

SYMPOSIUM BREAKOUT SESSION TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2022 | 12:00-1:00 PM ET

The Lone Rangers: Teaching Multilingual Learners in Rural and Remote Schools

PRESENTERS:

- Laureen Avery, UCLA Center X/ The ExcEL Leadership Academy
- Jason Cervone, UCLA Center X/ExcEL Leadership Academy
- Christopher Clouet, Mitchell College/ExcEL Leadership Academy



Immigrant families come to rural areas through resettlement and employment opportunities, and small public school systems are challenged to respond effectively.



<u>What unique challenges do</u> <u>teachers face working with</u> <u>multilingual learners in rural and</u> <u>remote sites?</u>

Go to www.menti.com and enter code 1573 0836

<u>Challenges in rural and remote areas ...</u>

Learning Outcomes

- Who are the multilingual families in northern New England? Why do they come this area?
- What are the unique challenges of being a 'lone ranger' – teaching multilingual learners without much experience and often without local colleagues or peers



Questions????



Feel free to drop questions or thoughts into the chat box as we move through the presentation.

We will also allow time for discussion at the end.

Presenters

- Laureen Avery, Director, UCLA Center X Northeast Region
- Dr. Jason Cervone, ExcEL Project Director, UCLA Center X Northeast Region
- Dr. Christopher Clouet, Mitchell College





The 'ExcEL Leadership Academy'

- Provides professional learning for all teachers to support high quality, equitable education for multilingual learners (MLLs)
- Focus is on mainstream classroom teachers working with MLLs in the content classroom
- Participants earn the essential support for working with multilingual learners micro-endorsement

Professional learning is competency-based and job-embedded

• And happens in school-based teams led by a school-based site facilitator

Context of the Study

- Unique context of these rural schools
 - Small, mostly white schools
 - English dominant
 - Stable communities with a lot of economic diversity
- Families come to these communities for a variety of reasons
- Teachers are volunteers (or volunteered)
 - Most without any formal preparation for working with MLLs

Significance and Lit Review

- Teachers working with small EL populations need an understanding of pedagogies of language development and the socio-cultural backgrounds of their students.
 - Many had students who were new arrivals to the country and needed to provide support beyond merely learning the language.
 - The findings can provide an understanding of how teachers without any background in language development can improve their own practice and create a welcoming environment for students and their families.

- Coady (2022, 2020) illustrates students who are learning English as an additional language are not limited to any geographic location, and though larger populations exist in urban areas there are still a number who live in rural areas.
 - There is tremendous difficulty in aligning practices and policies with respect to rural ELs given the variation in populations across the United States. One of these difficulties is the variety of languages spoken.

(Ruecker, 2021) notes school leaders express difficulty in creating and maintaining adequate ESL programs and have limited resources necessary to develop the proper curriculum. Small population sizes also create difficulty in placing students in the correct environments and receiving the services to which they are entitled.

 Many rural teachers also do not have access to the necessary culturally relevant instruction necessary for their students (Hoover, Sarris, & Hill, 2015).

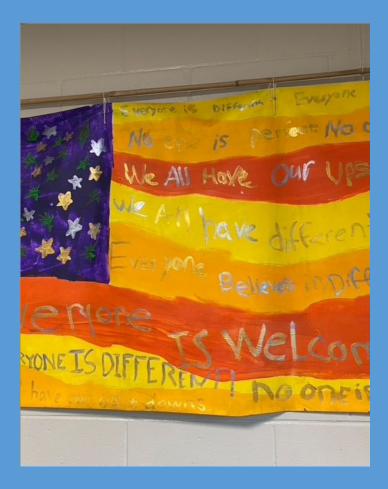
Methods



- This study investigated the classroom practices and pedagogies of English
 Language instruction as well as school and community perceptions of various rural schools in Maine and Northern
 Vermont.
- In all, 13 participants were interviewed, 11 teachers or classroom specialists, 1 district EL coordinator and 1 community partner

This study has two major limitations

- The first is the sample size, 13
 participants scattered across two New
 England states will clearly not be
 representative of rural education in
 general.
- Another limitation is in the communities selected. Some participants have only a handful of ELs or even as few as one. New England, and Vermont especially, also skew far more socially liberal than the rest of the United States,



Findings: Taking on the role of the ESL teacher

Of the 13 participants interviewed for this study, only 3 have a background in teaching English as a Second Language. The rest served in various positions at their schools and volunteered (or were volunteered) to take on the role of ESL teacher with several currently working on their certifications. I'm a literacy specialist... sometimes (ELs) come my way and the methods that I've used are really methods intended for students with dyslexia, or students having difficulty attaining literacy in their first language so it just doesn't feel appropriate.

Findings: Reflections on the school

- The teachers we interviewed generally felt supported by their school administration and were heartened by the prospect of some increase in state funding to support EL students.
 - However, they did voice concerns that there was not any sort of systemic plan or resources to ensure their EL students have full access to the curriculum.

I think the kids and the adults are welcoming in terms of social-emotional needs, do they understand what it takes to be a person who comes from someplace else to being here? I think people don't totally get it, and definitely not in an academic way. (ESL Teacher)

Findings: Reflections on the community

 Generally, the teachers felt that the school communities were welcoming although several detected a gap between the level of acceptance in school versus the wider community.

We are in a very conservative belt... when you drive to school there's "Let's Go Brandon" signs everywhere. But it seems that issues are directed at policies rather than people. I haven't experienced poor treatment here, everyone has been welcoming. (World Language Teacher)

Findings: Less than adequate official supports and policies

Despite the overall positive tone of the interviews there are challenges for ELs in rural schools. Most of these seem to stem from a disconnect between the needs of the students—as described by teachers—and policies, at the school, district and state levels.

I can't believe he's not getting credit for his junior year... he learned another language. (ESL Teacher)

Findings: Building on the strengths of a rural school

Even with the struggles facing rural teachers of ELs, participants were hopeful about their abilities to meet the needs of their students and found strength in what a rural school can offer, particularly being able to support students individually.

I love rural ELL teaching, it just keeps me global, I love that I get to work with all the kids in our spaces and see the world through their eyes. Because we're rural I get to know each kid individually. You get to make these connections that are deeper. (ESL Teacher)

Recommendations



- Emerging from these conversations is the idea that the foundation of teaching and learning is the creation of community of learners—both teachers and students.
- In order to overcome the feelings of isolation, the development of a meaningful network of rural EL teachers would allow for vibrant and structured communications, the ability to share new materials and practices, and working together to overcome challenges.

Recommendations

Interview participants also noted as a challenge a lack of coherent guidelines for pedagogy. Though all were adamant in their desire to better serve EL students, they were equally clear about the need for vetted materials that were relevant to their rural realities



Advancing Policy in New England



New partnership with Aurora Institute beginning 2022-23

- Focused on advancing the conversation around competency-based pathways for teacher endorsement and certification (like ExcEL!)
- certification (like ExcEL!)
 Meets urgent needs of the field as an alternative to traditional routes



Questions and Discussion

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- Chris Clouet, chrisclouet1@gmail.com
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Thank you for joining us!

Share Your Thoughts Participate in our one-minute poll (link in chat box)

