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First and Second Generation Immigrant Students:
Breaking Down the Barriers to K-12 English Language Learner Success

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A Capstone Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Science Degree in Counselor Education

at

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

CAPSTONE PROJECT

First and Second Generation Immigrant Students: Breaking Down the Barriers to K-12 E
English Language Learner Success

This is to certify that the Capstone Project of

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Has been approved by the faculty advisor and the CE 695- Capstone Project
course instructor in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Abstract

This literature review discusses the growing and diverse population of first and second generation immigrants in the United States. The immigrant population has grown exponentially over the years and is assumed to continue on this trajectory. A rapidly growing subgroup of immigrants is students identified as English Language Learners in the K-12 school system. With this growth, so grows the barriers these students and their parents face while trying to navigate American school systems, as well as a new community. Some of these obstacles include, but are not limited to, academic, cultural, financial, communication and social barriers. It is imperative that educators and stakeholders are aware of these issues. The implications of these barriers for school counselors are also addressed; school counselors, though, can support immigrant English language learners socially, emotionally and academically. Systemic interventions at the national, state and local levels are recognized.

Keywords: English Language Learners, first generation immigrants, second generation immigrants, academic, school counselors, iceberg theory, BICS, CALP, CUP theory

First and Second Generation Immigrants: Breaking Down the Barriers to K-12 English Language Learner Success

Immigration has been a staple of the United States foundation. While the country has prided itself on being an open land for foreigners to start anew, there are still substantial barriers standing in the way of many immigrants' success. Immigrants come to the United States seeking refuge from war, hopes for economic success, religious freedom and a chance to start a new life in a country where the "American Dream" is said to be reachable for everyone. While immigrants come from different cultural backgrounds, they all seem to face very similar barriers; prejudice, economic inequality, language and cultural barriers, and lack of educational resources (Garrett, 2006).

In the last 30 years, the population of immigrants coming to the U.S. has tripled, and according to the 2013 Yearbook on Immigrant Statistics, about 990,000 immigrants took lawful permanent residence in the United States (Homeland Security, 2016). This does not take into account the estimated 11.4 million illegal immigrants who are also living in the United States, according to the Department of Homeland Security (2016). The Center for Immigration Studies notes that the U.S. population of legal and illegal immigrants reached a record high of 42.1 million, in just the second quarter of 2015.

As the number of immigrants in the U.S. swells, immigration statistics vary by state. In 2012, California, New York, New Jersey and Florida, were the four states in which about one in five people reported being foreign born (Krogstad & Keegan, 2015). Mexican-born immigrants make up the highest population of immigrants in the U.S; and while U.S. immigrants born in Mexico are the majority in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Idaho and Oklahoma, Indian-born immigrants are the majority in New Jersey (Krogstad & Keegan, 2015). In 2014, in Wisconsin,

about 115,000 foreign-born individuals were from Latin America, 96,800 were from Asia and 51,000 from Europe. The three major regions that immigrant residents in Wisconsin come from are Mexico, India and Germany (Map the Impact, 2012). In Minnesota, about 163,000 foreign-born individuals were from Asia, 102,000 were from Latin American, and 96,000 were from Africa (Frequently Requested Statistics, 2012).

Statistics like these are necessary in understanding not only the diversity of the U.S. immigration population, but also avenues to better understand their needs, as well as how barriers are being addressed state-by-state and throughout the country. These numbers have also led to increasing concern about an underserved population of immigrant students in the K-12 school systems. These are first and second generation immigrant children, who are also English language learners (ELL's; Teachers of English, 2008). Educators and researchers have been increasingly concerned with the barriers these students face.

First-generation-immigrant students are those children who are foreign-born with foreign-born parents, while second-generation immigrant students are children who are born in the United States to foreign-born parents (Nwosu, Batalova & Auclair, 2013). *Foreign born* and *immigrant* refer to persons with no U.S. Citizenship at birth (Frequently Requested Statistics, 2013). This population includes naturalized citizens, individuals or families who took up permanent, lawful residence, refugees and persons on temporary visas, as well as those who are unauthorized (Frequently Requested Statistics, 2013). This literature review will focus on first and second generation immigrants who are ELL's, the barriers impacting their K-12 educational success and the implications for school counselors.

English Language Learners

Much like the diversity of immigrants coming to the United States, ELL's are equally as

varied in several respects (Teachers of English, 2008). Some ELL students may identify strongly with their non-U.S. background, or identify more strongly with U.S. culture. Some may speak little English at home or speak English fluently within the household. Some may have been born in the U.S., while others may have recently immigrated to the U.S. There are ELL students who live in areas, which are denser in their parents' foreign-born culture, while their classmates may be surrounded by non-ELL individuals in their communities (Teachers of English, 2008).

ELL's comprise approximately 10 percent of the United States school-aged population and the highest growth are those students in grades 7-12th (Teachers of English, 2008; Sidana, Lampron & O'Cummings, 2016). While the majority are second or third generation immigrants, the number of foreign-born immigrants is increasing (Sidana et al., 2016). The proportion of students learning English as a second language in American public schools, by 2030, will be about two out of every five students (Shah, 2012). The projected growth and diversity of the ELL population speaks to the urgency with which American School Systems must become prepared to support this population so needs can be better served.

Barriers for English Language Learners

As the characteristics of ELL students are broad and their numbers in schools continue to increase, the barriers these students face are equally extensive. Barriers for ELL students include: language/communication differences (Roessingh, 2006; Goh, Wohl, McDonald, Brissett & Yoon, 2007), lack of social support (Goh et al., 2007; Lopez, 2015, Williams & Butler, 2003), financial needs (Braganza & Lad, 2013, Goh et al., 2007), trauma (Williams & Butler, 2003), cultural differences (Breiseth, 2016; Goh et al., 2007), education obstacles (Goh et al., 2007, Haynes, 2007) and overall lack of support within the school system (Lipsit, 2003; Goh et al., 2007; Lopez, 2015). Through the research on the barriers discussed in this literature review,

school counselors and educators can become aware of how these barriers impact one another and overlap.

Language Barriers. The majority of school systems see English proficiency as a necessity for academic success. However, lack of sensitivity and understanding of how ELLs develop this proficiency can lead to unfortunate, unintended negligence in assisting them in their education (Murphey, 2014). The U.S. Department of Education encourages states to offer ELL students certain accommodations, which includes extended testing time, small group and one-on-one testing (Murphey, 2014). While this is a step in the right direction, many districts tend to rush students into learning English with a “quick-exit transitional bilingual education” (Roessingh, 2006) in hopes to accelerate the pace of learning and to limit the funding for ESL programs (Haynes, 2007). Before schools can adequately address ELL students’ academic needs, it may behoove them to learn about second language development.

Second Language Development. Second language development is different from typical language development; this is an important concept for all educators, including school counselors and assessment developers, to understand. Cummins Iceberg theory explains the intricate process involved in developing proficiency in a second language through better understanding of the differences between social and academic language (Cummins, 1999). Social language or Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), is considered the *above the surface* language or every day, social language (Haynes, 2007; Roessingh, 2006). Academic language or Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is seen as the formal academic language, *below the surface* language, used for more cognitively demanding processing (Haynes, 2007, Roessingh, 2006).

BICS language is easier developed because of physical communication, which can play an important role in helping an ELL student get their point across by using gestures or pointing to objects (Haynes, 2007). When a student has acquired BICS language, they may be able to use survival vocabulary to ask for water or where the bathroom is. They may be able to answer yes or no questions such as, “What color is the car?” Or create simple drawings or graphs (Haynes, 2007, p. 1).

More cognitively demanding language, CALPS, includes expressing abstract thoughts, metaphors, extensive use of reading and writings, such as essays, “there and then” language and switching from learning to read, to reading to learn (Roessingh, 2006, p. 93). Some students may be able to read passages from a book and even memorize the meaning of certain words but still not comprehend the text (Haynes, 2007). Therefore, CALPS is more than being able to learn academic facts but the ability to strengthen their cognitive abilities and understand new concepts (Haynes).

Educators of ELL students should also understand Cummins’ Common Underlying Proficiency or CUP theory. There is a misconception that the more ELL students learn academically through the English language, the better their academic success will be. This is a false assumption (Freeman & Freeman, 1994). The CUP theory stresses that it is better for ELL students to learn academics through their primary language first and then once this knowledge is understood, they can begin to transfer this knowledge into the new language or the English language (Haynes, 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 1994). Another mistake that may be made by educators is encouraging students and their parents to speak more English at home. It is actually less beneficial for students to hear “broken English” than a rich vocabulary in their parent’s native language (Haynes, 2007). Cummins’ Iceberg Theory (1999) supports this in how it

explains that academic concepts are best learned first in the ELL student's primary language.

Educators and school professionals should also understand that *when* an immigrant student began their English learning process and *where* they were developmentally in their native country can impact how long it may take a student to become proficient in English. A comprehensive study done by Thomas and Collier (1997) researched a group of Asian and Hispanic students in the quest to better understand the amount of formal schooling that is needed for ELL students to test at the same performance level of a native speaker, at the 50th percentile on norm-reference tests (Haynes, 2007). Thomas and Collier found that overall, the more education students had in their primary language, the less time it took for them to reach the same academic level of their non-ELL peers (Haynes, 2007). In essence, students need more than two or three years in bilingual or ESL classes to succeed in school, and for some it may be 7 to 10 years (Haynes).

School professionals administering assessments should be sensitive to student's linguistic heritage and to understand that certain linguistic concepts can impact not only academic results, but also psychological evaluations (Athansiou & McCloskey, 2000). Many cognitive assessments measure CALPS, but if an ELL student has mastered this level of language development, the assessment may underestimate their cognitive abilities (Athansiou & McCloskey, 2000).

According to NAEP assessments, the achievement gap between ELL and non-ELL students is at about 40 percentage points in both fourth grade reading and eighth grade math; this has remained unchanged from 2000-2013 (Murphey, 2014). There is also significant state-level variation in this gap. For Louisiana and South Carolina for instance, ELL students and their non-ELL peers' scores are statistically identical (Murphey, 2014). Interventions and implications at

the state level will be discussed in more detail further in the paper.

Reported gaps, such as the one from the NAEP and misconceptions about ELL language development by school staff and stakeholders, point to the increasing need for more support from school counselors and administrators. An important piece to breaking down the language barrier, is finding better ways for parents, teachers, administrators and the students to communicate. Without this essential component of collaboration, ELL students continue to be at risk for falling behind academically.

Communication Barriers. While language barriers in this paper pertain to the limitations of acquiring academic and social vocabulary, communication barriers refer to issues in regards to lack of cultural understanding in communication between teachers and parents, teachers and students and the issues that arise from these interchanges.

A major stress for immigrant and ELL students is the pressure put on them to communicate to and for their parents (Goh, McDonald, Brissett, & Yoon, 2007). This not only puts a lot of responsibility on the shoulders of the students, but also creates a divide between the parents and the school. At times, students have to communicate between parents and teachers, and they may be the sole person helping their parents understand the U.S. education system (Goh et al., 2007). Certainly when students are learning to navigate a new country and culture, it may be difficult to not only understand the education system, but also to understand what educators are saying about their own growth and development. The expectation of ELL students communicating to parents could lead to confidentiality breaches or a student taking liberty with certain knowledge and communications (Breiseth, 2016). In addition, there may be cultural issues related to how children are supposed to communicate with parents that may be in cultural conflict if minors are asked by schools to talk to adults in parental roles.

The communication barrier between schools and ELL parents has been a pattern documented in research. In a 2003 study by Lipsit, nearly 300 immigrants were surveyed in New York City. The majority of immigrant parents reported that they had problems communicating with school staff at their child or children's school (Lad & Braganza, 2013). Some of these miscommunications occur around important parent/teacher meetings and the inability for parents to be able to attend due to the time of day. Many misconceptions may be formed in regards to parent involvement because parents may not attend conferences or other school events (Breiseth, 2016). It is important for schools to remember, however, that parents are so committed to their child's education that they traveled to a new county, sometimes at great risk, in order to provide the opportunity to them (Breiseth, 2016; Lad & Braganza, 2013).

Sending important school-related documents home in a student's native language; at the same time the English speaking documents are getting sent home, is also very important. Literature shows that immigrant parents are marginalized quite often by schools in regards to important educational matters such as, decisions about grades, assignments and placements in special education programs (Lad & Braganza, 2013). Communications barriers such as these stem from a lack of cultural understanding by the schools.

Cultural Barriers. Cultural differences should be recognized and considered when communicating with immigrant parents. Certain Latino communities have viewed school officials as persons not to be questioned and also may fear that too much communication with schools could result in deportation if they arrived undocumented (Breiseth, 2006; Lad & Braganza, 2013). It is important for school professionals to get to know the families' backgrounds as well as their cultural beliefs and norms in regards to education. In addition, making sure documentation is sent home in their native language will help schools become more

effective in limiting the communication barriers. Even if native language documents are provided, it is important to verify that adults in the home can read them.

Financial Barriers. Financial barriers for immigrant students and their families come in many forms. Some families may have come from affluent backgrounds in their home country, only to arrive facing economic hardship and inequality in the U.S. Other financial barriers come in the form of lack of funding for community and school resources to better assist ELL students succeed academically and socially. School professionals must consider parents' work schedules that make coming to school during daytime hours, difficult (Goh et al., 2007). A parent's need to financially support their children may impact their accessibility to school professionals; therefore, getting creative with where and when to meet with parents is essential.

Post-secondary schools should be fully accessible to all students: immigrant, ELL and traditional students. Immigrant students and those students of low SES status should have equal access to post-secondary options as their non-immigrant, middle- or high-income counterparts. Improving policies and programs that impact their experiences in elementary, middle and high school is key to improving the access they have to college (Baum & Flores, 2011).

Social Barriers. For some families, social capital, that is, the connections a family has within and between social networks, has great influence on whether the family will flourish in their new community (Douglas, 2007). A lack of social capital may be the result of bias and prejudice; this sort of discrimination may occur in the process of job searching by parents as well. This can also be seen at a smaller level within the school system.

Many immigrant students, who are also ELLs, find themselves in a place that is comfortable and safe within their ELL classroom and through connections with their teacher. Branching out into social interaction with non-immigrant and non-ELL students can be very

difficult, limiting the networking available to a few students. An ELL teacher at a high school in Wisconsin recently acknowledged that many of her students find it difficult leaving the safety they feel in her classroom (Arendsee, E., personal communication, 2016). She finds many students coming to her room during lunchtime, feeling out of place in the cafeteria. Many of the students feel judged because of how they speak and because of their race. She also stated that getting her students into the mainstream classes has been difficult, so she does her best to ease them into the routine, but always gives them the opportunity to come back into her room when they are having difficulty.

The importance of CALP language was discussed previously, but social or BICS language is just as necessary for educational success in the social arena of academia. Some ELL students may need to be taught certain interpersonal skills, understanding of nonverbal language and the use of personal space (Haynes, 2007). Learning appropriate voice tone, volume and language in different school settings will help students understand their own behavior, the behavior of others and how this impacts their social life (Haynes, 2007). This example of how language can impact the barriers students face socially, sheds light on the importance of meeting specific student needs before others should be addressed.

Meeting ELL Student Needs

In order to ensure educational success, schools implement programs or fund positions, which aim to meet student's social, emotional and academic needs. Some of these include, but are not limited to, funding for school counselors, social workers, free or reduced meal plans, special education programs and extracurricular activities. Schools also attempt to keep their students safe from harm by taking steps to reduce bullying, upgrading security and creating safe spaces for diverse groups to meet. While the student body as a whole, have needs to be met,

there are subgroups, such as ELL and immigrant students, who have sets of diverse and specific needs particular to them. The barriers facing these students, such as language, cultural, financial and social all stem from distinct and unique needs that are not being met either at home, at school or by the government. Therefore, specific interventions are warranted.

Understanding ELL Student Issues using Maslow's Hierarchy. This idea of meeting students' needs such as physiologically and emotionally, can be better understood through the application of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954). According to Abraham Maslow's theory, there are specific needs that are to be met before a person can reach their highest potential for self-actualization (Onchwari, Onchwari & Keengwe, 2008). In the shape of a pyramid, the first essential need to be met would be at the bottom and is called *physiological needs*, which include basic food and shelter (McLeod, 2014). These physiological needs have to be met before the next can be met. *Safety needs*, include protection from the elements, security, order and freedom from fear. From there, individuals seek the *love and belonging need*, which includes intimacy, love and support. *Esteem needs* include feelings of achievement, mastery and independence and lastly, *self-actualization needs* include realizing personal potential and seeking personal growth (McLeod, 2014). It is important to remember that reaching the next level of needs met requires that the previous needs have been met first to some length. This concept is applicable and may serve as an essential bridge in understanding how to better serve immigrant and ELL students in educational settings.

Physiological Needs. Looking first at the ELL students' physiological needs, it is understood that many immigrant families are coming to the United States starting fresh with no jobs and no permanent residence (Onchwari et al., 2008). If schools were to look at their students' needs from this hierarchy, attempting to teach students academic English and get them

thinking about college, is going to be troublesome and demanding when the students' basic needs have yet to be met (Onchwari et al, 2008). If a student is concerned about where they will get their next meal or if they will have a place to sleep, attempting to meet their educational needs may be futile.

Safety Needs. In regards to safety needs, many immigrant families face obstacles, and sometimes complete inability, to receive government resources such as health care if they are undocumented (Boyd-Zaharias & Pate-Bain, 2007, p. 41). The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 required everyone to show proof of citizenship when applying for Medicaid coverage, despite there being no proof that undocumented immigrants were accessing Medicaid (American Immigration Council, 2009). Acts such as this put students and their parents in an unsafe position.

Programs that undocumented immigrants *are* eligible to use are not always being utilized out of fear that when they do use these programs, they may be reported to authorities, or because the language barrier is difficult or they can't afford to lose a day's work (American Immigration Council, 2009). While schools alone cannot change these safety needs, school counselors, teachers and other school supports can act as advocates and continue to encourage families to utilize these available resources, and to be aware and speak out about the various needs their immigrant and ELL students are not receiving.

ELL students also struggle with meeting their social needs, finding acceptance and care from teachers and peers, which makes focusing on academics more difficult (Onchwari, Onchwari & Keengwe, 2008). The isolation the immigrant and ELL students feel in the mainstream classrooms and cafeteria can be attributed to racial and/or ethnic discrimination and feelings of being different from their predominantly Caucasian peers (Onchwari et al., 2008).

Some students may have come from war-torn countries and experienced separation from family members. Alienation from peers, financial burdens that may be occurring at home, and lack of caring support from school staff will make academic growth more trying and unreachable. It is essential that ELL students' basic needs be met before adding academic pressure to their lives. According to Boyd-Zaharias and Pate-Bain (2007), it is going to require more than just school reform to increase the achievement of disadvantaged students, it requires an expansive approach that begins at the highest levels of government, at the district level and everywhere in between (p. 41).

National Interventions

While the country and its' states still have many challenges in the face of ongoing immigration reform attempts, the U.S. has a history of important bills that have been passed to protect the rights and liberties of immigrant and ELL students. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance (United States Department of Justice, 2016). Under this bill, immigrant and ELL students have the legal right to an education in the public school systems up until the age of 21, regardless of immigration status.

In 1982, the United States Supreme Court decision, *Plyer vs. Doe*, maintained the right of both documented and undocumented immigrant parents to send their children to public school in America (Braganza & Lad, 2013). This law made it illegal to ask parents for documents of citizenship when registering students and also keeps schools from sharing knowledge on child immigration status (Braganza & Lad, 2013). As stated previously, many ELL parents who have migrated to the U.S. have reservations on reaching out to teachers, administrators and school counselors for fear of school officials reporting immigration status. School counselors can

remind parents of their legal rights and the rights of their child(ren) in an attempt to tame this fear, begin the dialogue and building rapport with students and parents.

The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S Department of Justice have come together to issue guidance to remind state education agencies and public school districts of their legal obligation to ensure that ELL students receive a meaningful and equal education. Other measures have been attempted by members of the federal government to increase accessibility of resources for immigrant and ELL students (Title VI, 2016).

For instance, the DREAM Act, short for Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, has been proposed in various forms since 2001. It is a bill that would allow legal status to certain undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States at a young age and have since went to school here (Anti-Defamation League, 2016). Many immigrant students graduate from high school in the hopes of going to college, but have few options to go to college or to obtain legal status (Anti-Defamation League, 2016). This act would allow students who had no choice and were brought to the U.S., a pathway to becoming legal citizens and to attend college. Financially, this could have an immense impact for immigrant students because it would keep colleges from forcing immigrant students to pay out of state tuition because of their legal status. With how expensive college is, this is a major hurdle for immigrant students in the United States currently and may keep many from enrolling in college.

In June of 2012, President Obama took executive action by putting a temporary measure in place so that students who meet certain requirements can apply for consideration for deferred action. Under this action, immigrants can also apply for a two-year deferral of an action that seeks to remove them or requests for documentation. In 2014, around 600,000 illegal immigrants had been accepted into the program (Ting, 2014). Again in 2014, President announced a series of

executive actions to constrain the amount of illegal immigration at the border, focused on deporting felons and not families, and “require certain undocumented immigrants to pass a criminal background check and pay taxes in order to temporarily stay in the U.S. without fear of deportation (Department of Homeland Security, 2015, p. 1).”

State Level

While getting the DREAM Act to become a reality has been difficult nationally, certain states have shown their support. In 2010, activists in California sponsored a rally in support of the DREAM Act. In Indiana, students staged a mock graduation to draw support for DREAM. Immigration activists in Boston have delivered more than 1,500 letters to the office of Senator Scott Brown, urging him to support the DREAM Act. Also, four students from Florida’s Students Working for Equal Rights walked 1,500 miles from Miami, Florida to Washington, DC for four months to urge President Obama to stop the separation of families and the deportation of DREAM Act-eligible students (American Immigration Council, 2016). While many people in various states have shown their support, there have also been setbacks.

In 2010, Arizona attracted national attention when the state passed a comprehensive immigration reform bill (Holley-Walker, 2011). This bill in Arizona includes provisions that enact state penalty in regards to “harboring, transporting illegal immigrants, trespassing, alien registration documents and employer sanctions” (NCLS, 2016). Other states have attempted to pass similar pieces of legislation in the past, and recently, created as “immigration reform”, but this is the first of its’ kind to be enacted (Holley-Walker, 2011, p. 357).

In 2012, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Rhode Island, West Virginia and Alabama enacted bills that require law enforcement to verify immigration status during a traffic stop and making it a state crime to carry federal immigration documents (NCLS, 2016). Alabama’s HB56

also required schools to verify students' immigration status (NCLS, 2016). Most, if not all parts of these bills have been barred, due in part by civil rights lawsuits being filed against the states (NCLS, 2016).

In 2015, the state of Wisconsin sought to pass two pieces of legislation; Senate Bill 533 would make the following state law:

1. Generally prohibits towns and counties from issuing photo identification cards
2. Prohibits photo ID from cities and villages from being used for specific purposes
3. Prohibits a locally made photo ID previously used to show proof of residence and for voting, from being used for those purposes moving forward.

(Wisconsin Legislative Council, 2016, p. 1)

On February 18, 2016 thousands of protesters rallied in the streets of Madison, WI, to protest these pieces of legislation (Krieg, 2016). It is necessary for schools to be aware of how state actions and protests like this directly impact their immigrant and ELL students.

Encouraging all students to be aware and proactive on how these issues impact themselves and their peers may be beneficial in the advocacy of immigrant and ELL students. School counselors can utilize time to discuss current issues with their students and to be a reminder to teachers and staff of the importance of multicultural awareness and advocacy.

Similar to the feelings of many Wisconsin protesters, the legality and civil fairness of these bills, such as Arizona's, have been in question and challenged in relation to due process, equal protection under the 14th amendment and prohibited search and seizure under the 14th amendment (NCLS, 2016). The question of whether law enforcement will use racial profiling has also been of concern and while the Governor of Arizona signed provisions that prohibit law

enforcement to profile individuals based on race or ethnicity, this does little to comfort people that it will not happen anyway (NCLS, 2016).

While legislation such as these seeks to further alienate and make living in the U.S. more difficult for immigrants, there are important measures being taken in various states, to improve the equal treatment and accessibility to education for immigrant and ELL students.

In 2013, Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick started the Summer Enrichment Academies, launched by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education or EOE (Lopez, 2015). As part of this agenda, the EOE awarded twenty Gateway school districts across Massachusetts a total of \$3 million in competitive grants to support summer English language learning for middle and high school students (Lopez, p. 3). When Lopez and colleagues (2015) visited the schools, a strong partnership with community organizations was witnessed. Documentation of increased pre- and post-test assessments during the summer were also witnessed taking place through culturally responsive academies. While the majority of these benefits came into fruition in the summer, many extended into the school year in the form of after school programming (Lopez).

Much of the literature talks about the importance of community collaboration in order to best service ELL and immigrant students (Lopez, 2015, Goh et al, 2007, Williams & Butler, 2003). Community collaboration can be seen in various ways, especially at the district level.

District Level

Through their years of research, Lopez (2015) explained that working with districts and communities on educational improvement and lessening the achievement gap can only be improved by requiring the combined “commitment, efforts and investments of an entire community” (p. 4).

At the district level, school counselors are recommended to encourage school principals to create a bill of educational rights for undocumented students and their families, identifying their schools as a “safe zone” (Braganza & Lad, 2013, p. 13). Schools can also hold mandatory professional development for staff about immigration, cultural responsiveness and learning the needs of their ELL students (Braganza & Lad, 2013).

Every school district may be different in how they go about assisting and providing education to ELL students but every district is obligated to provide ELL students with fair and meaningful education programs (Schools Civil Rights, 2015). ELL students should be given the opportunity to join certain EL programs but these programs should limit the time spent per day in these classrooms. School districts may not intend on segregating EL students from their peers but excessive time spent in these programs may result in unintentional segregation and therefore should be administered in the least segregated manner possible (Schools Civil Rights).

School Counselor Implications

The American School Counselor Association addresses the question, “How are students different as a result of what school counselors do?” (ASCA, 2016). In this literature review, the issues surrounding ELL students have been discussed. Now, it is important to consider how school counselors can positively impact ELL students. The distinctive needs of immigrant and ELL students call for a comprehensive school counseling program that weaves in cross-cultural sensitivity and activities that facilitate easy transition and rich adjustment experiences. Due to school counselor’s trainings in human development, counseling skills and student needs, school counselors are in an advantageous position to advocate for immigrant and ELL students (Goh et al., 2007).

According to the ASCA Ethical Standards of School Counselors (2010), school counselors are “concerned with the educational, academic, career, personal and social needs and encourage the maximum development of *every* student (p. 1).” Also, school counselors are to be social justice advocates and “acquire educational, consultation and training experiences to improve awareness, knowledge, skills and effectiveness in working with diverse populations”, among these, are ELL students (Legal & Ethical, 2010, p. 5). With this in mind, understanding the school counseling implications of ELL and immigrant student barriers is an ethical must.

Review of the literature pointed to various overarching issues facing immigrant and ELL students, for school counselors to keep in mind. These include, but are not limited to, psychological issues related to immigration, acculturation and racism, language barriers and common adolescent related social and emotional issues (Bal & Perzigian, 2013; Braganza & Lad, 2013; Goh et al, 2007, Williams & Butler, 2003).

According to William and Butler (2003), it is vital that school counselors to be aware of how recent immigrant students have arrived to the U.S. and also their country of origin (p. 9). Not all immigrant students will be facing exactly the same issues. For example, immigrants from Kosovo may be concerned about the effects of war, while Haitian immigrants may be experiencing racism for the first time (William & Butler, 2003, p. 9). Cultural sensitivity and awareness of the student population at their local school is essential for school counselors, if they aim to be available and responsive to all their students’ needs.

Knowledge of ELL Issues. By expanding school counselor knowledge of cultural issues and differences, the school counselor can work with the whole school to come together to support their ELL and immigrant students. This can be shown through, support groups, individual meetings, lesson plans and with funding, summer or yearlong programs. According to

a study done by Cardenas, Taylor and Adelman (1993) of 26 Latino and Latina immigrants at a public high school in the U.S., immigrant populations are not use to the same helping structure that is available in the United States, such as social workers and counselors (as cited in Goh et al., 2007). Working with students and families to lessen the stigma attached to help-seeking resources will benefit the student (Goh et al. 2007). Being aware of such differences could also impact a school counselor's relationship with teachers. Collaborating and communicate on this topic could strengthen relationships with ELL teachers especially. This partnership with ELL teachers can also lessen the weight on them to be the “one stop shop” for all their student’s needs (Haynes, 2007). School counselors can then look at how they collaborate with not only teachers, but also administrators and parents.

Creating a Collaborative Climate. Administrators have an authority and a hand in specific resources that can play a key role in empowering teachers and school counselors in leading the school toward multicultural coexistence (Goh et al., 2007 p. 68). With this in mind, school counselors can act as a trainer in teaching administrators about the needs of immigrant students and families. However, it is important for school counselors to tread carefully in order to avoid power struggles, but also reminding themselves that their main job is as an advocate for the students (Goh et al., 2007).

School counselors can also be advocates for ELL students by working towards building relationships with their parents. Counselors can do this in an attempt to help parents become more involved in their children’s school life (Goh et al., 2007). Counselors can do this in an attempt to help parents become more involved in their children’s school life (Goh et al., 2007). By creating possible formal and informal spaces for parents to become more involved with their children’s education, school counselors are helping bridge that gap between the educational

setting and immigrant parents (Goh et al., 2007). An example of this would opening up one night per week where a career counseling center, or maybe even pupil services is open late into the evening. This would allow those parents with varying work schedules to be given an opportunity to come speak with counselors, teachers or administrators who are available during this time.

Students are also a big part of creating an accepting and supportive climate. Goh and colleagues (2007) list various classroom exercises for students that can be done to bridge the cultural gap. These could be opportunities for school counselors to expand all the students thoughts on what the experience of moving to a new country might be like, and the confusion and emotions that may come with that. For instance, one classroom lesson called *Bafa-Bafa*, is a cross-cultural simulation “wherein participants hypothetically live and cope in a “foreign” culture and process the confusion and uniqueness of the experience” (p. 74). Lack of acceptance among peers can be very difficult for ELL and immigrant students. Not having the understanding of another student’s clothing attire, manner of speaking and language can make adolescence that much more difficult for immigrant and ELL students (William & Butler, 2003; Goh et al, 2007). Having culture appreciation events, the school counselor can expand on and facilitate discussion with students on the experience of immigration and in the process hopefully decrease the stigma and stereotypes of being a student of immigration or an ELL student (Goh et al, 2007). According to Lopez (2015), “when students see their lived experiences and communities reflected positively in the curriculum, it strengthens student engagement and increases the relevance of academic learning” (p. 4).

Some immigrant students arriving to the U.S. having witnessed war and other types of conflict, such as the refugee, Sudanese students in Nebraska. Keeping this in mind, it would be valuable for students and their parents to be provided resources from outside the school setting as

well (William & Butler, 2003). However, not all groups of ELL students will be homogenous. Some ELL groups will be heterogeneous with both immigrant and native-born students; both come with different needs (Goh et al., 2007). Awareness of these differences by school counselors will help immensely to surround both types of students with a support system to expand their linguistic, cultural and emotional strength (Goh et al, 2007).

Various intervention strategies may also work to serve school's immigrant and ELL student body. For instance, many schools have created transition programs or support groups (William & Butler, 2003). Programs vary from state to state but what remains the same is that they are created to help meet the needs of newly arrive immigrants by attending to their special needs. At the time William & Butler (2003) researched these programs, there were more than 110 programs in 26 states that provided for immigrant students unique needs (p. 12). Some of these programs are full school days, half days or after school programs. In these programs students become more familiar with life in American public schools, offering courses in cultural orientation. Instructionally, many of the programs focus on the development of academic and language skills (William & Butler).

Support groups are also a key component to many of these programs (William & Butler, 2003). In one support group at a Los Angeles high school, newly arrived immigrant students meet on a daily basis to discuss issues that are relevant to them; such as, navigating academia in a new school, lack of social support and language barriers (William & Butler). Students who took part in these groups explained that the support they found in these programs was irreplaceable because the program provided them with drive and encouragement to be successful in their new environment.

School counselors can be the agent for change in this respect by suggesting such

programs and support groups to administrators and stakeholders. For instance, school counselors can orchestrate their efforts to assist newly arrived immigrant students by reaching out to state education officials (William & Butler, 2003). State laws can be drafted and enforced, which ensure that students are provided equal access to transition programs and support groups.

School counselors can also encourage their colleagues to take part in various professional development in-services, which would help educate staff on cultural adjustment needs and concerns (William & Butler, 2003). Schools could focus their workshops on learning more about the specific cultures which populate their city or township and where students may be from. William and Butler (2003) explain that districts could create intake centers, coordinated by school counselors, for newly arrived immigrant students. Within these centers, school counselors could provide resources and information about area schools and enrollment information for students and their parents. It is common that school counselors are of the first staff members in a school setting to come in contact with newly arrived students. School counselors should utilize this time with the students to talk about how the counselor(s) can assist the students in coping with their academic, social and development needs (William & Butler). School counselors can also remain consistent in checking in with immigrant and ELL students on these various needs. The effectiveness of group work for immigrant and ELL students should also be utilized. Leading academic, social and support groups are ways school counselors can continually be of service to these students (William & Butler, 2003).

Conclusion

ELL and immigrant students are a vastly growing population within the K-12 educational setting. Administrators, teachers and school counselors should be aware of the growing needs of this population and how they can best serve ELL and immigrant students and their parents.

Understanding the diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds of students in their own district and state is a way to broaden multicultural awareness. By being thoughtful of where these students are coming from and their unique needs socially, emotionally and linguistically, school staff is taking the essential steps to increasing ELL and immigrant student's success.

School counselors can be the advocates for ELL students by communicating needs; concerns and ideas related to equal opportunity education for ELL and immigrant students, within their own school district. School counselors can also create comprehensive school counseling programs that interweave multicultural awareness and sensitivity with core standards and other areas of development in the guidance setting. Creating support groups, building relationships with parents and supplying resources for students and their families are also ways in which school counselors can advocate for ELL and immigrant students. Also, reaching out to community resources, religious leaders, community centers and non-profit organizations are some of the ways school counselors can connect students and their parents with other support systems to better serve their economic, educational and emotional wellbeing.

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