	10,765	19.21%	Yes	No

2011/2012 Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs)

AMAO #1 = 53%, or more, must achieve a 25 point gain
or greater on the overall score.

AMAO #2 = 14.6%, or more, must achieve proficient on the overall score.

AMAO #3 = LEP students achieved Aduquate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Key:

AMAOs: the number of AMAOs achieved by the District or State.

ELLs 2nd Test: the total number of LEP students tested twice on the
English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA).

Achvd: the number of LEP students that achieved the AMAO.

% Achvd: the percentage of LEP students that achieved the AMAO.

Achvd: Whether or not the AMAO was achieved.

* Fewer than 25 LEP students (Title I "n" Number), and/or district doesn't qualify for Title III funds.
These districts receive no sanctions for not achieving the AMAOs,
but their data are used to calculate state results.

Final - Revised 10/4/12

Source: State of Nevada Department of Education; 2012 State AMAO Report. Retrieved 3/1/13.

Figure 3: 2011/2012 Annual Measurable Achievement Objective Report

Another important finding that relates to the state of Nevada as a whole is the report showing the allocation of funding for Title III, or Limited English Proficient and Immigrant students. The funds allocated throughout Nevada to help LEP programs clearly went to the larger counties first (Clark County received \$6,528,300 this year) while many of the smaller counties got little to no funding due to such a low number of LEP students (Department of Education LEP). **Figure 4** shows the distribution of funds to all of the counties. Clearly the most funding goes to the most populated counties such

as Clark County and Washoe County, but this funding remains inadequate to provide proper supplemental programs to help these students reach both English proficiency as well as standards set forth for graduation requirements. The distribution of federal funding is too small to be significant enough to help the ELL student population. These recent additions to school districts to aid these students is only the beginning of an act or law that will change the face of ELL student instruction in the future for the better.

2012-2013 District Title III Allocations

LEP and Immigrant

DISTRICT	10-11	11-12	12-13	09-10	10-11	Eligible	11-12	12-13
	LEP	LEP	LEP	Immigrant	Immigrant	for Imm	Imm.	Imm.
	Count	Funding	Funding	Count	Count	Funding	Funding	Funding
Carson	1,294	154,593	\$150,540	195	70	No	0	\$17,400
Churchill	281	33,571	\$32,700	63	55	No	0	\$0
Clark	55,818	6,668,517	\$6,528,300	6,695	5262	No	0	\$0
Douglas	308	36,796	\$35,601	31	12	No	0	\$10,050
Elko	1,064	127,115	\$128,000	35	42	Yes	11,600	\$11,400
Esmeralda	17	0	\$0	5	0	No	0	\$0
Eureka	0	0	\$0	0	0	No	0	\$0
Humboldt	398	47,549	\$50,000	43	46	Yes	12,400	\$0
Lander	110	13,142	\$11,900	8	10	Yes	5,200	\$0
Lincoln	0	0	\$0	0	0	No	0	\$0
Lyon	587	70,128	\$68,600	121	76	No	0	\$0
Mineral	0	0	\$0	0	0	No	0	\$0
Nye	436	52,088	\$48,000	23	32	Yes	9,600	\$0
Pershing	35	0	\$0	2		No	0	\$0
Storey	0	0	\$0	0	0	No	0	\$0
Washoe	11,056	1,320,849	\$1,261,200	936	826	No	0	\$0
Whitepine	51	0	\$0	11	12	Yes	5,600	\$0
Charter Aut.			\$0					\$5,250
TOTAL	71,455	8,524,348	\$8,314,841	8,168	6443		44,400	\$44,100

Figure 4: Title III Allocations.

Source: State of Nevada Department of Education; 2012 State AMAO Report. Retrieved 3/1/13.

The dropout rate for the entire state was 5.1% in the 2007-2008 school year (U.S. Department of Education 2011 Report Card). This is an interesting figure because it is larger than Clark County's rate, which one would expect to be higher due to a higher density of population in one area. On the contrary, because the overall state percentage takes into account the small counties whose dropout rate is very high due to a low population, Clark County is shown to have a lower dropout rate than the rest of the State. On the other hand, Clark County had a lower graduation rate (66.4%) when compared to the state as a whole (68.8%), and even lower when compared to Washoe County (71.3%) (U.S. Department of Education 2011 Report Card). Although dropout rate and graduation rate are hardly directly related, one would expect there to be a higher graduation rate in a county with a small dropout rate. This information suggests that Clark County School District succeeds more at keeping students in school than graduating on time, again, perhaps due to the high number of students. Also, this would suggest that other counties such as WCSD are doing an exemplary job in helping all of the students achieve graduation. ELL students can be accounted for here by looking at the overall graduation rate of students per district, because these students are held to the same standards as all students in the system.

Takahashi (2012) notes in the *Las Vegas Sun* that, "Hispanic students are now the largest student group in the state, yet they are among the least likely to graduate from high school. Nevada's graduation rate for Hispanic students in the class of 2008, the most recent data available, was a mere 29.6 percent." The majority of ELL students in Nevada are Hispanic with Spanish as the main background language spoken. The author further

discusses the importance of funding for these programs, and how Nevada has an especially difficult time with this funding due to the lack of allocation of funds specifically for ELL programs. Focusing on CCSD, the article explained that the district suffered from multimillion-dollar budget cuts last year, resulting in cutting approximately 60 ELL facilitators. However, the district sees the education of ELL students as such a high importance that through reallocation of resources, the district was able to ensure an ELL specialist in all of the 217 elementary schools (Takahashi 2012). This is an incredible feat considering the fact that there are 357 schools in the entire district. The administrators and legislators found it more important to have these specialists at elementary schools because it has been shown that children are able to learn a new language much faster at a younger age.

In an article published in the Las Vegas Review it was explained by School Board President Edwards that graduation rates can be more or less predicted and, “The ability of students to read English well by the third grade is a strong indicator of their likelihood to graduate and be successful” (Curtis 2011). Therefore, it is important that the administrators decided to ensure that every elementary school has an ELL specialist. These specialists will be able to help the ELL students at a younger age and that will create a better base for these students to continue to build upon in their public school career. Previously it was explained that learning a new language at a younger age allowed for deeper and quicker acquisition, this implies that having an ELL specialist at Elementary Schools is also helpful for the staff that works in secondary level schools as it prepares the students in terms of English acquisition. Although this thesis focuses solely

on the secondary schooling level it is important to point out the effect elementary teaching has on the preparation of students for the rigorous curriculum presented at the secondary.

Effective Methods

What is known about good instruction and curriculum in general holds true for English learners as well but when instructing ELL students in English, teachers must modify instruction to take into account students' language limitations. This includes things such as clear goals and learning objectives, meaningful contexts, curriculum rich content, well structured and paced instruction, active engagement, and opportunities for individual and group practice with assessments and reviews (Goldenberg, 2008).

Effective language teaching needs both explicit content instruction as well as opportunities for the students to practice both on their own and with their peers. It has always been said that immersion is one of the most helpful ways of learning a new language, but this is only so if the context is meaningful and the student is challenged at a level that is beneficial, not detrimental. In the article *Ensuring Academic Success for English Learners* nine elements of effective ELL education were outlined. In a broad sense they are high quality preschool education, supports for newcomers in transition, comprehensive English language development programs, full access to challenging curriculum, high quality instruction and materials, inclusive school climate, valid assessments, strong family and community partnerships, and a school structure that is directed for the particular needs of ELL students (Olsen, 2006). The research for this thesis argues that the second point made is the most important of all of them, that

supporting the newcomers in their transition is a large part of the Newcomer Center in Wooster High School. Immigrant newcomers need to learn more than just the academic portion of their new life, but the culture as well. In order for schools to help these students with the culture shock that is a very big reality, schools usually offer counseling services for these students (Olsen, 2006).

Conclusions

The importance of the findings presented earlier could go beyond the state border for Nevada because of the fact that the Newcomer Center uses very specific methods to assist the ELL students that go through the public schools. The Newcomer Center in Washoe County School District employs the use of sheltered instruction whereby the teachers employ scaffolding for the students in both English and the core curriculum. These teachers scaffold for these students by encouraging them to challenge themselves at a perfect level without making the lessons too difficult or too easy. Although this is an important concept to keep in mind with all students, it is especially important when it comes to ELL students because these students require much more help than the instruction in the one core content area (as opposed to core content and English together). Plainly speaking, these students have twice the academic load as all the other students because they need to acquire English at the same time. Sheltered instruction has proven to be effective thus far.

Another conclusion to be made from the findings in these this school district is the point that Nevada may be setting an example for other states to follow. Due to the fact that Nevada has the highest number of ELL students and began these this program within

the last five years speaks a strong message that this topic is of great importance and needs help. The decision to enact this center could not have come at a better time to help these students with the recent increase of immigrant and LEP populations. It is very sensible to say that the Newcomer Center is just the beginning of a process that will continue to grow outward to other counties and school districts and perhaps even further states to help the growing ELL student populations.

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