

# The Effectiveness of Online Professional Development for Teachers of ELs

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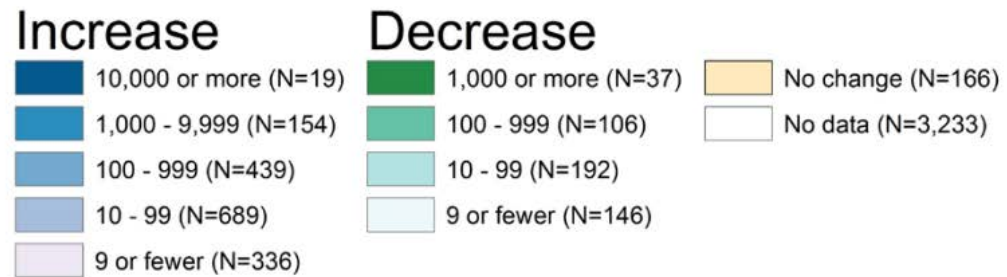
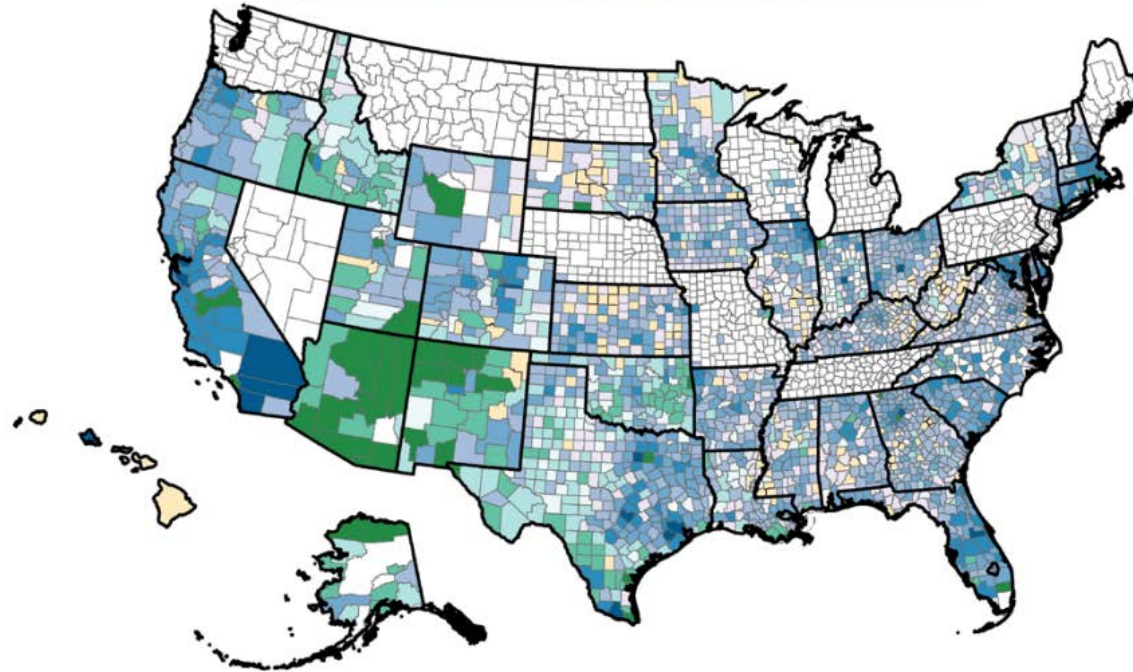
# Presentation abstract

The presenter reviews the results of a study of an online professional development program completed by 174 inservice teachers. Results indicated the PD was effective in increasing participants' self-efficacy in several domains including assessment, accommodations, instructional differentiation and identification of different stages of culture shock.

# What is the “New South”?

- ▶ Characterized by large growth in EL populations
- ▶ Very few, if any, requirements that teachers be prepared to work with this population
- ▶ Mostly rural with pockets of high EL populations in urban and suburban areas

Change in Number of ELs, by County: SYs 2000-01 to 2011-12



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey" 2000-01 and 2011-12 v. 1a.

# Issues providing professional development

- ▶ Federally, all districts must provide professional development to any staff, administrators or teachers who work with ELs.
  - ▶ Many districts in the New South are isolated and rural. They get very little professional development of any kind
- ▶ While researchers generally agree on what teachers need to know to be effective with ELs, there is little agreement among teachers themselves about what they should know
- ▶ High turnover rates also make F2F professional development difficult to maintain

# Our task...

- ▶ After being awarded a National Professional Development grant by the U.S. Department of Education (Office of English Language Acquisition), we were tasked with providing professional development to some of our neediest counties in the state.
- ▶ Of our 5 partner counties, 4 were considered rural farming communities. In fact, of the 100 counties in NC, 80 are classified as rural.
- ▶ One county in particular had experienced over a 60% growth rate in their EL population, and their ESL Student: Teacher ratio was at 77:1 in a geographic area that covered over 1000 square miles

# Our solution

- ▶ We developed an online professional development program with the following characteristics
  - ▶ Research-based; we addressed general topics that teachers and researchers told us would be useful.
  - ▶ Professionally developed; we employed a team of instructional designers familiar with Quality Matters standards. Two university TESOL professors acted as SMEs (Subject Matter Experts). We use Storyline for our Module development
  - ▶ Interactive
  - ▶ Self-paced
  - ▶ Short- 10 hours
- ▶ Why online PD?
  - ▶ Research demonstrates that online PD can allow teachers access to 'just-in-time' research-based PD that they can immediately apply to their classrooms.

# Our online PD

- ▶ Self-paced, but uses adaptive release
- ▶ Contains 5 Modules
  - ▶ Culture
  - ▶ Policies and Procedures
  - ▶ Assessing Language Proficiency
  - ▶ Lesson Planning
  - ▶ Teaching Strategies



# Our participants

- ▶ 251 participants
  - ▶ About 45% had 10 or more years of experience in the classroom
  - ▶ Most were inservice teachers (77%). Others were administrators, paraprofessionals, support staff and preservice teachers
  - ▶ 84% were female; 81% were White

# What did we ask about self-efficacy?

- ▶ We asked about participants' satisfaction with the overall PD
- ▶ We asked about both confidence in and knowledge of the following topics
  1. Identifying the current stage of culture shock in a new student
  2. Identifying the differences between social and academic language proficiency
  3. Knowing what ELs need to be successful in my classroom
  4. Knowing where to go for help when I need it
  5. Making appropriate accommodations to support ESL student success
  6. Fairly assessing your ESL students without lowering standards

# Results – overall satisfaction

- ▶ 92% reported that the PD met their expectations (agreed or strongly agreed)
- ▶ 96% reported that the materials and resources enhanced their learning
- ▶ 87% reported being appropriately challenged by the course
- ▶ 91% reported being exposed to new information
- ▶ 96% reported being able to use the knowledge and skills gained to support ELs
- ▶ 94% reported that they would recommend the PD to their colleagues

# Results – self-efficacy (confidence in and knowledge of)

- ▶ Using a repeated measures t-test, we had significant results on all questions ( $\alpha < .001$ )

# Participant comments

- ▶ *Seeing concrete examples of how questions and assessments can be changed to fit the needs of LEP students was very helpful.*
- ▶ *I plan to use the charts of English language development to understand where my students are and what their goals should be.*
- ▶ *The fact that all children are teachable, we just need to find out what they need and how to provide it for them.*

# Where to from here?

- ▶ We've applied for another round of grant funding
- ▶ There are two areas of real need across the state
  - ▶ Working with dually identified ELs (EL/EC)
  - ▶ Working with SIFE (students with interrupted formal education)

Questions? Comments?