Teaching Learners of English as an Additional Language: Re-Conceptualizing Mainstream Teacher Preparedness in the Growing Linguistic Mosaic of Ontario


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Abstract

As the population of Learners of English as an Additional Language (LEALs) has increased steadily in mainstream classrooms over the last decade, mainstream classroom teachers are challenged with teaching situations for which they are not adequately prepared. Using a Complexity Theory and Mindfulness Mindset lens, this study examined self-perceived preparedness of 15 recently graduated teachers over the course of a 10-workshop series titled *Teaching LEALs in Mainstream Classrooms*. The following research questions guided the study: (a) How do teachers’ perceptions of their preparedness to teach LEALs change during the workshop series? (b) How did the workshops contribute to changes in teachers’ perceptions? Through datasets created from observational field notes, questionnaires, and semi-structured interview, workshop, and session documentation, this semester-long qualitative case study presents mainstream teachers’ experiences and perceptions. Rather than providing a detailed and prescribed curriculum for change, attention is on the overall direction of teacher preparedness and fostering conditions for change and learning. Study findings capture the intricacies of mainstream teacher preparedness and indicate that change depends on adequate professional development that maximizes teachers’ LEAL-related knowledge. However, in addition to knowledge, self-perceived levels of preparedness were influenced by the discomfort of disequilibrium, feedback, and embracing uncertainty. There are important implications for teacher education practice and professional certification. Ultimately, mainstream teacher training for LEALs cannot be optional. All teachers require targeted and intentional training to effectively address barriers to LEAL teaching and learning.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Multiculturalism and multilingualism are highly distinctive features of Canadian society. More than one million newcomers settled in Canada between 2001 and 2006, and over 80% were allophones (Statistics Canada, 2010). An *allophone* is a resident with a home-language other than English or French. Over the last decade, the demographic profile of Ontario—the largest province in Canada—has changed dramatically, with over 100,000 newcomers arriving to the province each year (People for Education, 2010). Canada is a country of linguistic diversity, and it continues to become increasingly multilingual with growing numbers of immigrants who are allophones (Statistics Canada, 2013). Parallel to the demographic trends that indicate a shrinking proportion of Anglophones in comparison to allophones, the number of allophone students who registered for school has also increased significantly (Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario [ETFO], 2010; Pettit, 2011; Statistics Canada, 2012). Ontario’s linguistic portrait has consequently shifted, most notably as it is the province of choice for over 50% of newcomers (Chui, Tran, & Maheux, 2007). Immigration has contributed to linguistic diversity and the prevalence of Learners of English as an Additional Language (LEALs) in mainstream classrooms. Further inflating the linguistic diversity trend is the growing number of Canadian-born allophone students starting school (People for Education, 2010). It is projected that the allophone population could increase at a rate 7 to 11 times faster than the rest of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2012).

Ontario’s English-language elementary school population is changing. In 2010, People for Education reported that province-wide, 51% of elementary English-language schools had 10 or more students in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, 26%
of which had no ESL teacher—an increase of 22% since 2009. More specifically, 29% of schools outside the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) with 10 or more English Language Learners (ELLs) do not have ESL teachers (People for Education, 2011). There is an unmet need for English language supports, because there has been a steady increase of LEALs in Ontario schools during the past decade.

With these demographic shifts, teacher preparedness for LEALs is a growing issue in Ontario. This influx of LEALs pressures mainstream educators who encounter barriers and limited training for their educational engagement. Educators’ struggles are well documented in international scholarly literature (Antunez, 2002; Barnes, 2006; Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008; Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2016; Eller & Poe, 2016; Evans, Arnot-Hopffer, & Jurich, 2005; Menken & Antunez, 2001; Meskill, 2005; Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004). Mainstream teachers in English-speaking countries around the world are increasingly expected to teach LEALs in mainstream classrooms.

Teacher education is responsible for the quality and preparation of teachers they graduate (Cochran-Smith, Ell, Ludlow, Grudnoff, & Aitken, 2014). Teacher education, as the programmatic preparation of teachers, has the potential to alleviate these barriers with LEAL-specific training. The potential of teacher education assisting with teacher preparedness for rapid changes in education is indisputable (Lin & Lin, 2015).

Since elementary and junior students receive most of their instruction in regular classrooms, it is crucial that generalist educators are prepared to meet the challenges they may face in the classroom. Some of the challenges identified by teachers include: communicating with, understanding, and connecting with students; lack of adequate time; variation of student needs; lack of tools and assessments; inadequate preparation or
training; and lack of confidence (Clair, 1995; Daniel & Peercy, 2014; de Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013; Eller & Poe, 2016; Farrell, 2016a; Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Rueda & Garcia, 1996; Turgut, Sahin, & Huerta, 2016). In response to demographic changes, Ontario has implemented a focus on policies regarding educational equity and inclusion (Government of Ontario, 2007; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). Yet, more needs to be done to bring the provincial ministries’ vision to life. Current studies continue to demonstrate issues with newly certified teachers entering the profession grossly underprepared to be effective early literacy teachers (Eller & Poe, 2016).

Teachers require professional training that improves their ability to address the oppressive prejudices that affect Ontario’s schools and communities (ETFO, 2010). Thus, teacher education practices that influence the preparation of educators to meet the varying needs of the linguistically diverse student population require greater attention. Pettit (2011), Macnab and Payne (2003), and Yoon (2008) affirm that beliefs are more influential and stronger predictors or determinants of behaviour than knowledge. As a result, there is a need to explore options pertaining to the training of teachers to become better prepared for this growing population. A closer examination of teacher education practices through the perspective of recent teacher graduates may inform a linguistically responsive teacher preparation curriculum. Teachers’ perceptions are powerful indicators of future behaviour and thus represent critical avenues for understanding preparedness while providing insight into impeding issues in teaching and learning, strengths of teacher education practices, and implications for professional certification. With a better understanding of preparedness, teaching professionals move closer to equitably supporting all students.
Teacher preparedness simultaneously changes with the needs of school populations and society. Teacher education must continuously reflect the needs represented in schools—beyond the mandated curricular needs—to best prepare future teachers for realistic classrooms. In 2010, several Ontario schools reported on the number of newcomers and Canadian-born students who are starting school with Stage 1: English proficiency (Coelho, 2007; People for Education, 2010). People for Education (2010) reports that 67% of Ontario’s English-language elementary public schools have LEAL students in their school populations, representing a steady 24% increase from 2002-2003, while elementary schools in the GTA report numbers as high as 94%. In schools with only a few LEALs, classroom teachers are usually the only ones available to provide support. In cases where ESL support is available, students still spend the majority of their school days in mainstream classrooms. Nevertheless, annual reports on schools indicate that several schools with a high need for language support do not have LEAL specialist teachers (People for Education, 2010). However, teachers are certain to encounter increasing numbers of LEALs in their classroom despite the lack of instructional support.

More recently, People for Education (2011) indicates that 56% of elementary schools report having 10 or more LEALs, which is an increase of 10% from 2003-2004. Of these, 19% continue to have no support from teachers who specialize in teaching English to newcomers. Most alarming are the comments of elementary school principals in the People for Education (2010) annual report. For instance, People for Education (2010) notes that “1.5 ELL teachers are servicing all of the Rainbow [board] elementary schools” (p. 19), while in the Toronto District School Board, principals note that support “has not changed, [there is] just no service” (p. 15). More alarming, perhaps, is a
comment from the Peel District School Board principal, who notes that while there are 325 ELL students in their school, only 80 are serviced by ESL staff (People for Education, 2010). In Simcoe County District School Board, one principal echoes the lack of ESL support by noting that resource staff are no longer able to support students and staff at the school level; instead, email support from a designated board person is available (People for Education, 2010).

It is evident that there continues to be an unmet need for English language supports and an illusionary divide of generalist and specialist teaching roles. It is commonly misconceived that LEAL-related knowledge is reserved for ESL and LEAL specialists, yet such knowledge has become necessary for all teachers to successfully educate children within Ontario. Clair (1995) and Rueda and Garcia (1996) credit the lack of understanding surrounding additional language acquisition to be a key issue in teaching pedagogy. With a growing multilingual population, every teacher is likely to work with LEALs and thus must be prepared to do so. This means equipping all teachers with specialized knowledge in language learning pedagogy. Ultimately, language and literacy are at the core of learning, and teachers cannot make sound instructional decisions without an understanding of the principles involved in learning how to read (de Jong et al., 2013; Eller & Poe, 2016). Instruction needs to be comprehensible to be effective and equitable.

The researcher offered a series of workshops titled *Teaching LEALs in Mainstream Classrooms* to recent pre-service teacher graduates from the divisions of Primary/Junior (P/J) for Grades 1-6 and Junior/Intermediate (J/I) for Grades 4-10. The workshops were developed by the researcher in consultation with others in the field,
current research and Ministry of Education documentation, as well as ESL-related
textbooks. The final topics of this series were co-selected in collaboration with volunteer
pre-service and in-service teachers during the Winter 2012 semester. A “bottom-up” style
of development and change was embraced as it reasserted student-centeredness,
emphasized process, and rejected linear programming (Morrison, 2006). Further input
was sought from a local public school board’s support staff and the board’s ESL
coordinator (see Appendix A for Workshop Series contents). Incorporating feedback on
the content and delivery from educational professionals contributed to ensuring both
relevance and meaningfulness of the content explored. Godley, Sweetland, Wheeler,
Minnici, and Carpenter (2006) state that teachers will disregard information that does not
seem to have relevance to them. For this reason, the information that was presented must
be anchored in mainstream practice and have explicit relevance. Fifteen recent teacher
graduates from the P/J and J/I divisions consented to participate in this study.

The focus of this study was to qualitatively explore teachers’ perceptions of their
preparedness to teach LEALs before, during, and after a series of face-to-face and online
professional development workshops. The workshops aimed to promote the development
of participants’ awareness of and understanding of concepts (theoretical) and strategies
(practical) for teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms. The content intended to
prepare teachers to fulfill the roles of a mainstream classroom teacher, specifically with
LEALs. Important to this goal was also the knowledge of language acquisition, current
challenges and realities in LEAL education, as well as relevant myths and
misconceptions. These provided the Basic Language Constructs (Reeves, 2006;
Washburn, Binks-Cantrell, Joshi, Martin-Chang, & Arrow, 2016) and information to
contextualize their learning (Bukor, 2015). This study intended to focus on the beliefs and perceptions of generalist P/J and J/I majors regarding their preparedness and learning about teaching LEALs in Ontario’s mainstream classrooms.

**Personal Ground**

This study is personally significant because of my experiences as a Canadian-born LEAL in Ontario. As a child, I endured the negative consequences of educational professionals who lacked knowledge in multilingual acquisition. Due to my elementary experiences, I lost my heritage language at a young age. It was believed that the simultaneous development of two languages was detrimental to the English language development necessary for academic success in Ontario; this type of misconception is documented in the literature as a belief that bilingualism produces delays and confusion in English language learning (McLaughlin, 1992; Wong-Fillmore, 1991). Language learning was an “either-or” choice, and bilingualism was not considered an option. In response to this belief, some educational professionals recommend the use of the English language at home (Clair, 1995). This advice is reflective of my own experiences in the public school system.

I grew up believing that my experience of language loss and discrimination was the exception, merely a rare occurrence in schooling, as I knew others who did not experience the same. I did not discover the extent and prevalence of this issue until I enrolled in a Master’s program course titled *Linguistic Issues for Minority Language Children*. The widespread misconceptions and misunderstandings of language learners were deeply rooted in history, beliefs, and practice. The more I read, the more intrigued and passionate about the topic I became. It is in this course that I also explicitly unveiled
my perception of language learning and teaching. I also noticed that the literature and research related to LEALs in mainstream education were primarily produced in the United States. This led to my graduate research, which explored this issue from the perspective of pre-service teacher graduates in the Canadian context. I was interested to understand the current prevalence of language issues among newly certified teachers. Unfortunately, I found that well-intentioned teachers lacked the knowledge, understanding, and mindsets necessary for teaching LEALs—a significant issue since the LEAL demographic continues to grow in Ontario classrooms.

Between the time of my Master’s and Doctoral research, I had many experiences that reinforced the prevalence of the issues and built my understanding of working with LEALs. Toward the completion of my Master’s degree, I enrolled in a pre-service teacher education program, majoring in the Primary and Junior divisions. During this time, I witnessed many of the issues I had learned about during my research, including the non-existence of LEAL-related content and seemingly a lack of priority for LEALs in mainstream education. After graduation, I continued to observe issues and challenges as an instructor in the teacher education program and as an Occasional Teacher for a local public school board. These experiences confirmed a need for a change in Ontario’s mainstream education and in the preparation of teachers.

During this time frame, there were also many opportunities I sought out to further my own learning regarding LEALs in mainstream classrooms. I volunteered in a local public school with a Learning Resource Teacher to obtain direct experience identifying needs and teaching LEALs in elementary schools. I also became a Language Mentor at the local university to obtain experience working with adult LEALs in an academic
setting. To formalize my learning I sought out LEAL-related conferences, professional
development opportunities, and enrolled in the English as a Second Language Additional Qualifications course for certified teachers. These provided a clearer understanding of the content in existing professional development opportunities for teachers.

Midway through the Ph.D. program I switched from full-time to part-time status to pursue an offer for full-time employment as a Learning Strategist in an Independent School. While this delayed my progress through the doctoral program, I was fortunate to incorporate my LEAL-related learning and experiences into my new position. I led the establishment of formalized LEAL language support in both the Lower and Upper Schools as well as teacher training and support across campus. With a large LEAL demographic, I have also had many opportunities to implement LEAL-specific strategies.

Reflecting back to my Master’s research and my more recent experiences within the field of education, I hoped to further my exploration of teacher preparedness for LEALs toward a solution or change at the level of teacher training. Since initial teacher education is the most formalized aspect of teacher education programs, I strategically targeted this population for my study. For this study, the workshop series was designed to serve as a pilot for later whole-scale implementation in formal teacher education programs.

These personal experiences, as well as related scholarly literature, have generated a personal and professional interest in this topic. It is of particular importance to me, now as a teacher educator, that these types of situations no longer occur in Ontario’s education system. I strive to explore, understand, and address critical issues in teacher education in hopes of rippling a positive outcome through several levels of education including elementary and pre-service teacher education. It is important for mainstream teachers of
LEALs to understand the basic constructs of bilingualism and multilingual development, and importantly, the role of language and culture in learning.

**Rationale**

Documented scholarly literature and experiences have both demonstrated teachers’ low self-efficacy for teaching LEALs and the overall lack of adequate teacher preparedness for this growing demographic (de Jong et al., 2013; Gandara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003; Jones, 2002; Turgut et al., 2016; Wong-Fillmore & Meyer, 1992). Instead, many teacher candidates are being trained for monolingual classrooms (Webster & Valeo, 2011). From a practical standpoint, Perez and Holmes (2010) claim that the majority of LEALs continue to be taught by undertrained teachers. Numerous studies support this claim, with an indication that certified teachers lack the necessary knowledge for teaching LEALs including an understanding of the basic constructs of multilingualism, the stages of language proficiency, the role of the first language, the structure of the English language, strategies and accommodations, and so on (Coelho, 2007; de Jong et al., 2013; Evans et al., 2005; Menken & Antunez, 2001; Pettit, 2011; Washburn et al., 2016). Despite the growing body of international evidence, limited Canadian literature exists on the topic of LEALs and mainstream teacher preparedness. Yet, related literature on multiculturalism and diversity inclusion in teacher education have reinforced the urgency for greater investigation into teacher preparedness for educating increasingly diverse populations (Coelho, 2007; Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004; Santrock, Woloshyn, Gallagher, Di Petta, & Marini, 2010).

It is no longer an option but now a necessity to prepare teachers for the growing population of children from non-English speaking families (Pettit, 2011). Due to the
strong indication of insufficient teacher preparedness for multilingual diversity, my dissertation research investigates recent teacher graduates’ perspectives regarding their conscious and unconscious beliefs, as well as their understandings and misunderstandings of teaching LEALs in their future mainstream classrooms before, during, and after a 10-week workshop series. However, as Thompson (1992) states, “to understand teaching from teachers’ perspectives we have to understand the beliefs with which they define their work” (p. 129). This exploration of teachers’ perceptions of their preparedness includes the explicit identification of teachers’ beliefs regarding teaching and understanding LEALs.

**Terminology**

In the field of education, terms are used to bind groups of students into distinct categories of learners by related characteristics. *Mainstream teacher* is the term used to identify regular, content teachers. The teachers of this study were also recent pre-service teacher education graduates who have been granted the professional designation of OCT (Ontario Certified Teacher) by the College Council (Ontario College of Teachers, 2013). This designation signifies that the individual is certified and qualified to teach in Ontario schools. OCTs possess the knowledge and skills required to teach and participate in ongoing learning and are devoted to being professional practitioners. As members of this teaching community, OCTs are dedicated to education and committed to students.

The term *English Language Learner (ELL)* is commonly used in Canadian educational literature and refers to a category of students positioned outside typical learners in mainstream English-language classrooms (English, 2009; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). In general, ELLs have been loosely defined in the literature as
language learners in the novice stages of English language development, in comparison to same-grade peers, for academic purposes in the schooling context (Baker, 2006; Coelho, 2007; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005; Peregoy & Boyle, 2008; Perez & Holmes, 2010). Nonetheless, as shown in Table 1, this same category of students is also referred to in the literature by a variety of terms and loose definitions, including Second Language Learners (SLL), English as a Second Language (ESL) students, Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, Language Minority Students, and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) learners (Webster & Lu, 2012). In this dissertation, I refer to these students as Learners of English as an Additional Language (LEALs).

In the most basic sense, all learners in education are English language learners when English is the language of instruction in the school; however, it is necessary to distinguish between those learning the English language at grade level and those learning the English language as an additional language. With this, the common ELL term used in Canadian literature appears to be imprecise. Furthermore, the term ELL emphasizes English at the forefront of the learner. LEAL is a more appropriate term to identify this body of learners by utilizing person-first language, a philosophy that demonstrates respect for people by referring to them first and to their needs second (Bickford, 2004; Blaska, 1993); here, the focus is on the person rather than his or her abilities (Webster & Lu, 2012). This term also acknowledges prior language skills by highlighting “additional” language. Although using this term takes more time, it is more accurate (Blaska, 1993). This type of language incorporates the ever-important aim of the CLD term, consideration for the whole student and their lived experiences, while still emphasizing the English learning aspect.
Table 1

**Key Contents From Definitions of Commonly Used LEAL-Related Terms**

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<th>Term</th>
<th>Key Content</th>
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| English Language Learner (ELL)    | · Students in English-language schools  
· First language is not English or is a variety that differs significantly from the variety used in Ontario’s schools  
· May initially require educational interventions to attain proficiency, possess a variety of needs  
· Canadian born or newly arrived  
| English as a Second Language (ESL) Student | · Originally referred to non-native speakers who were learning the English language in an English language schooling environment  
· Often used to refer to the acquisition of English as a non-native language  
· Term is broadly and widely used, internationally                                                                                           | Peregoy & Boyle (2008)                                                                     |
| Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) | · Focus predominantly on the acquisition of English  
· Emphasis on what student’s lack (i.e., English proficiency) rather than the assets they bring (e.g., diverse experiences)  
· Linguistic dimension is only one of four dimensions (sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, academic)                                                                 | Perez & Holmes (2010, pp. 33-34)                                                          |
| Language Minority Students (LMS)  | · Speak a minority group language other than English at home                                                                                                                                                  | Peregoy & Boyle (2008, p. 24)                                                              |
| Limited English Proficient (LEP)  | · Beginners to intermediates in English  
· The word *limited* focuses on a lack rather than assets  
· Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994’s definition: - Sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding  
- May deny opportunity to learn successfully (English instruction)  
- Difficulties participating fully in society due to place of birth, environment, native language, etc.                                                                                                                                                             | Peregoy & Boyle (2008, p. 2); 103rd Congress of the United States of America (1994); Schon, Shaftel, & Markham (2008) |
| Second Language Learner (SLL)     | · A learner who already has a known language structure and a lexicon, which can be used to sort out some of the new language                                                                                      | Rubin (1975)                                                                               |

Source: Webster and Lu (2012)
This change is subtle but powerful. Language usage is very pervasive and influences not only society’s perceptions of others but also individuals’ perceptions of themselves (Blaska, 1993; Gates, 2010). Overall, the most important aspect of the LEAL term is that it takes the focus from the language and places it on the learner; here, language learning becomes a descriptor (Webster & Lu, 2012). In contrast, the most important and foremost attribute about the child in the ELL term is the English language.

The term perception is used in this study to refer to the thoughts and consciousness stemming from past experiences, ingrained attitudes and beliefs, and related activities toward a particular subject, idea, or theme. It is a psychologically held understanding, judgment, premise, or proposition of the world that is felt to be true without requiring a truth condition as is essential for knowledge (Pajares, 1992; Pettit, 2011; Richardson, 1996; Rimm-Kaufmann, Storm, Sawyer, Pianta, & La Paro, 2006). I am interested in teachers’ perceptions of their preparedness for teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms. Perception is used in the literature synonymously with teacher belief, perspective, and attitude. These terms are used inconsistently in the literature (Kagan, 1992), and thus, it is important to clarify that all of these terms are considered within this study under the term perception. Teachers’ perceptions will include knowledge about second language acquisition, attitudes toward having LEALs in mainstream classrooms, beliefs concerning the role of ESL teachers and mainstream teachers, preparedness to teach LEALs, and relevant personal histories. All of these together go beyond the exploration of knowledge about teaching LEALs; perception delves into evaluative and affective components of the mind, which represents the cognitive element of this research (Pettit, 2011).
Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of my study was to explore the self-perceived preparedness of recently graduated teachers over the course of a workshop series entitled *Teaching LEALs in Mainstream Classrooms*. This 10-workshop series aimed to promote teachers’ awareness of and understanding of theories, concepts, and strategies for teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms with a holistic theoretical approach.

Two research questions guided this study:

1. How do the teachers’ perceptions of their preparedness to teach LEALs change over the course of the workshop series?
2. How did the workshops contribute to changes in teachers’ perceptions?

Significance

Literature suggests that there can be an expected continuation of linguistic diversification for the coming decades. In a previous study (Webster & Valeo, 2011), I found that well-intentioned teachers lacked inclusive mindsets, basic foundational knowledge, and important understandings necessary for teaching LEALs (de Jong et al., 2013; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Washburn et al., 2016). Yet, LEALs are the fastest-growing student demographic in public schools (Jones, 2002). Graduates of professional teacher education programs will increasingly become the mainstream teachers who are often solely accountable for the education of the LEALs in their classrooms (Barnes, 2006; Eller & Poe, 2016; Harklau, 2000; Karathanos, 2010; Meskill, 2005). To continue the development toward educational equity and responsive teacher education, an in-depth study on the re-conceptualization of teacher preparedness is needed and would add significantly to the field.
Future teacher candidates may benefit from ongoing efforts to establish a responsive LEAL course in teacher education. I developed a series of workshops with the aim of training teachers to adopt effective strategies and knowledge required for teaching LEALs academic content and English language proficiency. This series underscored the importance of preparing candidates for diverse classrooms by teaching them how to talk about, understand, and establish innovative responses to the prevalence of LEALs in Canadian mainstream classrooms. In addition, by explicitly modelling teacher research and reflection, I assisted teachers in developing an awareness of the importance of ongoing professional learning, which is also identified as a priority in the Ontario College of Teachers’ (2011) professional standards.

The educational community also benefits from this study since there is a need for more links between teacher education courses and the practical realities of teaching in highly diverse schools. This study broadened and deepened understandings regarding the needs of teacher development. The opportunity to disseminate information related to the impact of LEAL-related training may enhance this subject-specific area in teacher education and for all mainstream teachers, since they may gain awareness about current educational issues while acknowledging and reducing their own misunderstandings associated with LEALs and English language learning and teaching. It is imperative that certified mainstream teachers are aware of the length of time it takes for LEALs to become proficient in academic English; it is their responsibility to understand the demographic they teach before stepping into the classroom (Daniel & Peercy, 2014; Pettit, 2011).
Lastly, there are also benefits to the professional community. This study may contribute to the further development of a Canadian LEAL research agenda and make an original contribution to the field. The study is consistent with the Professional Learning Framework of the Teaching Profession (Ontario College of Teachers, 2011), which encourages inquiry into teaching practice, research to enhance teaching and learning, and contributions to the growing knowledge base of teaching and learning through the broad dissemination of research findings by way of publications and presentations. Moreover, the findings and recommendations will be shared with teacher education programs, the Ontario College of Teachers, as well as the Ontario Ministry of Education. The study may offer some specific ideas that could be incorporated into teacher education courses that are currently in the early years of implementation under new accreditation regulations. Policy makers may also adapt, if necessary, the teacher credentialing and certification requirements to ensure teacher education practices meet the needs of LEALs in mainstream classrooms. All teachers need to become credentialed to teach LEALs.

This dissertation research may ultimately contribute to the enhancement of teacher education and influence the practices for educating teachers prepared for tomorrow (Ontario College of Teachers, 2011) as a means of developing skilled, culturally competent, and responsive teachers who, in turn, contribute to Ontario’s emergence as a leader in equitable education, innovative research-based responses, and community engagement. The development of teachers’ understanding of multilingualism and linguistic issues is essential to the successful inclusion and education of LEALs in mainstream classrooms. By studying recent graduates’ perceptions of their preparedness towards teaching LEALs and their related-professional education training, this study
provides a clearer understanding of teacher education and preparatory requirements that ultimately evaluates and enhances pre-service teaching curricula. The resonance of this research extends beyond Ontario; it is relevant to the rest of Canada and all other English-speaking countries that mainstream LEALs.

**A Wholistic Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

My dissertation research was positioned within a wholistic framework that consists of two interconnected components: Complexity Theory and Mindfulness Mindset. The wholistic approach aims to fully engage all aspects of a person in development and aims to highlight the inseparability found within the interconnections of constructs, learning, and core understanding. Rather than exploring the conscious and unconscious as distinctly separate components of teacher development, wholism attempts to explore this concept by the sum of its parts. Therefore, from the wholistic stance, it is pedagogically undesirable to establish a systematic method of teacher development that is focused solely on separate compartments of “good teaching” (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Hamachek, 1990).

*Complexity Theory* was the theoretical component of this study; it values wholes, relationships, systems, and environments (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2008; Morrison, 2006). There was a broader focus that highlights multi-dimensional relationships and interactions among its parts. Cvetek (2008) highlights how traditional procedures of teaching demonstrate a static view of language and how it is taught or learned in classrooms. This investigation of teacher preparedness looked beyond a linear knowledge-transmission logic for teacher preparedness (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014; Morrison, 2006). Rather, teacher preparedness was viewed as a complex system that is
self-organizing and emergent in non-linear learning situations; it is uncertain and influenced by several factors including teacher and learner characteristics, history and experience, interacting patterns, methods and materials, and external factors (Cunningham, 2001; Cvetek, 2008). Teacher preparedness was investigated as a composite entity with multiple interacting parts that cannot be fragmented, objective, and narrowly transferred without loss (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014; Morrison, 2006).

Complexity Theory strives to move beyond a reductionist deconstruction to a transformed re-conceptualization of teaching and learning in multicultural times by looking deeper into processes. Complexity Theory takes up important questions to understand these systems and how they change, develop, learn, and evolve (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014). A complex view resists an oversimplification of the processes and outcomes involved in both teacher education and self-perceived preparedness. This theory is deemed supportive of studies that examine teacher learning in relation to historically marginalized students (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014) since it exemplifies the multi-layered and intertwined nature of real-time classrooms (Briggs & Peat, 1989; Cvetek, 2008; Davis et al., 2008).

Teachers themselves are complex systems that work with and within other systems of complexity including school systems, family systems, and legislative or regulatory systems (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014). These systems interact and intersect to influence teacher preparedness in some way. As such, Complexity Theory encourages teachers to accept problematic situations and the complexity of teaching as natural conditions of classrooms. This mindset is a distinct interplay between order and disorder.
in teaching and engaging in an ongoing process of ad-hoc decision-making (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Cvetek 2008; Davis et al., 2008).

Teacher preparedness also emerges from the disequilibrium and feedback that powers learning and change. Here, both positive and negative feedback are necessary. Negative feedback is common with shock and seeks equilibrium, while positive feedback is common with successes and leads to fundamental changes and growth (Cunningham, 2001). However, complexity allows for variability in outcomes. Different experiences and circumstances can lead to similar outcomes, and vice-versa (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014). Influence on learning cannot be determined or controlled since it emerges spontaneously; however, it is possible to foster the conditions that enable critical events for emergence, innovation, and learning (Morrison, 2006; Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). For example, tasks that evoke conflict and disequilibrium can be planned. When successful, these are pivotal to learning, adapting, self-organization, and order (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014; Morrison, 2006).

Professional learning occurs only when cognitive dissonance disrupts a teacher’s existing beliefs through positive or negative feedback (Cunningham, 2001; Gleeson & Davison, 2016). The focus is on the evolution of learning and changing beliefs in a non-linear manner due to the praxis nature of development. With the understanding that complexity is a natural condition of teaching, teachers become agents of chaos in their classrooms (Cvetek, 2008). There are many individualized paths to teacher preparedness and, therefore, equal emphasis is placed on the process and the product of teaching.

The conceptual component of the framework is Mindfulness Mindset (Patterson & Purkey, 1993). Teacher development and learning go beyond understanding child
development, comprehending pedagogy, and teaching the curriculum; greater conceptual attention is required by the teacher as a developing person as opposed to a mere carrier of teaching competencies (Shulman & Shulman, 2004). Teaching involves many facets of personal identity, epistemological interests, experiences, and beliefs regarding the purpose and meaning of teaching and learning (Hamachek, 1999; Hyland, 2009; Langer, 2000; Patterson & Purkey, 1993; Shulman & Shulman, 2004). Hamachek (1999) emphasizes this point by stating that “consciously, we teach what we know; unconsciously, we teach who we are” (p. 209). Unconsciously, we express our self-perceptions and perceptions of others, beliefs, assumptions, and values through our actions (Bukor, 2015). Therefore, competencies and humanistic qualities are both necessary in an investigation of teacher preparedness.

Drawing on the work of Langer (2000), Kabat-Zinn (1990), and Thich Nhat Hanh (1999), cognitive pluralism and ignorance can be minimized with mindfulness. The concept of mindfulness stems from Buddhist teachings strongly promoted by Thich Nhat Hanh, who emphasizes the nature of inclusiveness, consciousness, genuineness, and deep learning beyond superficial levels (Hyland, 2009; Langer, 2000). Modern interpretations of mindfulness include the major pillars of non-judging, patience, having a beginner’s mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). A current definition may refer to mindfulness as the state of being fully engaged in the present moment, manifesting a here-and-now oneness, and not indulging ourselves in contemplation of the past or future (Lu, Tito, & Kentel, 2009). Mindfulness itself is not a religious practice; rather, it is more of a practice of self-understanding, self-psychology, and self-discovery (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Langer, 2000). It requires an active, intentional,
and ongoing investigation of one’s behaviour, mind, intent, and, most importantly, perceptions (Maha Thera, 1990). Through Mindfulness Mindsets, people become aware and understand their inner mind and how it influences their choices, perceptions, learning, and actions.

The often uncomfortable development of familiarity with one’s judgment, prejudices, and mental categorizations begins the process of learning to suspend them (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Mindfulness guides the series’ teaching methods and the learning activities geared towards genuine reflective practice focusing on the interconnections and true appreciation of others. Through mindfulness, teachers may learn to become cognizant and stronger thinkers by questioning their ideas and actions, logic, and connections to prior and current learning by addressing the acts that constrain individual growth. Mindful practice may aid in curbing automatic reactions, re-establishing teaching habits, releasing unconscious routines, and adverting interfering thoughts.

Teacher preparedness is a work in progress, requires active effort, and incorporates personal past, present, and future experiences in its development. With this lens, teachers may obtain an awareness of the impermanence and uncertainty surrounding development. This same understanding will be used in the research process. This study takes an all-accepting approach in its data collection and analysis. Rather than looking for definite beginning or end points, each teacher’s preparedness journey will be viewed as an in-progress state. As teachers inquire into their personal and professional knowledge, they are not looking for superficial answers but instead are listening to their inner dialogue invoked by questions (Beattie, Dobson, Thornton, & Hegge, 2007; Hyland, 2009; Langer, 2000). Mindfulness provides a deep sense of knowing and a rich personal
understanding of self and others. The topics explored and the data collected will not be limited to the confines of typical educational experiences. This framework allows for flexibility in the influences considered in and as teacher education and development. Without this appreciation of the greater whole, reality would be reduced to fragments that conceal the interdependence associated with teacher development and overall teacher preparedness for all classroom students.

Many studies have employed a lens that focuses exclusively on teacher education as the onset of teacher development rather than considering the whole teacher (past, present, and future) as being engaged in a deeply transformative learning process. There was value seen in the interconnectedness of the personal and professional as well as the conscious and intuitive thought processes of teachers (Bukor, 2015). The wholistic framework established for this study attempted to authentically incorporate all aspects of the teacher education process, being cumulative life experiences, as it related to LEALs.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the self-perceived preparedness of recently graduated teachers over the course of a 10-workshop series aimed to promote teachers’ awareness and understanding of theories, concepts, and strategies for teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms.

This section reviews the literature related to LEALs in mainstream classrooms and teacher preparedness. The three themes of literature reviewed in relation to the purpose of the study (or research questions) are: (a) challenges and issues faced by teachers when working with LEALs in mainstream classrooms, (b) external changes such as curriculum and practice, and (c) internal changes such as self-efficacy and LEAL competence.

Challenges and Issues With LEALs in Mainstream Classrooms

In general, new teachers struggle to work with students’ diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which can lead to the failed facilitation of effective teaching and learning in classrooms (Taylor & Sobel, 2003). When exploring the literature on the challenges and issues with LEALs, a common theme evidenced in the literature relates to the misconceptions held by teachers regarding LEALs, which ultimately affect their beliefs, practice, and inclusion of LEALs in mainstream classrooms. Some common misconceptions are explored in this review.

Evidence indicates that some challenges may stem from misunderstandings about second language acquisition. There is a general, common misconception surrounding the length of time it takes to acquire English. It is widely accepted in second language literature that it takes 1 to 3 years to learn conversational English, and 5 to 7 years to
learn academic English (Baker, 2006; Cummins, 1981, 2000). Nonetheless, studies indicate that teachers believe English is acquired within 2 years (Reeves, 2006) or that fluency is developed after 1 year (Walker, Shafer, & Liams, 2004). These misconceptions affect the support provided by teachers as well as their overall expectations for students. Expectations derived from misunderstandings allow for unachievable, irrational progressions that set children up for failure from the onset. Other misconceptions are related to the impact of the first language on multilingual development.

Teachers were also revealed to believe that a first language interferes with English language development (Clair, 1995; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Reeves, 2004) whereas linguistics research supports native languages as the best basis for multilingual development and academic achievement (Cummins, 1992; Lee, 2002). There is a clear discrepancy between the pedagogical thought evident in linguistics research and that portrayed by teachers in practice. Teachers holding this belief encourage families to speak English in the home instead of a native language (Clair, 1995). In many cases, this causes a stigma or negativity towards the heritage language, and leads to language loss (Baker, 2006; Hakuta, 1986; Lee & Oxelson, 2006). Loss of language can result in a breakdown of communication within families and lower self-esteem (Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002; Wong-Fillmore, 2000). Consequently, the idea that culture and language are inseparable needs to be taught and put into practice (Ryan, 1995).

Major misconceptions related to the role of ESL teachers and ESL programs are also highlighted in the literature. Gleeson (2012) and Harvey and Teemant (2012) found that teachers simply did not know what ESL teachers do or what happens in ESL programs. However, the literature clearly demonstrates an expectation from mainstream
teachers that the responsibility to teach English resides solely with ESL teachers. They perceived this role to be outside of their teaching responsibilities as mainstream teachers, which is both impractical and incorrect (Walker et al., 2004; Yoon, 2008). Teachers need to embrace this growing body of students as their responsibility in order for these learners to experience both student success (e.g., learning strategies and affective development) and academic success (e.g., academic content and achievement).

These widespread misconceptions suggest the need for added teacher education curricula and professional development (Eller & Poe, 2016; Youngs & Youngs, 2001), especially since research supports the fact that less prepared teachers are less likely to accommodate students’ needs, which might result in blaming students for their ineffective instruction (Penfield, 1987; Pettit, 2011). These misconceptions attribute LEALs’ struggles to a lack of language skills, a lack of effort, and laziness. In reality, however, it is often teachers’ low expectations of LEALs that produce barriers to success (Ortiz-Franco, 2005; Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). It is necessary for teachers to understand how to provide students with the support they need to have equal access to the curriculum and equal opportunities to succeed.

There is no question that mainstream teachers must adopt a new set of beliefs in order to be highly effective with LEALs in their classrooms. In mainstream classrooms, LEALs are a different demographic of students with different needs. Teacher education programs need to address the pedagogical issues related to linguistic and cultural diversity. Researchers suggest that teachers who have better preparation, positive attitudes, and clearer perceptions of effective instruction for diverse linguistic backgrounds are likely to engage in appropriate instruction and further facilitate learning
(Byrnes & Kiger, 1994; Clair, 1995; de Jong et al., 2013; Hansen-Thomas, Richins, Kakkar, & Okeyo, 2016; Youngs & Youngs, 2001).

In efforts to improve inclusion and equity, LEALs have been placed in mainstream classrooms with same-grade peers (Harper & de Jong, 2009). However, mainstreaming has led to the reduction of ESL expertise and overall diffusion of the assumption that “good teaching” is “good enough” for all students (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Turgut et al., 2016). Fortunately, some teacher education programs are responding to these assumptions and the growing population of LEALs through various approaches. While the literature acknowledges the above issue, two major positions are identified: an external change to practice or curriculum, and an internal change in the teachers.

**External Change: Curriculum and Practice**

Canada is comparable to the United States in terms of similar societal features and, more specifically, educational issues pertaining to inclusion and equity. In the United States, LEALs are estimated to be increasing at a rate 2.5 times higher than the general student population (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2006). Harper and de Jong (2009) conducted a study of seven U.S. states and indicated that fewer than 8% of the teachers working with LEALs had received more than 8 hours of professional development specifically related to LEALs. Other English speaking countries such as England and New Zealand have also identified teachers as having the potential to prevent difficulties with language acquisition with skills related to understanding the structure of the English language (Washburn et al., 2016). Teacher instruction is identified as the root of many language-based difficulties in the classroom, an issue that stems partially from a lack of understanding basic language constructs or
foundational components of the English language including phonological and phonemic awareness, alphabetic principles, phonics instruction, morphology, and morpheme awareness (Washburn et al., 2016). Rather than relying on professional development, some teacher education programs have dramatically restructured their curricula. Three common pedagogies explored in the literature are Culturally Responsive Teaching, Training All Teachers, and Multicultural Education. Other teacher education programs have opted for less intensive, infused, or workshop-based approaches. All of the above describe the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of effective mainstream teacher of LEALs (de Jong et al., 2013).

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is also referred to as culturally appropriate, compatible, and relevant instruction that focuses on cultural competence, sensitivity, and consciousness (Barnes, 2006; Pappamihiel, 2004). A whole-program approach involving extended placements, reflective practice, and debriefing are practices highlighted in this CRT pedagogy. While many benefits are associated with CRT curriculum, it is found to be highly difficult and costly to implement due to human resources, requiring much effort from pre-service candidates due to the required changes in ingrained attitudes and beliefs, and, overall, being systematically complex (Barnes, 2006; Pappamihiel, 2004).

The Training All Teachers program is similar to CRT and focuses on forming an understanding of the complexities of teaching about LEALs at the pre-service level. Major components of this curriculum are confronting inaccurate beliefs regarding English language learning, meaningful fieldwork, explicit teaching of cultural tolerance, and unlearning false beliefs (Meskill, 2005; Snow, 2011). With the explicit concentration on
LEAL training, Training All Teachers curricula has more of the depth and detail that teachers require for the effective teaching of LEALs (Meskill, 2005). This program infuses aspects of LEAL-related teacher competencies throughout the programming (Harper & de Jong, 2009). Disappointingly, despite the added LEAL focus, a major drawback of the Training All Teachers curriculum is the overwhelming focus on mere tolerance and surface-level acceptance of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Varieties of the Multicultural Education curricula are implemented in many Canadian teacher education programs (Coelho, 2007; Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004; Santrock et al., 2010). The delivery of this content takes multiple forms including infusion, stand-alone courses, optional courses, and professional development. While there is general agreement that there is a requirement for some form of training, the parameters are not clearly specified and lacks uniformity (Daniel & Peercy, 2014; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; Turgut et al., 2016). The focus of this pedagogy is to ensure the academic needs of all children are met through inclusive and equitable practice. Here, there is emphasis placed on the universality of education and social justice. Unfortunately, the value of the content is often lost as several topics are merged under a single umbrella term. Literature demonstrates that the general multiculturalism addressed is often vague, broad, or overarching rather than explicit, specific, and course-based (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008; Coelho, 2007; Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004). Multicultural Education may also incorporate LEAL education. The catch-all diversity grouping of many different student needs under a single heading can diminish the importance or value of each individual topic (Gleeson & Davison, 2016; Turgut et al., 2016). Best practice or good teaching strategies are not enough; more is needed to equalize learning
opportunities in mainstream classrooms. Inclusive education requires mainstream teachers to go beyond good, general teaching practices and just physically including LEALs in the classroom (Coady et al., 2016; Turgut et al., 2016). Language learning and teaching needs to become a distinct priority in teacher education to portray a clearer message regarding its importance.

Special interest courses, workshops, and professional development opportunities are alternative methods of addressing the need for LEAL-related knowledge and understanding (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; Majawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004; Taylor & Sobel, 2003). Ultimately, educational issues pertaining to equity should hold a central position in teacher education curricula rather than being treated as electives. A cohesive systematic approach is much more effective than optional learning opportunities, general multiculturalism, and generic good teaching practice for a broad range of diverse learners (Barnes, 2006; Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008; Gleeson & Davison, 2016; Harper & de Jong, 2009; Turgut et al., 2016). Garcia-Nevarez, Stafford, and Arias (2005), Lee and Oxelson (2006), and Mantero and McVicker (2006) state that the more development hours or graduate credit hours taken on working with language minority students, the more positive the perception. Also, online courses are more effective when blended with a face-to-face component rather than when offered strictly online (Schrum, Burbank, & Rosemary, 2007). Short-lived learning experiences often lack the time necessary to teach in-depth understanding of the purposes related to strategies and methods (Pappamihiel, 2004). It is therefore insufficient to provide pre-service teachers with a list of strategies and methods without an explanation of their need and purpose; bluntly, this is substandard practice (Taylor & Sobel, 2003). Teachers need authentic and explicit
instruction in the English language, modifying language for comprehensibility and lesson plans, learning and group strategies, opportunities for oral and written language practice, and appropriate assessment methods, among other LEAL-related teaching skills and abilities (Coady et al., 2016; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Menken & Antunez, 2001; Washburn et al., 2016). Teachers who know the basic constructs of the English language are more likely to teach it. Merely being a skilled reader of English is not enough to teach LEALs how to read.

Of the various actions taken to improve teachers’ LEAL preparation, practicums are important to highlight since they hold great influence on teacher training—much more than coursework (Coady et al., 2016; Daniel, 2014; Eller & Poe, 2016). As such, practicums require specific attention and vetting for quality learning opportunities. Daniel (2014) claims that candidates hear, observe, and participate in multiple teaching and learning processes that perpetuate inequitable education for LEALs in elementary schools. While they are presented with opportunities to interact with LEALs, expectations regarding the interactions varied. Too often, educating LEALs is not discussed or modelled by mentor teachers. Without structured practicums and effective mentors, valuable learning opportunities are missed and candidates are at risk of developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that perpetuate inequity (Coady et al., 2016; Daniel, 2014; Eller & Poe, 2016).

While all of these pedagogies and external approaches have benefited teachers through their focus on improving cultural competence and educational responsiveness, none of them effectively meet their objectives due to an imbalance of content. Gandara et al. (2005) found that teachers continue to report little or no professional development in
teaching LEALs. Though gains have been made in teacher education, there remains a shallow understanding of LEALs, English language teaching, and LEAL inclusion. There needs to be more explicit training for teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms. Mainstream teachers need the skills to differentiate and accommodate instruction to meet language learning and academic needs while brokering cultural differences (Coady et al., 2016; Eller & Poe, 2016; Menken & Antunez, 2001).

Nonetheless, optimism is evident in studies such as Torok and Aguilar’s (2000) mixed method study on changes in pre-service teachers’ beliefs and knowledge on language issues. The purpose of their study was to explore the impact of multicultural education courses on changes in pre-service teachers’ beliefs and knowledge about language issues. The study revealed that the course increased both knowledge and understanding while also encouraging pre-service teachers to become more aware of their own beliefs and the diverse perspectives of their peers. Overall, the study indicated that by carefully structuring courses to attend to specific issues, teacher preparation programs might indeed influence the beliefs and knowledge of teachers.

Gandara et al. (2005) also highlighted that “greater preparation for teaching English learners equaled greater teacher confidence in their skills for working with these students successfully” (p. 12). Likewise, Pettit (2001) discovered that teachers could change through professional development and reflection; it is simply a matter of having the right circumstances for the change to occur. Unfortunately, these circumstances are not clearly identified in the literature; however, Walker et al. (2004) found that even a little appropriate and meaningful training could go a long way in preventing and addressing the negativity teachers held toward LEALs. Thus, successful change is a result
of having the right circumstances to encourage such change. This was the ideology considered when developing the workshop content. Making the content meaningful was at the forefront of the development method used.

Although beliefs are often difficult to change, it is possible to change them through effective professional development or coursework so that LEALs will have greater success in mainstream classrooms (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; Pettit, 2011). It is important to explore avenues for teachers who hold deficit, negative, and misconceived beliefs toward LEALs to adopt new beliefs for the successful inclusion of LEALs in mainstream classrooms. Richardson (1996) identified that the study of beliefs is a crucial element in teacher education since beliefs drive classroom actions and influence the teacher change process. Naturally, therefore, it is the responsibility of teacher education programs to explore beliefs and ensure that teachers are actually prepared, both practically and mentally, to learn and teach before awarding certification. It is evident that a major factor that affects teachers’ beliefs is explicit and targeted training. This is a situation that can be changed to end the perpetuation of misconceptions. We are in a student-centered era that aims to foster instructional methods that promote the best learning possible in classrooms (Lin & Lin, 2015). Teachers thus need to be able to evaluate and determine individual learning needs at all stages of language acquisition to provide the necessary targeted instruction that meets needs of LEALs (de Jong et al., 2013; Eller & Poe, 2016).

**Internal Change: Self-Efficacy and LEAL Competence**

Despite progressive pedagogy, inclusive efforts, and reconstructed programming, LEALs continue to be marginalized and misunderstood, and many mainstream teachers
continue to hold deficit beliefs toward LEALs (Harper & de Jong, 2009; Pettit, 2011).
Ultimately, the central goal of teacher education is to train teachers who are competent
and capable of fulfilling diverse educational roles. However, the often-overlooked
internal aspects of confidence, attitude, beliefs, and lived experience play significant roles
in competence and capabilities (Coelho, 2007; Evans et al., 2005; Hansen-Thomas et al.,
2016; Rueda & Garcia, 1996). Fang’s (1996) research demonstrates teachers’ tendency to
reflect their theoretical beliefs in their teaching practice. The experiences that LEALs
have in schools are partially dependent on the beliefs of the teachers they encounter. The
literature suggests that positive beliefs and high expectations for LEALs lead to greater
self-perceptions of cultural and linguistic competency as they relate to helping children
achieve academic and social potential play a powerful and intricate role in the type of
educational services provided to culturally and linguistically diverse children” (p. 54).

Teacher beliefs have prevailing implications for LEALs in their classrooms; yet,
few studies have been conducted on attitudes or beliefs towards LEALs in classrooms
(Barnes, 2006; Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). However,
these underlying factors influence the learning environment, teaching behaviours, and the
effectiveness of the academic experiences created, thus influencing LEAL competence.
Regrettably, the unseen qualities of pre-service teacher candidates are often neglected in
training rather than being placed at the forefront of the education process. It is crucial that
pre-service teacher candidates are provided with more than content, strategies, and
methodologies in teacher education programs. Pre-service teachers also require a
meaningful understanding of the students they teach, educational responsiveness, socio-
political contexts, the value of language and culture in learning, and pedagogical practices that build on existing strengths, knowledge, and skills (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008; Coelho, 2007).

All pre-service teachers enter teacher education with existing beliefs, knowledge, and experiences regarding teaching and learning in classrooms (Evans et al., 2005). These beliefs act as a filtering lens that is used to absorb new information (Farrell, 2006). To optimize the teacher education process, candidates need to learn to identify their beliefs and take them into consideration as they learn new knowledge that may compete with their existing beliefs, understandings, or theories (Farrell, 2006). This process cannot be trivialized and requires confrontation, discomfort, and active efforts since engrained beliefs are often resistant to change (Evans et al., 2005). Literature shows that even well-meaning teachers discriminate without realizing it due to their unexamined beliefs toward LEALs (Peregoy & Boyle, 2008; Richardson, 1996). Actions and choices in the classroom are a reflection of teachers’ beliefs. Compounding this issue, as Farrell (2006) observes, even the mere articulation of beliefs may be difficult due to their inexplicit, subconscious nature.

Consequently, teachers must be required to make their pre-existing beliefs related to teaching and language acquisition explicit to promote growth among teachers (Kagan, 1992). This is of particular importance for beliefs that are inaccurate and potentially damaging. It is necessary to rectify these beliefs in the training process. Teachers must challenge the adequacy of their beliefs while having extended opportunities to examine, elaborate, and integrate new information into their belief systems (Brown, 2004; Kagan, 1992; Rueda & Garcia, 1996). Beliefs may be replaced when they are proven to be
unsatisfactory, but they are unlikely to prove unsatisfactory if they are not challenged (Pajares, 1992). Therefore, without an active and challenging process, naively held generalizations, biases, and prejudices will continue to hinder effective teaching practice. With these outlooks, the educational needs of LEALs will continue to be overlooked, and serious equity issues will be perpetuated through well-intentioned inclusion and multiculturalism practices (Harper & de Jong, 2009). Teacher educators and researchers should attempt to situate teacher beliefs in broader contexts and show teachers how beliefs are formed and how they can be influenced by societies and policies—and vice-versa.

When teachers are highly prepared for the profession, their perceived level of self-efficacy in their teaching skills and abilities corresponds. Perceived self-efficacy beliefs are significant since they can have more influence on future teaching methods than any information received during training (Farrell, 2006; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Pajares, 1992; Rueda & Garcia, 1996) Furthermore, they are also a strong predictor of teachers’ capacity and preparedness for classroom tasks (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). However, Youngs and Youngs (2001) affirm that one of the greatest educational challenges is that teachers of LEALs do not feel prepared to meet the needs of LEALs in their classrooms. This is a significant issue, as mainstream teachers are increasingly expected to differentiate and accommodate instruction for a multitude of diverse needs, including LEALs (Coady et al., 2016). Teacher education has the duty of ensuring programs certify adequately prepared experts who are confident in their field of study (Ontario College of Teachers, 2011). It is necessary to consider that each new teacher who is certified according to high standards
will in turn influence each student encountered during his or her teaching career (Menken & Antunez, 2001). Without stringent LEAL criteria in teacher education, LEALs are at risk of social isolation, meaningless peer interaction, devaluation, ineffective teacher feedback, and missed opportunities for language and academic development (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008; Harper & de Jong, 2009). It is not enough for teachers to use generic accommodation strategies or “just-in-time” scaffolding techniques for LEALs (Coady et al., 2016). LEALs require teachers who are competent and confident in their ability to plan and apply specific LEAL practices to simultaneously facilitate language and content development (Reeves, 2006; Turkan, de Oliveira, Lee, & Phelps, 2014).

Measures can be taken to counteract, reverse, or replace underlying hindrances to teacher preparedness for LEALs. An effective role model, field experiences with LEALs, critical self-reflection, and effective training can contribute to the motivation and development of positive LEAL-related positions (Barnes, 2006; Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008; Coelho, 2007; Eller & Poe, 2016; Farrell, 2006a, 2016b; Meskill, 2005; Pappamihiel, 2004; Pettit, 2011). It is evident, then, that the necessary requirements exceed infused teaching where there is minimal mention within existing programs, classroom ESL strategies, and differentiated instruction. Teachers require disciplinary linguistic knowledge that emphasizes the role of language in learning and the specialized knowledge required to effective teach content areas (de Jong et al., 2013; Turgut et al., 2016; Turkan et al., 2014; Wong-Fillmore, 1991). Sociolinguistic and cultural aspects of LEAL pedagogy are also significant components to mainstream teacher training (Coady et al., 2016). In essence, LEALs can no longer be a missing element of mainstream educational discourse; there must be a place in teacher education curricula to specifically
highlight the unique linguistic, cognitive, educational, and inclusion needs of LEALs. Well-prepared mainstream teachers of LEALs have specialized knowledge and skills, but also simply understand the English language and how it works (de Jong et al., 2013; Harper & de Jong, 2009; Turgut et al., 2016; Washburn et al., 2016; Wong-Fillmore, 1991). There is an evident need to increase professional development in relation to teaching LEALs in order for teachers to adopt a new set of beliefs for the successful inclusion of LEALs in mainstream classrooms.

**Summary**

The literature points to a clear need for increased professional development for mainstream teachers because teacher education programs currently offer an inadequate approach to language learning. Many teachers who hold teaching certification continue to demonstrate a significant lack of knowledge in additional language acquisition and a minimal understanding of the challenges of English language learning, multicultural education, and multilingual pedagogy. Thus, the literature supports the need for many prospective teachers to develop better understandings of the needs of LEALs. Teacher educators and teacher education programs must understand the role that beliefs play in the quality of classroom practice and need to make this an explicit focus of the teacher development process they provide (Pettit, 2011). After all, teachers are found to reflect the type of training they receive.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study explored the self-perceived preparedness of recently graduated teachers over the course of a workshop series entitled *Teaching LEALs in Mainstream Classrooms*. I facilitated the series that was developed to provide the context within which the research was conducted. Rather than providing a specific, exactly detailed process for change, attention and concern was focused on the overall direction and the creation of conditions for change (Morrison, 2006). Case study designs are common in complexity research, as they have the capacity to shift the focus away from teacher knowledge and skills toward the way teachers are shaped by conditions and activities (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014; Farrell, 2016a). Participants’ perceptions were documented throughout the series to capture any changes in their preparedness to teach LEALs and any contributors of change. Chapter 3 presents the methods and research procedure, the selection of site and participants, instrumentation, and data collection and analysis. Limitations and ethical considerations are also addressed.

A wholistic perspective on teacher preparedness for LEAL teaching and learning in a teacher education context was applied to this research. To establish a wholistic account of the complex processes occurring during the study, ample detailed and in-depth data had to be collected (Creswell, 2011; Daniel, 2014; Farrell, 2016a). To meet this aim, the methodology was qualitative and the research strategy of investigation was a case study. Case studies can capture the complexity of systems with their depth and detail. This was an instrumental type of case study, as it aimed to provide insight into teacher preparedness for LEALs in mainstream, which may be of use to others (Stake, 2000). More specifically, case studies may be instrumental in shaping future teacher education
curricula or teaching methods to enhance teacher preparedness.

The case study focused on a real-life program and its activities within a bounded system (Creswell, 2011; Stake, 2000) and provided in-depth insights for the study (Denscombe, 2010). The case (i.e., the workshop series) was bound by time, place, the physical boundaries of the study site, and communal activities. A detailed record of shared or emerging patterns, as well as covert patterns and changes, were tracked over a period of 5 months (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014). The case study also represented a process consisting of a series of steps; the steps were represented through the process of the workshop series. Each step or session built on the previous and lead into the next. Wholistically, since cases are impacted by their larger context, a geographic and demographic of the community was shared to better understand and situate the data collected.

Overall, a qualitative case study was chosen since it could provide the rich description required to adequately capture and understand the subtleties and individualities of each participant’s history, opportunities, learning, change, and self-organization (Daniel, 2014; Morrison, 2006). Case studies have the unique ability to deal with a variety of data, much beyond other methods. Yin (2009) notes that there is a distinct advantage to using case studies to investigate “how” questions, while allowing the researcher to wholistically retain the description and character of real-life events. They are used to understand, appreciate uniqueness, explore complexity, and recognize interactions within contexts (Stake, 2000).

As a teacher-researcher, I spent considerable time in the field among the participants whose lives and cultures were being studied. My role allowed for the
necessary naturalism and participation in the routine and normal aspects of the program to occur. Denscombe (2010) notes that special attention must be given to the way participants see their world, understand things, provide meaning to happenings, and perceive reality. In alignment with this view, the emphasis was placed on the participants’ perceptions, language, and emerging themes that illuminated meaning and interpretation rather than pre-existing ideas from the researcher (Eisner, 1991). This design also supported the theoretical framework with its emphasis on a wholistic approach and complexity that stresses inter-linkages, contextual data, processes, relationships, connections, and interdependency (Davis et al., 2008; Denscombe, 2010).

Lastly, this case study aimed to acknowledge more than a single representation; rather, it was a carefully crafted construction in collaboration with its participants.

Due to the inevitable involvement of the researcher and the potential bearing on the study, there was an added focus on self-awareness. It was deemed necessary to include the researcher’s personal ground, including a public account of the role of the self that included personal beliefs regarding the topic (values, standpoint), personal and professional interests in the area of investigation (vested interest, history of events), and personal experiences related to the research topic (incidents affecting self or others) (Denscombe, 2010). As a participant-observer in this study, I kept a reflexive journal throughout the data collection process.

The content of the workshop series was determined in collaboration and consultation with various teacher education stakeholders: mainstream teachers, a local school board consultant, an ESL coordinator, pre-service candidates, as well as faculty, staff, and the Chair of the Department of Teacher Education at a local university (during
the Winter 2012 semester). Initially an email was sent out to P/J/I candidates at a local university to invite them to an informal discussion. The invitation provided my research interests and intention to develop a LEAL course. It was noted that the course was not meant to replace the *English as a Second Language Additional Qualifications* (AQ) course but instead strived to provide all classroom teachers with the information deemed necessary to work with all mainstream learners. With an understanding of the “disconnects” that sometimes happen between education systems, research, and practice, I sought feedback from both teacher candidates and practicing teachers in the development of the course. To ensure the informal discussion was convenient to students, I made arrangements to arrive at the end of a professional development session held on campus. The discussion was an hour long. During this time, volunteers were provided with a tentative course outline and asked for feedback on topics, assignments, teacher preparedness, and general comments on what is helpful in teacher education courses, learning, and experiences. After the informal discussion session, individual appointments were made with the other relevant stakeholders.

Incorporating the feedback of several educational professionals helped ensure both relevance and meaningfulness of the workshop content. The idea of incorporating teacher input in curriculum design was deemed essential by Claire and Adger (1999). The workshops aimed to develop teachers’ understanding of the basic constructs of multilingualism, stages of language proficiency, role of the first language, structure of the English language, strategies, and accommodations. These were key understandings identified by related research literature and the Ontario Ministry of Education’s ESL and ELL policies. The workshop series was developed with consideration of the information
obtained and the time commitment of participants. The anticipated time commitment for participation in this study was 23 hours. The series was organized into a blended education format with 10 sessions. Three of the sessions were face-to-face and seven of the sessions were online. Each session was anticipated to require approximately an hour of time, delivered over a period of 10 weeks.

Participants were provided with the following description of the workshop series:

The workshop series *Teaching Learners of English as an Additional Language (LEALs) in Mainstream Classrooms* is an introductory series designed for teachers who have little or no background in linguistics. Using a selection of readings, discussions, and reflective and problem-based activities, teachers will develop a broad understanding and practical strategies (LEAL toolkit) for teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms. Basic language teaching/learning theories and methods will be discussed. An awareness of the complexities of the English language and the common difficulties experienced by language learners will help prepare teachers to teach students whose first language is not English and who are simultaneously learning the English language and curriculum content. The goal is to provide teachers with the tools and “know how” necessary for ensuring that all learners receive high-quality teaching. This series is intended for teachers who wish to provide linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogy in P/J/I classrooms. Topics addressed in the series include: issues related to language, academics, acculturation, myths, and misconceptions; basic concepts of multilingualism; best practices for language learning and teaching; content-based instruction; language learning assessment; program models for LEALs; teacher advocacy; and suggestions for celebrating and supporting students’ languages as part of a school-wide approach in multilingual schools.
The three face-to-face sessions were intentionally arranged at the beginning, middle, and end of the workshop series. The first session provided participants with an opportunity to meet each other and the instructor, making the following sessions more meaningful. A panel session was incorporated midway into the workshop schedule. This session included guest panelists: a LINC/ESL instructor at a local multicultural centre, the Director of ESL Services from a local university, an ESL/ELD itinerant teacher for public secondary schools, and an instructional coach from the local school board. The panel was assembled to provide various perspectives and insight into several aspects of LEAL demographics, teaching, and learning. This was a session for participants to guide the inquiry into LEAL preparation and best practice by engaging directly with professionals in the field. The final session was set-up similar to a poster session at a conference. Each participant was allocated space for the presentation of their toolkit. Local educators, panelists, and administrators were invited to the session to provide greater exposure to the work completed as well as an opportunity for participants to advocate their position on the education of LEALs in mainstream.

Each online session consisted of statistics and quotes regarding LEAL education in Ontario, a mindfulness exercise, the weekly content, discussion questions, and a reflection. An example of an opening quote from Session 6: Accommodations and Strategies to Enable Language Learning Across the Curriculum would be “The average ratio of ESL/ELD teachers to ELL student is 1:73 in elementary schools and 1:47 in secondary schools” (People for Education, 2013). Another from Session 3: How English Works: Concise yet Comprehensive Overview of the Foundations, includes: “It is up to the school boards how they spend the funding, and whether they spend all of it on
language support. Language funding can be used for other programs and services” (People for Education, 2013). An example of a Mindfulness Minute is Mindful Actions which comes from Session 2 of the series and requires picking a simple everyday action such as driving, eating, or walking. For the week, every time they are engaged in this action, they should approach it with newness and presence by placing all their attention on what they are doing rather than acting on autopilot. Discussion Tasks were also included in each session. For example, in Session 6 participants were asked to:

Choose a lesson plan for any grade level you work with (one you made or one online). How can it be improved to engage lower to mid-level LEALs? Provide ways the lesson can be accommodated for LEALs. Share your lesson plan and accommodations in Forums (if you create supports like a picture-vocabulary sheet than add it as an attachment).

Three ready-made lesson plan websites were provided with this task. Lastly, a sample Reflection topic may be: “What are your personal thoughts on the ESL/ELD policies and procedures in Ontario. Are there any surprises or concerns? Or reflect on any topic or experience that resonates with you this week.”

The LEAL workshops act as a pilot that will hopefully lead to future implementations. To avoid whole-scale implementation that may not work, this study initiates change on a small scale with aims to move toward an eventual broad change. Pettit (2011) states that the most consistent factor to influence teacher beliefs is teacher training. The pilot workshop series aimed to develop or encourage teacher perceptions that were in line with current research on best practice for LEALs in mainstream classrooms. Therefore, it is important to eventually target the time frame of teacher
Based on past relevant studies, I have learned and incorporated the following into the workshop series. First, I attempted to make the content of the workshops relevant and meaningful by involving several key stakeholders (listed above) in the development process. By listening to the stakeholders’ stories, I gathered and aimed to include real concerns from teachers and listened to the priorities of the target sample population by ensuring the content was situated within practical and realistic circumstances. Knowing that beliefs are resistant to change and require conflict or dissonance, I incorporated challenges to the adequacy of their beliefs, while having extending opportunities to examine, elaborate, and integrate new information into their belief systems (Gleeson & Davison, 2016; Morrison, 2006). New knowledge is developed when teachers feel their existing knowledge as inadequate. Beliefs were primarily challenged through statistics, questions, and experiences related to LEAL teaching and learning. While it was the aim to intentionally create moments of disequilibrium between existing and new learning, I understand that individuals respond differently to stimuli; what causes discomfort, internal conflict, or dissonance for one may not for others. Having 10 weekly sessions allowed for the digestion of information and professional reflection on the content and experience. It was important to give time to the learning process. This professional development pilot could not be hurried, as emergence and self-organization require time and space to develop (Morrison, 2006).

**Selection of Site and Participants**

Within the larger case of the workshop series, there were 15 embedded cases of novice teachers that explored how novice mainstream teachers perceived their
preparedness throughout the series. Since generalist mainstream teachers increasingly teach LEALs for the entire school day in mainstream classes, teachers at the onset of the teaching cycle (recent pre-service teacher graduates) were the targeted sample population for the workshops. Gleeson and Davison (2016) and Walker et al. (2004) found that teachers with 4 or fewer years of experience were more likely to want professional development, as they have less experience to draw on. As such, I targeted teachers who had graduated within the last 4 years.

Furthermore, I targeted teachers in the Primary/ Junior (P/J) and Junior/ Intermediate (J/I) divisions since Ontario schools tend to adopt a non-rotary schedule at these levels, with teachers teaching the same group of students all day long. A total of 15 participants were recruited through purposeful sampling using a recruitment poster that was circulated through Faculties of Education in southwestern Ontario and teaching networks on social media; see Appendix B for Initial Promotional Material (Creswell, 2011). There were no required characteristics of gender or age—simply an interest in participating in a professional development opportunity. This group of participants was at the edge of chaos and disintegration with their shared challenges and concerns with teaching LEALs in mainstream classes (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). The research site selected for this study was a postsecondary institution in southwestern Ontario.

**Instrumentation and Data Collection**

The primary instruments used to collect data in this study included a pre- and post-questionnaire as well as semi-structured interview. To supplement the instruments of data collection, reflective journaling, written tasks, observational field notes, and Ontario College of Teachers and Ministry of Education documents were used throughout the
series. These data sources captured the effectiveness of the workshop content in promoting pre-service teacher graduates’ awareness and understanding of concepts (theoretical) and strategies (practical) for teaching LEALs. Furthermore, they illuminated the beliefs and perceptions of generalist P/J and J/I majors regarding their preparedness, learning, and understanding of teaching LEALs in Ontario’s mainstream classrooms.

**Questionnaire**

The pre- and post-workshop questionnaire was used to collect demographic information about ethnicity, language, credentials, and relevant teaching or learning experiences. Important influences included personal experiences, family background, sociocultural contexts, and emotional qualities (Bukor, 2015). It was anticipated that each questionnaire would take approximately one hour. Participants individually completed the questionnaire regarding their existing knowledge and attitude during the first session of the series to establish a baseline of their beliefs and understandings related to LEALs, teaching, and learning. They provided useful data to begin understanding the teachers’ perspectives (see Appendix C for Questionnaire). The pre-questionnaire also provided insight into the conditions and influences prior to formal teacher education training. Wholistically, geographic and demographic information of the community was collected because all cases occur within larger contexts. It aimed to capture the complex nature of teacher preparedness with its several interconnected parts, including knowledge, beliefs, emotions, and professional development (Bukor, 2015). To avoid redundancy, this information was only collected from the first questionnaire.

The post-questionnaire administered at the end of the study indicated any changes resulting from the processes involved in the workshop series. While it was important to
document additional insight into the professional learning that occurred, the changes in
teacher preparedness and the conditions or influences on those changes—the
“particulars” of the workshop experience—were equally significant. Furthermore, it was
important to explore any instances of impactful disequilibrium, lingering questions or
concerns with teaching LEALs, and future recommendations based on their experiences.

**Reflective Journaling**

Reflective journaling was a requirement of the series to document pertinent
information, changes, and thoughts related to the content and experiences (see Appendix D
for Reflective Journaling Requirement). Each session had an associated journaling
requirement to assist me in understanding candidates’ beliefs and teaching-related thinking.
Each reflective journal entry was anticipated to take approximately 30 minutes to complete,
for a total of 5 hours over the entire workshop series. There is a general consensus that
teachers who are encouraged to reflect can gain new insight into practice as an intellectual
exercise but also develop self-awareness into their inner life (Farrell, 2016b). All journal
entries were collected as part of the workshop curriculum. The reflective journaling aimed
to capture the truth as they understand and experience it (Bukor, 2015). Also documented
were the internal conflicts, critical events, and dissonance that were essential to change and
contributors to preparedness (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014). Teachers were encouraged to go
beyond descriptions and facts, and instead to examine challenges, values, and assumptions
in their thinking (Farrell, 2016b; Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005).

**Written Tasks**

Additional written tasks included any documentation that the participants were
required to complete as members of the workshop. Written tasks were designed to
develop participants’ awareness of, and reflection about, teaching and learning in linguistically diverse classrooms. Some tasks were meant to reinforce learning, such as written lesson plans and assessments. Lin and Lin (2015) remind us that it cannot be assumed that teachers graduate with these skills once completing teaching education programs. Other written tasks were intended to invoke a critical event for participants by encouraging disequilibrium—for example, experiential learning that required participants to complete written tasks through the perspective of LEALs. Tasks also enabled the teachers to share knowledge, co-design activities, and gain autonomy over their learning and their learning community (Farrell, 2016b; Morrison, 2006). Collegial tasks facilitated a trusting environment where they could take risks, make mistakes, and ask for help while also providing opportunities to exchange ideas without judgment. Short tasks were collected and promptly returned. Each task contributed to the development of a culminating LEAL toolkit that was personalized and ready for use in mainstream classrooms (see Appendix E for LEAL Toolkit Requirement).

**Observational Field Notes**

Observational field notes were an accumulated written record of events that included descriptions, experiences, dialogues, and general observations about the activities of participants, as well as my own actions, questions, and reflections as the researcher. They included initial impressions, surprises, incidents, emotional responses and tones, and both verbal and nonverbal interactions (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Field notes were written and elaborated on as soon as possible after witnessing relevant events to help ensure that they were complete, accurate, and detailed (Emerson et al., 1995). During workshop sessions, it was only possible to record jottings for later
elaboration. Jottings written immediately following an event helped preserve the essence of experiences; this may have otherwise been lost or altered during retrospective recall. Preserving the integrity of events was useful for deeper reflection at a later time.

The initial writing was unpolished and participants were identified by pseudonym for future analysis (individual and group analysis). Evaluation and editing was held off for later. However, any brief reflective bits were recorded as asides. The field note documentation allowed for processes to be captured as they unfolded rather than attempting to reconstruct them at a later point in light of an overall final meaning, understanding, or importance (Emerson et al., 1995). They also provided written accounts that create texture and provide variation to the study.

**Semi-Structured Interview**

After the completion of the series, individual semi-structured interviews were held with volunteer participants (see Appendix F for Interview Guide). Interview times ranged from 30 to 60 minutes to complete. These were recorded with the consent of the participants and transcribed. Interviews were focused on descriptive experiences, knowledge acquisition, anticipated challenges, attitudes, Mindfulness Mindset, perceptions, beliefs, and general workshop evaluation. General evaluation questions concerned workshop content, pedagogy, materials, and how the series had contributed to their professional growth.

**Data Analysis**

The questionnaires, written tasks, field notes, interview, and workshop documentation created a large amount of data. The data was divided into three datasets according to the nature of the data. First, Dataset 1 included naturally occurring data
through observational field notes. This data set also included the documentation from the workshops, including the lesson plans and workshop materials. There was a naturalistic essence to this group of data. Dataset 2 consisted of questionnaires, as well as the transcribed interview data that was guided or facilitated by the researcher after the completion of the workshop series. Dataset 3 included documents consisting of examples of tasks and written work, reflective journal entries, and other products generated by the participants.

Data analysis procedures began in the field in the form of reflexive notes recorded simultaneously to data collection. Ongoing analysis of data was used throughout data collection with available data in sets 1 and 3. Upon completion of the workshop series, I completed a thematic analysis of all the datasets to identify the recurring themes. The datasets were described as separate datasets because they will be analyzed separately before they are analyzed as a whole. The data was easier to manage and analyze in smaller datasets, which helped identify common themes within the separate sets. The findings of the study emerged from the data rather than being pre-established prior to analysis (Creswell, 2011; Murchison, 2010). The emerging themes were included in a coding system that was first organized using flat coding, and further synthesized using hierarchical coding as major links or contradictions emerged (Creswell, 2011).

Complexity Theory and Mindfulness Mindset influenced the process and output of the research process as I continued to focus on the teacher as a whole. As such, themes and codes that were uncommon were still noted in the analysis and dissertation. Complexity Theory highlights the importance of learning being emerging, non-linear, problematic, and influenced by many external factors. This has the potential of looking
very different for each participant, though was still noted since it may be crucial to the individual’s professional development.

Similarly, the Mindfulness Mindset emphasizes the many facets of teachers with a focus on self-discovery and individual growth in professional development. Thus, it was necessary to note any self-growth as identified by the participant as this is part of their overall professional development process. With an understanding of the uniqueness of individuals, learning, and self-discovery, I attempted to document and represent their whole growth as best as possible, beyond the major themes identified through analysis. To increase the reliability of the findings, triangulation and respondent validation were used. Participants were sent a copy of their questionnaires and interview transcripts for accuracy and approval. In respect of the participants’ voices, the analysis and findings are presented using the words and language of the participants as much as possible.

**Ethical Considerations**

This study received clearance from the university’s Research Ethics Review Board. The participants were informed of the purpose of the study, responsibilities of participants, and implications for participating. An information letter of invitation that briefly described the objectives of the study, the time commitment, the potential impact, and the potential outcomes of the research was provided in combination with the informed consent. All participants provided free and informed consent to participate. I decided that no one could participate in the workshops without also participating in the research. Since the sample size was relatively small with substantial amounts of data, it would have been difficult to separate participants from non-participants, as well as the influence of non-participants on this study. Thus, by eliminating the possibility of non-
participants from the beginning, I could better control the demographics of the sample. However, if any participants chose to withdraw from the research midway, they could continue to participate for the remainder of the workshops to minimize the disruption. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured throughout this study with pseudonyms.

**Limitations**

The study is a case study of one small group, which poses limitations for generalizability. Despite this limitation, there is relevance for this study in preparing teachers for Ontario classrooms. Given the comparable requirements across all teacher education programs at Ontario, there is no reason to expect extensive differences. The workshop series can be considered a pilot for full implementation in a teacher education program. It is necessary to test applicability with a small sample before moving to broader implementation. There would likely be greater variability in the findings due to the contextual differences of teacher education program candidates.

The optional workshop series, instead of required coursework, may limit the chance for meaningful development in the time period. The optional nature, as well as self-selection bias, must be considered as participants have selected themselves into the research sample. This group of participants is collectively eager to engage with this content which may not be reflective of a general group of teacher candidates. The use of self-report tools (reflective journaling, interview, etc.) may also be considered a limitation due to a desirability effect. Participants may be inclined to produce responses that are perceived as desirable to the researcher.

The teacher-researcher dynamic may be a limitation due to a perception of power dynamics. To deter this effect, the study was thoroughly explained to the participants
during the first session of the series, with an emphasis on the right to withdraw at any point throughout the workshop series, including the protocol for doing so. Participants were not coerced to participate in this study, and ongoing feedback and documentation occurred for all participants as part of the regular interactions between facilitator and attendees.

Lastly, it is understood that as a researcher, there are biases that exist as limitations to the study. Personal perceptions and beliefs about teacher education as well as LEAL teaching and learning affect the methodology and data analysis. Member checking, expert consultants, and personal ground are used to acknowledge and minimize the limitations of researcher bias.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

With the increase of LEALs in Ontario’s mainstream classrooms, teacher preparedness for LEALs is a growing issue for generalist teachers. Teachers encounter barriers and limited preparation to meet their learning and language development needs. Therefore, the purpose of this investigation was to explore the self-perceived preparedness of recently graduated teachers over the course of a 10-workshop series aimed to promote teachers’ awareness and understanding of theories, concepts, and strategies for teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms. This qualitative case study used several data sources: questionnaires, reflective journaling, written tasks, observational field notes, semi-structured interviews, as well as workshop and session documentation.

This chapter introduces each of the participants with a brief description of their personal and professional background, teaching experience, prior professional development or training, and initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs. The data presented in these introductions was collected prior to the beginning of the workshop series. The remainder of the chapter presents the major themes identified through data analysis. Triangulation, respondent validation, and member checking were used to increase the reliability of the findings. To respect participants’ voices, the findings were presented using the words and language of the participants as much as possible.

Introduction of Participants

There were a total of 15 participants in this study. All were recently certified teachers, within the first 4 years of receiving Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) certification from the P/J or J/I divisions. All participants completed an accredited teacher education program and held active membership with the Ontario College of Teachers at
the time of participation. These participants were recruited using purposeful sampling with no required characteristics of gender or age.

**Tina**

Tina identified her ethnicity as Caucasian. She is fluent in the English language and speaks a moderate level of French. Tina obtained her Bachelor of Arts–Concurrent Education degree in 2011 from a university in southwestern Ontario. She then completed her Bachelor of Education, with qualifications to teach in the J/I division with a History teachable in 2012 from the same university. She also became certified with the Ontario College of Teachers in 2012. Soon after graduation, Tina moved to England to teach Grade 4 for a school year. She described this experience as being one of the best and most influential for her personal and professional life. In particular, she highlighted the confidence she developed overseas. After a year in England, Tina moved back to Ontario where she volunteered in three public schools. In September 2014, Tina was hired as an occasional teacher. She has supplied in all divisions despite her J/I qualifications. She will soon begin work with a second school board. In addition to her in-class teaching, she has worked for Kumon for 4 years, Oxford for 4 months, and private tutoring for 4 months. Tina was enrolled in the Special Education; Part 1 AQ course at the time of the study.

When asked to describe herself as a classroom teacher, she gave the following response:

As a teacher I really strive for equity in the classroom where each child feels that they can be involved in some way, shape, or form, and each one wants to be there; each one gets something out of the lesson. When you have your own class, you
get to know each student, their needs, their strengths, allowing you to develop resources, plans, accommodations, and modifications based on each student’s needs and strengths. Really getting to know them so they talk to you and they share things with you, you begin to empathize for them and because you know them you put the extra effort in to help and support them.

Tina emphasized several times throughout the workshop series and during her interviews the importance of taking the time to know and understand her students. This was evidently a critical component to her teaching philosophy.

**Teaching experience.** Tina had a variety of teaching related experiences including practicums, overseas, volunteering, and tutoring. In her teacher education program, Tina successfully fulfilled practicum placements in Grades 5 and 7/8. Overseas in England, she taught Grade 4 students. As a tutor for Kumon and Oxford, and for private tutoring, she has taught a range of students in the J/I division. As a volunteer teacher, she has worked with students in the P/J divisions. When asked about her experiences with LEALs, she reported that “my experiences with LEALs are very limited, as Teachers’ College failed to provide me with any theory, strategies or teaching experiences related to Learners of English as an Additional Language.”

**Prior professional development or training.** Prior to the LEAL workshop, Tina did not participate in any LEAL-related professional development or training. She stated that “there was no training in Teachers’ College” for this student demographic. Tina’s questionnaire responses indicated that she had not received training in the areas of language-based accommodations and strategies, second language acquisition, or classroom learning needs for linguistically diverse students.
**Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs.** Tina stated several times throughout the workshop series, questionnaire, and interview that she does not feel confident in teaching LEALs and that her teacher education program was inadequate in preparing her for teaching LEALs. She reported that her training “failed to provide [her] with any theory, strategies, or teaching experiences related to Learners of English as an Additional Language. My experiences in practicums in a number of schools have also not provided me with the opportunity to work with many LEALs.”

In her first discussion post, Tina shared that her level of preparedness on a 5-point scale going into the workshop series was a 2. She further detailed the factors that have attributed to this rating:

I feel my lack of preparedness for LEALs falls at an unconfident, unknowledgeable level 2. I can attribute this feeling to my entire experience with education, from elementary school where all the students in my class were fluent in English (predominately 2nd/3rd generation Canadian born, Caucasian, middle-class) to my lack of experience working and volunteering with LEAL students prior to Teachers’ College. A single memory I have during this time where I worked with a LEAL was working with a LEAL Grade 1 child on his literacy skills. I remember identifying the language barrier, feeling unsure of how to break the barrier and deciding it was best to apply my knowledge of phonics strategies and making connections with him to his real life so he could comprehend the text. The reality was I did not have the knowledge, experience, or strategies to help this LEAL student to the best of my abilities—to a lack of experience with LEALs during B.A. concurrent program and with B.Ed. program including practicums. I
do believe my B.Ed. is largely responsible, as their primary purpose is to prepare teachers for the classroom.

Tina went on to share her frustration as a certified teacher who successfully completed a teacher education program while remaining unprepared for future classrooms with LEALs. Due to this reality, Tina had decided to participate in the workshop series.

In the pre-workshop questionnaire, Tina was asked to rank herself on a 5-point scale to indicate how prepared she was to meet the academic needs of LEALs. Tina responded with a 1. When asked how prepared she was to meet the language development needs of LEALs, specifically regarding increasing proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, she responded with 1, 1, 2, and 1, respectively. Furthermore, when asked if she felt confident in her ability to fulfill her multiple roles and responsibilities as a mainstream classroom teacher for LEALs, her response was “overall, I do not feel confident.”

Her intention for participating in the series was to become more knowledgeable and increase her confidence so that she may best meet the needs of future LEALs in her classroom. She hoped to accomplish this by working with colleagues to develop a LEAL toolkit of theories, experiences, and effective strategies.

**Lindsay**

Lindsay had wanted to be a teacher for as long as she could remember. She had been volunteering in elementary classrooms since she was in elementary herself. Her volunteerism in elementary classrooms continued throughout high school and postsecondary. On the pre-workshop questionnaire, she noted her ethnicity as Caucasian and a fluent speaker of the English language. She graduated from a Bachelor of Science
program, which lead into a Concurrent Bachelor of Education degree program in southwestern Ontario. She was qualified to teach in the J/I divisions with a Science teachable. During her program, she chose to enroll in additional elective courses on coaching school sports, outdoor and environmental education, and catholic religious studies. She graduated from her teacher education program in 2013 and became certified with the Ontario College of Teachers in 2014. Lindsay was in her first year of a 2-year Master of Education program in the thesis stream at the time of the study.

Regarding her status as a Master’s candidate, she reported that it “feels a bit strange ... to currently be pursuing a Master of Education in Teaching, Learning, and Development” considering she had only ever wanted to become a teacher. Her research interests included the general area of self-efficacy and learning. Lindsay never envisioned herself continuing her postsecondary education beyond teacher certification.

Lindsay described her teaching philosophy as one that went beyond curriculum and content:

Not all the books on all the shelves can teach students what they should be; it was a really short verse but it just talked about the importance of who the teacher was as a person and that at the end of the day it’s not just the material in the textbook or just the factual material that you share with your students, and I think that’s the definitely the central part of my teaching is that it’s much more than just the book work. I think my research is interested in looking at student’s self-efficacy and learning, so kind of a lot of the self-referent processes and how teachers, the things teachers do, the things teachers say, the type of learning activities they provide, the type of differentiated instruction they provide, really do say things to
the students too, about how they, how capable they are as learners, and I think that influences what they become.

Lindsay alluded to the hidden curriculum that is often communicated to students intentionally or subconsciously by teachers. She was very in tune and sensitive to her impact on students on more of a human level.

**Teaching experience.** Throughout Lindsay’s personal educational journey in a southwestern Ontario town, she had very limited experiences with LEALs or “people of diversity in general. You grow up with pretty much no racial or ethnic diversity, and then [come] to [a] very low, mostly white university.” She recounted that her practicum experiences also did not provide her with contact with LEALs:

In all that classroom time though, because of my geographical location, I realized a few years ago that I lack much teaching experience (especially more “formal” teaching experience) in the area of teaching learners of English as an additional language. [In university] I was a conversation partner with [postsecondary] International students which simply provides a domestic match and consequent opportunities to converse regularly in English) for a Japanese female for one semester and a Saudi Arabian male in the fourth year of my undergrad. That was my first, and most intensive, extended experience speaking with someone who was a beginning English language learner.

However, after her experience as a conversation partner that following summer, and for the past two summers after, she worked at a summer camp in an urban setting. This experience had provided her with exposure and numerous opportunities to work with children who spoke different languages at home other than English:
This was the first time where I felt like I had really assumed the role of “teacher” for a student who was learning English as an additional language. It was a very trying and frustrating experience for myself as a teacher, as I am sure it was for my LEAL students, because I lacked any formal training or personal experience in teaching learners of English as an additional language.

Her experience as a teacher in this summer camp was evidently insightful and influential for her as a teacher. The new experience of working with LEALs identified a gap in her training and personal experiences.

**Prior professional development and training.** When starting this workshop series, Lindsay did not have any prior LEAL-related training. However, she had commented a few times throughout the series about her experience as a camp teacher in an urban setting. Lindsay stated that her experience in this camp had been the extent of any formal training. She reported that she had no training in the areas of LEAL strategies and language-based accommodations, second language acquisition, and classroom learning needs for linguistically diverse students.

**Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs.** Lindsay believed that her lack of preparedness for LEALs stemmed from no formal or personal experience teaching LEALs:

By “formal experience” I am referring to my learning about education and learning during my Concurrent Education degree. Aside from a more theoretical “diversity in education” course I was required to take in my second year of undergrad, neither my undergraduate, “interdisciplinary” B.Sc. degree or B.Ed.
provided me with any ideas or practical materials I could have used to help with my preparedness to teach LEAL students in mainstream classes. She went on to express her disappointment that LEALs were not discussed nor included in the current B.Ed. program: “I just can’t believe that that information is just not ... spoken about.”

Despite her disappointment, Lindsay stated in her pre-workshop questionnaire that she felt confident that she could learn to eventually fulfill the multiple roles and responsibilities of teaching all students in a mainstream classroom. Though, given her lack of training and experience, she suspected that her first few years would be experienced with hardship. She stated: “I imagine it would take additional time to accommodate a LEAL student and this might be especially stressful during my first few years of teaching.”

When asked about her preparedness to teach LEALs academic content, she rated herself at 3 out of 5. When asked about her preparedness to meet the language development needs of LEALs, specifically regarding increasing proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, she responded with a 3, 2, 4, and 3, respectively. Lindsay looked forward to strengthening and growing her teaching practice in relation to teaching LEALs through this workshop series.

**Diana**

Diana identified as Korean and spoke English fluently and Korean moderately. In 2007, she obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations from a western Canadian university. In 2012, she earned a Bachelor of Education in Secondary Education. In 2014, she became certified with the Ontario College of Teachers with I/S
qualifications. Diana was continuing her education in a Master of Education program at the time of the study, and did not have any additional certifications, training, or Additional Qualifications.

Diana described herself as a “quite passionate” teacher. She found this to be a surprise to her as it was not her initial career goal:

When I first started out teaching, I didn’t really have a background in terms of teaching strategies or teaching philosophy. Then it wasn’t until I did my B.Ed. that I really got a foundation in it. Since then I have been learning a lot about teaching and about learning and how to communicate and motivate and how to help make sure that all students in the class are having their needs met.

Though her formal teacher training may have begun during her teacher education program, she has fulfilled an array of teaching roles in various Canadian provinces and internationally.

**Teaching experience.** Diana has teaching experiences that range from pre-school to adult learning. In western Canada, she had her first teaching experience with Kindergarten to Grade 2 children in an ESL classroom. In 2007, she taught in the position of English Conversation Teacher at a private institute. The same year, she moved to Korea to teach English as a Foreign Language in a private institute to students aged 6 to 16. She remained in this position for a total of 3 years. In 2011, she returned to western Canada and worked as a LINC assistant and adult ESL teacher at a community centre. In 2012 when she completed her Bachelor of Education, she noted that her final teaching practicum had students who spoke Korean and Somali as their first languages. After graduation, Diana moved to Shanghai for a year to teach English as a Foreign Language
in a private institute to students aged 3 to 16. It was at this time that she applied for the Master of Education program.

Diana had several years of experience teaching LEALs, though most of her knowledge came from job training in second language specific settings. In these settings, all students were LEALs and a whole class approach was used. Contextually, the situation was very different than a mainstream classroom where several different language needs are being addressed. She hoped that the workshop series would be able to teach her more about LEALs in mainstream classrooms.

Prior professional development or training. As stated in the previous section, Diana obtained professional in-service training and workshops at private institutes for LEALs overseas. These private institutes were LEAL-specific environments and each required a week of training prior to teaching. For 3 months throughout the school year, she was also required to attend weekly hour-long workshops on various topics.

Diana completed a course entitled Teaching Diverse Learners in her teacher education program, which aimed to prepare pre-service teachers for teaching diverse students in the classroom. One week of this course focused on linguistically diverse students. They discussed both adaptations and modifications in lesson plans for LEALs. However, she found that it was inadequate and ineffective in impacting her self-efficacy or practice in the classroom:

In my classroom observations, during my B.Ed. and teaching practicums, there seemed to be a lack of support for LEALs in mainstream classrooms. I felt pressure and wanted to meet inclusivity requirements, but didn’t know or feel I had the resources to do so. This was particularly difficult in English and Social
Studies classrooms, which requires a great deal of English proficiency. More training for teaching LEALs in a B.Ed. is necessary.

Diana also completed a *Linguistics 101* class that provided “very general information on second language acquisition.” Although Diana had more course-based experience than most other participants, they were described as insufficient preparation and lacking impact for effectively working with LEALs in mainstream contexts.

**Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs.** Diana felt that she was “somewhat prepared” for teaching LEALs in mainstream, which she attributed to the strategies she had “picked up” from teaching LEALs “in ESL settings.” However, overall she did not feel confident in her abilities to fulfill the multiple roles and responsibilities as a mainstream classroom teacher for LEALs. In her pre-workshop questionnaire, she stated that “most of my experience in teaching LEALs has been in second language learning environments in which all students were LEALs. I could provide curriculum specific to their language learning needs.” Being that this was a different context, she did not believe her experiences necessarily applied or transferred, even though she had technically been working with English language learners for several years.

On a scale to 5, she rated herself as a 2.5 for her level of preparedness to meet the academic needs of LEALs. When asked how prepared she was to meet the language development needs of LEALs, specifically regarding increasing proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, she rated herself as 3, 3, 2.5, and 2.5 for those categories.

**Brittany**

Brittany identified her ethnicity as Caucasian and was fluent in English and basic in French. She had a Bachelor of Arts honours degree in Child and Youth Studies from a
southwestern Ontario university. She completed her Bachelor of Education in 2009 from the same university and held qualifications to teach in the P/J divisions. Brittany became certified with the Ontario College of Teachers in 2010 and completed an Additional Qualifications course for Special Education. After several years volunteering and working for a year in England, she became an occasional teacher in Ontario in 2014.

When asked to describe herself as a teacher, she stated that “I find that I want to be a teacher that is very hands-on because I think that is how kids learn best, not just through listening but through seeing it and making it as fun as possible as well.” Brittany was taking this series to learn new strategies for working with LEALs in mainstream contexts.

**Teaching experience.** Brittany had minimal experience with LEALs; her first encounter was during a teacher education practicum where she had “two ESL students in Grade 1” who would be withdrawn from class. She described the two students as “pretty good at communicating” in the English language. In the past year as an occasional teacher, she had encountered many more LEALs in mainstream classrooms and believed that there were “at least a couple in every class.” This was significantly different from her previous teaching experiences where she rarely encountered LEALs.

**Prior professional development or training.** Brittany stated that she has not had any prior professional development or training regarding LEALs. She also reported no training or learning in the topic areas of LEAL strategies or language-based accommodations, second language acquisition, or classroom learning needs of linguistically diverse students.
**Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs.** In the pre-workshop questionnaire, Brittany reported that she did not feel confident in her abilities to fulfill the multiple roles and responsibilities of a mainstream teacher for LEALs. When asked to rate herself on a scale of 1 to 5 to express how prepared she was to meet the academic needs of LEALs, she chose 3. When asked how prepared she was to meet the language development needs of LEALs, specifically regarding increasing proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing she responded with a 3, 4, 2, and 2, respectively:

Overall, I do not feel that I am overly prepared to teach students who are ELL. I think that a lot of it does have to do with the teaching program. I feel this way because the Teachers’ College program is the one that is teaching us to become a teacher and how we should teach curriculum to students. If it is not covered within our program, how are we to learn strategies to prepare us for teaching ELL students? Maybe the teacher colleges feel it is our responsibility to learn once we have graduated and become full-time teachers?

Brittany identified the gaps in her teacher education curriculum as potential causes or contributors to her lack of preparedness. Noting a particular concern for topics that were necessary for teachers to know, yet those were not incorporated into teacher training programs. When discussing her teaching practice, she acknowledged that she required more specific strategies for working with LEALs in mainstream: “I need strategies to help me teach LEALs, strategies that can be used in the classroom that are very useful, helpful. Able to be used every day to ensure success of LEAL students.” She was happy to learn that strategies, for teaching and classroom, were a key component of the series.
Catherine

Catherine was a single parent to an 11-year-old daughter. She and her daughter enjoyed growing vegetables in their backyard garden and tending to their eight egg-laying chickens. While she described herself as a lifelong learner, she was happy to be in her “dream job.” Catherine had always dreamed of being a classroom teacher.

On the pre-workshop questionnaire, Catherine identified her ethnicity as Caucasian. She was fluent in the English language and had basic fluency in the French language. She attended a university in southwestern Ontario and in 2010 she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts with honours in Sociology and a Minor in Women’s Studies. The following year she attended an American university just across the Canadian border for a combined Master of Science in Childhood Education and Bachelor of Education degree. She graduated from this program in 2011 with qualifications to teach in the P/J divisions. Catherine became certified with the Ontario College of Teachers in 2011 and completed an array of Additional Qualifications courses, including Integrated Arts, Reading Part 1, and Special Education Part 1. She also completed two Additional Basic Qualifications to add the Intermediate (Family Studies) and Senior (Social Sciences) divisions to her teaching credentials.

Teaching experience. After obtaining her teaching certificate, Catherine was employed for a few years as an online English teacher to adult men in Saudi Arabia. The organization arranged online textbooks and webcams for communication. She described this as a “really neat experience,” though it was not what she had hoped to continue as a career choice. For the last 3 years, she has been employed as an occasional teacher for a
Catholic school board in southwestern Ontario and was currently on a Long-Term Occasional assignment as an itinerant teacher in two very different schools:

One of the schools is very, there is just everybody there speaks English basically, and the other school that I’m at, which I am at that one for the majority of the time, has a ton of LEAL students and it really does seem like every week someone new has joined the school. New families come from all over the world, so when I first saw the ad for this particular course, that’s why I was particularly interested because I feel like, and I still feel this way, I have so much to learn. I wanted to do something to better the way that I teach so that I can help students who are learning English and hopefully I can be a good support for them an also for me as a teacher.

In the second school she described, Catherine had acquired 10 to 15 new students with no English language proficiency. With the constant influx of LEALs in the school, Catherine was eager to learn new strategies for effective communication with this demographic for the benefit of the students and for her own professional growth and efficacy as a teacher.

**Prior professional development or training.** Catherine had not had any prior professional development or training related to LEALs prior to the workshop series. More specifically, she had no training in LEAL strategies and language-based accommodations, second language acquisition, or classroom learning needs for linguistically diverse students.

She recalled her teacher education program touching on the topic of teaching English in mainstream classrooms but nothing LEAL-specific. She also took a course on multiculturalism; however, it focused more on bringing other cultures into the classroom.
Catherine wished that some content had been spent on teaching newcomers the English language. Overall, she thought that there may have been a total of 4 hours of somewhat related content in her teacher education program. While reflecting on her training, she stated that was “not a lot of time at all.” She described the content as being “very surface level” and felt that the message portrayed was that it was the responsibility of teachers to continue their learning on additional topics of interest independently.

**Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs.** In the pre-workshop questionnaire, Catherine ranked herself as a 3 out of 5 for her level of preparedness to meet the academic needs and language development needs of LEALs in a mainstream classroom. She attributed this ranking primarily to her limited experience. While she did take a course on multiculturalism, she felt that she had “A LOT left to learn.” She was a hands-on learner and valued quality experiences to enhance her teaching practice.

When asked if she felt prepared to fulfill the multiple roles and responsibly of a mainstream teacher for LEALs, Catherine stated:

> Every single day I doubt what I do and every single day I want to be and do better. I think oh-my-god I did that and I should have done this differently. I feel like I’m a good teacher and I’m good with kids and everything but I constantly doubt myself and I constantly feel like I’m double guessing myself. Confident no, but I will do my absolute best all the time to try and get the best out of everybody.

Despite her uncertainty and lack of confidence, after working in a diverse school Catherine felt that she has learned a good amount about LEAL students and teaching LEALs: “the more I have learned, the more I realize I have to learn.” It was important to
note that her final reflection stated that she would have ranked herself lower if she realized what there was to learn.

Catherine realized that she will never be fully prepared for every teaching situation possible; however, she acknowledged that there was much that could be learned to help prepare teachers for certain types of students that they will likely encounter in the classroom. To further enhance her preparedness, she’d like to address a “major concern” of hers by building a repertoire of effective strategies that she could readily implement.

**Meghan**

Meghan described herself as someone who enjoyed the company of friends, watching American Idol, relaxing at home, as well as trying and learning new things. For as long as she could remember, she had always wanted to become a classroom teacher.

Meghan identified her ethnicity as Scottish/English, and she was fluent in the English language. She completed all her postsecondary education in southwestern Ontario where she obtained an undergraduate Bachelor of Arts degree in Child and Youth Studies and then a Bachelor of Education degree as a concurrent student. In 2010, Meghan became certified with the Ontario College of Teachers to teach in the P/J divisions. Shortly after completing her Bachelor of Education, she earned an Additional Qualification in Special Education.

Meghan began her teaching career in a private school working with a very diverse group of children with special needs. When offered a position as an occasional teacher with a public board, she decided to leave the private school with hopes of someday becoming permanent faculty in the public system. At the time of the study, Meghan was an occasional teacher with a Long-Term Occasional position teaching gym, science,
library, and music to Kindergarten through Grade 3 students. Meghan described her teaching philosophy as “something that allows more power for the students, like that gradual release, I like students to take initiative and become active in their environment when it comes to learning, so I like to always reinforce those roles within the class.”

Meghan taught from the constructivist approach to teaching and learning.

**Teaching experience.** When asked to describe her experiences with LEALs, Meghan recalled two particular experiences as a teacher candidate and occasional teacher. As a teacher candidate, Meghan recalled having two LEALs in her classroom. She remembered the teacher and parent collaborating on a variety of strategies that were beneficial inside and outside of the classroom. More recently, she stated that her role as an occasional teacher had allowed her to encounter and work with LEALs more frequently in mainstream. She had identified various locations within her catchment with high LEAL populations.

**Prior professional development or training.** Meghan did not have training in the areas of LEAL strategies and language-based accommodations, or second language acquisition. She did have training, however, in the area of classroom learning needs of linguistically diverse students. She recalled an hour-long staff meeting where they were provided with a brief overview of the topic. In addition, she had attended some in-service meetings where they discussed diverse learners and autism; it may have been mentioned at these as well. She believed that the reason for the lack of content is “they don’t really know how to approach it I find, I find teachers just don’t discuss it because they don’t know enough about it, I don’t know, that is what I have noticed.”
Despite the lack of formal professional development or training, she found that working one-on-one with a learning resource teacher had provided her with some key learning regarding furthering the educational success of LEALs. The relationship with this teacher had been significant for her work with LEALs in the mainstream classroom.

**Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs.** Meghan ranked herself as a 3 on a 5-point scale when asked how prepared she was to meet the academic and language development needs of LEALs. Language development needs included increasing proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. From her responses, it was clear that some of her unpreparedness derived from her teacher education program while her preparedness stemmed from her classroom experiences and undergraduate learning. More specifically, Meghan attributed these rankings to her learning from a *Theory of Child Development* course she took during her undergraduate program. This course provided a good foundation for understanding how children learn. However, she felt as if “Teachers’ College could have provided me with more resources and real-life tools and strategies for a variety of teaching assignments.” As an occasional teacher, she was often placed in classrooms with an “unfair disadvantage.” She described her preparedness from teacher education as “very vague and could have been much more practical to real life.”

When asked if she felt confident in her abilities to fulfill the multiple roles and responsibilities of a mainstream teacher for LEALs, she responded: “Right now? No, I feel that Teachers’ College does not provide you with enough education on real-life practical and hands on activities that actually happen in a classroom.” Meghan also remarked that language and math were her weakest subject areas.
Andrea

Andrea described herself as being “really flexible and willing to do anything.” For as long as she could remember, her dream had been to become a Special Education teacher in the public school board system. Her philosophy was “if we give everyone the tools they need, everyone can be successful.” She lived this philosophy by trying to be as loving and supportive as she could to all the students she encountered. Andrea was a proponent of inclusion and her primary focus in the classroom was making all children feel safe and happy.

Andrea identified her ethnicity as Caucasian and was fluent in the English language. In 2008, she graduated with an undergraduate English degree from a southwestern Ontario university. In 2009, she earned a Bachelor of Education degree with English and History as teachable subjects. She became certified with the Ontario College of Teachers in 2009 with qualifications to teach J/I divisions. Additional courses she had taken since becoming certified included Additional Qualifications courses in Special Education Part 1, Reading Part 1, and Library Part 1. She was completing an Additional Basic Qualification for the Primary division at the time of the study.

Since certification, she had been hired as an occasional teacher for a public school board. Andrea had successfully fulfilled a few Long-Term Occasional placements in her current board. In her current position she had one LEAL in her classroom. Through the workshop series, she wanted to learn how to accommodate her most effectively. Also, given the unpredictable nature of occasional work, she believed that this workshop series could better prepare her for whomever she encountered: “I never know what school I’ll be at, and my board has a very diverse population, so I want to be the best I can be.”
Teaching experience. Andrea had limited experience teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms and highlighted two notable experiences. In one of her practicum placements she had a student learning English who only spoke Swahili. At her current school, she taught one LEAL who spoke Spanish primarily at home. Regardless of her limited encounters, she repeatedly mentioned the value of training in preparation of the potential demographics of her next classroom.

Prior professional development or training. Andrea had no professional development or training related to LEALs. She had “absolutely nothing” related to training in the areas of LEAL strategies and language-based accommodations, second language acquisition, and classroom learning needs for linguistically diverse students.

Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs. On a 5-point scale, Andrea rated her level of preparedness to meet the academic needs of LEALs as a 2. She rated her preparedness to meet the language development needs of LEALs, increasing proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking also at a 2. When asked about her preparedness to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of a mainstream teacher for LEALs, she stated, “No, but that’s why I am taking this course.” She hoped the series would provide her with the basic tools she needed to be more successful with this demographic.

In a discussion post, Andrea provided additional detail into her ranking. She commented,

I put myself as lower on the scale; I put it as low because we didn’t spend a ton of time on it in Teachers’ College to the best of my recollection. I don’t think it’s the college’s fault, because they only have a year to train you, and there is so much content for them to teach you that they can’t get too in depth in any particular area.
While she associated her level of preparedness to her teacher education program, she did not place blame, though she did note an important limitation of time and depth.

**Madison**

Madison described herself as a “holistic educator” and believed that her role in the classroom was to encourage learning and not be a depositor of knowledge. She took a facilitator or coaching approach to teaching and believed that her work stemmed from a constructivist perspective. She was a large proponent of inquiry-based learning. Nonetheless, through her recent research work she had come to understand and value direct instruction as a necessary component of any teaching program.

Madison identified her ethnicity as Caucasian and was fluent in the English language. In 2012, she graduated from a southwestern Ontario university with a Bachelor of Science honours degree. In 2013, she earned a Bachelor of Education from the same university and became certified with the Ontario College of Teachers for teaching qualifications in the J/I divisions. After graduating, she did not pursue any professional development. However, she was pursuing her Master of Education at the time of the study.

When asked about her interest in this workshop series, Madison stated: “I feel as though teaching LEAL students was not effectively touched upon throughout my teaching program. I think this course will offer me valuable knowledge and insight to be able to help my English language learners in the future.” Madison evidently felt that there was a training void that she would like to fill and this series might have been the first step toward doing so.
Teaching experience. Madison had “very little experience” with LEALs as a student and as a teacher. She recalled being in elementary school and new LEALs arriving, though she did not recall any supports in place to help them succeed. She also trusted that she did not encounter any LEALs in either of her teaching blocks or through any other placements. Yet, more recently, she had done some volunteering with international students in the university and was volunteering in a mainstream classroom with a newly arrived LEAL with limited English proficiency.

Prior professional development or training. Madison had no prior professional development or training related to LEALs, LEAL strategies and language-based accommodations, second language acquisition, or classroom learning needs for linguistically diverse students. She did, however, take a “diversity class” in her third year of her undergraduate degree. In this course they discussed culture, ethnicity, and identity but nothing specific to LEALs or teaching LEALs.

Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs. Overall, Madison rated herself as a 2 on a 5-point scale for preparedness to meet the academic needs of LEALs. When asked to rate her preparedness to meet LEALs language development needs, specifically increasing proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, she rated herself as 2, 2, 2, and 1, respectively. Madison stated that she was not prepared to fulfill the many roles and responsibilities of a mainstream teacher for LEALs and that she had “a lot to learn” to be better prepared.

In a discussion post, Madison provided additional insight into her ratings. She did not feel that she had enough of an “academic background in teaching LEALs.” When asked to elaborate on this she responded with the following:
This was not a concept widely discussed in my teacher education program—nor was it discussed throughout the earlier years in my Concurrent program. Reflecting on this now I think this is quite strange due to the number of immigrant families that are moving to Canada with students who require effective support to thrive academically. If I were in a classroom that required me to support LEAL students I would use my experience from being a student myself, but I do not have any specific strategies that I would be able to draw on. I hope the lack of LEAL teaching support is something that is being considered during the revising of the teacher education programs in Ontario.

Madison’s insight highlighted perceived gaps in her teacher training and her hope for future revisions. Without adequate training, her greatest fear was balancing the attention provided to the class and LEALs who may require more direct support. Through the workshop series, she was hoping to develop an understanding of second language acquisition so that she may have an accurate understanding of the language learning process and of language expectations for these students.

**Brian**

Brian described himself as personable, flexible in nature, and valuing more than literacy and mathematics. He believed that teaching was more about preparation for life and future experiences in both social and academic domains. He aimed for a holistic development that included critical thinking and reflection. Brian talked about being a teacher both inside and outside of the classroom. Teacher–student relationships were very important to Brian; instead of “just going in and teaching a lesson and then withdrawing
from the student,” he aimed to establish an authentic and meaningful relationship and rapport with all his students.

Brian identified his ethnicity as Caucasian and was fluent in the English language. He had earned a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Bachelor of Education degree. In 2014, he became a certified teacher by the Ontario College of Teachers with teaching qualifications in the J/I divisions. After certification, he taught English internationally in South Korea. The majority of his LEAL teaching experience was developed with these overseas experiences. At the time of the series, he was pursuing his Master of Education.

Brian did not have any professional development, Additional Qualifications, certifications or training related to education. However, he looked forward to equipping himself with “innovative skills and knowledge to meet the needs of LEALs in mainstream classrooms.” He believed that this workshop series was a positive step toward meeting that goal.

**Teaching experience.** Unlike many other participants, Brian had several experiences with LEALs. During his teacher education program, all of his practicum placements had multiple LEALs in the classrooms. However, his most notable experience was “teaching ESL” in South Korea. While this was not the same as teaching LEALs in English speaking mainstream classrooms, he believed that he had gained transferable knowledge and skills that could be applied. His experiences in Korea had provided him with the majority of his “strategies to assist LEALs.” He recalled having to learn on the spot: “I learned from my experiences during what I would call a ‘trial-and-error’ period. Early in the year, I would experiment with different teaching approaches and continued the use of those that showed student achievement and engagement.” This process was
frustrating and lengthy, as it required much additional research, planning, self-teaching, and review.

**Prior professional development or training.** When asked about previous professional development or training related to LEALs, Brian recalled a course in his second year of undergraduate studies that looked at “Canadian diversity in an educational context.” While language was not a focus of the course, it did make him think about the topic. During his teacher education program, “there was nothing that really spoke about how to support or accommodate students who were learning English or who had difficulty with English.” This was a gap in his pre-service education curriculum. Brian attributed most of his training to overseas experience: “Most of my training was when I was in Korea but I wasn’t teaching students in the mainstream classroom, it was teaching all students who had the same or similar English abilities.” Prior to teaching in Korea, Brian was required to complete an 8-day orientation where they reviewed mostly the Korean culture, strategies, and second language acquisition. However, he sensed that the orientation had “nothing to do with teaching LEALs.” Therefore, without any prior formal LEAL training, he felt that he was simply thrown into the classroom to learn as he went. He found this process to be largely “empirical” because he had to see what worked and what did not. He found that he often reflected and refined simultaneously with teaching.

**Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs.** Brian felt “moderately prepared to assist LEALs in mainstream classrooms” since he had only had his practicum experiences in mainstream classrooms. On a 5-point scale, he ranked his level of preparedness to meet the academic needs of LEALs as a 4. When asked to rank his level
of preparedness to meet language development needs of LEALs, specifically increasing proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, writing abilities, he responded with 4, 3, 4, and 4, respectively.

Despite the high ratings, when asked overall how prepared he was to fulfill the roles and responsibly of a mainstream classroom for LEALs, his response was, overall, I do not feel fully confident in my abilities to meet the needs of LEAL students in a mainstream classroom. I know where I would start, where I could get resources and ways I could make them feel included in the classroom community. However, I feel that I am not currently equipped with the proper education and training to have LEAL students achieve to their full potential in a mainstream classroom.

Brian attributed his level of preparedness to his teacher training. Throughout his pre-workshop survey and early discussion posts, he mentioned the value and gaps of his teacher training. The following comment highlights some of the issues and gaps experienced: “I do not feel that I was given appropriate training to fully support LEAL students. I think more emphasis should be attributed to training pre-service teachers in this area as Canada’s language plurality is steadily increasing.” In his initial reflection post, Brian clarified this point by saying, “Reflecting on my pre-service education, I cannot remember any direct references to the support of LEALs. This is definitely an area that needs to be addressed to further support and prepare emerging teachers.” Despite the lack of direct LEAL content, Brian referenced key learning from his teacher training that was transferable to LEALs:

The only way in which I feel my B.Ed. program offered me any preparation was
the push for differentiated instruction. I feel that differentiated instruction may aid LEALs in the mainstream classroom by providing them different modes of communication other than spoken language only.

Brian realized that only some of his learning was transferable to teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms.

**Jordan**

As a teacher, Jordan described himself in the following way:

I want to be that authoritative figure in the classroom but still very relatable to students, that’s what I’m trying to be professionally. So maintaining my professionalism but not feeling like I can’t be approached by students, and trying to teach to all students as best as I can. I am finding more and more that that is not as easy as it sounds.

In alignment with this vision, he hoped to continually learn to become a better teacher.

He acknowledged that there was much more to be learned in terms of best practice for an array of learners.

Jordan identified his ethnicity as Caucasian. He was fluent in the English language and had basic abilities in both the Korean language and French language. In 2007, he graduated from an Economics program from a university in southwestern Ontario. In 2013, he earned a combined Master of Education degree and Bachelor of Education degree from an American college. In 2014, he became certified with the Ontario College of Teachers with teaching qualifications in the P/J divisions. He had not pursued any professional development or additional certifications related to education.
since becoming certified. He was looking for employment and volunteering in schools at the time of the study.

His interest in this workshop series stemmed from his experience teaching abroad in combination with his limited experience teaching in Canadian classrooms. He hoped to be better prepared for whatever challenges LEALs may present in his future classrooms.

**Teaching experience.** His first experience with a LEAL was in an elementary school. He recalled a student in his grade classroom who struggled throughout elementary due to her being a LEAL. More recently, he taught in South Korea for 4 years where he worked with many English learners in small classes of varying levels ranging from no previous experience to advanced English learners. His students ranged from elementary to elderly adults, but he found the elderly demographic to be “the most fun students to teach; they had the most enthusiasm.” He noticed that there were different skill sets required for different age ranges. Jordan’s experience was more extensive than some due to his years abroad before attending a Faculty of Education.

**Prior professional development or training.** Jordan completed a 100-hour online TESOL program but found it to be “very off-base” compared to his experiences in Korea. This program touched on LEAL strategies and language-based accommodations. It did not include the areas of second language acquisition or the classroom learning needs for linguistically diverse students. Jordan evaluated this training as having minimal impact on his understanding or practice of teaching LEALs. Jordan believed his only true training to be his hands-on work overseas.

Being from a non-education background, he felt like he was merely “thrown into the mix of things” during his first day in Korea. He had to immediately learn new skills
that were never taught to him. At that time, any university degree would allow you to teach in Korea; therefore, he learned everything as he went along. He was pleased to find that teaching “came slightly natural” to him and he was able to easily relate to students. Jordan identified student–teacher relationships as his greatest teaching strength. He also found that while teaching younger students he was much more “animated,” using different tones and facial expressions.

**Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs.** Overall, Jordan felt confident in his abilities to provide LEALs in his class with an enriched educational experience. He believed that he could fulfill the multiple roles and responsibilities of a mainstream teacher for LEALs, including planning, delivering curricular standards, providing accommodations to instruction and assessment, and inducing meaningful classroom engagement. Jordan attributed his confidence to his experience in Korea: “The ESL experience I have gained will be a great asset in the future. Patience is more important than most people think when teaching LEALs.”

Jordan’s pre-workshop questionnaire provided additional details to his level and areas of preparedness. On a 5-point scale, Jordan rated his level of preparedness to meet the academic needs of LEALs as a 3. Regarding preparedness to meet the language development needs of LEALs, specifically increasing proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, he selected 4, 4, 4, and 3, respectively. In a discussion post, Jordan elaborated on his ratings. He most specifically accredited his high ratings to his experience teaching ESL despite the evident differences:

I know that it differs from mainstreaming LEALs but there are still transferable skills, in my opinion. Things like communicating with the aid of “sign language,”
paying attention to intonation, and deriving meaning from context are all things
that I needed to become familiar within the classroom.

Victoria

Victoria identified her ethnicity as Caucasian and she was fluent in the English
language. In 2010, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from a
university in southwestern Ontario. In 2011, she earned a combined degree of Master of
Education and Bachelor of Education from an American college just across the Canadian
border. Shortly after graduation she became certified with the Ontario College of
Teachers with teaching qualifications in the P/J divisions. Victoria had also earned
Additional Qualifications in Special Education Part 1.

At the time of the study, Victoria was employed as an occasional teacher with a
public school board and was awaiting the results of an interview for the Long-Term
Occasional list. As a teacher, she liked to use certain processes such as utilizing
technology. Currently she was a French teacher and felt “a little bit out of my comfort
zone.” She was now working with a lot of LEALs and described it as follows: “It’s all a
new learning process for me and I’m absorbing as much as I can, learning what I don’t
like, learning what I do like and just trying to make my way through my first year.”
Victoria stated several times that she was not prepared but she was learning along the
way. She hoped to learn some new techniques for teaching LEALs in mainstream through
this workshop series.

Teaching experience. Most of Victoria’s experience with LEALs consisted of
volunteering and a little bit of supply work in a school where the leading language of the
community is German. In this school, she had worked with students in Grades 1, 6, and 7.
Given the immense German LEAL population, she believed that this experience was still a little different than having a couple LEALs in a mainstream classroom. She had also worked in an English Literacy Camp during the summer; her role in the camp consisted of “fun camp stuff that we tried to incorporate as much reading activities into to help students who are ELLs get a little more English language experience. That is the most with ELLs.”

**Prior professional development or training.** Victoria reported that she did not have training in the areas of LEAL strategies and language-based accommodations, second language acquisition, or classroom learning needs for linguistically diverse students. She noted that her teacher education program did not have a whole lot of training regarding LEALs. The workshop series was the first formal course she had taken that has helped to show her the different steps to take and strategies for teaching LEALs in mainstream; as she stated, “previous to that I haven’t had a whole lot of training in that aspect.”

**Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs.** On the pre-workshop questionnaire, Victoria ranked her level of preparedness to meet academic and language development needs as a 3 on a 5-point scale. In a discussion post, Victoria elaborated on her rating by stating that she believed she lacks preparedness in this area despite her experience working with LEALs in both school and camp settings. An insecurity and lack of foundation was evident in her comment:

> I am not 100% confident that the techniques I am using are the most beneficial for my students. Though things have seemed to work in the past I feel that Teachers’ College did not really focus a lot on the techniques that would be best to use.
During the one-year program I took I felt that many things were touched on, but LEALs was not a focus.

Despite her mid-range rating, when asked if she felt confident to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of a mainstream teacher for LEALs, she reported that I do feel confident, I have a love for learning myself, I know I don’t know everything now but I am confident that if I had a job in the classroom I would do everything I could to accommodate English language learners.

Victoria was very confident and well-intentioned as a teacher; she knew that she would do what she believed was necessary, regardless of her training.

**Natalie**

Natalie described herself as a “very compassionate person” who takes into account students’ feelings and background. She drew on her own experiences as an “ESL student” when working with students. She reflected:

A lot of times when I see somebody, you know, who is learning the language I think of the way that I was treated, or things that sort of helped me, I do tie it in, I think that I take my experience and work it in.

Natalie intuitively reflected and applied her own experiences in her teaching style. She believed that her own upbringing had influenced her perspective on the impact of feelings and backgrounds when it came to learning. She tried to make her classroom as friendly as possible so that all of her students could feel comfortable. She remembered her first experience and recalled feeling scared while having many other emotions. For this reason, her first response was to give the students space and to allow them to take their time in the silent stage of language learning. She respected students’ need for silence and
felt that it was helpful for establishing a connection with students; when the students realize that you care and understand, they are more apt to open up to you.

Natalie identified her ethnicity as Spanish, and she was fluent in both the English and Spanish languages. In 2007, she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography from a university in southwestern Ontario. She then pursued a combined Master of Education and Bachelor of Education degree from an American college close to the Canadian–American border. In 2009, she earned both degrees and became certified with the Ontario College of Teachers with qualifications for the P/J/I divisions, the intermediate teachable being geography. At the time of the study, Natalie was an occasional teacher for a public school board in southwestern Ontario and had completed an Additional Qualifications course in Special Education Part 1.

**Teaching experience.** Growing up as a LEAL had provided Natalie with additional insight and perspective. Reminiscing about her experience as a 10-year-old language learner, she recalled the difficulties she faced. Without any English language proficiency, she struggled with the language barriers:

In terms of education, I struggled in the first years of school, but I had a great teacher who really spent a lot of time with me and we communicated through pictures and stuff like that and it made it a little easier.

Throughout our discussions, Natalie often referred to strategies that she found helpful to her own language development needs. She stated that with supportive teachers, “over time I was able to pick up the language and incorporate it and understand everyone else in the classroom so I was able to participate but in the beginning it was really, really challenging!” The initial challenges were something that she highlights as a significant
piece of understanding required by effective teachers. Now, as a certified teacher, she had volunteered with Learning Resource Teachers in schools and had been able to work with LEALs and extend her understanding and compassion of language learning to them.

**Prior professional development or training.** Natalie had no prior professional development or training in the areas of LEAL strategies and language-based accommodations, second language acquisition, or classroom learning needs for linguistically diverse students; she stated: “What I know is from my experience and watching other teachers.” She drew from and relied on what she has lived and observed in the classroom. Other than these experiences, Natalie stated that there were not any formal LEAL-related training opportunities:

I didn’t think that there was really any training in the Teachers’ College, like if I hadn’t been an ESL student myself, I wouldn’t have known anything right. Without you researching yourself, there wasn’t anything really provided in Teachers’ College. Maybe we touched upon it, talked about it, but there wasn’t anything, you know, in terms of giving you resources going beyond and researching about it, the topic, so I don’t think I had any previous experience besides my own and being an ESL student myself and working with ESL teachers.

Natalie highlighted some gaps in her teacher education program and general training for LEALs in mainstream classrooms.

**Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs.** Despite her general disappointment with her formal training, Natalie felt that she was “somewhat prepared” for LEALs in mainstream classrooms due to her personal experience as an “ESL
student.” Natalie drew on her first-hand experiences with the struggles and challenges that were associated with learning a new language. She utilized her experiences as a platform for the support she provided as a teacher to promote LEAL success.

Regarding her overall preparedness to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of a mainstream classroom teacher for LEALs, she responded,

I do feel confident but I always feel that there are ways to learn new things to incorporate in the classroom to make things easier. I am hoping that taking part in these workshop things that it would become easier to plan for an English learner student.

While recognizing her confidence and insight as a LEAL, her self-ratings on a 5-point scale, which intended to delve a little deeper into her preparedness, were on the lower end of the scale. When asked how prepared she was to meet the language development needs of LEALs, increasing proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, she rated herself as a 2 for all. When asked how prepared she was to meet the academic needs of LEALs, she rated herself as a 2.5. Natalie was driven to take the workshop series due to her own desire to gain additional ideas, strategies, and resources related to LEAL teaching and learning. Furthermore, she hoped to become an ESL teacher in the future.

Heather

Heather grew up in a small town in rural Ontario and had little exposure to LEALs growing up and felt that it was “minimally touched on in Teachers’ College.” In the pre-workshop questionnaire, she stated that she “looks forward to learn about how to support these students in my classes as diversity is becoming increasingly common.”

Heather described herself as “very patient, pretty open-minded, always willing to try new
things to figure out what is going to work best for whoever [she’s] teaching, pretty acceptable, and welcoming.”

Heather identified her ethnicity as Caucasian, and she was fluent in the English language. In 2013 she graduated from a Concurrent Education program in southwestern Ontario. Her program earned her both a Bachelor of Arts degree and Bachelor of Education degree. The same year, she became certified with the Ontario College of Teachers with teaching qualifications for the P/J divisions. Since graduation she completed the Special Education Part 1 Additional Qualifications course and the Intermediate History Additional Basic Qualifications course.

Heather became employed as an occasional teacher the summer immediately after graduation. While working for that board, she was hired by another board 5 months later. She decided to make the move and switch public school boards. She has supplied in classrooms ranging from Kindergarten to Grade 8, though she considered herself to be a “P/J teacher.”

Teaching experience. Heather described her experience with LEALs as “very limited.” While some students from her practicum experiences may have fit the criteria as a LEAL, neither of her two associate teachers “modified work for them.” She did, however, state that she has had “some students” in classes that she had supplied for in the first few months of school. Given her upbringing in a rural community, “with no second language learners at all,” all of her experiences were from her postsecondary years.

Prior professional development or training. Heather had no training related to LEALs. More specifically, she had no training in the areas of LEAL strategies and language-based accommodations, second language acquisition, or classroom learning
needs for linguistically diverse students. She did not recall this being a topic in her teacher training: “I don’t think it was ever, maybe briefly touched on, in my Teachers’ College.” If it was a component, it was evidently not memorable or impactful.

**Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs.** When asked if she felt confident in her abilities to fulfill the multiple roles and responsibilities as a mainstream classroom teacher for LEALs, including planning, implementing curricular standards and accommodations, and inducing meaningful classroom engagement, she responded with: “No, now as a teacher, it is nervous to know how to accommodate for these students when I have limited knowledge.” To delve further into this response, when asked on a 5-point scale to rate her preparedness to meet the academic needs of LEALs, she selected 2. When asked about her level of preparedness to meet the language development needs of LEALs, Heather’s rating was a 2 for all language domains. In Heather’s first discussion post, she provided additional insight into her ratings. She stated that her lack of preparedness stemmed from her “B.Ed. program, lack of work with LEALs, lack of exposure, and lack of academic instruction.” Realizing this gap in teaching preparedness, she was motivated to participate in this workshop series.

**Rebecca**

Unlike other participants, teaching was not Rebecca’s dream job. Her dream was to graduate from Economics and work at a bank. After approximately a year and half working in her “dream job,” she realized it was not what she had hoped it to be. At this point, she and her husband decided to teach English in South Korea. After teaching in Korea for 3 years, they decided that they wanted more from teaching and wanted to have the opportunity to teach anywhere in the world. They then decided to apply to a teacher
education program, which led to coming back to Canada, volunteering, and joining the workshop series.

Rebecca described herself as an extremely inexperienced teacher. She was trying to get as much experience in the classroom as possible through volunteering. Being new out of teacher education, she had not decided what kind of teacher she was since she was still learning and trying to figure that out. Rebecca identified her ethnicity as Caucasian. She was fluent in the English language, moderate in the French language, and basic in the Korean language. In 2008, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from a university in southwestern Ontario. In 2013, she earned a Master in Elementary Education from an American college. She became certified with the Ontario College of Teachers in 2014, with teaching qualifications in the P/J divisions. She was volunteering and looking for employment as a teacher at the time of the study. She had not pursued professional development, additional certifications, or training related to education. From this workshop series, Rebecca hoped to gain new ways to approach LEALs in the classroom.

**Teaching experience.** Rebecca’s family participated in a university homestay program for approximately 8 years. While not related to teaching, during this time she was able to learn about different cultures, traditions, and languages. Reflecting back, she realized that there was a definite intolerance of difference and that the students desired to acculturate to the Canadian culture. She remembered cringing at some of the foods and things that the homestay students would bring. Now, she was the stark opposite and did not know why she cringed at the things, cultures, and foods that she now enjoyed so much. Rebecca associated her prior behaviour with immaturity and different cultural times.
While in postsecondary, she assisted and tutored international students in English. Following her postsecondary experience, she taught English in South Korea for 3 years to students ranging in ages from 3 to 65. This was a pivotal experience in Rebecca’s career path as it instilled a desire to continue teaching.

**Prior professional development or training.** Rebecca completed a 100-hour TESOL course, which she describes as “online, and not very serious.” In the TESOL course she did learn some LEAL strategies, language-based accommodations, and about classroom learning needs of linguistically diverse students. She had experience “planning for ESL teaching” with various lesson progress techniques. However, she did not learn about second language acquisition or the theoretical underpinnings of language learning.

**Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs.** Overall, Rebecca felt confident in her abilities to fulfill the multiple roles and responsibilities as a mainstream classroom teacher for LEALs. When asked to elaborate, she stated,

I am willing to put in the time. I will have a classroom that is set up so that a new student may come in and be able to take a tour on their own and be able to figure out the basic layout on their own. My best practices include providing instructions in a variety of ways as to meet all learning types. Most importantly, I have a patience required to provide support to all of my students.

Regarding preparedness to meet the academic needs of LEALs, Rebecca rated herself as a 3 on a 5-point scale. Concerning her preparedness to meet the language development needs of LEALs, increasing proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, she rated herself as 4, 3, 4, and 3, respectively.
In a discussion post, Rebecca shed light on her rating choices. She attributed her high ratings to her experience overseas: “My experience in South Korea was definitely an asset.” In her teacher education program she also learned about several tools for assessment, and approaches to work with struggling students. She also gained “a lot of valuable tools in regards to differentiated instruction for language arts.” While she did not get to implement many of these tools in her practicum experiences since struggling students were withdrawn from the classroom by a resource teacher. Nonetheless, she felt that much of the content she learned was transferable to LEALs in mainstream classrooms. One area of concern, however, was setting up a language arts program that accommodated LEALs.

Steve

As a teacher, Steve described himself as “outgoing and there for the students” while striving to “provide as much knowledge as I can and unfortunately sometimes it’s a little too much knowledge.” He was certainly a keeper of facts and very enthusiastic about imparting what he knew to others. However, he was very much aware of this and stated, “By the end of the day, I try to make sure that what needs to get done gets done.” Steve actively tried to balance his love for knowledge with the needs of the program and students.

Steve identified his ethnicity as “Caucasian with a British background” and was fluent in the English language. In 2011, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Language and Literature. In 2013, he earned a Bachelor of Education degree from a university in southwestern Ontario and became certified with the Ontario College of Teachers with teaching qualifications for the P/J divisions. Steve did not have any
Additional Qualifications or certifications related to education. He did, however, successfully complete a Tribes Training program. Steve had been an instructor lifeguard for the past 10 years and enrolled in this workshop series to better himself for the purposes of providing education for everyone.

Teaching experience. Unlike many other participants, Steve had minimal overall classroom experience. He had taught students from an athletics and camp perspective for several years. Nonetheless, while in a teacher education program he completed his practicum placements in an independent school and a public school. In both situations, Steve did not recall having to work directly with any LEALs in the classroom.

Prior professional development or training. Steve did not have any LEAL-related training or professional development. He claimed himself to be a practical learner and knew that he would best learn in practice regardless of any formal training he was to receive.

Initial self-perceived preparedness for LEALs. Overall, Steve did not feel confident in his abilities to fulfill the multiple roles and responsibilities as a mainstream teacher of LEALs, which includes planning and implementing curricular standards, accommodations to instruction, environment, and assessment, as well as inducing meaningful classroom engagement. However, he hoped to learn methods and strategies that would help enhance his confidence. Regarding preparedness to meet the academic needs of LEALs, Steve rated himself as a 4 on a 5-point scale. About his preparedness to meet the language needs of LEALs, including increasing proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, he rated himself as 4, 2, 4, and 3, respectively. Steve
elaborated that his “lack of preparedness is attributed to having very little in-class experience.”

**Beliefs and Background Knowledge Prior to Workshop Series**

Prior to the workshop series, participants completed a pre-workshop questionnaire to establish a baseline for this study. Questions aimed to seek background information, perceived preparedness for LEALs and to gauge their existing knowledge and understanding of English language learning, English language teaching, and LEALs in general. The questionnaire required approximately 30 minutes to complete.

**Perceived Role and Responsibilities for LEALs**

Roles and responsibilities were explored in terms of mainstream classroom teachers, ESL specialists, and school boards. Participants were asked how they perceived each stakeholder’s roles and responsibilities in relation to LEALs. With regard to mainstream classroom teachers, participants were asked to provide specific examples of any differences that may arise in the teaching of LEALs from mainstream students.

Mainstream classroom teachers perceive their overall role and responsibilities to be the “success of all” children through smooth day-to-day teaching activities. These include educating and evaluating knowledge and understanding, ensuring comprehension, encouragement, and providing an effective and equitable learning environment. Lindsay, Meghan, and Madison also included humanistic aspects of teaching. They commented on the importance of “nurturing” the development and “well-being of LEALs” as a person and learner. Tina included opinions that extend beyond her own capacities; for example, taking AQ courses and involvement with others, whether it is collaborating with families or education “specialists for advice and resources.” Steve’s viewpoint was notably
different from the other participants who focused primarily on language and culture; he
specified that English communication is secondary to teaching content as the classroom
teacher: “I don’t think needing to learn English needs to be the biggest concern.” In
addition, three participants saw their role to include accommodations for LEALs. In
contrast to the other participants, Diana did not differentiate her role as a mainstream
teacher as being any different for LEALs specifically.

The role and responsibilities of ESL specialists related primarily to resources,
assessment, and in-class support. Along with ESL specialists, Steve suggested that
volunteers or educational assistants could work with LEALs on processing information in
the classroom. He noted that additional support can also aid with attention distribution in
the classroom:

Having an educational assistant in the classroom maybe, even to take some of
their time to help out with those students. Time management is going to be a big
thing; it’s how much time am I going to afford a LEAL compared to another
student that deserves just as much of my time.

While most teachers expected the ESL specialist to work in their classes or complete
assessments, Tina stated that the ESL specialists should educate teachers to do the
assessments themselves. Thus, the ESL specialist would be used more as a teacher
resource. Lindsay had a similar view, as she would like specialists to direct her to a
collection of resources that would benefit her teaching practice. Despite their perceptions
of ESL specialists, most participants had limited experience working with these
professionals; instead, they were more familiar with learning resource teachers filling
similar roles. Catherine was the only participant to interact with travelling itinerant ESL
teachers. From this type of specialist, she would expect specific strategies to use with students. As a former student in an ESL program, Natalie believed that ESL specialists should focus on building LEALs’ confidence, as opposed to simply language, to promote overall success in the classroom.

Participants most repeatedly expected school boards to provide requested supports, in-class specialist support, consultation, resources, and training for teachers. Tina suggested that school boards provide professional development days dedicated to LEALs, resource banks, and community support for parents to learn English, too. These services would be most beneficial if made mandatory. Steve’s response was notably different from the others as he highlights, above all else, the importance of school boards being patient with student progress. He felt that the expectations were often unrealistic for teachers. Support from the school board was deemed a significant contributing factor to the education of LEALs. Rebecca believed that the school boards needed to take a proactive position by providing supports immediately upon the arrival of LEALs. These supports should align with the demographics of the incoming students.

**Anticipated Classroom Barriers**

Participants were asked if they anticipated any classroom barriers in teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms. There were four predominant concerns, including communication, time, inclusion, and other concerns as teachers. Other recurrent concerns, though less, are mentioned below including concerns with LEALs, parents, and resources.

A primary concern was the anticipated language barrier that inhibits communication or understanding between the teacher and student, thus resulting in a
barrier to accessing curriculum content. There was also the fear around not knowing what is being talked about when students utilize their home languages in the classroom. Regarding not knowing the language, participants such as Heather worried about the potential for miscommunication or distraction. Another concern was related to the potential for students to strictly translate the words without understanding or learning the language, and thus becoming reliant on translators.

Time was a significant concern for many, especially with regard to meeting the needs of LEALs while fulfilling the demands of teaching for all students. Diana, Jordan, and Andrea stressed the barrier of “limited time to balance with meeting needs of other students” including gifted, behavioural, and children with exceptionalities. Concerns stemmed from a fear of hindering the educational experience of other students. Andrea, Natalie, and Rebecca expressed unease with the individualized time it takes to support LEALs. A related classroom pressure includes the number of students that are in the class. Brian, Victoria, and Jordan imagined that the “number of students in the classroom may hinder the amount of time a teacher can spend one-on-one with LEAL students.” Having experience with LEALs, Catherine was concerned with the time it took for students to actually complete tasks, even when accommodated.

Participants also anticipated difficulty in facilitating social interactions and inclusion in classroom learning. Concerns branched from the challenges of facilitating in an authentic and genuine manner. Meghan specified her apprehensions as “social neglect from peers.” Similarly, Lindsay was uneasy with the thought of “classmates not being accepting of a new and different peer.” While wanting to support the development of a
social network for LEALs, they were unsure of how to do so and were weary of the outcome.

Some participants expressed that they themselves, as teachers, are barriers. Five participants explicitly expressed fear for teaching LEALs when they have a lack of understanding LEALs, the progression of learning an additional language, and relevant training. Diana specifies some gaps as “Limited knowledge in how to best help LEALs of certain levels and how to adapt or modify instruction and assessments while being valid and accurate.” The ability to provide appropriate accommodations was a concern expressed by several participants. Likewise, Lindsay questioned her ability to “judge their content knowledge and abilities correctly.” Jordan expressed a different concern for teachers of LEALs; he was troubled by the “toll it takes on teachers to essentially teach every lesson twice.” Catherine supported this concern as she described some of the methods she has used to accommodate LEALs and the demand it placed on the teacher. Victoria had a unique perspective and viewed herself as being a barrier as a monolingual speaker.

Other concerns, while not predominant, were recurrent and noteworthy. Participants noted the potential for LEALs to be unwilling to learn English, which can create a barrier to learning and teaching. There were also concerns with addressing LEALs’ “self-confidence,” “comfort,” and “feelings of failure.” Parents were the topic of two potential barriers: an inability to communicate effectively with them, and “not having English language learning support from learners’ parents at home (e.g., them not encouraging practice or practicing with them)”. Lastly, participants anticipated a lack of resources and support at the school and board levels. This lack of resources included
external assistance, books, access, and funding which are seen to inevitably hinder teachers’ abilities to meet the needs of LEALs.

Benefits to Being a Minority Language Speaker in Canada

Several benefits were mentioned for having a first language other than English in Canada; however, two themes were prevalent. Nine participants noted that Canada is a multicultural country and a different language would allow LEALs to engage with different cultures. Specific benefits include increased involvement in other communities, enjoying various music, movies, and social opportunities, as well as the benefit of exposure for other students to new cultures. Eight participants mentioned employment as a major benefit, especially for government and administration jobs.

Furthermore, three participants mentioned personal benefits rather than social or professional ones. One mentioned the benefit of having a native language for future generations, which would maintain heritage and traditions. They thought that this may be an important consideration for language learners’ families. Another mentioned the benefit of additional confidence for LEALs as they would have an added language skill that others do not possess. Lastly, one participant mentioned that there are cognitive benefits to multilingualism that include a deeper appreciation for other cultures. Brittany was the only participant who believed that there were no benefits to an additional language since all educational institutions require students to speak English.

Foreign Language Use in the Classroom

Participants unanimously agreed that they would incorporate foreign languages in their classroom, with only two participants expressing any hesitation. In particular, most agreed that they would encourage basic words and everyday expressions such as “hello,”
“goodbye,” “help,” “washroom,” and numbers. They would also encourage new students to teach a few words to their peers. Some would do this as an introductory exercise, while others would aim to make this ongoing activity particularly in social studies, for example, during celebrations, festivals, and holidays. For instance, Meghan would “set aside a week or so to allow students to become aware that there are other languages and cultures.” Even with a basic use of foreign languages, it was believed that an atmosphere of trust, interest, and cultural awareness may be fostered.

**Definition of LEAL Prior to the Workshop Series**

Participants were asked to provide a definition of a LEAL. Their definitions were short with limited qualifiers. All participants defined a LEAL as a person who does not speak English as a first or native language and English is not spoken in the home. Some participants also included the fact that English is an additional language that they are learning and it may not necessarily be their second language. Natalie added that it is someone who is “struggling to learn English.” Four participants also specified that it was someone who was new to the country or had recently moved to Canada, within 2 years.

**Determining Level of Proficiency and Initial Assessment Tools**

None of the participants were aware of or familiar with any tools or assessments designed specifically for LEALs. Various generalist strategies were mentioned to determine initial levels of proficiency for reading, writing, and oral language. To obtain a general sense of proficiency, several participants suggested using running records, conversations, and pictures. Reading and writing levels would be determined using standardized leveled booked, sight word assessments, and writing samples. Many mentioned using grade-appropriate materials for their assessments. However, Andrea
stated that she would not attempt to determine proficiency herself, but would rather seek an ESL specialist who has the training to do so. Despite the methods shared, formal assessments designed to assess English proficiency or designed for LEAL placement were absent from their repertoire.

**Special Tools or Resources for LEALs**

Technology and language translators were the most predominantly mentioned tool or resource for LEALs in the classroom. These were seen as beneficial for translating language into something that could be more easily understood. Technology was also mentioned for games, audio, and videos. Victoria stated that “A lot of kids no matter where they are from they enjoy computers and they are a lot more inspired by it.” Technology was seen as a tool that could motivate and engage LEALs. When asked to specify which programs or websites would be used, they were unaware of any specific options. ESL specialists were also perceived to be an important resource for LEALs due to their specialized knowledge and likely repertoire of strategies for teachers. There was no mention of any other human resources to access for language learning support.

Madison, Natalie, Catherine, and Andrea were unsure of any special tools or resources that they would use. They felt that they did not know of anything in particular to mention. Catherine admitted that “I don’t really have much to add to that one, I’m sorry, I have lots and lots to learn.” Though unaware of any tools or resources, they are willing to learn about the options that were available for LEALs.

**Assessment Strategies for LEALs**

Participants were asked how they would assess LEALs’ learning in their programming—specifically, if their assessment strategies would differ from those used
with mainstream students. Furthermore, they were asked to elaborate on their choices by sharing how they would document progress and how they knew their selected strategies would be effective.

The most prevalent strategies offered were heavily reliant on teachers such as observation, anecdotal notes, video and audio recordings, interviews or oral conferencing, hired translator or educational assistant, daily recordings, oral assessments, and scribing. Other strategies such as collecting written work and portfolios were deemed to be effective, though they were unsure on how exactly it would work and what would be included. Many participants found that a reduced requirement was a viable assessment strategy for LEALs. Natalie was more concerned with the level of the student prior to determining any assessment strategy. Her strategies were based on her own experiences as a LEAL and revolved more around scaffolding student learning oppose to necessarily reducing expectations.

For many participants, when they were asked to elaborate on their selection of assessment strategies, they were unable to articulate the differences or anticipated differences of LEAL documentation. Tina stated she was “Largely unsure of assessments used to assess progress with language development.” This comment mirrored many responses from participants who often knew of strategies they could use, but were unsure of how or where they fit on a language development continuum.

**Strategies and Advice for Parents and Families of LEALs**

Participants were asked what strategies or advice they would give parents and families for supporting LEALs at home. All but one response advised parents to learn or use English in their home. Catherine, alternatively, focused her response on the
importance of maintaining the native language while learning English, and stressed the significance of partnering with parents in a language they understand. Specific strategies and advice were given for all four domains of English including speaking, reading, writing, and listening.

For oral English development, teachers saw English language learning as a family effort as evidenced through their responses. “Practice speaking English together” was the most common advice given. The common stance is illustrated in Brittany’s suggestion to families: “Speak the language as much as they can at home; if they don’t know English, take classes.” She felt that parents’ effort to speak English demonstrates its importance and support for their children. Brian also stated the importance of advising parents to study English with their children to provide motivation and positive reinforcement of the process. Additionally, Tina advised parents to speak English “all the time” or as much as possible in the home. Some participants had a less all-encompassing approach; for example, Meghan stated that it is enough for parents to use “key English words” and “practice dialogue.” Rather than attempting to switch entirely to English, incorporating some conversational English was deemed adequate. In line with the expressed importance of practice and exposure to the language, some recommended that their parents invited fluent English speakers into the home, whether it is family or community members.

To develop English reading skills, most participants would advise parents to read with their children every day in the English language. For example, Natalie stated that “it is probably a good idea to read to their kids in the language that they are trying to learn.” In support of this advice, Heather advised teachers to send English books home with students for families to read together. No mention of parent fluency was made. More
specifically to this advice, parents would be instructed to read to their children in English for at least 30 minutes a day and to expose children to “several kinds of texts” in English.

To support LEALs in the development of their written English, participants supported the idea of parents writing with their children to practice their English abilities. Specific exercises or practices were not mentioned. Meghan suggested that parents “write in English for simple tasks such as notes and grocery lists, et cetera.” Using everyday experiences to add written practice was seen as an authentic opportunity to practice.

Two participants offered advice for developing English listening skills. Madison and Jordan advised parents to watch English movies or TV programming instead of their native language. Additional advice to develop all areas of English development included making use of assistive technology, getting involved in English speaking community groups, or taking children to events or places that expose them to English (e.g., museums, plays). Overall, the strategies and advice provided stemmed predominantly from maximum exposure and practice in all domains of language development.

During the Workshop Series

The following section outlines findings obtained during the 10-session workshop series. The data was obtained in both face-to-face and online sessions through discussion posts, journal reflections, observations, field notes, and learning tasks. The findings in this section aim to illustrate any changes or ongoing learning that took place during the series.

Myths and Misconceptions

Participants were asked to identify whether a series of statements were true or false and to provide justification for their selection. The purpose of this task was to gauge their understanding of LEALs and language learning through the use of common myths.
and misconceptions that can misguide teaching. While all the statements were false, all participants identified at least one statement as true. Of the 15 participants and six statements, four participants identified one statement as “true,” five participants identified two statements as “true,” three participants identified three statements as “true,” and three participants identified five statements as “true.” The myths and misconceptions are presented below in order of error frequency.

Ten participants identified the following statement as true: “Children learn second languages quickly and easily. They soak up new languages like sponges.” Six participants commented on younger brains finding it easier, being open for knowledge, having a greater capacity, and still developing in comparison to adults. Madison added to her selection, saying that “I believe it is understood that children should only be learning a maximum of two languages at a time for effective acquisition.” Two participants also stated that children have an ability to “pick up” language unlike adults.

Six participants identified the following statements as true: (a) “Students require ESL or language support until they can speak English”; (b) “Children have a limited capacity for language. Learning two languages at once can result in delays, incomplete mastery, or even impairment in one of the languages”; and (c) “Bilingualism leads to linguistic confusion (e.g., children who switch between two languages).” ESL or language supports were deemed to be a likely benefit to helping students feel more comfortable and confident in their abilities yet, was not viewed as a necessity. Conversely, Brittany claimed that children could learn a language on their own to become fluent. Regarding the second and third statements, learning two languages was viewed as: a potential impediment, a negative influence on the potential for learning, and a cause for
confusion or language delays. Natalie wrote that “two languages can lead to confusion; it is probably best to teach a child one language first and then they don’t get confused, especially when they are young because it can affect them academically.” Similar to the previous statement, some participants believed that bilingualism could lead to linguistic confusion due to limited intelligence capacities and based on observation.

Five participants identified the following statements as true: (a) “Proficiency in oral English is a prerequisite for receiving academic instruction” and (b) “It takes 1-3 years to develop English fluency.” Some participants believed that oral English was a prerequisite to classroom learning or, as Lindsay stated, “true in the current education system in Ontario.” Similarly, Victoria stated, “in most Ontario schools, teachers are only required to speak English.” Oral language was considered to represent a student’s preparedness and understanding of instruction. Participants who agreed with the second statement found that 3 years was sufficient time for students to learn English, including phonetics, grammar, spelling, and overall grasping the full language. Many believed that English fluency could be developed within the first year.

In the second session of the workshop series, the myths and misconceptions were explained using research findings. Upon learning the results of their responses, they reflected on the process and outcome. While it takes time and an active effort to make a lasting change to their beliefs and its underpinnings, this was an effective quick gauge and visual as to how prominent misconceptions continue to be and how they too may perpetuate them unintentionally. Participants were surprised by the results as many of the statements contradicted their existing beliefs. Following the explanations, they commented on how the realities and facts were “perfectly reasonable” and identified new
ways of thinking about different cultures and raising awareness of the beauty in which LEALs contribute to Canadian multiculturalism. The results also illuminated a likely source for frustrations and misinterpretations for teachers and even LEALs. It also made them aware of the stigmas that are often attached with LEAL education. Learning that LEALs take more than 1 to 3 years to gain academic fluency was a major area of surprise to some and they could see how basic conversational skills could easily mislead educators. The silent period was also interesting to many, since it re-emphasized the importance of establishing a relationship and comfort in the learning environment. It also disabled many assumptions and advice to having student practice and participate upon arrival.

Learning about the myths and misconceptions enabled participants to feel more knowledgeable and prepared to understand the needs of LEALs. It also led them to realize how much they had yet to learn. As Tina reflected,

I was quite surprised at how many of us believed these misconceptions. It is scary to think that some of our teaching strategies have been misguided. Even when we are trying to do the best for our students, we unknowingly are not meeting their needs.

Overall, participants found that this task made them more aware of what they could do, not only for LEALs but for all students.

**Cultural Competence**

The development of cultural competence was a reoccurring topic in discussion posts. While it was impossible to prepare for all cultural differences, participants discussed methods of addressing situations and implications for attitudes towards them. It was determined that a particular level of understanding and sensitivity is required,
especially since, as Diana noted, “how important it is to protect first languages.” Two major themes arose related to cultural competence, including cultural awareness and language profiles.

Diana’s reflection post about cultural awareness indicated that we as teachers know how important it is to get to know each student, but oftentimes our assumptions/presumptions may get in the way of that, we may not be aware of many of our social and cultural norms until we are in a place that has different norms, they are pointed out to us by those with different norms, or there is some tension/conflict that arises from the difference in norms.

All participants perceived themselves as culturally aware, but they had different levels of cultural awareness stemming from their experiences. Natalie reflected on her personal experiences with immigration and “assimilating to Canadian culture” while others reflected on their upbringing, work, and schooling experiences. Growing up and going to school with “diversity” was a major factor. Though the levels of diversity differed and some felt the need to differentiate between European diversity and racial diversity in their experiences.

Experience teaching overseas was a major factor impacting cultural awareness for Rebecca, Diana, Jordan, and Brian as they learned to be cautious of their own beliefs, cultural differences, and not wanting to offend others. They particularly developed a new consciousness of themselves and their actions in those situations. In Canada, they felt that others had to adapt to Canadian culture; in these experiences, it was them that had to adapt to a different majority. Jordan reported that being in different countries made him “stand out” which allowed him to become easily aware of how different he could be.
After recounting a situation in which he inadvertently offended a co-worker, he stated: “I became culturally aware that our cultures are different for sure.” Brian noted that being in another country helped him to realize cultural differences. Stepping outside and taking a different perspective helped him to notice differences he had not previously noticed:

It hit me that that’s when I had to change what I did, I have really stepped back and I can really see the, well it’s easy to say that Canadians or westerners don’t have culture, we definitely do and it’s very different from other places.

From his travels, he sympathized with the challenges and “overwhelming” nature of learning a new culture, values, expectations, language, and education system. Teaching overseas had taught these participants cultural sensitivity, different cultural norms, and the importance of reflecting on personal cultural affiliations.

Madison, Victoria, and Lindsay developed their cultural awareness later in their experiences. Madison, as a graduate student, had been discussing culture in one of her courses, which led to some interesting and eye-opening discussions. She recounted a story told by a professor about stark interpretive differences in other cultures and realized many things she never considered. She also stated that she was “mind blown” by her recent experiences and attributed much of her cultural and language awareness specifically to the workshop series. Victoria had her “eyes opened” in her current school where she had noticed that she was a “minority.” She had noticed that she was changing the way she did certain things, including the way she dressed. She dressed more conservatively and was more conscious of adhering to the customs and cultures around her. Lindsay recounted developing her cultural awareness in university after completing a learning task on white privilege. Prior to that experience, she never questioned her
privilege. She learned to put herself in others’ shoes and to reflect on people’s cultural backgrounds and how it might impact how they see themselves. This and similar experiences have lead Lindsay to participate in this study; she stated, “I thought about how unaware I was there and how I wanted to change that, how I needed to change that.” These participants have had highly impactful cultural experiences later in their lives.

Language profiles, such as those from UCLA’s Language Materials Project, created a lot of discussion amongst participants. They found value in learning general background information about countries, cultural differences, core values, and language characteristics including pronunciation, customs, and beliefs. With this understanding, they anticipated that it could enhance a student’s comfort level with them, assist in making an authentic connection, and help build rapport. The profiles could “fill in some gaps about the culture that you might not be aware of.” It could also provide insight into “specific differences in grammatical structures [that] may help you predict common language errors.” Overall, language profiles were deemed valuable for providing the basic information necessary to establish culturally responsive lessons and “instill the value of global education.” However, participants were concerned with individual differences not being accounted for, collective overgeneralization, stereotyping creating a bias toward students they just met, or creating a false sense of understanding. Despite the concerns, participants agreed that the language and cultural profiles are valuable for informing teachers of possible strengths, needs and characteristics. In particular, they felt that teachers should be cognizant of social norms, expectations, manners, and behaviours of their students. In some situations, understanding language patterns could help teachers

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1 Though the project’s funding was terminated in 2014, the LMP website maintains archival Language Profiles listings. See: http://www.lmp.ucla.edu/profile.aspx?menu=004
to understand where and how students were confused with various aspects of learning the English language. All teachers agreed, however, that sole dependency on the profiles would be detrimental and counterproductive to any LEAL.

**Shocks, Surprises, and Discomfort**

Participants were asked if there were any instances of shock, surprise, or discomfort in the learning process since these responses often yield significant, deep, or memorable learning. Participants identified five primary causes including statistics, learning tasks, lack of support, guest speakers, as well as expectations and training. Other substantial, though less prevalent, occurrences were also mentioned.

Brittany, Meghan, and Heather were shocked by the statistics, quotes, ratios, and facts presented at the beginning of each PowerPoint presentation. Brittany elaborated:

The lack of support for LEAL students, especially for school boards, you think that they are the ones that know what they are doing and what they are supposed to be doing and supporting, and to see that lack of support is pretty scary.

For Meghan, the statistics became a significant motivator for learning:

It sparks interest first of all, but then you get frustrated because you are like, what is going on here, why is this going on unnoticed, what is the root behind the problem, but I think just the statistics alone were pretty shocking.

Statistics pertained to the status of Ontario schools and supports for LEALs.

The myths and “Eglish” task were identified as the most impactful learning tasks. The “Eglish” task aimed to provide participants with a glimpse of a LEAL’s experience in completing a typical classroom activity. Participants were required to complete a task without understanding or using words with the letter “n.” They found that the restriction
extended the time required, caused gaps in reading, and made responding difficult as they had to filter through their vocabulary. As Tina reflected in a post:

I sat there going, I can’t do any of this … if I was a child I wouldn’t necessarily know how to use the thesaurus or the Internet for that, and then I wouldn’t have that available to me, and then this would become 100% impossible and then I’m like oh my gosh, this is so aggravating, I loved that it was so aggravating, made us kind of feel how some students feel.

Madison in turn found the task to be overwhelming because I have never been put in a situation where I felt that I don’t have the skills necessary to be successful. I have never been in a situation where it is so different and so that experience, reading a section of text that just was then making no sense to me, was very overwhelming and disturbing.

Victoria’s response to this task was that it was a mind blower for me, because then you really understand what it would be like to try and be thrown a text book and say, ok read this and answer these questions, and have no idea what on earth is going on other than look at the pictures or maybe a few simple words, I think that one was definitely one of those things that really shocks you, and makes you understand a little bit more what your students are going through.

Participants valued the opportunity to experience the other perspective.

A dominant theme of the panel session as well as participant discussions was the lack of LEAL-related supports available to students and teachers. Following the panel session, Madison was “saddened to learn that a LEAL high school student could go
throughout an entire school day without saying a word if there are no supports in place.”

One of the panelists, a traveling itinerant ESL specialist, visits over 40 students and that is often only by student request. Madison was left wondering how many students who are shy fall through the cracks with this model. For Brian, Victoria, Natalie, and Tina, it was a “real eye opener” when they learned that the majority of high schools have no formal ESL program. With LEALs becoming more prevalent they felt that this situation merits greater attention. Furthermore, LEALs should not feel pressured to attend a school that is far from their homes to receive the education that they deserve and are entitled to because of lack of services. Additionally, it was concerning to participants that there were no social integration programs for LEALs. With the understanding that there is a lack of support available, teachers felt that it made them want to learn more and prepare themselves better so that they may provide support that they may not receive from anyone else. With this regard, they felt that they had learned a lot of valuable insight and information beyond what they had intended including that other ESL programs other than withdrawal support existed. Support and services were a major concern for participants.

The panelists shared insightful stories with the participants regarding their roles and observations in schools. Participants were “amazed” and “intrigued” by the speakers’ personal experiences. Jordan’s interest in LEALs peaked with the opportunity to meet and listen to the guests, even pieces in which he felt did not immediately apply to him:

“Hearing their war stories about how to deal with certain situations, those are learning experiences for me. I took a lot of that in, how to behave amongst certain cultural parents.”

The biggest shock for Brian was the overall experience of the panel session, because that’s when you see it in the real world they were talking about how little support
there really is, I think that was kind of a shock especially when we have school boards throughout Canada that really pride themselves on multiculturalism and diversity, they are not really giving forth what they should be.

Despite how shocking the panelist session was, it made participants feel more determined to offer better support to LEALs within the classroom, a space where they can ensure support is provided.

Rebecca was “totally shocked” to learn that teachers have to be prepared for LEALs yet there is no expectation that they take the English as a Second Language AQ course. Meanwhile, there was very little support and funding from the government. Where funds were allocated, they were not mandated to be spent on ESL programming. She felt that LEALs were not taken seriously and that they were held to an unrealistic expectation without the necessary support: “It is a very close-minded view to expect people who don’t speak English as their first language to simply just learn it.” In hindsight, Catherine found the most surprising thing for her was realizing how little time was spent on teaching LEALs in teacher education. She felt that it “should have happened” and just to realize that you think somebody gets it but there could be so much that they don’t understand, I guess that I was kind of sad.” Similarly, Lindsay found that she was most shocked that she had never even thought that teachers were not qualified to teach in this way:

I didn’t have the knowledge, I had seen ESL support for students of other languages but it didn’t occur to me that there was a whole other population of learners who also could benefit from getting it, and a lot of the statistics really did make me think.
Learning about the policies, expectations, and training of teachers provided some significant points of reflection.

Other topics that were shocking or disturbing included learning about recruited international students in public school boards, board developed resources, and limited knowledge of teachers. Participants were disturbed to learn that public boards were seeking and charging international students knowing that ESL supports were limited. They felt that this was done solely for financial gain without appropriate academic or social supports for the students. In Madison’s opinion, “we are advertising a dissatisfactory product.” Others found it shocking to learn that there were board-developed resources that are only shared with teachers from that board. Tina was disappointed and questioned why boards were not sharing their knowledge, resources, and experiences with each other to avoid duplication of resources and wasted funds. She felt that this demonstrated a lack of student-centeredness within the boards of education.

Lindsey was surprised within the first few sessions to uncover her knowledge level regarding LEALs. She stated that it really “illustrates my lack of knowledge of not only second language development, but even knowledge of how to teach language acquisition to students who speak alternative dialects of English, I was upset.” She further reflected on a previous teaching experience:

This really blows my mind when I think that now as a certified teacher I am no better informed of how I could or should teach a student with language learning needs, yet if I was his classroom teacher I would be expected to do so with little support. It really upsets me that I think they might not be getting proper ESL support, and that instead teachers are winging it like I did.
This was a common realization among participants by the end of the study; they learned what they were unaware of or did not know going into the series.

**Current and Future Teaching Practice**

Throughout the workshop series, participants reflected on future practice and how some of their learning may influence changes to the way they plan, teach, and assess student learning. There was a sense of new awareness for effectively implementing the curriculum and accommodations without deteriorating the educational experience of the English speakers in the class. Overall, meaningful learning for all students was at the heart of their planning and teaching moving forward. Major themes include added consideration for LEALs, LEAL-specific strategies, and assessment practices.

Jordan found that he was thinking more about LEALs as the workshop series progressed:

Over the course of the past couple of months I have been thinking a lot more about LEALs and how they impact the environment in any classroom. This course has made me think more about LEALs specifically when it comes to planning my lessons. I now put more thought into adjusting my lessons and accommodating the LEALs in my classroom.

This is echoed by others, including Diana who aimed to “try to more broadly adapt resources and supports from across contexts, subjects, et cetera.” As they learned more about the challenges faced by LEALs and specific strategies, they were more cognizant of their needs.

Strategies for teaching and communicating were mentioned as highly valuable. Some were able to immediately amend their practice as they received new positions with
LEALs or had new LEALs join their classes. Catherine in particular found the workshop series timely as she gained three new LEALs midway through the series. Participants noted that they had learned quite a few new strategies that could easily be implemented immediately. Madison noted that the greatest change to her future practice would be her level of patience:

I think that waiting for students to respond and being patient with that thinking time will always be a challenge for me. I get excited when students get excited about learning and tend to jump at the first person who puts their hand up. I know that this extra thinking time is very valuable.

An understanding of language development and language learning needs altered teachers’ strategies for future teaching. In addition to having a better understanding of teaching LEALs, there was an appreciation for strategies for vocabulary development. Victoria enthusiastically commented on possible ways to incorporate new strategies in future practice. All participants appreciated the variety of specific strategies including those for different aspects of language learning, subject matter, environment, and general teaching or communication.

Lastly, assessment practices were an area of current and future change. Participants commented on how they would make changes to the planning and implementation of student assessments to better meet their language needs and match their abilities. Brittany reflected on her changing assessment practice: “I can see my assessment strategies becoming more extensive and better capable of assessing students. There were just so many ideas in the session that are so useful and I see myself able to
use them without a problem!” Overall, participants found that the series was “offering a lot to think about” regarding their teaching practice.

**Gaps in Experiences or Practice**

While comfortable teaching in mainstream classrooms, several participants stated in their reflections that they are “underprepared” to teach LEALs in mainstream classrooms. While initially more confident, those with overseas experiences felt that their teaching skills were not always transferable to a mainstream classroom. Participants unanimously agreed that there were differences between teaching non-LEALs and teaching LEALs as well as teaching overseas with entire classrooms of LEALs. Based on their field experience, significant gaps and challenges were identified.

In practicum, Brian experienced working with a LEAL in a mainstream classroom: “I understand that it was quite difficult for that student to reach his true potential with the language barrier that existed. However, I didn’t know exactly how to approach teaching in a way to mitigate this barrier.” In a reflection post, Rebecca explained that “I have the most difficulty with imagining how to accommodate for LEALs.” Similarly, Heather claimed, in my B.Ed. program, this was not an area that was discussed. Working with LEALs also has not been an area that I have experienced in the classroom. I think lack of exposure, but also lack of academic instruction has combined to my feeling of a lack of preparedness.

Steve and Catherine also identified a gap in their understanding due to “having very little in-class experience.”
Participants with overseas experience stated that their experiences were invaluable to their teaching; however, they recognized that teaching LEALs in mainstream is a much different experience. Brian posted:

Teaching ESL in Korea is very different than supporting students learning English through an immersive setting in a mainstream classroom. Even in this setting, I learned from my experiences during what I would call a “trial-and-error” period. Reflecting on my pre-service education, I cannot remember any direct references to support LEALs. This is definitely an area that needs to be addressed to further support and prepare emerging teachers.

These participants acknowledged the differences of teaching overseas and their concerns in Canadian classrooms.

In a discussion post, Tina positioned her preparedness for LEALs at an “unconfident, unknowledgeable level.” She attributed her feelings to her education, including a lack of experience with LEALs during her B.A./B.Ed. concurrent program including practicums. In one experience she had working with a LEAL, she remembered identifying a language barrier and “feeling unsure of how to break the barrier.” She elaborated on this experience:

The reality was I did not have the knowledge, experience or strategies to help this LEAL to the best of my abilities. I believe my B.Ed. is largely responsible, as their primary purpose is to prepare teachers for the classroom. As a certified teacher I am unprepared for when my future classes have LEALs.

Tina also discussed the issues with relying solely on practicums to teach teachers how to work with LEALs. She found that the tasks LEALs were assigned were nothing related to
the content the other students were learning and “that was horrible.” Rather, “they were
told to go on the computer, use a dictionary, collect words, or do extra math; it didn’t go
along with the classes’ lessons. There was no inclusion.” Thus, she would have liked to
see her experience paired with some training to enhance her abilities.

Now, with the LEAL-specific learning of the workshop series, participants found
that they were focusing more attention on the LEALs they worked with. They tried new
strategies that were taught in the sessions and even found that they intentionally sought
communication opportunities with LEALs. They also realized that many strategies
transferred to other students in the classroom, which enhanced the flow of their teaching
day. In their current experience, alternative assessment options were also being explored
with their students to provide equitable opportunities to succeed. For example, Heather
allowed a student to videotape an oral presentation as opposed to presenting in front of the
class. She, in particular, was discovering the many ways technology could be used to assist
LEALs and support their learning. Being in the field, Victoria had found that reporting and
assessments could be more LEAL-centered. Assessment accommodations in general for
LEALs were something that many participants did not think of before. After being in a
classroom with diverse needs, Tina found that her lack of direction for planning and
teaching LEALs went to show how important diagnostic assessments were for LEALs.

Overall, experiences in mainstream classrooms with LEALs require different
considerations and intentional planning. Participants were often “thrown into the mix of
things” and relied on instinct and learning in-situ. Steve found the policies governing how
to work with LEALs and what is expected of teachers to be scary since the training he
received did not match the expectations. Brian felt that it is essential for teachers to have
experiences working with LEALs to make connections between the theory and practice and to obtain a more holistic sense of how to approach teaching them: “Until you are faced with that situation where you know you have that lacking knowledge, that’s the point where you realize that you don’t know; that’s when you kind of move.” Brian only learned that he needed to develop his skills after being faced with a situation in which he did not know how to respond.

After the Workshop Series

Each participant completed an exit interview with the researcher after the completion of the workshop series. The following section includes findings from the interviews, culminating activities, and final journal reflection entries. The findings in this section highlight participants’ self-perceived beliefs, knowledge, and preparation.

Teachers’ Beliefs

Participants reflected on their beliefs throughout the workshop series, whether they were confirmed or changed through the process. Most felt ill-prepared at the onset of the series and still continued to believe that teacher education programs did little to prepare them for this demographic. The content, policies, statistics, and number of resources and strategies available surprised them, reassured them, and often changed their beliefs regarding the teaching of LEALs in mainstream classrooms. Participants with experiences abroad or literacy courses also found that their initial beliefs regarding preparedness were deceiving. The sessions illuminated several reflection points and content that they had not considered, leading participants to the conclusion that their initial teacher training was indeed not enough.
The series confirmed some participants’ beliefs regarding the responsibilities of teachers in teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms, including the many challenges that may be present. Andrea found that the sessions strengthened her existing opinions. Rebecca reflected that while she felt that her approach will remain similar, the series had made her realize that there was a lot more encompassed in teaching LEALs than she originally thought. Regardless of their confirmed beliefs, all participants agreed that they were better prepared to meet the challenges of teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms.

Many beliefs changed regarding LEALs and LEAL-related classroom practice. While many had tools and ideas of what they could do to help the demographic, they commented on how they now possess tools and ideas to teach every LEAL in the classroom. Furthermore, the workshop series impacted initial misconceptions that lead to misguided practice and ideas. Brittany stated that the series has “personally impacted my beliefs and perspectives of teaching in the classroom.” Before commencing, she did not realize the prevalence of LEALs in mainstream classrooms, who classified as a LEAL, and how rarely their needs were effectively met or supported. She commented on how her awareness and attitude has changed. Lindsay echoed Brittany’s remarks:

My perception has changed, I didn’t realize how much of an issue it was so now it’s made me think about all the additional responsibilities I think that it brings to teaching and to teachers that I have never considered. So it has definitely changed my perception and I enjoyed the opportunity to reflect.

Participants noted their observations of the ongoing existence of traditional views and methodologies of teaching and learning.
In the post-interview, participants reflected explicitly on the impact the workshop series has had, if any, on their beliefs and perspectives on teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms, including the way they think about learning English and the way that they think about teaching English. Catherine stated that her beliefs have “evolved” over the past few months; after gaining some knowledge and being exposed to an alternative perspective, she claimed to have a greater respect for students who are learning English for the first time. Brian reflected on what he had gained throughout the duration of the workshop series and declared that the series had “absolutely changed” his perspective of teaching and addressing the needs of LEALs in mainstream classrooms. He revealed his ignorance for cultural and belief differences within groups of LEALs. While initially believing that grouping all LEALs together would be of benefit to them, he learned that differences within groups can pose “hurdles” that hinder students’ learning.

Diana’s perceptions regarding assessment changed, most notably from a belief that tests were only fair if the same for everyone. She now believed that equitable testing required differentiation and a variety of ways for students to demonstrate their learning. Understanding LEAL-specific accommodations was a major point of personal impact on participants’ beliefs and perspectives, as was learning how small changes and additional considerations may have “profound” impact on overall learning, which for example allows LEALs to focus on their knowledge rather than vocabulary recall. Madison never considered how much LEAL support also included supporting their families and including them on the transition time: “Many times I have seen students begin to flourish socially, culturally, and in language acquisition within the school setting and parents were left behind. This could lead to a divide in the family which was not beneficial for anyone in
the end.” Her beliefs regarding the importance of including families in the process were changed. Victoria’s eyes were opened to many things that she was unaware of and has made her beliefs regarding the teacher’s role shift. She found that her work with LEALs was still challenging but more rewarding with this mindset.

Changes in beliefs had also contributed to confidence levels for many participants. As Brian shared,

It’s no longer going in and kind of being frightened or hesitant to work with them, it’s now; it’s kind of more of a goal, a feeling of accomplishment when you can’t them to reach certain levels. I think it has definitely changed my perception of working with them.

Working with LEALs had become a welcome and manageable challenge of mainstream teaching.

**Responsibility for LEALs to Learn English and Academic Content**

Participants attributed the responsibility for LEALs to learn English to a network of key individuals and professionals in the school. Common words used in their descriptions were “everyone,” “team,” “school community,” and “collaborative effort.” As Madison explained:

I wouldn’t say that it is the responsibility of any one person I think that something we learned throughout this is that, it’s a team effort and if you can get, supports from the school system that’s awesome, but the principal has to be involved in supporting the teachers, the teachers have to be involved in supporting and getting to know the students at an individual level and they also need to be engaged with
the parents and acknowledging that the parents themselves are probably going through this whole transition.

Each member of the network had a different role and level of responsibility. Meghan was the only participant who continued to feel that it was solely the teacher’s responsibility for LEALs to learn English.

While most participants suggested that the responsibility fell on a number of individuals, they all agreed that teachers were given the most responsibility for reasons including “spending most of their day with the child” or “head of the classroom” and therefore, they should be the captain or coach of the team. Lindsay also strongly emphasized the teacher’s responsibilities in teaching LEALs:

Legally it is ultimately the teacher, not entirely fair that just the teacher is responsible though because they aren’t prepared to do it themselves; it’s just not mandatory that they’re prepared because those courses aren’t in the Teachers’ College programs.

Regardless of training, as Andrea comments, teachers were regarded responsible to “help ignite the passion for the language and encourage them to want to practice.” They were also responsible for establishing a learning environment that was suited to language needs and providing the appropriate techniques and scaffolding to build on prior knowledge and confidence and to inspire them.

Parents were the second group most commonly identified as responsible for supporting language development at home and at school. Parents were thought to be a critical component to supporting the student and communicating with the teacher.

Additional members critical to the support network included other teachers, other
students, and LEALs. Other teachers in the school (subject specialists, ESL specialists, learning resource teachers) were responsible for being culturally sensitive and supportive. Non-LEAL students were identified as being important for encouragement. And lastly, the LEAL was identified as responsible for having a “willingness to learn,” being “committed,” and “practicing” their learning. Overall, language learning required a culture of support and the school culture must be one that facilitated the learning of English throughout the “entire school.”

While it was considered to be a shared responsibility for LEALs to learn English, the responsibility for LEALs to learn academic content was not as unanimous. Half of the participants believed it was solely the responsibility of the classroom teacher, whereas the other half believed it was still the responsibility of a team that included the teacher, ESL teacher, resource teacher, parents, and student.

**Equipped With Specific Understanding of English**

The majority of participants felt that they were adequately equipped with the specific understanding of English necessary to teach LEALs in mainstream. Tina shared her experiences in an undergraduate university course that focused on breaking down language and decoding it for children. However, despite this experience, she was still not confident in her ability to break down the English language for a LEAL. She recommended a language development course for all teacher candidates to grasp the knowledge and be ready to apply it in practice. Reflecting back on her earlier work with students, she felt that she failed them due to her lack of understanding of English language teaching despite the fact that she tried as hard as she could.

Others found that a specific understanding of English was not enough in itself.
Rather, it needed to be paired with knowledge of LEAL education. Rebecca and Brittany recounted their own language learning experience and felt that it was never actually explained; rather, they were simply told “This is the way we speak and this is the way we do things.” If things were adequately explained they would not need to Google the specifics of grammar to teach LEALs and provide examples. Madison and Heather had similar concerns. Madison stated:

I often question myself as to whether I’m even competent enough to teach, the native English speakers, I worry that I don’t know enough about the complex rules of English and that is something that I would still be concerned about. She could have benefited from a session or course on English language and grammar. While Brian had never really thought about the rules of the English language, he believed that teachers should be able to explain the reason behind it to ensure the learning is transferable and meaningful to learners. Lindsay also believed that teachers should understand language acquisition and language development prior to entering a classroom with LEALs. This was something she felt that she did not learn in teacher education.

While participants were confident in their ability to make their LEAL teaching successful, they were still concerned with their existing level of knowledge regarding the English language and the complexities of the rules. These concerns were expressed for both native English speakers as well as English language learners. Participants were simply uncomfortable and unconfident in their abilities to readily teach and explain the nuances and intricacies of the English language.

Role of ESL Supports

Participants had varied opinions on the role of ESL supports after the workshop
series. With the expectation that access to ESL specialists would be limited, participants believed that realistically the ESL supports would act more as a resource for “bouncing ideas off of” and “figuring out accommodations and modifications” as opposed to making any significant contributions directly to students. Major roles mentioned, however, included support, pull-out programs, and work in the classroom. Nonetheless, some participants were hesitant to state expectations that any, even limited, support would be available to them.

Supporting LEALs in a pull-out program was deemed to be a significant help for teachers; however, they imagined that there would not be enough time spent with each individual student due to the sheer number of students who do not speak any English. Not enough time was given to the individual students, especially when they were past the beginner stages of language learning. Thus, participants saw the role of ESL specialists more likely to support the teacher and provide them with the necessary resources to help students achieve and be successful in the classroom. However, they were aware that this was not always a reality. In cases where they were not directly supporting teachers, they may indirectly support teachers through other means such as technology. Catherine explained how her school board established an “amazing support system” through the board’s email conference and resource sharing folders.

Pull-out programs were also identified as a major role of ESL supports, when available. Lindsay was most familiar with the withdrawal type of support programs for LEALs. However, from her experience it had not been an ESL specialist but rather a Learning Resource Teacher providing support. Yet, in addition to the program she would like a session used for the teacher to meet with the specialist to discuss how they could
adjust their teaching practice to best support LEALs within their classrooms. She stated that while changes can be easy to implement, the problem is often being aware of them in the first place. Yet she was hesitant in her response since she had yet to see all that much being done for LEALs in schools. Heather had also seen ESL pull-out programs and highlighted the issues with this type of support. Since the program was not always aligned with the students’ schedules, they were often missing something else that teachers were teaching and it was difficult sometimes because then they would have to catch them up.

With the challenges of pull-out programs, some participants would prefer to see ESL supports work in the classrooms with LEALs. Tina suggested that ESL supports use their limited time in the classroom:

I really think an ESL teacher should be in the classroom seeing how that kid works with other kids, seeing which child’s going to help him or her out, seeing what resources are being used in the classroom. Knowing what is accessible to the teacher and the structure is important because sometimes ESL teachers suggest helpful strategies or resources though the teacher does not have the time or option to do so.

A presence in the classroom would allow the specialist to make informed recommendations and support. Steve and Heather would also like an ESL professional to work one-on-one or in small groups in the classroom to mirror class work. Brian never had direct contact with ESL support staff; however, he had seen an Educational Assistant fill this role. He believed that they had a very difficult role, often having to come into the classroom and immediately adapt to what was happening, which required them to be extremely flexible
and start supporting the students with whatever they were working on.

Despite the many roles identified by participants, some presumed that there would likely be no or limited ESL support. Some expressed frustration with the current status of ESL support in schools; as Tina explained: “Sometimes there isn’t even an ESL support so that eliminates the fact that they have a role.” Rebecca, Jordan, and Madison shared their reservations and concerns with the level of support they had actually seen in schools. Rebecca recounted an experience in a placement where a resource teacher would pull students for half an hour, twice weekly. However, in her high needs school, she was shocked that there was no “full on support in the classroom, which I think is necessary especially in a community where there’s a lot of students in that situation.”

In the face of understanding how ESL specialists and supports are intended to function, based on the information learned and the panel session, Madison stated that it was “only appropriate for me to prepare myself and not expect those resources as much as they are appropriate and needed and necessary.” Heather’s preference was for ESL specialists to come and work with students in the classroom; however, from her experience there was not enough support to make this a reality. Thus, she and Brittany believed that there needed to be a lot more support but also a lot more training on the teacher’s part with changing demographics.

All participants would like to see ESL specialists in every school for consistent and continuous support for their LEALs. Participants felt that English language development was not a priority to their school boards and thus the funding was not always there. Overall, participants shared very real concerns for novice teachers. However, while expressing their concern, they were optimistic as well in their responses.
They stated their concern and what they would do to counteract their concerns.

**Definition of LEAL After the Workshop Series**

After the workshop series, participants were once again asked to provide a definition of LEAL. In comparison to their initial definitions, participants were more assured in their responses and the definitions themselves were longer with very specific criteria. Participants’ definitions most commonly included the following components: language development, cultural learning, and additional language(s). Language development was deemed to consist of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and being able to process the English language. Some specified that it could take at least 5 years to become proficient in the everyday language and the academic. LEALs were also considered to be in the process of learning English. Cultural learning consisted of simultaneously learning the culture, learning environment and education system. However, some participants noted that LEALs might be Canadians as well. When referring to prior knowledge, participants noted that LEALs have existing language skills and fluency in another language(s). It is, however, important to note that two participants still referred to LEALs as being from another country or a newcomer.

**Understanding of English Language Learning and Teaching**

In the post-workshop interviews, participants were asked about their understanding of English language learning and teaching. Responses fell within two broad categories: the general classroom program and the language program.

The majority found that English language teaching and learning was more about inclusion, understanding accommodations, appropriate assessment standards, cultural sensitivity, and creating a sense of community. Having students involved in lessons as
much as possible and bringing different cultures in the classroom was found to be the most important components of LEAL teaching. Overall, a greater awareness of LEALs needs through some background understanding has provided additional insight and consideration for lesson planning and overall teaching. With the understanding that education was constantly evolving, professional development on best practice was also a significant point for participants. As such, education was seen as a process in which teachers must be patient and supportive of their students and other teachers. Team effort was also emphasized as being critical to any successful English language learning and teaching program.

In terms of the language program, starting out with “the basics” such as phonemic awareness, syntax, vocabulary, and conversational skills was deemed necessary. From the workshop series, some participants noted concerns similar to Madison’s: “Aspects of the English language can be totally confusing.” Grammar in particular was an area of need for participants to continue learning. Victoria stated: “It’s almost ridiculous how much I don’t know about the English language.” Brian and Jordan suggested that language teaching and learning needed to be “authentic” with meaningful vocabulary paired with opportunities to practice across curriculum subjects. However, individual differences, prior experience or education, and skill sets must be considered. While participants believed that being immersed in English was most effective at school, they supported the continued learning of their home language at home, thus supporting the benefits of multilingualism. Similar to LEALs, participants understood that English language learning and teaching was stressful and an ongoing learning process. Yet the overarching
goal was “to ensure the success of every student” so even small adjustments and accommodations could make a difference.

**Understanding of Language Diversity and Canadian English Prior to Teaching**

Participants were asked if it was important for teachers to have an understanding of language diversity and Canadian English prior to teaching in the classroom. There was unanimous agreement that it was necessary; however, there were different interpretations of what that meant. Participants interpreted this to mean the ability to accommodate and modify programs, recognizing student needs, being cognizant of English dialects and cultural resources, or as open-mindedness for linguistic differences and expectations. As Andrea stated:

> If you are in Canada you are going to have children from all over the world in your classroom; you need to be sensitive to the fact that our students may speak multiple languages and come from everywhere. If you cannot accept this, you should not be a teacher.

Tina believed that it is necessary for teachers to have this type of understanding to appropriately accommodate and modify for the differences. Without the ability to recognize students’ needs, then students could very well go an entire day without understanding what was said or taught in the class. Natalie agreed that teachers should have an understanding of different languages, not necessarily fluency, but an understanding of the structure and culture. Having a little bit of background knowledge would assist them in meeting their needs. According to Victoria, knowledge of language diversity was crucial to teaching in Ontario; she explained that every classroom she had been in had at least one LEAL.
Brian stated:

Teachers who can’t explain kind of the foundations of the English language would have a really hard time to have a student really understand them, because they want to know why we do thing. I mean if I were learning a second language, I would want to know why this happens so that I can really make it meaningful to my understanding and then apply it to new situations, new contexts.

Some components that were deemed necessary included an ability to explain spelling, pronunciation, grammar, subject, verb order, and sentences. Teachers who were unable to explain the basics of the English language could impede the learning pace for LEALs.

Brittany shared her insight on the challenge:

I think everyone who speaks English feels that they have very thorough understanding of what Canadian English sounds like, but, I think that teachers still need some training and any type of strategies to know how to teach English as well, you can’t just start coming to the classroom and just start talking; you need to have strategies for it.

Meghan mirrored this concern in a reflection post: “I know nothing; I don’t think there is enough education out there for teachers, because even to teach students who know English, I’m ill prepared for that.” Furthermore, Diana highlighted the importance of being cognizant of the existence of English dialects to avoid misunderstandings regarding students’ abilities.

Lindsay believed that while teachers should have this type of understanding, it was more important that they understood that cultural resources exist so that they could apply the information to relevant situations—somewhat of a resource that teachers use
and know exactly where to go to, how to use it, so that they could become prepared in a timely manner. Similarly, Madison highlighted the importance of understanding cultural faux pas to avoid misunderstandings and being disrespectful of cultural differences.

While they agreed that this was necessary, they did not know how it could become a reality in professional development or teacher education. Many participants suggested that this become a mandatory component of teacher education as language teaching “needs to be put into a different perspective” and teachers need a “different understanding” for LEALs. Suggestions included a teacher collaborative group to share cultural conversations on history, norms, and expectations. It was not enough to merely demonstrate sentences to students and ask them to practice it. Still, in the big picture, these topics were believed to be lower on the hierarchy of needs for teachers before entering the classroom. However, without being a component of teacher education program, Jordan believed that its significance is minimized.

**Greatest Effect on Preparation for LEALs in Mainstream Classroom**

Participants were asked to identify what has had the greatest effect on their preparation for LEALs in mainstream classrooms. Their responses indicated three dominant sources including the workshop series, practical experience, and personal experience. While participants identified the greatest effect, often times it is a combination of sources with varying degrees of influence.

Nine participants considered that the workshop series had the greatest effect on their preparedness for LEALs in mainstream. The series provided them with “a lot of useful information” that was practical and hands-on while also affirming their beliefs and confirming many of their ideas on how they would approach LEALs in the classroom.
They also found that they never took the time to look into the subject prior to the series and thus were unaware of the documents and supports available to them. It had helped them to recognize differences in things they need to know and did not previously think about. Rebecca noted that she had never actually considered LEALs prior to the workshops:

To be honest, I actually hadn’t really thought about how to, like I never really realized how diverse a classroom is going to be, I always thought maybe, maybe I’d have to be more aware of students on IEPs and all these different levels but I never thought of throwing a language barrier in there, so this was the first time really thinking about it.

Madison also believed that the series was a major contributor to her preparation for LEALs; however, she believed that it was her involvement paired with her practical experiences that had ultimately led to her preparedness. Involvement put LEALs at the forefront of their minds as they entered the classroom and thought about the classroom. These nine participants believed that the workshops should be a mandatory requirement for teachers entering schools. To them, a “deeper understanding” of LEALs would serve as a dominant pillar to their success as teachers in Ontario.

Four participants found that their practical experiences in the classroom had the greatest influence on their preparedness for LEALs in mainstream classrooms. However, in terms of international experience, they found it hard to know how it would translate into Canadian classrooms. Jordan reflected on his ability to “handle an entire classroom full of LEALs” yet questioned the challenge of balancing a classroom with diverse language needs. For Steve, it was actually speaking with LEALs that had best prepared
him for LEALs in mainstream. Whether it was students or friends, he had utilized many strategies to effectively communicate. It was through his practical experience that he had learned not to use colloquialisms, to simplify language, and to incorporate visual teaching supports. Madison believed that her volunteer work in diverse classrooms had significantly contributed to her preparation. She started volunteering at the beginning of the workshop series and found that it was particularly helpful and rewarding to learn from the series, apply it to her teaching, and teach the classroom teacher some strategies. Prior to her arrival, the classroom teacher would often “place the student just at a computer to use an online translator.” Teaching blocks and occasional teaching were also major practical sources of preparation, with opportunities to see what other teachers had found useful or the strategies that they used. In some cases, they had also learned what they would avoid doing in their own teaching practice.

Personal experiences varied from learning a new language and traveling to foreign countries. Andrea believed that the greatest effect on her preparation was learning French. She had learned that it was difficult to learn a language without authentic experience and a safe learning environment. For her, these were foundational components necessary for language learning. When students did not feel safe, they were not likely to ask questions or take risks, both of which were needed for successful language learning. Victoria recounted a personal experience of travelling to Nicaragua where she was immersed in another language she could not speak. This had a profound effect on her as she was the one who did not speak the language. Being in that situation really put language learning in a different perspective for her. She now considers how a LEAL
might feel in a classroom and how challenging or frustrating it could be to not understand what people are saying.

Overall, participation in the workshop series had inspired many participants to want to further pursue the ESL Part 1 Additional Qualifications course to learn even more about how they could specifically support this demographic. They felt that professional development could have a substantial impact on their level of preparedness for LEALs.

**Preparedness After Workshop Series**

Participants expressed several gains after participating in the workshop series. Many participants explicitly stated a change in their level of preparedness toward the end of the series; for example Brian reflected in a post that “as for my preparedness, it has increased significantly” and Steve wrote that he “feels a lot more prepared.” Their reflections and interviews indicated changes in their preparedness through changes from initial ratings, understanding, and resources. Still, several also stated that their original rating scales may be misleading since they became aware of how much they did not know and could learn regarding LEALs in mainstream.

Some participants felt that their initial rankings should have been lower after realizing what there is to know about teaching LEALs. For example, Catharine said: “Even with the knowledge that I have gained, I may rank myself lower now!” Brian made a similar comment: “Looking back if I knew what I know now, going back I would have, I would have dropped it, it wouldn’t be a 4, and it would probably be more of a 2.5; there was still so much that I didn’t know.” Catherine reflected:

I feel that my level of preparedness has changed. In my initial interview, I felt that I was “middle of the road” prepared. Although I have definitely learned a lot over
the past few months, I think it has also left me realizing that I have so much more to learn.

It was common for participants to refer back to their initial self-conceived preparedness to describe the changes that had taken place over the series. Tina explained: “When I started I would say I was like a 0 or 1 and now I would say that I’m at like a 3.” Meghan commented on her .5 increase with enthusiasm: “On a 5-point scale, going up .5, it’s a lot!” Brian shared his thoughts on his and others’ pre-workshop ratings:

Before you’ve had any training um you kind of have, kind of like a naïve or ignorant sense of what it is before you actually, it’s kind of like you know the more you know, the more you don’t know kind of thing. You don’t really know your level of preparation but you would like to think that it is up there, versus now you understand kind of the difficulty or how much goes into it.

Jordan’s ratings remained the same; when asked why this might be, he stated:

I attribute the number being the same because I had gaps exposed and some gaps filled in. I realized I didn’t know much about assessment, planning, and tracking and then I learned a little bit about it and I’m like, I haven’t really thought about being very interactive with parents and then I learned about it. So I knew four out of 5 things and now I know 8 out of 10 things.

None of the post-workshop series ratings were a 5; several participants who rated themselves as 4s made comments about never reaching a 5, stating that they need “room for growth,” “specialists would be 5,” and “it’s an ever changing field.” All participants were positive about their growth and spoke about their self-conceived preparedness with confidence, though many were hesitant to rate themselves higher than a 3 or 4 due to the
lack of practical experience working with LEALs. Brian explicitly stated that his ratings were on the “conservative” side. Meghan reflected on what would make her a 4 rating: “What would make me a 4, probably an experience in the classroom with those students.” Again, a need for practical experience was highlighted for greater preparedness.

Greater understanding was a major theme in developed preparedness. In a reflection entry, Catherine stated that she had “learned quite a lot over the past few months about LEAL students, and teaching LEALs. The more I have learned, the more I realize I have to learn.” She made an interesting point concerning learning about LEALs; rather than feeling as though she had learned all that she needed to be prepared, she came to the realization that there was much she had yet to learn after becoming aware. Tina echoed this message: “I don’t understand why they have not had a course like this originally, a lot of us are so unprepared and we don’t realize how unprepared we are because we don’t know what’s out there.” She also commented on her new understanding of testing accommodations:

Something that I didn’t think about prior to the course was the fact that, how you organize a test, like I always understood that you know, you want to take the time to sit there and scribe for the child maybe, you want to present questions in a more concise manner, or in the language that they understand, I always got that but the idea about not using multiple choice and that, oh gosh that makes so much sense, something so simple, I find that a lot of teachers don’t do that.

Madison explicitly stated:

I do feel like my level of preparedness has changed throughout the 10 weeks. I have become more aware of the specific challenges that LEAL students face when
having to learn a new language. I have also become more aware of how specific assessment strategies can be used effectively to assess for knowledge rather than knowledge through the lens of language proficiency. I think this is very important to note.

Distinguishing the differences between testing proficiency and testing content was valuable to many.

On many occasions, participants commented on their appreciation for the resources and strategies shared during the workshop series. Several commented on how having access to a personally reviewed and prepared repertoire of resources and strategies added to their level of preparedness. Steve affirmed that he “feels a lot more prepared in the fact that I have resource to go back on.” Brittany reflected on her self-perceived changes:

I feel that my level of preparedness has changed in terms of my teaching. I feel much more prepared to teach LEAL students in a full time classroom, especially when it comes to assessment. I have learned so much in this series, that my perspective on teaching has definitely been expanded to more fully understand LEAL students. I feel that I will be able to accommodate the students in my future classroom. I also just feel more prepared in general. This is because I feel the strategies we have learned about throughout the series have benefited not only LEAL students, but all students in the classroom.

The uncertainty and discomfort was evident at the onset of the series lessened as participants learned, explored, and experimented with the content.

Despite the progress and development over the series, some participants continued to challenge their self-perceived preparedness. Brittany asserted that a “10-
week course isn’t enough for me; I think I need to get more, develop more in-depth with it. This was a good introduction to changes, and seeing strategies and hands-on lessons I could use.” While expressing her gains from the workshop series, Tina noted a continued lack of preparedness for LEALs in the classroom. After reflecting on her overall learning and preparation for LEALs, she claimed that she would always have more to learn.

**Reassurance and Confidence**

Reassurance and confidence were commonly mentioned among responses throughout and after the workshop series. After learning about strategies, resources, and accommodations, many were pleasantly surprised that the strategies were either easier than anticipated or already things they were implementing. Brian reflected that after only two sessions, he already felt a sense of relief. However, before learning about the resources he would have felt “abandoned at sea while meeting the needs of LEALs in a mainstream classroom.” This was a common concern at the onset for many participants.

Heather reflected on the “no red pen” strategy and highlighted the significance of this reminder. While many teachers use a red pen to grade and provide feedback on student work, it was not so much the colour itself as much as it was what was being written. LEALs, as all other students, require constructive feedback, praise, and encouragement for their efforts to continue building on their success. This discussion was reassuring to Heather since it reinforced strategies that she had been using. Other participants also commented that while they may have implemented some of the appropriate strategies, they would not have known that they were the “right things to do.”

Some found that sessions answered many questions and concerns they held. Brian and Heather noted that nothing in the teacher education program or Concurrent Education
had prepared them to meet the needs of LEALs. They had hovering questions such as: “where do I start, what do I do, and how do I know?” Brian felt that he had a better understanding of how to approach educating LEALs and was more confident and prepared in his abilities to successfully engage and teach LEALs. The sessions provided him with the tools needed to confidently approach the challenge. He commented that the series would “act as a good foundation to approach teaching LEALs in a mainstream classroom.” Tina echoed these comments and further reflected on her preparedness to assess and provide appropriate accommodations and modifications for LEALs now that she had the knowledge and resources to do so. In a journal reflection, Brittany also commented on her growing confidence: “I have learned so much in this series, that my perspective on teaching has definitely been expanded to more fully understand LEAL students. I feel that I will be able to accommodate the students in my future classroom.”

Overall, the content of the workshop series had reassured and grew confidence in many participants. Participants stated that they felt more confident in their abilities to support LEALs, understanding some critical points in teaching LEALs, were more knowledgeable of the different resources and supports available, and had a better understanding of the expectations of themselves and professionals around them. Tina effectively articulated the reaction from many participants:

I definitely feel more confident, I feel like I could sit down with a LEAL and go, ok I know that I could try this, and this, and this, ok let’s try these three things and let’s see if they work, if they don’t work I’m going to go home tonight and figure out what else I can do, something that I didn’t think about prior to the course.
Similarly, Madison asserted that “I have increased my internal feeling of competence to be able to meet those needs because of this experience.” While most shared a newfound confidence in working with LEALs, Tina expressed a sense of reassurance that she was not as unknowledgeable and she initially thought.

**Specific to the Workshop Series**

Participants were asked to comment specifically on aspects of the workshop series itself. This included the format and delivery, content and learning tasks, potential improvements, and overall experience. Aspects of the series that were repeatedly mentioned as being impactful are highlighted in this section, such as the panel session and toolkit.

**Workshop Format and Delivery**

Participants were asked to comment on any aspect of the delivery and format of the workshop series. They commented on the presentation of information and the blended delivery format. Some participants also mentioned characteristics of effective instructors for teacher education.

The primary method of presentation was PowerPoint presentations. Participants found that the slides were very effective because they were short and to the point, thus easily understandable. Often complex or dry topics such as policies were concise and digestible within a single session. Tina stated:

> It seems like you’d spent years developing the perfect slides, it worked very well for me. You provided so much information but it wasn’t me racking my brain, the way you write, it sounds very professional but it makes sense! Even for the first session, how you presented that was taking maybe 3 weeks of information from
our psychology course and you put it in a way that made sense. I finally actually understand it; wish I got this in first year.

Madison also welcomed the amount of information presented; the variety gave her several options to focus her learning each week. The span of information also allowed her to fill in her “knowledge gaps” with the most valuable information for her.

Participants found that the slides connected well and they enjoyed the connections to resources, documents, and references within the sessions. Brian valued the links to Ministry of Education documents since it “made” him go through them and familiarize himself with them. He believed that the links throughout the series would help him in the long run whether he was a teacher in Ontario or not. Jordan appreciated the quick charted information that was easy to read and not daunting: “When I get reading into deep research papers, I lose track of things, I like charted information, and your PDFs were great because they are very much to the point.” Participants noted that the visual examples and ideas were “inspiring” and helpful in understanding how implementation could look. The reading content within the slides was also useful: Jordan found that he was constantly linking whatever I was reading to what I know about LEALs and how I could use the information in the classroom. The discussion question had me going through a bunch of materials I still have from teaching abroad and re-evaluating how effective they are as teaching tools.

The presentations were concise yet comprehensive enough for knowledge development and a catalyst for discussions or reflections.

The series was delivered in a blended format that included both online and face-to-face sessions. Participants found that the online component was convenient since it
was flexible and provided less pressure on participants. Many participants would not have been able to participate if it were not partially online due to other commitments including work, education, or location. The face-to-face sessions, however, had better reviews since participants were able to ask questions, engage in discussion, and it made them feel part of an actual course with opportunities to network and meet people. Some participants stated that had they not met the other participants and instructor, they may not have been as committed. While online was preferable at this particular time, many stated that they would have preferred more, if not all, face-to-face sessions. Brian, Steve, Diana, and Jordan would have loved to engage in more discussion with opportunities to exchange ideas with their peers. Lindsay suggested having at least every other session face-to-face. Overall, all participants agreed that having the initial face-to-face session made them more accountable to the series and connected to their peers.

Participants described the instructor (researcher) as a significant component of the delivery. Descriptors included approachable, nice, and easily understood in communication. Tina commented: “How you presented the course I was quite surprised, especially with each time I read a slide, I was like, ‘wow, she made it in a way that I can understand, this is amazing.’” This comment was made in the context of the theory, policies, and other government documentation. The instructor was described as passionate about the topic and authentically concerned about the education of LEALs.

**Most Effective Session**

Participants were asked to identify the session or topic with the greatest effect on their preparedness. The following topics were identified: factual information, gauging
preparedness, learning tasks, strategies and accommodations, panelist session, and assessment. Some participants also noted that the sessions were of equal value.

Participants appreciated the inclusion of statistics and facts about LEALs in each session, predominantly used at the beginning of each PowerPoint presentation. These were found to be “interesting” and “kept the teachers engaged.” They were used as a hook and reminder as to the importance of this topic for teachers. They were also used to contextualize the content of the sessions. Similarly, the policy documents were another source of factual documentation aimed to encourage participants to reflect on their role as teachers. Requiring participants to focus on LEAL-related policies and asking them to reflect on what they meant and any potential shortcomings “was really impactful.”

Participants found the initial gauging of self-perceived preparedness to be a significant component of their growth. This paired with the early learning tasks was eye opening for Tina and reminded her to be reflective of her growth as a teacher of LEALs. Further on the learning tasks, Catherine stated:

That had a significant impact on me because I mean I was born here, I have spoken English my whole life and that gave me the tiniest glimpse of what it would be like and I, I thought that was an excellent exercise; it definitely makes a point.

She disclosed further on the reflections of her peers: “I think everybody’s reflection that I read, everyone said that they felt frustrated, you know, and that is, that is the daily life for so many students.” Participants highlighted how highly effective, very informative, and eye-opening it was to use the participants’ stance on myths and misconceptions as the content of a session.
The strategies and accommodations provided were appreciated, as participants established a bank of information to refer to when required. The technology connections were specifically valued since the links and webpages could easily be bookmarked for later use and browsing. Brian discovered that the accommodations and strategies were a “big thing” for him when teaching. There were strategies that could be implemented to assist all students in mainstream classrooms. He liked that the strategies were “practical” and there were a lot of resources to pull from, especially for topics such as writing.

Lindsay commented:

The general accommodations really stuck to me because all those were really practical, a lot of those were things that anyone can say they do, but are definitely crucial especially for LEAL students so I think they would be more cognizant of those, like easier things and regularly ensuring that you are doing them, could make your practice much stronger for a LEAL, much more beneficial.

For her, this session was “really practical and relatable, things I could do now,” which was an important factor for several participants. Heather appreciated the session on subject-specific accommodations and considerations:

I liked the one that was math and science because those aren’t areas that you necessarily, like you think of LEAL and you automatically just think of language, whereas if you think about math and science, you realize how many terms and stuff there is that like harder to understand for students who aren’t a LEAL.

Subject-specific accommodations were a new area of consideration for many participants yet all appreciated the added perspective.
The assessment session was a highlight for several participants—not unexpected as it was a substantial area of concern at the onset of the series. Victoria found the session particularly beneficial:

I just was really interested in learning all the different ways that were kind of more suited for LEALs. The different ways that aren’t so great and how it could be better, I think that was one aspect of my career that I wasn’t 100% sure on and now I can kind of, reflect on what I have done in the past and kind of correct it, adjust my assessment to better suit my LEALs.

This session provided several examples of the potential and challenges of assessment practice.

Those who had the opportunity to implement some of the strategies found that the outcome was not only beneficial to LEALs but also “way better for almost everybody in the class.” Steve and Tina emphasized the impact of the learning task that required them to modify a test and lesson plans to be appropriate for LEALs. They noted that it was a “very helpful exercise and applicable to actual teaching” and “how to consciously make an effort in their learning.” Madison also commented on the lesson plan learning task: “I really liked that because I could use a lesson plan that I had already made and taught and then change so that it more effective, that was cool.” Even more appealing was the sample lessons and tests that have been modified for LEALs at different levels. The charts and tables provided to assess LEALs’ language proficiency were deemed very useful as well. Rebecca stated: “being able to show progress—that is something I struggle with.” Lastly, Meghan added: “Even to this day you are going to use those all the time, like the assessment is so important, it’s something that is not touched upon often and then
those strategies to follow up with that assessment.” Participants valued having access to language continuums, assessment resources, practice opportunities, strategies for easy implementation, and a deeper understanding to support their justification for changes.

The panel session with LEAL experts was a highpoint of the workshop series. Participants found it helpful to be able to ask unbarred questions to seasoned experts in the field and listen to their experiences with resources. Knowing what worked and did not work for these professionals was a great benefit to their own learning and understanding of LEALs. Steve valued the opportunity to “actually ask questions” and “have someone to bounce them off of.” Jordan declared the panel session to be the most memorable session: “They had such interesting things” and really shed light on cultural awareness of who we are teaching because the students have culture but it’s not engraved in them yet, they are very young and they are very open to things, but, if you really get to know older students and the parents of the students, I think that’s when you really, really get to know the information that you need to educate those LEALs, you really get quality stuff from the parents, opposed to taking everything from a child with a grain of salt.

Family relationships were found to provide “a good idea of how to educate their children.” Overall, the session helped them become aware of what was available, where to start the process, who to connect with, and what might become more available in the future.

Three participants evaluated all sessions and topics of having equal value. Natalie commented, “There were so many different things, not just one, a lot of parts from every
single lesson or session were really helpful.” Theses participants noted how they learned something new each session and saved components from all sessions for future reference.

**Least Effective Session**

Participants were asked to identify the session or topic that was least effective to their preparedness for LEALs in mainstream classrooms. The two sessions mentioned include the initial introductory session and the session on policies. Some participants were unable to isolate a single session or topic.

The first session focused on housekeeping regarding the format of the workshops and information for the research study. Rebecca and Victoria selected this session as the least helpful: “It was just a lot of reading and kind of housekeeping, just stuff to get out of the way” and “mostly just introductions.” Nonetheless, Victoria detailed that she still found it was interesting yet selected it because she “didn’t take as much away from that one as I did the rest of them.” Heather and Brittany found that the language and developmental theories presented were the least effective for classroom practice.

Tina found that the session on policies had the least effect because she believed education tends to focus too much on policies and how they should direct everything teachers do. Policies were seen as too constrictive and structured, and even a barrier to teaching practice and learning. Madison also found that the session on policies was least effective: “I’m not really one to follow the rules. Sometimes there are things you just got to do to benefit your students, if you ask then people start to ask questions.” She elaborated by sharing her experiences with policies as being restrictive to her practice and limiting significant learning opportunities.
Five participants took something away from each session. Catherine found that “it was all such valid information and was such a logical flow. It made sense for the next, to the next, to the next.” Brian noted, “They all had value; they were all important to kind of give you a full understanding of how to assist LEALs.” These participants were energetic about all components of the workshop series, often commenting on how they had saved the content for future reference and added reflection.

**Experiences and Understanding of Mindfulness**

All participants believed themselves to be consistently reflective, nonjudgmental, and in the present moment. However, the intentional practice of mindfulness was a challenge to most. Practicing mindfulness exercises was not easy for many and often fell at the bottom of their priorities. Nonetheless, they collectively voiced the significance of mindfulness practice in teaching and education in general. Predominant themes regarding mindfulness included mindfulness practice, benefits of mindfulness, and challenges.

Regarding the incorporation of mindfulness exercises, Brian shared his appreciation:

The mindfulness activities throughout the different sessions were pretty cool, um, because they kind of every, every week you have a new one that you could try, right so all of a sudden it did become regular; right, so um I think it’s important so I was really happy that they were in there.

The most effective mindfulness activities were those that could easily be incorporated into their existing activities; for example, taking time to appreciate and acknowledge the sounds and sights in the classroom during quiet times was common. Other mindfulness activities included Three Deep Breaths, and Mindful Eating. Those who participated
found that mindfulness slowed them down during times of typical autopilot actions. Some of the exercises led participants to realize that they already utilized similar exercises daily. Steve explained, “I already did but I didn’t realize I was doing so.” Throughout the day, he would realize that he was silently meditating. Diana was a strong believer in taking moments to meditate and actively practiced meditation. Brittany discovered her three most effective exercises were mindful eating, mindful breathing, and appreciative observation. Jordan identified the self-reflective exercises, breathing exercises, focused awareness of body points, and thinking of positive things to be effective and easy to adopt. Victoria claimed that even one minute of mindfulness practice was effective and provided benefits. While Rebecca did not participate in many of the mindfulness exercises, she recognized various times and situations in which she could teach them in the classroom.

Participants who engaged in the mindfulness exercises throughout the series identified several benefits. Mindfulness practice encouraged participants to reflect on their teaching practice as it unfolds, having an awareness of student needs and also, as Tina said, the need to “change for the better.” Steve recognized an appreciation for the explicit exercises and for the new awareness of mindfulness moments throughout the day. Andrea found that being mindful not only affected her practice but also promoted an awareness of her beliefs. Diana claimed that the exercises that focused the senses and thoughts were effective in calming her down, focusing her breathing, and becoming aware of the state of her body and mind. She saw potential in utilizing these exercises with students to “affect the learning process” in terms of helping students focus and calm their bodies and minds before starting a task. Meghan commented on how it pushed her
to be “conscious” and “aware” of the things that she typically didn’t pay attention to, which was a “cool experience.” Others described their benefits as being “in tune with yourself,” “relaxing,” and “calming.” The benefits mentioned impacted both mood and mindset for teachers.

Lindsay noted how mindfulness could be pivotal to the well-being of teachers since the emphasis on academics and busyness of teaching often makes teachers’ “lives seem less and less important.” It was important for teachers to take care of themselves as students can “sense if you are stressed out, and that has an impact.” Heather found that it forces you to focus which like makes you relax for the most part, because it brings you down a level and if you are up here, and you are brought down, or come down a level, you are probably more in tune with what is going on around you. Madison stated that it should be included in our work to “improve ourselves.” She appreciated the incorporation of mindfulness exercises because she saw “a lot of benefits” and that it “promotes a more balanced approach to learning” by “letting her thoughts happen, instead of taking time to be concerned or anxious about them.” She would like to incorporate these exercises in her classrooms as well. Victoria found the exercises to be nice, relaxing, and put some positive thoughts in there on a day when maybe I wasn’t feeling so good. When you are having one of those, you know, crazy super stressful days, it’s a good way to kind of let things go and breathe … not stress too much about the little things.
Brian found that to be “mindful and in the present moment” was an important mindset for him to have and to teach his students. All teachers need a break from focusing on the past and future.

Challenges arose from the mindfulness exercises, whether it was from unfamiliarity, intentionality, or expectations. Tina expressed the difficulties with engaging with mindfulness practice as it challenged the way she was taught growing up. With the rush of time teachers often face, she found that teachers often do not take the time to be mindful of their practice and equity issues. Steve found it difficult to intentionally engage in mindful practice when he was not teaching; he referred to his reflective practice as happening “on the spot” as opposed to after the fact. Brittany believed that mindful practice was something she “needs to work on a little bit, just because I am more of a reactive person sometimes, and I need to definitely work on that part of it, but those exercises I think can help you become more aware.” While Madison would like to incorporate mindfulness practice in her classrooms, she alluded to the importance of being “careful about the way you went about it” because “depending on what the parent’s perception is of what you are trying to do, [it] could affect your success; I would definitely try it.” Catherine found it difficult to sustain her practice, despite seeing the potential benefits of regular practice; she commented on the difficulties and stress of her daily life and inability to incorporate more than a few minutes a week.

**Learning Tasks**

Throughout the workshop series participants were presented with various learning tasks to reiterate or apply their learning. Through reflection and discussion posts, they highlighted the tasks that were most beneficial to their learning. The tasks were designed
to challenge their current understanding of teaching practices and stretch their thinking beyond the familiar. The three tasks that were deemed the most impactful were the lesson plans, assessment practice, and LEAL experience.

The lesson plan task was identified as one of the most significant learning tasks of the series. Brian and Catherine valued tasks that required them to re-examine and refine their current teaching practice. For example, one of the tasks required participants to take one of their previously designed lesson plans and revise it to accommodate LEALs. To extend this task, during the following session the participants were asked to critique a lesson created by another teacher and make suggestions on how they could be improved. These tasks were posted for peers to review and comment on. By reviewing their peers’ posts, they found that they were able to gather ideas, strategies, differentiation tactics, and accommodations. Many participants found these tasks particularly relevant and helpful to their LEAL practice. This task pushed Jordan to realize the potential difficulties for LEALs in social studies due to limited prior knowledge and high literary content. This pushed him to comprehend the need for important considerations prior to teaching lessons. In addition, Catherine learned the significance of disregarding the often “heavy focus on spelling or grammar” in tasks where it is not the primary focus.

To further explore assessments, participants were asked to accommodate a test that was provided to them or one that they had previously created, in light of their learning. Madison stated that this task had changed her assessment practice as she was now “much more aware of what I want my students to know.” Rather than seeking “limited eloquent answers,” she wants students to demonstrate all that they know in whichever form necessary. The memorization of definitions was not seen as valuable as
once thought but rather an understanding of the general concepts; as Madison noted: “By
separating content from language, teachers are able to make better assessment of student
understanding—apart from their language proficiency.” Another learning task asked
participants to analyze diagnostic and placement assessments designed for LEALs at the
elementary and secondary levels. Tina stated: “Prior to this week, I did not know about
any assessments for LEALs.” She found immense value in learning about the cultural
adaptation chart, elementary English Language Proficiency package, Factors in
Adjustment and Acculturation, Compiled characteristics of A-D learners, and the
presentation on A Welcoming Environment. For her, and many others, this was their first
exposure to this type of content.

Steve found great value in having a compiled language development continuum
while Brian was surprised by the overall comprehensiveness of the package. Exploring
systematic checklists and research-based continuums were particularly useful. Language
continuums provide descriptors for the development of English language proficiency and
literacy. An example of a language continuum is available in the Ontario Ministry of
Education’s (2001) *English As a Second Language and English Literacy Development: A
Resource Guide*. Understanding these progressions allows teachers to accurately monitor
progress and prevents “just arbitrarily thinking” about their development. The ability to
look for specific evidence in all four language domains was considered by Brian to be a
significant thing, especially for talking to their parents and you can honestly say, you
know at the beginning they were here because they could do this and now it’s
not just me saying this but they are actually achieving higher, it’s a more tangible
thing that you can show them.
Victoria, Heather, and Brian appreciated a tool to determine a starting point for instruction and the types of supports that may be necessary. However, this task also illuminated some potential limitations and challenges of formal assessments including the number of tasks, formality, structure, inauthenticity, and time requirement.

In a discussion post, Jordan, Brian, and Rebecca also highlighted the significance of students’ willingness, shyness, or preparedness to take part in early assessments. Anxiety, confidence, and nervousness could hinder a student’s participation and placement outcome. Nonetheless, participants found the material convenient for general teacher use, and valued exposure to the variety of assessment components and their newfound caution with prepackaged assessments. However, all agreed that formal assessments alone are “not enough to understand a student’s needs,” as Catherine expressed. This was especially necessary when considering that some LEALs are slow to transition into new environments. In these cases, authenticity was believed to be a key component to effective assessment practice.

A LEAL experience was assigned to participants where they had to complete a task with language limitations. Participants found that this activity was very frustrating, difficult and eye opening to the experience of LEALs who may not fully grasp the English language. Despite using alternative strategies such as looking at pictures to fill in gaps in understanding, the content was still inaccurately understood. An additional challenge included time; Brittany stated that it “definitely took a long time trying to decipher what the website was trying to say.” This task inspired her to change my teaching practice because it really puts you in the mind of the learner.

It helps me to think about how difficult it actually is for someone who does not
really understand English to learn new things. It makes me realize that the lessons I make will need to be much more hands on, practical, and visual as well.

While frustrating, participants felt that it was likely nowhere near the frustrations experienced by LEALs in the classroom when they do not have the necessary language or supports to help them succeed.

In a reflection post, Victoria explained that she found it “frustrating how many of the key words I couldn’t understand.” Both reading and writing were very difficult; for writing she explained that she would look for other ways to explain what I meant. I would have loved to write longer paragraphs for each answer, but I was getting so frustrated from my inability to find sentences that made sense that I decided to give up after one or two sentences.

She felt that overall she could not adequately complete the requirements, which in turn made her feel bad. Her response also “took WAY too long” to complete and the process definitely opened my eyes to how a LEAL may be feeling in a mainstream classroom. This activity made me realize I need to ensure that I give sufficient time for students to complete assignments, as it may take them much longer to develop thoughtful answers they are also proud of.

She also reflected on how teachers often become frustrated with students who take a longer time to complete assignments, but this task provided her with a glimpse of the difficulties they may face.

Brian reflected that “Emotionally, I found myself frustrated and stressed out mentally. I found that I did a satisfactory job writing a paragraph.” Tina echoed this
comment: “To be truthful, after I read this I felt quite dumb.” Four others wrote very similar reflections describing their challenges and frustrations. Catherine explained that “It probably took me four times longer to write my response.” Lindsay wrote, “I can imagine that this is how a LEAL student may feel about having to put that much time and frustrating, cyclical thought into incorporating new letters, words, aspects of punctuation, et cetera into their writing.” Overall, they commented on how it made them frustrated but also flustered and self-conscious about writing. This provided insight into the cognitive processes and struggles of knowing what you want to say, having to constantly scan your repertoire for suitable alternatives, and still not finding the words. Thus, the final product may still not reflect their knowledge.

This activity led Madison to share an observation from her classroom experiences. She explained how she once worked with a student who was often provided with alternative computer tasks during class time. She expressed great sympathy for the student, explaining that she knows she had “so much more to offer than she can express to us in English. I can only imagine how isolating that must be for her.” To compound the issue, the classroom teacher claimed to not know what more to do and to not have time to find new ways to help her. This task motivated her to find new ways to help eliminate language barriers to student understanding from both the academic and social emotional perspectives. Diana also shared a personal experience of being overseas and recalling many simple things that she could not do due to language barriers. Both experiences depicted how easily challenges can be overlooked until you experience them firsthand. Participants found that this learning task was a great way to understand and empathize with LEALs early on in the workshop series.
Strategies and Accommodations

Sessions six and seven were dedicated to general and subject-specific strategies and accommodations for LEALs. Participants recounted their teaching experiences and how successful or unsuccessful they have felt in mainstream classrooms. However, looking back at their experiences, many stated, “I did not know how I would work with LEALs” in specific subject areas. Participants claimed to not have the knowledge, strategies or accommodations necessary to successfully integrate and teach LEALs. Steve reflected that “I’m actually a little disappointed I didn’t have many of these strategies during my placement.” Participants expressed their appreciation for the strategies and accommodations presented in the series, stating that they are “practical and useful for the classroom.” Five themes arose regarding strategies and accommodations, including: welcoming strategies, general teaching strategies and accommodations, subject-specific accommodations, assessment accommodations, and feedback strategies.

Learning to create a welcoming and linguistically inclusive classroom was a valued component. Strategies that were simple to incorporate into daily routines were most favourable to participants, including “good morning” or “hello” in different languages, different print around the classroom, and cultural music playing during work times, and incorporating these into daily practice could establish a normalcy of diversity in the classroom for all students. Participants imagined that establishing a welcoming environment was the most important strategy a teacher could implement in their classroom since it enabled students to take risks and make mistakes, which was necessary for the learning process. A welcome package for new students and families was also a major topic of interest. Heather’s mind went into “overdrive” with worry when she first
met a LEAL since it was not something she had much experience with. She reflected on the importance of all classroom teachers having a “game plan” about how, as the teacher, you would want to go through the first day with a new LEAL.

A variety of general teaching and comprehension strategies were presented and participants found them particularly “helpful” and “exciting.” With the understanding that some would work better than others for individual students it was beneficial to have an array to choose from. Lindsay was familiar with many of the strategies presented, though she realized that “when working with LEALs those types of comprehension strategies need to be purposefully planned prior to each lesson delivery. More haphazard application of specific comprehension strategies would not suffice.” This intentional application was elaborated with her personal experience of students “slipping through the cracks.” Intentional strategy application leads to building in needed learning opportunities for LEALs and consistent support. Even though it may be a bit of a time-consuming task at first, as with learning anything new, participants believed that with practice it could easily become an element of a teaching that would not take much additional time or planning.

The subject-specific accommodations were a new area of consideration for many. Initially, most were concerned predominantly with strategies for their language arts programs. Heather expressed her appreciation for the math and science accommodations: “These are two areas that I feel way less confident in my ability to differentiate and provide accommodations.” In reflection posts following each session, others also commented on their learning. Madison claimed that the material learned would benefit all of her students that need support in different subject areas. Many commented on how
great it was to “see how these strategies were broken down for subjects” so that they could see how they could be used in different contexts.

Assessment was a significant area of concern and discomfort for many participants at the onset of the workshop series. Brittany, Madison, and Catherine explicitly stated their appreciation for the assessment accommodations provided to ensure assessments measured learning and knowledge opposed to English skills. For Catherine and Brian, the idea of ESL portfolios really resonated with them. They believed that this could be a great communication tool among teachers and throughout a student’s education while also providing students with a sense of autonomy and growth. Furthermore, portfolios could provide a holistic image of the student’s language development. Jordan agreed with the value of the portfolios and student-selected assessments. It was noted that these types of assessments lend themselves nicely to sharing conferences between students, teachers, and parents, leading to higher levels of engagement from all stakeholders. Furthermore, teachers need to consider the language-learning continuum when assessing students. Rebecca reflected on how she had never thought of the “silent period” prior to the workshop. Initially she would have immediately attempted a diagnostics or formal assessments to determine proficiency. Lastly, a significant learning point was the development of understanding that if a student demonstrates knowledge of a concept or competency of a skill, it does not need to be reassessed in the form of a written test.

Feedback strategies were a topic that resonated with participants as they could all recount a time where they received feedback in a less than constructive manner. While many teachers were aware of the issues related to the “red pen,” they agreed that receiving
a piece of work that was covered in ink was counterproductive and may be detrimental to self-esteem and self-efficacy of students who were trying to learn and putting forth their best effort. Learning about supportive feedback strategies specific to LEALs was noted as being important to them as opposed to simply circling errors. This was a reminder that marking should be less about pointing out errors and more about advancing learning and promoting growth. Lindsay demonstrated this point by always marking errors with a dot instead of an “x” since “dots always have the potential to grow into checkmarks with time and effort.” The idea of the dot resonated with several participants.

Overall, participants agreed that confidence was a major factor in learning English. While strategies and accommodations may ease the learning process, LEALs need to first feel comfortable in the classroom environment, develop a trusting relationship with the teacher, and feel supported without judgment. “Knowing the student” was the most important consideration when determining appropriate strategies and accommodations. The strategies and accommodations presented were also deemed “more effective,” “authentic,” and “memorable” in comparison to general differentiation and were considered critical components of their LEAL toolkits.

**Panel Session**

The panel session was a highlight for several participants. Their reflections indicated that this session was “useful,” “informative,” “provided access to knowledge,” and was “thought provoking.” This professional development opportunity was considered to contrast the typical “top-down” approach.

The ability to ask questions to experts in the field was greatly appreciated. Participants were intrigued by their colleagues’ questions, yet comforted to know that
others had similar concerns. The face-to-face format also provided opportunities to ask spontaneous follow-up questions throughout the session. Participants found it “valuable,” “informative,” and “helpful” to have the different perspectives of LEAL professionals. It was interesting for them to learn about their colleagues’ roles, stories, and challenges in relation to LEALs. Furthermore, participants found that they were “exposed to several perspectives” they had “not previously considered.”

What stuck most with Tina from this session was learning how committed the local board’s instructional coach was, yet how little she could do for LEALs with limited resources. As with many other school boards, there are a limited number of ESL site schools and programs. Therefore, the instructional coach “hopped around to 15 high schools providing LEAL support.” Learning about the role of the coach was eye opening since teachers are always commenting on the lack of support and the need for change without realizing what is being done. They were amazed by the individuals on the panel who are in the position to provide support and realized that they do all they can with the resources given. Participants were surprised me to learn that there was “little to no social integration programs for LEALs.” Tina exemplified this point:

A LEAL high school student could go an entire school day without talking to anyone. It is beneficial to the student’s success in school and life to setup a buddy system for LEALs and any students wishing to have friends and get involved, but have a hard time doing so.

In a discussion post, Jordan reflected on the evident discomfort of one of the panelists who apologized for being unknowledgeable with the education system or mainstream classroom teaching. He described her as being “out of her element” in a room
full of educators of children. However, he was glad she was there because he felt she had the most interesting perspective. Learning about LEAL families was equally as significant as learning about LEALs themselves. Her perspective on the communities and public services enhanced the discussion for many participants. She spoke about parents who felt that they could not help their children, the fears of losing home languages, as well as cultural conflicts. Understanding how to support parents and cultural differences was a thought-provoking perspective for teachers to consider.

The panelists provided highly applicable strategies for the teachers, including strategies specific to occasional teachers as requested by the group. These were important for the occasional teachers in the group since they often feel bound to the instructions left by the teacher they are filling in for. They learned that regardless of the instructions left for them, there were “some key strategies teachers can take to encourage LEALs to actively participate in their new school, culture, and language, such as having a transparent positive attitude and letting the LEAL know that they are smart and valued.” Also, learning what resources were available in the boards and the role professionals play was significant for participants. Brian appreciated learning more about some of the resources and programs available for LEALs: “The panel expert provided some great examples of resources and programs for LEALs, such as YMCA-Jump Start, Big Brothers and Sisters, and multicultural centres in the community.” For some participants, the biggest learning or advice that they took away was that there was no single method for teaching LEALs; rather, many cultural and individual considerations must be made.

Overall, this session reiterated some participants’ initial thinking and raised awareness through new perspectives. For example, Diana was reinforced in the “need for
structural and policy change to better meet the needs of LEALs” while Brian had a “real eye-opener” experience to learn that the majority of high schools in the region have “no formal ESL program.” Participants unanimously agreed that LEAL education was an area that merits greater attention. Still, they have come to learn that teachers can take the initiative to embrace LEALs and facilitate their transition into the English language and Canadian culture. This session was deemed to be an excellent style of professional development for teachers. Lindsay felt that this type of session has great potential in teacher education for building teacher self-efficacy. Rather than being told what to do, it was a conversation among colleagues and stakeholders who shared a wide variety of information on a complicated topic. From the information shared, participants could use salient learning to inform their future teaching practice. This type of learning leaves participants with a lot to think and reflect on. Catherine articulated, and many agreed, that “the more that I am learning, the more I realize I have to learn!” Panelists emphasized the ongoing learning and the challenges of teaching LEALs and their families but also highlighted their work satisfaction and commended teachers in their efforts and learning.

At the end of the panel session, a participant asked: “What is the best advice you ever received for working with LEAL students?” The panelists’ responses included: “getting to know your students on a personal level is the most important”; “stay positive and encouraging”; and “student first, academics second.” In reflection posts, participants noted that these responses energized and encouraged them, as they knew that they could meet all of these related pieces of advice.

**The LEAL Toolkit**

The toolkit was a learning assignment that was administered in our first session.
Participants were asked to create a reference collection for future use in the classroom with LEALs. This was the culminating task that would be shared in our final session together. The final session was an opportunity for participants to showcase their work, articulate their stance on LEAL teaching and learning, and continue their learning from peers. The participants of this study valued two aspects of the toolkit: the process of putting it together and the opportunity to share their work with colleagues and guests.

The process of putting together a toolkit was not as straightforward as many anticipated. The most popular format was a binder paired with a PowerPoint or resources including government documents and children’s books. However, some participants started with a file folder or binder and found that it was difficult to manage the electronic information or lengthy documents. As an alternative, they chose to utilize their computer, website, or blog formats for their toolkits. For Tina, it was important to have something that was easily accessible for herself and something from which other teachers could also benefit; she agreed to share her website.² Heather and Brittany enjoyed the process of making a toolkit; it was helpful and pushed them to explore and evaluate different resources. Diana noticed that creating the toolkit was a “good impetus for reflecting” on what she found most useful. This process enhanced their awareness for different resources for students, teachers, parents, and communities. Rebecca shared other reasons for her enjoyment: “I found the process of creating the toolkit fascinating, because I decided it would be best to complete in a group. We collaborated which isn't something that I have seen very much in the teaching profession.” This small group focused on dual language materials that were applicable to their current teaching positions.

² See: http://teachingleals.weebly.com
Catherine was initially overwhelmed at the idea of putting together a toolkit. However, reflecting back on the process she discovered it to be “quite fluid” following the recommendation to add to the toolkit after each session:

There was so much great information, throughout the course and that seems like a great place to put everything and then to go back to it, I am pleased that I have that, something concrete that I put together and I can go back to.

In the end, the process was less daunting than she originally expected and the number of resources, articles, and websites she was able to collect over time surprised her. Diana stated that “Creating the toolkit was a good impetus for reflecting on what I found most useful and how I might use the resources.” Overall, this process greatly improved participants’ awareness of the different supports and resources available. There was a strong appreciation for developing a practical culminating task that could be applied to future practice. Tina reflected that “That’s why it was really great to have the idea of making a toolkit because then it is all there, I’ve actually grouped it all together and then when I need it, then I can go back.” Participants demonstrated pride in their toolkits and expressed their excitement for the final products; Jordan stated: “The toolkit provides options and avenues to provide a better educational experience. I can’t wait to apply what I have learned.”

Toolkits were shared during a final session that was held in the format of a walk-about conference session. Participants were each provided with a table to set up and electronic equipment or outlets, if required. Hors d’oeuvres and beverages were provided for all participants and guests to establish a casual and comfortable environment. In a reflection, Madison shared her enjoyment and appreciation for the final session. After “getting to know the paths that others have been on” it was interesting for her to see how
their new knowledge informed their teaching practice. Tina and Brittany also relished the toolkit conference where they had the “opportunity to discuss the toolkit process and get to know a few new participants” and “being able to see everyone else’s toolkits and the way they were put together shows how creative and resourceful we as teachers are.” They appreciated the diversity of the task and the various ways learning was documented, represented, and shared with others.

Victoria commented:

It was really nice to see what everyone else had done. I was really impressed with some of the toolkits that were put together; there was one that was done on a blog and I thought it was awesome so it was neat to see the different ideas that people came up with. It was also funny to see that some of the resources that we used a lot of other people had used the same ones, so it shows that a lot of people saw that it was something that could be useful.

Catherine noted that the last session was a success and that there was a lot to share and to learn from. I am working on reading through the toolkits of everyone in the class. I am finding it interesting to read them, to see the aspects of teaching LEALs that my colleagues found most effective, and I am keeping track of resources that have been helpful to others.

The toolkits provided participants with an inventory of resources, tools, and information to quickly access and add to.

**Overall Experience in Workshop**

All participants appraised the workshop series as enjoyable, valuable to their professional development, and a positive experience. They felt that they gained useful
knowledge, strategies, and tools, as well as many points for consideration in their teaching practice. Overall comments indicated that the series was a good balance between practical and theoretical components.

During their exit interviews, participants made the following comments regarding their enjoyment of the series. Heather explained that “I enjoyed it, very much so, I was glad that I was able to do it.” Others echoed: “it was really, really good” and “I really enjoyed the course, I really loved the course.” Catherine stated that “It was a great experience; I’m very happy that I stumbled upon it and took the opportunity.” Madison and Diana enjoyed the learning process in terms of convenience, experience, and content. Tina reflected on her experience in the series and proclaimed to have enjoyed all aspects:

I’m very judgmental about things and a lot of the times when I am doing courses I am hating it the entire time through, there was not one point in the entire workshop that I hated it, so that was the things that I remember, were coming out of each activity and being like, oh ok, so the thing really is that this workshop is so much better than any other teachers college course that I had at all, so I feel like everything that you taught, I want to be like, ok that is 100% awesome because in comparison to everything else, it is perfection, and that sounds so weird to say but the rest of it just doesn’t compare, so I would actually, everything about your course I would keep, cause I, yea I actually liked every little bit of it, I got something from each and every one.

Victoria also expressed her enjoyment:

I was really happy with the way that the workshops went. Overall I was really happy with the readings; they were easy to read, they made so much sense, the
resources were great. I printed out tons of them to use for myself at school. Yeah overall it was a great experience; I’m really happy about it.

The series led many participants to think about the application of learning and their existing teaching practice. They commented on how they were pushed to think more about tools and being better prepared for LEALs—many things that they had not previously considered. Participants very much valued the sessions where they were asked to make lesson plans, tests, et cetera because they found it applicable and relatable while also providing them with a whole resource of ideas for accommodations. Catherine commented: “A great course, I think it was full of great information, full of great strategies, references to great resources, and an important topic.” Lindsay stated:

I really enjoyed my experience. I feel like I learned a lot. I have things now that I could take with me. I also have things that I can draw on; more detail that I saved. … I really enjoyed, and I reflected on this, the experience of creating the toolkit because it allowed me to make personal connections, find, draw out what was important to me. It was an opportunity to reflect on what the highlights of the course were for me, and it was authentic, because it was very open-ended.

Steve identified two specifically useful aspects, the first being the panelist session and the second being the resource sharing:

I really appreciated it, I really did like the panelist session because it was nice hearing it from other people who are dealing with LEALs at different stages of their lives. I would also say when you had us put different websites up that we could just go and look through, we had to go and find a website and share it with other people, and it was kind of cool, kind of the different strategy games so it
was, a lot of people brainstorming their ideas together. I thought that was really good because you have always got a basket to choose from.

Brittany also stated that she had learned a lot of new things and strategies to use and lots of examples that I have saved to my computer for the future. To have these resources, it’s definitely a step towards being able to feel successful in teaching LEAL students.

Participants designated the workshop series as an important and effective professional development experience with course-like expectations. Brian reflected:

I am just happy that I participated in it. Sometimes when you look at something you actually have no expectations, you have no idea what to expect going into it, but I signed up because I knew it was something that was important from my experiences, dealing with students who were learning English as a subsequent language. I know that I need to kind of learn more to support them, so this was absolutely perfect, a professional development, I want to learn more. I wanted to refine my teaching methods and become better at what I do, so it was neat to go through the whole process. … I like the layout of it too, how you did have the syllabus that was actually like a course, I was really happy to have had participated so I think I took a lot away from it, but going through it I thought that if this was a university course, this is what you would expect, right; so it was good.

Jordan also experienced the series as if it were a teacher education course: “I definitely see that there is a place for it in teacher education.” The content and format added to its transferability and appeal.
As with all teaching subjects, despite all of the gains made by participants, there were still gaps that needed to be filled. Jordan stated:

I came into the workshop thinking that I knew something and it was nice to find out that I did know something but I’m humble enough to say that I did not know everything and it was very informative in that, it filled in the gaps. I still have gaps that need to be filled but going through the workshop and meeting with you and just speaking with you, probably the most, has been the most helpful in that giving me the information that I need and reassuring that you do know a little bit already and just build on that.

With the development that they have received in the series, they felt that they were better able to fulfill their teaching roles with LEALs.

**Improving the Workshop Series**

While reflecting on the format and delivery, participants were asked to share how the workshop series could be improved. Improvements included an application component, guests or visitors to the sessions, additional learning activities, and format.

Participants would have liked an opportunity to implement their new learning. Tina suggested an application component linked to a B.Ed. practicum or Concurrent Education course requirement. She recommended a weekly practical component:

That would be amazing to have it where once a week you take an hour and you spend some quality time applying what you learned and seeing how well it worked or how maybe it didn’t work, I think that aspect of it would really add to it.

Rebecca echoed Tina’s recommendation; however, she suggested that student teachers should need to learn the role of a resource teacher:
I think a portion of the student teacher education program should be, you need to learn how to be a resource teacher, you need to be able to take those kids out and be able to offer more differentiated instruction and to be able to pinpoint their needs. I would be all over it; I don’t see any disadvantages to it, might also help in collaborating with those types of professionals.

A practical component could provide experiential learning and a better sense of the actual requirements or expectations in the field.

The panel session was a great success in the workshop series. It was a highlight of many participants’ experience. They would like to see this type of guest component expanded to include those directly impacted by the supports and services. Participants suggested that adult, teenage, and children LEALs be invited to a session to share their particular learning experience and challenges. This would provide them with an added perspective to better support the needs of LEALs.

Several additional learning activities were recommended to enhance the workshop series. Potential learning activities included: role-play, teacher self-assessment, lesson plans, and current events. In line with the application component, as an alternative to working directly with LEALs, participants could engage in a role-play type scenario. For example, having someone take on the role of a LEAL family and child, using pre-made profiles, and having teachers complete a registration form and reception interview based on the role-played family. Scenarios were also seen as opportunities for participants to gain a better understanding of equity and equality. With regard to sociolinguistic competence, teacher self-assessments also could track the number of times they use colloquial words in one class. Tina stated that this type of exercise “would help us
recognize just how many informal words we use and how to be mindful of this with a LEAL in the class.” The same type of exercise could be used with non-verbal language. Another suggestion concerned typical lesson plan templates used in teacher education programs. Participants recommended a lesson plan template with a section for LEALs. This would encourage students to constantly consider language accommodations. Providing completed samples would also be beneficial to teachers in training. Jordan also suggested something with current events incorporated into the workshops, a type of learning task that would encourage participants to keep an eye out for LEAL-related news:

It’s cool to keep your ear to the ground for anything, how often you will see things that are related to that or how often you will hear someone speak about something; you know what, I could use that this week because its related to teaching LEALs, bring it in and just here’s this scenario, what would you do? Any ideas? And there are no wrong answers.

The suggestions of role-play, self-assessment, lesson plans, and current events were viewed as catalysts to assist participants in becoming more aware as teachers and better prepared for specific real-life situations.

Some participants believed that the blended learning format would be less effective than fully face-to-face in-class sessions. The most interesting aspect of this professional development was the opportunity to talk with others in similar situations—opportunities to fill a room with novice teachers to reflect, discuss, and strategize. Whether teaching lessons is a success or a colossal fail, they found it fun to hear others’ stories about how “bad” things have gone to reflect on the learning experiences that other
people had. Rebecca commented:

As much as I like the online, I think online is good for supplemental. I think it would be nice to be in a classroom to have more discussions with people, I’m not a fan of having to type out my answers and it’s just nice to get a couple ideas, just out and then have someone complete the thought.

While Victoria very much appreciated that the majority was online due to her location, she would have loved to participate in a hybrid series closer to home.

As Meghan stated, the benefit of face-to-face included the following:

If we were all sitting face-to-face and having it as a discussion or a seminar. I think it would have, it just would have been nice to, to really hear, what other people’s opinions were on certain topics, like I did read some of them but I just didn’t get to hear from everybody.

During face-to-face sessions, students can interact, bounce ideas, and engage in fluid conversations. Jordan found that communication “requirements” for online learning are often “forced.” Rather than requiring x-amount of responses, alternatives such as posing a question, bringing something in, or doing a short talk could be additional participation options.

Other participants would have liked the face-to-face sessions to be longer. After each face-to-face session, many of the participants would remain and chat with each other; they wanted to talk and they wanted to hear what others were doing. Brian appreciated the opportunity to come in and just be able to talk to other people who were doing the same thing. The following limitation was mentioned:
If it was all online you would see someone’s name and you would never really put a face to that name. It’s a lot less personable and a lot less in that sense, but if you go and you know that person you have met them before and you kind of see what they are like. Then when you see their name you kind, you know who it is, kind of in the real world.

Seeing each other, sharing, and spontaneous conversations or discussions was important for this group.

**Policies, the Ontario College of Teachers, and Teacher Education**

Various Ministry of Education and policy documents in Ontario were referenced and explored throughout the workshop series. This section includes findings pertaining to those documents and teacher education. Teacher education is included in this section since it is heavily informed by educational policies including the accreditation of teacher education programs from the Ontario College of Teachers Act. Participants’ experiences and response to teacher education and the policies are presented.

**Preparedness From Teacher Education**

Participants constantly commented on their lack of preparedness for LEALs from their teacher education programs. Tina commented: “I was ill-prepared; Teachers’ College did not prepare me for supporting LEALs at all.” As recent graduates, they expected to be better prepared for the classroom challenges. Upon reflection, participants attributed their lack of preparedness almost entirely to their teacher education programs since it is deemed the passage to becoming a teacher.

Participants described their level of preparedness as “lacking,” “graduated feeling unprepared,” “unconfident,” and “unknowledgeable” to teach LEALs, “ill-prepared,” and
the like. They explained that they were left to learn in the field. Participants questioned how they are to learn strategies and skills required to prepare them for teaching LEALs if it is not covered within the program. Specifically, participants felt that their teacher education programs did not prepare them to assess students in a meaningful and informative way. For others, they were unfamiliar with the concept of LEALs due to their minimal experience and exposure. They also felt that they were unsure of how to set up a language program that accommodated LEALs.

Many would have liked a practicum experience where they could spend time with a resource teacher, prep teacher, or other roles within the school aside from just the mainstream classroom teacher. They would have also appreciated collaborating with an ESL specialist. These experiences would allow them to diversify their skills and understanding of the multiple teaching roles in the education system. Tina supported this suggestion as she reflected on a teaching experience where a student returned from withdrawal support and she had no idea what they had done while out of the classroom: “I had no clue as to what they were reading or skill they were focusing on.” She also commented on not knowing what ESL supports actually do with the students since she was not taught about their role. At minimum, they agreed that an ESL or LEAL-specific course could have provided better preparation. It was deemed that these topics could have been better targeted in their training, especially if it is expected in their actual teaching practice as mandated by the policies. They felt that they were unqualified for how diverse a classroom could realistically be. The participants who were most disappointed were those who completed Concurrent Education programs since they had the greatest opportunity and lengthiest programs in Education and teacher preparation.
Overall, participants felt that the primary purpose of teacher education programs was to prepare teachers for the realities of classrooms, yet their programs were not fulfilling their mission by overlooking this demographic in the certification process. They collectively felt cheated by the level of preparedness stemming from their education, stating that they had all graduated from teacher education “so unprepared” and, even worse, learning that they did not realize just how unprepared they were because there was much they did not know or realize they needed to know.

**Gaps in Teacher Education**

Throughout the duration of the workshop series, participants referenced their experiences in teacher education and gaps that they believe exist. Throughout the series, their reflection posts contained statements such as “something we didn’t focus on in Teachers’ College and it’s important”; “this was not a concept widely discussed in my teacher education program nor was it discussed throughout my concurrent program”; and “again through Teachers’ College they don’t really cover anything.” Participants who completed concurrent programs were the most sensitive and expressive of the gaps in teacher education. Brian stated:

There is nothing in Teachers’ College or Concurrent Education. Can you imagine—5 years of education courses with only a half credit course on diversity that has prepared me to meet the needs of LEALs. Confronting a LEAL for the first time, I had questions floating around my mind, such as where do I start, what do I do, and how do I know?

Furthermore, participants with non-education undergraduate degrees felt that their previous schooling did not contribute to their understanding of LEALs. Gaps were
identified in four categories: candidates, teacher education curriculum, lack of strategies, and professional development.

Some gaps related directly to the candidates in the program. Madison reflected on the process currently in place for teachers and was “amazed at the characteristic uniformity of teacher candidates” and how many had “very little understanding of the diversity mindset that will be required of them upon the first time they stand in front of a class.” More needed to be done about the admissions process: “Good grades are not always a representation of the qualities that make a good teacher, nor do they always represent someone who brings openness to diversity.” Many found that their program colleagues were unresponsive to cultural competence, equity, or diversity issues in general.

Several participants explicitly noted the absence of LEALs from the teacher education curriculum; for example:

I felt I had no preparation to meet the needs of LEAL students at the end. It is frustrating to know that people spending 5 years in a program to develop their teaching ability may graduate not having any idea how to meet the needs of sometimes 30% or more of their students.

Brittany believed that LEALs should be focused on just as much as Special Education in the teacher education program, especially since the reality was that they would be teaching this demographic. Heather added:

I would still advocate that there should be more exposure to LEALs in the teacher education part. So many schools are so diverse all across Ontario that having a course (or more exposure) to LEALs while in a faculty of education could have a
positive impact for future teachers.

Similarly, candidates should be told realistically the level of support they can expect in schools, the roles of ESL professionals, and the types of programs that exist within the school system.

Current LEAL-related policy documents were vague on the expectations of teachers as well as the descriptions of ESL programs and support systems available. Jordan found that this was a significant point of reflection for himself and his peers. These policies should be a component of the teacher education program so that teachers are aware of their role in LEAL teaching and collaboration potential with other professionals involved in LEAL education. He suggested that the teacher education program was in need of an ESL part-one type course, since “having LEALs in a public school classroom is all but a certainty in many parts of Canada.” In Victoria’s experience, every classroom she had been in had at least one LEAL.

Catherine also reflected on a personal experience that highlighted the urgency of this curriculum:

Now that I am actually teaching and I am in my field, and doing what I have been taught to do, and then I run into a few students who don’t speak any English and think, oh I’m not prepared for this, you know, so it should be a larger component of our training for sure.

The betterment of LEAL education was dependent on teachers understanding how to adapt the curriculum and accommodate this demographic of students. Victoria and Heather also emphasized the importance of awareness for ESL-related policies and ministry documents. They were shocked to learn that there were four different ESL
programs in Ontario and several hidden resources within their boards. After being in the field and seeing some ESL programs and resources, Heather believed it was important for teachers to know that many times these programs include students of all different grades at the same time. Currently, this was not common knowledge to candidates.

The lack of LEAL-specific strategies was also a gap identified in their teacher education programs. Jordan wrote in a reflection post that “I know that teachers need to be adaptable to a variety of needs but if appropriate strategies are not provided to the teachers it seems like a catch-22 situation.” Steve also expressed in a reflection his disappointment with his teacher education program for not providing many of the strategies for him to utilize in his placements. Meghan noted that “Teachers’ College could have provided me with more resources and real-life tools and strategies for a variety of teaching assignments. I felt that Teachers’ College was very vague and could have been much more practical to real life.” Assessment strategies would have also been beneficial for the majority of participants who were at a loss at the onset of the series. Heather continued to find assessment practice difficult in the field. This was one area that she found absent from the teacher education program. She found the series’ session on assessment to be extremely helpful since it exposed her to different strategies that ensure assessments are grading students’ knowledge rather than language ability. Heather learned the significance of simplifying assessments to focus more on understanding and less on memorization and believed that this was a critical gap in teacher education.

Brian recognized that a 1-year program may not be able to include an entire course dedicated to LEALs; however, he believed that they should have spent a few sessions within the program on LEAL-related training, insofar as saying
here are the resources, this is what you can do, you know if you want to look into it further than you can go here, but they don’t do any of that, it’s kind of just a big hole or gap in Teachers’ College right now.

Participants were amazed yet frustrated to learn about board and ministry created resources that were available for teachers to assist students learning English. One participant stated: “In Teachers’ College our attention was never focused on LEAL resources and for that reason, I was largely unaware of them.”

Overall with regard to strategies, several discussion posts mention how teacher education programs did not focus on anything suited specifically for LEALs. Reflecting back on their learning, they found this to be disheartening due to the number of “immigrant families that are moving to Canada with students who require effective support to thrive academically.” As recent graduates, they did not feel that they had any specific strategies that they would be able to draw on spontaneously.

LEAL-specific professional development was identified as a gap in teacher education programs. In a reflection post, Lindsay commented on the potential of the expert panel session for teacher education. She stated that this session was “an excellent style of professional development activity for teachers.” Self-efficacy has a significant impact on teachers’ abilities within the classroom, teaching success, and a happy teaching career. The types and opportunities for professional development might influence teachers’ self-efficacy. From her experience, she had found that top-down forms of professional development are rarely effective.

In contrast, Lindsay found that the expert panel discussion to be just the opposite of a top-down professional development opportunity, as instead of us attending the event to be told
something that we should do, we were given a wide variety of information on a complicated topic from a number of different stakeholders in the matter that we could process and use to inform our future teaching practice.

This type of professional development was deemed useful, informative, and something that all teachers could benefit from. While they appreciated the existing professional development in teacher education programs, they deemed this a worthy topic to add to the list of learning opportunities for candidates.

In general, participants indicated that it was a combination of lack of academic instruction and lack of exposure or effective teacher models that had lead them to believe there were gaps in the teacher education program. As a result, they felt that they did not have an academic background for teaching LEALs even after successfully completing teacher education, in many cases not even realizing the gaps. This realization was directly correlated to feelings of disappointment and lack of preparedness.

**Value at the Bachelor of Education Level**

Participants proclaimed that more teachers needed access to information pertaining to the importance of teaching LEALs, especially in a multicultural country. Catherine stated: “This should be knowledge that teachers are learning from day one from their training and in their practice as well.” She suggested that the series become a mandatory component of the teacher education curriculum to ensure that all pre-service teachers were prepared for LEALs in mainstream classrooms. Participants were asked if there was value to having a course similar to the series at the Bachelor of Education level. Participants unanimously agreed that this content was necessary for new teachers.
Rebecca imagined that a course on LEALs would help teachers become “qualified or at least somewhat qualified” to effectively work with LEALs. Victoria, Natalie, and Brian stated that this topic was

something that has to be addressed, you have courses on classroom management um reflective practice but there really is no course devoted to cultural diversity or cultural understanding, nothing to do with languages but that is something that is real and you know it’s good, every teacher who is in the profession is going to have to face it so to have that background it is going to help them immensely. Jordan described this content as continually “gaining relevance” in practice.

Comparisons were made with the existing Special Education course found in teacher education programs. While they believed that teachers have a good understanding of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and the necessary background to create them, they were unfamiliar with IEPs designed for LEALs. Despite some of the overlap with Special Education (e.g., the strategies and IEPs), they felt strongly that these two areas should not be combined into a single course. Rather, each deserved its own to ensure that the focus of each remained clear.

Participants commented repeatedly on the value of the practical content of the series and would want that to continue in a teacher education program. Steve noted how it provided “a lot more opportunity for practical nature” for realistic and not only ideal teaching situations. He recounted a placement experience with a LEAL where he “really had no clue how to really work with her.” He was left to learn strategies in the field, often by mimicking the classroom teacher: “I just had to go with what she was telling me, ESL students to sit and copy off other people.” Many felt that teacher candidates were left to
learn about LEALs on their own in the field. They recount situations where they felt frustrated, confused, and unprepared to face the challenges. In hindsight they reflected on their “inadequate,” “ineffective,” and “counterproductive” teaching and felt that it could have been prevented with better preparation in their teacher training. Relying on teachers in the classroom was not acceptable in their opinion.

Thus, many felt that this content would be most timely prior to teaching practicums. Steve commented: “If I had it in the first term or even the second term, before one of the two practicums, I feel like it would have benefited me because I could have sat ad worked with different students a lot better.” Seven others echoed Steve with the recommendation of either providing the content prior to a practicum or paired with a practicum experience. LEALs were often overlooked in practicum experiences; as Madison stated, with a course on LEALs “maybe students would be more tuned in and recognize those kids, because if not, I guess what I’ve learned is it’s not just your kid who’s moved here from across the world, there’s a lot more to it than that.” They also stated that it was beneficial to obtain early exposure and experience while guidance was heavily offered. A practical component would allow candidates to apply and learn from the experience and be better equipped to provide support on their own.

Furthermore, if pairing with a practicum is not possible, some suggested pairing the course with experiences with an ESL specialist or resource teacher. This would allow participants to observe how professionals engage with these students, develop a better understanding of their role, and assist in obtaining strategies and resources used by professionals. Without exposure to these professionals and LEALs, novice teachers overlook the information and supports available in their boards. Heather stated:
I wouldn’t have even known that that information was probably available, or even that this was such a significant issue. I was ignorant to it probably, it just dumbfounded me how the students don’t have the extra support and how convoluted our system of support is. It just had never occurred to me before, so I think that for that reason alone even just bringing awareness to the issue would be a really good reason for it to show up in Teachers’ College.

There was unanimous agreement that this was an issue worth pursuing.

**Accreditation and Ministry Policies**

Prior to 2013, the Ontario College of Teachers Act: Ontario Regulation 347/02 Accreditation of Teacher Education Programmes (1996) made no mention of anything related to LEALs in the regulations. In 2013, the regulations were amended to include the following:

Note: On September 1, 2015, paragraph 3 is revoked and the following substituted: (See: O. Reg. 283/13, ss. 2 (2), 6(2))

3.1. The programme enables students of a programme of professional education to acquire knowledge’s and skills in all of the elements set out in Schedule 1.

(Historical version for the period October 25, 2013 to November 30, 2014)

Prior to this version, the elements of Schedule 1 were not included in the regulations.

Schedule 1 outlines curriculum knowledge, pedagogical and instructional strategies knowledge, and the teaching context knowledge required for all teacher candidates.

Schedule 1 has the following statement related to LEALs listed under Pedagogical and Instructional Strategies Knowledge:
Note: On September 1, 2015, the Regulation is amended by adding the following Schedule: (See: O. Reg. 283/13, ss. 5, 6 (2))

8. How to teach students whose first language is not the language of instruction, whether English or French.

(Historical version for the period October 25, 2013 to November 30, 2014)

Thus, beginning in September 2015, teacher education programs across the province were required to amend their programming to include a component on teaching LEALs. In September 2015, all teacher education programs in Ontario became 2 years. However, even with changing such programs, there are currently many recently certified and novice teachers whose education did not include a required component of LEAL education.

The policy document examined in this series was Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary School, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). This document outlined the framework and components of the policy for LEALs, programs, and services. Policy 2.5.1 outlines the program and service options implemented by school boards that enable LEALs to continue their education while learning English. One program model included the “integration into mainstream classrooms with appropriate instructional support from the classroom teacher and/or an ESL/ELD teacher” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 23). Policy 2.8.2 outlines the procedure for teachers to follow regarding reporting based on documented modified expectations as well as some of the accommodations related to the assessment process that may be implemented by teachers to assess and evaluate learning. Policy 2.8.4 requires yearly summarized information on each LEAL’s level of language acquisition to be included in the student’s Ontario Student Record. The most discussed policy in the
workshop series was Policy 2.12.1 School boards will assign staff with the qualifications required by the Ministry of Education to teach ESL and ELD programs (see Ontario Regulation 184/97), which states:

All teachers are responsible for supporting academic success for all students – including English language learners. Classroom/subject teachers who have students in their classes who are English language learners are not required to hold English as a Second Language Part 1 qualification. However, the school board should provide all teachers with opportunities for professional development in meeting the needs of English language learners. (p. 31)

As certified teachers, participants were shocked to be introduced to these policies for the first time during the fourth session. They were highly concerned with the fact that they had not seen this Ministry document before nor did they know of its existence. They were also introduced to other Ministry documents including: Many Roots, Many Voices: Supporting English Language Learners in Every Classroom. A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators (2005), Supporting English Language Learners: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators Grades 1-8 (2008), Supporting English Language Learners with Limited Prior Schooling: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators (Grade 3 to 12) (2008), English Language Learners/ ESL and ELD Programs and Services; Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (2007), and Supporting English Language Learners in Kindergarten: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators (2007). They were also concerned with the additional unknown responsibilities related to LEALs. While reflecting on the existing and forthcoming changes to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, Tina expressed a concern that the new
content in teacher education would “probably be thrown in with Spec Ed and they will say here is a week of ELLs; there, we taught you.” Other participants in the workshop series echoed the concern with the quality and depth of the LEAL content that will be incorporated in teacher education programs. Based on their observations and experience, LEAL education had never been emphasized as a priority.

Furthermore, participants would like to see additional amendments to the policies to retract directives such as “should” and “encourage” and replace them with firm requirements. Otherwise, they fear that they will continue to encounter colleagues with no formal training on how to best meet the educational and developmental needs of LEALs. Without uncompromising policies that advocate for LEALs, they foresee the continuation of grim outcomes being amplified and students not truly meeting their full potential in Ontario schools. Furthermore, they question why policies were not in place to protect teachers from feeling inadequately prepared or unconfident in their abilities to manage their teaching obligations—especially since it could eliminate or reduce avoidable added stress that will inevitably impact all classroom students.

Policy Changes

Session four focused on LEAL-related policies and procedures as well as Ministry of Education documents available for teachers. Participants were asked to reflect on the policies, procedures, and documents presented. In particular, they focused on their familiarity with the documents, the roles and expectations of teachers, supports and services for LEALs, and language development in the classroom. The following themes emerged from their reflection entries: new understanding related to teaching LEALs, significance of policies, and inadequacies of policies.
After exploring the various policies, participants were alarmed to learn that there were expectations for teachers of LEALs. Rebecca stated that it was “an eye opener to the expectations of teachers and the optional required courses to do their job properly.” Given this new body of information, she was shocked that the Additional Qualifications course for ESL was only recommended and not required by teachers, particularly since teachers were “expected to teach and provide a fair and equal opportunity to LEALs as well as all their students.” The process of ESL support was also a new area of learning and concern for participants.

Jordan found it interesting that the principal was the “person making the final call” on supports for LEALs. He elaborated: “I don’t know much about what it is like to be a principal or running a school but I do know that they don’t spend nearly enough time with individual LEALs to make critical decisions about their academic support.” This was an area of concern for Jordan. Many participants were unaware that ESL policies and procedures existed. Brittany was surprised to learn that ESL/ELL policies existed in Ontario. Prior to the workshop series, she had not known about the policies or the documents published by the Ministry of Education related to LEALs. She found that the documents provided a good framework for teachers in terms of what they can do to help their LEALs learn and felt that the documents should be better shared with teachers.

Heather found it interesting to learn about the different types of supports that were available to LEALs in mainstream classrooms. In a reflection, Meghan stated that the self-contained ESL sounded like a “jail” as opposed to anything beneficial for the child. Participants also learned that the implementation of policies could result in a consistent approach to the education of LEALs across the province. Yet, while learning about the
ESL policies, new terminology, various programs, and differences between ESL and ELD support, Victoria felt that many teachers, especially new teachers, were not aware of the policy to begin with.

In their reflections, participants stated that the session on policies confirmed how important system level policies were for creating inclusive and equitable education programs. Equitable policies and practices are needed to help address both structural and institutional discrimination that impacts learners inside and outside the classroom and school. Diana noted that policies should be used to dictate that teachers must have the training they need to better support LEALs in mainstream classrooms.

Several inadequacies and apprehensions were identified regarding the policies and procedures documents. Rebecca, Diana, and Brittany found that the policies were “very vague,” “wishy washy,” and “contradictory” in the way that they are written. Tina also found them to be “very general and ill defined.” Meghan commented on how they were problematic since “blurred lines of undefined terms within policies from the Ministry of Education contribute to some inconsistencies across the education system.” In a reflection, Jordan wrote a personal response to the policies: “some really interesting facts about how the education of LEALs may not be doing them justice.” Echoing Rebecca, he found the policies to have “vague descriptions of how long ESL students would receive additional support” and had more questions unanswered after having read the documents.

Three others also had more questions than answers after examining the policies and procedures. Madison suggested that “neglecting to define the term ‘acceptable standard’ provided a loophole for the accountability to provide the educational support that many students need to develop even a moderate proficiency in English.”
Furthermore, Jordan recommended that the ESL Part 1 Additional Qualifications course be required for all teachers for the betterment of LEAL education, rather than a simple suggestion by the Ministry: “Having LEALs in a public school classroom is all but a certainty in many parts of Canada.” Steve was also “a little taken aback” by the way the Ontario government has left so many flaws in their own writing. Be it vagueness of what sufficient understanding of the English language is, or the statement that every teacher will need to deal with LEALs, yet ESL is not part of the Teachers’ College Program. If I were not concerned with LEALs there’s a good chance, to me a sufficient understanding would be the ability to have a conversation in English.

Another concern was related to funding; participants were shocked to learn that ESL funding can be appropriated as a school or school board sees fit. Rebecca stated that “A lot of the funds are not used for ESL.” If the policy does not specify where funds are to be allotted, they will be used elsewhere.

Jordan expressed shortcomings related to LEAL policies:

I feel like the government has made some shortcomings on the choice of an ESL course where Special Education is mandatory. I am certainly not saying Special Education should not be mandatory because it should, but ESL should be as well. He justified this statement by listing similarities such as both happening in mainstream classrooms, both requiring support, and both needing specific training to know how to work with them. Yet, he stressed that teacher education only teaches you how to assist students under the Special Education umbrella, which was more explicitly supported by
government policies. Steve also questioned how the Ministry of Education could seemingly publish policies that seem to be self-serving and “corrupt.”

Diana also had concerns with the “contradictory policies within the Ministry.” In a reflection, she wrote about being baffled by the Ministry documents and suggested that they amend their policies to mandate that existing teachers enroll in ESL Part 1 to address concerns of “preparing teachers for proper instruction and assessment.” In reflection posts, four others shared their concern about the Integration Program as one of the program options; this was simply a “nice way of saying ‘no program.’” They failed to describe a program of any sort and instead described what should be the role of a mainstream teacher for any students—LEAL or not.” Accommodations or modifications for LEALs should not be considered as extra programs.

Madison noted that “the lack of support for LEALs is certainly not reflective of how we hope LEALs will one day positively contribute to society.” While policies were an area of little excitement for the participants initially, Tina valued how the policies were broken down into digestible chunks and discussion points. This topic generated quite a bit of discussion and most participants found that this topic was a valued component of the workshop series.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Inadequate teacher preparation for LEALs is a long-documented issue due to the influx of language learners in southwestern Ontario’s mainstream classrooms. Certified teachers encounter barriers and challenges with limited LEAL-related training, at both the pre-service and in-service levels. Mainstream teachers of LEALs work in increasingly demanding circumstances where both language and academics must be taught, learned, and assessed in high stakes contexts (de Jong et al., 2013). The purpose of this investigation was to explore the self-perceived preparedness of recently graduated teachers over the course of a workshop series aimed to promote teachers’ awareness of and understanding of theories, concepts, and strategies for teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms. Complexity Theory was the theoretical lens used to focus on the initial conditions and critical events of learning while also guiding the interpretation of data (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005).

This study addresses the following research questions: (a) How do the teachers’ perceptions of their preparedness to teach LEALs change over the course of the workshop series? (b) How did the workshops contribute to changes in teachers’ perceptions? Options pertaining to the training of teachers for LEALs were explored by examining teacher education through the perspective of recent teacher graduates. Through the workshop sessions, participants were introduced to theoretical and practical LEAL content and discussions. Subsequently, they reflected on the impact of LEAL-specific training on their perceptions of preparedness for LEALs in mainstream classrooms. This is particularly important since teachers’ perceptions are powerful indicators of future behaviours and represent a critical avenue to understanding
preparedness. Reflections revealed several critical events that invoked disequilibrium; these events are deemed pivotal to the development and preparedness of teachers (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014). It was in these moments that teachers are propelled into learning and self-organization to regain equilibrium and order. In this research, there were two continuous sources of anxiety that propelled learning: first, the anxiety around meeting the needs of LEALs, and second, changing what is known or familiar about teaching practice.

Previous investigations have explored how mainstream teachers feel unprepared and untrained for LEALs, as well as the struggles they face with language learners in mainstream classrooms (Antunez, 2002; Barnes, 2006; Cadiero-Kaplin & Rodriguez, 2008; Evans et al., 2005; Farrell, 2016a; Menken & Antunez, 2001; Meskill, 2005; Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004; Webster & Valeo, 2011; Youngs & Youngs, 2011). However, few studies have examined how course-type training has impacted mainstream teachers’ perceptions of their preparedness for LEALs in mainstream (Turgut et al., 2016). With the understanding that teaching involves training as well as many facets of personal beliefs, competencies, and humanistic qualities (Hamachek, 1999; Hyland, 2009; Langer, 2000; Patterson & Purkey, 1993; Shulman & Shulman, 2004), both internal and external changes are incorporated as contributors to perceptions. The broader view of contributors exposes the continuous process of invention, exploration, and learning linked to dissonance, the environment, others, and activities (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2015). The findings of this study may inform educational equity for LEALs teacher education programs, and have implications for teacher certification requirements.

Learning was not forced to happen; rather; the complex system of teacher
education was manipulated to include a series of conditions to elicit critical events and make learning more likely to occur (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2015). A safe cognitive risk-taking environment to contain moments of disequilibrium fostered by the series was also supported by the Mindfulness Mindset that was simultaneously encouraged. Within the series, learning occurred as an individual and communal process embedded in activities and interactions that involved the negotiation of a new communal identity: an identity of teachers who are adequately prepared for LEALs in mainstream classrooms (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2015).

Teachers in the P/J divisions are in particular need of LEAL training as they spend most of their teaching day with the same group of students on a non-rotary schedule. Non-rotary teachers are often solely accountable for the education of LEALs in their classrooms (Barnes, 2006; Harklau, 2000; Karathanos, 2010; Meskill, 2005). The participants were active, reflexive risk-takers seeking a transformation in their professional identity (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). There was a shared desire to learn about LEALs in mainstream classrooms as their sense of competence and value as teachers was at risk. The desire to grow and this spirit of activism may not be present in all teachers.

Complexity Theory enables a direct focus on learning and the anxieties teachers have when adapting new knowledge, orientations, and professionalism that is unfamiliar and uncomfortable (Morrison, 2006; Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). Teacher education has the potential to facilitate these processes by creating transitional spaces and therefore is the central focus since it is the recognized and regulated process in which teachers become certified. Teacher education programs are intended to prepare teacher candidates
with the capacities needed to meet the needs of a range of realities of mainstream classrooms. Yet, teachers continuously feel underprepared for LEALs despite successfully graduating from teacher education programs. It is concerning when teachers believe that their skills are inadequate for this growing population, especially when the literature indicates that beliefs are more influential and a stronger predictor or determinant of behaviours than knowledge (Macnab & Payne, 2003; Pettit, 2011; Yoon, 2008). Teacher education needs to recognize and embrace the human agency of teacher preparedness with an appreciation for complexity and uncertainty in teaching (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014).

Thus, teachers not only require relevant knowledge of academic subject content but also need to acquire the belief that they are prepared for this demographic of learners. Their self-perceived preparedness can have a strong influence on their teaching beliefs and corresponding behaviours in the classroom. To enable the necessary change, teacher education needs to recognize, acknowledge, and support teachers. Change can be a painful process as teachers abandon their comfortable and familiar routines to reflect on their difficulties and explore alternatives (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). Without the appropriate conditions, it is unlikely that teachers will engage in this vulnerable process of exposure and growth.

**How Perceptions of Preparedness Changed Over the Course of the Workshop Series**

This study aimed to explore how teachers’ perceptions of preparedness changed over the course of a 10-week workshop series. While the focus of teacher training is often on the knowledge gained, more attention was paid to the beliefs of teachers since they are
stronger predictors and influences on behaviour (Thompson, 1992). Teachers’ beliefs are foundational to their teaching practice. As such, it is necessary to examine those beliefs and ensure that they align with current societal needs and populations. Future teachers should be prepared for realistic classroom circumstances with skills beyond delivering the mandated curriculum to students. Accurate classroom perceptions include LEALs in the classroom for much of the academic day. Reports indicate that even with minimal English language speakers, the role of LEAL specialist teachers continues to diminish in school boards (People for Education, 2010). Furthermore, in situations where ESL support is available, students are only absent for marginal amounts of instructional time, leaving the responsibility on mainstream classroom teachers (Coelho, 2007; People for Education, 2010). Therefore, all mainstream teachers are certain to teach an increasing number of LEALs, of various stages, in their classrooms. This is a challenge that is well-documented and warrants greater consideration.

**Initial Perceptions of Teaching and Preparedness**

At the onset of the series, participants were keen on better preparing themselves for LEALs in mainstream classrooms. Many identified a gap in their professional understanding and experiences with LEALs that they were looking to develop. They viewed their role as a teacher as being one that can foster success for all students in their classrooms. Though many were unable to provide specifics as to what their role and responsibilities would include for LEALs, they demonstrated that they were well-intentioned. However, academic content was still the main objective of classroom teaching. Accommodations or providing access to the curriculum was rarely mentioned by participants. When it was mentioned, the core of their response referred to equality
opposed to equity in learning. Furthermore, language teaching was not mentioned as being part of their role or responsibilities as mainstream classroom teachers.

**Challenges and issues with LEALs in mainstream classrooms.** There were several anticipated challenges and issues related to teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms. As previously highlighted in academic literature, common concerns included language barriers, time, and social interactions. As such, participants echoed findings from studies stating that new teachers struggle to work with LEALs, which leads to ineffective teaching and learning in the classroom (Taylor & Sobel, 2001). Unique to this study, one of the barriers identified by participants was the teachers themselves. Teachers viewed themselves as a barrier for their lack of understanding of LEALs, the progression of language development, limited relevant training, and inadequate knowledge of accommodations. Trends of insufficient training continue to perpetuate the challenges and issues that mainstream teachers face with little to no relevant-training (Harper & de Jong, 2009; Turgut et al., 2016; Washburn et al., 2016; Zeichner, 2010). Intriguingly, being a monolingual speaker was also viewed as a barrier to teaching LEALs due to a lack of experience or understanding of the issues. Parallel to previous findings, participants perpetuated widespread myths and misconceptions regarding LEALs which continue to create challenges and issues, which in turn affect their beliefs, practice, and inclusion of LEALs in mainstream classrooms.

**Myths and misconceptions.** Exploring commonly held myths and misconceptions provided some excellent insight into the beliefs held by teachers and used to inform their practice. The exploration of myths forced teachers to face practical issues by exposing basic assumptions and points of view (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2015).
Some participants believed as many as five of the six false statements—and furthermore, could confidently justify their positions. There was a clear demonstration that foundational language-related myths and misconceptions continue to be perpetuated by teachers. Most concerning was the ease with which the participants believed children could learn languages; they described language learning as quick and easy for young learners.

There was also a significant misunderstanding regarding the length of time it takes to develop English fluency. Three years was stated as being sufficient to learn both BICS and CALP. This is a common, yet significant, misconception that was highlighted in the work of Reeves (2006) and Walker et al. (2004). This is of particular concern given that research clearly indicates that it takes upwards of 5 to 7 years to acquire academic English (Cummins, 1981, 2000). Despite the incorrect identification of time required for language acquisition, while debriefing the statements participants acknowledged that there are differences in language fluency and that it takes much longer to develop CALP since they are continuously chasing a moving target. Without an understanding of the time required for language acquisition, teachers may have inappropriate expectations from language learners and prematurely withdraw necessary supports in the classroom.

Other evidence of misunderstanding that could misguide practice include believing that students only require support until they can speak English and that learning two languages simultaneously can lead to delay, interference, incomplete mastery, impairment, or linguistic confusion (Clair, 1995; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; McLaughlin, 1992; Reeves, 2004; Wong-Fillmore, 1991). As stated by Natalie, learning one language at a time is preferable and beneficial to the student. With this type of belief, it is unlikely
that they will support families in multilingual development or support heritage language use at home or in the classroom. Instead, they will continue to recommend the use and practice of the English language at home (Clair, 1995). These beliefs continue to maintain the stigma and negativity toward heritage languages, lower self-esteem, and contribute to language and culture loss as well as communication challenges within families (Baker, 2006; Hakuta, 1986; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Ryan, 1995; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002; Wong-Fillmore, 2000). Teachers need to understand how the first language and additional languages are similar and different, and also their impact on one another (de Jong et al., 2013). With this mindset, teachers are unlikely to perceive the vast research-based benefits of continued heritage language development as well as multilingualism and academic achievement.

Many myths and misconceptions continue to be preserved and deeply rooted in the pedagogical thought of teachers. While they have been explicitly revealed in this study, they are also continually depicted in practice. Consistent with the literature (Penfield, 1987; Pettit, 2011; Youngs & Youngs, 2001), it is evident that teachers continue to demonstrate a need for added professional development on language acquisition and language learning needs to begin effectively accommodating students. Armed with accurate knowledge and beliefs, teachers can anticipate realistic expectations, identify authentic barriers to success, and enhance their efficacy for LEALs (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The pedagogical issues related to linguistic and cultural diversity should be a requirement of all teacher education programs to eliminate the myths and misconceptions underlying ineffective practice.
It is important to note that misconceptions are not always easily eliminated. While it appears as though the participants easily eliminated their misconceptions, this interpretation is cautioned with consideration of self-selection bias and teacher-researcher dynamics. Given that the participants of this study were eager to participate and learn, the findings may not reflect potential outcomes of alternative professional development contexts.

**Lacking experience.** Despite believing that they were lacking meaningful experience with LEALs and effective LEAL models or mentors, all participants felt that they were culturally aware. Cultural awareness stemmed from their experiences—whether they were teaching in classrooms, travelling abroad, or discussing cultural differences later in life. However, due to their lack of experience working directly with LEALS, they found that they have been “winging it” in the field or learning from poor classroom models. They admitted to often using a trial-and-error approach to these students’ education. Furthermore, there was an illusionary expectation for specialists to teach LEALs in their classrooms.

**Lacking knowledge.** A significant issue in LEAL education is the assumption by generalist teachers that LEAL-related knowledge is reserved for ESL specialists or learning resource teachers. This is a significant issue for Ontario teachers who inevitably will work directly with LEALs in their classrooms. Given this reality, all teachers must be adequately prepared to effectively work with LEALs. It has become necessary for all classroom teachers to be equipped with specialized knowledge in language learning pedagogy to match the prevalence of LEALs and the services available in education systems. The cultivation of a deep knowledge regarding the English language and how it
works, second language acquisition, significance of language maintenance, and the many benefits of multilingualism were absent (Coady et al., 2016; de Jong et al., 2013; Turkan et al., 2014; Washburn et al., 2016; Wong-Fillmore, 1991). There was a clear misunderstanding of the expectations for ESL specialists, as there was an illusionary divide in language responsibilities. Participants were under the assumption that ESL specialists would be readily able to provide in-class support. Similar expectations were made of school boards where participants expected their requests for support to be met, and in some cases anticipated, immediately upon the arrival of new LEALs.

Most notably lacking among the participants was an understanding of the benefits of bilingualism. When asked about any benefits, the two most noted were social inclusion and employment. While those may be important external benefits, only one participant mentioned potential cognitive benefits and one believed that there were no benefits. It was evident from participants’ responses that they were unaware of the literature supporting the life-long personal benefits of multilingualism. This lack of knowledge simply facilitates the existing issues in teaching pedagogy regarding language learners (Clair, 1995; Rueda & Garcia, 1996; Turgut et al., 2016; Washburn et al., 2016). As discussions continued, several participants expressed a general lack of knowledge of language acquisition and teaching for all students. This position extended to mainstream students as well; Meghan explains that “Even to teach English to students who know English, I feel ill-prepared for that.” This highlights a potential general content gap in teacher education.

**Lacking resources and strategies.** Ontario schools mainstream LEALs to enhance the inclusion and equity for these students; yet, teacher training has remained the
same (Harper & de Jong, 2009). Teachers lack the resources and strategies they need to effectively teach LEALs in mainstream classrooms. When asked how they would intentionally address the educational equity of LEALs, the most common response was to learn a few basic everyday words from the student’s home language. While probing into further details, participants’ initial view of incorporating foreign language in the classroom was to use the approach of a cultural celebration week or somehow connecting to social studies for holidays, festivals, and celebrations. There was no mention of connecting heritage languages to everyday classroom activities or in any other meaningful way. The inclusion of heritage languages was surface level and confined to a cultural spotlight or attempts to connect to relevant curriculum content.

Participants were also unaware of any specific resources or initial assessment tools to determine a LEALs level of proficiency. Tools that are designed to assess big picture proficiency while determining strengths and weaknesses of students. Rather, they were able to share general practices that would be “good teaching” for all students, a finding that supports de Jong and Harper’s (2005) study that questions whether “good teaching” is “good enough.” Alternatively, when discussing assessment strategies, participants suggested strategies or accommodations that place heavy demands and unsustainable involvement from teachers including actions such as daily recorders, oral assessments, and scribing. They were also unable to specify differences in assessment documentation for LEALs or how various strategies would fit onto a language development continuum. These findings support previous findings of teachers not knowing where or how to acquire diagnostic information or assessment results at LEAL progress and proficiency (de Jong et al., 2013). Multimodal strategies could enhance
LEAL communication and learning by providing an alternate pathway to teaching and learning (Choi & Yi, 2016).

When directing language learning to family contexts, the strategies recommended for parents and families of LEALs were founded in maximum exposure and practice of the English language, both inside and outside of the home. In many cases, participants expected parents to learn English and model enthusiasm or motivation for learning the language. It was evident that there was a lack of understanding regarding the significance of heritage language development or benefits of maintenance. Overall, initial responses claimed to not have the tools, strategies, or resources necessary to successfully integrate or accommodate LEALs in mainstream classrooms. However, some caution should be exerted to prevent teachers from thinking that effective LEAL teaching simply consists of strategies, tool, and resources (Choi & Yi, 2016).

Teacher education programs. Overall, participants expressed concerns that their teacher education programs did not provide the training necessary to adequately teach LEALs in mainstream classrooms, especially for teaching situations in which they would not receive the expected supports from specialists and school boards. They felt not only unprepared but also, ultimately, unqualified to teach this demographic with the training they had received. In line with the literature, despite improvements, it is evident that teacher education programs continue to train teachers for monolingual classrooms (Eller & Poe, 2016; Turgut et al., 2016; Webster & Valeo, 2011).

Concurrent Education students were the most distraught by the lack of LEAL content in their educational training. They noted how within the 5 years dedicated to teacher preparation, only a half-credit course was dedicated to the topic of diversity in
While this was often more than Consecutive Education students, it was deemed inadequate and nonspecific. Regardless of the length of training, participants constantly referenced their lack of relevant preparedness and attributed this gap almost entirely to their teacher education programs since it was deemed the passage to becoming a teacher. They felt that they graduated feeling unprepared, unconfident, and unknowledgeable in this area and that they were left to learn in the field. This finding supports previous studies such as Perez and Holmes’s (2010) that found that the majority of LEALs continue to be taught by undertrained teachers. It was further unsettling for them to learn that the Ministry of Education has policies requiring teachers to effectively teach LEALs and perform in a particular way in the field. They questioned why this information was not taught in teacher education and how they were expected to use certain skills they were never taught.

The training that was often provided in teacher education programs was described as very vague and lacking realistic practical application. Teachers require additional content on teaching reading methods, integrating theory into practice, learning pedagogical techniques, assessment data and usage, as well as effective interventions (Eller & Poe, 2016). The content covered needed specificity and relevance for pre-service teachers. There was not only a lack of academic instruction but also a significant absence of exposure to effective teacher models. Some were left to learn strategies in the field where they simply and aimlessly complied with what the teacher mentors told them to do or based on their personal perceptions of good practice. In hindsight, pre-service teachers should never be left to learn on their own in the field. This trial-and-error or blind practice is inadequate, ineffective, and counterproductive to teaching. These are standards
of practice that would be deemed unacceptable for mainstream students. Overall, participants felt that their teacher education programs do a true disservice to LEALs by overlooking them in the certification process and minimizing how diverse the classroom could realistically be for new teachers. Generally, participants with the longest education-related training were the most disappointed since they had the greatest opportunity to learn with lengthier programs.

Intentional, content-specific training is required for mainstream teachers of LEALs. With just 10 sessions, participants indicated an increase in their capacity of meeting the needs of LEALs. While it may only be introductory and foundational, it is nonetheless a starting point for effective LEAL teaching to be built. They noted that the workshop series taught them crucial information that was not provided in their training; for example, LEAL-specific knowledge, understandings, skills, and strategies. Furthermore, detailed topics such as common myths and misconceptions in teaching LEALs and language acquisition challenged them to recognize and uproot their beliefs so that they may provide greater support at a broader level. What they have learned from this parsing process has provided a better teaching framework for all students as they examine the beliefs that often drive their practice, consciously or subconsciously. Even well-intentioned teachers can subconsciously ignore LEALs in their classrooms due to a lack of specialized knowledge, skills, and strategies (Turgut et al., 2016).

**After-Series Perceptions of Teaching and Preparedness**

Participants clearly expressed several gains from the workshop series, including how their self-perceived preparedness was impacted and how it has even increased significantly for some. More specifically, the knowledge of diagnostic language
assessments and accommodations for instruction helped them to feel better prepared and confident in their abilities to engage and teach LEALs. The series was also noted as being impactful on their understanding and approach to teaching LEALs in mainstream classroom, even if their preparedness rating was not the highest.

Regarding the self-perceived preparedness scale, interestingly, in hindsight, several participants felt that their initial rankings should have been lower after realizing what there was to know about teaching LEALs. Meaning, for many participants, there was a false sense of confidence based on inaccurate beliefs, naïveté, and assumptions regarding the significance of the issue, teachers’ roles, and others’ role within the school system. Brian clearly articulates the naïveté:

Before you’ve had any training, you kind of have, kind of like a naïve or ignorant sense of what it is before you actually. You don’t really know your level of preparation but you would like to think that it is up there, versus now you understand kind of the difficulty or how much goes into it.

Thus, the initial ranking for some participants were later deemed inaccurate, deceptive, and misrepresented as they began to realize what they did not know and things that they also did not realize they needed to know.

Other rankings had an evident increase and a corresponding sense of confidence, reassurance, and optimistic outlook on their self-efficacy, while mid-range rankings did not change much after the workshop series. When probed for more detail, these participants noted that while they had gained much from the series, they realized that they had also developed areas for further learning. Thus, even with a growing range, they
hovered at the mid-range of the scale. More importantly, they became aware of a gap and need in their professional development.

Preparedness was highly impacted by the resources and strategies that participants were presented with throughout the series. With a set of teaching tools, they were less concerned about immediately looking for external support, and addressed their concerns of not knowing where to begin or what to do. Initially, many commented on how they were unaware or uncomfortable with knowing where to start or what would be deemed appropriate practice for this demographic. Brian went from stating “I had no idea what do you do?” to feeling prepared to diagnostically assess, identify where they would be on a language continuum, and understand how to identify next steps, strategies to get them to next steps, and so forth. Participants thinking about LEALs became more research-based, systematic, and comprehensive as opposed to aimless trial-and-error methods to teaching at the expense of the learner. Overall, uncertainty and discomfort dissipated as their perceived preparedness increased. After completing the series, they felt a lot more prepared to work with LEALs in mainstream classrooms and also gained the knowledge needed to support LEALs’ families appropriately. Families are a critical component to any language or education program.

After the workshops, participants shared different positions regarding the knowledge required by classroom teachers and a common assumption that leads to poor practice. Brian states,

teachers who can’t explain kind of the foundations of the English language would have a really hard time to have a student really understand them, because they want to know why we do things, I mean if I were learning a second language I
would want to know why this happens so that I can really make it meaningful to my understanding and then apply it to new situations, new contexts.

He demonstrates how it is important to go beyond procedural teaching and the need for a deeper understanding of the English language for teachers to adequately explain the mechanics of the language when questioned by curious learners.

Furthermore, Madison notes the need for an awareness of “cultural faux pas and the cultural resources they bring to the classroom.” She acknowledges that all language learners cannot be merged as a single entity but rather maintains diversity in their language identities. The need for this deeper knowledge is also echoed by Brittany:

I think everyone who speaks English feels that they have a thorough understanding of what Canadian English should sound like. Being a native English speaker is not enough; it is an assumption to think that you can simply teach someone else the language because you speak it perfectly. Teachers still need some training and strategies to teach English to those who cannot speak it.

You cannot simply go into a classroom and start speaking.

This is a common issue that arose during the series. Participants found that they either initially did not realize the need for specialized learning or commented on how they have witnessed others not realizing the need due to being a native speaker of English.

The workshop series not only contributed to perceptual changes but also changes in attitudes toward working with LEALs. As Steve states,

it’s no longer going in and kind of being frightened or hesitate to work with them, its now, it’s kind of more a goal, a feeling of accomplishment when you get them
to reach certain levels. I think it has definitely changed my perception of working with them.

Most notably, being armed with a repertoire of relevant accommodations and strategies shifted perceptions of working with LEALs toward excitement and a welcome challenge. Strategies and accommodations were presented with a strong emphasis on application, and in response they were found to be practical and useful. Participants were confident in their ability to apply the tools they learned and noted also being better prepared for unexpected arrivals of LEALs. Even though many of the strategies were not new, they had not been previously considered for use with LEALs. Knowing that they could modify the strategies they already knew helped them to realize that they may have been better prepared than they initially perceived. However, as Lindsay acknowledged, knowing good strategies is not enough for teachers; they must be purposefully planned ahead of time to be successfully applied. This was an important reminder for the participants.

Regarding formal assessments, the enhanced level of documentation transformed typical learning milestones into something more tangible that could be shared with students and parents. This provided comfort and confidence in documenting and communicating growth and development with key stakeholders. Teachers could better explain what it meant to be a low-, mid-, or high-level C on the acquisition continuum, rather than simply stating that a student is in the level C category, which could last the duration of the entire year. The deeper understanding provides a breakdown of specific criteria that they aim to achieve as well as a common language amongst teachers and other educational professionals. Therefore, it would provide clarity and consistency amongst members of the field, within student experiences, and for parent involvement.
Overall, participants believe that some of their experiences with LEALs could have been better with greater explicit preparation in their teacher education programs. Without adequate training, unqualified teachers have been left to their own devices in the classroom. In hindsight, they felt guilty about the quality of education that they provided. They stated that they could have worked better with the students had they had the information provided in this workshop series. The content of the series produced a greater sense of confidence, awareness, and self-perceived preparedness for LEALs, both newcomers and Canadian-born. However, a greater sense of preparedness may have been achieved with a practical component to the series. Despite the gains of the series, none of the participants felt that they had learned all that they needed to know. This is a good sign of ongoing learning. The workshop series has heightened their awareness for LEALs learning needs and the types of supports that they can provide within the classroom.

**How the Workshop Series Contributed to Changes**

The workshop series made several contributions to participants’ perceptions of preparedness evidenced through external and internal changes. Teacher preparedness is an ongoing development, a process that requires active effort and incorporates both personal and professional experiences. The most impactful preparedness comes when the content is meaningful; in general, learners disregard much of the information that does not seem relevant to them. Meaningful learning experiences take many forms and have several roots; as such, numerous changes were identified and analyzed from the data. From the mindfulness perspective, it is more important to capture the genuine inner dialogue invoked in teachers as they parse their personal and professional knowledge and beliefs (Beattie et al., 2007; Hyland, 2009). Great care was taken to portraying the greater
whole of teacher development beyond the confined parameters of formal teacher education programs (Coady et al., 2016; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Morrison, 2006; Turken et al., 2014). There are influences from both personal and professional experiences that contribute to the development of a teacher (Bukor, 2015). This discussion uses a wholistic framework to authentically incorporate various aspects of the whole teacher in learning processes such as situatedness and experiences, as well as formal teacher development as it relates to LEALs. It was important to broadly examine all dominant influences (educational, personal, and professional) that shape teacher preparedness to accurately explore the complex relationships between beliefs, assumptions, perceptions (Bukor, 2015).

**External Changes: Curriculum and Practice**

In the past, teacher education programs restructured their curricula to better reflect and respond to the needs of the demographics served. These programs include major changes to the curriculum, practicums, and philosophy of teacher training and preparation. Unfortunately, while issues regarding educational equity should hold a central position in teacher education, they continue to be presented as an “add-on”; this communicates the message that working with LEALs is optional or only important if you think it is. Keeping it on the sidelines to the academic content taught by teachers is substandard practice in multicultural Ontario, especially since positive perceptions of working with LEALS is dependent on the time allocated to the topic (Eller & Poe, 2016; Garcia-Nevarez et al., 2005; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Mantero & McVicker, 2006). It is necessary for teacher candidates to be provided with the necessary time to align their perceptions with current research on best practices for LEALs. Without the necessary
compulsory time for explicit training, issues of shallow understandings of LEALs and language acquisition, lack of knowledge for language teaching, and LEAL inclusion remain at risk (Gandara et al., 2005).

Changes in pre-service teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, and awareness around language issues is possible to change through a meaningful course that explicitly addresses the issues and content (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; Pettit, 2011; Torok & Aguilar, 2000). Even small amounts of direct and meaningful training go a long way in addressing negativity and misconceived beliefs toward LEALs—a foundational mindset for successful inclusion (Richardson, 1996; Walker et al., 2004). Most importantly, greater preparation for LEALs positively correlates with greater confidence to teach them (de Jong et al., 2013; Gandara et al., 2005). For this reason, the workshops were designed to be impactful and targeted to address the gaps indicated in previous literature, such as the basic constructs of multilingualism, stages of language proficiency, role of first languages, structure of the English language, strategies, and accommodations specifically for language learners (Coelho, 2007; de Jong et al., 2013; Evans et al., 2005; Lin & Lin, 2015; Menken & Antunez, 2001; Pettit, 2011; Washburn et al., 2016).

Nine participants identified the workshop series as having the greatest effect on their preparedness for LEALs in mainstream classrooms. The other participants found that the series has had an impact in combination with their personal and practical experiences. The practical and hands-on nature of the series informed how they would approach teaching LEALs. Most significantly, it has helped them to realize the things that they need to know and did not previously consider. Language teaching and learning was not on their radar as they were not mentioned in their teacher education programs.
Considering the impact of the series on their practice and beliefs, they commented on how it should be a mandatory component of every teacher education curriculum. The learning they obtained over the 10 weeks has had a substantial impact on their level of self-perceived preparedness for LEALs as well as their awareness of LEALs in general. Furthermore, involvement in the series has inspired them to seek additional professional development on the topic. Specific aspects of the series that contributed to participants’ external changes are now explored.

**Specific to the workshop series.** There were particular features of the workshop series that participants found impactful to external changes in their curriculum and practice. First were some design features of the workshop series, such as the blended learning, the content organization and presentation, and a weekly focus on mindfulness.

It was found that meeting face-to-face for the first session kept participants more accountable and connected with their peers. Having the opportunity to meet their colleagues and learn more about their concerns and motives provided them with a sense of relationship for the online portions of the series. This was noted as an important first step and contributor in the learning process. At the onset of the series, participants were asked to gauge their self-perceived preparedness; interestingly, participants found this to be significant to their growth since it brought their current understanding and beliefs about LEALs to the forefront of their metacognition. While intended to provide a baseline, it unexpectedly became a contributor of change by reminding them to be reflective of their growth as a teacher throughout the learning process. There was also a stark appreciation for the digestible language of the content and materials as well as the corresponding examples. Many times in postsecondary courses, students are presented
with research-based practice that is not easily digestible or well explained for classroom use. Teachers perceive research to be irrelevant, unhelpful, and too theoretical (Anwaruddin, 2016). Participants were not interested in merely learning to recite best practice or research studies. A different approach was taken in which they were presented with the relevant research in digestible chunks with corresponding evidence and examples of how the research is transferred into classroom practice.

There was a mindful moment associated with each session of the series. Participants collectively voiced the significance of mindfulness practice in teaching and education in general. Still, it was evident that the intentional practice was a challenge for most. While those who engaged with the exercises shared their enjoyment of their inclusion, others found that they were only able to try a few that could be easily incorporated into existing activities. Regardless of how many they tried, they were encouraged to try at least one repeatedly to explore potential benefits. Those who engaged found that it slowed them down during autopilot actions or moments of mindlessness (Hyland, 2009; Langer, 2000). Other benefits included awareness or consciousness, calming or relaxing, in-tune with self, focus on influences, balance, and letting go. These exercises impacted both mood and mindset, which were found to be pivotal to the well-being of teachers and openness to learning. The participants who encountered the most challenges with this component appeared to treat mindfulness as a destination or goal rather than an experience in itself. This is a common challenge portrayed in the literature when training the inner mind (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Langer, 2000).

The tasks and strategies presented throughout the series aimed to reinforce, reiterate, and apply learning in a realistic and practical manner. Participants found that
these definitely made a point in their understanding of the issues and challenges while also providing them with a bank of practical information to refer to. The topics were discussed in a relatable manner and many ready to implement ideas were shared and explored. To add to the meaningfulness of the content, participants used their existing practice to build upon. They could take things that they have done in the past and correct or adjust it to better meet the needs of LEALs. Tina notes that these exercises were “applicable to actual teaching” as opposed to teaching ideals. It was also noted that having samples for teachers to see and follow was extremely beneficial to their understanding and application of ideas. Breaking down strategies by subjects illustrated how different contexts or subjects impact strategy choices and decisions.

The learning tasks that were deemed most impactful were those that simulated the experience of completing a typical classroom task as a LEAL. They found the task to be very frustrating, difficult, and eye opening. In the face of the additional time it took them to complete the task, they felt that the final product still poorly portrayed their knowledge. Another learning task involved lesson planning, critical skills for all teachers and one which all teachers have experience with. It was particularly helpful to explore this familiar topic using lesson plans that they themselves had created for previous classrooms. These were the impetus for discussions around directly improving their own practice. This approach was helpful and relevant to each participant as they reviewed and revised their own work, while benefiting from the added exemplars of their colleagues. Participants refocused their attention on the primary purpose of the task opposed to spelling and grammar, which are not the focus of the assessment. They became aware of what they wanted students to know by separating the content from the language. This
refined their expectations to become more realistic, reduced their stress of having LEALs perform to an unrealistic level, and develop an understanding that “different” is ok.

The panel session provided them with an accurate idea of what ESL specialists experience on a day-to-day basis. They were shocked to learn what these professionals experience daily and admitted to not grasping what they did. This was also concerning to them since the emphasis in education is always on collaboration and comprehensive support systems; meanwhile, they have no idea what their colleagues are actually doing. It outlined the challenges that they face and the realities of the many schools that they often work in. Learning about the struggles of these professionals, participants could establish realistic expectations of these supports as well as a better idea of what LEALs may need from classroom teachers. This was another source of determination for participants to enhance their own practice as classroom teachers of LEALs. The panel session was deemed to be a critical component to participants learning and contrasted the typical top-down approach to learning seen in teacher education or professional development. They valued the opportunity to ask questions to experts who are currently engaged in the field and were comforted by their peers who had similar concerns. This being a face-to-face session was important as they could ask spontaneous follow up questions.

The varied perspectives of professionals were important to them; they were exposed to perspectives they had not previously considered. It was also eye opening to learn the actual role of itinerant ESL specialists. It was easy for them to criticize the lack of services available, though they did not actually know what these individuals did on a daily basis. It was also significant for them to learn that language learning can have a
deep family impact. Perspectives beyond the education system were valued as they enhanced the depth of the discussion into the ripple effects of language learning and cultural differences. This session also reiterated the fact that there is no single solution or method for teaching LEALs in any situation. Participants were left energized and encouraged by the discussions. They also established a greater sense of understanding for ESL specialists and their roles and services within the schools. Learning about the challenges that they face as well, provided a different perspective for them, while also restating the necessity for self-efficacy and preparedness for LEALs in the classroom.

Toolkits allowed participants to create something that was individualized and meaningful to them. There was a sense of personal relevance to this assignment since it pushed them to seek and analyze various resources for students, teachers, parents, and within their communities. It enhanced their awareness of what was already available. Often they do not seek these services unless they need them or if they encounter a situation. The toolkit was viewed as a “living” and evolving reference tool where they could collect resources and information that could be available at any given time. It was something concrete that they created in preparation for any LEAL.

Toolkits also promoted reflection and analysis of resources. There was a strong sense of appreciation for a practical culminating task that could be personalized and reused in practice. It was evident in the final session that participants were proud of their toolkits and the work that they had put into them to make them purposeful in the classroom. They appreciated the creative freedom of choosing a format that was most meaningful to them. In the walk-about conference-style session, participants shared the contents of their toolkits and justified why they included various resources as well as
their stance on LEAL education. Driven by the process of change and need for survival, the toolkit development provided a point of connectivity, networking, and feedback within and beyond the group (Morrison, 2006). It gave them an opportunity to reify their activism for the equitable education of LEALs in mainstream classrooms (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). Since all participants received a copy of their peers’ toolkits, they gained an extensive inventory of resources, tools, and information to access and add to when necessary.

Overall, the series established the atmosphere of a professional learning community in which there were several opportunities for professionals to learn from each other. They were often intriguing and inspiring others with their stories, experiences, strategies, and ideas. For example, Lindsay’s marking strategy of using a dot to identify errors on student work had a lasting impact on others as it was referenced consistently. There was a deeper message though to this strategy; much like the idea that the dot has the potential to become a checkmark, so too can their practices. What is most important is that the dot exists—the effort that initiates the growth process. For many participants, this workshop series was their dot. It was the effort that contributes to their understanding of teaching LEALs. They identified a distinct difference from general differentiation for mainstream students and plan to continue adjusting their teaching practice accordingly for the needs of LEALs in mainstream classrooms.

**Issues with limited training.** Participants felt that they lacked the academic instruction necessary to meet the needs of LEALs and the confidence to address associated challenges. This pressured some participants, such as Tina, to position themselves as both “unconfident” and “unknowledgeable.” The myths and
misconceptions were a shock to participants as they learned that even though they are well-intentioned, their practice was built upon fallacies that may then misguide their practice. This shock gives participants negative feedback which seeks equilibrium though learning, order, and change (Cunningham, 2001). Learning about LEAL-specific strategies enabled participants to feel better prepared to spontaneously work with all students as an occasional, long-term occasional, or full-time teacher. Having a repertoire of information and strategies on hand allows them to address a variety of challenges and the ability to articulate the need and reasoning behind their choices. Strategies for different aspects of language learning, subject matter, environment, assessment, general teaching, or communication gave them a sense of confidence in addressing these initial areas of uncertainty. Many were disappointed that they had not known of this information during their teaching practicums. Nonetheless, it is important to consider the quality of the practicums themselves for full learning potential (Coady et al., 2016; Daniel, 2014). This exemplified the importance of all mainstream teachers receiving the necessary training to learn the basic constructs of bilingualism and multilingual development as well as the role of language and culture in learning for students.

**Lacking experience or practice.** The lack of experience or practice with LEALs was a common concern and was identified as a significant contributing factor to their lack of preparedness. While participants with international experience were initially more confident in their skills, they realized that their skills were not necessarily transferable to Ontario mainstream classrooms. All participants identified gaps and challenges with their experiences or practice whether they were deemed not valuable because of the models (e.g., students being told to use the computer or translator) or they lacked exposure
altogether. Targeted training may have given them greater authority to better advocate for and accommodate these students.

Despite the lack of personal practice with LEALs, they felt that the stories of colleagues and the panelists provided vicarious experiences for them to learn from. Also, the learning experiences of accommodating assessments and lesson plans for LEALs for various subjects gave them a realistic experience of the expectations on teachers. Participants came to realize that there are many ways in which teachers create additional barriers for LEALs in their practice and how they often poorly assess student learning. With practice, they reported a developing understanding of the importance in ensuring that assessments measured learning and knowledge opposed to English skills. It was more important for participants to obtain solid practice of research-based strategies and accommodations in their work than having hands-on experiences that were less fruitful.

**Lacking an awareness of the policies and procedures governing practice.** The policies and statistics presented in each session alerted participants to current educational issues and acted as a reminder of the significance of supporting LEALs. The statistics were reflective of the realities of Ontario’s public classrooms and yet were consistently a shock to participants. In many instances, these were issues that they had not previously considered prior to the series. For many, it was the first time they had exposure to policies relevant to teaching LEALs. Participants such as Rebecca were “totally shocked” to learn that they were expected to be prepared for LEALs despite the unmatched training. It was alarming to unveil the mismatch between reality, training, and the awareness of teachers.

The workshop series provided participants with the added motivation to better
enhance their own skills to address the gaps that exist. Learning about the different types of ESL programs intrigued them to learn more about various support options, additional strategies, and general knowledge in the topic area. They expressed appreciation for igniting the interest in the topic for them and unveiling the rationale for an additional focus for their professional development. Steve comments that “If I were not concerned with LEALs, there is a good chance, to me, a sufficient understanding would be the ability to have a conversation in English.” The series has taught him that there are several potential points of misunderstanding; however, the policies and procedures outlined by the Ministry of Education provided some clarity on what teachers can expect from LEALs at various levels of mastery. Unfortunately, these documents are not always known to teachers. Generally, the governing policies and procedures generated many good discussions among participants as they analyzed and critiqued them as well as assessing the impact they have had on their practice, regardless of their initial awareness.

**Internal Changes: Self-Efficacy and LEAL Competence**

It is evident in the literature and from participants’ responses that there is an overlooked internal aspect of teacher development that includes confidence, beliefs, and lived experiences that play a significant role in self-efficacy and competence in teaching (Coelho, 2007; Garcia, 1996; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Pettit, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Teachers’ self-perceptions must be examined since they play a powerful role in teacher practice that inevitably impacts LEALs in the classroom (Barnes, 2006; Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008; McSwain, 2001). These unseen factors influence the learning environment, teaching behaviours, and the academic experiences created by teachers.
Even the most well-meaning teachers can perpetuate poor practice, such as social isolation, meaningless peer interactions, ineffective teacher feedback, and missed opportunities, without even realizing it due to their underlying beliefs (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008; Harper & de Jong, 2009; Perego & Boyle, 2008; Richardson, 1996). Unfortunately, while we know that all teacher candidates arrive with existing beliefs, knowledge, and experiences that act as a filter and lens, these unseen qualities are minimally explored during the training process (Evans et al., 2005; Farrell, 2006). To optimize the impact of teacher education and capitalize on its meaningfulness, candidates need to learn to identify their existing beliefs and take them into consideration during the training process. As found by Evans et al. (2005), this process cannot be trivialized regardless of the discomfort, time, and active effort it may require.

Self-perceived levels of efficacy have a significant influence on the learning process and on future teaching practice (Farrell, 2006; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Pajares, 1992; Rueda & Garcia, 1996). Alternatively, low levels impede learning and practice, thus being identified as one of the greatest educational challenges of teachers (Youngs & Youngs, 2001). It would be a common expectation for newly trained and certified teachers to not have low levels of self-efficacy, especially when it is known that there are methods of circumventing the negative outcomes associated with missing elements in mainstream educational discourse (Barnes, 2006; Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008; Coelho, 2007; Farrell, 2006; Meskill, 2005; Pappamihiel, 2004; Pettit, 2011). All teachers must understand the needs of LEALs: linguistic, cognitive, educational, and inclusion. The workshop series was
viewed by participants as a definite step towards inner changes of feeling prepared and successful in teaching LEALs. These internal changes are further explored in this section.

**Beliefs.** The belief of what it meant to teach in mainstream classrooms was constantly challenged by the new information being shared during the series. With a greater awareness of shifting underlying beliefs, participants identified their most pertinent deficiencies and were better able to recognize and establish a meaningful plan of action. Participants explicitly stated that the workshops changed their beliefs to better prepare them to teach, accommodate, and offer support and guidance to LEALs. It also helped them to realize that teacher tasks such as lesson planning are more comprehensive than they originally perceived and were prepared for. In reflections, participants noted that the content and experiences were contributing to their perspectives expanding to include LEALs in all aspects of their teaching. Even those who came in with no expectations or questions, only a genuine interest to becoming the best trained teacher possible, found the experience to be a real “eye opener” and impactful on their beliefs as a teacher. Many reflected on the personal impact of the series on their perspectives of teaching and noted how they now instinctively view teaching differently and have an eye for even small pedagogical changes that can profoundly impact the educational experience and flourishing of students and their families. This was an important change as families were often unseen as valuable contributors in the English language learning process.

To stimulate necessary changes in beliefs, there were several intentionally planned potential critical events to encourage moments for cognitive dissonance (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). Some that the participants found most effective were
the statistics, learning tasks, discussions with guest speakers pertaining to the lack of support, and expectations in comparison to the training of teachers. The disruption of existing beliefs was a touch point or opportunity to address ingrained beliefs that perpetuate poor practice and inhibit teacher development. These topics stimulated critical thought, illuminated practice, and provoked reflection and conversations regarding their attitude, beliefs, practice, and competence for Ontario’s diverse mainstream classrooms (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). It was found to be highly effective to discuss the moments of cognitive dissonance for teachers as it resulted in changing perceived preparedness and practice for many in the group.

Confidence. Participants initially felt that they were “abandoned at sea” without the tools or knowledge necessary to teach LEALs in mainstream classrooms. They identified several barriers and were cynical in their identification and discussion. As the series progressed there was a growing sense of confidence in their teaching abilities and preparedness that matched a distinct change in their outlook. Participants still acknowledged barriers but discussed them as temporary challenges or obstacles that can be overcome. For examples, time was identified as a significant barrier to LEAL support. While it may be time consuming at first, as with all new changes in practice, it would become a natural element of their practice over time. LEAL-related tasks were viewed as a necessary component of teaching practice, rather than an unknown supplementary duty. Furthermore, while some strategies were intuitively used with LEALs, participants said that they would have continued questioning themselves and never known that it was the “right thing to do.” Knowing for certain that they are implementing research-based
practice and learning the technical names for strategies and development helped instill a sense of confidence and reassurance.

There were also many “ah-ha moments” or critical events where they made connections between their experiences, knowledge, and new learning. Complexity Theory directs us to examine the insights of critical events on professional learning (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). These are defining moments that can instantly transform teachers. Armed with new connections and a common language, they were better able to understand the literature and policies regarding LEALs in mainstream classrooms. Similarly, they began to understand the language regarding the “look-fors” or milestones in language development. Understanding the different steps has provided them with greater confidence in their ability to support LEALs and an enhanced sense of being current and knowledgeable on the topic.

Simply knowing where to access materials eased teachers’ concerns and fostered their confidence. The difference these small actions have made only reinforce the notion that all pre-service teachers should be further educated on the documentation and resources available to readily meet the needs of Ontario’s diverse student populations. Overall, as Brittany states, participants demonstrated an increased “internal feeling of competence” in meeting the needs of LEALs because of their experience in the series where they were afforded the opportunity to explore, learn, and experiment with their concerns paired with targeted information.

**Knowledge.** The series facilitated the development of new knowledge, a better understanding of LEAL experiences, and LEAL needs in mainstream classrooms. One of the most significant learnings identified was the levels of language proficiency. While
initially only considering LEALs as being students in the early stages of development, they now know that students with strong basic communication skills may still require support to develop their cognitive academic language proficiency. Possessing the knowledge necessary to identify the different characteristics’ various stages as well as methods of documenting learning progress has been noteworthy developments to their knowledge of LEALs. The introduction to a language continuum was critical to their understanding of what students know or can do, what they need to know and be able to do, and where they should be headed. It provided a framework to structure their support and goals, thus grounding their practice in something that is research-based and reliable.

A solid demonstration of knowledge change is evidenced in the change of LEAL definitions. Initial definitions of LEALs provided by participants included minimal and vague criteria, such as being new to the country and learning English. These criteria miss a large portion of LEALs and contribute to them being misunderstood or poorly taught. As a result of the series and their growing knowledge of LEALs, participants’ definitions changed to include greater detail such as language development, cultural learning, and additional languages. For many there was also a new acknowledgement of different English dialects and Canadian-born LEALs. With this broader definition, it is likely that more students who require LEAL support will have their needs met in the classroom. Thus, who they actually identify as a LEAL has changed from being narrow and vague to broader, specific, and accurate. The new definitions reflect a better understanding of who LEALs are, their diversity, and their potential needs.

After exploring the roles and responsibilities of teachers as documented in policies, research, and panelist stories, participants developed accurate knowledge
regarding the role and expectations of teachers. Importantly, they now possess accurate
information concerning ESL supports available in public school systems. Rather than
simply expecting full support from the school board and specialists, they understand that
it is likely that they will receive intermittent support that may be on an itinerant schedule.
Thus, beliefs regarding ESL support shifted and ESL specialists were seen as more of a
resource with whom they can collaborate and plan for guidance and not rely on as sole
support providers. They also learned that learning resource teachers are excellent point-
persons within the school for language-resource support since they often take on a
language-support role when specialists are not available.

**Understanding.** With a better understanding of the challenges faced by LEALs,
participants reported a sense of compassion and deeper intuition to the learning needs of
LEALs. Experiential learning tasks fostered perceptual changes by enhancing their
understanding of the time and cyclical thought processes involved in constantly scanning
their repertoire of vocabulary. The barriers imposed caused feelings of frustration, fluster,
and self-consciousness in their ability to complete a typical classroom task. This learning
task motivated a desire to better understanding LEALs and find new ways to help
eliminate barriers to learning. This begins with an understanding that the responsibility of
teaching LEALs is accomplished and dependant on a network of individuals in the school
community; a team where everyone supports the development of students regardless of
credentials or position. Most important is the culture of support within the school, with or
without ESL specialists; there must be a culture that facilitates the learning of English.

Within the classroom, participants have a better understanding of English
language learning and teaching in terms of general classroom programs and language
programs. Language programs were planned by deliberately beginning with the basics of everyday language and moving to the more complex academic requirements. There was an added focus on transitioning and relationship building with their growing understanding of language acquisition. For example, initially many did not realize that there may be a silent period experienced. Participants such as Rebecca admit that they would have immediately turned to attempting diagnostics or formal assessments to determine proficiency without consideration for the stages of acculturation. Without these considerations, initial interactions would not be reflective of the LEALs’ skills and knowledge. Teachers need to be able to make informed decisions based on their understanding of why certain instructional practices are better than others for LEALs and in particular situations (Coady et al., 2016; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Turkan et al., 2016).

The content of the series offered a deeper understanding of LEAL teaching and provided the impetus to develop a strong basis to support their justification for changes in practice and greater advocacy. For example, teachers are taught to acknowledge learning through assessments; however, all learning does not need to be evidenced in the form of a written test. Alternative assessments are a valid measure of learning and may be more appropriate for LEALs in many cases. While initially counterintuitive, teachers came to understand that pressures are often self-imposed and learned to validate the use of alternatives.

**Awareness.** Overall, participants reported a new sense of awareness for effectively implementing the curriculum and accommodations for LEALs without deteriorating the educational experiences of mainstream students. By interacting with their colleagues, research, and experts from the field, they became aware of what is
available, where to start the process, who to connect with, and what might become more available in the future. Through targeted content, a consideration for LEALs was reportedly developed and added to the lens of these certified teachers.

It is evident that many changes, both external and internal, were acquired through participation in the workshop series. Importantly, participants expressed a greater sense of responsibility for LEALs in mainstream classrooms because of their participation (Faez, 2012). The conditions of the series fostered a change to the identity of the complex system and the way that it interacts within larger social contexts (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). The complexity lens identified some of the most impactful processes to preparedness. It is important to acknowledge that the positive reception of the workshop series may also be linked to the fact that they served as a series of consciousness-raising sessions on different topics. The participants were not required to go more deeply into the subject matter through application with actual LEALs. Only some were in situations where they could apply their learning simultaneously with LEALs. Those who were unable to apply their new ideas may not have a true grasp of the difficulties of working with LEALs. Nonetheless, their positive willingness and confidence regarding their LEAL competence is a significant starting point towards effectively teaching LEALs.

These findings can be incorporated into a nonlinear approach to teacher education and may create the initial conditions necessary to support the emergence of a collective self-organization toward enhanced preparedness (Morrison, 2006). This information may be incorporated into teacher education courses in the early years of implementation. The outcomes of teacher education may vary; however, they will not be random and inexplicable (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014). There are many aspects to learning and change
that can be fostered and facilitated within teacher education. To further disseminate the benefits of this study, recommendations were compiled based on suggestions from the participants as well as the most pertinent findings.

**Recommendations**

The findings of this study support the literature that expresses the impact of teachers’ low self-perceptions for teaching LEALs and a lack of adequate teacher preparedness resulting from their teacher education programs (Eller & Poe, 2016; Gandara et al., 2003; Jones, 2002; Perez & Holmes, 2010; Turgut et al., 2016; Wong-Fillmore & Meyer, 1992). Certification criteria must reflect the needs of current Ontario classrooms. Findings that reveal the ongoing certification of undertrained teachers must be addressed systematically through all levels of the certification.

The following are recommendations derived from the data to better meet the needs of LEALs and mainstream teachers.

**Recommendation 1: Mandate a Dedicated LEAL Course in Teacher Education**

The workshop series was a valuable professional development experience to all involved. There was a good balance between practical and theoretical components, and participants noted that there was something to take away from each session. The content pushed them to develop some new considerations and to think more about specific language learning and teaching tools.

It is recommended that all teacher education programs mandate a dedicated LEAL course as a meaningful component of teacher education. The current expectations of teachers in the field do not match the depth of their training. Targeted, intentional, and specific LEAL-related content is necessary for all teachers and cannot continue to be
minimized through mere mention, infusion, or combined with other courses. LEAL education requires greater visibility and priority in teacher education. For example, Special Education and LEAL-training each deserve distinct platforms to ensure the focus of each remains clear. It is common for language content to be infused into generic courses on diversity or special needs (Gleeson & Davison, 2016). Diversity courses fail to equip teachers with the specific knowledge, skills, and strategies they need to meet the language and academic needs of LEALS (Turgut et al., 2016). Participants believe that it is a serious shortcoming to allow LEAL-training to be elusive, especially since they noted that more training would have improved their level of self-perceived preparedness for the realities of the classroom. LEAL education must be considered the role and responsibility of all classroom teachers (Daniel, 2014; Eller & Poe, 2016). Furthermore, there is significant research support indicating that strong preparation can make a dramatic difference to student learning as well as academic achievement (Turgut et al., 2016). While a mandated course is a good starting point for change, both a course and topic infusion within existing courses would have a greater effect.

Given that every teacher candidate may not have the opportunity to work with a skilled mainstream teacher of LEALs, it is necessary for them to learn to think critically about teaching practices they observe (Daniel, 2014). Candidates need to learn to critique the teaching practices around them in schools and question the ways in which they support or challenge educational inequities. This skill development can be incorporated into their LEAL education. In general, Hansen-Thomas et al. (2016) found positive correlations between LEAL-related courses and mainstream teachers’ perceived knowledge of competencies. This type of content specific course was deemed highly beneficial for
mainstream teachers. It is unrealistic to expect teachers to feel prepared for LEALs in mainstream classrooms and confident in their abilities without required training (Turgut et al., 2016).

**Recommendation 2: Educate Teacher Candidates on the Role of ESL Specialists**

It is important for all teacher candidates to know the role of ESL specialists, the policies of ESL and ELD, as well as the types of programs available to LEALs. This is important information for candidates to know, as they will need to collaborate with professionals, advocate for LEALs, and understand Ministry language pertaining to providing the best support for LEALs. Learning to advocate is particularly important in schools with less support and higher risks of loneliness (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). Teacher candidates should be given opportunities to engage with ESL specialists to gain insight into the different ways LEALs are supported within the school while also refining the ways they provide support (Daniel, 2014). If it is an expected role and responsibility of teachers, as mandated by policies, it should be deemed important enough to have specific and targeted content within the teacher certification process. For these reasons, it is recommended that all teacher candidates are educated on the role and responsibilities of ESL specialists and related information.

**Recommendation 3: Making the LEAL Component Within Teacher Education**

**Practical**

Participants noted that a practical component for the opportunity to implement new learning would have been a valuable complement to the series content. Some went further to recommend a link between a practicum or Concurrent Education course requirement to meet this need. However, it is important to note that simply placing
students in schools with diverse student populations is not enough (Daniel, 2014). Connections and communication needs to occur between practicum schools and teacher education programs to ensure that there are opportunities for candidates to apply their learning (Eller & Poe, 2016; Zeichner, 2010). A weekly practical for students to spend quality time with LEALs and engaging in the learning and teaching process would add to the efficacy of the series content and meaningfulness of the experience. By applying their learning, they could have the experience of identifying what works and what does not work with particular students. In Daniel’s (2014) study, candidates identified their interactions and observations of students as being the most positive learning experiences. Studies have found that this type of positive feedback relates to fundamental change and growth (Cunningham, 2001). This is an important skill for teachers to practice and learn, and for this reason it is recommended that a practical component of working with LEALs be added to teacher education programs and LEAL-related professional development.

**Recommendation 4: Train All Teachers for the Role of Learning Resource Teacher**

It is recommended that all teacher candidates be trained in the role of learning resource teacher so that they can pinpoint student needs, understand how to work with students who are withdrawn from the classroom, and better understand the role of these professionals. Given that most certified teachers also have their Special Education Part 1 AQ, becoming a learning resource teacher is not an unlikely possibility. The practical component would give a realistic sense of the requirements and expectations in the field. It would also afford them the opportunity to readily collaborate with an ESL specialist. It is problematic that they do not know what resource teachers or ESL supports actually do with students when they are withdrawn. It would also develop greater self-efficacy and
perceived preparedness—an important consideration for teacher preparedness as teachers’ self-efficacy directly impacts their ability to adequately meet students’ needs (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

**Recommendation 5: Teachers Require Adequate Training of the English Language**

Participants noted how teachers need a different understanding of language teaching for LEALs. This was a significant area of challenge for teachers as they felt that early exposure and experience with these challenges while under the guidance and support of teacher education programs would be ideal. During these times, support is freely available by teacher mentors, faculty advisors, peers in similar situations, and teacher training curriculum. With these multiple levels of support and guidance in the training process, they would be better equipped to provide the support on their own. With the regulated Standards of Teaching practice, it should be deemed unacceptable for certified teachers to be concerned with their knowledge of the English language and the complexities of its rules. All teachers must develop an understanding of English as a linguistic system that is influenced socially, culturally, and academically (de Jong et al., 2013; Washburn et al., 2016). Participants were concerned with their understanding of the English language and their ability to impart their knowledge to young learners, both native speakers and learners of English. Furthermore, participants noted that learning the rules of the English language would be less valuable in isolation, but rather it should be paired with LEAL education to pair it with a realistic context.

**Recommendation 6: Educate Teachers of Existing Policies and Update Policies to Include LEALs as a Priority in Education**

Participants felt that the current policies do not represent LEALs as being a
priority or valuable members to school boards. Policies should also be a component of teacher education programs so that teachers are aware of their role and obligations in teaching LEALs. It also promotes collaboration potential with other professionals involved in LEAL education. Currently this is not common knowledge to candidates or graduates of teacher education programs.

Existing policies should be used to dictate the training teachers need to better support LEALs in mainstream classrooms by placing a greater emphasis on educating LEALs in certification policies (Daniel & Peercy, 2014). Policies used to guide practice should never be a surprise to certified teachers already in classrooms. Furthermore, the existing language used in the policy documents allows school boards to fall short of meeting the promises of the policies. For example, language such as “should” or “encouraged to” are not enough as they allow for a continuation of the status quo in schools and training programs. They lack a strong advocacy for LEALs and clearer directives to protect teachers from feeling inadequately prepared or unconfident in their abilities to manage their teaching obligations. This could eliminate undue stress on teachers—an important goal since the well-being and self-efficacy of teachers impacts all students within their care.

**Recommendation 7: Educate Teachers on How to Assess Learning for LEALs**

A critical gap identified in teacher education programs was the lack of teaching on how to assess student learning for LEALs. The most common methods of addressing LEAL needs were to simply reduce the number of questions or provide an online translator program. Actually, learning the purpose and use of various assessment accommodations was significant. There is a significant gap in teachers’ knowledge
regarding how to make valid decisions and use of strategies and accommodations in the classroom for instruction and assessment purposes (Lin & Lin, 2015). It was noted that even within the existing assessment courses, there is a need to learn how to accommodate assessments to focus more on understanding and less on memorization while also ensuring that the assessments are actually measuring what they are aiming to. Teachers require explicit teaching on assessment strategies, alternatives, their purposes, and uses.

**Recommendation 8: Develop an Entirely Face-to-Face Course Format**

While the online format worked well for the research study—since participants required the flexibility, convenience, and less pressure as they were each pursuing other full-time obligations or joining from a distance—there was a definite preference for face-to-face sessions where they could ask questions, engage in open discussions, feel part of a course, and network with others. These sessions also impact teachers in a different way as the conditions of the situation may foster the group to witness transformation and become affected by their peers’ growth and self-empowerment which may lead to their own self-review (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). Employing greater face time would allow for greater discussions, role-play scenarios, and other interactive learning tasks. Role play could be used for initial assessments, to create an assessment portfolio, or to practice the reception process. This format also provides novice teachers with more opportunities to reflect, discuss, and strategize collegially. Additionally, communication in online platforms often seems inauthentic or forced with the posting requirements. A face-to-face format would add flexibility in participation options and the variability of the discussion. It would also provide ongoing mentoring
to teachers that may even be situated in practice and offer richer learning potential
(Cochran-Smith et al., 2014; Daniel & Peercy, 2014; Meskill, 2005).

**Recommendation 9: Incorporate Panel Sessions in Teacher Education and Professional Development Opportunities**

The panel session has great potential in the professional development of teachers for building self-efficacy. Rather than being told what to do, it becomes a conversation among colleagues and stakeholders who share a wide variety of information on a complicated topic. The varied perspectives provided insights into different domains and community affiliations that were not necessary connected or considered previously.

Participants can become aware of the complexities and ripple effect of language learning and cultural differences in the panel type session. The information shared provided different meaning and significance to each individual, yet all participants valued the opportunity to communicate freely with experts in the field. It also provided a sense of comfort knowing that they were not alone in their concerns and challenges. They quickly learned that others are in the same position and they can come together to share ideas, collaborate, and obtain feedback (Farrell, 2016a). The shared experience within a collegial and caring arena was important to them. For the first time, they felt that they understood what these professionals were doing in the field, what their role was, and the challenges that they too face within the educational system. It connected participants and the guests on a greater level of understanding and community.

The panel session is uniquely individualized learning as participants take from it what they want to transform their practice. An extension of this recommendation is to incorporate additional guests or perspectives to this type of session to include those
directly impacted by LEAL education. Hearing their learning experiences and challenges can be extremely impactful while also teaching candidates an alternative perspective.

**Recommendation 10: Further Exploration of Teachers’ Self-Perceptions of Preparedness**

The findings confirm that teacher development occurs prior to candidacy in a pre-service education program. Teachers draw on their own experiences as learners and observers in classroom settings to supplement their training. Moreover, teacher education programs omit critical questions and foundational content regarding language learning and teaching which leads to the perpetuation of misinformed practice and low self-efficacy among teachers of LEALs. The theoretical basis used in this study could be extended as teacher education programs evaluate the impact of LEAL content through the lens of teachers’ self-perceptions of preparedness.

**Future Research Directions**

The workshop series was a pilot to test applicability with a small sample prior to full implementation. It is meant to be a springboard for further research with a broader sample; this would allow for a deeper investigation into the impact of LEAL content on teachers’ self-perceived preparedness, especially when explored across multiple postsecondary institutions in Ontario. A longitudinal study would also provide more comprehensive data and implications for teacher education. Furthermore, with recent amendments to teacher education program requirements and policies, there may be added differences to document. A greater body of data from multiple institutions would allow for generalizability and a clearer sense of the preparation taking place across Ontario.

The participants were enthusiastic and excited to learn about LEALs while enhancing their skills in this area. It is necessary to explore the impact of the workshop
series on a greater range of teacher candidates. With full implementation or mandatory LEAL-related content in teacher education programs, a greater variation of impact may be found. Additionally, deeper research could be conducted with the addition of a practicum component and with entirely face-to-face sessions.

It is necessary to continue the exploration of teacher preparedness through a Complexity Theory lens. For many years, there has been an overt concern with a process-product approach that aims to identify specific components of teaching that can be prescribed. This approach is inadequate and oversimplifies the preparation of teachers for the complex situations of real-life teaching (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014). Teacher preparedness is influenced by both the history of the system and external environments (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014; Morrison, 2006). To better understand teachers’ processes of preparedness, learning, and self-organization, additional studies into approaches of teacher preparedness and education are warranted to learn more about the initial conditions that encourage critical events.

Overall, it is necessary to continue investigating teachers’ self-perceived levels of preparedness as they graduate from teacher education programs, become certified with the College of Teachers, and enter the field to work with students. Perceptions of preparedness may lead to critical insights into the effectiveness of teacher education programs on preparing teachers for the realities of Ontario’s classrooms. Through personal perspectives, we can investigate—with great depth—what and how teachers learn about educating LEALs and how prepared they feel to educate LEALs (Daniel, 2014; Washburn et al., 2016). With the addition of a second year in training and additional accreditation regulations, it is necessary to continue this line of investigation.
This study provides some evidence that recent changes in regulations can have a beneficial effect on teacher preparedness for LEALs in mainstream classrooms. Research supports the need to explore ways in which teachers can be better prepared to develop higher self-perceptions of preparedness for LEALs in mainstream classrooms (de Jong et al., 2013; Faez, 2012; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Lucas, Villages, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

**Conclusion**

The language mosaic of Ontario continues to diversify as it remains the province of choice for newcomers and continues to be the home to many Canadian-born LEALs. Yet, scholarly literature consistently highlights a need to address teachers’ low self-efficacy for teaching LEALs and a lack of adequate teacher preparedness for LEALs (Gandara et al., 2003; Jones, 2002; Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Turgut et al., 2016; Wong-Fillmore & Meyer, 1992). Even well-intentioned teachers lack important knowledge and perceptions necessary for teaching LEALs (Webster & Valeo, 2011). Teachers require targeted, intentional training that improves their ability to address the barriers to effective LEAL teaching and learning. However, as a complex system, this is not a simply prescribed solution. Consideration for initial conditions, interactions, feedback loops, and other influences are needed (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014). Teacher education for LEALs can no longer be optional, as it has become a necessity for this growing demographic of learners in Ontario classrooms (Jones, 2002; Pettit, 2011).

This study aimed to explore options pertaining to the training of teachers for LEALs by examining teacher education programs through the perspective of teacher
graduates, theoretical and practical LEAL content, and discussion regarding the impact of LEAL-specific training on perceptions of preparedness for LEALs in mainstream classrooms. Teachers’ perceptions are powerful indicators of future behaviour and represent a critical avenue to understanding preparedness—even more than knowledge itself (Pettit, 2011; Yoon, 2008). Through a Complexity Theory and Mindfulness Mindset lens, this study explored the interactions between knowledge, history, and participation within the fostered conditions of the series (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). The aim was not to determine a tightly prescribed curriculum but instead to explore actions, experiences, relationships, and climates that promote change, order without control, and self-organization (Morrison, 2006). The outcome of this study has implications for teacher education curriculum, teacher certification requirements, and may ultimately impact the equity of education in mainstream classrooms.

With recent changes to teacher accreditation and regulations, there is an added component of knowing how to teach LEALs; however, the format and depth of this teaching or learning remains unknown. Moreover, in the existing ESL policies there are several responsibilities of teachers that are unknown to them. With all of the unknowns that are not being addressed, there are concerns regarding the quality and depth of the LEAL content that will be incorporated in teacher education programs. There are varying degrees to which this content can be incorporated including infused or stand-alone, paired with a practicum, et cetera. What is known for certain is that Faculties of Education are positioned to have a positive impact on future teachers by instilling in them the competence and confidence needed to work with a variety of needs in the classrooms. This study supports the claim that teacher education has the potential to alleviate barriers
with LEAL-specific training. This 10-session workshop series gives promise as it resulted in participants feeling better prepared to fulfill their teaching roles and responsibilities with LEALs in mainstream classrooms. While results may present greater variability with teacher candidates, it is nonetheless a significant content gap that needs to be addressed. It is necessary to begin incorporating meaningful and impactful LEAL content into teacher education for all teachers.

Teachers need to be prepared for the complexities of teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms. They need to embrace the unknown and uncertainties evident in the field and begin prioritizing the education of LEALs (Choi & Yi, 2016; Daniel, 2014). The tendency to keep LEAL education on the periphery is likely to change when teachers’ self-efficacy and perceived levels of preparedness are at an acceptable level (Daniel & Peercy, 2014; Hansen-Thomas et al, 2016; Melnick & Zeichner, 1995). Teachers need to learn to move beyond simply knowing they are responsible; they need to embrace the disequilibrium that enables learning, creativity, and comfort with uncertainty since it is inescapable in the complex systems we work in. Teachers can experience empowerment as they abandon their priority for strategies and embrace the humanistic side of teaching to the centre of their instructional decision-making (Choi & Yi, 2016; Daniel, 2014). This idea was also emphasized by the panelists as they were told to begin with relationships, care, and connection to students as the groundwork to any successful LEAL teaching. These are the skills that need to be honed to teach 21st century learners. Farrell (2016a) also highlights the fact that many novice teachers experience shock and leave the profession because they assumed that teaching would be a mere application of what they learned during teaching education. For these teachers, life
instantly becomes hectic with a mentality of needing to “swim or sink.” They were not prepared for the uncertainty and complexity of the profession and did not have the skills to adequately deal and grow with the shocks.

Overall, participants’ reflections illuminate the issue of teachers being unaware of the expectations and policies of their role and responsibilities when it comes to LEALs in their classrooms. None of the participants were aware of their responsibilities for LEALs as mandated by the Ministry of Education despite being certified teachers. They found that it is increasingly difficult for teachers to provide excellence in teaching when they are unaware of the expectations in the first place. The answer begins with educating teachers more thoroughly and giving them the necessary experiences prior to certifying them to teach in the classroom.

Candidates require a realistic understanding of the level of support they can expect in schools and understand the roles of the human resources around them. All too often, they are taught the ideals of teaching scenarios during their teacher education programs, which leave teachers to encounter the sometimes rude reality of classroom life for when they enter the profession (Farrell, 2016a). They also require an understanding of the policies, procedures, and processes in place that should inform their practice as well as an awareness of the types of ESL programs that exist within the school system. These are foundational documents and services that should be known to all certified teachers.

Complexity Theory in education does not prescribe curricula, though it does not deny that there is important knowledge and content to learn. There is an urgent need for a curriculum component dedicated to the betterment of LEAL education in teacher education. Successful LEAL inclusion and education is dependent on teachers
understanding how to adapt the curriculum and accommodate LEALs to make learning accessible, engaging, and developmentally appropriate. It is imperative to educational equity that teacher education extends beyond content, strategies, and methodologies to include a meaningful understanding of LEALs, educational responsiveness, and pedagogical practices that build on existing teaching knowledge and skills. Teachers must enter the field armed with the necessary tools, knowledge, experiences, and self-efficacy to successfully engage and inspire the future generations of Ontario residents.

Teacher preparedness is not simply about teacher knowledge development; it is more complex than that. It includes personal history and experience, mentors and mentorship, self-efficacy, vicarious experiences, feedback loops, critical events, and disequilibrium. It is a system that is constantly acting and reacting to critical events that shock and place the community at the edge of chaos (Larson-Freeman, 1997). In this state, teachers seek to improve their practice and the system of which they are members (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). Thus, teacher education must embrace disorder as it gives way to order, learning, unlearning, and change. Through complexity thinking, teacher preparedness can be reconceptualised to inform the conditions, contexts, and activities where teacher preparedness for LEALs can emerge.

Personal Reflection on the Research Project

It is an ongoing challenge to meet teachers who are insecure and unconfident in their ability to teach LEALs in Ontario’s diverse mainstream classrooms. However, it is exciting to know that they are eager to identify the gaps in their understanding and are continuously aiming to better their teaching practice. While the teachers participating in this study were well intentioned, they held and identified with common misconceptions
that may misguide their practice for LEALs in mainstream classrooms. It is concerning to me to know that there are many teachers who continue to perpetuate detrimental advice and practice.

However, I am optimistic that there are growing opportunities for change. With recent changes to teacher education programs, there may be more time to address concerns beyond the academic curriculum content. This study demonstrates that even a 10-session workshop series can have a positive influence on teachers’ self-perceptions of preparedness, their understanding of LEALs, and their professional interest in ongoing learning on the topic. I continue to believe that it is crucial to target novice teachers and that teacher education has the potential to expose and address this issue by explicitly teaching the necessary LEAL-content as a mandatory component of their curriculum and exit requirements. Through this type of learning, teachers can develop a language-informed perspective for teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms.

It is with near certainty that Ontario teachers will educate LEALs in their classrooms. It is necessary to continue advocating for teacher qualifications and training that is reflective of the demographics and needs of Ontario classrooms. Teacher competencies must extend beyond an expertise of academics. All certified mainstream teachers should be skilled, culturally competent, responsive, mindful, and possess a high self-efficacy and sense of preparedness for mainstream students. Equitable education hinges on the significance associated to LEALs in teacher education programs and related policies. This line of inquiry undoubtedly benefits LEALs as well as their future teachers as they are prepared for linguistically diverse classrooms. A reconceptualization of what it means to be an Ontario Certified Teacher is needed from the perspective of LEAL
teaching. It is evident that teacher candidates require more than mere exposure to the topic, as mainstream teachers they should be able to understand, establish developmentally appropriate programs, and advocate for LEALs in their future classrooms.
References


## Appendix A: Workshop Series Content

1. **Workshop 1: Face-to-Face**
   - Formal introduction and invitation to participate in the research study
   - Questionnaire

   **The Language Learner & A Welcoming Environment**
   **Welcome & Introductions**
   - Workshop series Overview: Approach, Expectations, Outcomes
     - Reflective journaling and LEAL Toolkit
   - Who are LEALs and their teachers?
     - Unpacking terminology (LEAL, Allophone, ELL, ESL, ELD, CLD, LEP), new arrivals/Canadian born, teachers’ role, theoretical foundations
     - Intake/interview

2. **Workshop 2: Online**

   **Working Together to Support LEALs**
   **Key Issues in LEAL Education & Creating an Inclusive Classroom**
   - Understanding the needs of LEALs (language/social)
     - Myths and misconceptions of LEALs, learning English and the English language
     - Schools/teacher programme and delivery models – framework for K-12 policy & LEAL Toolkit

3. **Workshop 3: Online**

   **How English Works**
   **Language Learning: A concise yet comprehensive overview of the foundations**
   - Stages of English Development
   - The sound system of English

   **Understanding Multilanguage Acquisition**
   - Acquiring a language – how long
   - English-only
   - Corrections/encouraging

4. **Workshop 4: Online**

   **Adapting the Ontario Curriculum for LEALs**
   - Differentiating Instruction
   - Programme Adaptations
   - Describing learning behaviours
   - Making language/content accessible

NOTE: *Prepare questions for GUEST SPEAKERS: Q & A Panel*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><strong>Workshop 5: Face-to-Face</strong>&lt;br&gt;Organizing Language Instruction&lt;br&gt;  - Language Programme – programme models&lt;br&gt;  - Methods of multilingual instruction&lt;br&gt;<em>GUEST SPEAKERS: Question and Answer Panel Session</em></td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td><strong>Workshop 6: Online</strong>&lt;br&gt;Language Learning across the Curriculum&lt;br&gt;Integrating language and content instruction (including subject specific) – best practices&lt;br&gt;  - Applying strategies in the classroom&lt;br&gt;  - Visuals, instruction, scaffolds, journals, projects, materials…</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td><strong>Workshop 7: Online</strong>&lt;br&gt;Creating a Supportive Language Learning Environment&lt;br&gt;  - Comprehensible instruction/feedback&lt;br&gt;  - Incorporating students’ languages&lt;br&gt;  - Supporting beginning language learners /participation&lt;br&gt;  - School, parents, and community (a community of support)</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td><strong>Workshop 8: Online</strong>&lt;br&gt;Planning Instruction&lt;br&gt;  - Framework for adapted unit planning</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td><strong>Workshop 9: Online</strong>&lt;br&gt;Assessment&lt;br&gt;  - Alternative assessment, evaluation and reporting&lt;br&gt;  - Putting it all together &amp; raising awareness among colleagues</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td><strong>Workshop 10: Face-to-Face (Presentations)</strong>&lt;br&gt;LEAL Toolkits for Mainstream Teachers Conference&lt;br&gt;Note: Bring in a hardcopy of your Toolkit as well as an e-copy on a USB Drive for sharing</td>
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Appendix B: Initial Promotional Material

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

FREE Professional Development For Recently Certified Teachers

10 Session Workshop Series on Teaching Learners of English as an Additional Language (LEALs) in Mainstream Classrooms

Ask Yourself...

How prepared are you to teach LEALs in Ontario’s Mainstream classrooms?
What do you know about teaching LEALs in public school boards?
Did you learn about language acquisition and multilingualism?
Did you know that LEALs are the fastest growing student demographic in public schools?

Are you?
• A recent graduate from Teacher Education (within last 4 years, P/J and J/I divisions)
• Looking for a professional development opportunity that will set you apart from other candidates (professional development certificate will be awarded upon completion)
• Are you current in best teaching practices for LEALs in mainstream classrooms?

The Study:
• Developing teacher preparedness for teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms
• Take part in a 10 session workshop series on Teaching Learners of English as an Additional Language (3 face-to-face sessions, 7 online sessions)
• Create a practical LEAL toolkit with assessments, strategies, and accommodations
• Pre- and post- series questionnaire and an interview (your responses will not be linked to your name)
• Aims to inform future teacher education practice across the province

For more information, please contact: Nina Webster (nina_webster@ridleycollege.com)

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Dr. Chunlei Lu, PhD Supervisor
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Faculty of Education, Brock University

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University’s Research Ethics Board (file #13-090-LU)
Appendix C: Questionnaire

**Title of Research Project:** Learners of English as an Additional Language: Re-conceptualizing Mainstream Teacher Preparedness in the Growing Linguistic Mosaic of Ontario

**File Number:** 13-090

**Principal Investigator:** Nina Webster
**Email:** Nina_webster@ridleycollege.com or nl08xl@brocku.ca

**Department:** Graduate and Undergraduate Studies in Education

**Faculty Supervisor:** Dr. Chunlei Lu
**Email:** chlu@brocku.ca

**Department:** Department of Teacher Education
**Phone Ext.:** 5343

**Purpose** - *The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect demographic information and to establish a baseline of your perceptions and understanding related to teaching LEALs.*

**Demographic and Background Information**

Name: ____________________________________________

Ethnicity: __________________________________________

Languages (level of fluency):
_____________________________________________________

Degrees (program/university/year):
________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

What year did you became OCT Certified: _______________

**Must be within 4 years of certification to qualify as “recently certified” for this study**

AQS or any additional certification related to education:
________________________________________________________

Additional learning pertaining to LEALs (PD/in-service training/workshops/courses...)
________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________
Brief description of classroom experiences (as a student or teacher) pertaining to LEALs
This may include childhood experiences, practicum blocks, volunteer experiences, etc.
Consider including a timeframe, location, description of classroom (diversity, languages...)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What does the term Learner of English as an Additional Language mean to you? Please define.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Have you been trained in any of the following areas?

___ LEAL strategies and language-based accommodations
   (instructional/environmental/assessment)

___ Second language acquisition

___ Classroom learning needs for linguistically diverse students

If yes, provide details on context, depth of learning, hours spent

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Baseline on English Language Acquisition (Perceptions and Understanding)

1. For the following statements, state whether they are true/false and elaborate on your choice.

   a. Children learn second languages quickly and easily. They soak up new languages like sponges.

   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
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   b. It takes 1-3 years to develop English fluency.

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   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
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   c. Students require ESL or language support until they can speak English.

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   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
d. All children learn a second language in the same way.

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__________________________________________________________________

e. Proficiency in oral English is a prerequisite for academic instruction.

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__________________________________________________________________

f. Children have a limited capacity for language. Learning two languages at once can result in delays, incomplete mastery or even impairment in one of the languages.

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__________________________________________________________________
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__________________________________________________________________
g. Bilingualism leads to linguistic confusion (e.g., children who switch between two languages).

2. Overall, what are the key components necessary for successful English Language Learning?

3. How would you determine a student’s level of proficiency? What would you use as an initial assessment tool? What must this tool include?
4. What, if any, are the benefits to having a first language other than English in Canada?

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5. What strategies or accommodations would you immediately implement to develop comfort and trust with a newly arrived LEAL in your classroom?

________________________________________________________________________

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6. Would you incorporate the use of a foreign language in your classroom? Why or why not? If so, how?

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7. What strategies or advice would you encourage parents to use at home to build or support learning English?

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8. What assessment strategies would you use for LEALs? How do you know that they are effective? How will you document progress?

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9. Are there any special tools or resources you would use in a classroom with this demographic?

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________________________________________________________________________
10. If/when you are teaching in a mainstream classroom, describe your role and responsibilities in relation to LEALs. Describe the role and responsibilities of other professionals/services in your school board. What are your expectations of the school board?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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11. Please list the classroom barriers you anticipate in future teaching with LEALs.

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12. Overall, do you feel confident in your own abilities to fulfill the multiple roles and responsibilities as a mainstream classroom teacher for LEALs? This includes planning and implementing curricular standards, accommodations to instruction/environment/assessment, and inducing meaningful classroom engagement.

________________________________________________________________________
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13. On a scale of 1 to 5, how prepared are you to meet the academic needs of LEALs?

___________

14. On a scale of 1 to 5, how prepared are you to meet the language development needs of LEALs? Specifically regarding increasing proficiency in:

Speaking _____________

Listening _____________

Reading ______________

Writing _______________
Please share any additional comments or concerns you have regarding teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms:

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Appendix D: Reflective Journaling Requirement

Critical Insights (10 submissions)

One objective of this workshop series is to help participants to articulate their position and professional vision in relation to teaching LEALs by tracking their learning, questions, growth, and thinking throughout the series. The reflective journal is a place to examine underlying assumptions, beliefs, or attitudes on which professional philosophies of teaching are based.

Reflective Journaling will be completed online. Each participant is required to write an entry for each workshop. Reflective topics may be suggested throughout the series. Reflective pieces are due prior to the next session to allow participants with enough time to engage in the reflective process. Questions to consider:

- **How will your learning impact your future teaching?**
- **Have any of your thoughts or beliefs changed as result of today’s topics?**
- **Did anything in particular shock or evoke emotion?**
- **Do you have any lingering questions or thoughts?**
- **Reflect on experiences related to the topic, any ah-ha moments?**
- **If the situation is different in practice than in theory, why do you think this is?**
- **Observations or notes on your thinking (during workshop or readings)?**
- **How has this session impacted your teaching and learning philosophy?**

Each written piece requires a minimum of 3 key points from the workshop and connections to future teaching practice. It is important to remember that when I or others question your statements, this is not intended as an attack on you or your opinions. Rather, it is an invitation to expand on your initial statement and to reach deeper.
Appendix E: LEAL Toolkit Requirement

Each participant will develop a personal LEAL toolkit in the workshop series. The contents of the toolkit will be a compilation of material from the readings, tasks, and research. Participants are responsible for meeting the minimum requirements of the toolkit. A variety of organizational systems may be used (including accordion-style folder or binder); or stick with an electronic format as the required method of submission. All LEAL toolkits must have the following components:

- A continuum of language development (visual or summary)
- Environmental supports
- Student resources
  - Strategies to support students at varying levels on the continuum
  - IT (e.g., SMARTboard, webcams, websites)
    - Strategies for ongoing support (e.g., to differentiate instruction)
- Professional resources e.g. Research tidbits on LEALs
- Alternative assessment methods
- Strategies for parent partnerships
- Tying in the first language (e.g., dual language texts)
- Resources (Print, Online, Community)
- Notes from Panel Presentation (Week 5)
- Optional (recommended additions – I can assist you in arranging these):
  - Visit local school board’s Welcome centre and obtain information
  - Visit a mainstream teacher with beginner LEALs
  - ESL class support
Participants must provide an electronic copy of their toolkit in workshop 10 on a USB drive (Microsoft Word, PDF, Scanned Copies, and/or Photographs) to be shared with others. This collegial exchange allows all participants to maximize their toolkit contents and resources for future use. Participants will be advised on proper APA sourcing for their toolkit materials and on respecting copyright.

**Presentation of Toolkit:**

A conference style presentation session will be set up to share the LEAL Toolkits with other teachers. The goal of this session is to raise awareness and to articulate and justify the contents of your toolkit. Site is yet to be determined.
Appendix F: Interview Guide

Title of Research Project: Learners of English as an Additional Language: Re-conceptualizing Mainstream Teacher Preparedness in the Growing Linguistic Mosaic of Ontario

File Number: 13-090

Principal Investigator: Nina Webster
Email: Nina_webster@ridleycollege.com or nl08xl@brocku.ca
Department: Graduate and Undergraduate Studies in Education

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Chunlei Lu
Email: chlu@brocku.ca
Department: Department of Teacher Education
Phone Ext.: 5343

Participant ID: _________  Date _______________________
Start time _______  End time ________

Procedural reminders:

• Introduce yourself and give purpose of the exit interview

• Remind the participant that in the informed consent agreement, you have pledged not to disclose anything concerning his or her participation in the study with anyone other than the research supervisor; his or her identity will be protected

• Provide supervisor’s name and contact information as well as SREB Clearance and file number (13-090-LU)

• Remind the participant that the interview is scheduled to last for about one hour

• Provide a brief introduction

• Remind participant that the interview will be tape-recorded

• Make sure the tape recorder is on
Introduction:

I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. I will be recording and transcribing, what we say. It is important to me to give you a voice by accurately interpreting and representing what you say; therefore I will be asking you to review my transcriptions and any notes I make regarding my interpretations. The transcription will be verbatim; including, “ums”, so that I do not paraphrase something you've said with an incorrect interpretation. (These will not be included in the direct quotes I use for the final dissertation.)

What I am interested in finding out is your beliefs and perceptions regarding your preparedness, learning, and understandings about teaching LEALS in Ontario’s mainstream classrooms. I am also interested to know the effect, if any, of the LEAL workshop series. You’ve had a chance to review the questions I am going to ask you today and give them some thought. I really want to know your honest thoughts so please feel free to discuss your views. In order to better understand your responses, I may ask you some additional questions that you have not reviewed as we go along. Are you ready to begin?

TURN ON TAPE-RECORDER

DESCRIPTIVE EXPERIENCES

1. Tell me a little bit about who you are as a teacher. This can include your training, experiences, philosophy, etc.

2. Prior to this workshop series, describe the extent of your LEAL-related education?
3. Have you had the opportunity to reflect on your own cultural affiliation and your cultural awareness of others who are not like you?

4. Of all your past experiences, personal or professional, what has had the greatest effect on your preparation for LEALs in mainstream classrooms?

**KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION**

5. Explain, describe, or characterize your training for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

6. What is your understanding of English language learning and teaching? On what do you base this understanding – teacher education, professional development, personal knowledge, professional reading, conversations, etc.?

7. Are you equipped with the specific understanding of English and LEALs in mainstream classrooms?

8. What is the role of ESL supports in the school board in relation to your practice?

9. What key practical strategies for working with LEALs would you implement? How do these work? Where did you learn these strategies?

10. What (if any) knowledge or understanding, are you taking away from the workshop series with you?

**ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES**

11. What are the most pressing challenges that you anticipate in working with LEALs in mainstream classrooms? What will you do to overcome these challenges?

**ATTITUDES**

12. Ultimately, whose responsibility is it to ensure that LEALs learn English?

13. Whose responsibility is it to ensure that LEALs learn academic content?
14. Do you feel that it is important for teachers to have an understanding of language 
diversity and Canadian English prior to teaching in a classroom?

15. Do you feel that your perception of teaching LEALs has changed during the 
workshop series?

MINDFUL MINDSET

16. Do you believe yourself to be mindful in your teaching practice? What strategies 
do you use to help you maintain or develop a mindful mindset (reflective, 
nonjudgmental, present awareness)?

17. Did the mindfulness exercises affect you in any way?

GENERAL WORKSHOP EVALUATION

18. Was the information presented in an effective manner for your understanding and 
learning?

19. In what ways did the workshop series contribute to your professional growth?

20. Which session had the greatest effect, why?

21. Which session had the least effect, why?

22. What teaching approaches, readings, or strategies did you find effective in 
promoting your preparedness for teaching LEALs?

CONCLUSION

23. On a scale of 1 to 5, how prepared are you to meet the academic needs of LEALs?

24. On a scale of 1 to 5, how prepared are you to meet the language development 
needs of LEALs (increasing proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, writing)?

25. Is there anything else you would like to add to this discussion?
**Closing notes to remember**

- Thank participants for their time, participation and cooperation
- Explain - In my analysis I hope to capture the dynamics of your beliefs, perceptions of how you were prepared to teach LEALs, and your assessment of personal/professional growth
- They will be contacted to review notes for accuracy and to provide additional information
LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Research Project: Learners of English as an Additional Language: Re-conceptualizing Mainstream Teacher Preparedness in the Growing Linguistic Mosaic of Ontario

I, Nina L. Webster (PhD Candidate at Brock University), invite you to participate in a research project entitled Learners of English as an Additional Language: Re-conceptualizing Mainstream Teacher Preparedness in the Growing Linguistic Mosaic of Ontario.

The purpose of this research project is to explore the self-perceived preparedness of recently graduated teachers over the course of a 10-session workshop series (3 face-to-face sessions, 7 online sessions), entitled, Teaching LEALs in Mainstream Classrooms. The series aims to promote teachers’ awareness and understanding of theories, concepts, and strategies for teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms with a wholistic theoretical approach.

I would like to ask you to participate in this study by completing the workshop series, participating in two questionnaires (pre- and post-series), and a tape-recorded interview that is approximately 1 hour (after the completion of the series). Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Although the results may be published, your involvement will remain anonymous and responses will not be linked to you.

Research participation has the potential benefit of additional training in the area of teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms. As a participant you will also develop and collect several LEAL toolkits that may be useful to future teaching practice. Participants will also receive a certificate of completion which they may highlight on their resume or teaching portfolio. Ultimately, I hope that this research will lead to inform future teacher education practice across the province in the area of preparation and instruction for LEALs in mainstream.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 ext. 3035 or reb@brocku.ca. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact the Principal Student Investigator at (905) 647-1881 or nina_webster@ridleycollege.com.

Thank you,

Principal Student Investigator: Nina Lee Webster, PhD Candidate Faculty of Education, Brock University nina_webster@ridleycollege.com

Primary Faculty Supervisor: Chunlei Lu, Ph.D. Faculty of Education, Brock University chlu@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University’s Research Ethics Board (file # 13-090-LU)
Appendix H: Consent Form

Informed Consent

Date: October 10, 2013

Project Title: Learners of English as an Additional Language: Re-conceptualizing Mainstream Teacher Preparedness in the Growing Linguistic Mosaic of Ontario

SREB File Number: 13-090-LU

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Chunlei Lu, Associate Professor
Department of Teacher Education
Brock University
(905) 688-5550 Ext. 5343
chlu@brocku.ca

Student Principal Investigator (SPI): Nina L. Webster, PhD Candidate
Department of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies in Education
Brock University
nina_webster@ridleycollege.com

INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this study is to explore the self-perceived preparedness of recently graduated teachers over the course of a 10-session workshop series (3 face-to-face sessions, 7 online sessions), entitled, Teaching LEALs in Mainstream Classrooms. The series aims to promote teachers’ awareness and understanding of theories, concepts, and strategies for teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms with a wholistic theoretical approach.

WHAT’S INVOLVED

As a participant, you will be asked to complete a 10-session workshop series (3 face-to-face sessions, 7 online sessions), entitled, Teaching LEALs in Mainstream Classrooms, participate in two questionnaires (pre- and post-series), a tape-recorded interview (after the completion of the workshop series). Participation will take approximately 23 hours of your time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Components</th>
<th>Anticipated Time Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face sessions</td>
<td>1 hour sessions x 3 = 3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online session</td>
<td>1 hour session x 7 = 7 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre- and post-series questionnaire</td>
<td>1 hour each x 2 = 2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Journaling</td>
<td>30 minutes x 10-sessions = 5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAL Toolkit</td>
<td>5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>23 hours</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

Possible benefits of participation include additional training in the area of teaching LEALs in mainstream classrooms. As a participant you will also develop and collect several LEAL toolkits that may be useful to future teaching practice. Participants will also receive a certificate of completion which they may highlight on their resume or teaching portfolio. There are no risks associated with participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information you provide is considered confidential; your name will not be included or, in any other way, associated with the data collected in the study. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study; however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish.

All written or copied texts, transcripts, and raw data will be kept in a secure location (locked drawer in a personal office) and will be destroyed within three years after the completion of the workshop series. Pseudonyms will be used to identify, label, and save computer files. Access is restricted to the Nina Lee Webster (researcher) and Dr. Chunlei Lu (supervisor).

There will be no tasks for participants during the duration of the workshop series that are not normally associated with effective instruction to enhance teaching and learning. In addition, I will keep field notes and a reflexive journal that may contain references to workshop events and conversations with participants. Any such data will be reported in a manner consistent with the confidentiality protocols. All electronic files will be encoded using Microsoft software available at: http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/protect-your-documents-in-word-2007-HA010235484.aspx

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Every effort will be made to remove all data that is already collected from them. While I will attempt to remove all data, I may not be able to remove everything (e.g., a fieldnote where it is not clear that a certain understanding came from someone who has now withdrawn, with ongoing analysis that individual may have already informed my interpretations and it is no longer possible to unlearn or unknow something). The written tasks of workshop attendees who withdraw consent will not be quoted in any research and will not be kept for research purposes since it is up to the participants to decide what to do with their written work. They may continue to participate permitted that they have been engaged in the workshops until the point of dropout. To withdraw, participants may notify the researcher. All participants, including withdrawn, who attend all 10-sessions and submit all work will receive the certificate.
PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Feedback about this study will be available from Nina L. Webster, contact nina_webster@ridleycollege.com.

Nina L. Webster will establish a mailing list of those interested in feedback; contact will be initiated when available. Information on individual participants will not be disclosed to others. Publications of the research will not allow participants to be identified.

☑ Check this box if you would like to be added to the mailing list for feedback and future publications

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Nina Lee Webster or Dr. Chunlei Lu using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (13-090-LU). If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: __________________________________________________________________

Signature: __________________________________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________________________________

Optional:
Email Address for Mailing List: __________________________________________________________________
Appendix I: Certificate of Ethics Clearance

Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Human Participant Research

DATE: 12/4/2013

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: LU, Chunjie Graduate & Undergraduate

FILE: 13-000 - LU

TYPE: Ph. D.  STUDENT: Nina Webster
SUPERVISOR: Chunjie Lu

TITLE: Learners of English as an Additional Language: Re-conceptualizing Mainstream Teacher Preparedness in the Growing Linguistic Mosaic of Ontario

ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED

Type of Clearance: NEW  Expiry Date: 12/31/2014

The Brock University Social Sciences Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from 12/4/2013 to 12/31/2014.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 12/31/2014. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.

To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics web page at http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms.

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:

a) Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
b) All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
c) New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
d) Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research.

Approved: 

Jan Frijters, Chair
Social Sciences Research Ethics Board

Note: Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.