Schools’ Civil Rights Obligations to English Learners: Leadership Perceptions on Key Issues

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SCHOOLS’ CIVIL RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS TO ENGLISH LEARNERS:
LEADERSHIP PERCEPTIONS ON KEY ISSUES

by

Pamela R. Schwallier

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Doctoral Committee:

LaSonja Roberts, Ph.D., Chair
Brett Geier, Ed.D.
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English Learners (ELs), who now represent nearly 10% of all K-12 public school students, 4.8 million of who speak over 400 different languages and dialects, continue to lack equitable educational opportunities as demonstrated through gaps in achievement outcomes, poor graduation rates, and identified systemic barriers related to the intersectionality of language, culture, race, and racism (Crump, 2014; DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2017; Menken & Solorza, 2015; Morita-Mullaney, 2018; National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition [NCELA], 2015, 2018). This quantitative study captured over 800 K-12 educational leaders’ perspectives, via an anonymous electronic survey, on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools. Analysis of their attitudes and beliefs, formal level of preparation, level of understanding of civil rights obligations, barriers, level of equitable EL program implementation, and EL program outcomes revealed severe equity issues for ELs in our schools.

Grounded in an understanding of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Social Justice Leadership, and LangCrit Theory, this study found that while K-12 educational leaders have overall positive attitudes and beliefs regarding equitable programs for ELs, they have a vast void of formal preparation and understanding coupled with minimal levels of implementation of
schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs (Crump, 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2017). Specifically, less than 35% of participants responded that they completely understand any one of the 10 civil rights obligations aligned to the OCR/DOJ 2015 Dear Colleague Letter, and over 50% of educational leaders reported that not a single one of the 10 civil rights issues identified is fully implemented in their school or district. Barriers to implementation were identified with the most significant barrier being a lack of certified ESL/bilingual teachers.

This study is the first to examine the perceptions of K-12 educational leaders in relation to schools’ civil rights obligations of ELs, and the findings show that school- and district-level leaders have statistically significant differences in their perceptions. Additionally, a statistically significant regression model was found to predict EL Program Outcomes based on five predictors, three of which were statistically significant. Greater levels of preparation and implementation showed higher levels of EL Program Outcomes. Conversely, the more barriers experienced by K-12 educational leaders, the lower the EL Program Outcomes. This study emphasizes that minimal compliance does not equate to fully equitable opportunities for ELs, and the intersectionality of language, culture, race, and racism is carefully addressed. Implications and recommendations for educational leaders, policymakers, and multiple stakeholders are provided along with opportunities for further research.
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DEDICATION

This dissertation was written with love and honor for:

- *the students* who enter our schools as emerging bilinguals, multilingual learners, and English Learners (ELs). This work was inspired by their beautiful languages, cultures, stories, experiences, and tenacity.

- *the parents* of ELs who continuously strive to provide opportunities and support for their children amidst a myriad of unjust, systemic barriers.

- *the educators and allies* of our multilingual and multicultural students. Their commitment and dedication to ELs continues to give me hope.

- *the future generation*. May this work continue to build upon the movement towards social justice and educational equity so one day all students entering our classrooms can realize their full potential while feeling welcomed and valued.

In the timeless words of children’s author and storyteller Carmen Agra Deedy (2017), “I sing for those who dare not sing – or have forgotten how.”

Pamela R. Schwallier
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I’m eternally grateful to be surrounded by so many brilliant, compassionate, hard-working, and loving individuals who share my passion for education, language, culture, equity, and social justice. Thank you for giving me hope and confidence in a bright future!

Pamela R. Schwallier
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Para los niños trabajamos, porque los niños son los que saben querer, porque los niños son la esperanza del mundo. [For the kids we work, because the kids are those that know how to love, because the kids are the hope of the world.]
–José Martí, writer & activist

I believe that education is the civil rights issue of our generation. And if you care about promoting opportunity and reducing inequality, the classroom is the place to start. Great teaching is about so much more than education; it is a daily fight for social justice.
–Arne Duncan, former US Secretary of Education, October 9, 2009

Amidst a global pandemic where schools across the United States (US) were forced to close their doors and provide emergency remote learning due to the novel Coronavirus, growing political unrest and divisiveness as a new Presidential election approaches, anti-immigrant policies resulting in family separation and the detention of immigrant children, and renewed energy behind the social movement of Black Lives Matter, educational leaders are grappling with issues of equity within our school systems. While browsing the Internet, perusing social media, absorbing messages from multiple news outlets, or merely engaging in or listening to the conversations that abound, it would be hard to miss the flood of opinions about the educational system in the US and its role in serving an increasingly diverse student demographic. Yet, the voices of our multilingual and multicultural families in this system often are underrepresented and even unheard in the best of times.

Attempts to recognize and celebrate our diverse, multilingual and multicultural students and families all too often result in one-time international food nights, a few posters or flags in classrooms, and a handful of bilingual and native language books alongside books with characters of color in a corner of a library in a “diversity” section. Rarely are key stakeholders deeply invested in addressing the more challenging, and more uncomfortable, equity and civil
rights issues facing these unique and often vulnerable communities, particularly those of our English Learners (ELs) (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015).

**Background**

K-12 schools across the US continue to serve an increasing number of ELs, who now represent nearly 10% of all public school students, 4.8 million of who speak over 400 different languages and dialects (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition [NCELA], 2018). As a result, our educational leaders play an integral and increasingly challenging role in creating and sustaining equitable systems that not only capitalize upon and honor the assets of our multilingual and multicultural students and families, but also ensure an equal opportunity for all to thrive. Due to the fact that the institution of public education was designed in the US without multilingual students and families in mind, today’s educational leaders must more deeply understand their role in evaluating the systemic structures that may inhibit these students from thriving within our schools while proactively and intentionally creating and sustaining the change necessary to create equitable systems that minimally adhere to schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs.

While some educational outcomes, including high school graduation rates, for ELs have improved slightly in the past decade, annual data continues to demonstrate significant gaps for ELs compared to the average of all students. Specifically, the EL high school graduation rate in the US has risen from 57% in the 2010-11 school year to 66.9% in the 2015-16 school year, while the average graduation rate of all students in similar years rose from 79% to 84.1% (NCELA, 2018). Additionally, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the average math and reading scale scores for ELs were significantly lower than the average scores for non-ELs (NCELA, 2015). Amidst the startling data demonstrating a need for greater equity for our multilingual learners, educators in classrooms and schools across the
country are striving to meet the needs of all children with the time, resources, knowledge, and tools they have available to them. However, little is known about the perceptions of our K-12 educational leaders on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs.

Over 50 years have passed since the educational rights of ELs were explicitly protected in the landmark legislation passed in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, with dozens of subsequent court cases further clarifying schools’ obligations to ELs and their families. The educational rights of ELs were further solidified in the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, which requires all public schools to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs. Yet, from my perspective as a practicing educational leader in a Midwestern state, there tends to be a lack of urgency, understanding, and readiness of K-12 leaders when implementing equitable educational programs for ELs that minimally adhere to these foundational civil rights obligations protected over a half century ago.

In contrast to the observed lack of urgency around the understanding of and adherence to civil rights obligations to ELs dating back to the mid-1900s, educational leaders have dedicated considerable time and attention to the Read by Grade Three law (MCL.380.1280f) enacted in 2016, less than five years ago in this Midwestern state. The Read by Grade Three law requires the retention of third grade students who are not demonstrating a specific reading proficiency through the state ELA assessment, an alternative approved reading assessment, or a portfolio unless a Good Cause Exemption is approved (Michigan Department of Education, 2019). Since the passage of this law, leaders, scholars, educators, community organizations, and policy makers have come together to promote literacy initiatives. Specifically, Section 35a(5) of the fiscal year 2018 State School Aid Act appropriated nearly twenty million tax payer dollars for additional instructional time to students in grades K-3 who were identified as needing additional
supports in order to be reading at grade level by the end of third grade (Michigan Department of Education, 2019). Additionally, superintendents and regional education leaders recognized collective urgency around early literacy in Michigan and collaborated to form the Reading Now Network to ensure a minimum of 80% of third graders read proficiently at grade level. The urgency around early literacy also prompted the collaborative compilation and implementation of the Essential Practices in Early and Elementary Literacy developed by the Early Literacy Task Force, a subcommittee of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators [MAISA] General Education Leadership Network (GELN) (MAISA GELN Early Literacy Task Force, 2016; Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators, 2019; Michigan Department of Education [MDE], 2019). The urgency around early literacy is noble and should not come in competition with meeting the civil rights obligations of ELs. For example, many of the instructional practices can be complementary for students building literacy in their first or second language. It does not have to be a choice between the two. To be clear, the attention and urgency around early literacy initiatives along with similar urgency around schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs can be mutually supportive. Many educators are indeed striving to improve literacy for all students, including ELs, across the state to meet the rigorous goals outlined in the 2016 Read by Grade Three law; however, ELs continue to wait for similar urgency from K-12 leaders to understand, address, support, and embrace their unique multilingual and multicultural assets and needs in order to realize their own civil rights founded decades ago in 1964.

Some have argued, due to misconceptions, that there are fewer ELs in Michigan than third graders and, therefore, less funding, resources, and attention are needed to address equitable EL programming; however, according to pupil counts by the MDE, there are similar numbers of ELs across all grades as there are third graders enrolled in public schools across the state. Specifically, there are roughly 98,000 students identified as ELs (Migration Policy Institute,
2018), compared to roughly 105,000 third grade students (MDE Fast Facts, 2019). With similar numbers of third grade students impacted by the Read by Grade Three law as ELs impacted by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the startling discrepancy in the state of urgency is troubling, and more must be done to better understand the underlying factors that have led to this reality, including the perceptions of educational leaders on key issues regarding programs that minimally adhere to schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs. To be clear, mere compliance with civil rights obligations should not be assumed or misunderstood to be the ideal standard for equitable educational opportunities for ELs. It is a baseline from which schools can build equitable programs. Which is why, for this study, these obligations will provide a common understanding of minimally equitable EL programs to examine the perceptions of our educational leaders around key issues.

**Problem Statement**

**Researchable Problem**

ELs, who now represent roughly 10% of the total K-12 student population, or 4.8 million students, are the fastest growing student demographic in the US (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018; US Department of Education, 2018). Yet they continue to lack equitable educational opportunities and significantly underperform academically compared to their native English-speaking peers (Fenner, 2014; Kanno & Kangas, 2014; NCELA, 2018).

Fenner (2014) sheds light on the lack of equitable educational opportunities for ELs by identifying gaps in teacher and administrator preparation programs, inequities in classroom instruction and assessment, as well as specific areas of concern for ELs and their families such as communication, health, safety, and cultural and/or racial biases and misunderstandings. Furthermore, these inequities are demonstrated in both reading and math scores, which are significantly lower on the NAEP assessment for ELs than non-ELs (NCELA, 2018). ELs are
also vastly underrepresented in gifted and talented (GATE) programs with ELs representing 11% of students in schools offering GATE programs but were only 3% of students in these programs across the US (NCELA, 2018). Additionally, in a qualitative case study at a large public high school, Kanno and Kangas (2014) exposed systematic barriers that prevented ELs from accessing rigorous academic preparation in high school while concluding:

Unless high school educators abandon the assumption that English proficiency must be fully in place before ELs are ready to take high-level courses and begin offering linguistic support within the context of a rigorous academic curriculum, ELs’ underachievement will persist, not because they are incapable of learning but because they are not given the opportunity to learn. (p. 874)

Not only do ELs continue to lag academically behind their native English-speaking peers and lack access to high-level courses due to these systemic barriers, they are also retained and held back at a higher rate than non-ELs. In 2011-12, ELs represented 14% of all students enrolled, but were 18% of all students held back or retained in grades K-6 nationwide (NCELA, 2018). These inequities are just a few examples of how ELs continue to lack programs that recognize and build upon their linguistic and cultural assets while meeting their unique educational needs. This is despite decades of educational reform efforts largely stemming with the pivotal passage of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that bans discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. 

Further clarifying the obligations of public schools to ELs under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the Supreme Court’s landmark decision in Lau v. Nichols (1974). This decision concluded that the San Francisco school system was in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by merely providing the same educational opportunities to ELs as native English-speaking students and failing to provide English language instruction to ELs. Since
then, case law has played a major role in federal and state policy for ELs and their families, including landmark rulings in Castañeda v. Pickard (1981) which created a 3-prong test for EL Programs, United States v. Texas (1971, 1981) which mandates effective language programs, and Rios v. Reed (1978) which supports the offering of effective bilingual education. Given the multitude of court cases that have further clarified schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs and the ongoing need to assist state education agencies (SEAs), school districts, and public schools in meeting these obligations, the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) issued joint guidance within the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter, which outlines 10 common civil rights issues. While this guidance added clarity for educational leaders along with the publication of the companion EL Toolkit by the US Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition (2015), educational leaders continue to lack opportunities to learn about these obligations, tools, and resources through professional development and university preparation programs (Menken & Solorza, 2015; Rivera-McCutchen, 2014; Tuters & Portelli, 2017; Watson, 2017).

**Studies Addressing the Problem**

As the EL population has steadily grown throughout public schools across the US, several studies have supported K-12 instructional programs by informing instructional and observational frameworks, such as the Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP) Model, as well as informing the design of instructional tools to support teachers in differentiating the linguistic demand of academic tasks and facilitating the use of all four language domains: reading, writing, listening, and speaking in academic settings (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2008; Sharkey & Hansen-Thomas, 2018; Short & Echevarría, 2016; Vogt & Echevarría, 2008; Vogt, Echevarría, & Washam, 2015; Ward Singer, 2018). These instructional resources have advanced
the understanding and practices for ELs in K-12 schools where leaders and educators have prioritized the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

Many instructional resources are available to both ESL and general education teachers. For example, Echevarría et al. (2008) have authored numerous books and resources for teachers, coaches, and administrators serving ELs, ranging from PreK through 12th grade, supporting the effective implementation of The SIOP Model, a framework for the effective teaching of language and content to ELs. Additionally, Ward Singer (2018) provides tools for educators of multilingual learners in a flip-to guide, and TESOL Press has contributed widely to the resources available to teachers serving K-12 ELs, including the recently published books focused on transforming practices at each grade band (Sharkey & Hansen-Thomas, 2018).

Adding to the research and resources available to educators serving multilingual and multicultural learners, WIDA (2018), a US-based consortium comprised of 39 member states, provides a range of research-based resources for educators of multilingual and multicultural learners, including standards, assessments, professional learning, and tools. Administrators, teachers, educational support personnel, and families of ELs are able to access a wide range of resources through WIDA that can inform and support the educational development of multilingual learners in our K-12 schools.

There are also studies addressing the complexity of equitably serving ELs and the intersectionality of race, culture, language, and educational practices (Benavides, Midobuche, & Kostina-Ritchey, 2012; Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010; Morita-Mullaney, 2018). Specifically, Benavides et al.’s (2012) work highlights the unique challenges and civil rights issues faced by educators serving ELs in various program models and the role that language, culture, and race play in the system. Furthermore, Brooks et al. (2010) demonstrated the need for greater shared responsibility among all educators in order to realize equity for ELs by
illustrating the fact that English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers can often become marginalized when they accept sole responsibility for all EL needs; this also can limit the perceived needed professional development of other teachers and administrators. Through their observations, experiences, and interviews with principals in Indiana, Brooks et al. found that school-level administrators are often concerned about surface-level supports for ELs, often focusing on language alone, rather than the broader systematic challenges that impact the success of ELs in schools, including culture, race, and underlying issues of inequity. Another recent study using a narrative inquiry found that “by avoiding the centrality of race and claiming language as the sole operating principle, we disquiet the intersectionality of language and race, reproducing racism and linguicism and using language or English as our shielding proxy” (Morita-Mullaney, 2018, p. 15).

Additionally, multiple studies have demonstrated a severe lack of formal preparation opportunities for both K-12 teachers and administrators through college and university preparation programs regarding equitable and effective educational practices for ELs in our schools and the benefit of effective preparation (Menken & Solorza, 2015; Rivera-McCutchen, 2014; Tuters & Portelli, 2017; Watson, 2017). One alarming study by Menken and Solorza (2015) found that school leaders who adopted English-only policies in their schools in New York City held “no formal preparation in the education of emergent bilinguals, and thus have misconceptions about bilingualism and language learning, including the belief that home language instruction is an impediment to learning English” (p. 677). Additionally, Watson’s (2017) literature review noted that students who are immigrant, migrant, or ELs are not uniquely mentioned in the standards for educational leaders and the policies that govern their actions, while Tuters et al.’s (2017) in-depth document analysis and interviews with educational
building-level leaders led to the finding that school leaders are grossly under-prepared for the task of leading for equity.

Finally, there are further studies that illustrate the benefits of formal preparation for educational leaders as they prepare to serve an increasingly diverse student population in an equitable and just manner. Demonstrating the explicit benefit and need for purposeful and effective preparation of school leaders to serve diverse student populations with a focus on social justice and equity, Rivera-McCutchen (2014) found that entering the role of principal with a predisposition for equity and fighting injustice allows leaders to not only better create an inclusive school community, but also to be adequately equipped with strategies to respond to scenarios involving prejudice and inequity. Additionally, in an effort to clarify essential understandings for K-12 leaders to better address the needs of all students, Fenner, Kozik, and Cooper (2015) developed four principles for inclusive teacher evaluation as a tool to promote equitable educational access for all students, including English Learners. These studies have provided greater understanding and tools to address the problem.

**Literature Deficiency Statement**

With the K-12 EL student population continuing to expand, it is critical that educational leaders are equipped and ready to serve these students and families with equity while acknowledging and honoring the highly diverse students they represent and the unique cultural and linguistic assets they add to our classrooms and schools. Despite strides to require and support equitable educational opportunities for ELs through the issuance of the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter, the USED EL Toolkit (2015), a growing number of educational books and resources for educators of multilingual students, and specific recognition of ELs in the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), little is known about the perceptions of current K-12
educational leaders on key issues regarding equitable educational opportunities that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools to ELs.

While there have been studies and resources developed to better inform instructional practices of teachers serving linguistically and culturally diverse students along with studies illuminating the complexities of serving ELs with minimal opportunities available for leaders to become adequately prepared, fewer studies and resources exist pertaining to the specific role of K-12 educational leaders in providing equitable educational opportunities for ELs (Dormer, 2016; Zacarian, 2011). For example, Dormer (2016), a former immigrant language learner herself with extensive, global experience with multilingual learners and the author of the book, *What School Leaders Need to Know about English Learners*, provides an introduction to foundational language acquisition principles in the context of educational leadership. She emphasizes not only the potential for legal and safety issues that arise when leaders lack an understanding of ELs, multilingualism, and multiculturalism, but also the missed opportunities to embrace and capitalize upon the richness, diverse life experiences, linguistical skills, and multicultural perspectives of our ELs in our schools. Zacarian (2011) also provides a resource built from a multitude of studies for school leaders outlining key Supreme Court cases, common instructional models, and collaborative programming where ELs flourish. Yet, due to the fact that educational leaders lack opportunities to explore resources and texts similar to these through formal coursework in college and university preparation programs, K-12 leaders are often unaware of the resources available. A few driven educational leaders who have identified a gap in their preparation for serving ELs may encounter resources such as these to support their efforts in equitably leading EL programs in their schools, but with the many roles, responsibilities, initiatives, and constant pull between managing and leading their schools, ELs often suffer the consequences (Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, Harvey, & Koff, 2013).
As previously noted, adding to the literature of K-12 leaders serving culturally and linguistically diverse students, Fenner et al. (2015) developed four principles for inclusive teacher evaluation as a tool to promote equitable educational access for all students, including ELs, in an effort to begin to clarify foundational understanding for K-12 leaders to meet the needs of diverse students. Strikingly, the first principle focuses on the necessity for educators to be “aware of and adhere to the laws and to the precedents set in numerous court decisions regarding full and equal access to public education for all students” (Fenner et al., 2015, p. 86).

Despite the lack of formal educational opportunities for school and district leaders through teacher and administrator preparation programs, our leaders must be ready to implement equitable educational opportunities that minimally comply with civil rights obligations for ELs, as these children are currently in our classrooms awaiting the educational opportunities they deserve. While Fenner et al.’s first principle highlights the need for a focus on the understanding of and adherence to civil rights laws and precedents regarding the education of ELs in public schools, no studies could be found that examined the perceptions of K-12 educational leaders on key issues regarding equitable EL programs drawing on their attitudes and beliefs, level of formal preparation, level of understanding of civil rights obligations, barriers, level of equitable EL program implementation, and EL program outcomes.

**Significance of Study**

By better understanding K-12 educational leaders’ perceptions on these key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally comply with schools’ civil rights obligations, multiple stakeholders, including state departments of education, institutions of higher education, policymakers, community partners, and K-12 educational leaders will be better equipped to effectively serve our culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Additionally, such knowledge will support the development of short-term and long-term strategic plans, the
identification of networks to support the work towards equitable EL educational opportunities, and the prioritization of ongoing professional learning that supports the specific needs and civil rights for ELs in our schools.

By having a greater awareness of the perceptions of K-12 educational leaders on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs, community partners, educators, students, families, and advocates for EL equity in schools will be better equipped to identify and urgently advocate for the systemic changes that may be necessary. Such data could also inform future studies regarding the civil rights of ELs in schools and the development of tools to support educational leaders in their pursuit to provide equitable educational opportunities for all students.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this quantitative study was to capture K-12 educational leaders’ perspectives on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools; such perceptions were ascertained through an analysis of their attitudes and beliefs, formal level of preparation, level of understanding of civil rights obligations, barriers, level of equitable EL program implementation, and EL program outcomes. This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. In reference to equitable programs for ELs, what perceptions do K-12 educational leaders have regarding:
   a. their attitudes and beliefs regarding the education of ELs;
   b. their formal preparation regarding this issue;
   c. their level of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs;
   d. barriers experienced while implementing equitable programs for ELs;
   e. their current level of equitable EL program implementation; and
   f. their perceived EL program outcomes?
2. How are the perceptions of school and district level administrators similar or different regarding equitable programs for ELs?

3. To what extent can the attitudes and beliefs, preparation and understanding levels, barriers, and level of implementation predict EL program outcomes, when accounting for the percent of EL students and total number of ESL/bilingual certified teachers serving such students?

**Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

While many scholars have varying interpretations of the terms conceptual and theoretical frameworks, for this study, I borrowed from Maxwell’s (2013) interpretation who interchangeably uses the terms to describe the graphic construction and narrative representation of the relationships among the key concepts, variables, and theories that inform the purpose and design of the study. The constructed framework for this study depicts how I as the researcher have borrowed from an understanding of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Social Justice Leadership, and LangCrit Theory, also referred to as Critical Language and Race Theory, in order to build a common understanding of equitable programs for ELs and the perceptions of educational leaders on key issues (Crump, 2014; DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018; Hastings & Jacob, 2016; Mavrogordato & White, 2019; Theoharis, 2011). Specific factors that may be influencing EL program outcomes including, attitudes and beliefs, level of preparation, level of understanding, barriers, and level of implementation, are represented as connected variables leading to EL program outcomes. Additionally, arrows are drawn from K-12 educational leaders' perceptions on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs to each of these factors. Finally, a box pointing to the educational leaders’ perceptions indicates district and school-level differences which will be evaluated in this study. A visual representation of my conceptual and theoretical framework can be seen in Figure 1.
Figure 1. K-12 educational leaders’ perceptions on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs (Schwallier, 2020).

At the base of Figure 1, a foundation containing three major components that inform the design of this study is shown. In the center of the base, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 lays a foundational understanding of public school’s obligations to ELs under federal law. Many subsequent Supreme Court cases have clarified these obligations while the Office for Civil Rights along with the Department of Justice collaboratively outlined the 10 most common civil rights issues schools face while serving ELs in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter. These 10 common civil rights issues were used to inform the content and analysis of the survey instrument. Also, in the base of Figure 1 is Crump’s (2014) LangCrit Theory, which draws on Critical Race Theory (CRT) with an emphasis on the “intersection of the subject-as-heard and
the subject-as-seen” to illuminate the intersectionality between “race, racism, and racialization” with issues of “language, belonging, and identity” (p. 207). This study recognized the crucial understanding of this intersectionality, and embraced the complexity of equitably implementing EL programs beyond English language development.

Finally, Social Justice Leadership is found in the base of the framework as a key third component to understanding the role of leadership as enacted by K-12 public school administrators slated with the obligation of equitably serving ELs. DeMatthews and Izquierdo’s (2017) Social Justice Leadership framework for dual language (DL) programs specifically outlines how leaders can effectively prepare for, implement, evaluate, and sustain DL programs where schools and communities have historically failed to meaningfully serve and honor emerging bilingual students. Also, Mavrogordato and White’s (2019) framework for policy implementation for social justice informs how school leaders can enact social justice in their schools while implementing policy. Specifically, their study, which draws upon previous research findings, definitions of Social Justice Leadership, as well as their own qualitative case studies of eight elementary schools, found that school leaders “both enable and obstruct practices that reflect social justice leadership” while lacking awareness that they are doing so (p. 2).

Furthermore, Theoharis and O’Toole (2011) as well as Hastings and Jacob (2016) further define what it means to lead inclusive school programs for ELs through a Social Justice Leadership lens. For example, Theoharis and O’Toole’s comparative case studies of principals involved in reform efforts that improved both achievement of ELs along with connections with EL families led to implications for school leaders and their role in creating socially just schools for ELs. Also, Hastings and Jacob outline what Social Justice Leadership entails in the context of English language teaching. These three components have together informed this study’s purpose and
design to capture K-12 educational leaders’ perspectives on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations as seen in Figure 1.

Central to the conceptual and theoretical frame constructed for this study is K-12 educational leaders’ perceptions on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs, as well as potential district and school-level differences. This is directly linked to the purpose of the study, which was to capture K-12 educational leaders’ perspectives on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools. Such perceptions were ascertained through an analysis of their attitudes and beliefs, level of preparation, level of understanding of civil rights obligations, barriers, level of EL program implementation, and EL program outcomes. These contributing factors are represented as six connected subcategories drawn from the centrality of K-12 educational leaders’ perceptions in the constructed conceptual and theoretical frame. As seen in Figure 1, the first five factors are connected with an arrow pointing to the sixth factor, EL program outcomes, indicating the extent to which these factors may or may not predict outcomes. The components of this framework are informed by my own professional experiences and beliefs, an extensive review of the literature regarding the role of educational leaders in implementing equitable programs for ELs, as well as Pasmore and Woodman’s (2007) definition of readiness for change, which integrates factors of attitudes, content, processes, contexts, and the individual stakeholders involved.

Methods Overview

Based on the purpose and content of this proposed study, a quantitative approach was used. The study was conducted in a Midwestern state using survey data gathered from all K-12 educational leaders at the school and district level. The survey was sent via email to all school and district-level educational leaders on record with the state department of education within K-12 public school districts and academies. Additionally, the survey was sent via email to all K-12
educational leaders who are members of the Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators (MASA), a prominent professional organization for school leaders in the state. Additionally, to increase the number of responses, I collaborated with regional leads at intermediate school districts and educational service agencies to send out the invitation and survey instrument. This study examined the perceptions of K-12 school and district leaders regarding key issues around equitable programs for ELs. The survey tool was specifically grounded in minimal civil rights obligations of schools to ELs, and leaders’ perceived attitudes and beliefs, level of formal preparation, level of understanding of civil rights obligations, barriers, level of EL program implementation, and outcomes were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Hotelling’s T-Squared test, and a multiple linear regression model. The 10 most common civil rights issues identified in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter jointly published by the Department of Justice and Office for Civil Rights were used as a common understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs for this study. The relationships between these factors were examined along with potential differences between the perceptions of school versus district level leaders.

**Chapter 1 Closure**

ELs, the fastest-growing K-12 student demographic in US public schools, increasing from 4.3 million students in the 2002-03 school year to 4.9 million students in 2015-16 school year, bring with them immense assets, skills, perspectives, and experiences that bring a greater richness to our classrooms and schools (NCELA, 2018). Due to their unique and diverse backgrounds, educational and life experiences, linguistic strengths, cultural identities, and various perspectives, ELs also often bring unique challenges and opportunities to educators striving to meet their needs working within an educational system that was not designed with multilingual and multicultural learners in mind. As a result of the civil rights movement, over 50
years ago, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 laid a foundational understanding of equitable educational opportunities for ELs and a multitude of Supreme Court cases have since clarified schools’ obligations to ELs.

Given these unique challenges and opportunities while serving this growing linguistically and culturally diverse student population, the demonstrated lack of preparation of our educational leaders, and the recurring lack of equitable educational opportunities for ELs, more research is needed to examine the perceptions of our K-12 leaders on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs. A better understanding of their perceptions on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools through an analysis of their perceived attitudes and beliefs, level of formal preparation, level of understanding of civil rights obligations, barriers, level of implementation, and EL program outcomes, was needed in order to systematically make the changes necessary to advance educational equity.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

While the fact that all children in the US have an equal right to a free, public education is undeniable, K-12 educational leaders are tasked with navigating the complex terrain of the American school system to ensure all students, including those that bring new languages and cultures into our classrooms, have equal access to a meaningful education. As ELs are currently the fastest growing student subgroup in the US, make up roughly 10% of the total K-12 student population, and represent over 400 different languages and dialects from around the globe, they continue to perform at a much lower rate than their English-speaking peers (NCELA, 2018). Furthermore, ELs often do not possess a strong voice in our educational system due to many factors, including their English language proficiency, cultural factors, systemic barriers, and with today’s political climate, a fear and uncertainty of authority figures (Aronson & Diaz, 2015; Castagno & Hausman, 2017; González, 2010; Hakuta, 2011; NCELA, 2018).

Given these realities and the interwoven complexities of language, race, culture, privilege, and power, educational leaders share a collective responsibility to not only meet their legal obligations to ELs, but also fully embrace the richness that multilingual and multicultural children and families bring to the table. Not only will schools face legal and safety issues if K-12 district and school-level leaders are not ready to implement equitable educational programs that minimally adhere to civil rights obligations to ELs, but a lack of understanding of ELs, multilingualism, and multiculturalism and the array of assets these learners bring to our schools, can have lasting and devastating consequences for students, communities, and our society as a whole (Edwards Dormer, 2016; Hastings & Jacob, 2016). Clearly this country can celebrate the progress that has been achieved for ELs in our educational system as evidenced by multiple landmark court cases and rulings throughout the past 60 years; however, much work remains in

To better understand the complexity of equitable educational programs for ELs, a review of the current US EL population and program models in context of our diverse K-12 schools is crucial. This chapter begins with a brief overview of the identification and diversity of ELs across the country, along with a big picture of EL program models serving these students. Next, a review of current research and legal requirements are provided in order to lay a foundational understanding of equitable educational opportunities for ELs and the role educational leaders play in ensuring equity for this group of learners. Finally, a thorough review of the literature around each of the core components related to the key issues defined in the conceptual and theoretical framework is provided. These components include attitudes and beliefs, level of preparation, level of understanding, barriers, level of implementation, and EL program outcomes. This chapter concludes with a summary of the literature and the conclusions drawn.

**Current US EL Population and Programs**

**EL Identification**

In schools across the US, ELs must be identified using a protocol determined by the State educational agencies (SEAs) (US Department of Justice, US Department of Education, Dear Colleague Letter, 2015). As generally understood, ELs are students ages 3-21 whose home or native language is a language other than English and whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may inhibit their ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English (NCLB/ESEA Title IX, Sec. 9101(B)(25)). The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) outlined 10 common civil rights issues that arise in OCR and DOJ investigations in the Dear Colleague
Letter in 2015. In addition, the US Department of Education in partnership with the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) created a companion resource entitled the *English Learner Tool Kit* (2017) to assist SEAs and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with explanations, checklists, tools, and resources to support them in meeting their legal obligations to ELs in public schools. The first noted legal obligation in both of these documents is the identification of ELs, which is essential to accurately and effectively plan, implement, and evaluate educational programs serving this population. While the federal government does not specify the exact tools which must be used in the identification of ELs and leaves the interpretation up to SEAs, they do outline the requirements and suggest tools that would meet those requirements. Once identified, it is imperative to recognize the unique attributes of each learner and not make assumptions based on an EL label.

As is the case in many professional spaces, the realm of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, TESOL, encompasses a plethora of acronyms and labels that refer to both students whose native or primary language is not English and the programs that serve them. The numerous acronyms highlight the diversity not only in the students that are served, but also the programs, tools, and assessments used to serve and describe their diverse life experiences, educational backgrounds, linguistic abilities, and educational goals. The label of EL is used for this study, as it is the label most widely used in the midwestern state in which the study takes place. In this state, ELs are identified using the MDE Entrance Protocol, which calls for all LEAs receiving any federal funds to use a Home Language Survey (HLS) during the enrollment process and administer an English language proficiency screening assessment designed by WIDA according to grade level to determine EL eligibility (Michigan Department of Education, 2020). In order for an EL student to no longer carry the label and be reclassified as a Former English Learner (FEL), the student must meet exit criteria as determined using guidance from the
SEA. In this midwestern state, the Exit Protocol requires ELs to score a minimum of a 4.8 composite proficiency level on the WIDA Access assessment or P2 for ELs with significant disabilities who took the WIDA Alternate Access assessment (Michigan Department of Education, 2020).

Recognizing the fact that a label should never define a child, recent studies have highlighted reasons why educators should take caution when using the EL label (Edwards Dormer, 2016; Stromquist, 2012; White & Mavrogordato, 2018). First, White and Mavrogordato (2018) found via a mixed-methods study in Texas involving educators’ use of state guidance related to EL reclassification policy, there is inconsistency in the use of these policy guidance documents based on individual characteristics of the educational leader. This illuminates the fact that the EL label should be carefully interpreted since it may not accurately reflect the linguistic abilities of all ELs if state policies are not being implemented correctly. Additionally, due to an overall lack of understanding of the assessments and results, along with the various implications of the EL label across schools, concerning misconceptions and assumptions regarding ELs abound and can ultimately reduce chances of access to higher education opportunities for ELs (Stromquist, 2012).

**Diversity of ELs**

When the population of ELs is analyzed across the US, it is evident that each state serves a unique share of the overall EL population. For example, K-12 ELs currently represent roughly 10% of their overall student demographic nationwide, there are states including California, Texas, New Mexico, and Nevada where ELs represent between 15-20% of the total student population. Likewise, Montana, Missouri, Alabama, West Virginia, Vermont, and New Hampshire have EL populations of less than 3% of their total K-12 student population (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2015). Due to the fact that the EL student population
varies so drastically throughout the US, coupled with the varying levels of local control between SEAs and LEAs, EL programming also varies widely throughout the country.

In addition to the numbers of ELs being distributed unevenly throughout the US, there are also many diverse linguistic, cultural, and educational disparities represented by this population. Out of more than 400 languages and dialects represented in US public schools, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese are the top four languages represented throughout the country, with Spanish representing the home language of about 77% of all ELs in the US (National Center for Education Statistics, EDFacts, 2017). Additionally, while many ELs have immigrated to the US from countries throughout the world, the vast majority (approximately 70%) of students designated as ELs in US public schools were born in the US (Migration Policy Institute, 2018). ELs also represent migrant students, those with limited or interrupted formal education, refugees, long-term ELs, and those with a wide range of proficiencies in their native languages.

In the midwestern state in which this study takes place, there are approximately 98,000 students that are designated as ELs, which accounts for 6%, of the total K-12 student population (Migration Policy Institute, 2018). Nearly 65% of these students were born in the US, with the top languages represented being Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, and Chinese (Migration Policy Institute, 2018). Similar to the fact that the overall EL population varies widely by state throughout the country, EL populations at LEAs throughout this state vary widely as well, from zero ELs enrolled in some LEAs to nearly 10,000 ELs enrolled in others (Michigan Department of Education, MI School Data, 2018). Likewise, there are LEAs that do not employ a single ESL or bilingual certified teacher to serve their ELs, and there are other LEAs with nearly the entire teaching staff holding an ESL or bilingual certification. The wide range of cultural, linguistic, demographic, educational, and life experiences and backgrounds of ELs, along with the range of
certified staff available at each LEA, makes designing educational programs addressing the
unique assets and needs of multilingual and multicultural children a formidable and honorable
task.

Diversity of Program Models

Similar to the diversity represented within the K-12 EL population, the EL program
models that serve these students in US public schools also vary widely based on multiple factors,
including the size and demographics of the total student body and EL population, funding,
staffing, local leadership, and state policies among others, and have been heavily debated as to
which model is most effective and how it should be implemented (Benavides, Midobuche, &
Kostina-Ritchey, 2012; Callahan, 2005; Callahan & Wilkinson, 2010; Collier & Thomas, 2009;
Hakuta, 2011; Howard, Lindholm-Leary, Rogers, Olaque, Medina, Kennedy, Sugarman, &
Christian, 2018; Short & Echevarría, 2016; Soltero, 2016; Stromquist, 2012). For this study, an
EL program model refers to any instructional program design that provides English language
development and meaningful access to the core curriculum for ELs. After conducting multiple
studies comparing seven common EL program models and analyzing over 6.2 million student
records in urban, suburban, and rural school districts across the US, Collier and Thomas (2009)
found that the strongest predictor of long-term K-12 achievement is the type of EL program
provided in elementary school. Specifically, one-way and two-way dual language education
models were not only found to be the most effective, but also the only models that resulted in
ELs scoring above the 50th percentile in Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) on standardized tests
in English reading.

While dual language models have been found to be the most effective, ESL push-in and
pull-out models, where English language development is taught in or out of the general
education setting as a remedial program with no native language support, are most common and
have many identified challenges (Benavides, Midobuche, & Kostina-Ritchey, 2012; Callahan, 2005; Callahan & Wilkinson, 2010; Collier & Thomas, 2009; Hakuta, 2011; Stromquist, 2012).

For example, Callahan (2005) found, via a quantitative study in a rural high school in northern California with approximately 20,000 students, of which 32.3% were ELs, that track placement in segregated ESL classes and remedial coursework was a better predictor of achievement than proficiency in English. More specifically, Callahan’s study exposed the fact that “98% of the ELs in the sample had not enrolled in the coursework necessary for a 4-year college to be an option” (p. 324). Furthermore, in a more recent study, Callahan and Wilkinson (2010), via a longitudinal study across 523 schools examining the effects of ESL placement on 2,352 language minority adolescents’ college preparation and academic achievement, found that ELs enrolled in ESL beyond an initial period when they are learning English do not benefit from, and may even be hindered by, ESL placement.

For many schools across the US, including many of those located in the midwestern state in which this study takes place, The SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) Model is widely used as a framework for teachers to plan and deliver lessons that allow ELs to acquire academic knowledge as they develop English language proficiency alongside dual language program models and ESL push-in or pull-out models (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2008; Short & Echevarría, 2016; Vogt & Echevarría, 2008; Vogt, Echevarría, & Washam, 2015). This model empowers general education teachers, who are responsible for the core instruction of ELs for the majority of the school day, to plan, scaffold, and deliver lessons that integrate both content and language goals in order for ELs to have meaningful access to the core curriculum and continue their language development simultaneously.

Due to the fact that a single EL program model is neither mandated by the federal government nor SEAs, coupled with the numerous models implemented to various degrees in US
schools, the term EL program model encompasses a broad understanding of instructional models supporting the academic and language development of ELs. While understanding the diversity of EL program models that exist across US schools, it is also essential to illuminate the fact that there are many schools that currently enroll ELs but do not employ any ESL or bilingual certified teachers as observed through my professional work both statewide and nationally. Many of these schools do not have a defined EL program model supporting the English language development of ELs beyond the instructional services available to native English-speaking children. As documented in the landmark 1974 Supreme Court case of Lau v. Nichols, the lack of an EL program providing supplemental language instruction for students with limited English proficiency is a direct violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

**Equitable Educational Opportunities for ELs**

The topic of equity in K-12 public education in the US is not new, but it has gained attention and traction in the past decade as school leaders, policy-makers, researchers, community organizations, and the general population grapple with the lack of academic progress for many of our most vulnerable student populations, including ELs, amid decades of reforms, changes in educational policies and practices, civil rights cases, and changes to educator preparation programs. As Gorski and Swalwell (2015) pointedly illuminate, while there are a multitude of schools across the nation that have invested time and resources in diversity initiatives, many of these programs and efforts avoid or minimize the true equity issues underlying the educational system (p. 35). It is the moral and legal responsibility of our K-12 educational leaders to make the time to consider these systemic equity issues and begin to make the necessary changes with urgency to ensure that schools are minimally meeting their civil rights obligations to English Learners.
Equity and Equality

In recent years, the term equity has increasingly become a buzz word not only in public education, but also in politics, the media, and various outlets advocating for systemic change. For this study, I draw upon Brayboy, Castagno, and Maughan’s (2007) distinction between equity and equality, along with an understanding of the long history of influence of structural racism linking to Crumps (2014) LangCrit Theory and Gorski’s (2015) Equity Literacy Framework. First, Brayboy et al. (2007) attribute equality to sameness, illuminating the fact that racialized groups continue to have unequal access to educational resources and equality “may not be able to overcome the long history of influence of structural racism on American schools and racialized communities” (p. 180). In order for equity for ELs to be achieved, a nonequal distribution of resources must be allocated with an attentiveness to color, privilege, and the interconnectedness of race, racism, culture, and language (Brayboy et al., 2007; Crump, 2014).

Collier and Thomas (2009) also add to the literature by providing the Thomas-Collier Test of Equal Educational Opportunity and emphasizing that equal educational opportunity for ELs should be demonstrated through parity in long-term achievement with native English speakers as measured by on-grade-level tests of all subjects administered in English. Finally, Gorski (2015) advocates for the development of educators’ equity literacy where schools employ those that have the knowledge and skills needed to be a threat to the existence of bias and inequity within the spheres of influence they each possess. Equity goes well beyond equality and the simplistic approaches to appreciating diversity and initiatives to close the achievement gap and confronts the deep, systemic, opportunity gaps that underlie the disparaging outcomes of many marginalized populations, including our multilingual and multicultural learners.

To be clear, schools and educational leaders alone cannot be held solely responsible for equitable opportunities for ELs, but educators can cultivate a foundational level of equity for
multilingual learners through ensuring adherence to schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs and engaging in intentional collaboration efforts that build capacity to recognize and react to the inequities that plague our schools and society (Flores & Chaparro, 2018; Gorski, 2015; Howard, Lindholm-Leary, Rogers, Olague, Medina, Kennedy, Sugarman, & Christian, 2018; Kelly, 2018; Morita-Mullaney, 2018). For example, Flores et al. (2018), through their portrait of four schools in the School District of Philadelphia that offer dual language bilingual education programs, demonstrated that “even the most effective bilingual education program will do little good for language minoritized students who are forced to live in segregated, low-income communities with a lack of jobs that offer a living wage” (p. 381). Additionally, Kelly (2018), using a critical discourse analysis lens to conduct a directed content analysis, found that the expansion of some dual language programs can be an example of interest convergence where ELs may benefit from dual language programs, but the programs exist because of the perceived benefit of the majority, English speakers. This, along with Gorski’s (2015) equity literacy framework, illuminates the essential centrality of equity that should be foreground in understanding the implementation of equitable educational programs for ELs.

Finally, Morita-Mullaney’s (2018) narrative inquiry adds to the literature around cultivating equity for ELs by finding that “by avoiding the centrality of race and claiming language as the sole operating principle, we disquiet the intersectionality of language and race, reproducing racism and linguicism and using language or English as our shielding proxy” (p. 15). Indeed, the work of implementing equitable educational programs for ELs is complex and interconnected with compounding societal inequities, yet, our multilingual students and their families anxiously yearn for the day equity is realized in the US educational system.

In order to further define equitable educational opportunities for ELs, this study will focus on equity as minimally demonstrated through compliance with schools’ civil rights
obligations to ELs. Through an analysis of the historical context of the education of bilingual children, Souto-Manning (2018) challenges educators to promote equity as clarified through civil rights laws, in order to empower diverse students through effective educational practices. This analysis, grounded in adherence to civil rights obligations, offers a lens into educational equity for ELs illuminating the fact that “equity is not simply allocating the same amount of money per student. Equity is based on fairness and promotes educational opportunities which foster the success of all students” (Souto-Manning, 2018, p. 266). To be clear, minimal compliance with civil rights obligations should not be mistakenly understood as fully equitable. Rather, this study utilizes these civil rights obligations as a baseline to achieving equity for ELs. Specifically, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) along with the Department of Justice (DOJ) collaboratively outlined the 10 most common civil rights issues schools face while serving ELs in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter based off Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, and the numerous subsequent Supreme Court rulings clarifying schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs. These 10 common civil rights issues, along with a grounding in Social Justice Leadership and LangCrit Theory, form the foundation of understanding equitable programs for ELs throughout this study.

**Schools’ Civil Rights Obligations to ELs**

Due to their unique position of decision-making power in regard to staffing, programming, scheduling, professional learning opportunities, local educational policies, and the trajectory of systemic change through school and district improvement plans in our K-12 schools, it is essential for K-12 educational leaders to fully understand schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs in order to ensure the implementation of equitable educational opportunities for these students. Staehr Fenner, Kozik, and Cooper (2015) have previously illuminated the necessity for educators to be “aware of and adhere to the laws and to the precedents set in
numerous court decisions regarding full and equal access to public education for all students” in their first principle towards committing to equal access for all learners (p. 86). While civil rights laws protecting the educational rights of ELs have been in place for decades, a lack of urgency and inconsistent interpretation, implementation, and oversight have allowed ELs to continue to be marginalized within US public schools (Hastings & Jacob, 2016; Lewis, Garces, & Frankenberg, 2019; Mavrogordato & White, 2019).

It has been over a half century since the Supreme Court of the United States “determined that in order for public schools to comply with their legal obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), they must take affirmative steps to ensure that students with limited English proficiency can meaningfully participate in their educational programs and services” (U. S. Department of Justice, US Department of Education, Dear Colleague Letter, 2015). The Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) further emphasized schools’ obligation “to act to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by students in their instructional programs” (US Department of Justice, US Department of Education, Dear Colleague Letter, 2015). While the federal government and courts have not mandated particular educational models or approaches, case law has had a significant impact on federal, state, and local policy for ELs in public schools. Numerous key federal policies, court cases, and rulings have set precedents to clarify public schools’ obligations to English Learners and their families. Notably, the 1974 Lau v. Nichols case explicitly demonstrated that failing to provide English language instruction and merely providing the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum to students who do not yet understand English is a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Furthermore, in 1978, the Supreme Court ruling in the Casteñeda v. Pickard case established a three-part assessment for determining if EL programs meet civil rights requirements including:
(1) the program must be based on sound educational theory,

(2) the program must be implemented effectively with resources for personnel,
    instructional materials, and space, and

(3) after a trial period, the program must be proven effective in overcoming language barriers.

Most recently, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, commonly referred to as ESSA of 2015, explicitly recognizes the unique needs of ELs and elevates provisions relevant to ELs by moving accountability measures from Title III, Part A to Title I, Part A. This shift encourages greater collaboration and attention around the needs of our unique multilingual learners and the obligations of our schools.

Due to the numerous cases that have informed the foundational legal obligations schools have for educating ELs, it can be daunting and time consuming for educational leaders to become fully knowledgeable of these legal requirements without formal education preparing them to interpret the findings and apply them into local policies and practices. Educational leaders may find themselves implementing programs that promote equality that “necessitates the same treatment, resources, policies, and practices to all students” (Brayboy et al., 2017), rather than truly implementing programs that dig deeply into the complex interconnectedness of race, culture, language, power, and privilege and working toward long-term equity as demonstrated through equivalent outcomes for native and non-native speakers of English (Collier & Thomas, 2009; Crump, 2014; Gorski, 2015; Kelly, 2018). To assist K-12 educational leaders in meeting their civil rights obligations to ELs, the OCR and DOJ issued joint guidance in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter providing an outline of 10 common civil rights issues that frequently arise in OCR and DOJ investigations and potential approaches to meet these obligations. As an added resource, the US Department of Education in partnership with the Office of English Language
Acquisition (OELA) created a companion resource entitled the *English Learner Tool Kit* (2017) to assist SEAs and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with explanations, checklists, tools, and resources to support them in meeting their legal obligations to ELs in public schools aligned to these 10 common civil rights issues:

1. Identifying and Assessing All Potential EL Students
2. Providing EL Students with a Language Assistance Program
3. Staffing and Supporting an EL Program
4. Providing Meaningful Access to All Curricular and Extracurricular Programs
5. Avoiding Unnecessary Segregation of EL Students
6. Evaluating EL Students for Special Education Services and Providing Special Education and English Language Services
7. Meeting the Needs of EL Students Who Opt Out of EL Programs or Particular EL Services
8. Monitoring and Exiting EL Students from EL Programs and Services
9. Evaluating the Effectiveness of a District’s EL Program
10. Ensuring Meaningful Communication with Limited English Proficient Parents

These 10 civil rights issues, while not comprehensively equating to equitable educational opportunities for ELs, nor fully capturing all civil rights obligations of schools to ELs, will serve as a basis for interpreting the perspectives of K-12 educational leaders on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs.

**Identifying and assessing all potential EL students.** To clarify the first common civil rights issue noted in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter, the midwestern state in which this study takes place specifies exactly how to identify and assess all potential EL students in the MDE Entrance and Exit Protocol (2020). At the beginning of the school year, LEAs have 30 days to
identify all potential ELs using two main criteria: (1) a Home Language Survey (HLS) indicating a language other than English was the native language or is the primary language used in the home, and (2) an English language proficiency screener created by WIDA with state-defined cut scores indicating if a child qualifies for EL services. After the initial 30 days have passed, LEAs have 10 days to identify and assess any newly enrolled potential ELs using the same criteria.

Providing EL students with a language assistance program. Once ELs have been correctly identified, LEAs must provide EL students with a language assistance program as outlined in the second civil rights issue noted in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter. Federal civil rights laws do not require any particular program or method of instruction, nor does the state department of education in which this study takes place; however, the EL program must be “educationally sound in theory and effective in practice” to ensure EL students are able to reach English proficiency within a reasonable length of time (US Department of Justice & US Office for Civil Rights, 2015, p. 12). As Cummins (1979) highlights, Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), also referred to as social language, are typically acquired within one to two years while Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is typically acquired within five to seven years. Additionally, the work by Collier and Thomas (2009) greatly informs today’s understanding of effective and educationally sound EL programs demonstrating the long-term achievement of ELs compared across seven common program models.

Staffing and supporting an EL program. The third common civil rights issue identified in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter addresses the legal requirement to adequately staff and support the EL program. Based on the EL program locally chosen, LEAs are obligated to provide an adequate number of highly qualified teachers, trained administrators, and appropriate materials to provide effective language assistance programs. In the midwestern state in which this study takes place, highly qualified teachers are required to hold an ESL (NS) endorsement
and/or a bilingual (YA-YT) endorsement (Michigan Department of Education, 2019). It is noteworthy to emphasize the fact that paraprofessionals, aides, or tutors cannot take the place of these highly qualified teachers unless used as an interim measure while the LEA secures sufficient qualified teachers to serve all ELs (Castañeda v. Pickard, 1978; US Department of Justice & US Office for Civil Rights, 2015).

**Providing meaningful access to all curricular and extracurricular programs.** Next, the DOJ and OCR establish guidance in the Dear Colleague Letter (2015) around what it means for ELs to have meaningful access to all curricular and extracurricular programs and what the legal obligations of LEAs are while serving these culturally and linguistically diverse students. Specifically, LEAs have a dual obligation to provide English language development instruction to support ELs in the acquisition of English proficiency in a timely manner as well as appropriate linguistic supports and accommodations in grade-appropriate core curriculum and instruction.

While specific supports and accommodations are not mandated, they may include instruction and assessment in the EL’s primary language, sheltered classes, the use of SIOP strategies, as well as accommodations to allow for greater comprehensible input and scaffolded output. Furthermore, LEAs must provide ELs equal opportunities to meaningfully participate in all programs and activities including pre-K, Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, online programs, performing and visual arts, athletics, clubs, and other extracurricular activities provided to native-English speaking students (US Department of Justice & US Office for Civil Rights, 2015, p. 18).

**Avoiding unnecessary segregation of EL students.** The fifth common civil rights issue identified in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter emphasizes the fact that LEAs may not segregate ELs based upon their national origin or EL status without a clearly identified and justifiable purpose. For a limited period of time, EL programs may require that ELs receive separate
English language development or content area instruction based upon the chosen program’s goals, each student’s English proficiency, and the amount of time and progress in the EL program. Specifically, compliance issues regarding segregation of ELs have been found by the DOJ and OCR when LEAs do not provide ELs access to grade-level curriculum, special education, or extracurricular activities. Additionally, a common issue has arisen when ELs are segregated during non-academic subjects such as recess, lunch, and electives. Finally, LEAs should use caution to ensure ELs are not placed in EL programs longer than necessary and are not segregated into EL programs due to behaviors or special needs (US Department of Justice & US Office for Civil Rights, 2015, p. 23).

Evaluating EL students for special education services and providing special education and English language services. As detailed in the sixth common civil rights issues in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter, differentiating between language acquisition and learning disability in order to correctly identify and service all ELs can be challenging. While the Individual with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) require LEAs to ensure all students, including ELs, are identified and evaluated for special education services in a timely manner, the evaluation of ELs with suspected disabilities is increasingly complex since LEAs must not determine disability status due to limited English proficiency. Additionally, LEAs may not have a policy of delaying disability evaluations of EL students based on their EL status.

Presently in US K-12 public schools, about 14.2% of ELs are identified as having a disability which aligns roughly with the national average of all public school students identified as having a disability; however, patterns of over- and underrepresentation are found at state and district levels (NCES, 2018). For example, about 30% of ELs in California are identified as having a disability while only about 1% of ELs in the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, and West
Virginia are identified as having a disability. In the midwestern state in which this study takes place, about 5% of all ELs are identified as having a disability (NCES, 2018). Klinger and Eppolito (2014) shed light on this issue and provide guidance to support this civil rights issue including appropriate uses of assessments, characteristics of language acquisition, roles and involvement of multiple stakeholders, and strategies to distinguish between language acquisition and disability. Finally, once a school district identifies ELs with disabilities, they have a dual-obligation to provide these students with both language assistance and disability-related services to comply with Federal law (US Department of Justice & US Office for Civil Rights, 2015, p. 24).

Meeting the needs of EL students who opt out of EL programs or particular EL services. Although LEAs must serve all ELs, parents also have a right to opt of some or all of the EL services within a school’s EL program as outlined in the seventh common civil rights issue in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter. For example, parents might choose to have their child receive services from an ESL certified teacher in a traditional English-only classroom but decline to enroll their child in a two-way dual immersion program. The parents of ELs have the right to a voluntary decision, and LEAs must provide guidance in a language parents can understand to ensure they fully understand their child’s rights, the services available, and the benefits of the services. Related to this issue, it is noteworthy that services may be waived by the parent, but the EL label remains, and the student’s English language proficiency must continue to be annually assessed with the assessment chosen by the SEA. If ELs that opt out of EL services do not show progress, the school must take steps to support the English language development of the students. This could take place through multiple means, including providing additional professional development to the general education teachers.
Monitoring and exiting EL students from EL programs and services. The eighth common civil rights issue schools face in meeting their civil rights obligations to ELs is monitoring the progress of EL students, exiting ELs once they meet proficiency standards set by the SEA, and continuing to monitor ELs for a minimum of four years (US Department of Justice & US Office for Civil Rights, 2015). In the midwestern state in which this study takes place, LEAs should use state guidance to determine when to exit ELs from the program based on a minimum proficiency level on the annual English language proficiency assessment and the use of a state-approved local reading assessment to ensure the EL is at or above grade level in reading (MDE Entrance and Exit Protocol, 2017).

Evaluating the effectiveness of a district’s EL program. The next common civil rights issue identified in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter relates to the evaluation of the EL program through analyzing accurate data and modifying the EL program when it proves ineffective. If the chosen EL program does not enable ELs to attain both English proficiency and meaningful participation in the standard education program compared to their never-EL peers within a reasonable period of time, the district must make programmatic changes to reach these two goals. It is particularly critical at the secondary level to monitor EL’s progress and ensure they are on track to graduate and have equal opportunities to rigorous content area courses to prepare them for college and careers (US Department of Justice & US Office for Civil Rights, 2015).

Ensuring meaningful communication with limited English proficient parents. Finally, the tenth common civil rights issue in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter emphasizes the obligation schools have to communicate with parents in a language they can understand. Additionally, LEAs must adequately notify parents of information about any program, service, or activity that is provided to English proficient parents. For example, schools and districts must provide information in a language parents can understand related to the language assistance
program, special education services, discipline policies, registration and enrollment, report cards, permission slips, conferences, handbooks, and any other school and program choice options (US Department of Justice & US Office for Civil Rights, 2015). The DOJ and OCR guidance further clarifies that translators and interpreters should not merely be bilingual; they must be able to accurately and effectively communicate information in both languages related to any specialized terms or concepts. Specifically, it is documented that LEAs must not “rely on students, siblings, friends, or untrained school staff to translate or interpret for parents” (US Department of Justice & US Office for Civil Rights, 2015, p. 39). This can be a challenge, and large expense, for LEAs serving students of multiple language backgrounds with limited availability to local translators and interpreters; however, it is not optional to provide this meaningful communication.

The Role of Administrators

Due to the complex nature of equitably serving culturally and linguistically diverse students, the growing EL population representing many cultures and languages, and the various program models throughout the US serving these students, educational leaders have a challenging, yet pivotal, role in providing equitable educational opportunities for ELs. Elfers and Stritikus (2014) found, via their case study involving four school districts in Washington state, that “leadership at both school and district levels play a crucial role in creating and sustaining systems of support” while ensuring equitable educational opportunities for ELs (p. 318). Linking to Bush’s (2011) distinction between administrators’ roles of leadership and management, educational leaders serving ELs must not only have the skills to efficiently manage the technical issues related to EL programs, but also the leadership skills grounded in values and purpose in order to establish a vision for change and innovation to ensure equitable opportunities. Specifically, in order to meet schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs as outlined
in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter, there are many technical and managerial tasks, such as the identification and assessment of ELs along with providing the necessary translators and interpreters to ensure meaningful communication with families. Conversely, complying with schools’ civil rights obligations also necessitates strong leadership qualities requiring administrators to design visionary programs that provide appropriate language services while ensuring that all ELs have meaningful access to curricular and extracurricular programs to ultimately close the achievement and opportunity gaps that exist.

Many studies have highlighted the complex role of K-12 administrators with an emphasis on shared leadership (Aronson & Diaz, 2015; Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010; Cortina, Makar, & Mount-Cors, 2015; DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2017); yet, others have cautioned that shared decision-making models can serve as barriers to equity for ELs noting that the responsibility of equity is often displaced (Castagno & Hausman, 2017). Through their professional expertise and collaboration, Aronson, former executive director of TESOL International Association, and Diaz (2015) outline specific roles administrators have in leading equitable programs for ELs, including creating a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility, empowering family members of ELs, understanding cultural differences, providing support and training for teachers, and seeking additional funding and resources. Additionally, Brooks et al. (2010) warn that school-level administrators are often concerned about surface-level supports for ELs, often focusing on language alone, rather than the broader systematic challenges that impact the success of ELs in schools. They also illuminate the need for shared responsibility by illustrating the fact that ESL teachers can become marginalized when given sole responsibility for all EL needs. While these studies have demonstrated that equitably serving ELs in schools must be a collective commitment of all stakeholders, Castagno et al. (2017), via their year-long ethnography at a diverse, urban school district with 39% LEP
students, emphasized the need to establish a support network, so leaders do not take on the work of educational equity of ELs independently, while cautioning against the displacement of the responsibility of equity through a model of shared leadership.

Adding to the complexity of the role of administrators, in order to equitably lead EL programs and make decisions regarding instructional models, educational leaders must be equipped with foundational knowledge of the unique backgrounds, assets, and needs of ELs, effective program models, and the interconnectedness of culture, race, language, identity, difference, and privilege (Capper & Young, 2014; Collier & Thomas, 2009; Moreno-Recio, Orange, & Corrales, 2018). For example, Capper et al.’s (2014) meta-analysis of the educational leadership for social justice literature revealed that leaders must not only collaborate with multiple stakeholders, they must also become experts on the range of student differences with a focus on the elimination of educational inequities. The range of educational, cultural, linguistic, and individual backgrounds of ELs is complex and demands time for leaders to become experts. Demonstrating the effectiveness of training around the uniqueness of educating ELs, Moreno-Recio et al.’s (2018) mixed-methods study involving a purposeful sample of 150 school leaders serving ELs in Texas revealed that the hours of training leaders received related to English language development are statistically significant to develop leaders’ overall efficacy. This highlights the specific knowledge needed in order for leaders to take on the role of equitably serving ELs.

Being an instructional leader who equally emphasizes language and content standards has also been demonstrated to be a critical role of administrators leading equitable programs for ELs (Morita-Mullaney, 2016; Zwiers, O’Hara, & Pritchard, 2014). The findings from Morita-Mullaney’s (2016) narrative study aligns with the work by Zwiers et al. (2014) in that it highlights the inequity between language and content standards where content standards have
been given greater attention. The role of administrators is essential in leveling the importance of both language and content and elevating the position of ELD standards. Additionally, as instructional leaders, administrators play a key role in cultivating and growing the cultural competence of themselves and all educators serving culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Hansuvadha & Slater, 2012; Hastings, & Jacob, 2016; Souto-Manning, Llerena, Martell, Maguire, & Arce-Boardman, 2018). These studies illuminate the fact that instructional leaders must not consider language as the sole contributor to the perpetuating existence of inequitable outcomes for ELs.

**Tools and Frameworks**

Acknowledging the complexity of the role of school and district-level administrators leading equitable programs for ELs, a few tools and frameworks have been developed to assist leaders (Ascenzi-Moreno, Hesson, & Menken, 2016; Baecher, Knoll, & Patti, 2016; DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2017; Liou & Mermans, 2017). For example, Ascenzi-Moreno et al. (2016) found that effective structural changes in programming and pedagogy, which encourage ELs to engage their entire linguistic repertoire through translanguaging, were associated with changes in school leadership structures from hierarchical to collaborative. By shifting to a leadership framework that adopts shared responsibility, the assets of ELs can be more fully integrated and tapped into within the educational setting. Furthermore, Baecher et al. (2016), coming from a background as TESOL and school leadership preparation program faculty, developed an observation tool targeted to EL instruction that incorporated guided video analysis and live observation to be used by those preparing for the role of school principal. Through the use of a grounded theory study, this tool was found to contribute to the preparation of instructional leaders who can positively influence the academic achievement of ELs.
Additionally, building off the work of Collier et al. (2009) demonstrating the effectiveness of dual language programming, DeMatthews et al. (2017) proposed a social justice leadership framework to engage multiple stakeholders in the “foregrounding, preparation, implementation, evaluation, and sustainment of a dual language program” (p. 65). Also, a joint publication by the Center for Applied Linguistics, Dual Language Education of New Mexico, and Santillana USA provided seven strands of guiding principles for dual language education, including templates for self-evaluation and a quick-reference page of the seven strands and 25 principles (Howard, Lindholm-Leary, Rogers, Olague, Medina, Kennedy, Sugarman, & Christian, 2018). These tools have been developed to support the effective leadership of programs serving ELs while accounting for the complex nature of equitably serving culturally and linguistically diverse student populations.

While considering the role of administrators as cultural mediators with knowledge and skills related to race, racism, language, culture, and privilege, Liou et al. (2017) developed a conceptual framework that has implications for administrator preparation programs seeking to prepare responsive administrators to issues of race and racism in the context of diversity and demographic change. This framework emerged from their narrative inquiry at an educational leadership program in Arizona where “concepts and skills related to race, racism, and the structures and culture that can either perpetuate or disrupt inequitable treatment of diverse student populations” were woven across and throughout all of the program courses and experiences (p. 661). Knowing the complexity of the role of administrators and the tools and frameworks that exist to support their leadership of equitable programs for K-12 ELs, it is essential to fully understand their perceptions on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs.
Finally, to support school and district-level administrators in understanding and implementing EL programs that minimally adhere to civil rights obligations of schools, the OCR and DOJ 2015 Dear Colleague Letter and accompanying EL Toolkit (2017) serve as tools that provide legal and practical guidance around the 10 most common civil rights issues schools face while serving ELs and their families. While these resources exist, no studies could be found capturing the perceptions of K-12 educational leaders on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools. This study will fill this void in the literature by specifically capturing administrators’ perceived attitudes and beliefs, level of preparation, level of understanding, barriers, level of implementation, and EL program outcomes related to these 10 common civil rights issues.

Factors Contributing to EL Program Outcomes

Readiness for Change

This study specifically seeks to better understand the perceptions of K-12 educational leaders on key issues regarding equitable educational opportunities for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools. These perceptions will be analyzed to determine the extent to which the attitudes and beliefs, preparation and understanding levels, barriers, and level of implementation can predict EL program outcomes. The term readiness used in this study will draw upon the work of Pasmore and Woodman (2007) who define readiness for change as a comprehensive attitude that is influenced simultaneously by the content, process, context, and the individuals involved, and collectively reflects the extent to which an individual is “cognitively and emotionally inclined to accept, embrace, and adopt a particular plan to purposefully alter the status quo” (p. 326). This readiness for change will be captured, in part, through the perceptions of K-12 school and district level educational leaders.
Illuminating readiness for change for ELs, Von Esch’s (2018) findings, via a year-long comparative case study of two elementary EL teacher leaders in an ethnically and culturally diverse urban school district, noted that “the movement toward improved instruction for EL students and equitable opportunities for learning hinged upon the work of the EL-focused teacher leaders” (p.169). While this qualitative study demonstrated the positive impact teacher leaders can have on EL programs, it also demonstrated a need for strong leadership from administrators with a greater sense of urgency around the need to change practices to move towards educational equity. This study will analyze K-12 educational leaders’ perceptions on key issues regarding equitable EL programs by capturing their attitudes and beliefs, level of preparation, level of understanding, barriers, level of implementation, and EL program outcomes. A review of the literature in each of these areas is provided related to the issue of equitable educational programs for ELs.

**Attitudes and Beliefs**

Emphasizing the critical role that educational leaders play in providing equitable educational opportunities for ELs, multiple studies have demonstrated varying attitudes and beliefs regarding EL programming and the need to recognize the education of culturally and linguistically diverse learners as both a moral imperative and legal obligation (González, 2010; Kangas, 2018; Mavrogordato, 2012; Rivera-McCutchen, 2014). Mavrogordato (2012) emphasizes the legal obligations that educational leaders have while implementing programs for ELs by examining the evolution of policies surrounding bilingual education and the expanded role of the federal government in protecting traditionally underserved groups of students, including ELs. In addition, Lewis et al. (2019) adds to the understanding of these legal obligations via an analysis of policy guidance by OCR in regards to schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs. In order to further understand the perceptions of educational leaders on key
issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that adhere to these legal obligations, we must first understand their attitudes and beliefs regarding the education of ELs.

Additionally, González (2010) contributes to the understanding of the equitable education of culturally and linguistically diverse learners beyond a legal obligation as both a moral imperative and economic directive. Educational leaders hold a unique and integral role in ensuring that their school or district is meeting this moral imperative, economic directive, and legal obligation. By examining the attitudes and beliefs of K-12 educational leaders regarding the education of ELs, areas of targeted support may be identified in order to enhance educational equity for ELs.

While recognizing that the education of ELs is a legal and moral obligation, Kangas’ (2018) qualitative comparative case study found that non-compliance with federal laws and policies was primarily a consequence of administrators’ and teachers’ beliefs about the very laws and policies intended to protect ELs. A hierarchy was noted where EL services were seen as optional and interpreted as mere policy recommendations where other policies, specifically special education services, were seen as obligatory under the law. This emphasizes both the emotional and cognitive readiness needed, as highlighted in Pasmore et al.’s (2007) definition of readiness, to equitably provide programs for ELs.

After an exhaustive review of the literature, no studies were found that capture the attitudes and beliefs of K-12 educational leaders regarding the current state of educational equity for ELs. More specifically, no studies could be found that captured these attitudes and beliefs related to the 10 common civil rights issues documented in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter. This study will bring to light these attitudes and beliefs in order to illuminate, in part, the perceptions of K-12 administrators on key issues equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools.
Level of Preparation

Certainly, if K-12 educational leaders are expected to equitably lead programs for ELs that minimally adhere to schools’ civil rights obligations to these students, they must be prepared to do so; however, many studies have shown a startling lack of preparation of educators serving culturally and linguistically diverse students (Baecher, Knoll, & Patti, 2013; Baecher, Knoll, & Patti, 2016; Tuters & Portelli, 2017; Watson, 2017; Whitenack, 2015; Young, Anderson, & Nash, 2017). For example, Baecher et al. (2013) found, via a mixed-methods study of an advanced certificate program in administration and supervision housed within one public university’s college of education, that there was little systemic attention to ELs in the leadership curriculum and coursework. Furthermore, Young et al. (2017) after reviewing the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards and the related literature, found that the standards are preparing future educational leaders for the current educational landscape rather than for imagining and creating a new future that would more equitably serve ELs and other growing, diverse populations. Due to this demonstrated lack of attention to ELs in leadership preparation programs, Baecher et al. (2016) later developed a guided video analysis and observation tool which was found to contribute to the preparation of instructional leaders who can positively influence the academic achievement of ELs through a grounded theory study. Even though this tool was developed and shown to be effective, this study also noted that leadership candidates without specific background in TESOL were hesitant to use the tool.

Also, Watson’s (2017) and Whitenack’s (2015) independent reviews of the literature shed light on the lack of preparation of K-12 educational leaders serving ELs. Specifically, Watson (2017) found that students who are immigrant, migrant, or ELs are not uniquely mentioned in the standards for educational leaders in New York. Additionally, Whitenack illuminates the central role that school principals play in the academic achievement of ELs in the age of the Common
Core State Standards (CCSS), and emphasizes the need to revise the curriculum of administrator preparation programs as well as utilize professional development for instructional leaders to address the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Indeed, the US is not alone in the challenge of preparing school leaders to lead for equity with growing numbers of diverse learners. Tuters et al. (2017) also found, via an in-depth document analysis and interview with educational building-level leaders, found that the school leadership in Ontario is also grossly under-prepared.

While these studies have shown a lack of overall focus on ELs and equity in leadership preparation programs, one study highlighted the successful integration of the complexity of serving ELs and diverse learners throughout the preparation program (Liou & Hermanns, 2017). Liou and Hermanns (2017) found, via a narrative inquiry at an educational leadership program in Arizona, that the program faculty there were able to collaborate to intentionally weave concepts and skills related to race, racism, culture, and language across and throughout the program courses and experiences to prepare responsive administrators to serve diverse populations. Without ELs specifically noted in the national standards, it will take an ambitious effort from faculty members preparing future educational leaders to incorporate the complex assets, needs, and civil rights of ELs into their programs.

By having leaders that are underprepared to implement equitable programs for ELs, some studies have demonstrated the harmful effects these leaders can have on EL programs (Menken & Solorza, 2015; Morita-Mullaney, 2018). For example, after interviewing 27 principals, assistant principals, supervisors, and teachers in English-only and bilingual schools in New York City, Menken et al. (2015) found that many leaders are dismantling bilingual programs due to outside pressures, and that those with no formal preparation in the education of emergent bilinguals are adopting English-only policies and perpetuating misconceptions about the value
and role of native language development. Additionally, Morita-Mullaney’s (2018) narrative inquiry found that EL district leaders who are underprepared to serve ELs often avoid the central issues of race and racism while only focusing on language as sole operating principle which ultimately is reproducing racism and linguicism.

Not only have K-12 educational leaders had little formal preparation to serve ELs, they also are likely to have had little preparation prior to their role as an educational leader since many studies have shown the lack of preparation of general education teachers to serve ELs (Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2016; Coady, Harper, & DeJong, 2016; Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018; Turkan & Buzick, 2016). Specifically, Brooks, et al. (2016) found that ESL teachers often accept sole responsibility for all EL needs in K-12 settings, and therefore can become marginalized, due to a lack of preparation and shared responsibility of general education teachers and leaders serving culturally and linguistically diverse students. Additionally, Coadey et al. (2016), via a mixed-methods study involving interviews and observations in Florida, revealed a need to better prepare teachers to systemically address the linguistic and cultural learning needs of ELs. Finally, Hiatt et al. (2018), via an analysis of mixed-methods survey data of 126 teachers’ perceived preparedness to serve ELs in a Midwestern state, noted specific areas in which teachers needed greater preparation and long-term professional development to meet the linguistic, cultural, and academic needs of the ELs in their classrooms. Finally, Turkan et al. (2016) also note the fact that many general education teachers have not received training on effectively teaching ELs, nor have administrators received training on how to evaluate teachers of ELs, and therefore it can be difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of educators serving these students.

More specifically, after an exhaustive review of the literature, no studies were found capturing the perceptions of K-12 educational leaders on key issues regarding equitable
programs for ELs that minimally comply with the civil rights obligations highlighted by the DOJ and OCR in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter. While this guidance document was published in 2015 to support K-12 educational leaders and clarify schools’ obligations to ELs, along with the companion USED EL Toolkit (2017), no studies could be found evaluating the level of preparation of such leaders to implement programs that adhere to these obligations.

**Level of Understanding of Civil Rights Obligations**

Acknowledging the widespread lack of formal preparation today’s K-12 educational leaders have in meeting the complex needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse student population, along with the complexity of the many civil rights obligations of schools to ELs, it is important to better understand educational leaders’ level of understanding of ELs’ civil rights since they are expected to implement EL programs that minimally comply with Federal law.

Despite an exhaustive review of the literature, no studies examining the perceived or actual level of understanding that K-12 educational leaders have of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs could be found. Brooks et al. (2010) observed through their experiences and work in Indiana, as well as interviews with principals, that school-level administrators are often concerned about surface-level supports for ELs, often focusing on language alone, rather than the broader systematic challenges that impact the success of ELs in schools. This study, while not specifically referencing ELs’ civil rights, alludes to the fact that school level administrators are often more concerned with language alone rather than some of the more complex civil rights issues of segregation, meaningful access to all school programs, and the identification of ELs with suspected disabilities as emphasized in the joint guidance from the DOJ and OCR 2015 Dear Colleague Letter.

As demonstrated in the lack of literature available regarding K-12 leaders’ level of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs, Racines (2015), after analyzing
litigation trends and outcomes related to the education of ELs, found that the rights of ELs have not received much attention while there is an increasing emphasis on test scores and specific instructional strategies for ELs. Additionally, Militello, Schimmel, and Eberwein (2009), through a national survey aimed to determine secondary school principals’ knowledge of the rights of students and teachers, found that a majority of principals are uninformed or misinformed about school law issues and that 85% of the principals said they would change their behavior if they knew the answers to their law survey questions. While this study was not specific to educational civil rights protecting ELs, according to this survey of 493 schools principals, the number one area that principals’ want teachers to know more about was “special education and Limited English Proficiency” (p. 41). While principals do not need to complete a law degree, Militello et al.’s (2009) study emphasizes the need for every principal to have a comprehensive preservice school law course, regular legal updates, user-friendly resources, and access to legal counsel in order to practice preventive law and build a more legally literate staff (p. 42). This study, conducted 10 years after that of Militello et al., will add to the specific understanding of the current perceived level of understanding educational leaders have regarding schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs.

**Barriers**

Interrupting decades of educational and systemic patterns that have allowed ELs to have unequal access to educational opportunities and outcomes will take leaders who are ready to identify and overcome the barriers that stand in the way of educational equity for our culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Edwards Dormer, 2016; Staehr Fenner, 2014; Zacarian, 2011). Many have demonstrated the complex task of leading schools while balancing the managerial and leadership roles which require leaders to simultaneously serve as educators, community leaders, cultural mediators, finance directors, politicians, specialists in educational
law, assessment coordinators, and visionary instructional leaders while recognizing the various stakeholders and historical power relations involved (Burns, 1978; Bush, 2011; Harvey, Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, & Koff, 2013; Kose, 2011; Lemoine, McCormack, & Richardson, 2014; Northouse, 2016). While educational leaders share the responsibility, and privilege, of navigating the complex terrain of the K-12 educational system to serve all students that enter their doors, there are unique challenges and barriers present while implementing equitable programs for ELs (Aronson et al., 2015; Arsen, Delpier, & Nagel, 2019; Brayboy et al., 2007; Capper et al., 2014; Castagno et al., 2017; Hakuta, 2001; Menken et al., 2015; Morita-Mullaney, 2018; Turkan & Buzick, 2016; Tuters et al., 2017).

Specifically, there are managerial aspects of implementing equitable programs for ELs that can serve as barriers such as lack of funding, time, and qualified staff (Aronson et al., 2015; Arsen et al., 2019; Lemoine et al., 2014; US Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education, 2017). Arsen et al.’s (2019) report on K-12 school funding in the midwestern state in which this study takes place shed light on the fact that total K-12 education funding declined by 30% between 2002 and 2015 after adjusting for inflation. Directly impacting the funding available for ELs, this report highlighted the fact that the number of at-risk students, including ELs, has grown significantly while the funding per at-risk student dropped by over 60% since 2001. Strikingly, this midwestern state ranked last among states in total education revenue growth since the passage of Proposal A which restructured school funding back in 1994. Certainly, with educational leaders working with tight budgets and many needs, funding can be a barrier to implementing desired programming. Aronson et al. (2015) add to the understanding of the power of partnerships and the need for additional funds to serve ELs by specifically suggesting to K-12 administrators to purposefully seek additional funding in order to meet the complex demands of implementing equitable EL programs.
In addition to funding, a lack of time can serve as a barrier to implementing equitable EL programs (Aronson et al., 2015; Lemoine et al., 2014). With the many responsibilities placed upon our educational leaders, requiring both managerial and instructional leadership, lack of time continues to be barrier for school administrators (Lemoine et al., 2014). Aronson et al. (2015) also highlight time as a critical factor in improving school districts’ capacity for supporting ELs in US schools. They specifically note that administrators must make time to engage families of ELs, provide support and training for teachers serving ELs, embed EL professional development, support teacher collaboration, and grow cultural competence. With so many demands and an array of diverse student needs, creating the time to prioritize these components of EL programming can be a challenge.

Another program management issue that school leaders may face as a barrier is a lack of qualified staff available to fill the identified positions. As a nation, the need for ESL and bilingual certified teachers has steadily grown from 1990 to the present day as documented by an increase in K-12 ELs nationwide as well as an increased number of states listing ESL and bilingual certified teachers on the shortage list as documented by the US Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education in their 2017 Teacher Shortage Areas Nationwide Listing. Through my own professional experience in the midwestern state in which this study takes place, it is not uncommon for schools to only have one or two qualified candidates for a posted ESL or bilingual teaching position. To assist with this issue, the US Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition (2017) has provided grants to address this shortage and support pre-service and in-service teachers in earning their ESL endorsement, however a critical shortage remains. Due to the civil rights requirement of communicating with parents in a language they can understand, schools must also find qualified translators and interpreters for many languages to assist with this communication. Finding these qualified
translators and interpreters can also serve as a barrier. Reflecting increasing globalization and a more diverse US population, according to the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2019), employment of interpreters and translators is projected to grow 18% from 2016 to 2026. While the demand is increasing, schools are already struggling to find qualified translators and interpreters, especially for less common and indigenous languages.

Furthermore, many studies have illuminated the unique barriers related to various stakeholders and the historical, systemic issues that are at play while implementing equitable programs for ELs (Aronson et al., 2015; Brayboy et al., 2007; Brooks et al., 2010; Capper et al., 2014; Castagno et al., 2017; Morita-Mullaney, 2018). Multiple studies have demonstrated a lack of attention to systemic issues relating to language, culture, race, and equity to be a barrier in implementing equitable programs for ELs (Brayboy et al., 2007; Brooks et al., 2010; Capper et al., 2014; Morita-Mullaney, 2018). Additionally, the lack of engagement of key stakeholders has been shown to be a barrier with many studies finding a need for greater shared leadership and responsibility for ELs (Aronson et al., 2015; Capper et al., 2014; Cortina et al., 2015; DeMatthews et al., 2017; Elfers et al., 2014; González, 2010; Theoharis et al., 2011). On the other hand, one study, via a year-long ethnography after an OCR agreement, found that a shared decision-making form of governance actually served as a barrier to the pursuit of equity for ELs due to the fact that the responsibility of equity is often displaced (Castagno et al., 2017).

Closely related to these stakeholder issues are barriers due to a lack of administrator and teacher preparation to serve ELs as well as lack of continued professional learning opportunities that address the multifaceted aspects of equitable EL programs (Aronson et al., 2015; Hiatt et al., 2018; Menken et al., 2015; Turkan et al., 2016; Tuters et al., 2017). With a lack of mention of ELs in preparation standards, little systematic attention made to ELs in school leadership curriculum, studies illuminating the need for greater preparation, and a severe lack of ESL
certified educators across the US to provide ongoing support and professional development at the local school level, this lack of preparation can certainly be a barrier in implementing equitable programs for ELs (Aronson et al., 2015; Baecher et al., 2013; Brooks et al., 2010; Hansuvadha et al., 2012; Hiatt et al., 2018; Menken et al., 2015; Turkan et al., 2016; Tuters et al., 2017).

Finally, due to the fact that there are many state and federal laws and policies related to the implementation of equitable programs for ELs, lack of clear and consistent policies as well as a lack of oversight of schools’ obligations to ELs can serve as barriers (Capper et al., 2014; Castagno et al., 2017; Hakuta, 2001; Kangas, 2018; Menken et al., 2015). For example, Capper et al.’s (2014) meta-analysis of the educational leadership for social justice literature revealed a lack of policy and practice coherence. Additionally, as demonstrated in the 2015 OCR and DOJ Dear Colleague Letter, there are numerous obligations of schools to ELs which have been continuously defined to a greater degree following the passage of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Finally, OCR and DOJ share authority for enforcing Title VI in the education context while the state departments of education further define and implement policies and oversight related to English Learner (USED, 2015). Kangas’ (2018) qualitative comparative case study found that EL services, which vary based on policies from SEAs, were interpreted as mere policy recommendations rather an legal requirements compared to special education services which were viewed as obligatory. As demonstrated through multiple studies, an overall lack of clear and consistent policies alongside a lack of oversight of schools’ obligations to ELs can serve as barriers to the implementation of equitable programs for ELs (Hakuta, 2001; Menken et al., 2015). While these studies highlighted the noted barriers and challenges that K-12 educational leaders may face while implementing equitable programs for ELs, no studies could be found illuminating the extent to which K-12 educational leaders perceive them to be barriers while implementing equitable programs for ELs.
Implementation and Outcomes

Despite the complexity of implementing equitable programs for a growing population of diverse ELs and the myriad of potential barriers faced by our educational leaders, many studies have highlighted successes (Ascenzi-Moreno, Hesson, & Menken, 2016; Cortina, Makar, & Mount-Cors, 2015; Edwards Dormer, 2016; González, 2010; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Hastings & Jacob, 2016; Mavrogordato & White, 2019; Peterson, 2014; Scanlan & López, 2012; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). Specifically, there are studies demonstrating improved EL programming with a shift in school leadership structures from hierarchical to collaborative (Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2016; Cortina et al., 2015; González, 2010; Elfers et al., 2014; Mavrogordato et al., 2019; Theoharis et al., 2011). Theoharis et al.’s (2011) findings from comparative case studies of principals involved in reform efforts for ELs documented successful, inclusive EL services which improved both the achievement of ELs along with the connections with EL families. Finally, there are further studies highlighting successes once stakeholders address deeply rooted issues beyond language related to race, culture, and systemic inequities (González, 2010; Flores et al., 2018; Peterson, 2014; Rivera-McCutchen, 2014). These successes offer insight and hope for current and future educational leaders implementing programs for ELs that will result in equitable opportunities and outcomes for our culturally and linguistically diverse students who bring richness to our schools. While these studies illuminate pockets of success, no studies could be found related to specific level of implementation of EL programs in connection to the key civil rights issues identified in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter.

Chapter 2 Closure

Ultimately, K-12 educational leaders cannot be the sole answer to the observed inequities present in our K-12 schools. Establishing a collaborative network of stakeholders committed to
equitable educational opportunities and outcomes for ELs, while recognizing the interconnectedness of language, race, culture, identity, and privilege, must be in place for sustained, meaningful change (Crump, 2014; DeMatthews and Izquierdo, 2017; Hansuvadha & Slater, 2012; Hastings, & Jacob, 2016). In order to better understand the perceptions of current K-12 educational leaders, as one member of this essential network, and further the honorable work of implementing equitable educational opportunities that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools to ELs, more studies must address this gap in the literature.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Amidst many competing roles, responsibilities, and challenges that today’s educational leaders must address, along with an increasing number of multilingual and multicultural students enrolled in schools, the equitable education of ELs must be a priority, and it is critical that our leaders are ready to implement equitable educational opportunities that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools. Over half a century has elapsed since the passage of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any program that receives federal funding. Yet educational leaders continue to wrestle with equitable EL programming.

Although this study did not propose to analyze specific EL programs in schools and their adherence to civil rights obligations, it begins to capture K-12 educational leaders’ perspectives on key issues regarding equitable educational opportunities that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools to ELs through an analysis of their perceived attitudes and beliefs, level or preparation, level of understanding of civil rights obligations, barriers, implementation, and EL program outcomes. This information, while also analyzed at the school and district level, shed light on the extent to which current K-12 educational leaders’ perceptions can predict perceived EL program outcomes. Acknowledging the fact that ELs in K-12 schools continue to lack equitable opportunities in schools and lag significantly behind their native English speaking peers on academic assessments, greater understanding of the perceptions of our leaders on key issues regarding equitable programs fills a void in the research regarding a possible disconnect between schools’ legal obligations to ELs and the perceptions of educational leaders.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to capture K-12 educational leaders’ perspectives on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the
civil rights obligations of schools; such perceptions were ascertained through an analysis of their attitudes and beliefs, formal level of preparation, level of understanding of civil rights obligations, barriers, level of equitable EL program implementation, and EL program outcomes. As such, this chapter outlines the methods of data collection using an instrument that will allow for analysis of educational leaders’ perceptions. Specifically, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. In reference to equitable programs for ELs, what perceptions do K-12 educational leaders have regarding:
   a. their attitudes and beliefs regarding education of ELs;
   b. their formal preparation regarding this issue;
   c. their level of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs;
   d. barriers experienced while implementing equitable programs for ELs;
   e. their current level of equitable EL program implementation; and
   f. their perceived EL program outcomes?

2. How are the perceptions of school and district level administrators similar or different regarding equitable programs for ELs?

3. To what extent can the attitudes and beliefs, preparation and understanding levels, barriers, and level of implementation predict EL program outcomes, when accounting for the percent of EL students and total number of ESL/bilingual certified teachers serving such students?

This chapter outlines the population, potential sample size, survey instrument, and data analysis procedures, along with the validity of the methods, limitations, and delimitations of the study.
Research Design, Approach, and Rationale

In order to capture perceptional data from current school and district leaders regarding key issues around equitable EL programs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools to ELs, I used a non-experimental quantitative design since I used existing conditions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). More specifically, a cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data at one point in time. The benefit of a survey design for this study was that it provided a quantitative description of trends, attitudes, and perceptions of many educational leaders across a large area with an efficient rate of turnaround in data collection, which allowed timely generalizations to be drawn from the sample of school and district leaders (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

While designing this study and survey tool, a transformative worldview was enacted due to the fact that the study centers around advocacy for the social issue of educational equity for ELs, an often marginalized population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Mertens, 2010). Recognizing the intersectionality among race, racism, language, culture, identity and power as highlighted in LangCrit Theory, this study and survey tool embraced the complex nature of equitably implementing programs for ELs and aimed to shed light on the perceptions of K-12 educational leaders on key issues (Crump, 2014). Such knowledge can better equip multiple stakeholders in collaboratively enacting changes necessary to advance equity in educational programs serving culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

Population, Sample, and Setting

The population for this study consisted of all school and district level educational leaders, or administrators, whose email addresses are correctly on file with the state department of education’s database secured through CEPI, the Center for Educational Performance and Information, across all K-12 public school districts and academies in a Midwestern state during
the 2019-20 school year. Additionally, the survey was sent via email to all K-12 educational leaders that are members of the Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators (MASA), a prominent professional organization in the state. In order to increase the number of responses, I additionally collaborated with regional leads at intermediate school districts and educational service agencies to send the survey invitation and instrument. For the purpose of this study, all levels of administrators were invited to participate in the study, recognizing the collective responsibility of educational leaders in providing equitable programs for ELs. Specifically, the following LEA and PSA district and school level contacts were used from the CEPI database: superintendent, assistant superintendent, administrator, principal, assistant principal, director, assistant director, interim superintendent, school leader, dean, assistant dean, EL assessment coordinator, migrant education summer program contact, Title III administrator.

To clarify, Title III administrators directly oversee federal funds for English Learners.

Through my own professional work and connections in the field, ease of access to the population via email addresses was made possible through support of the state Department of Education and the leadership of MASA. The sample for this study included all K-12 school and district level administrators serving in K-12 public school districts or public school academies during the 2019-2020 school year who chose to complete at least one-third of the survey. Using G Power, given that I had a total of five independent variables and two control variables that were used in the data analysis, my target sample size was a minimum of 135 participants in order to achieve a power of .8 or a minimum of 204 participants in order achieve a power of .95 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009; Pearson & Mundform, 2010). A total sample of 811 participants was used for this study.

The setting, which was a Midwestern state with approximately 6% of the total K-12 student population identified as ELs, or roughly 81,000 students (Migration Policy Institute,
was chosen due to accessibility to the study population. Upon analysis of the EL student population, roughly 40% of K-12 ELs have a home language of Spanish and 24% have a home language of Arabic. Bengali, Chinese, and Albanian round out the top five languages other than English in the state, with 2.6%, 1.8%, and 1.8% of ELs with those home languages, respectively. To the surprise of many who are less familiar with the K-12 EL population in the US, the majority of ELs in this state, as well as throughout the entire country, were born in the United States, both at the elementary and secondary levels (Migration Policy Institute, 2018).

**Instrumentation**

An online survey tool, which ensured anonymity, was created using Qualtrics for this unique study to capture the quantitative description of school and district level educational leaders’ perceptions on key issues regarding programs that equitably serve ELs. (See Appendix A). Recognizing the time constraints of educational leaders, this online survey tool included a total of 13 questions and required less than 10 minutes to complete. Despite an extensive literature review, no preexisting survey could be found to align to the purpose of this study; however concepts, formatting, and structural ideas were drawn from multiple survey designs used in previous studies (Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018; Militello, Schimmel, & Eberwein, 2009). Due to the fact that this survey was created specifically for this research study, it did not have any previously established reliability or validity. In order to establish content validity, it was reviewed by my doctoral committee along with two professional colleagues. Their feedback led to wording and structural adjustments to the survey instrument. Furthermore, the survey instrument was pilot-tested by two school-level and two district-level administrators and revised according to their feedback. The pilot-test allowed for adjustments and improvements to the wording, format, and scales where uncertainties or concerns arose. Following the pilot-testing, a
final draft of the survey instrument was constructed. Approval to use the survey and conduct this study was sought from WMU’s HSIRB before distributing it to the population.

The survey was divided into seven sections. The first six sections aligned directly with the sub-questions under research question one regarding perceptions of K-12 educational leaders on key issues regarding the implementation of equitable programs for ELs. A six-point Likert scale was used to capture the educational leaders’ perceived attitudes and beliefs, level of preparation, level of understanding of civil rights obligations, barriers, level of implementation, and perceived EL outcomes related to the implementation of equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to schools’ obligations to ELs under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The ten items found in sections two and five of the survey instrument were aligned with the 10 most common civil rights issues found in schools as identified in the OCR/ DOJ 2015 Dear Colleague Letter. The extensive review of the literature informed the items found in the other sections. A short, demographic section was placed at the conclusion of the survey in section seven to determine if the participant served as a school- or district-level educational leader and to more clearly understand the sample and EL population being served by the educational leaders that participated in this study.

The questions developed for the survey instrument included options for educational leaders to respond to their perceptions in an efficient manner through the use of a six-point Likert scale appropriate to each category. Survey question four gathered perception data from the sample regarding barriers experienced while implementing programs for ELs. The barriers listed were drawn from the extensive literature review as well as my own professional experience working with K-12 educational leaders serving culturally and linguistically diverse learners. An option to list additional barriers was also available. Survey questions were designed for accuracy
and efficiency in capturing K-12 educational leaders’ perceptions on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Before sending the electronic survey via email to K-12 administrators across the Midwestern state, I sought WMU’s Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) approval for the study, including the specific survey tool and the wording to be used in the email invitation. A single email invitation was sent to all current members of MASA by the executive director of the organization (see Appendix B). This email invitation included the purpose of the study along with a direct link to the survey tool. Similarly, I sent an initial email invitation to all K-12 school and district-level administrators whose email addresses were on file with CEPI (see Appendix C). Specifically, the following LEA and PSA district and school level contacts were used from the CEPI database: superintendent, assistant superintendent, administrator, principal, assistant principal, director, assistant director, interim superintendent, school leader, dean, assistant dean, EL assessment coordinator, migrant education summer program contact, title iii administrator. A reminder email invitation was sent one week following the initial request to those with emails on file with CEPI (see Appendix D), and a final email invitation was sent one week later (see Appendix E). Members of MASA only received a single email invitation without subsequent reminders.

A total data collection window was open for approximately four weeks in order to allow for greater participation. No identifiable data was collected via the Qualtrics survey instrument ensuring anonymity for all respondents. Emails that contain the URL for the survey were sent to participants through a blind copy 10 or less at a time to avoid bounce-back from servers and rerouting to junk mail boxes. The participant email addresses were not collected via the Qualtrics survey and no identifiable information was part of any of the data set collected.
As respondents took the online survey, all results were collected and stored through a password-protected Qualtrics account. Upon conclusion of the survey window, the data was exported from Qualtrics to the IBM SPSS Statistics software, version 25, for statistical analysis and stored on a personal, password-protected computer. Additionally, the data was exported to SAS software for further analysis. These statistical analysis tools allowed me to analyze and represent both descriptive and inferential data obtained for each of the three research questions.

**Data Analysis**

The survey data that was collected for this study is quantitative in nature in order to capture perception data of K-12 building and district level administrators’ perceptions on key issues regarding equitable educational programs for ELs. Responses obtained were exported into SPSS and SAS, and all subsequent analysis was conducted in these statistics software tools. The survey questions were directly aligned to the three research questions with key demographic data collected in the final section of the survey tool that was crucial in understanding and interpreting the results of the study. The following sections detail the analysis techniques in alignment with each of the three research questions.

**Research Question 1**

Research question one was: In reference to equitable programs for ELs, what perceptions do K-12 educational leaders have regarding:

a. their attitudes and beliefs regarding the education of ELs;

b. their formal preparation regarding this issue;

c. their level of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs;

d. barriers experienced while implementing equitable programs for ELs;

e. their current level of equitable EL program implementation; and

f. their perceived EL program outcomes?
Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to report, organize, and depict the collection of data for question 1a through 1f (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These techniques allowed me to tabulate, summarize, and represent the collection of data in an abbreviated fashion (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012). The data is illustrated with both tabular and graphical displays of distributions in order to clearly depict the results of the survey. Specifically, I indicated the number and percentage of participants responding to each prompt according to the provided Likert scale within each of the six subcategories aligning to research question 1a-f. Additionally, I provided the mean and standard deviation for each of these areas in order to provide a clear picture and to better understand and interpret the distribution of the data set.

**Research Question 2**

Research question two was: How are the perceptions of school and district level administrators similar or different regarding equitable programs for ELs?

In order to answer this question, a two-sample independent T-test was originally anticipated. Since this survey had never been used before, Principal Component Analysis (PCA), under the umbrella of Exploratory Factor Analysis, was used before utilizing Cronbach’s Alpha to collapse the survey question results into new variables. Type of educational leader, school or district level, is the independent variable while the six dependent variables were proposed to be the perceptions of educational leaders on key EL issues including attitudes and beliefs, level of preparation, level of understanding, barriers, level of implementation, and EL program outcomes. These new variables were calculated by summing and averaging the corresponding responses in the survey based upon an extensive review of the literature and supported by using PCA.
Upon further analysis, Hotelling’s T-Squared test, the multivariate counterpart of the T-test, was used for this study in order to avoid inflated Type I error. If a T-test was used as proposed for the study, six different T-tests would need to be conducted for each of the six dependent variables which would inflate the Type I error, or the rejection of a true null hypothesis. To avoid this, the Hotelling’s T-Squared test was selected since it is able to determine the significance of difference between the perceptions of school- and district-level educational leaders by taking all six variables into account at once. Type of educational leader, defined as school- or district-level, remained the independent variable. Perceptions regarding equitable programs for ELs was the new dependent variable which accounted for all six new variables based on the sum and averages of the aligned items: Attitudes & Beliefs, Level of Preparation, Level of Understanding, Barriers, Level of Implementation, and EL Program Outcomes.

The null hypothesis was that there is no statistical difference in perceptions based on type of educational leader, district or school level. The statistical, or null, hypothesis was written as $H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$ while the alternative, or research, hypothesis was written as $H_1: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$ where $\mu_1$ represented the perceptions of district level educational leaders and $\mu_2$ represented the perceptions of school level educational leaders. This scientific hypothesis, denoted by $H_1$, can be interpreted to signify that the perceptions of district and school level educational leaders are not equal, and that there is indeed a significant difference based on type of educational leader, school or district level.

**Research Question 3**

Research question three was: To what extent can the attitudes and beliefs, preparation and understanding levels, barriers, and level of implementation predict EL program outcomes, when
accounting for the percent of EL students and total number of ESL/bilingual certified teachers serving such students?

A multiple linear regression model was conducted to determine if EL program outcomes, the dependent variable, can be predicted from the independent variables, including the perceived attitudes and beliefs, level of preparation, level of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs, barriers, and level of equitable EL program implementation when accounting for two demographic factors including the percent of total students that are ELs and the total number of ESL/bilingual certified teachers serving ELs. According to Lomax et al. (2012), “multiple regression analysis involves the use of two or more predictor variables and one criterion variable” in order to determine how well a set of independent variables predicts a dependent variable (p. 659). Figure 2 illustrates the independent, dependent, and control variables.
For this study, there were five total independent variables and two control variables. The five independent variables were calculated by summing and averaging the responses to the corresponding items found in survey questions two through six aligned to research question 1a-1e using a 6-point Likert scale. This decision was made according to an extensive review of the literature and supported by PCA and Cronbach’s Alpha. Two additional control variables, percent ELs and total ESL/bilingual certified staff, were used from the demographic section of the survey instrument. Percent ELs refers to the percent of total students who are ELs in a school or district according to results from demographic questions eight and nine. Total ESL/bilingual certified staff was determined by the responses to demographic question 10 where
school and district leaders report the number of ESL/bilingual certified teachers who are serving ELs in their school or district.

Similar to the methods described for research question two, in order to use multiple regression analysis, PCA and Cronbach’s Alpha was conducted in order to collapse items from survey questions one through six to form new variables and to confirm internal consistency. The new independent variables were named Attitudes and Beliefs, Level of Preparation, Level of Understanding, Barriers, and Level of Implementation. Additionally, percent of ELs and total ESL/bilingual certified teachers were control variables. The new dependent variable was named EL Program Outcomes. The results are illustrated using both tabular and graphical displays. The equation to calculate the multiple linear analysis was represented as:

\[ Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \epsilon \]

Where \( Y \) = EL program outcomes

\( X_1 \) = Attitudes & Beliefs

\( X_2 \) = Level of Preparation

\( X_3 \) = Level of Understanding

\( X_4 \) = Barriers

\( X_5 \) = Level of Implementation

\( X_6 \) = Percent ELs

\( X_7 \) = Total ESL/Bilingual Teachers

Percent ELs \((X_6)\) and Total ESL/Bilingual Teachers \((X_7)\) were the control variables to accurately interpret the data results using multiple regression analysis.

**Crosswalk Table**

In order to clearly illustrate the purposeful alignment among the research questions, survey questions found on the data collection instrument, and the aligned data analysis, a
crosswalk table is provided. Table 1 illustrates this alignment for main survey questions one through six as well as demographic questions seven through ten. The remaining survey questions are not part of this crosswalk due to the fact that the questions collected demographic information which was used to better understand the specific sample of this study and to inform the interpretation of results and potential future studies. This demographic data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in order to organize, summarize, and describe the collection of this demographic data.
Table 1

**Anticipated Analysis of Survey Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Anticipated Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) In reference to equitable programs for ELs, what perceptions do K-12 educational leaders have regarding:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a) their attitudes and beliefs regarding the education of ELs;</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b) their formal preparation regarding this issue;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c) their level of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs;</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d) barriers experienced while implementing equitable programs for ELs;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1e) their current level of equitable EL program implementation; and</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1f) their perceived EL program outcomes?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) How are the perceptions of school and district level administrators similar or different regarding equitable programs for ELs?</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7</td>
<td>Exploratory Factor Analysis, Cronbach’s Alpha, Independent T-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) To what extent can the attitudes and beliefs, preparation and understanding levels, barriers, and level of implementation predict EL program outcomes, when accounting for the percent of EL students and total number of ESL/bilingual certified teachers serving such students?</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10</td>
<td>Exploratory Factor Analysis, Cronbach’s Alpha, Multiple Linear Regression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Limitations and Delimitations**

Due to the fact that this study collected self-reported perception data, a key limitation of the study is the inability to measure honesty or truthfulness in the responses. This study was
limited to the sample of administrators who chose to participate in the study. Some participants may have been hesitant to answer truthfully due to the sensitive nature of the topic as civil rights of ELs, an often marginalized population, is a central topic of the study. Furthermore, acknowledging the fact that not all schools and districts within the Midwestern state in which this study takes place currently serve ELs, and others enroll a large number of ELs, another limitation may be that administrators with less experience or knowledge regarding EL programming may be less apt to complete the survey. A further limitation is the researcher-designed survey tool which included my own perceptions to the barriers that may be in place for educational leaders to implement programs that minimally adhere to civil rights obligations to ELs.

This study was delimited to K-12 educational leaders employed at the school or district level in any public school district or public school academy in one Midwestern state during the 2019-2020 school year. Only those that were accurately reported in the state database of email addresses, CEPI, or members of the professional organization MASA were included. Finally, a delimitation to this study is its quantitative design, which cannot capture the depth of understanding of the attitudes and beliefs held by K-12 educational leaders that may be available through qualitative methods. Despite these limitations and delimitations, this study captured invaluable perception data, which can inform future studies, policies, and practices to move our educational systems towards equity for our multilingual and multicultural learners.

**Chapter 3 Closure**

In conclusion, Chapter 3 detailed the methodology that was used to collect, organize, analyze, and interpret the perception data of K-12 school and district level educational leaders regarding key issues related to the implementation of equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools. The data collection and analyses outlined in this
chapter are directly aligned to the three research questions this study aimed to answer. A
detailed description of the survey instrument, collection methods, population, sample, and setting
were also provided. Chapter 4 will present the results of this analysis.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This quantitative study sought to capture K-12 educational leaders’ perspectives on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools; such perceptions were ascertained through an analysis of their attitudes and beliefs, formal level of preparation, level of understanding of civil rights obligations, barriers, level of equitable EL program implementation, and EL program outcomes. The research questions in the study were as follows:

1. In reference to equitable programs for ELs, what perceptions do K-12 educational leaders have regarding:
   a. their attitudes and beliefs regarding the education of ELs;
   b. their formal preparation regarding this issue;
   c. their level of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs;
   d. barriers experienced while implementing equitable programs for ELs;
   e. their current level of equitable EL program implementation; and
   f. their perceived EL program outcomes?

2. How are the perceptions of school and district level administrators similar or different regarding equitable programs for ELs?

3. To what extent can the attitudes and beliefs, preparation and understanding levels, barriers, and level of implementation predict EL program outcomes, when accounting for the percent of EL students and total number of ESL/bilingual certified teachers serving such students?

In order to answer these questions, an anonymous Qualtrics survey was sent to all school and district level educational leaders in one midwestern state whose email addresses were on file.
with CEPI. Specifically, the following LEA and PSA district and school level contacts were used from the CEPI database: superintendent, assistant superintendent, administrator, principal, assistant principal, director, assistant director, interim superintendent, school leader, dean, assistant dean, EL assessment coordinator, migrant education summer program contact, title iii administrator. Members of MASA, an association of statewide administrators, also received an email invitation from the executive director to participate in the study. A data collection window was open for approximately four weeks in order to allow for greater participation.

Once the data collection window closed, the data was exported from Qualtrics to the IBM SPSS Statistics software, version 25, for further data analysis. Of the 924 educational leaders in the midwestern state who began the survey by completing at least the first response, 811 completed a minimum of one-third of the survey and were used for analysis. Due to the large sample size and the proposed data analysis methods, those completing less than one third of the survey were not used for this study. Any further missing data is due to incomplete survey responses and is accounted for in the reporting and analysis by the adjusted n size. The SPSS software only included responses from participants who completed all necessary questions in order to conduct the appropriate analyses for research questions one and two.

Further, a data cleaning process was used to eliminate misinterpretations of any open-ended questions. Any responses that were unrelated to the survey question were eliminated. Finally, the data is purposefully analyzed as single level data rather than nested data in this study due the design which ensured complete anonymity. It is not possible to identify the schools or districts that the educational leaders belong to which makes conducting the analysis from a nested perspective challenging. Anonymity was essential in order to capture honest responses to questions regarding schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs.
The sample for this study represented both school-level \((n=464; \text{61.7\%})\) and district-level \((n=288; \text{38.3\%})\) K-12 educational leaders with an average of 12.58 years of experience serving as a formal K-12 educational leader ranging from 0 years of experience to 45 years of experience. Notably, on average, 10.52\% of all students are ELs in schools represented by those who participated in this study according to the responses of the school-level leaders while the statewide average is only 6\% (Migration Policy Institute, 2018). At the district-level, the mean percentage of ELs in districts represented by participants was 7.20\%. Additionally, 28.5\% of district-level responses stated that there are no certified ESL/bilingual teachers serving ELs in their district while only 9.5\% of district-level responses state that they have 0 ELs identified. Similarly, 31.5\% of school-level responses stated that there are no certified ESL/bilingual teachers serving ELs in their school while only 11.0\% of school-level responses state that they have 0 ELs identified. In other words, roughly 20\% of the educational leaders who completed the survey stated that they do not have a single ESL/bilingual certified teacher in their school or district serving the ELs that are present in their buildings.

Participants at the school and district level reported serving ELs representing up to 112 different languages using a variety and combination of EL Program models including services within English mainstream classes \((n=501)\), interventions with educators not ESL or bilingual certified \((n=341)\), individual/small group pull-out with an ESL or bilingual certified teacher \((n=415)\), push-in/ co-teaching with an ESL or bilingual certified teacher and a general education teacher \((n=245)\), one-way transitional bilingual programs where all students are ELs \((n=41)\), two-way dual language programs serving native English speakers and native speakers of the partner language \((n=38)\), sheltered instruction or general education teachers trained with The SIOP Model \((n=220)\), online/digital platforms for English Language Development \((n=129)\), and Newcomer Programs \((n=89)\). Additionally, 58 participants listed other program models
including no EL Program due to no ELs identified or a program not yet existing, daily ELD/literacy classes, alternative education, bilingual aides, ISD and consortium services when needed, a bridging program after a newcomer program, dedicated secondary ESL classes, tutors, and utilizing retired master reading teachers.

**Reporting of Data**

Upon analysis of the survey data specifically collected for this study, a couple anticipated methods for data analysis slightly changed. Table 2 displays the proposed and updated methods for data analysis, and thorough explanations as to why these changes occurred are provided within this section.
Table 2

Analysis of Survey Results: Proposed and Actual Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Anticipated Data Analysis</th>
<th>Actual Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) In reference to equitable programs for ELs, what perceptions do K-12 educational leaders have regarding:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a) their attitudes and beliefs regarding the education of ELs;</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b) their formal preparation regarding this issue;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c) their level of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs;</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d) barriers experienced while implementing equitable programs for ELs;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1e) their current level of equitable EL program implementation; and</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1f) their perceived EL program outcomes?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) How are the perceptions of school and district level administrators similar or different regarding equitable programs for ELs?</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7</td>
<td>Exploratory Factor Analysis, Cronbach’s Alpha, Independent T-test</td>
<td>Principal Component Analysis, Cronbach’s Alpha, Hotelling’s T-Squared Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) To what extent can the attitudes and beliefs, preparation and understanding levels, barriers, and level of implementation predict EL program outcomes, when accounting for the percent of EL students and total number of ESL/bilingual certified teachers serving such students?</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10</td>
<td>Exploratory Factor Analysis, Cronbach’s Alpha, Multiple Linear Regression</td>
<td>Principal Component Analysis, Cronbach’s Alpha, Multiple Linear Regression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 1

Research question one asked: In reference to equitable programs for ELs, what perceptions do K-12 educational leaders have regarding:
a. their attitudes and beliefs regarding the education of ELs;

b. their formal preparation regarding this issue;

c. their level of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs;

d. barriers experienced while implementing equitable programs for ELs;

e. their current level of equitable EL program implementation; and

f. their perceived EL program outcomes?

In order to answer the first research question, survey respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions using a 6-point Likert scale on sub questions aligned to each research question 1a-f. For question 1a, respondents were asked to what extent do they agree or disagree with statements regarding their attitudes and beliefs related to equitable EL programs. Responses were coded with “strongly disagree” as 1, “moderately disagree” as 2, “slightly disagree” as 3, “slightly agree” as 4, “moderately agree” as 5, and “strongly agree” as 6. Table 3 displays the frequency, percent, mean (M), and standard deviation (SD) of total responses.
Table 3

**Attitudes and Beliefs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</th>
<th>% (n)</th>
<th>% (n)</th>
<th>% (n)</th>
<th>% (n)</th>
<th>% (n)</th>
<th>% (n)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believe…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELs should be an urgent educational priority</td>
<td>1.2 (10)</td>
<td>3.0 (24)</td>
<td>3.5 (28)</td>
<td>19.9 (161)</td>
<td>31.8 (258)</td>
<td>40.4 (328)</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs are a moral imperative</td>
<td>.6 (5)</td>
<td>2.2 (18)</td>
<td>2.1 (17)</td>
<td>11.5 (93)</td>
<td>29.0 (235)</td>
<td>54.0 (438)</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>.979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL services are of equal importance as Special Education services</td>
<td>1.1 (9)</td>
<td>2.0 (16)</td>
<td>3.5 (28)</td>
<td>8.4 (68)</td>
<td>27.3 (221)</td>
<td>57.6 (467)</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>1.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational leaders are crucial to ensuring equity for ELs</td>
<td>.6 (5)</td>
<td>1.0 (8)</td>
<td>1.6 (13)</td>
<td>9.5 (77)</td>
<td>25.4 (206)</td>
<td>61.7 (500)</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The policies surrounding EL education are clear</td>
<td>7.6 (62)</td>
<td>13.3 (108)</td>
<td>19.1 (155)</td>
<td>25.3 (205)</td>
<td>24.5 (199)</td>
<td>9.7 (79)</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.413</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While responses showed more agreement than disagreement for each sub-question on average, the responses showed much greater disagreement regarding the clarity of policies surrounding EL education. Specifically, 40.0% of responses indicated a level of disagreement to the statement “I believe the policies surrounding EL education are clear” while all other statements had less than 8% of responses indicating a level of disagreement. Figure 3 provides a graphical display of the results aligned to question 1a.
ELs should be an urgent educational priority

Schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs are a moral imperative

EL services are of equal importance as Special Education services

Educational leaders are crucial to ensuring equity for ELs

The policies surrounding EL education are clear

Figure 3. Bar charts of attitudes and beliefs.

For question 1b, respondents were asked to what extent did their college or university prepare them to meet schools’ legal obligations to ELs, implement effective EL program models, address equity issues related to language, culture, and race, and effectively lead schools with ELs. Responses were numerically coded with “not at all” coded as 1, “slightly” as 2, “somewhat” as 3, “moderately” as 4, “very much” as 5, and “completely” as 6. Table 4 displays the frequency, percent, mean (M), and standard deviation (SD) of total responses.
Table 4

Level of Preparation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not at all (1)</th>
<th>Slightly (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat (3)</th>
<th>Moderately (4)</th>
<th>Very much (5)</th>
<th>Completely (6)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>meet schools’ legal obligations to ELs?</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implement effective EL program models?</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>address equity issues related to language, culture, and race?</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effectively lead schools with ELs?</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While responses demonstrated a range of levels of preparation, less than 3% of all respondents felt as though their college or university completely prepared them to meet schools’ legal obligations to ELs (n=18; 2.2%), implement effective EL program models (n=9; 1.1%), address equity issues related to language, culture, and race (n=21; 2.6%), and effectively lead schools with ELs (n=8; 1.0%). Conversely, many respondents felt as though their college or university did not prepare them at all to meet schools’ legal obligations to ELs (n=360; 44.4%), implement effective EL program models (n=421; 51.9%), address equity issues related to language, culture, and race (n=175; 21.6%), and effectively lead schools with ELs (n=394; 48.6%). Figure 4 provides a graphical display of the results aligned to question 1b.
Meet Schools’ Legal Obligation to ELs

Implement Effective EL Program Models

Address Equity Issues Related to Language, Culture, and Race

Effectively Lead Schools with ELs

Figure 4. Bar charts of level of preparation.

For question 1c, respondents were asked what their level of understanding was regarding schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs. The ten areas aligned to the ten most common civil rights issues in schools as identified by the 2015 OCR/DOJ Dear Colleague Letter. Responses were numerically coded with “do not understand” as 1, “slightly understand” as 2, “somewhat understand” as 3, “moderately understand” as 4, “mostly understand” as 5, and “completely understand” as 6. Table 5 displays the frequency, percent, mean (M), and standard deviation (SD) of total responses.
**Table 5**

**Level of Understanding**

| In the following areas, what is your level of understanding regarding schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs? | Do not understand (1) | Slightly understand (2) | Somewhat understand (3) | Moderately understand (4) | Mostly understand (5) | Completely understand (6) | M    | SD  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (n) | (n) | (n) | (n) | (n) | (n) | (n) | N   |    |
| Identifying and assessing all potential ELs | 2.6 | 9.9 | 12.2 | 16.5 | 32.2 | 26.6 | 811 | 4.46 |
| Providing all ELs with appropriate language services | 3.2 | 9.5 | 11.6 | 17.8 | 33.8 | 24.0 | 810 | 4.42 |
| Providing ESL certified teachers and resources | 3.9 | 10.0 | 12.8 | 17.3 | 32.6 | 23.4 | 811 | 4.35 |
| Providing all ELs meaningful access to appropriate curricular and extracurricular programs | 3.5 | 9.5 | 12.8 | 16.0 | 33.9 | 23.8 | 807 | 4.40 |
| Avoiding unnecessary segregation of ELs | 2.5 | 6.5 | 10.7 | 14.8 | 32.4 | 33.0 | 811 | 4.67 |
| Accurately evaluating ELs for Special Education services and providing both Special Education and EL services | 4.8 | 12.3 | 16.2 | 19.1 | 31.3 | 15.8 | 807 | 4.08 |
| Meeting the needs of ELs who opt out of all or some of the EL program | 10.0 | 15.0 | 18.5 | 19.2 | 24.8 | 12.1 | 808 | 3.70 |
| Accurately monitoring and exiting ELs from EL programs | 7.0 | 13.4 | 13.4 | 19.4 | 26.4 | 19.7 | 806 | 4.04 |
| | 57 | 109 | 109 | 157 | 214 | 160 | 1.541 |    |
Table 5 - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>9.1</th>
<th>15.7</th>
<th>16.5</th>
<th>21.5</th>
<th>25.2</th>
<th>11.7</th>
<th>808</th>
<th>3.73</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaningfully evaluating the</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effectiveness of EL programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and modifying them as</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>necessary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing translation to</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicate with</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>257</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parents as needed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the majority of respondents reported that their college or university either did not prepare or slightly prepared them to meet schools’ legal obligations to ELs (n=556; 68.6%), their perceived levels of understanding of the ten most common civil rights issues in schools as identified by the 2015 OCR/ DOJ Dear Colleague Letter varied significantly. Notably, less than 35% of the more than 800 educational leaders who responded reported that they completely understand any of the ten basic civil rights obligations. Figure 5 provides a graphical display of the results aligned to question 1c. Responses are combined to represent those indicating 1-4 on the Likert scale (do not understand, slightly understand, somewhat understand, and moderately understand) compared to those indicating 5-6 on the Likert scale (mostly and completely understand).
Providing ESL Certified Teachers and Resources

Providing All ELs Meaningful Access to Appropriate Curricular and Extracurricular Programs

Avoiding Unnecessary Segregation of ELs

Accurately Evaluating ELs for Special Education Services and Providing Both Special Education and English Language Services

Meeting the Needs of ELs Who Opt Out of All or Some of the EL Program

Accurately Monitoring and Exiting ELs from EL Programs

Meaningfully Evaluating the Effectiveness of EL Programs and Modifying them as Necessary

Providing Translation to Communicate with Parents as Needed

Figure 5. Bar charts of level of understanding.
For question 1d, respondents were asked what barriers they have experienced while implementing programs for ELs. Twelve potential barriers were listed based on the literature review, and there was an option to name additional barriers experienced that were not listed. Responses to the 12 provided barriers were numerically coded with “not a barrier” as 1, “slight barrier” as 2, “somewhat a barrier” as 3, “moderate barrier” as 4, “strong barrier” as 5, and “extreme barrier” as 6. Table 6 displays the frequency, percent, mean (M), and standard deviation (SD) of total responses starting with the strongest reported barrier descending to the weakest barrier according to the mean.
While implementing programs for ELs, I have experienced the following as barriers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not a barrier (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of ESL/bilingual certified teachers</td>
<td>5.7% (46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of teacher preparation about ELs</td>
<td>3.1% (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of instructional time for ELs</td>
<td>6.2% (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of funding</td>
<td>8.4% (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of translators</td>
<td>6.2% (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of professional learning opportunities around ELs</td>
<td>6.0% (49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of leadership preparation in EL issues</td>
<td>7.4% (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of stakeholder engagement in EL issues</td>
<td>9.2% (75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clear and consistent policies (federal and state)</td>
<td>7.3% (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of attention to equity issues: language, race, and culture</td>
<td>14.9% (121)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of legal oversight regarding schools’ obligations to ELs</td>
<td>14.9% (121)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push-back from board or others</td>
<td>57.0% (462)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey respondents were also able to type open-ended responses identifying barriers that were not listed. Responses are categorized and listed in Table 7.

Table 7

*Barriers: Open-ended Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal School and District Barriers: Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District does not provide support for ELs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetent administration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support from district office and building staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time, energy and resources put toward planning for ELs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preconceived notions of different EL program models</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There’s an enormous disconnect between those who work directly with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students and those who manage funds and programs at the district level.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwillingness for district to spend money (Teacher FTE) because of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limited accountability. District utilizes aides.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal School and District Barriers: Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much of this training around ELs also involves a large amount of time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for teacher PD. Our teachers already face this constant shortage of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time and putting another thing together for our teachers is difficult.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand this is an important issue, but all things take time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding of EL services by the general public, including</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misidentified students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of teacher knowledge on best practices for ELs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural: Lack of co-op</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of stable population of ELs to provide services to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External State and Federal Barriers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of equity for state assessments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support and resources from federal and state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much federal government involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have adequate funding but the restricted use prevents our</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programming from growing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding is a HUGE barrier; we hired a translator to sit with the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students who were here seven years ago. This year we have no money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to hire one for the student who deserves and needs one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools are overwhelmed with so many obligations. We struggle to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make ends meet for issues facing the majority of our children. Our</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELs deserve the best, but there is only so much money and time within</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the day to make this happen.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of detailed guidance documents with specific examples from State/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fed government related to policies and practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engaging EL Families</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is very difficult to find niche language translator (i.e. Mandinka)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 – continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of participation in EL families due to justifiable concern in drawing attention to themselves or their household that may result in immigration issues/ deportation of immediate/ extended family members in the home.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents being able to team with us</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affordable preparation is a problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of qualified teachers/ admin who are quality and/or actually apply when there is a job opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who refuse to exit, no matter what the evidence dictates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 12 potential barriers listed in the survey, lack of certified ESL/bilingual certified teachers was the strongest barrier with 61.1% of respondents reporting this to be a strong or extreme barrier ($M=4.55$). Conversely, push back from board or others was not reported as a strong barrier with 57% of respondents reporting that this is not a barrier ($M=1.98$).

Furthermore, the 25 participants who submitted open-ended responses to barriers experienced while implementing equitable programs for ELs emphasized a range of both internal and external barriers that illuminate key equity issues.

It is important to recognize the misconceptions that are present in the open-ended responses along with the shifting of responsibility to EL families rather than owning the responsibility at the school level. For example, one participant stated that there are misconceptions or “preconceived notions” about EL Program models. Additionally, another participant stated that they have enough funding, but the “restricted use prevents our program from growing.” This is a misconception as all civil rights obligations of schools to ELs are requirements of general fund dollars which would not restrict uses towards EL programming. Conversely, there are supplemental federal and state funds that can be used to support ELs, including Title III and Section 41, which have specific allowable uses restricting the use of funds. Statements that shift responsibility from the school to ELs and their families include
responses that claim students “refuse to exit,” parents are unable or unwilling to engage with the school, and a “lack of a stable population of ELs.” The statement that students “refuse to exit” illuminates a troubling misconception due to the fact that exiting, or no longer being classified as an EL, is not a choice. Students must meet clearly defined state exit criteria demonstrating English proficiency. Figure 6 provides a graphical display of the results aligned to question 1d. Responses are combined to represent those indicating 1-2 on the Likert scale (not a barrier or slight barrier), 3-4 (somewhat or moderate barrier), or 5-6 (strong or extreme barrier).
For question 1e, respondents were asked what the level of implementation was regarding schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs in their school or district. The ten obligations aligned to the ten most common civil rights issues in schools as identified by the 2015 OCR/DOJ Dear Colleague Letter. Responses were numerically coded with “not implemented” as 1, “slightly implemented” as 2, “somewhat implemented” as 3, “moderately implemented” as 4, “mostly implemented” as 5, and “fully implemented” as 6. Table 8 displays the frequency, percent, mean ($M$), and standard deviation ($SD$) of total responses.
### Table 8

**Level of Implementation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the following areas, what is your level of implementation of the following EL issues in your school or district?</th>
<th>Not implemented (1)</th>
<th>Slightly implemented (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat implemented (3)</th>
<th>Moderately implemented (4)</th>
<th>Mostly implemented (5)</th>
<th>Fully implemented (6)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accurate identification and assessment of all potential ELs</td>
<td>2.3% (19)</td>
<td>3.7% (30)</td>
<td>5.5% (45)</td>
<td>9.9% (80)</td>
<td>27.7% (225)</td>
<td>43.9% (356)</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>1.256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing all ELs with appropriate language services</td>
<td>4.4% (36)</td>
<td>5.8% (47)</td>
<td>12.7% (103)</td>
<td>19.7% (160)</td>
<td>31.2% (253)</td>
<td>18.9% (153)</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>1.363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient ESL teachers and resources</td>
<td>9.2% (75)</td>
<td>17.0% (138)</td>
<td>15.8% (128)</td>
<td>20.8% (169)</td>
<td>20.5% (166)</td>
<td>9.4% (76)</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing all ELs meaningful access to appropriate curricular and extracurricular programs</td>
<td>2.7% (22)</td>
<td>8.8% (71)</td>
<td>14.3% (116)</td>
<td>20.1% (163)</td>
<td>26.8% (217)</td>
<td>20.0% (162)</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>1.366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding unnecessary segregation of ELs</td>
<td>2.2% (18)</td>
<td>3.9% (32)</td>
<td>8.3% (67)</td>
<td>12.7% (103)</td>
<td>30.2% (245)</td>
<td>35.0% (284)</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>1.273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurately evaluating ELs for Special Education services and providing both Special Education and EL services</td>
<td>4.9% (40)</td>
<td>9.5% (77)</td>
<td>15.7% (127)</td>
<td>19.1% (155)</td>
<td>26.4% (214)</td>
<td>16.4% (133)</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>1.434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting the needs of ELs who opt out of all or some of the EL program</td>
<td>8.5% (69)</td>
<td>13.6% (110)</td>
<td>16.4% (133)</td>
<td>21.2% (172)</td>
<td>21.6% (175)</td>
<td>10.4% (84)</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.487</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8 - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Accurately monitoring and exiting ELs from EL programs</th>
<th>Meaningfully evaluating the effectiveness of EL programs and modifying them as necessary</th>
<th>Providing translation to communicate with parents as needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.9 8.0 12.1 18.4 27.4 21.3 747 4.29</td>
<td>8.1 11.6 15.9 22.7 24.2 9.9 749 3.79</td>
<td>4.8 10.9 12.5 18.7 24.8 20.6 748 4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40 65 98 149 222 173</td>
<td>66 94 129 184 196 80</td>
<td>39 88 101 152 201 167</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the levels of implementation vary according to each of the ten civil rights obligations of schools to ELs, less than 10% of respondents reported that their school or district fully implements EL programs with sufficient ESL teachers and resources \((n=76; 9.4\%)\), and less than 45% of the roughly 750 educational leaders who responded reported full implementation of civil rights obligations to ELs in any of the ten areas. Figure 7 provides a graphical display of the results aligned to question 1e. Responses are combined to represent those indicating 1-4 on the Likert scale (not implemented, slightly implemented, somewhat implemented, and moderately implemented) compared to those indicating 5-6 on the Likert scale (mostly and fully implemented).
Sufficient ESL Teachers and Resources

Providing All ELs Meaningful Access to Curricular and Extracurricular Programs

Avoiding Unnecessary Segregation of ELs

Accurately Evaluating ELs for Special Education Services and Providing Both Special Education and English Language Services

Meeting the Needs of ELs Who Opt Out of All or Some of the EL Program

Accurately Monitoring and Exiting ELs from EL Programs

Meaningfully Evaluating the Effectiveness of EL Programs and Modifying them as Necessary

Providing Translation to Communicate with Parents as Needed

Figure 7. Bar charts of level of implementation.
Finally, for question 1f, respondents were asked to what extent they observed five specific EL program outcomes in their local setting, including increased ESL/bilingual certified teachers, increased cultural and linguistic awareness of all staff, increased translation services provided to families, increased opportunities for ELs (e.g. advanced classes, extracurricular activities, appropriate accommodations), and reduced achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs. Responses were numerically coded with “not at all” as 1, “slightly” as 2, “somewhat” as 3, “moderately” as 4, “very much” as 5, and “completely” as 6. Table 9 displays the frequency, percent, mean (M), and standard deviation (SD) of total responses.
### Table 9

**EL Program Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent have you observed the following EL program outcomes in your local setting?</th>
<th>Not at all (1)</th>
<th>Slightly (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat (3)</th>
<th>Moderately (4)</th>
<th>Very much (5)</th>
<th>Completely (6)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased ESL/bilingual certified teachers</td>
<td>40.4% (328)</td>
<td>15.4% (125)</td>
<td>11.0% (89)</td>
<td>11.8% (96)</td>
<td>8.9% (72)</td>
<td>3.5% (28)</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased cultural and linguistic awareness of all staff</td>
<td>12.7% (103)</td>
<td>21.2% (172)</td>
<td>21.8% (177)</td>
<td>18.7% (152)</td>
<td>13.2% (107)</td>
<td>3.1% (25)</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased translation services provided to families</td>
<td>16.5% (134)</td>
<td>15.4% (125)</td>
<td>18.5% (150)</td>
<td>16.8% (136)</td>
<td>14.4% (117)</td>
<td>9.0% (73)</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased opportunities for ELs (e.g. advanced classes, extracurricular activities, appropriate accommodations)</td>
<td>14.8% (120)</td>
<td>16.3% (132)</td>
<td>17.4% (141)</td>
<td>17.1% (139)</td>
<td>17.5% (142)</td>
<td>7.2% (58)</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs</td>
<td>13.8% (112)</td>
<td>20.8% (169)</td>
<td>21.9% (178)</td>
<td>20.6% (167)</td>
<td>9.5% (77)</td>
<td>3.3% (27)</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These perceived EL Program outcomes illuminate that over 40% of respondents have not observed any increase in ESL/bilingual certified teachers ($n=328; 40.4\%$); however, over 50% of the over 700 educational leaders who responded have at least slightly observed all five of the EL Program outcomes listed. Figure 8 provides a graphical display of the results aligned to question 1f. Responses are combined to represent those indicating 1-2 on the Likert scale (not at all or slightly), 3-4 (somewhat or moderately), or 5-6 (very much or completely).
Figure 8. Bar charts of EL program outcomes.

Validation of the Survey Instrument

In order to analyze the inferential questions of this study, research questions two and three, items from survey questions one through six were collapsed by summing and averaging the responses under each construct to form new variables: Attitudes and Beliefs, Level of Preparation, Level of Understanding, Barriers, Level of Implementation, and EL Program
Outcomes. For example, the responses using a 6-point Likert scale from the five items below survey question 3 which began with the question stem, “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I believe...” were summed and averaged to create a new variable named Attitudes and Beliefs. Similarly, this process was used with survey question one to create the new variable named Level of Preparation, survey question two to create the new variable named Level of Understanding, survey question four to create the new variable named Barriers, survey question five to create the new variable named Level of Implementation, and survey question 6 to create the new variable named EL Program Outcomes. This was justified by an extensive review of the literature which identified the items that aligned to each variable (Aronson et al., 2015; Arsen et al., 2019; Brayboy et al., 2007; Capper et al., 2014; Castagno et al., 2017; Hakuta, 2001; Menken et al., 2015; Morita-Mullaney, 2018; Turkan & Buzick, 2016; Tuters et al., 2017). Descriptive statistics of these new variables can be seen in Table 10.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>KMO</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes and Beliefs</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>4.960</td>
<td>.831</td>
<td>.856</td>
<td>2009.411</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Preparation</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>2.241</td>
<td>1.181</td>
<td>.822</td>
<td>2548.140</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Understanding</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>4.249</td>
<td>1.265</td>
<td>.939</td>
<td>8308.799</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>3.793</td>
<td>1.022</td>
<td>.776</td>
<td>296.627</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Implementation</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>4.210</td>
<td>1.099</td>
<td>.919</td>
<td>4658.048</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL Program Outcomes</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>3.003</td>
<td>1.204</td>
<td>.849</td>
<td>1716.716</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. KMO = Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. $\chi^2$=Approximate Chi-Square. df= degrees of freedom. $p=$ significance value compared to .05.

Additionally, to increase and establish validity, whether you can draw meaningful and useful inferences from scores on the instrument, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was
conducted (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). PCA, under the umbrella of Factor Analysis, is a data reduction technique that allows the variance in variables to be captured using a linear combination, or a weighted average, of a set of variables in an optimal way. This analysis confirmed that each new variable measured a single construct and matched the qualitative grouping of these constructs. Table 10 includes the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measures of Sampling Adequacy along with Barlett’s Test of Sphericity for each of the six new variables. Using PCA and analyzing the Scree Plots and component matrices, five of the six new variables confirmed that the items measured a single component with an Eigenvalue total greater than one and all factors loading on a single component.

The new variable Barriers suggested that there might be three components within that construct with three Eigenvalue totals greater than one. While all the items loaded on three components, after further analysis, it was decided that a single component is most appropriate. The third component had only a single factor loading which was “push-back from board or others.” For this study, it was decided to group this factor with the overall variable named Barriers. After analyzing the descriptive statistics, it was noted that 57.0% of responses indicated that this is not a barrier. Due to the nature of the question and the fact that the survey cannot measure truthfulness, it is possible that the responses included bias, and future studies may wish to address this issue. Furthermore, only two items loaded on component two, “lack of professional learning opportunities” and “lack of leadership preparation in EL issues.” Comparing the loadings between component one and component two, they are almost identical for these two items. Due to this, the variable Barriers is kept as a single variable. Table 11 displays a comparison of loadings for all items within these components.
Table 1

**Principal Component Analysis Loadings for the Variable Barriers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item:</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
<th>Component 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>While implementing programs for ELs, I have experienced the following as barriers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of funding</td>
<td>.705</td>
<td>-.460</td>
<td>-.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of instructional time for ELs</td>
<td>.744</td>
<td>-.422</td>
<td>-.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push-back from board or others</td>
<td>.424</td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>.706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of ESL/bilingual certified teachers</td>
<td>.802</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of translators</td>
<td>.757</td>
<td>-.119</td>
<td>-.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of stakeholder engagement in EL issues</td>
<td>.777</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td>.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of attention to equity issues: language, race, and culture</td>
<td>.697</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>.453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of leadership preparation in EL issues</td>
<td>.608</td>
<td>.674</td>
<td>-.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of teacher preparation about ELs</td>
<td>.667</td>
<td>.360</td>
<td>-.471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of professional learning opportunities around ELs</td>
<td>.583</td>
<td>.507</td>
<td>-.228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clear and consistent policies (federal and state)</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td>-.307</td>
<td>-.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of legal oversight regarding schools’ obligations to ELs</td>
<td>.798</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please specify</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>-.497</td>
<td>-.040</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, Cronbach’s alpha (α) was utilized to verify the reliability, or the consistency or repeatability, of the instrument by quantifying the internal consistency (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Internal consistency, or the degree to which sets of items on an instrument behave the same way, is important to establish reliability since the scale items should be assessing the same underlying construct (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), values for Cronbach’s alpha range between 0 and 1, with optimal values ranging from .7 and .9. For this study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was calculated for all six new variables rather
than as a whole: Attitudes and Beliefs, Level of Preparation, Level of Understanding, Barriers, Level of Implementation, and EL Program Outcomes. Cronbach’s alpha showed each to reach acceptable reliability with all coefficients above $\alpha=0.8$ as displayed in Table 12.

Table 12

*Cronbach’s Alpha*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha ($\alpha$)</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha ($\alpha$) Based on Standardized Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes &amp; Beliefs</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.818</td>
<td>0.847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Preparation</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.908</td>
<td>0.910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Understanding</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.960</td>
<td>0.960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>0.901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Implementation</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.925</td>
<td>0.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL Program Outcomes</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.868</td>
<td>0.870</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 2**

Research question two asked: How are the perceptions of school and district level administrators similar or different regarding equitable programs for ELs?

In order to answer the second research question, a two-sample independent T-test was originally proposed. Level of educational leader, defined as school- or district-level, was proposed as the independent variable and the dependent variables were proposed to be the new variables determined through PCA to represent the perceptions of these leaders around key EL issues: Attitudes & Beliefs, Level of Preparation, Level of Understanding, Barriers, Level of Implementation, and EL Program Outcomes. These new variables were calculated by summing and averaging the corresponding responses in the survey based upon an extensive review of the literature and supported by using PCA as described above. Upon further analysis, Hotelling’s T-Squared test, the multivariate counterpart of the T-test, was used for this study in order to avoid
inflated Type I error. If a T-test was used as proposed for the study, six different T-tests would need to be conducted for each of the six dependent variables which would inflate the Type I error, or the rejection of a true null hypothesis. To avoid this, the Hotelling T-test was chosen since it is able to determine the significance of difference between the perceptions of school- and district-level educational leaders by taking all six variables into account at once. Level of educational leader, defined as school- or district-level remained the independent variable. Perceptions regarding equitable programs for ELs was the new dependent variable which accounted for all six new variables based on the sum and averages of the aligned items: Attitudes & Beliefs, Level of Preparation, Level of Understanding, Barriers, Level of Implementation, and EL Program Outcomes.

The null, or statistical, hypothesis was $H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$ while the alternative, or research, hypothesis was $H_1: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$ where $\mu_1$ represented the average perceptions of district-level educational leaders and $\mu_2$ represented the average perceptions of school-level educational leaders. The scientific hypothesis, denoted by $H_1$, signified that the perceptions of district and school level educational leaders are not equal, and that there is indeed a significant difference based on type of educational leader, school or district level.

Before conducting hypothesis testing, three assumptions were checked: random sampling, normality, and equal population variance. For this study, the assumption of random sampling was met, and responses from a random sample of 811 school and district level educational leaders from one midwestern state were studied. Conversely, the assumption of normality, using the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality, was violated. Each dependent variable (Attitudes and Beliefs, Level of Preparation, Level of Understanding, Barriers, Level of Implementation, and EL Program Outcomes) had a $p$-value, or significance value, below .001 using this test. Finally, the assumption of homogeneity, or equal population variance, was
checked. I ran a Proc Discrim procedure using SAS, and results indicated that the assumption was not met as indicated from the Chi-square ($\chi^2=55.514$) and significance value ($p<.001$).

Considering the assumption violations along with the large sample size, it was confirmed that the Hotelling’s T-Squared test, interpreted with Wilk’s Lambda, was the most appropriate test for statistical analysis since it is robust to the normality assumption. The Pearson Correlation Coefficients were evaluated to determine the correlation between the six new variables. The highest correlation was between Level of Implementation and EL Program Outcomes (.576) and the lowest correlation was between Attitudes and Beliefs and Barriers (-.029). Using Hotelling’s T-Squared test and interpreting the Wilk’s Lambda results, the null hypothesis was rejected by comparing the $p$-value to .05, and there is indeed a significant statistical difference in the perceptions of school- and district-level educational leaders ($F(6)=8.47, p<.001$). Table 13 displays the descriptive statistics representing the perceptions of school- and district-level educational leaders for each of the six new variables which were used in the Hotelling’s T-Squared test.
Based upon these results, it can be interpreted that school- and district-level educational leaders have statistically significant differences in perceptions regarding equitable EL Programs. Specifically, district-level educational leaders had higher perception scores than school-level educational leaders in the areas of Attitudes and Beliefs, Level of Understanding, Barriers, Level of Implementation, and EL Program Outcomes. The only area where school-level educational leaders had higher perception scores than district-level leaders is Level of Preparation.
Research Question 3

Research question three asked: To what extent can the attitudes and beliefs, preparation and understanding levels, barriers, and level of implementation predict EL program outcomes, when accounting for the percent of EL students and total number of ESL/bilingual certified teachers serving such students?

A multiple linear regression model was conducted to determine if perceived EL Program Outcomes, the dependent variable, can be predicted by the independent variables, including the perceived Attitudes and Beliefs, Level of Preparation, Level of Understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs, Barriers, and Level of Implementation when accounting for two demographic factors including the percent of total students that are ELs and the total number of ESL/bilingual certified teachers serving ELs. These variables were calculated by using the sum and average of the aligned survey items based on a comprehensive review of the literature and supported by Principal Component Analysis and Cronbach’s Alpha as described in the Survey Instrument Validation section. Two additional control variables, percent ELs and total ESL/bilingual certified staff, were used from the demographic section of the survey instrument. Percent ELs refers to the percent of total students who are ELs in a school or district according to results from demographic questions eight and nine. Total ESL/bilingual certified staff were determined by the responses to demographic question 10 where school and district leaders reported the number of ESL/bilingual certified teachers that are serving ELs in their school or district. Finally, the data in this study is treated as single level data compared to nested data due to the purposeful design which ensured anonymity. Participants cannot be linked to specific schools or districts in order to analyze the data from a nested perspective using Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM).

The equation to calculate the multiple linear analysis is represented as:
\[ Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \varepsilon \]

Where \( Y = \) EL Program Outcomes

\( X_1 = \) Attitudes & Beliefs

\( X_2 = \) Level of Preparation

\( X_3 = \) Level of Understanding

\( X_4 = \) Barriers

\( X_5 = \) Level of Implementation

\( X_6 = \) Percent ELs

\( X_7 = \) Total ESL/Bilingual Teachers

Percent ELs (\( X_6 \)) and Total ESL/Bilingual Teachers (\( X_7 \)) were the control variables to accurately interpret the data results using multiple regression analysis. The null hypothesis was that there is no relationship between EL Program Outcomes and any of the independent variables while controlling for percent ELs and total ESL/Bilingual teachers. This hypothesis is represented as

\[ H_0: \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = \beta_4 = \beta_5 = 0, \]

showing that all the Beta values, apart from the those of the control variables, are equal to zero. The alternative hypothesis is that at least one of the Beta values is not equal to zero (\( H_1: \beta_1 \neq 0 \) or \( \beta_2 \neq 0 \) or \( \beta_3 \neq 0 \) or \( \beta_4 \neq 0 \) or \( \beta_5 \neq 0 \)). The criterion to be used to reject the null hypothesis is set with an alpha of 0.05 (\( \alpha=0.05 \)).

Before conducting multiple linear regression, four assumptions were checked including linearity between the independent and dependent variables, homoscedasticity, normality in the distributions of errors (\( \varepsilon \)), and that the errors associated with any two different observations are independent. First, the assumption of linearity is largely met in this study. This is supported by observing the scatterplots with the fit lines in Figure 9 comparing the dependent variable (\( Y \) EL Program Outcomes) to each independent variable.
Figure 9. Assumption of linearity scatterplots.
Next, the assumption of homoscedasticity was checked. The variance of the distribution of errors ($\varepsilon$) must be constant. As seen in Figure 10, this assumption is largely met since the variances along the line of best fit remain largely similar as you move along the line.

Figure 10. Homoscedasticity.

The third assumption that must be checked is that the distribution of errors ($\varepsilon$) is normal. This assumption is met due to the fact that the residuals, or errors, of the regression line are approximately normally distributed as seen in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Distribution of errors.

The final assumption that must be met is that the errors associated with any two different observations are independent. The Durbin-Watson statistic is 2.109, which is between 1.5 and
2.5. Therefore, the assumption of independent observation is supported, and the data is not auto-correlated.

Once all assumptions were checked, a multiple linear regression model was used to determine if there is a significant relationship between perceived EL Program Outcomes and perceived Attitudes and Beliefs (X₁), Level of Preparation (X₂), Level of Understanding (X₃), Barriers (X₄), and Level of Implementation (X₅) regarding equitable EL Programs while holding percent ELs and total ESL/bilingual teachers constant. Based on the results that were calculated using SPSS, the overall model was found to be statistically significant in predicting perceived EL Program Outcomes $F(7, 561)=58.987, p<.001$. The estimate of the correlation coefficient, $R$, indicates that there is a strong positive linear relationship ($R=.653$) between perceived EL Program Outcomes and the set of independent variables knowing that when $R=0$ there is no linear relationship and when $R=±1$ there is a perfect relationship. Additionally, the independent variables accounted for 42.7% ($R²=.427$) of the variation in perceived EL Program Outcomes, the Standard Error of the Estimate ($s$) is .94662, and the Mean Square Error (MSE) is 52.857. This relationship is statistically significant ($p<.001$).

Additionally, it is essential to consider the statistical significance of each of the independent variables (Attitudes and Beliefs, Level of Preparation, Level of Understanding, Barriers, and Level of Implementation) along with the two control variables (Percent ELs and Total ESL/bilingual certified teachers) in relationship with the dependent variable, EL Program Outcomes. In this model, when comparing to $\alpha=.05$, three of the five independent variables including Level of Preparation ($X₂; p=.002$), Barriers ($X₄; p<.001$), and Level of Implementation ($X₅; p<.001$) were significant as well as both control variables, Percent ELs ($X₆; p<.001$) and Total ESL/bilingual Certified Teachers ($X₇; p=.002$). A summary of the regression coefficients is found in Table 14 and illustrates how predictors contributed to the model.
Table 14

**Coefficients for Model Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes and Beliefs</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>1.629</td>
<td>0.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Preparation</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>3.064</td>
<td>0.002*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Understanding</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>1.101</td>
<td>0.271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>-0.200</td>
<td>-4.759</td>
<td>&lt;0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Implementation</td>
<td>0.512</td>
<td>11.622</td>
<td>&lt;0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent ELs</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>3.538</td>
<td>&lt;0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ESL/bilingual Certified Teachers</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>3.075</td>
<td>0.002*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *$p$*<.05. **$p$**<.001.

From these findings, we can determine that the least square regression line can be represented as: $\hat{y} = 0.613 + 0.088X_1 + 0.108X_2 + 0.043X_3 - 0.200X_4 + 0.512X_5 + 0.008X_6 + 0.024X_7$.

Where $\hat{y} =$ EL Program Outcomes

$X_1 =$ Attitudes & Beliefs

$X_2 =$ Level of Preparation

$X_3 =$ Level of Understanding

$X_4 =$ Barriers

$X_5 =$ Level of Implementation

$X_6 =$ Percent ELs

$X_7 =$ Total ESL/Bilingual Teachers

The overall model is statistically significant, and the Beta values for Level of Preparation ($X_2$), Barriers ($X_3$), and Level of Implementation ($X_5$) were statistically significant along with the control variables. This represents that for every one unit of increase in the area of Attitudes and
Beliefs regarding equitable EL Programs, the EL Program Outcomes score increases by .108 on a 1-6 scale since all responses were based on a 6-point Likert scale, when holding all other variables constant. Similarly, for every one unit of increase in the area of Level of Preparation regarding equitable EL Programs, the EL Program Outcomes score increases by .043 when holding all other variables constant. For every one unit of increase in the area of Barriers regarding equitable EL Programs, the EL Program Outcomes score decreases by .200 when holding all other variables constant. Finally, for every one unit of increase in the area of Level of Implementation regarding equitable EL Programs, the EL Program Outcomes score increases by .512 when holding all other variables constant.

Based on the results of the multiple linear regression analysis, the null hypothesis is rejected and there is indeed a statistically significant relationship between perceived EL Program Outcomes and at least one of the specified independent variables while controlling for percent ELs and Total ESL/bilingual certified teachers. Based on the responses of 561 school- and district-level educational leaders in one mid-western state, the alternative, or research, hypothesis that at least one of the predictors is not equal to 0 is accepted.

**Chapter 4 Closure**

This chapter served to display and analyze the survey results of 811 school- and district-level educational leaders in one mid-western state regarding their perceptions of equitable EL Programs in relation to the three research questions in this study. Descriptive statistics were used to illustrate the perceptions K-12 educational leaders have regarding:

- their attitudes and beliefs regarding the education of ELs;
- their formal preparation regarding this issue;
- their level of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs;
- barriers experienced while implementing equitable programs for ELs;
e. their current level of equitable EL program implementation; and

f. their perceived EL program outcomes.

Overall, the majority of responses indicated positive attitudes and beliefs regarding equitable programs for ELs. Conversely, responses varied for the remaining variables, but overall results highlighted a stark lack of formal preparation in regards to equitable EL Programs, a lack of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs, a myriad of strong and extreme barriers to the implementation of equitable EL Programs, and moderate EL Program outcomes. Finally, results indicated that only 9.4%-43.9% of school- and district-level educational leaders reported full implementation of EL Programs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools to ELs within the 10 areas that OCR/DOJ highlighted as the most common civil rights issues in the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter.

Additionally, using a Hotelling’s T-Squared test, this study found that there is a statistically significant difference in perceptions regarding equitable programs for ELs between school- and district-level administrators. Specifically, district-level educational leaders had higher perception scores than school-level educational leaders in the areas of Attitudes and Beliefs, Level of Understanding, Barriers, Level of Implementation, and EL Program Outcomes. These perception scores reveal that district-level leaders had stronger positive attitudes and beliefs regarding equitable EL Programs and higher levels of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs compared to school-level leaders. Additionally, district-level leaders reported stronger barriers to the implementation of equitable EL programs, yet they reported higher perceived levels of implementation of schools’ civil rights obligations compared to school-level leaders. Finally, district-level leaders reported better EL Program outcomes than school-level leaders. The only area where school-level educational leaders had higher perception scores than district-level leaders is Level of Preparation. While a staggering 51.9% of all
educational leaders reported that their college or university did not prepare them *at all* to implement effective EL Programs, school-level leaders reported feeling more prepared by their colleges and universities regarding equitable EL programs than district-level leaders.

Finally, a multiple linear regression model was used to determine if perceived EL Program Outcomes can be predicted by perceived Attitudes and Beliefs, Level of Preparation, Level of Understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs, Barriers, and Level of Implementation when accounting for two demographic factors including the percent of total students that are ELs and the total number of ESL/bilingual certified teachers serving ELs. This study found that the overall model was statistically significant. Specifically, three of the five predictors were statistically significant. Both Level of Preparation and Level of Implementation, two of the significant predictors, have a positive relationship with EL Program Outcomes. In other words, the more educational leaders feel prepared by their colleges and universities, the better the outcomes of their EL Programs. Similarly, higher levels of implementation of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs predict better EL Program outcomes. The third statistically significant predictor of EL Program Outcomes was Barriers which had a negative relationship. Educational leaders experiencing greater perceived barriers have lower EL Program outcomes. Notably, while the vast majority of educational leaders reported strong positive attitudes and beliefs regarding equitable EL Programs, Attitudes and Beliefs was not a statistically significant predictor of EL Program Outcomes. Chapter 5 will explain how the above findings relate to the existing literature as well as provide recommendations for further research, policy, and practice.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results, limitations, and implications of this quantitative study which sought to capture K-12 educational leaders’ perspectives on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools; such perceptions were ascertained through an analysis of over 800 survey results illuminating their attitudes and beliefs, formal level of preparation, level of understanding of civil rights obligations, barriers, level of equitable EL program implementation, and EL program outcomes. This study is especially timely given the current social and political climate in the US which has been divisive across lines of race, class, citizenship status, and political affiliations. The pending 2020 Presidential election, the renewed movement of Black Lives Matter, anti-immigrant policies, and the global pandemic due to Coronavirus have heightened equity concerns. Educational leaders across the nation are grappling with issues of equity as they seek to provide meaningful opportunities and safe spaces for each student amid these challenging times. This study has revealed severe equity issues for ELs in our schools; in the year 2020, civil rights obligations established in 1964 are yet to be fully implemented.

The foundation of this study was intentionally grounded in an understanding of three major components: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Social Justice Leadership, and LangCrit Theory, also known as Critical Language and Race Theory (Crump, 2014; DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2017). This study specifically sought to capture the perceptions of K-12 educational leaders on key EL issues, to determine how the perceptions of school and district-level leaders are similar or different, and the extent to which perceived EL Program Outcomes can be predicted by their attitudes and beliefs, preparation and understanding levels, barriers, and level of implementation.
In order to capture these perceptions, an electronic survey was sent to all school- and district-level educational leaders in one mid-western state whose email addresses were correctly on file with the state’s database, CEPI. Of the 924 educational leaders who began the survey by completing at least the first question, 811 completed a minimum of one third of the survey and were used for analysis. The sample for this study represented both school-level \((n=464; 61.7\%)\) and district-level \((n=288; 38.3\%)\) with a wide range of formal leadership experience (0-45 years) overseeing a variety of EL Program models serving students representing up to 112 unique language backgrounds.

Notably, compared to the statewide average of 6% of the student population identified as ELs, at the school-level, the mean percentage of ELs in schools represented by participants was 10.52%. At the district-level, the mean percentage of ELs in districts represented by participants was 7.20%. Additionally, 28.5% of district-level responses stated that there are 0 certified ESL/bilingual teachers serving ELs in their district while only 9.5% of district-level responses state that they have 0 ELs identified. Similarly, 31.5% of school-level responses stated that there are 0 certified ESL/bilingual teachers serving ELs in their school while only 11.0% of school-level responses state that they have 0 ELs identified. In other words, roughly 20% of the educational leaders who completed the survey stated that they do not have a single ESL/bilingual certified teacher in their school or district serving the ELs that are present in their buildings. This alone is a stark indicator that there is much work to be done in order for ELs to realize their basic civil rights guaranteed by Tile VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The findings of this study indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in perceptions regarding equitable programs for ELs between school- and district-level administrators. Furthermore, a statistically significant multiple linear regression model was created illustrating how perceived EL Program Outcomes can be predicted by educational
leaders’ perceived attitudes and beliefs, preparation and understanding levels, barriers, and level of implementation.

**Discussion of Major Results**

**Findings Related to Research Question 1**

Research Question 1 asked: In reference to equitable programs for ELs, what perceptions do K-12 educational leaders have regarding:

a. their attitudes and beliefs regarding the education of ELs;
b. their formal preparation regarding this issue;
c. their level of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs;
d. barriers experienced while implementing equitable programs for ELs;
e. their current level of equitable EL program implementation; and
f. their perceived EL program outcomes?

Data for this question was collected using six different survey questions each using a six-point Likert scale with multiple items below each question that were based upon an extensive review of the literature provided in chapter two. Specifically, the ten most common civil rights issues schools face while serving ELs and their families as identified in the OCR/DOJ 2015 Dear Colleague Letter were used for items aligned to research question 1c and 1e. These ten issues are:

1. Identifying and Assessing All Potential EL Students
2. Providing EL Students with a Language Assistance Program
3. Staffing and Supporting an EL Program
4. Providing Meaningful Access to All Curricular and Extracurricular Programs
5. Avoiding Unnecessary Segregation of EL Students
6. Evaluating EL Students for Special Education Services and Providing Special Education and English Language Services

7. Meeting the Needs of EL Students Who Opt Out of EL Programs or Particular EL Services

8. Monitoring and Exiting EL Students from EL Programs and Services

9. Evaluating the Effectiveness of a District’s EL Program

10. Ensuring Meaningful Communication with Limited English Proficient Parents

These 10 civil rights issues, while not equating to equitable educational opportunities for ELs, nor fully capturing all civil rights obligations of schools to ELs, serve as a starting point for ensuring the basic civil rights of ELs are met.

In the area of attitudes and beliefs, the majority of participants responded with more agreement than disagreement for each of the five items aligned to research question 1a. Table 15 displays the results comparing levels of agreement to levels of disagreement while the full spread is found in Table 3 within Chapter 4.
### Table 15

**Attitudes and Beliefs: Agreement vs. Disagreement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I believe…</th>
<th>% (n)</th>
<th>% (n)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELs should be an urgent educational priority</td>
<td>7.7 (62)</td>
<td>92.1 (747)</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs are a moral imperative</td>
<td>4.9 (40)</td>
<td>94.5 (766)</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>.979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL services are of equal importance as Special Education services</td>
<td>6.6 (53)</td>
<td>93.3 (756)</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>1.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational leaders are crucial to ensuring equity for ELs</td>
<td>3.2 (26)</td>
<td>96.6 (783)</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The policies surrounding EL education are clear</td>
<td>40.0 (325)</td>
<td>59.5 (483)</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.413</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While it is encouraging that over 90% of all responses illustrated a level of agreement to the first four items displayed in Table 15, it is somewhat surprising and quite concerning that there are educational leaders with significant positional power in our schools and districts that disagree. Specifically, there are educational leaders that do not believe ELs should be an urgent educational priority (n=62) nor that schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs are a moral imperative (n=40). This is troubling as González (2010) specifically emphasizes the necessity of strong, informed, and responsive leaders in the K-12 setting who recognize the education of ELs and Latino students as an urgent priority, a moral imperative, and an economic directive. In my own professional experience, I have witnessed both leaders who have unwavering positive attitudes and beliefs regarding equitable programs for ELs as well as leaders who have openly
stated that EL Programming is not a priority and they will not comply with basic civil rights obligations until forced to do so.

Furthermore, there are educational leaders who do not believe EL services are of equal importance as Special Education services \((n=53)\) nor that educational leaders are crucial to ensuring equity for ELs \((n=26)\). Not only have several studies highlighted the crucial role of educational leaders in ensuring equity for ELs (Aronson et al., 2015; Elfers et al., 2014; Morita-Mullaney, 2016), Kangas’ (2018) qualitative comparative case study highlighted the hierarchy of special education services over EL services where “EL services were interpreted as mere policy recommendations” and therefore optional while special education services were seen as obligatory under the law (p. 792). This discrepancy in urgency and attention to the law regarding EL services compared to special education services has been widely observed in my own professional experience. It is not uncommon for ELs to receive no instructional time with an ESL or bilingual certified teacher where this is almost never the case for students with disabilities receiving services from certified teachers and specialists. Drawing on Crump’s (2014) LangCrit Theory and Morita-Mullaney’s (2018) narrative inquiry, the centrality of race in this discrepancy cannot be ignored. The voices of our multilingual students and families are often underrepresented and even unheard in our systems while students with disabilities, representing all races, may have parents from more privileged backgrounds who are able to elevate the needs and rights of their children without fear of systemic barriers related to language, race, and racism.

Finally, there was much more disagreement around the final item, “the policies surrounding EL education are clear” \((n=325; 40.0\%)\). This is crucial to consider as policies are created, communicated, and implemented. As Pasmore et al. (2007) emphasize, leaders must be cognitively and emotionally invested in order to disrupt systems and improve outcomes.
Notably, Kangas’ (2018) qualitative comparative case study found that non-compliance with federal laws and policies was primarily a consequence of administrators’ and teachers’ beliefs about the very laws and policies intended to protect ELs. Finally, the findings of this study add to Rivera-McCutchen’s (2014) qualitative study, which emphasizes the benefit of school leaders entering the role with a predisposition for equity and fighting injustice. Policies regarding equitable EL education must be clearly written and communicated, but careful attention must also be paid to the attitudes and beliefs of school leaders towards these policies.

Notably, this study found high levels of positive attitudes and beliefs towards equitable EL programs, but these positive attitudes and beliefs are contrasted with very low levels of implementation of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs. This is consistent with Gorski’s (2019) description of racial equity detours where he emphasizes that “racial inequities aren’t predominantly cultural misunderstandings” and that equity cannot be achieved with greater cultural awareness alone (p. 58). Similarly, as emphasized in the Michigan Department of Civil Right’s (MDCR’s) Racial Equity Toolkit (2018), although individuals may have good intentions, “impact matters more than intent” (MDCR & University of Michigan, p. 17). Our educational leaders may have positive attitudes and beliefs towards multilingual learners and equitable EL programming, but if these good intentions do not result in actions that disrupt systems which have marginalized ELs for generations, their positive intentions are insufficient.

In the area of formal preparation related to research question 1b, this study found that our school- and district-level education leaders feel as though their college and university programs vastly underprepared them in the area of equitable EL programming. Specifically, less than 3% of all respondents felt as though their college or university completely prepared them to meet schools’ legal obligations to ELs \( (n=18; 2.2\%) \), implement effective EL program models \( (n=9; 1.1\%) \), address equity issues related to language, culture, and race \( (n=21; 2.6\%) \), and effectively
lead schools with ELs ($n=8$; 1.0%). Conversely, numerous respondents felt as though their college or university did not prepare them at all to meet schools’ legal obligations to ELs ($n=360$; 44.4%), implement effective EL program models ($n=421$; 51.9%), address equity issues related to language, culture, and race ($n=175$; 21.6%), and effectively lead schools with ELs ($n=394$; 48.6%). The significance of this will be fully discussed later as a statistically significant multiple linear regression model was developed in this study illuminating the positive relationship between Level of Preparation and EL Program Outcomes.

It is startling to know that so many educational leaders to whom we entrust our multilingual children each day feel as though they received little to no formal preparation in the area of equitable EL Programming. This finding is consistent with previous literature showing a startling lack of preparation of educators serving culturally and linguistically diverse students (Baecher et al., 2013; Baecher et al., 2016; Tuters et al., 2017; Watson, 2017; Whitenack, 2015; Young et al., 2017). Effective preparation of our leaders in the area of equitable EL programming is imperative to the success of ELs. Many studies have detailed the harmful effects underprepared leaders can have on EL programs, including the dismantling of bilingual programs, adopting English-only policies, and the avoidance of the central issues of race and racism while only focusing on language as a sole operating principle which ultimately reproduces racism and linguicism (Menken et al., 2015; Morita-Mullaney, 2018). Table 16 illustrates the level of preparation broken down by responses indicating how well their college or university prepared them: not at all/slightly, somewhat/ moderately, or very much/ completely.
Table 16

**College and University Preparation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent did your college or university prepare you to:</th>
<th>Not at all—Slightly (1-2)</th>
<th>Somewhat—Moderately (3-4)</th>
<th>Very much—Completely (5-6)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>meet schools’ legal obligations to ELs?</td>
<td>68.6 (556)</td>
<td>23.2 (188)</td>
<td>7.8 (63)</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implement effective EL program models?</td>
<td>71.9 (583)</td>
<td>20.2 (164)</td>
<td>6.8 (55)</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>address equity issues related to language, culture, and race?</td>
<td>45.6 (370)</td>
<td>38.8 (315)</td>
<td>15.0 (122)</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effectively lead schools with ELs?</td>
<td>70.7 (373)</td>
<td>22.2 (180)</td>
<td>6.4 (52)</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For research question 1c, participants were asked what their level of understanding was regarding schools’ civil right obligations to ELs based upon the ten most common civil rights issues identified in the OCR/DOJ 2015 Dear Colleague Letter. Knowing that 68.6% (n=556) of respondents reported that their college or university either did not prepare or slightly prepared them to meet schools’ legal obligations to ELs, it is interesting to see such variance in their perceived levels of understanding of these legal issues as detailed in Chapter IV. While interpreting these results, it is noteworthy to emphasize that participants included the following LEA and PSA district and school level contacts: superintendent, assistant superintendent, administrator, principal, assistant principal, director, assistant director, interim superintendent, school leader, dean, assistant dean, EL assessment coordinator, migrant education summer program contact, Title III administrator. Specifically, EL assessment coordinators, migrant
education summer program contacts, and Title III administrators directly oversee components of EL Programs and should be acutely aware of schools’ legal obligations to ELs. This is key to keep in mind while interpreting results of this study, and future researchers may consider evaluating the potential difference in level of understanding of various educational leaders. Acknowledging that understanding basic civil rights obligations should be a starting point and not a finish line while equitably serving ELs, it is imperative to highlight how few school- and district-level leaders state that they completely understand these legal obligations as illustrated in Table 17.
Table 17

*Schools’ Civil Rights Obligations to ELs: Leaders Who Completely Understand*

In the following areas, what is your level of understanding regarding schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Do not understand</th>
<th>Mostly understand (1-5)</th>
<th>Completely understand (6)</th>
<th>% (n)</th>
<th>% (n)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifying and assessing all potential ELs</td>
<td>73.4 (595)</td>
<td>26.6 (216)</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>1.389</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing all ELs with appropriate language services</td>
<td>75.9 (615)</td>
<td>24.0 (195)</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>1.384</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing ESL certified teachers and resources</td>
<td>76.6 (621)</td>
<td>23.4 (190)</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>1.424</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing all ELs meaningful access to appropriate curricular and extracurricular programs</td>
<td>75.7 (614)</td>
<td>23.8 (193)</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>1.402</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding unnecessary segregation of ELs</td>
<td>66.9 (543)</td>
<td>33.0 (268)</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>1.336</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurately evaluating ELs for Special Education services and providing both Special Education and EL services</td>
<td>83.7 (679)</td>
<td>15.8 (128)</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.428</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting the needs of ELs who opt out of all or some of the EL program</td>
<td>87.5 (710)</td>
<td>12.1 (98)</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.530</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurately monitoring and exiting ELs from EL programs</td>
<td>79.6 (646)</td>
<td>19.7 (160)</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>1.541</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningfully evaluating the effectiveness of EL programs and modifying them as necessary</td>
<td>88.0 (713)</td>
<td>11.7 (95)</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.508</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing translation to communicate with parents as needed</td>
<td>68.2 (553)</td>
<td>31.7 (257)</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>1.440</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Knowing that less than 35% of educational leaders completely understand any one of these ten civil rights obligations of schools to ELs, it is imperative that key resources, experts in the field, and meaningful learning opportunities are available for our school and district leaders to rely upon. To be clear, this question was not asking the level of understanding educational
leaders have regarding language acquisition, cultural awareness, or even effective program models; rather, this question captured the level of understanding of the 10 most common civil rights issues identified in the OCR/DOJ 2015 Dear Colleague based upon Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The content knowledge regarding language acquisition, instructional strategies for multilingual learners, and effective EL program models would be expected of those holding an ESL/bilingual endorsement, MA in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), and applied linguistics; however, all school- and district-level leaders must understand the basic civil rights obligations of schools’ to ELs.

Consistent with the findings of Racines (2015), the rights of ELs in schools have not received much attention while there is an increasing emphasis on test scores and instructional strategies for ELs. Certainly, teachers must be equipped with effective instructional strategies to serve ELs, and assessment outcomes can be one indicator of equity, but a greater understanding and implementation of the civil rights of ELs must be addressed with urgency. Our multilingual children and families have waited over 50 years to realize their basic civil rights in our schools. It is past time to comprehensively address this issue.

The findings of this study, illuminating a lack of attention to greater systemic challenges impacting ELs beyond language alone, are also consistent with Brooks et al.’s (2010) findings and Crump’s (2014) LangCrit Theory. Brooks et al. (2010) found that administrators are often concerned about surface-level supports for ELs rather than the systemic issues that cross-cut issues of language, race, racism, and multifaceted factors that impact the success of ELs. This has similarly held true in my own professional experience where educational leaders often seek quick-fixes focusing on language alone rather than investing the time and resources necessary to truly address deeper systemic issues that could positively disrupt our systems for ELs.
Certainly, I would like to recognize and honor the complex roles of our leaders with many responsibilities, initiatives, and a constant pull between managing and leading schools. Multiple prior studies have highlighted the complex roles of K-12 administrators as they lead and manage programs serving ELs (Aronson et al., 2015; Brooks et al., 2010; Cortina et al., 2015; DeMatthews et al., 2017). For example, Aronson et al. (2015) outline specific strategies administrators should use to improve learning outcomes for ELs including: empowering parents to understand the educational system, providing training for teachers, creating a culture of collaboration, supporting ESL and content teacher collaboration, understanding cultural differences, collaborating with colleges and universities, and seeking additional funding. These strategies require substantial time and resources. On top of this, administrators must also manage many technical aspects of EL Programs including budgeting, assessment, identification, and the submission of many compliance documents.

Noting administrators’ efforts and high levels of positive attitudes and beliefs regarding equitable programs for ELs found in this study, our ELs unfortunately continue to wait for our educational systems to minimally meet their civil rights obligations as highlighted by the fact that less than 50% of participants reported full implementation of any one of ten basic civil rights obligations. Their positive intentions, shown through their attitudes and beliefs, are negated by their limited knowledge to act in the best interests of ELs; thus, ELs’ needs are left unmet. An area of hope is that Militello et al.’s (2009) study found that while a majority of principals are uninformed or misinformed about school law issues, 85% report they would change behavior if they knew the law. Further studies could explore the direct relationship between educational leaders’ level of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs and the level of implementation.
In the area of barriers, aligned to research question 1d, participants were asked to what extent they have experienced various barriers that were listed based on an extensive review of the literature and my own professional experience (Aronson et al., 2015; Arsen et al., 2019; Brayboy et al., 2007; Capper et al., 2014; Castagno et al., 2017; Hakuta, 2001; Menken et al., 2015; Morita-Mullaney, 2018; Turkan & Buzick, 2016; Tuters et al., 2017). Twelve potential barriers were listed with a six-point Likert scale, and there was an option to type barriers experienced that were not listed. The barriers listed included: lack of funding, lack of instructional time for ELs, push-back from board or others, lack of ESL/bilingual certified teachers, lack of translators, lack of stakeholder engagement in EL issues, lack of attention to equity issues: language, race, and culture, lack of leadership preparation about ELs, lack of teacher preparation about ELs, lack of professional learning opportunities around ELs, lack of clear and consistent policies (federal and state), and lack of legal oversight.

Of the 12 potential barriers, lack of certified ESL/bilingual teachers was the strongest barrier with 61.1% of respondents reporting this to be a strong or extreme barrier. As a nation, the need for ESL and bilingual certified teachers has steadily grown from 1990 to the present day as documented by an increase in K-12 ELs nationwide as well as an increased number of states listing ESL and bilingual certified teachers on the shortage list as documented by the US Department of Education 2020 Teacher Shortage Areas Nationwide Listing. Through my own professional experience serving multiple counties as an English Learner consultant in the midwestern state in which this study takes place, it is not uncommon for schools to have only one or two certified candidates for a posted ESL or bilingual teaching position. On the other hand, in my nearly five years serving as a consultant for multiple counties, every ESL teaching position that was posted was filled by an ESL certified teacher or a certified teacher pursuing an ESL endorsement. While this study found a lack of certified ESL/bilingual teachers to be the
strongest barrier, future studies may want to explore how many positions are posted and unfilled to determine whether it is simply a perceived barrier or an actual barrier.

Conversely, push back from board or others was not reported as a strong barrier with 57% of respondents reporting that this is not a barrier. While the majority do not find this to be a barrier, 18.2% ($n=147$) of participants have experienced push-back from the board or others as a moderate, strong, or extreme barrier while implementing equitable EL Programs. Further studies could explore this issue with qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of this reality. Connecting to the previously noted lack of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs, if our leaders do not fully understand these obligations, there may not be any reason to advocate for the rights of ELs; thus, limited advocacy would result in limited to no push-back. Similarly, further studies could explore the level of advocacy for EL Programs from the community, parents, students, teachers, leaders, and other stakeholders to better understand if advocacy is occurring and its relationship with push-back. Leaders are often not the only group unaware of EL rights. Students and parents who come from historically underrepresented and marginalized populations may not know their rights nor have the capacity to advocate effectively or safely due to linguistic, cultural, and systemic barriers.

Additional barriers identified by the majority of participants as either strong or extreme include lack of funding (50.3%; $n=408$) and lack of teacher preparation about ELs (52.3%; $n=424$). Interestingly, educational leaders who participated found that lack of teacher preparation ($M=4.35$) was a stronger barrier than lack of leadership preparation ($M=3.86$), and only 37.8% ($n=307$) found that lack of professional learning opportunities around ELs to be a strong or extreme barrier. A lack of teacher preparation, leadership preparation, and professional learning opportunities is consistent with prior studies which emphasize these as key barriers
while illuminating the fact that ELs are rarely mentioned in preparation standards (Aronson et al., 2015; Hiatt et al., 2018; Menken et al., 2015; Turkan et al., 2016; Tuters et al., 2017).

There have also been many studies illuminating the lack of preparation general education teachers have to equitably serve ELs (Brooks et al., 2016; Coady et al., 2016; Hiatt et al., 2018; Turkan et al., 2016). For example, Hiatt et al. (2018), via an analysis of mixed-methods survey data of 126 teachers’ perceived preparedness to serve ELs, highlight the fact that in-service teachers report feeling severely underprepared to serve ELs. If our educators and educational leaders are not given the opportunities to learn how to effectively and equitably serve multilingual and multicultural students and families, our ELs will continue to suffer the consequences. This is a prime example of systemic racism. Our systems, which were designed to meet the needs of white, monolingual, English-speaking students and families, are not producing educators ready to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse student demographic. It has been over 50 years since Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and our ELs deserve to be served by educators prepared to minimally fulfill these legal obligations.

Furthermore, schools have been vastly underfunded for decades. Arsen et al.’s (2019) report on K-12 school funding in the midwestern state in which this study takes place specifically notes that total K-12 education funding declined by 30% between 2002 and 2015 after adjusting for inflation. However, funding to meet basic civil rights obligations must be prioritized as they are a general fund obligation. A schools’ priorities can be observed through an analysis of its budget. If schools have the funds to provide extracurricular activities, athletics and arts programs, advanced courses, field trips, and state of the art facilities, funds certainly exist to meet the basic civil rights of our ELs that were guaranteed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Drawing from LangCrit theory, it is essential to consider the intersection of language, race, and racism as spending patterns are analyzed (Crump, 2014). If we look closely at which
students are benefiting most from various programs and the financial investment of such programs, which students are most valued will become evident. Funding must be allocated support programs that allow our ELs to realize their basic civil rights before funding is allocated to programs that further advance opportunities for those with the most privilege.

Finally, the following barriers are worth highlighting due to the fact that between 40-50% of the participants found them to be strong or extreme barriers: lack of instructional time for ELs (49.7%; n=403) and lack of translators (49.7%; n=403). This is also consistent with prior literature noting a lack of instructional time for ELs (Aronson et al., 2015). Similarly, the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2019) projects that the demand for interpreters and translators will grow 18% between 2016 to 2026. While the demand for translation and interpretation is growing, technological advances are also making ease of communication in languages other than English more accessible. For example, national and global translation and interpretation companies like Telelanguage and LanguageLine (among many others) can provide immediate telephonic interpretation 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Additionally, there are many apps, add-ons, extensions, and websites that can provide basic, yet still imperfect, translations and interpretations for free when appropriate. Awareness of such resources will impact the allocation and prioritization of funding.

Some may find “lack of legal oversight regarding schools’ obligations to ELs” to be an interesting barrier, but if civil rights are not enforced, will those in positions of power know of their obligations and choose to fully comply? Only 14.9% (n=121) found this to not be a barrier at all, meaning the vast majority of educational leaders who participated point to a lack of legal oversight as a slight to extreme barrier while implementing equitable programs for ELs (80.8%; n=656). Notably, according to the US Department of Justice’s website (last updated on July 31, 2020) listing recent cases regarding educational opportunities for national origin and English
Learners, only a single case is listed from the midwestern state where this study took place which originated by a complaint letter received in 2011 with an agreement settled in 2014. This individual case led to a full investigation of the EL Program, hiring practices, and discrimination against the educators that raised the concerns along with a detailed agreement to ensure equitable policies, practices, and educational opportunities for ELs (US Department of Justice, 2014). As a result, ELs in this district have greater access to ESL certified teachers, appropriate accommodations, and the translation and interpretation services needed to communicate meaningfully with their families. While there has been tangible progress for ELs in this district, knowing the complex intersection between language, race, and racism and its connection with belonging and identity, further ongoing work must continue for a meaningful shift in mindsets and school culture as emphasized within LangCrit Theory (Crump, 2014). After an extensive review of the literature, no studies could be found noting the relationship between legal oversight regarding schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs and level of implementation or outcomes. This may be an area for future investigation.

Furthermore, the 25 participants who submitted open-ended responses to barriers experienced while implementing equitable programs for ELs emphasized a range of both internal and external barriers that revealed key equity issues. Seven of these responses indicated that internal leadership was a barrier to equitable EL Programs with a few specifically noting that there is “incompetent administration,” the “district does not provide support for ELs,” and there is a “lack of support from district office and building staff.” One internal leadership barrier stood out, “Unwillingness for district to spend money (Teacher FTE) because of limited accountability. District utilizes aides.” This demonstrates a purposeful disregard for the law regarding the implementation of EL Programs and how a lack of oversight allows for this to be a continued practice. In my own professional experience, ESL and bilingual teachers often tread
lightly while attempting to advocate for ELs while not compromising their jobs or professional relationship with administrators.

External barriers included seven responses highlighting a “lack of equity for state assessments,” an overall “lack of support and resources from federal and state,” and one claiming “too much federal government involvement.” The last statement is particularly intriguing as the federal government does not require any specific program model, has merely provided guidance around schools’ basic civil rights obligations to ELs along with an optional toolkit to support the implementation of these obligations. As demonstrated previously, there has been very little oversight on behalf of the federal government. All open-ended responses are found in Table 7.

Finally, it is important to be aware of the misconceptions that are present in some of the open-ended responses along with the shifting of responsibility to EL families rather than owning the responsibility at the school level. For example, one participant stated that there are misconceptions or “preconceived notions” about EL Program models. Additionally, another participant stated that they have enough funding, but the “restricted use prevents our program from growing.” This is a misconception as all civil rights obligations of schools to ELs are requirements of general fund dollars which would not restrict uses towards EL programming. Conversely, there are supplemental federal and state funds that can be used to support ELs, including Title III and Section 41, which have specific allowable uses; however, these funds are only to be used once all civil rights obligations are met with general fund dollars. Statements that shift responsibility from the school to ELs and their families include responses that claim students “refuse to exit,” parents are unable or unwilling to engage with the school, and a “lack of a stable population of ELs.” It is also important to reiterate the fact that students do not have the ability to “refuse to exit.” ELs are exited using the state approved policy once they reach a
specific level of English proficiency. Future qualitative studies may be able to explore these findings at a greater depth than was available through this quantitative survey.

For research question 1e, participants were asked what the level of implementation was regarding schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs in their school or district. Similar to question 1c which asked about their level of understanding of these obligations, the ten survey items aligning to this question came directly from the OCR/DOJ 2015 Dear Colleague Letter which outlined the 10 most common civil rights issues schools face while serving ELs. Respondents used a six-point Likert scale to indicate their level of implementation. Emphasizing that fully implementing minimal civil rights obligations should be a baseline or starting point for equitable EL programming, Table 18 illustrates a comparison between those that responded that the 10 civil rights obligations are fully implemented compared to those responding not implemented through mostly implemented.
Table 18

*Schools’ Civil Rights Obligations to ELs: Fully Implemented*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the following areas, what is your level of implementation of the following EL issues in your school or district?</th>
<th>Not implemented % (n)</th>
<th>Mostly implemented (1-5) % (n)</th>
<th>Fully implemented (6) N</th>
<th>Mean SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accurate identification and assessment of all potential ELs</td>
<td>49.1 (399)</td>
<td>43.9 (356)</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>5.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing all ELs with appropriate language services</td>
<td>73.8 (599)</td>
<td>18.9 (153)</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient ESL teachers and resources</td>
<td>83.3 (676)</td>
<td>9.4 (76)</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing all ELs meaningful access to appropriate curricular and extracurricular programs</td>
<td>72.7 (589)</td>
<td>20.0 (162)</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding unnecessary segregation of ELs</td>
<td>57.3 (465)</td>
<td>35.0 (284)</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurately evaluating ELs for Special Education services and providing both Special Education and EL services</td>
<td>75.6 (613)</td>
<td>16.4 (133)</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting the needs of ELs who opt out of all or some of the EL program</td>
<td>81.3 (659)</td>
<td>10.4 (84)</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurately monitoring and exiting ELs from EL programs</td>
<td>70.8 (574)</td>
<td>21.3 (173)</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningfully evaluating the effectiveness of EL programs and modifying them as necessary</td>
<td>82.5 (669)</td>
<td>9.9 (80)</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing translation to communicate with parents as needed</td>
<td>71.7 (581)</td>
<td>20.6 (167)</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Knowing that this question asked about the level of implementation of basic civil rights obligations to ELs that were established in 1964, it is astonishing and disheartening that less than 50% of responses indicated full implementation of any one of the ten most common civil rights issues identified in the 2015 OCR/DOJ Dear Colleague Letter. Specifically, results found that the most fully implemented civil rights obligation was in the area of accurate identification and
assessment of all potential ELs (43.9%; \( n=356 \)). This is problematic as it illuminates the fact that not only are more than half of schools not accurately assessing and identifying potential ELs, but even fewer are fully implementing equitable services once ELs are identified.

Possibly even more concerning is the fact that less than 10% of participants reported fully implementing programs that meet minimal civil rights obligations in the areas of sufficient ESL teachers and resources (9.4%; \( n=76 \)) and meaningfully evaluating the effectiveness of EL programs and modifying them as necessary (9.9%; \( n=80 \)). In other words, over 90% of our schools and districts do not have sufficient ESL teachers and resources nor are they meaningfully evaluating and improving EL Programs. As eloquently stated in the recent text *Breaking Down the Wall: Essential Shifts for English Learners’ Success*, “*sufficient and adequate* will not help our ELs become excellent. It will move them down the road of compliance. Excellence comes from hard work, determination, and a complete commitment to the process” (Espino Calderón, Staehr Fenner, Honigsfeld, Slakk, Zacarian, Dove, Gottlieb, Ward Singer, & Soto, 2020, p. 32).

In the area of providing qualified teachers and resources for ELs, our schools are a long way from sufficient, let alone excellent.

All other civil rights obligations range from only 10.4%-35.0% of responses indicating full implementation in schools and districts. As educational leaders grapple with issues of equity, these findings should be an urgent call to action to ensure all ELs have their basic civil rights met in our schools. It is unconscionable that the vast majority of ELs in the year 2020 attend public schools where appropriate language services are not available, unnecessary segregation is occurring, communication is not provided to parents in a language they can understand, and access to curricular and extracurricular programs is not meaningfully provided. As found in this study, our school and district leaders’ positive intentions and strong positive
attitudes and beliefs regarding EL programming are not sufficient. Policies and practices at the school and district levels must be evaluated to improve levels of implementation.

Despite a thorough review of the literature, no studies could be found documenting the actual level of implementation of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs. Future studies could compare the fidelity of implementation compared to the perceived levels of implementation. It is also important to consider the lack of understanding of each of these civil rights obligations demonstrated by the results of research question 1c. If educational leaders do not fully understand these obligations, it would be challenging to accurately assess whether or not they are fully implemented.

Finally, for research question 1f, participants were asked to what extent they observed five specific EL Program outcomes in their local setting including: increased ESL/bilingual certified teachers, increased cultural and linguistic awareness of all staff, increased translation services provided to families, increased opportunities for ELs (e.g. advanced classes, extracurricular activities, appropriate accommodations), and reduced achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs using a six-point Likert scale. The results illuminate that over 40% of respondents have not observed any increase in ESL/bilingual certified teachers (40.4%; n=328) even though ELs are the fastest growing student demographic in the US (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018; US Department of Education, 2018). Drawing on Crump’s (2014) LangCrit Theory, it is imperative to consider how race and racism may have contributed to this issue in our schools.

It is also imperative to reiterate the fact that roughly 20% of the educational leaders who completed the survey stated that they do not have a single ESL/bilingual certified teacher in their school or district despite the fact that they have ELs enrolled in their schools. Not only is this a civil rights violation, increasing the number of ESL/bilingual certified teachers is an essential
part of providing equitable EL Programs. Several studies have illuminated the central role EL teachers play in the equitable education of our multilingual and multicultural students (Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2016; Brooks et al., 2010; Theoharis et al., 2011; Von Esch, 2018). Specifically, Von Esch (2018) found that “the movement toward improved instruction for EL students and equitable opportunities for learning hinged upon the work of the EL-focused teacher leaders” (p. 169). EL teacher leaders not only support the instruction for ELs directly, but they also serve as consultants to general and special education teachers, are often responsible for many of the compliance and technical tasks related to EL Programs, serve as family liaisons, and work closely with administrators. Due to these complex roles, there are multiple implications for preparation programs and shared leadership strategies which are further explored in the recommendations of this study. Finding ESL teachers to fill positions may be a challenge as a lack of certified ESL/bilingual certified teachers was also the strongest barrier reported with 61.1% of educational leaders responding that this is a strong or extreme barrier. Further complicating the issue is the fact that there is a nationwide shortage of certified ESL and bilingual teachers (US Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education, 2017). There are potential solutions to this barrier that will be further discussed in this chapter.

On a positive note, over 50% of the over 700 educational leaders who responded have at least slightly observed all five of the EL Program outcomes listed. The following observed EL Outcomes are in order from greatest to least according to mean (M) survey results: increased opportunities for ELs (M=3.31; SD=1.557), increased translation services provided to families (M=3.27; SD=1.596), increased cultural and linguistic awareness of all staff (M=3.09; SD=1.372), reduced achievement gap (M=3.01; SD=1.353), and increased ESL/bilingual certified teachers (M=2.38; SD=1.558). While participants of this study have not widely observed any of the EL Outcomes, previous studies provide hope by illustrating positive
outcomes once stakeholders collaboratively address the complexities of providing equitable EL Programs, look beyond language, and take action to overcome systemic inequities related to race and culture (Flores et al., 2018; González, 2010; Peterson, 2014; Rivera-McCutchen, 2014). Knowledge gained from this study can also serve as motivation to improve EL Program Outcomes.

Overall, the findings from research question one provide a comprehensive, quantitative snapshot of K-12 educational leaders’ perceptions on key issues related to schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs that have not been captured through previous studies. While the results highlight the fact that the majority of K-12 school- and district-level leaders have strong positive attitudes and beliefs regarding equitable EL programs, these beliefs have not translated to the implementation of equitable EL programs. Many barriers exist, and few have experienced strong positive outcomes in their EL Programs. This study brings to light the critically low levels of understanding our educational leaders have regarding schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs. Less than 35% of the over 800 participants report fully understanding any one of the ten civil rights issues found in the 2015 OCR/DOJ Dear Colleague Letter that stem from Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Most alarming, this study illuminated the unconscionable levels of implementation of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs. Less than 50% report full implementation of any one of the ten civil rights obligations, and less than 10% report having sufficient ESL teachers and resources.

Additionally, less than 10% report meaningfully evaluating their EL Programs and taking action to improve based on these evaluations. While this is listed as a single civil rights issue in the 2015 OCR/DOJ Dear Colleague Letter, leaders must take two distinct actions. First, they must meaningfully evaluate their EL Program by considering multiple layers of data. Then, based upon these results, appropriate action must be taken to enact necessary change. Further
recommendations are discussed later in this chapter. These findings are critical to understand and build from as educational leaders, researchers, and multiple stakeholders seek to provide greater equity.

**Findings Related to Research Question 2**

Research Question Two asked: How are the perceptions of school and district level administrators similar or different regarding equitable programs for ELs?

This study found that there is indeed a statistically significant difference between the perceptions of school and district level administrators using a Hotelling’s T-Squared test and interpreting the Wilk’s Lambda results \((F(6)=8.47, p<.001)\). New variables were created by summing and averaging the related items which aligned to each survey question based upon an extensive review of the literature detailed in Chapter II and supported through PCA and Cronbach’s Alpha as described in Chapter IV. Table 18 displays the descriptive statistics representing the perceptions of school- and district-level educational leaders for each of the six main areas from research question one.
Table 19

Perceptions of School- and District-Level Educational Leaders: Mean Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>M difference</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes and Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.091</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-level</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>4.931</td>
<td>.812</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-level</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>5.022</td>
<td>.860</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>4.966</td>
<td>.831</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Preparation</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-level</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>2.309</td>
<td>1.189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-level</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>2.200</td>
<td>1.182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>2.268</td>
<td>1.187</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Understanding</td>
<td>.553</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-level</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>4.094</td>
<td>1.274</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-level</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>4.647</td>
<td>1.096</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>4.306</td>
<td>1.238</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-level</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>3.759</td>
<td>1.085</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-level</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>3.892</td>
<td>.863</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>3.810</td>
<td>1.008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Implementation</td>
<td>.189</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-level</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>4.174</td>
<td>1.169</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-level</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>4.363</td>
<td>.978</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>4.208</td>
<td>1.100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Program Outcomes</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-level</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>2.979</td>
<td>1.245</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-level</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>3.054</td>
<td>1.131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>3.007</td>
<td>1.202</td>
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</table>

Based upon these results, it can be interpreted that overall, school- and district-level educational leaders do have statistically significant differences in perceptions regarding equitable EL Programs. Specifically, district-level educational leaders had higher perception scores than school-level educational leaders in the areas of Attitudes and Beliefs (M difference = .091), Level of Understanding (M difference = .553), Barriers (M difference = .133), Level of Implementation (M difference = .189), and EL Program Outcomes (M difference = .075). These perception scores reveal that district-level leaders had stronger positive attitudes and beliefs regarding equitable EL Programs and higher levels of understanding of schools’ civil rights
obligations to ELs compared to school-level leaders. Furthermore, district-level leaders reported stronger barriers to the implementation of equitable EL programs, yet they reported higher perceived levels of implementation of schools’ civil rights obligations compared to school-level leaders. Finally, district-level leaders reported better EL Program outcomes than school-level leaders. Despite a comprehensive review of the literature, no previous studies could be found analyzing differences in school- and district- level perceptions. From my own professional experience as an EL consultant for multiple counties working with superintendents, curriculum directors, building principals, and EL educators, along with collaboration throughout the state, there is often a disconnect between district- and school- level perceptions regarding equitable EL Programs. These differences can result in added barriers to the implementation of effective EL programming; however, it also illuminates the benefit of greater collaboration and the engagement of multiple stakeholders while implementing effective programs for ELs.

The only area where school-level educational leaders had higher perception scores than district-level leaders is Level of Preparation ($M$ difference = .109). While a staggering 51.9% of all educational leaders reported that their college or university did not prepare them at all to implement effective EL Programs, school-level leaders reported feeling more prepared by their colleges and universities regarding equitable EL programs than district-level leaders. When interpreting this data, it is important to keep in mind that the mean is an average of the responses which were on a six-point Likert scale so the minimum was 1.0 and the maximum was 6.0. With this understanding, it is apparent that the difference in means between school and district level educational leaders may appear small with mean differences ranging from .075–.553 units for each new variable, but on a six-point scale, these small differences are significant.

It is worth emphasizing that the results for the new variable named Level of Understanding, which has a mean difference of .553, demonstrated that district-level educational
leaders responded, on average, .553 units higher on the six-point Likert scale compared to school-level leaders. Knowing that district-level educational leaders reported a much higher perceived level of understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations, greater collaboration between educational leaders could benefit ELs. Interestingly, school-level leaders report a higher level of preparation by their colleges or universities, yet they report a much lower level of understanding compared to district-level leaders. In summary, the Hotelling’s T-Squared test took all six new variables into account simultaneously to determine that there is indeed a statistical difference between the perceptions of school and district level educational leaders.

Connecting to prior literature, many studies illuminate the integral role educational leaders at both the school and district level play in providing equitable opportunities for ELs (Aronson et al., 2015; Brooks et al., 2010; DeMatthews et al., 2017; Elfers et al., 2014; Rivera-McCutchen, 2014). Specifically, Elfers et al. (2014) found, via their case study involving four school districts in Washington state, that “leadership at both school and district levels plays a crucial role in creating and sustaining systems of support for classroom teachers working with EL students” (p. 318). No studies could be found that specifically examined the difference in school and district level perceptions regarding equitable EL Programs. This study provides a new finding to add to the literature demonstrating that there are significant differences in school and district-level perceptions. Further studies could explore these differences at a deeper level through qualitative methods. From my own professional experiences, I have observed both school and district level leaders serving as instruments of positive change as well as added barriers to improved EL programming. Better understanding these complex relationships between the impact of district and school level leaders, the educators working directly with ELs, and the outcomes and experiences of ELs can support needed progress in our schools.
Findings Related to Research Question 3

Research Question Three asked: To what extent can the attitudes and beliefs, preparation and understanding levels, barriers, and level of implementation predict EL program outcomes, when accounting for the percent of EL students and total number of ESL/bilingual certified teachers serving such students?

Based on the responses of 561 school- and district-level educational leaders who responded to all questions and using multiple linear regression, a significant regression equation was found ($R^2=.427; F(7, 561)=58.987, p<.001$). The $R^2$ value signifies that the five predictors (Attitudes and Beliefs, Level of Preparation, Level of Understanding, Barriers, and Level of Implementation) explained 42.7% of the variance related to EL Program Outcomes. The unstandardized coefficient $\beta$ was used to interpret the results in terms of units on the six-point Likert scale. From these findings, the least square regression line was represented as:

$$\hat{y} = .613 + .088X_1 + .108X_2 + .043X_3 - .200X_4 + .512X_5 + .008X_6 + .024X_7.$$

Where $\hat{y} = EL$ Program Outcomes

$X_1 = $ Attitudes & Beliefs

$X_2 = $ Level of Preparation*

$X_3 = $ Level of Understanding

$X_4 = $ Barriers**

$X_5 = $ Level of Implementation**

$X_6 = $ Percent ELs**

$X_7 = $ Total ESL/Bilingual Teachers*

*Note.* $*p<.05.$ $**p<.001.$

Notably, three of the five independent variables were statistically significant in predicting EL Program Outcomes when holding all other variables constant including Level of Preparation.
(X_2; p=.002), Barriers (X_4; p<.001), and Level of Implementation (X_5; p<.001) as well as both control variables, Percent ELs (X_6; p<.001) and Total ESL/bilingual Certified Teachers (X_7; p=.002). In practical terms, the more K-12 leaders feel as though their colleges and universities prepared them to address issues related to equitable EL Programs, the higher the outcomes of their EL Programs. For every one unit of increase on a scale from 1-6 in the area of Level of Preparation regarding equitable EL Programs, the EL Program Outcomes score increases by .108 when holding all other variables constant. Additionally, the more K-12 leaders experience barriers, both internally and externally, the lower the outcomes of their EL Programs. For every one unit of increase in the area of Barriers regarding equitable EL Programs, the EL Program Outcomes score decreases by .200 on a 1-6 scale when holding all other variables constant.

Finally, the more schools implement and meet the civil rights obligations to ELs, the better the outcomes of the EL Programs. Most notably, for every one unit of increase in the area of Level of Implementation regarding equitable EL Programs, the EL Program Outcomes score increases by .512 on a scale from 1-6 when holding all other variables constant. This variable has the highest Beta value, meaning that it is especially noteworthy to emphasize the fact that the higher the Level of Implementation of the civil rights obligations defined in the OCR/DOJ 2015 Dear Colleague Letter, the higher the EL Program Outcomes as defined in this study.

Two of the five predictors in the model were not statistically significant. While not statistically significant, the regression model determined that for every one unit of increase in the area of Attitudes and Beliefs regarding equitable EL Programs, the EL Program Outcomes score increases by .088 on a 1-6 scale, when holding all other variables constant. This represents that more positive attitudes and beliefs are positively related with EL Program Outcomes. Additionally, perceived Level of Understanding was not found to be statistically significant. While not statistically significant, the regression model determined that for every one unit of
increase in the area of Level of Understanding of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs, the EL Program Outcomes score increases by .043 on a 1-6 scale, when holding all other variables constant. This represents that higher levels of understanding are positively associated with EL Program Outcomes.

While prior literature illuminates the key role each of the five predictors of this study’s regression model play in equitable EL Programming, as noted within each corresponding finding for research question 1a-e, no studies could be found that capture the quantitative perceptions of K-12 educational leaders regarding schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs. Furthermore, no studies could be found linking these perceptions to EL Outcomes. Thus, this study adds to the literature by providing a statistically significant regression model that can predict EL Program Outcomes by K-12 educational leaders’ perceptions regarding the defined issues.

**Summary of Key Research Findings and Prior Research**

The previous sections discussed the results of this study as they align to, contrast with, and add to the available literature regarding equitable K-12 programs for ELs that minimally adhere to schools’ civil rights obligations. Table 20 provides a succinct overview of the key findings of the three main research questions in this study as they relate to prior literature.

**Table 20**

*Comparison of Key Findings and Prior Literature*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schwallier (2020) Key Findings</th>
<th>Prior Research and Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Participant Perceptions in Reference to Equitable Programs for ELs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes and Beliefs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 90% of responses showed a level of agreement to each of the following statements:</td>
<td>Adds to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ELs should be an urgent educational priority.</td>
<td>• Literature emphasizing the key role positive attitudes and beliefs play in effective leadership for ELs (González, 2010; Kangas, 2018; Pasmore et al., 2007; Rivera-McCutchen, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs are a moral imperative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20 - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EL services are of equal importance as Special Education services.</th>
<th>Aligns with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational leaders are crucial to ensuring equity for ELs.</td>
<td>• Literature illuminating that positive attitudes and beliefs or intentions are not sufficient to reach equity for underserved populations (Gorski, 2019; MDCR &amp; University of Michigan, 2018)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40.0% of responses indicated a level of disagreement to the statement:
- Policies surrounding EL education are clear.

Aligns with:
- studies highlighting the evolution of policies surrounding bilingual and EL education (Hakuta, 2011; Lewis et al., 2019; Mavrogordato, 2012)

Level of Preparation by their College or University Programs

Less than 20% of educational leaders feel as though their college or university program very much or completely prepared them to:
- meet schools’ legal obligations to ELs (7.8%).
- implement effective EL program models (6.9%).
- address equity issues related to race, culture, and language (15.1%).
- effectively lead schools with ELs (6.5%).

Add to:
- literature highlighting the lack of college and university preparation for educational leaders regarding equitable programs for ELs (Baecher et al., 2013, 2016; Young et al., 2017)
- literature illuminating the potential negative impacts of leaders that are underprepared to implement equitable programs for ELs (Menken et al., 2015; Morita-Mullaney, 2018)

Over 40% of educational leaders report that their college or university did not prepare them at all to:
- meet schools’ legal obligations to ELs (44.4%).
- implement effective EL program models (51.9%).
- effectively lead schools with ELs (48.6%).

Add to:
- studies illuminating that students who are immigrant, migrant, or ELs are not uniquely mentioned in the standards for educational leaders and the need to revise curriculum for administrator preparation to include ELs (Watson, 2017; Whitenack, 2015)

Level of Understanding of Schools’ Civil Rights Obligations to ELs

Less than 35% of participants responded that they completely understand any one of the ten civil rights obligations aligned to the OCR/DOJ 2015 Dear Colleague Letter.

No previous research found; thus, a new finding

Add to:
- findings that the rights of ELs in schools have not received as much attention while there is an increasing emphasis on test scores for ELs (Racines, 2015)
- literature illuminating that administrators are often concerned about language alone rather than broader systematic challenges impacting ELs (Brooks et al., 2010; Crump, 2014)
- a finding that the majority of principals are uninformed or misinformed about school law issues, but 85% report that they would change behavior if they knew the law (Militello et al., 2009)
**Barriers Experienced**

61.1% of participants reported lack of certified ESL/bilingual teachers to be a strong or extreme barrier.

Between 45-55% of participants found the following to be strong or extreme barriers:
- Lack of teacher preparation (52.3%)
- Lack of funding (50.3%)
- Lack of instructional time for ELs (49.7%)
- Lack of translators (49.7%)

Only 14.9% of participants found lack of legal oversight regarding schools’ obligations to ELs not to be a barrier at all.

**Aligns with:**
- the 2017 Teacher Shortage Areas Nationwide Listing illuminating a critical shortage of ESL and bilingual certified teachers.

**Adds to:**
- Literature highlighting the lack of teacher preparation to effectively serve ELs (Brooks et al., 2016; Coady et al., 2016; Hiatt et al., 2018; Turkan et al., 2016)
- Arsen et al.’s (2019) report on the decline of K-12 school funding in the midwestern state in which this study takes place
- the increased projected demand for interpreters and translators (US Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2019)

**No previous research found; thus, a new finding**

**Level of Implementation of Schools’ Civil Rights Obligations to ELs**

Over 50% of educational leaders report that not a single one of the 10 most common civil rights issues is fully implemented in their school or district.

- “Accurate identification and assessment of all potential ELs” had the highest level of full implementation (43.9%)
- Less than 10% report full implementation of “sufficient ESL teachers and resources” and “meaningfully evaluating the effectiveness of EL programs and modifying them as necessary.”
- All other civil rights obligations range from 10.4%-35% of responses indicating full implementation.

**EL Program Outcomes**

40.4% of educational leaders have not observed any increase in ESL/bilingual certified teachers.

Over 50% of educational leaders have at least slightly observed each of the 5 EL Outcomes:
- Increased opportunities for ELs (M=3.31)
- Increased translation services provided to families (M=3.27)
- Increased cultural and linguistic awareness of all staff (M=3.09)

**No previous research found; thus, a new finding**

**Adds to:**
- Literature illustrating positive outcomes once stakeholders collaboratively address the complexities of providing equitable EL Programs, look beyond language, and take action to overcome
• Reduced achievement gap (M=3.01)
• Increased ESL/bilingual certified teachers (M=2.38)

Significant Differences Between School- and District-Level Leadership Perceptions

K-12 school- and district-level educational leaders have statistically significant differences in perceptions regarding equitable programs for ELs.

K-12 district-level leaders report higher perceptions regarding equitable EL Programs in their Attitudes and Beliefs, Level of Understanding, Barriers, Level of Implementation, and EL Program Outcomes compared to school-level leaders.

K-12 school-level leaders report higher perceptions in their Level of Preparation regarding equitable EL Programs compared to district-level leaders.

Multiple Linear Regression Factors

A statistically significant regression model was found to predict EL Program Outcomes based on 5 predictors.

For K-12 educational leaders, their formal Level of Preparation regarding equitable programs for ELs and their Level of Implementation of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs are significant factors in positively predicting EL Program Outcomes.

For K-12 educational leaders, barriers they experience while implementing equitable EL Programs is a significant factor in negatively predicting EL Program Outcomes.

Revised Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Based on the findings of this study, the conceptual and theoretical framework presented in Chapter I was revised to include the statistical significance of each variable. The two predictors that were not found to be statistically significant in the multiple regression model are

No previous research found; thus, a new finding

No previous research found; thus, a new finding

No previous research found; thus, a new finding

No previous research found; thus, a new finding

No previous research found; thus, a new finding

Add to:
• Liou et al.’s (2017) narrative inquiry where an administrator preparation program in Arizona successfully and systematically integrated concepts and skills related to race, racism, culture, and language across and throughout the program.

Aligns with:
• Many studies illuminating barriers and challenges present while implementing equitable programs for ELs (Aronson et al., 2015; Arsen et al., 2019; Brayboy et al., 2007; Capper et al., 2014; Castagno et al., 2017; Hakuta, 2001; Menken et al., 2015; Morita-Mullaney, 2018; Turkan et al., 2016; Tuters et al., 2017)
now in a text box outlined by a dashed line, including Attitudes and Beliefs and Level of Understanding. The two significant predictors with a positive relationship with EL Program Outcomes (Level of Preparation and Level of Implementation) are shaded green with a positive symbol (+) before the term while the one significant predictor with a negative relationship with EL Program Outcomes is shaded red with a negative symbol (-) before the term. Additionally, the box indicating District and School-level Differences is now shaded gray since there was a statistically significant difference. Finally, the EL Program Outcomes box is also shaded gray to represent that the overall multiple regression model was statistically significant. Test statistics, Beta values, and significance values are included as a reference. This revised framework is shown with a key in Figure 12.
Implications for Educational Leaders, Policy, and Practice

While acknowledging, honoring, and uplifting the complex and challenging roles of K-12 educational leaders, who widely hold positive attitudes and beliefs towards equitable EL programs as found in this study, the results of this study paint a grim reality for ELs in our public schools. Over 50 years have passed since Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and less than 50\% of K-12 educational leaders in this study reported full implementation of these guarantees.
In other words, the majority of our schools are violating the civil rights of our ELs and breaking the law. Not only is it illegal, it is unconscionable that less than 10% of these leaders reported having sufficient ESL teachers and resources. Similarly, less than 10% indicated that they fully evaluate and improve their programs for ELs. With participants illuminating a vast lack of preparation from their college and universities regarding equitable EL programs, an overwhelming lack of understanding of schools’ basic civil rights obligations to ELs, and a multitude of strong barriers, it is clear that our school systems are not set up to build upon the assets and meet the needs of our ELs.

Building on the literature that connects issues of education, language, culture, and race, it is apparent that what is at play is nothing short of systemic racism (Brayboy et al., 2007; Crump, 2014; Morita-Mullaney, 2018; Stromquist, 2012). While our current K-12 leaders likely did not create this system of advantage, they, along with multiple stakeholders, certainly have the responsibility to dismantle it and create equitable systems that honor, serve, and minimally meet the civil rights obligations of schools to ELs. As Morita-Mullaney (2018) found, “by avoiding the centrality of race and claiming language as the sole operating principle, we disquiet the intersectionality of language and race, reproducing racism and linguicism and using language or English as our shielding proxy” (p. 15). The findings from this study, along with previous literature, align closely with LangCrit Theory which highlights the intersection of the “subject-as-heard and the subject-as-seen” illuminating the intersectionality between “race, racism, and racialization” with issues of “language, belonging, and identity” (Crump, 2014, p. 207). The following section will detail specific implications and recommendations for key stakeholders based on the findings of this study as they seek to improve educational opportunities for ELs with this intersection of language, culture, race, and racism in mind.
Implications for K-12 Educational Leaders

School and district-level educational leaders in our K-12 schools are uniquely positioned to reproduce or disrupt the status quo of our educational systems. Whether a district enrolls thousands of ELs or a single child identified as EL, the school is required to provide the educational guarantees outlined in the OCR/DOJ 2015 Dear Colleague Letter based off Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The following recommendations provide actionable steps school- and district-level leaders can take based on the findings of this study.

**Recommendation 1:** Foster the belief system and knowledge necessary at a personal and organizational level to lay a foundation for meaningful, systemic change for ELs and their families. As demonstrated in this study, positive attitudes and beliefs towards ELs, their families, and the programs serving them are imperative, but they are not sufficient without action. K-12 educational leaders must commit to providing equitable educational opportunities for ELs that minimally meet schools’ civil rights obligations, regardless of the number of ELs enrolled in their school or district. This work will take time, resources, and a re-imagination of our educational systems. It will also include personal and organizational reflection and growth to understand how race and racism may have contributed to systemic, generational inequities for ELs.

This study revealed an unconscionable level of implementation of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs, and leaders must commit to the work ahead. While some issues will be easier or faster to address than others, many studies have illuminated the long-term, complex investment needed to meaningfully provide educational opportunities to ELs (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Hastings et al., 2016; Mavrogordato et al., 2019; Theoharis et al., 2011). Elfers et al. (2014) found, via their case study involving four school districts in Washington state, that
“leadership at both school and district levels plays a crucial role in creating and sustaining systems of support for classroom teachers working with EL students” (p. 318).

This study illuminated that there are statistically significant differences in the perceptions of school and district-level leaders regarding equitable programs for ELs, but overall, the vast majority of all leaders reported high levels of positive attitudes and beliefs yet a severe lack of preparation, lack of understanding, and lack of implementation of civil rights obligations to ELs along with dismal EL outcomes. Additionally, EL achievement outcomes and trends demonstrate that the vast majority of programs are resulting in inequitable outcomes for ELs (Fenner, 2014; Kanno et al., 2014; NCELA, 2018). Fostering positive attitudes and beliefs towards ELs, understanding the role that race and racism have played in our educational systems, and building greater understanding around equitable EL programming is a critical first step towards the systemic change needed. Kangas’ (2018) qualitative comparative case study found that non-compliance with federal laws and policies was primarily a consequence of administrators’ and teachers’ beliefs about the very laws and policies intended to protect ELs.

By building this foundation, K-12 leaders can open doors for the changes needed to equitably serve ELs.

While fostering positive attitudes and beliefs is critical, this study clearly demonstrated that positive attitudes and beliefs do not result in equitable programs for ELs that minimally ensure basic civil rights obligations are met. K-12 educational leaders must invest in personal learning regarding schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs and provide opportunities for all educators to understand these basic civil rights’ obligations. If our leaders do not know that they are legally required to communicate to families in a language they can understand, will they provide the translation and interpretation service necessary? Similarly, if teachers do not
understand that they are legally required to provide linguistic accommodations within their classrooms, these legal obligations are widely left as optional.

This study found, through multiple linear regression including five predictors, that the greater level of implementation of civil rights obligations to ELs, the higher the EL outcomes. If leaders and educators are unaware of these civil rights obligations and the complexity within them, how will they improve levels of implementation? This study found that less than 35% of all K-12 leaders reported fully understanding any one of the ten civil rights obligations of schools’ to ELs found in the 2015 OCR/DOJ Dear Colleague Letter. Acknowledging that college and university programs likely did not fully prepare K-12 leaders to equitably lead programs for ELs as revealed in this study, K-12 leaders must invest in personal and organizational learning.

Previous literature has demonstrated that the rights of ELs have not received much attention while there is an increasing emphasis on test scores (Racines, 2015). Additionally, Militello et al. (2009) found that the majority of principals are uninformed or misinformed about school law issues yet 85% of the principals in the study said they would implement change if they knew the law. The survey tool used in this study captured anonymous perceptions from over 800 educational leaders in one mid-western state. This tool could similarly be used at a local level to capture the perceptions of local leaders and educators regarding schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs to have a baseline from which to build. Finally, Militello et al.’s (2009) study emphasized the need for every school leader to have regular legal updates, user-friendly resources, and access to legal counsel. Many resources are available for this learning. Specifically, the 2015 OCR/DOJ Dear Colleague Letter outlines in detail the civil rights obligations of schools to ELs. There are also one-page snapshots available in English and multiple languages. Significantly, USED’s Office of English Language Acquisition has
developed an English Learner Tool Kit (2015) as a companion publication to add clarity and examples for school leaders as they implement the civil rights obligations.

In addition to these resources, educational leaders can consult many experts in the field through institutions of higher education, regional intermediate school districts and educational agencies, state and federal departments of education, and independent consultants. For example, in my professional role serving as an EL Consultant employed through several intermediate school districts supporting schools throughout multiple counties of one midwestern state, I maintain current resources which are relevant and available to all EL educators on a single website to support EL Programs and am available to support all aspects of EL programming (see Appendix G). Similarly, there are EL consultants and experts throughout each state serving in a multitude of capacities who are eager to support educational leaders. National professional organizations such as TESOL International Association and NABE, National Association of Bilingual Education, along with their state-level affiliates, can also support K-12 educational leaders as they build a greater understanding of equitable EL Programming. Similarly, WIDA and CAL, Center for Applied Linguistics, provide many resources to support multilingual learners, families, and the educators serving them. Finally, it is essential to lean on experts within the field of diversity, equity, and inclusion as leaders foster the belief system and knowledge necessary at a personal and organizational level to lay a foundation for meaningful, systemic change for ELs and their families.

**Recommendation 2:** Adopt a change model grounded in equity to create immediate and sustainable changes that lead to equitable educational opportunities and outcomes for ELs. For example, Kotter’s (2014) model for strategic change is uniquely constructed to meet the fast-paced needs of today’s leaders. The first of eight steps in Kotters’ (2014) model is to create a sense of urgency. The findings from this study, along with the literature from which it builds,
can be used to illuminate this urgency. Additionally, Safir (2017) offers a model with six-steps to influence complex change with an equity lens.

The first step in Safir’s (2017) steps to influence complex change is to tell the current state story. K-12 leaders must critically evaluate the current level of implementation of the civil rights obligations of ELs in their schools. This would require using multiple levels of data, the evaluation of policies and practices, and listening to multiple stakeholders. Data to evaluate would include what Safir refers to as street, map, and satellite data. In other words, satellite data is large-scale data such as patterns of achievement, graduation rates, retention, enrollment, staffing levels, district-level surveys, and funding allocations. Map data is slightly more focused and would include data at the school and classroom level. Street data focuses on the fine-grain details and would require focused listening to students, families, teachers, and stakeholders closest to the issues. This level of data is crucial to understanding the experiences, mindsets, misconceptions, and deep-rooted systemic challenges and will likely require collaboration with trusted community partners. Furthermore, the USED English Learner Toolkit (2015) offers tools for districts to use as they evaluate the current state of their EL Programming. Additionally, specific states offer tools to ensure compliance. For example, the Michigan Department of Education provides many guidance documents and checklists that support leaders in their evaluation of their EL Programs, including Appropriate Staffing of EL Programs (2019), Clarification Regarding Language Assistance Program Requirements (2019), and the Title III Monitoring Indicators Self-Assessment Checklist (2017).

The remaining five steps in Safir’s (2017) model include: naming an equity imperative, identifying a few simple rules, creating a ‘skinny plan’, establishing a few clear metrics, and distributing leadership to build capacity. Depending on the current state of an individual district or school, these five steps may look different. However, this study has illuminated that positive
attitudes and beliefs of K-12 leaders regarding equitable opportunities for ELs are insufficient for ELs to realize their basic civil rights in our schools without the necessary actions.

As prior literature emphasizes, and consistent with Safir’s (2017) model, collaboration of multiple stakeholders in a long-term investment towards equity for ELs is essential (Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2016; Cortina et al., 2015; González, 2010; Elfers et al., 2014; Espino Calderón et al., 2020; Mavrogordato et al., 2019; Theoharis et al., 2011). Notably, while the voices of ESL and bilingual teachers should be valued and welcomed, the responsibility of improving equitable systems and dismantling systems of oppression for ELs cannot be placed solely on the shoulders of ESL and bilingual teachers whose responsibility and expertise is in teaching multilingual children. Brooks (2010) found that ESL teachers can become marginalized when they accept the sole responsibility for all EL needs which also limits opportunities for leaders to develop their own professional expertise in serving ELs and their families.

If a district currently does not employ an ESL or bilingual certified teacher serving the ELs enrolled in their district, which is both illegal and true for roughly 20% of the schools and districts represented in this study, this is an immediate step that must be prioritized, regardless of the number of ELs enrolled. Districts that are unable to find a certified teacher due to the national shortage should consider supporting a current teacher in the pursuit of an ESL or bilingual endorsement. A district could financially support a teacher by reimbursing tuition costs or providing additional incentives. Alternatively, districts could encourage teachers to take advantage of federal grants that provide guaranteed scholarships for teachers enrolling in programs leading to an ESL endorsement. Western Michigan University, Eastern Michigan University, and Calvin University currently have federal grants available to students pursuing an ESL endorsement as an example in one midwestern state.
Finally, while adopting and enacting a change model, it will be imperative to avoid equity detours and acknowledge the key intersections of language, culture, race, and racism in our systems (Crump, 2014; Gorski, 2019; Morita-Mullaney, 2018). Districts must name and confront where racism exists and has existed in our systems in order to take appropriate action to ensure equity for ELs. The inequities that exist for ELs cannot be addressed by claiming language as the sole operating principle. One equity detour to specifically be cautious of is what Gorski calls the *Pacing-for-Privilege Detour*. Gorski notes, while buy-in and consensus-based leadership can be appreciated, we cannot wait for all to agree that schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs must be fully implemented. Leaders must prioritize equity for ELs, who have waited over 50 years to realize their basic civil rights in our schools, over the comfort and interests of equity-reluctant educators. A concise executive summary of this dissertation study documenting key resources for K-12 educational leaders is found in Appendix G.

**Implications for State and Federal Policymakers**

While there are many implications for our K-12 school- and district-level leaders, there are also key recommendations for policymakers at the state and federal levels. Adequate funding, strategies to address the ESL and bilingual teacher shortage, and clear policies that are regularly communicated, fully supported, and appropriately enforced are needed.

**Recommendation 1:** Provide the necessary funding schools need to fully implement equitable programs for ELs. Meeting the civil rights obligations of ELs in schools requires significant resources, and policymakers at both the state and federal levels must ensure these requirements are fully funded. For example, schools must hire ESL or bilingual certified teachers to provide direct English Language Development (ELD) services to ELs as well as provide translation and interpretation services to families. Both of these obligations can be extremely costly, and schools should receive appropriate funding to implement these basic civil
rights obligations. As previously noted, some colleges and universities have received federal grants to support teachers pursuing an ESL endorsement. These grants are a meaningful way to financially support the teachers, but our schools also need additional funding to hire appropriate numbers of ESL and bilingual certified teachers. This study revealed the fact that less than 10% of administrators report providing sufficient ESL teachers and resources to meet basic civil rights obligations to ELs. The 1974 Lau v. Nichols Supreme Court case explicitly demonstrated that failing to provide English language instruction and merely providing the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum to students who do not yet understand English is a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. By simply providing funding and policies that are intended to meet the needs of all students, English Learners continue to be left behind. In this study, funding was identified as one of the key barriers to the implementation of equitable EL Programs which can only be changed through improved funding structures and greater allocations.

**Recommendation 2:** Policymakers should prioritize strategies to address the ESL and bilingual teacher shortage. The greatest barrier illuminated in this study was a lack of ESL or bilingual certified teachers. One way to do this is to continue to provide grants to colleges and universities supporting or promoting ESL or bilingual education certification programs. For example, Western Michigan University was granted the US Department of Education National Professional Development Grant for ESL which provides tuition funding up to $10,300 to each teacher enrolled in the ESL graduate certificate program which results in teachers eligible for an ESL endorsement in the state. Additional funding to support teachers in the pursuit of an ESL or bilingual endorsement can address the issue of an ESL and bilingual teacher shortage. While these grants are available at multiple universities, greater communication and marketing may be necessary to increase awareness of funding to districts and teachers seeking support.
Similarly, in order for teachers, and future teachers, to be interested in obtaining an ESL or bilingual endorsement, opportunities must exist for the interest to be instilled. Policymakers should support, both with policy decisions and funding, K-12 World Language and Dual Language programs. For example, there are multiple two-way dual language programs supporting bilingual and biliteracy, high academic achievement, and sociocultural competence of both native English speakers and ELs throughout the nation. These programs not only foster second language development at a young age, but they also provide the cultural competency and equity foundation that can lead to greater interest in pursuing this field. By supporting policies that maintain and fund World Language and Dual Language programs, not only will ELs benefit, more individuals may choose to enter the field of EL education, and it may also lead to a greater number of individuals that can provide the translation and interpretation needed as illuminated in this study. Finally, if we are to ensure our ELs have equitable educational opportunities in our schools, we must have policies in place with their interests in mind and carefully consider the systemic role of race, racism, and privilege in our systems (Crump, 2014). Policymakers should draw on literature illuminating examples of interest convergence where dual language and world language programs exist primarily for the benefit of native English-speakers (Kelly, 2018).

**Recommendation 3:** Clear and consistent policies that are regularly communicated, fully supported, and appropriately enforced are needed by our policymakers at all levels. This study highlighted that educational leaders do not strongly believe that the policies around EL education are clear. Also, only 14.9% of educational leaders who participated in this study found lack of legal oversight regarding schools’ obligations to ELs not to be a barrier at all to implementing equitable educational opportunities for ELs. This means that the vast majority of educational leaders find a lack of legal oversight to be contributing to the issue that basic civil rights of ELs are not fully implemented in our schools. The civil rights of ELs in our schools
have been documented for over 50 years, but without appropriate enforcement and oversight, our schools have continued to not meet these basic obligations for decades without repercussions.

Finally, this study found that the majority of schools have English-only models of instruction with only a few reporting dual language or transitional bilingual programs which are proven to be most effective for ELs (Collier et al., 2009). By removing any English-only policies and implementing policies in support of dual language programs, ELs will have greater educational opportunities in our schools. For example, greater flexibility with assessment and accountability for dual language programs could lead to more schools being open to this programming. From my professional experience, I know that fear of assessment and accountability is an issue since state assessments are only widely available in English and do not allow emerging bilingual students to draw upon their full linguistic repertoire while demonstrating content mastery. Additionally, policies that would allow for greater flexibility in staffing dual language programs would address the national bilingual teacher shortage.

Implications for Institutions of Higher Education

Institutions of higher education (IHEs) also play an important role in ensuring all ELs have access to equitable educational opportunities that minimally adhere to schools’ civil rights obligations. As illustrated in this study, and aligning with many previous studies, educators are vastly underprepared to meet the needs of ELs in schools (Baecher et al., 2013, 2016; Brooks et al., 2016; Coady et al., 2016; Hiatt et al., 2018; Turkan et al., 2016; Young et al., 2017). This study specifically illuminated the fact that less than 35% of educational leaders fully understand any one of the ten EL civil rights issues identified in the 2015 DOJ/OCR Dear Colleague Letter.

IHEs must comprehensively evaluate their preparation programs and fully integrate concepts related to ELs into both teacher and leadership preparation programs, especially noting the importance of civil rights obligations of ELs and the intersectionality of language, race, and
racism as illuminated in this study. Multiple studies have highlighted the fact that students who are immigrant, migrant, or ELs are not uniquely mentioned in the standards for educational leaders (Watson, 2017; Whitenack, 2015). However, we can learn from the success highlighted by Liou et al.’s (2017) narrative inquiry where an administrator preparation program in Arizona successfully and systematically integrated concepts and skills related to race, racism, culture, and language across and throughout the program. This study resulted in the development of a conceptual framework which has implications for administrator preparation programs seeking to prepare responsive administrators to issues of race and racism in the context of diversity and demographic change.

Specifically, Liou et al. (2017) identified seven elements as the starting point for educational leadership programs as they respond to the demographic shift and prepare school leaders to develop the dispositions and practices that ensure equity. These elements align closely with Crump’s (2014) LangCrit theory and emphasize opportunities to connect antiracist theories to practice, an interdisciplinary approach to critical race leadership studies, and a co-constructed praxis of actualizing equity and excellence across school structure and culture through a transformative leadership lens grounded in racial justice. In order to fully prepare educators and leaders to serve our diverse, multilingual, and multicultural families, IHEs can use these elements to incorporate concepts of race, culture, language, racism, and equity across their preparation programs. If ELs are to realize their basic civil rights, and ultimately obtain educational equity, in our schools, our IHEs must prepare the teachers and leaders of our schools to not only be aware of the issues, but to fully embrace and capitalize upon the linguistic and cultural assets of ELs.

Finally, knowing that educational leaders and general education teachers are overwhelmingly underprepared to equitably serve ELs, ESL and bilingual teachers must be
prepared to not only work with multilingual students directly, but they must also be ready to serve as a consultant or coach for leaders and general education teachers knowing they often serve as a resource and expert for all EL-related issues. Von Esch (2018) clearly demonstrates the crucial role that these EL teacher leaders play in the movement towards equitable educational opportunities for ELs via a year-long comparative case study. EL teachers must be prepared to be more than teachers of English. They must also be prepared to be leaders and advocates.

Brooks et al. (2010) specifically shed light on the vast and overwhelming role ESL teachers have while often taking on sole responsibility for all EL needs. While it is imperative that the responsibility of equitably serving ELs is shared between educational leaders and all educators, including ESL/bilingual certified teachers, EL educators must be prepared to enter our schools amidst the current reality (Brooks et al., 2010; DeMatthews et al., 2017). IHEs with programs that lead to an ESL or bilingual endorsement play a critical role in the comprehensive preparation of ESL and bilingual teachers to serve in a myriad of capacities to support the full implementation of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs and spur programs to move beyond minimal compliance.

**Implications for EL Experts, Advocates, and Allies**

Along with K-12 educational leaders and policymakers, there are multiple EL experts, advocates, and allies that are crucial to the work of ensuring equitable educational opportunities for ELs. First, these individuals should support educational leaders and K-12 school sites. They must be aware of the reality K-12 educational leaders face each day and come alongside them to productively collaborate. There are several complex aspects to providing equitable opportunities for ELs as detailed in this study. Experts, advocates, and allies who have resources, skills, and the time to contribute should partner with our schools.
Second, EL experts, advocates, and allies are needed to support multilingual families and elevate their voices and needs in our schools. While the burden of advocating for and implementing needed changes should not rest on the shoulders of ELs and their families, their voices are imperative in the work. Similar to our educational leaders, ELs and their families may not be fully aware of their civil rights in schools. They have for generations lacked access to equitable educational opportunities and may have accepted these inequities as the norm. Experts, advocates, and allies can provide opportunities to grow awareness of the rights of multilingual families and students and support advocacy efforts.

Additionally, ELs and their families may not feel safe to express their concerns to school leaders within a turbulent social and political climate that has not been welcoming to immigrants and non-native English speakers. Allies and advocates who have built trusting relationships within communities of EL families can help elevate their voices and needs in the educational system. For example, some schools have family liaisons who can serve in this capacity, and many communities have non-profit organizations that directly serve immigrant, multilingual, and multicultural children and families. For over 50 years, ELs and their families have waited to realize their civil rights in our public schools, and all experts, advocates, and allies are needed to elevate this issue and collaborate to move programs forward.

**Limitations, Delimitations, and Implications for Future Research**

While this study has provided key findings related to the perceptions of K-12 educational leaders regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools, there were limitations to this work similar to all research studies. First, all data is anonymous, self-reported perception data which is limited by the fact that it cannot be independently verified. The accuracy and truthfulness of responses cannot be confirmed. Furthermore, due to the sensitive content related to their level of understanding and
implementation of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs, some participants may have been fearful to answer honestly or opted not to respond altogether to certain questions. Of the 924 educational leaders that began the survey by completing at least the first response, only 811 completed a minimum of one third of the survey and were used for analysis. A total of 561 completed the entirety of the survey. Participants may have been reluctant to answer a question that would be perceived as a negative reflection of themselves or educational leaders in general. Others may not have completed the entirety of the survey due to time, length, the sensitive content, or other factors.

Because this study used perception data, other researchers may be interested in conducting a similar study using verifiable data to capture leaders’ verifiable levels of understanding, level of preparation, level of implementation, and outcomes for ELs. Comparing perceptions to verifiable data could provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues raised in this study.

Additionally, based on the survey title, some invited educational leaders may have chosen not to participate due to their lack of experience with, or knowledge of, schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs. Due to this, the sample of this study may not be fully representative of the population. Based on the demographic questions that were asked, we do know that the sample represents schools and districts with higher proportions of ELs enrolled compared to the state average as discussed in the findings. We can infer that, in general, those with fewer ELs enrolled chose not to participate in the study. This is an area for potential future research, and researchers could explore the differences and similarities between schools and districts in the area of equitable EL Programs based on the percent of ELs enrolled.

Also worth emphasizing as a limitation to this study is the researcher-designed survey tool which included my own perceptions to the barriers that may be in place for educational
leaders while implementing programs that minimally adhere to civil rights obligations to ELs along with barriers that were specifically found in the extensive review of the literature (Aronson et al., 2015; Arsen et al., 2019; Brayboy et al., 2007; Capper et al., 2014; Castagno et al., 2017; Hakuta, 2001; Menken et al., 2015; Morita-Mullaney, 2018; Turkan & Buzick, 2016; Tuters et al., 2017). While the survey instrument did not have any prior reliability or validity due to it being created specifically for this study, methods for establishing reliability and validity are previously detailed.

Another important limitation is that this data had to be analyzed as single level data rather than nested data due to the purposeful design which ensured anonymity. In order to ensure complete anonymity, few demographic questions were included, and no demographic questions that could link individuals to specific schools or districts were included. Therefore, participants could not be linked to specific schools or districts in order to analyze the data from a nested perspective using Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM). Future studies could be designed differently in order to analyze the data from a nested perspective.

Finally, a key delimitation is the quantitative design of this study that cannot capture the depth of perceptions that may be available through qualitative methods. Specifically, in relation to the attitudes and beliefs captured in this study, qualitative methods might be better able to delve into the deeper, more complex attitudes and beliefs of educational leaders, including potential implicit biases. Further studies could explore the issues raised in this study through qualitative methods in order to establish a deeper understanding of K-12 educational leaders’ perceptions regarding schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs.

In addition to the future research mentioned above, researchers could build upon these results by further exploring the perspectives of teachers, educators not in formal leadership positions, students, and families regarding the key issues related to equitable EL programs raised
in this study. Also, this study found that school-level leaders report a higher level of preparation by their colleges or universities yet they report a much lower level of understanding compared to district-level leaders. Further research should be done to better understand this finding.

Similarly, future research could explore the difference in school and district level leaders’ perceptions as it relates to communication and transparency. Additionally, it would be insightful to study educational leaders’ actual levels of understanding and preparation rather than rely only on perception data to better understand this relationship. Finally, this study sought to capture the perspectives of K-12 educational leaders related to equitable programs that minimally adhere to the ten civil rights obligations of schools to ELs that are detailed in the OCR/DOJ 2015 Dear Colleague Letter. Each of the ten civil rights obligations are complex with many components that could be further unpacked and studied in future research to provide a more thorough understanding of the issues.

Related to the demographic data collected in this survey, this study illuminated that the majority of schools have English-only models with only a few reporting dual language or transitional bilingual programs which are proven to be more effective for ELs (Collier et al., 2009). Future studies could explore why this is the case. Additionally, further analysis of which students, native English-speakers or native speakers of other languages, are being served by our language immersion, dual language, and world language programs and teachers would add to the literature by connecting with LangCrit Theory (Crump, 2014). While the emergence of bilingual programs in US schools was intended to serve non-native English-speakers, subsequent English-only policies eliminated many of these programs. As Kelly (2018) highlights, recent expansion of dual language programs is an example of interest convergence where ELs may benefit from bilingual programs, but the programs exist because of the perceived benefit of the majority, English-speakers. Effective dual language programs grounded in equity are crucial for ELs and
an enrichment for non-ELs. In my professional experience, I’ve observed dual language programs, often referred to as immersion programs, advancing the linguistic privilege of native English-speakers by fostering their bilingualism and biliteracy while ELs are often placed in English-only programs that all too often result in neither proficiency in English nor proficiency in their native language. Further research could explore this reality to better understand for whom dual language programs exist and why.

Finally, further qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research could be conducted to further explore the barriers revealed in this study. Specifically, there were open-ended responses in this study that suggested misconceptions present. For example, one participant wrote that ELs “refuse to exit,” but students do not have a choice. There are state policies to guide the exit decision-making process at district level based on specific criteria. Also, the barrier “push-back from board or others” could be further studied. Specifically, it would be insightful to know if advocacy is occurring at that level in order for push-back to exist. Finally, lack of oversight of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs was a barrier that future studies could further explore to identify the relationship between oversight, implementation, and EL outcomes.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Acknowledging the incredibly complex roles of K-12 leaders and their overall positive attitudes and beliefs towards equitable opportunities for ELs, my hope is that the findings of this study can be used as a spring-board for authentic, meaningful changes to our educational systems so that basic civil rights obligations to ELs, which are guaranteed by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, can be fully implemented. I cannot over-emphasize that minimal compliance should not be mistaken as equivalent to ideal or equitable EL programming. However, because we are yet to implement these basic civil rights after over a half century has passed, I urge all educational leaders to critically consider the recommendations within this study and how they
can be an active part of the positive progress needed for ELs in our schools. Civil rights should not be optional nor negotiable; they are legal requirements. Fully implementing these civil rights issues in our schools will take a redistribution of resources to ensure access to high-quality, certified ESL/bilingual teachers as well as effective and relevant curricula, translation services for families, and appropriate accommodations to core content instruction to name a few.

It is unconscionable that the vast majority of ELs in the year 2020 attend public schools where their basic civil rights are not met. The year 2020 has brought issues of inequity to the forefront of many conversations. Specifically, a renewed Black Lives Matter movement, triggered from recent police brutality, along with the introduction of the novel Coronavirus has illuminated social and economic inequities in our communities, healthcare systems, businesses, and schools. School leaders are grappling with these issues amidst uncertain funding, legislation, and programming plans. While K-12 leaders are pulled in many directions to serve all students and families equitably, ELs and their families cannot afford to continue to wait for the attention and urgency to be placed on programs that directly impact their educational opportunities. It is also important to note that the survey results from this study were collected before the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) became a global pandemic which closed the doors to many schools across the US and required emergency remote learning. This means that systems were not in place to meet the basic civil rights of ELs before the pandemic started, and many of the issues may be compounded due to language barriers and lack of access, among other systemic barriers, during remote learning.

There are certainly barriers to the full implementation of equitable EL Programs as detailed in this study, but our ELs and their families cannot continue to wait for the lowest level of civil rights guaranteed to them in 1964 to be implemented. Fifty years is long past due. ELs bring incredible assets to our schools and communities that should be welcomed, valued, and
built upon. While I have certainly witnessed the inequities in our schools firsthand through my professional experiences, I have also been surrounded by several incredible educators, at all levels, community partners, advocates, and allies that give me hope for a brighter future. It’s time to rethink our systems fraught with inequities that further marginalize our ELs and prioritize those whom our systems have failed for generations.
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Office for Civil Rights. (2018). *Schools’ Civil Rights obligations to English Learner students and limited English proficient parents*. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html


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doi:10.1007/s11256-014-0297-2


Appendix A

Survey Instrument
Schools' Civil Rights Obligations to English Learners: Leadership Perceptions on Key Issues

Western Michigan University
Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology

Principal Investigator: Dr. LaSonja Roberts
Student Investigator: Pamela R Schwallier

You are invited to participate in this research project titled “Schools’ Civil Rights Obligations to English Learners: Leadership Perceptions on Key Issues.”

STUDY SUMMARY: This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide information that will help you decide whether you want to take part in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question. The purpose of the research is to capture K-12 educational leaders’ perspectives on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools and will serve as Pamela R Schwallier’s dissertation for the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership. If you take part in the research, you will be asked to complete an online survey. Your replies will be completely anonymous, so do not put your name anywhere on the survey. Your time in the study will take less than 10 minutes. Possible risks and costs to you for taking part in the study may be the time to take the survey. There are no direct benefits. Your alternative to taking part in the research study is not to take part in it.

The de-identified (anonymous) information collected for this research may be used by or distributed to investigators for other research without obtaining informed consent from you.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact Dr. LaSonja Roberts at 269-387-1821 or lasonja.roberts@wmich.edu or Pamela R. Schwallier at 616-648-5585 or pschwall@oaisd.org. You may also contact the Chair, Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298.

This consent has been approved by the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) on January 27, 2020.

Participating in this survey online indicates your consent for use of the answers you supply.
### Level of Preparation

**Q1** To what extent did your college or university prepare you to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Not at all (1)</th>
<th>Slightly (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat (3)</th>
<th>Moderately (4)</th>
<th>Very much (5)</th>
<th>Completely (6)</th>
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<tr>
<td>meet schools' legal obligations to English Learners (ELs)? (1)</td>
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<td>implement effective EL program models? (2)</td>
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<td>address equity issues related to language, culture, and race? (3)</td>
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**End of Block: Level of Preparation**

**Start of Block: Level of Understanding**
Q2 In the following areas, what is your **level of understanding** regarding schools' civil rights obligations to English Learners (ELs)?
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Do not understand (1)</th>
<th>Slightly understand (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat understand (3)</th>
<th>Moderately understand (4)</th>
<th>Mostly understand (5)</th>
<th>Completely understand (6)</th>
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<td>identifying and assessing all potential ELs (1)</td>
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<td>providing all ELs meaningful access to appropriate curricular and extracurricular programs (4)</td>
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<td>avoiding unnecessary segregation of ELs (5)</td>
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<td>accurately evaluating ELs for Special Education services and providing both Special Education and English language services (6)</td>
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<td>meeting the needs of ELs who opt out of all or some of the EL program (7)</td>
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<td>Level of Understanding</td>
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<td>accurately monitoring</td>
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<td>and exiting ELs from EL</td>
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<td>programs (8)</td>
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<td>meaningfully evaluating</td>
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<td>the effectiveness of EL</td>
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<td>programs and modifying</td>
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<td>them as necessary (9)</td>
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<td>providing translation</td>
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<td>to communicate with</td>
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<td>parents as needed (10)</td>
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End of Block: Level of Understanding

Start of Block: Attitudes and Beliefs Regarding the Education of ELs
Q3 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I believe...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree (1)</th>
<th>Moderately disagree (2)</th>
<th>Slightly disagree (3)</th>
<th>Slightly agree (4)</th>
<th>Moderately agree (5)</th>
<th>Strongly agree (6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELs should be an urgent educational priority. (1)</td>
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<td>Schools' civil rights obligations to ELs are a moral imperative. (2)</td>
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<td>EL services are of equal importance as Special Education services. (3)</td>
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<td>Educational leaders are crucial to ensuring equity for ELs. (4)</td>
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<td>The policies surrounding EL education are clear. (5)</td>
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End of Block: Attitudes and Beliefs Regarding the Education of ELs

Start of Block: Barriers
Q4 While implementing programs for ELs, I have experienced the following as **barriers**: 
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not a barrier (1)</th>
<th>Slight barrier (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat a barrier (3)</th>
<th>Moderate barrier (4)</th>
<th>Strong barrier (5)</th>
<th>Extreme barrier (6)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of funding (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of instructional time for ELs (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Push-back from board or others (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of ESL/bilingual certified teachers (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of translators (5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of stakeholder engagement in EL issues (6)</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of attention to equity issues: language, race, and culture (7)</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of leadership preparation in EL issues (8)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of teacher preparation about ELs (9)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of professional learning opportunities around ELs (10)</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of clear and consistent policies (federal and state) (11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of legal oversight regarding schools' obligations to ELs (12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Please specify: (13)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

End of Block: Barriers  

Start of Block: Level of Implementation
Q5 In the following areas, what is your perceived level of implementation of the following EL issues in your school or district?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not implemented (1)</th>
<th>Slightly implemented (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat implemented (3)</th>
<th>Moderately implemented (4)</th>
<th>Mostly implemented (5)</th>
<th>Fully implemented (6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accurate identification and assessment of all potential ELs (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>providing all ELs with appropriate language services (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>sufficient ESL teachers and resources (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>providing all ELs meaningful access to curricular and extracurricular programs (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>avoiding unnecessary segregation of ELs (5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>accurately evaluating ELs for Special Education services and providing both Special Education and English language services (6)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
meeting the needs of ELs who opt out of all or some of the EL program (7)
accurately monitoring and exiting ELs from EL programs (8)
meaningfully evaluating the effectiveness of EL programs and modifying them as necessary (9)
providing translation to communicate with parents as needed (10)

End of Block: Level of Implementation

Start of Block: Outcomes
Q6 To what extent have you observed the following EL program outcomes in your local setting?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increased ESL/bilingual certified teachers (1)</th>
<th>Not at all (1)</th>
<th>Slightly (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat (3)</th>
<th>Moderately (4)</th>
<th>Very much (5)</th>
<th>Completely (6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased cultural and linguistic awareness of all staff (2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased translation services provided to families (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased opportunities for ELs (e.g. advanced classes, extracurricular activities, appropriate accommodations) (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduced achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs (5)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

End of Block: Outcomes

Start of Block: Demographics

Q7 Do you mainly serve as a K-12 educational leader at the school or district level?

○ School (1)

○ District (2)

Skip To: Q8 If Do you mainly serve as a K-12 educational leader at the school or district level? = District
Q8 About how many total students attend your school?
________________________________________________________________

Q9 About how many ELs are identified in your school?
________________________________________________________________

Q10 About how many certified ESL/bilingual teachers does your school have serving ELs?
________________________________________________________________

Q11 About how many languages are represented by the ELs in your school?
________________________________________________________________

Q12 How many years of experience do you have serving as a formal K-12 educational leader?
________________________________________________________________
Q13 What best describes the program model for English Learners at your school? Check all that apply:

- [ ] English mainstream classes (1)
- [ ] Interventions with educators not ESL or bilingual certified (2)
- [ ] Individual/ small group pull-out with an ESL or bilingual certified teacher (3)
- [ ] Push-in/ co-teaching with an ESL or bilingual certified teacher and a general education teacher (4)
- [ ] One-way transitional bilingual program (all students are ELs) (5)
- [ ] Two-way dual language program (serving native English speakers and native speakers of the partner language) (6)
- [ ] Sheltered Instruction or general education teachers trained with The SIOP Model (7)
- [ ] Online/ digital platforms for English Language Development (8)
- [ ] Newcomer Program (9)
- [ ] Other. Please specify: (10)

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Q8 About how many total students attend your district?

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Q9 About how many ELs are identified in your district?

________________________________________________________________

Q10 About how many certified ESL/bilingual teachers does your district have serving ELs?

________________________________________________________________

Q11 About how many languages are represented by the ELs in your district?

________________________________________________________________

Q12 How many years of experience do you have serving as a formal K-12 educational leader?

________________________________________________________________
Q13 What best describes the program model for English Learners at your school? Check all that apply:

☐ English mainstream classes (1)

☐ Interventions with educators not ESL or bilingual certified (2)

☐ Individual/ small group pull-out with an ESL or bilingual certified teacher (3)

☐ Push-in/ co-teaching with an ESL or bilingual certified teacher and a general education teacher (4)

☐ One-way transitional bilingual program (all students are ELs) (5)

☐ Two-way dual language program (serving native English speakers and native speakers of the partner language) (6)

☐ Sheltered Instruction or general education teachers trained with The SIOP Model (7)

☐ Online/ digital platforms for English Language Development (8)

☐ Newcomer program (9)

☐ Other: Please specify (10)

________________________________________________

End of Block: Demographics
Appendix B

MASA Email
Subject: Short Survey: K-12 School and District-level Administrators

Content:

To: All MASA Members

Action: You are invited to participate in an optional, short, 10 minute or less, confidential online survey to assist with the doctoral dissertation of Pam Schwallier who is currently a PhD student at Western Michigan University (WMU). By completing this survey, you will receive a 1-2 page executive summary of the results. Please access the survey by clicking the following link, or copying and pasting the URL into your web browser:  
https://wmich.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9ovfJ1nyUD9r6Vn

Background: Pam is currently regional English Learner consultant for Ottawa Area ISD, Muskegon Area ISD, and Allegan Area ESA in partnership with Kent ISD. Along with her previous educational experiences and studies in the Educational Leadership program at WMU, she is interested in advancing equitable opportunities for K-12 English Learners (ELs) in our schools.

This study, entitled Schools’ Civil Rights Obligations to English Learners: Leadership Perceptions on Key Issues, is designed to capture K-12 educational leaders’ perspectives on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools.

Conclusion: Pam expresses her thanks in advance for supporting this study by completing the short survey. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact her by email at pschwall@oaisd.org.

Sincerely,

Chris Wigent
Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators
Executive Director
 cwigent@gomasa.org
Appendix C

Initial Email
Subject: Short Survey: K-12 School and District-level Administrators

Content:

Good morning, K-12 school and district-level administrators,

Action: You are invited to participate in a short, 10 minute or less, confidential online survey to assist with my doctoral dissertation as a PhD student at Western Michigan University (WMU). By completing this survey, you will receive a 1-2 page executive summary of the results. Please access the survey by clicking the following link, or copying and pasting the URL into your web browser: https://wmich.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9ovfJ1nyUD9r6Vn

Background: As a regional English Learner consultant for Ottawa Area ISD, Muskegon Area ISD, and Allegan Area ESA in partnership with Kent ISD, along with my previous educational experiences and studies in the Educational Leadership program at WMU, I am interested in advancing equitable opportunities for K-12 English Learners (ELs) in our schools.

This study, entitled *Schools’ Civil Rights Obligations to English Learners: Leadership Perceptions on Key Issues*, is designed to capture K-12 educational leaders’ perspectives on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools.

Conclusion: Thank you in advance for supporting this study by completing the short survey. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by email at psc@oaisd.org.

Sincerely,

Pam Schwallier
Regional English Learner Consultant
OAISD, MAISD, AAESA
PhD Candidate, Western Michigan University
616-648-5595
Appendix D

1st Follow-up Email
**Subject:** 2nd REQUEST - Short Survey: K-12 School and District-level Administrators

**Content:**

Good morning K-12 school and district-level administrators,

**Action:** Many thanks to those that already completed this short, 10 minute or less, survey. If you did not have a chance to complete it, and are willing to help with my doctoral dissertation, please proceed by clicking the link below, or copying and pasting the URL into your browser: https://wmich.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9ovfJ1nyUD9r6Vn The deadline to complete the survey is March 1, 2020. By completing this survey, you will receive a 1-2 page executive summary of the results.

**Background:** As a regional English Learner consultant for Ottawa Area ISD, Muskegon Area ISD, and Allegan Area ESA in partnership with Kent ISD, along with my previous educational experiences and studies in the Educational Leadership program at WMU, I am interested in advancing equitable opportunities for K-12 English Learners (ELs) in our schools.

This study, entitled Schools’ Civil Rights Obligations to English Learners: Leadership Perceptions on Key Issues, is designed to capture K-12 educational leaders’ perspectives on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools.

**Conclusion:** Thank you in advance for supporting this study by completing the short survey. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by email at pschwall@oaisd.org.

Sincerely,

Pam Schwallier
Regional English Learner Consultant
OAISD, MAISD, AAESA
PhD Candidate, Western Michigan University
616-648-5595
Appendix E

2nd Follow-up Email
Subject: FINAL REQUEST - Short Survey: K-12 School and District-level Administrators

Content:

Good morning K-12 school and district-level administrators,

Action: Many than ks to those that already completed this short, 10 minute or less, survey. If you did not have a chance to complete it, and are willing to help with my doctoral dissertation, please proceed by clicking the link below, or copying and pasting the URL into your browser: https://wmich.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9ovfJ1nyUD9r6Vn. The deadline to complete the survey is March 1, 2020. This is the final reminder. By completing this survey, you will receive a 1-2 page executive summary of the results.

Background: As a regional English Learner consultant for Ottawa Area ISD, Muskegon Area ISD, and Allegan Area ESA in partnership with Kent ISD, along with my previous educational experiences and studies in the Educational Leadership program at WMU, I am interested in advancing equitable opportunities for K-12 English Learners (ELs) in our schools.

This study, entitled Schools’ Civil Rights Obligations to English Learners: Leadership Perceptions on Key Issues, is designed to capture K-12 educational leaders’ perspectives on key issues regarding equitable programs for ELs that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools.

Conclusion: Thank you in advance for supporting this study by completing the short survey. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by email at pschwall@oaisd.org.

Sincerely,

Pam Schwallier
Regional English Learner Consultant
OAISD, MAISD, AAESA
PhD Candidate, Western Michigan University
616-648-5595
Appendix F

HSIRB Letter of Approval
Date: January 27, 2020

To: LaSonja Roberts, Principal Investigator
   Pamela Schwaller, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: IRB Project Number 20-01-35

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “Schools’ Civil Rights Obligations to English Learners: Leadership Perceptions on Key Issues” has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes to this project (e.g., add an investigator, increase number of subjects beyond the number stated in your application, etc.). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation.

In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the IRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

A status report is required on or prior to (no more than 30 days) January 26, 2021 and each year thereafter until closing of the study. The IRB will send a request.

When this study closes, submit the required Final Report found at https://wmich.edu/research/forms.

Note: All research data must be kept in a secure location on the WMU campus for at least three (3) years after the study closes.
Appendix G

Executive Summary
SCHOOLS’ CIVIL RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS TO ENGLISH LEARNERS: LEADERSHIP PERCEPTIONS ON KEY ISSUES

Pamela R Schwallier, PhD

October, 2020

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to capture K-12 educational leaders’ perspectives on key issues regarding equitable programs for English Learners (ELs) that minimally adhere to the civil rights obligations of schools; such perceptions were ascertained through an analysis of their:

- attitudes & beliefs,
- formal level of preparation,
- level of understanding of civil rights obligations,
- barriers,
- level of EL program implementation, and
- EL program outcomes.

Background

ELs, who now represent nearly 10% of all K-12 public school students, 4.8 million of who speak over 400 different languages and dialects, continue to lack equitable educational opportunities as demonstrated through gaps in achievement outcomes, poor graduation rates, and identified systemic barriers related to the intersectionality of language, culture, race, and racism (Crump, 2014; DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2017; Menken & Solorza, 2015; Morita-Mullaney, 2018; NCELA, 2015; 2018). This study is grounded in an understanding of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Social Justice Leadership, and LangCrit Theory (Crump, 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2017).

KEY FINDINGS:

- 800+ educational leaders in 1 midwestern state responded to an anonymous, electronic survey.
- High levels of positive attitudes and beliefs towards equitable EL Programs are negated by severely low levels of preparation, understanding, and implementation of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs.
- Less than 35% of participants responded that they completely understand any 1 of the 10 civil rights obligations aligned to the 2015 Office for Civil Rights & Department of Justice Dear Colleague Letter detailing the civil rights of ELs founded over 50 years ago in 1964.
- Over 50% of educational leaders report that not a single 1 of these civil rights obligations is fully implemented in their school or district.


Discussion

Building on the literature that connects issues of education, language, culture, and race, it is apparent that what is at play is nothing short of systemic racism (Brayboy et al., 2007; Crump, 2014; Morita-Mulaney, 2018; Stromquist, 2012). While acknowledging, honoring, and uplifting the complex and challenging roles of K-12 leaders, who widely hold positive attitudes and beliefs towards equitable EL Programs, the results of this study revealed a stark lack of formal preparation, a lack of understanding and implementation of civil rights obligations, a myriad of barriers, and moderate EL Program outcomes.

Through an analysis using a Hotelling’s T-Squared Test, this study found that there is a statistically significant difference between the perceptions of school and district level administrators (F(6)=8.47, p<.001). District-level leaders had higher perception scores in the areas of Attitudes & Beliefs, Level of Understanding, Barriers, Level of Implementation, & EL Program Outcomes.

Alternatively, while all leaders reported a vast lack of preparation, school-level leaders reported higher levels of preparation by their colleges and universities.

This study also developed a statistically significant regression model demonstrating that greater levels of preparation and implementation result in higher EL Program outcomes. Conversely, the more barriers experienced by leaders, the lower the EL Program outcomes (F(7, 561)=58.987, p<.001).

“Less than 10% of respondents reported that their school or district fully implements EL programs with sufficient ESL teachers and resources.”

Key barriers identified included a lack of certified ESL/bilingual teachers, lack of funding, and lack of teacher preparation about ELs. Notably, over 80% of leaders pointed to lack of legal oversight as a barrier to the full implementation of schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs.

There are certainly barriers as detailed in this study, but our ELs and their families cannot continue to wait for the lowest level of civil rights guaranteed to them in 1964 to be implemented. Fifty years is long past due. It’s time to rethink our systems fraught with inequities that further marginalize our ELs and prioritize those whom our systems have failed for generations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

K-12 Educational Leaders

1. Foster the belief system and knowledge necessary at a personal and organizational level to lay a foundation for meaningful, systemic change for ELs and their families.
2. Adopt a change model grounded in equity to create urgent and sustained changes that lead to equitable educational opportunities and outcomes for ELs (Kotter, 2014; Safir, 2017).

State & Federal Policymakers

1. Provide the necessary funding schools need to fully implement equitable programs for ELs.
2. Prioritize strategies to address the ESL and bilingual teacher shortage.
3. Clear and consistent policies that are regularly communicated, fully supported, and appropriately enforced are needed by our policymakers at all levels.

Institutions of Higher Ed

1. Integrate EL concepts, including the intersectionality of language, race, & racism, into educator preparation programs.

EL Experts, Advocates, & Allies

1. Partner with our K-12 leaders to elevate and support the voices and needs of ELs and their families in our schools.

For a copy of the full dissertation study or support with your EL Program, please contact:

Pam Schwallier, PhD Regional EL Consultant: OAISD, MAISD, AAESA pschwall@oaisd.org

www.sitimeline.com/English-Learners
### Key Resources for K-12 Leaders

**What are schools’ civil rights obligations to ELs & their families?**

The 2015 OCR/DOJ Dear Colleague Letter outlines the 10 most common civil rights issues found in K-12 schools based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964:

bit.ly/CivilRightsObligations

1. **Identifying All English Learner Students**
   - Fully understood (26.6%); Fully implemented (43.9%)

2. **Providing English Learners with a Language Assistance Program**
   - Fully understood (24.0%); Fully implemented (18.9%)

3. **Staffing and Supporting an EL Program**
   - Fully understood (23.4%); Fully implemented (9.4%)

4. **Meaningful Access to Core Curricular, Extra Curricular Programs**
   - Fully understood (23.8%); Fully implemented (20.0%)

5. **Creating an Inclusive Environment and Avoiding Unnecessary Segregation**
   - Fully understood (33.0%); Fully implemented (35.0%)

6. **Addressing English Learners with Disabilities**
   - Fully understood (15.8%); Fully implemented (16.4%)

7. **Serving English Learners who Opt-Out of EL Programs**
   - Fully understood (12.1%); Fully implemented (10.4%)

8. **Monitoring and Exiting English Learners from EL Programs and Services**
   - Fully understood (19.7%); Fully implemented (21.3%)

9. **Evaluating the Effectiveness of a District’s EL Program**
   - Fully understood (11.7%); Fully implemented (9.9%)

10. **Ensuring Meaningful Communication with Limited English Proficient Parents**
    - Fully understood (31.7%); Fully implemented (20.6%)

### Companion Resources

- US Department of Education (USED) Office of English Language Acquisition EL Toolkit
  - bit.ly/USEDELToolkit
- USED Newcomer Toolkit
  - bit.ly/USEDNewcomerToolkit

### Michigan-specific Resources

- All Resources:
  - michigan.gov/mde-el
- Title III Monitoring Indicators:
  - bit.ly/MonitoringIndicatorsTitleIII
- Entrance and Exit Protocol: How to Identify ELs
  - bit.ly/EntranceandExitMDE
- Appropriate Staffing of EL Programs
  - bit.ly/StaffingELPrograms

### Key Collaborators

- EL Students & Families
- ESL/Bilingual Teachers
- EL Consultants (State Department of Education, Intermediate School Districts, Independent Consultants, etc.)
- Community Organizations
- Institutions of Higher Education
- Policymakers

### Safir's (2017) 6-Steps to Influence Complex Change with an Equity Lens:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tell the current-state story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Name an equity imperative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Identify a few simple rules.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 4    | Create a "skinny plan."
| 5    | Establish a few clear metrics. |
| 6    | Distribute leadership to build capacity. |

For a copy of the full dissertation study or support with your EL Program, please contact:

Pam Schwallier, PhD  Regional EL Consultant: OAISD, MAISD, AAESA  pschwall@oaisd.org  www.sitimeline.com/English-Learners