THE AFFECT OF BEING BILINGUAL IN THE AREA OF ACADEMICS.

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ABSTRACT

This study was completed to find if there is a significant effect of being bilingual in regards to student’s academics. When ELL students are being taught their first language skills could be considered in adding to their learning. Research shows that students who are bilingual can have a great impact on their academics especially if the students are literate in their first language.

The study was conducted by using the scores from the students Acuity benchmark assessments. The data was collected from these exams for the first, second and third quarter of the 2014-2015 school year. The data was collected for both ELL students and Non ELL students in the same second grade class. The study was conducted by reviewing the students’ scores on their Math and Language Arts benchmark tests. These tests were given by computer. After the tests were given the reports were run to see how the students did on the test. The Math and Language Arts benchmarks each had 15 questions. The students were tested after each quarter.

Findings of this study shows that there a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students. The results suggest that further research to look into other factors of academic performance.
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INTRODUCTION

*Background, Issues and Concerns.*

The concerns how does being bilingual affect education for ELL students? It is important as the assessments are becoming more rigorous each year. The district has changed their benchmarks to mirror the MAP test. They are currently giving the Acuity benchmark assessments. Looking into this assessment it will be a predictor of how the second grade students will perform as third graders for the MAP test. Current research shows many academic benefits of being bilingual.

*Practice under investigation.*

The practice under investigation is to see if there is to see what the difference is in being bilingual. There will be a study to see if being bilingual will affect other areas of academics. This will be looked at by data collected from the Acuity assessment that is administered in my current school district. The data was compared for ELL students to that of native speakers. It was compared in the area of Math and Language Arts. Past research shows how being bilingual is beneficial as well as what methods teachers can use to help support bilingual students.

*School Policy to be informed by Study.*

The school policy to be informed by this policy would be to show how the students could possibly score on their MAP tests. The acuity test is supposed to be modeled after MAP testing which is the AYP for each school. Since these students are in second grade this would be an idea of how they will score. The data has been shared with the administration as well as their current teachers how to better differentiate instruction.
The Affect of Being Bilingual On Academics

Conceptual underpinning.

The conceptual underpinning is that being bilingual can affect a student academically. According to Collier and Cummins et al. (2011), research shows that second language learners usually require at least five years to catch up to native English speakers in academic English.

According to Garcia and Jensen et al. (2009), ELLs are more than likely to come from low income families than that of non-ELL students. They are also more likely to have parents with limited formal education. Garcia and Jensen et al. (2009) also state that ells also will more than likely have a grand-parent or other relative living in the home unlike their non-ELLs.

Garcia and Jensen et al. (2009) found that non ell students scored higher in math on average compared to their ELL peers. The authors Garcia and Jensen et al. (2009) state that a variety of educational risks are attributed to achievement in both ELL students and non-ell students. They are usually related to parent education levels, family income and parent English language proficiency.

Statement of the problem.

If there is a significant level of academic difference between ELL students and non- ELL students.

Purpose of the study.

The purpose of this study is to find out if there is a substantial difference that being bilingual affects other areas of academics.

Research question.

RQ1: Is there a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students?
Null Hypothesis (es)

Ho: There is not a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students.

Anticipated benefits of the study.

The benefits of the study will show the positive results of being bilingual. It will show how being bilingual can affect academics both positively and negatively. It will focus on the bilingual student being an English Language Learner.

Definition of terms.

ELL- English Language Learners, bilingual-students who can speak more than one language. L1 Language one and L2 second language. Assessments-Tests that are given to students. Acuity-Test my district uses as a benchmark. Non ELL students-Students who only speak one language. MAP-Missouri Assessment Program. Native English Speakers-Students whose first language is English.

Summary

A study was conducted on the Acuity benchmark assessment to see how the ELL students compare to that of non- ELL students. These results will allow for the district and teachers to know how to prepare these students for their third grade year, when the MAP testing will be implemented.
REVIEW of LITERATURE

The review of the literature shows that being bilingual can have a positive effect on students’ academic ability. The literature also shows how important it is for the students to have a strong literacy background in helping them to attain the academic English which is used on testing in the school districts within the United States. The literature continues shows the connection of being literate in their native language as well as their second language. That being bilingual will have a greater impact on their academic success as ELL students.

According to Garcia and Jensen et al (2009), that some of the primary influences in academic achievement for ELL students are family and schools. These two factors will shape the performance for the ELL students. There are other factors such as socioeconomic that also influence the academic achievement of these students.

The authors continue to state that the rates of disadvantage the ELL students have against them, which is three to five times higher than non-ELL students, they shouldn’t overlook the strengths this population of students represents. Ells are more likely than their Native English speaking peers to have a grandparent of other relative in the home, which can buffer expenses such as childcare.

Garcia and Jensen et al (2009) state that the population of children in immigrant families continues to grow faster than any other group of children within the United States and the importance of helping these students to perform and achieve is having teachers that has a working knowledge of the Best Practices for this group.

According to de la Luz Reyes (2012) ELL students can become biliterate spontaneously. She states these students can achieve and has the potential to do this without any formal literacy
instruction in the two languages. She continues to state how important it is for students to be able to use their native language. By using their native language they will have a better change academically in English.

According to a study by de la Luz Reyes (2012) a student named Huberto showed through his biliteracy with inventive spelling and use of Spanish mixed with English that language, culture and emotion plays a big part in the development of literacy and it shows the importance of providing bilingual students the ability to use all resources linguistically that they can pull from. She states that this student was a model student and that his “Spanish safety net did not hinder his academic success in English.”

According to de la Luz Reyes (2012), she discusses the use of code switching between English and Spanish. de la Luz Reyes (2012) also states that there are advantages of being biliterate and showing how this can advance their academic performance in their school years. The author also discusses how important it is to give bilinguals think time to be able to produce what they are being asked to write. She states that it is important to encourage students to read in both languages.

According to Gonzalez (2012) by becoming culturally competent evaluators, teachers can link assessment to instruction in all content areas and insightfully understand the rich connections between learning, culture, and language to their multilingual/bilingual students.

According to Gonzalez (2012) the importance of linking their L1 to their personal and cultural identity, to the expression of their learning styles and temperament, self-concept and self-esteem, all factors very much connected to the cultural expression of their cognitive and academic skills. Their assessment and curriculum standards, as well as teacher training and
evaluation reports, all remark on the importance of considering students’ L1 as an asset is linked to academic competence and social and cultural adaptations. (NAEYC, 2003, 2005; TESOL, 2006).

Gonzalez (2012) states that in the context of ever changing demographics that there is a large need for teachers to be prepared in the ability to use classroom based assessments and to use their first language for linking the assessment to academic competence across content areas, and to use classroom based assessments representing the students’ cultural backgrounds. (292)

According to Gonzalez (2012) research has shown that by conducting dual language assessments and allowing ESL students to use code-switching (ie the use of two languages in a sequential manner between sentences) and code mixing (ie the use of two languages in a simultaneous manner within the same sentence) are advisable because the allow students to show higher levels of cognitive and language skills and academic competence.

According to Gonzalez (2012) the importance of having a good teacher preparedness programs for ELL students and how important it is for the bilingual teacher or assessment given to be competent in the students first language to get a valid assessment. The most important assessment she state is the classroom based assessment when can tap into the ELL’s strengths and the advantages of their bilingualism. These methods of evaluation can be used for recording and collection samples.

According to Perez and Holmes (2010) it is important for Educators to pay attention to many of the dimensions that enable the students to develop academic literacy in the secondary classroom. The four areas are sociocultural, linguistic, academic and cognitive dimensions. (32)

The author also states that it is also important to know which stage of production in second language acquisition the ELL students are currently in. (34)
According to Perez and Holmes (2010), the stages of language acquisition are preproduction, early production speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency.

Perez and Holmes (2010) state that by knowing this stage of language acquisition will help you prepare lessons and assessments in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening; which are the four domains of learning a language. Their experiences showed that teachers can enrich their instruction and better ensure their students can be successful in the area of academic literacy in the classroom.

According to Harris (2014), bilingual students can be successful in school. It points out that the students need to be taught in both their native language and in English. The dual language programs focus on both languages, which give the students advantages in academic language as they transition into the middle school years.

Harris (2014) states that too often schools do not understand the benefits of using both their native language and English in the classrooms. According to Harris (2014), it is important to point out to make it rigorous and beneficial for students that you need to use both English and Content standards in teaching these students. In your lesson plan you would need to have both Spanish/English copies of a reading as well as sentence frames. It is also important to build background knowledge and to teach not only technical high academic language but also everyday language as well.

According to Guller (2014), discussed the concerns of teachers and the reliability of assessments for ELL students. The article made several points to use a wide variety of assessment measures. They were to use quizzes, projects, assessments both informal and formal. It also stated to give the students longer time on test to be successful. These students need this time for extra think time. It also made a point of the teacher making pop up glossaries to go with
the tests. This would help the students understand the test but not give them the answers like a bilingual dictionary would. The article also discussed the point of knowing your students and having them fill out a survey in your class to better understand their reading needs.

According to Garcia, Jensen and Scribner (2009) it is important to examine how we can meet English Language Learners needs. Their data examines a wide variety of information. It points out that in order to help these students to be successful we need to understand who they are and where they came from. We need to understand how to help them educationally.

According to Garcia, Jensen and Scribner (2009) it is important to discuss that their needs to be a large amount of collaboration within the schools and teachers. The authors continue to discuss how we can make the implementation gap shorter as well as what factors influence achievement for ELL students.

According to Maxwell (2014) he states that the positive effects of dual language immersion in a district in North Carolina. The district is K-8 Spanish and English immersion. Their school population has 750 students. They are a mix of native Spanish speakers and native English speakers. They have every category of students in population such as low income, English Language Learners, Hispanic, African American, White and those in Special Education.

According to Maxwell (2014) the data that is coming from this school is the students in this district are outperforming other districts in North Carolina and monolingual students. The students are taught Math, social studies and Spanish language arts in Spanish and then take the test in English. They are taught Science and English in English and Physical Education in Spanish. According to Maxwell (2014) it is important to discuss how all students are achieving
in their studies since they bring a rich language background with them during their school career at this North Carolina School.

Research from a study that was done on bilingual students, by Brice, Shaunessy, Hughes, McHatton and Ratliff (2008) One of the major points of this article was that the bilingual students in the gifted class were more excited and comfortable in switching back and forth between English and Spanish. They were very proud to be bilingual, Hispanic and in Gifted Education. They felt that this showed they were smart and were breaking stereotypes.

According to Brice and Shaunnesy et al. (2008) The other group was more hesitant switching between the groups. The article also focused on which students spoke Spanish at home whereas the other students didn’t speak as much Spanish in the home. According to Brice and Shaunnesy et al (2008) they found that the students that were excited and knew that being bilingual would be very beneficial for their future found that they had a richer vocabulary in both Spanish and English.

According to a study done by Pelham and Abrams (2014) they had early and late bilinguales as well as monolinguales and how successful they are in academics. They were categorized as either early or late bilinguals based on the age they became fluent in their second language. The study wanted to find out which groups would perform on a variety of verbal and nonverbal tasks. They focused on the bilingual results. They found that bilinguals did great in the areas of non-verbal tasks. They found that monolinguals produced a richer vocabulary when asked to describe animals. The study also looked at how they named pictures.
According to a study done by Pelham and Abrams (2014) whether, it was in their first language, second language or either language. They proposed that these findings were different dependent upon how early you learned your second language. Their study ended up showing that becoming bilingual in early childhood as well as adulthood would show lexical differences. It also showed which language you used more often and its effect on cognitive abilities.
RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

Independent Variables were ELL students and Non ELL students

Dependent Variables were Language Arts Acuity and Math Acuity

The collected data was from a second grade class that includes four current ELL students. The data that was collected are the benchmarks from Acuity for both Math and Language Arts. The tests were given in October 2014, December 2014 and February 2015. In each of the tests 15 questions are asked. These scores are supposed to be predictors of how the students will score on the MAP tests starting in third grade.

Study group description.

The study group will be ELL students compared to their classmates. The classmates are all native English Speakers. There are four ELL students and eighteen native English Speakers in this second grade class. The students’ ages are seven and eight years old. The school’s free and reduced lunch rate is 87.80 percent. The percent of the four ELL students that are on free and reduced lunch is 100%. The class is a mix of 13 females and 5 males. The four ELL students are comprised of two males and two females. The students are 7 and 8 years old.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

The reports from the first three benchmarks in the areas of Math and Language Arts that the second grade students took as well as their peers have also taken during the 2014-2015 school year. The students took these tests on the computer.
Statistical Analysis Methods

A T-test was used to analyze the difference between the ELL students and Native Speakers on the Acuity benchmarks that are given quarterly within this district. The data that will be compared is the data of ELL students and Native English speaker students. The mean, mean D, t-test, df and p-value were concluded from this test. The Alpha level was set at 0.25 to test the null hypothesis: Being bilingual does not negatively nor positively affect other areas of academics.
FINDINGS

A T-test was used to evaluate the data that has been collected is on their Math and Language Arts benchmark tests for October 2014, December 2014 and February 2015. Information about my ELL students is as follows. All of the students were born in the United States. Their first language and spoken language at the home is Spanish. Two of the four also speak English with brothers and sisters. The other two speak only Spanish with brothers and sisters. The following information, graphs and charts will show the data and findings based on the information collected.

A t-Test Analysis Result for Question 1:

Is there a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students?

Figure 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mean D</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELL Students (n=4)</td>
<td>53.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Speakers (n=18)</td>
<td>76.22</td>
<td>-23.47</td>
<td>-2.66</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significant when p<=0.25

There were four ELL students who took this benchmark and fourteen non ELL students who took this benchmark. The informational data from both the Math and English Arts test, which had 15 questions, was collected to see if there is a significant difference in academic
performance between ELL students and non-ELL students. The mean of the ELL a student is 53.25 and the mean of the Native Speakers was 76.22. The Mead D, or the difference between the two groups was -23.47. The t-test result was -2.66 and the df was 20. The Null hypothesis: there is not a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students. This null hypothesis was rejected because the p-value, 0.014 is lower than the alpha level, 0.25. The data determined the native speakers achieved significantly higher academically. The native speakers performed at significantly higher level which was -23.47.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mean D</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELL Students (n=4)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Speakers (n=18)</td>
<td>83.05</td>
<td>-23.055</td>
<td>-2.81</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significant when p<=0.25

There were four ELL students who took this benchmark and fourteen non ELL students who took this benchmark. The informational data from both the Math and English Arts test, which had 15 questions, was collected to see if there is a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students. The mean of the ELL students is 60 and the mean of the Native Speakers was 83.05. The Mead D, or the difference between the two groups was -23.055. The t-test result was -2.81 and the df was 20. The Null hypothesis: there is not a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students. This null hypothesis was rejected because the p-value, 0.04 is lower than the
alpha level, 0.25. This shows that being bilingual does show a significant difference and significantly affect other areas of academics. The data determined the native speakers achieved significantly higher academically. The native speakers performed at significantly higher level which was -23.055.

Figure 3

**Math February 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mean D</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELL Students (n=4)</td>
<td>68.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Speakers (n=18)</td>
<td>90.27</td>
<td>-22.02</td>
<td>-2.62</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significant when p<0.25

There were four ELL students who took this benchmark and fourteen non ELL students who took this benchmark. The data was collected to see if there is a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students. The mean of the ELL students is 68.25 and the mean of the Native Speakers was 90.27. The Mead D, or the difference between the two groups was -22.02. The t-test result was -2.62 and the df was 20. The null hypothesis: there is not a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students. This null hypothesis was rejected because the p-value, 0.016 is lower than the alpha level, 0.25. The data determined the native speakers achieved significantly higher academically. The native speakers performed at significantly higher level which was -22.02.
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**Language Arts October 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mean D</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELL Students (n=4)</td>
<td>53.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Speakers (n=18)</td>
<td>64.11</td>
<td>-10.86</td>
<td>-1.08</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significant when p<=0.25

There were four ELL students who took this benchmark and eighteen non ELL students who took this benchmark. The data was collected to see if there is a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students. The mean of the ELL students is 53.25 and the mean of the Native Speakers was 64.11. The Mead D, or the difference between the two groups was -10.86. The t-test result was -1.08 and the df was 20.

The Null hypothesis: there is not a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students. This null hypothesis did not rejected because the p-value, 0.29 which is higher than the alpha level, 0.25. The data determined that ELL students showed no significant difference. The ELL speakers performed at a significantly higher level which was -10.86.

Figure 4

**Language Arts December 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mean D</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELL Students (n=4)</td>
<td>71.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Speakers (n=18)</td>
<td>90.94</td>
<td>-19.19</td>
<td>-2.21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significant when p<=0.25

There were four ELL students who took this benchmark and fourteen non ELL students who took this benchmark. The data was collected to see if there is a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students. The mean of the ELL
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students is 71.25 and the mean of the Native Speakers was 90.94. The Mead D, or the difference between the two groups was -19.19. The t-test result was -2.21 and the df was 20.

The Null hypothesis: there is not a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students. This null hypothesis was rejected because the p-value, 0.03 which is lower than the alpha level, 0.25. The native speakers performed at a significantly higher level which was -19.19.

Figure 5

Language Arts February 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mean D</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELL Students (n=4)</td>
<td>66.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Speakers (n=18)</td>
<td>81.00</td>
<td>-14.25</td>
<td>-1.22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significant when p<=0.25

There were four ELL students who took this benchmark and fourteen non ELL students who took this benchmark. The data was collected to see if there is a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students. The mean of the ELL students is 53.25 and the mean of the Native Speakers was 76.22. The Mead D, or the difference between the two groups was -23.47. The t-test result was -2.66 and the df was 20.

The Null hypothesis: there is not a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students. This null hypothesis was rejected because the p-value, 0.23 is lower than the alpha level, 0.25. The data determines that the native speakers achieved significantly higher academically. The native speakers performed at significantly higher level which was -14.25.
In looking at this data it shows that the students’ scores fluctuate during the three testing periods. The two of the four ELL students’ scores for October 2014 show that they are either equal or within a few points of their Native English speaker classmates. The other two of the four
ELL students are below their classmates as well as their ELL classmates’ scores as well.

Looking at the data for December across the board the student’s scores improved except for one ELL student. In February it appears that all of the students’ scores for ELL and Native speakers either improved or stayed the same.

In my opinion these findings show that in the area of Math that the ELL students’ scores stayed for the most part on par with their classmates. This shows that the conceptual underpinning of this paper that being bilingual can affect academics.

**Figure 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>14-Oct</th>
<th>14-Dec</th>
<th>15-Feb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELL Mean</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Median</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL St.Dev.</td>
<td>0.181981</td>
<td>0.170482</td>
<td>0.213155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Speaker Mean</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Speaker Median</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the area of Language Arts the data shows that two of the four ELL students’ had similar scores as the native English speakers. The other two ELL students scored below that of the class and their ELL peers. In December the data shows that as whole the entire class’s scores improved on what was tested. This held true for all but one ELL student whose score went down from the previous exam. The data shows for February 2015 that the ELLS showed consistency on how they scored when compared to each other as well as native English speakers.

The students were better prepared for each consecutive exam and that the conceptual underpinning that being bilingual will affect academics.
CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The results reported in this study shows that non-ELL students significantly had a higher score on the Math and Language Arts Acuity benchmarks. The t-test results from these benchmarks show that the null hypothesis that was tested is rejected. The null hypothesis: There is not a significant difference in academic performance between ELL students and non-ELL students. The t-tests determined that there are differences between ELL and non-ELL in academic performance.

The conceptual underpinning is that being bilingual can affect a student academically. According to Collier (2011) research shows that second language learners usually require at least five years to catch up to native English speakers in academic English. According to Garcia and Jensen et al (2009), that some of the primary influences in academic achievement for ELL students are family and schools. These two factors will shape the performance for the ELL students. There are other factors such as socioeconomic that also influence the academic achievement of these students. This was not supported by the findings of the research study.

However, this research shows that students can take up to five years to reach academic English could be part of the reason for two of the four ELL students’ scores on their benchmarks. Taking this into consideration it is important for the ELL teacher and mainstream teachers to work together. By working together the teachers can better prepare students for their benchmark tests as well as improving their academic English.

After concluding this study, the data shows that more studies could be conducted. Data that would be good at would be their scores on the MAP testing in the future and compare them with these benchmark tests. A study could be run to see how much improvement has been
achieved within the next school year on their academic English. More data could be collected within the district to compare ELLs from K-12 on their academic English versus Non ELL students. They could compare and contrast the data with how long the students have been learning English.

The district could use some professional development to better understand ELL students and their needs within the classroom setting. These would benefit all students and staff to help in building their academic language.
REFERENCES


