

AN EXAMINATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF HAITIAN-CREOLE-  
AND SPANISH-SPEAKING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS BASED ON THE  
NUMBER OF YEARS IN THE ELL PROGRAM

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of  
The College of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Florida Atlantic University

Boca Raton, Florida

August 2016

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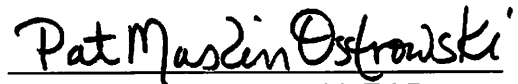
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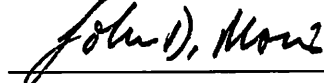
This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate's dissertation advisor, Dr. Patricia Maslin-Ostrowski, Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology, and has been approved by the members of his supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the College of Education and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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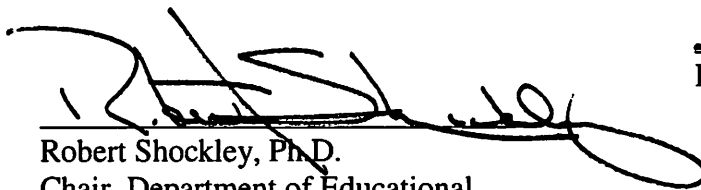
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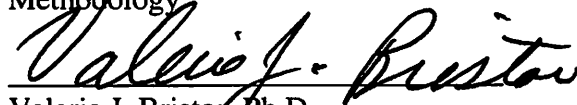
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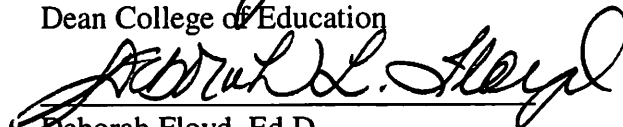
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I reflect back on this long journey, I know I couldn't have completed this without amazing support and encouragement of family and close friends. I have major respect for dissertation chair, Patricia Maslin-Ostrowski. Without your leadership I would not have become the researcher or writer this experience has transformed me into. Thank you to my dissertation committee members, Dr. John Morris and Dr. Daniel Reyes-Guerra. Thank you to my parents for setting the example to always strive for success and for preparing and supporting me through the challenges life has to offer. To my wife, Channale, thank you for believing in me and standing by my side to ensure I completed this milestone. Your encouragement and push especially during the last stretch was needed and appreciated. I look forward to now supporting you to one day while you earn your doctoral degree. To my boys, I hope that you continue to learn through my guidance and remember that hard work and sacrifices are some examples of what God wants us to accomplish during our lives. I hope that my motto of "being a leader by example" will continue to drive each of you as you continue to mature and grow each day. Lastly, to my sister and brother, our parents raised us with specific morals and values and we've achieved many successes. Together, let's engage all youths within our fields to achieve their highest potential.

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths. —Proverbs 3:5*

## ABSTRACT

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Title: An Examination of Academic Performance of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-Speaking English Language Learners Based on the Number of Years in the ELL program

Institution: Florida Atlantic University

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Patricia Maslin-Ostrowski

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Year: 2016

The primary purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between Haitian-Creole and Spanish-speaking English Language Learners students' number of years in the ELL program and their academic achievement as indicated by performance on the third-grade Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test Reading. This study also sought to determine if elementary school size (total student population), ELL student count (total number of ELL students in a school), school socioeconomic status (percentage of free and reduced lunch), student gender, and student home language (Haitian-Creole and Spanish), individual SES, and individual Idea Proficiency Test moderate the relationship.

The study included data analysis using quantitative methods for the 141 elementary schools in school district. A bivariate correlation of the Pearson Correlation value ( $r = -.021$ ,  $p > .05$ ) was used to test the relationship between the number of years in the ELL program and achievement results for third-grade student FCAT Reading

proficiency and the moderator variables (elementary school size, ELL student count, school SES, student gender, student home language, individual SES, and IPT individual score). Later, a multiple regression was used to test the moderation hypotheses.

The study found that the degree of relationship between the number of years students are in the ELL program and FCAT scores of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking English Language Learner students is higher as SES increases. As SES decreases, so does the relationship. Of the 1,204 records reviewed, 423 were classified as Haitian-Creole-speaking students versus 782 classified as Spanish-speaking students. Only 16% of the students scored a level 3-5 (passed as proficient) as opposed to 84% who scored a level 1-2 (non-proficient). The study reveals a need for further research to investigate the impact that ELLs' SES as well as the school's SES has on the school's achievement.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all educators. My hope is that we continue to teach our students to make them successful. Having been a second language learner myself, I know that in order for students to achieve, we must face the realities that they are experiencing in their lives and make appropriate decisions in their best interests.

*Don't make excuses for why you can't get it done. Focus on all the reasons why you must make it happen as there will always be challenges. And there will always be something you can do to get beyond each one. —Ralph Marston*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Public schools in the United States are attempting to manage the transformation currently taking place with the emergence of English Language Learners (ELLs), the fastest growing subgroup in the nation (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition [NCELA], 2009). This study aimed to investigate the challenges this transformation poses for schools dealing directly with ELLs. Since the study took place in Florida, ELLs will be defined according to Florida state statute:

An individual who was not born in the United States and whose native language is a language other than English; an individual who comes from a home environment where a language other than English is spoken in the home; or an individual who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on his or her level of English language proficiency; and who, has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or listening. (Florida Statutes 1003.56(2), 2011)

This student group has more than doubled over the past 20 years (NCELA, 2009). Today, there are over five million ELLs in the United States, about 11% of the public school population (Labor Education and Training Center [LETC], 2011). During the 2011-2012 school year, Florida's total membership for K-12 ELL students was 244,376 (Florida Department of Education [FLDOE], 2012), an increase of 39,754 from the 2002-2003 school year (Education Information & Accountability Data Reports, 2012). ELLs have become a sizeable population that today's school leaders must understand and

closely monitor in order to provide them with an appropriate education that fosters student achievement. School leaders are challenged by increased accountability under laws such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002) that requires them to increase student achievement of specific subgroups like ELL students. Leaders must develop strategies to overcome the sizeable challenges faced by ELL students in the classroom. ELL students must cope with learning a new language, adjusting to a different environment, and dealing with a number of factors such as socioeconomic status (SES) that impede learning (Canadian Council for Learning, 2010).

Educators understand that it is their professional responsibility to increase student proficiency. For example, the goal of the NCLB Act was to have every student proficient in reading and math by 2014. Yet the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing indicates that state tests show ELL students' performance is generally 20 to 30% below that of non- ELL students (Devoe, 2007).

Language proficiency is needed to succeed in the classroom. A major challenge for educators is that ELL students enter the United States and enroll in K-12 schools at various ages and the length of time in the United States plays a vital role in ELL students' language proficiency. According to Portes and Hao (2002) and more recently Fakeye and Yemi (2009), a key predictor of English language proficiency is the longer a child has lived in this country the stronger his or her command of English. Therefore, length of time in the United States has an effect on student achievement (Devoe, 2007).

Even though the ELL population is growing throughout the country including rural and suburban areas, the majority is distributed in a few urban school districts in a few states. California, Florida, and Texas comprise 21 out of 25 of the school districts highest in ELL enrollment (National Center on Immigration Integration Policy, [NCIIP],

2013).

Urban schools tend to be large. Many researchers have studied school size in relation to student achievement (Borland & Howsen, 2003; Conant, 1967; Conant & Gardner; 1959; Haller, 1990; Mok & Flynn, 1996). Depending on the study, the relationship between school size and student achievement could be positive or negative (Borland & Howsen, 2003; Hoxby, 2000; Irmsher, 1997). According to Wainer and Zwerling (2006), during the last quarter of the 20th century there were rumblings of dissatisfaction with large schools, and the suggestion that smaller schools could provide a higher quality of education gained adherents. However, prior studies that have investigated the relationships between school size and student academic achievement have produced conflicting results (Borland & Howsen, 2003).

This study examined the relationship between Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELL students' number of years in the ELL program and their academic achievement as indicated by performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading. The study also determined whether or not elementary school size (total student population), ELL student count (total number of ELL students in a school), school SES (percent of free and reduced lunch), student gender, and student home language (Haitian-Creole and Spanish), individual SES, and individual Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) moderate the relationship. The state of Florida administers the FCAT each spring to measure students' and schools' progress in reading proficiency for Grade 3. This assessment is a measure used to monitor student progress and determine if schools, districts, and the state are improving and meeting targeted benchmarks.

### **The Problem**

Many immigrant groups have migrated to the United States from countries where

English is not their native language, and they represent a large portion of the overall immigrant population (McDonald, 2004). Educational attainment is important to ELL families and the future success of their children (Kepley, 2011). Research indicates there will continue to be a dramatic increase in K-12 students who come to U.S. schools without proficiency in English (Gitomer, Andal, & Davidson, 2005), which puts them at risk of not being successful in school. Students who cannot read or write in English have a greater chance of dropping out of school and they often face a lifetime of diminished opportunity (Gingras, & Careaga, 1989; National Council of La Raza, 2007). ELLs are among the country's lowest-performing students, scoring far below the national average on the reading portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress and completing high school at very low rates (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). According to the National Graduation Rates (2007), approximately 50% of Blacks and Hispanics graduate from high school compared to the 70% nationwide average. Currently, there is little research available on Haitian-Creole and Hispanic ELL students and how they have fared on state assessments that are critical to promotion and graduation. School leaders must be aware of the challenges and how to meet the needs of ELL students so that they can achieve at mandated performance levels in school and be promoted with their peers.

### **Site**

The site for this proposed study was Broward County Public Schools, a large urban public school district in southeastern Florida that is the second largest school district in the state of Florida and the sixth largest school district in the United States (Broward County Public Schools [BCPS], 2013). There are 232 public schools that serve a population of over 258,000 students. According to BCPS (2013), this district has



35,104 ELL students, including 21,832 Haitian-Creole and Spanish speaking, and 2,461 are enrolled in the third grade. All 141 of the elementary schools have at least one Haitian-Creole- or Spanish-speaking ELL student (BCPS, 2013). Furthermore, Spanish and Haitian-Creole are the top two languages represented in Florida where 496,044 Spanish speakers and 63,429 Haitian-Creole speakers are in the schools throughout the state (FLDOE, 2012), According to the FLDOE (2013), the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch (SES) in Broward County is 56.89%, approximately 148,048 students. The researcher chose this site due to her current position as an elementary school principal and as a former second language learner (Haitian-Creole).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELL elementary students' number of years in the ELL program and their academic achievement, indicated by performance on third-grade FCAT Reading in BCPS. The study then determined whether or not elementary school size (total student population), ELL population (the number of ELL students in a school), SES (school's percentage of free and reduced lunch), FCAT Reading proficiency by school (third grade), student gender, student home language, SES status of individual students, and IPT (level of language proficiency) moderate the relationship. The critical purpose of this study was to investigate factors that can improve the performance of ELL students in K-5 school settings.

### **Research Questions**

The central focus of this study was based on the question: Is the relationship between number of years that Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs are in the ELL program and their academic performance moderated by elementary school size (total

student population), ELL student count (the number of ELL students in a school), school SES (percentage of free and reduced lunch), student gender, and student home language (Haitian-Creole and Spanish), individual SES, and IPT.

Sub-questions of the study were:

1. Is there a relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading (level 1-5) by Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs?

2. Is the relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs moderated by:

- a. Elementary school size (small, medium, large)
- b. ELL school student count (number of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELL students)
- c. SES (school percentage of free and reduced lunch)
- d. Student gender
- e. Student home language (Haitian-Creole and Spanish)
- f. SES of individual students
- g. IPT

### **Limitations**

According to Baron (2013), limitations are factors beyond the researcher's control that may affect the results of the study or the interpretation of the results. This study does not include grade levels 4 to 12 or any other academic subjects. Furthermore, this study only includes students in BCPS who were enrolled or entered the ELL program during the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, or 2012-2013 school years. The study was confined to

specific students who speak a particular language and Broward County is the source of the data. Lastly, two ELL groups, Haitian-Creole and Spanish are the only language groups included in this study.

### **Definitions**

Some of the terms in the study are unique to ELL students and the English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program, thus definitions are provided.

**Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).** A major goal of NCLB to determine whether states are making progress to close the achievement gap by 2014.

**Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs).** The key component of the AMOs is that targets are determined separately for each school and subgroup and shows whether a school or subgroup is on track to reduce its percentage of non-proficient students by half by the year 2016-2017.

**Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment (CELLA).** A tool to measure the progress of K-12 ELL students' proficiency in English, thus ensuring the skills needed in school to achieve at high levels academically (FLDOE, 2011).

**English Language Learners(ELL).** For purposes of this study, ELL refers to an individual who was not born in the United States and whose native language is a language other than English; an individual who comes from a home environment where a language other than English is spoken; or an individual who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on his or her level of English language proficiency; and who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or listening (Fla. Stat. 1003.56(2), 2011).

**Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).** Part of Florida's overall plan to increase student achievement by implementing higher standards. The FCAT was

administered to students in Grades 3 to 11 and consisted of criterion-referenced assessments in mathematics, reading, science, and writing, which measured student progress toward meeting the New Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) benchmarks.

**Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL).** Identifies students based on their SES and determines the percentage of students at a school who are eligible for meals and additional funding.

**Home Language Survey.** An instrument that asks parents what language or languages are spoken in the home.

**Idea Proficiency Test (IPT).** An assessment used to measure language classification that is used to determine placement of ELL students.

**Multicultural Education Training Advocacy (META).** Consent decree lists the training requirements teachers must receive to better understand and meet the needs of ELL students.

**No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).** The purpose of this law was to provide accountability for all and to attempt to reduce the gap between majority and minority students.

**Title I.** A federal program that provides districts funding to be utilized on disadvantages students in order to improve academic achievement.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter 1 introduced the challenges that ELL students face in K-12 schools. Concerned about their academic progress, the research identified two groups, Haitian-Creole and Spanish speakers, whose ELL enrollment dominate the study site's ESOL department. ELL students' participation in the FCAT Reading Test will be reviewed, then

moderated by elementary school size (total student population ELL population (the number of ELL students in a school), SES (school's percentage of free and reduced lunch), FCAT Reading proficiency by school (third grade), student gender, student home language, SES (individual students), and IPT (level of language proficiency). Also cited are the purpose, significance of the study, research questions, and definition of terms unique to this study.

Chapter 2 explores the growth of the ELL population in U.S. public schools, the school achievement of Haitians and Hispanic-speaking students, the achievement gap, policies and laws tied to ELL students, FCAT, and many components tied to ELL students in the state of Florida and, specifically in BCPS.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Public Schools in the U.S. are attempting to manage the transformation currently taking place with the emergence of ELLs, the fastest growing subgroup in the nation (NCELA, 2009). This study aimed to investigate the challenges this transformation poses for schools dealing directly with ELL learners. Since the proposed study took place in Florida, ELL was defined according to the Florida state statute:

An individual who was not born in the United States and whose native language is a language other than English; an individual who comes from a home environment where a language other than English is spoken in the home; or an individual who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on his or her level of English language proficiency; and who, has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or listening. (Florida Statutes 1003.56(2), 2011)

This literature review first documents and traces the increasing population of ELL students in K-12 schools. Second, the relationship between school size and student achievement are presented. Third, the achievement gap that exists between Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking immigrants and other groups and how they have been affected over the years is examined. Fourth, policies and laws are examined in order to identify how the educational treatment of immigrant Haitians and Hispanics is affected specifically by policies and legislation enacted to close the achievement gap between majority and minority students during 1960-2012. Fifth, funding practices for ELL under

federal law are examined to identify how ELLs are affected. Sixth, the choice and access to specific curriculum for recent arrivals are explored. Finally, research that examines how the length of time in the United States, age, gender, and SES are related to academic achievement and performance on standardized tests for ELLs is reviewed.

### **Growth of ELL Population in the United States**

ELL students have been the fastest growing student population in the country over the past two decades, due primarily to increased rates in immigration (Garcia, Lawton, Diniz de Figueiredo, 2010). For example, between the 1989-1990 and 2005-2006 school years, ELL enrollment more than doubled, from 2,030,451 students to 5,074,572 (NCELA, 2009). These numbers play a vital role in the direction leaders must take in order to ensure students are proficient in reading and mathematics. In this section, three topics are discussed: the national growth of ELL students, the growth of Haitians in the United States and specifically Florida, and the emergence of Hispanics and their subgroups in the United States and specifically Florida.

#### **National Growth**

The number of ELL students continues to rise nationally, which has an effect on states and districts. In 2011, nearly 50 million students were enrolled in U.S. public schools; about 5% immigrants whereas in 1960 there were 40 million students enrolled in public schools while 4% were immigrants (The Future of Children, 2011). In 2011, U.S.-born children of immigrants represented 14% of total enrollment. Thus at least 18% of Pre-K to 12 public school enrollment was the result of immigration (Hurlbert, 2010). Research has shown due to job opportunities the number of immigrant children is rapidly spreading in California, Texas, Florida, Illinois, New York, and New Jersey (The Social Contract, 2011). Moreover, many K-12 students are coming to U.S. schools without

proficiency in English (Gitomer et al., 2005) requiring states to develop policy and plans to increase proficiency.

According to the Pew Hispanics Center, Hispanics will compromise 30% of the nation's population by 2050. The United States has a large percentage of Hispanics migrating to many states especially the six mentioned previously. This has significantly increased the number of ELL students in schools. According to the Center on Education Policy (2010), in 2007 approximately 80% of ELL students spoke Spanish at home. Moreover, 22% of Spanish-speaking children were either born outside this country or lived with a foreign born parent (Mather, 2009). In the state of Florida, 34% of the ELL students were born abroad, in 273 foreign countries, and over 3 million speak Spanish (Office of Economic and Demographic Research, 2005). A majority of the students were born in Brazil, Columbia, Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela.

### **Haitians**

Today, of the nearly one million Haitians living in the United States, the largest population can be found in south Florida (Kepley, 2011). According to the BCPS District (2011), Haiti represents the most foreign-born students in Grades K-12 with more than 6,000. Furthermore, 7,700 students speak Haitian-Creole (SBBC, 2011). According to the Negro Educational Review (2004), Haitian immigration to the United States is associated with waves, each being tied to repressive conditions in Haiti. For example, the first wave began in 1957 following Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier's rise to power (Catanese, 1998). The majority of these immigrants were the well-educated political and economic elite with plans to return to Haiti after the ouster of Duvalier (Stepick, 1998). Furthermore, Stepick (1998) and Zephir (1996) found that between the 1960s and the 1990s the second wave of immigrants came from the Haitian middle class consisting of many skilled



laborers. Subsequently, the last wave of immigrants coming from Haiti since 1990 became known as the Haitian *boat people*, who were mostly lower class laborers (Chierici, 1991). Many of the lower class left Haiti due to lack of jobs, resources, and believe their children could benefit from living in the United States with freedom from political and economic turmoil.

According to Zephir (2001), the last wave of Haitians has faced ostracism, and physical and verbal abuse from members of other cultures and ethnic groups. Many of the cultural misunderstandings have led to negative stereotypes and proved to be traumatic to Haitian adolescents, who reacted by indiscriminately rejecting their cultural and ethnic identity for the mainstream culture (Vilme & Butler, 2004). To gain acceptance from other ethnic groups, Haitian adolescents often presented themselves at various times as African Americans, Caribbean Americans, or West Indians. Many Haitians faced continuous attacks at school and in different social settings affecting their ability to learn in the ESOL program. Furthermore, according to Stepick (1998) and Zephir (1996), adult Haitian immigrants continue to develop their ethnic identity while their children distance themselves from their cultural ethos. According to the CIA *World Fact Book* (2003), in 2000 80% of Haiti's population was living below the poverty line and 54% were living in abject poverty. It was also noted that two thirds of the population did not hold formal jobs. Thus, the focus turns to survival leading many Haitian to escape Haiti and come to the United States for a better life. The children lack the cognitive development that often occurs at a young age resulting in many Haitian ELL students often not having first language acquisition (L1) to assist in the development of second language acquisition (L2) (Stepick, 1998).

## **Hispanics**

According to the School Board of Broward County (BCPS, 2011), of the over 30,000 ELL students, 14,000 speak Spanish. Hispanics represent individuals from a range of countries in Latin America. The word *Hispanic* falls under the umbrella of different nationalities such as Mexican and Cuban, or different territorial backgrounds, such as Puerto Rico, Central, and South America (Kayaardi-Hinojosa, 2011). The majority of the Hispanic population is classified as one ethnic group in most studies. Yet, these sub-groups have unique backgrounds. According to Gonzalez (2005), Cubans share many cultural and language similarities with Puerto Ricans and Mexicans; however, their political and economic circumstances due to government leaders have been different. Cuban-America youths have historically had a higher acceptance from Whites than other Hispanic (Kao & Thompson, 2003). This has resulted in increased opportunities and a higher graduation rate from high school. Furthermore, Puerto Ricans and Mexican-American youth have faced high poverty and more difficulty with language (Crosnoe, 2006).

Many immigrants have strong support and networks developed over time. According to Portes and Stepick (2003), Cubans in Miami were referenced as a distinctive case of ethnic networks of economic opportunity. Many highly skilled first generation Cubans were accommodated due to their elite status as well as political and cultural power (Vanderkooy, 2011). Quickly, second generation Cubans were expected to *succeed* and possessed political and economic advantages. Cubans were perhaps the Hispanic subgroup expected to flourish, while Haitians were overlooked after experiencing political and economic turmoil.

## **School Size**

The era of one-room school houses is long over, and we now find schools that are on campuses with enrollments of over 1,000 students. The urbanization that characterized the 20th century led to the abandonment of the rural lifestyle and, with it, an increase in the size of schools (Wainer & Zwerling, 2006). One reason for larger schools was for cost savings because certain costs would remain constant, while buying in bulk would reduce other costs. Similarly, large schools might offer extracurricular opportunities that smaller schools would not be able to afford, which may translate into scholarships to college and create more well-rounded students prepared to be productive citizens in the burgeoning economy (Lay, 2007).

Some studies on student achievement have examined the effect of school size on student learning and the dropout rate (Lee & Smith, 1997; Werblow & Duesbery, 2009). They found that with higher enrollment there is lower student achievement and a higher dropout rate. Furthermore, minority students have been affected by school size. For example, nearly one third of all public high school students and nearly half of all Blacks and Hispanics fail to graduate in 4 years if they attend large schools (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006).

## **Achievement Gap**

The various groups of new immigrants entering to the United States present a challenge to meeting the NCLB Act of 2001's goal to reduce the achievement gap and help students achieve academic excellence. Most research points to the achievement gap between White and Black students or White and Hispanic students (FLDOE, 2012; Hemphill & Vanneman, 2010; Vanneman, Hamilton, Anderson, & Rahman, 2009; NCLR, 2007) whereas there are few studies of the achievement gap between other

groups, such as Haitian-Creole and White and Haitian-Creole and Hispanic (Loeffer, 2007). Florida is home to a large population of Hispanics and Haitians so it would be important to study the two groups to establish whether or not there is an achievement gap between them as well as between them and White students.

The educational experiences and achievements of immigrant youths from specific cultural backgrounds are often different from those of native-born American children and different from immigrant youths from other countries. For example, after living in the United States for 5 years, the average Grade Point Average (GPA) for Haitian youths decreased from 2.74 to 2.24 (Nicolas, DeSilva, & Rabenstein, 2009) in contrast to native-born American children whose GPAs have risen from 2.68 in 1990 to 3.0 in 2009 (The College Insider, 2011). Ethnicity has been found to be the dominant predictor of academic success between groups (Kaufman, 2004; Sirin, 2005).

### **Haitian Student Achievement**

Haitian society clearly places a high value on education, an attitude that carries forth within the Haitian immigrant communities in the United States (Vanderkooy, 2011). Yet, economic indicators from the 2010 Census show that Haitians have low levels of education. For example, in 2010 in the City of Miami just over half of the general population (52.7%) had a high school education or higher, whereas 35.4% of Haitians had reached this educational level (Vanderkooy, 2011). The high school located in Little Haiti, Miami Edison, for example, has consistently earned poor grades based on students' performance on the FCAT. The school's letter grade lingered at either "D" or "F" from 1998-2009 until earning a "C" in 2010 (Miami Dade County Public Schools, 2011). The challenges have affected their students' academic achievement and created a gap among subgroups.

## **Hispanic Student Achievement**

Similar to the underachievement of Haitian students, Hispanics face similar trials. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2007), Hispanics have a 22% drop out rate; however, that number jumps to 59% for all ELL students (Fry, 2003). Moreover, the report indicates that the reading level of Hispanics in Florida, who comprise 80% of all ELLs, is about half that of whites. According to NCLB (2001), every child must become a successful reader by third grade. This law has affected Hispanic students because they face many difficulties and delays in acquiring literacy skills and vocabulary knowledge needed to be a successful reader (Language, Speech, & Hearing Services in Schools, 2010). Hispanic children are faced with risk factors such as poor oral language proficiency, low SES, limited access at home, and poor vocabulary knowledge (Diener, Wright, Julian, & Bylington, 2003) and may need additional years to gain proficiency in English.

## **Policy and Law**

This section begins with a review of Title VI of the Civil Acts of 1964 and its connection to ELL students. This is significant because it was the first law that examined the rights of ELL students. Second, the prominent role that the law case *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) played regarding equality and appropriate curriculum for all ELL students is addressed. This law was meaningful because it looked closely at curriculum and attempted to address equality for all ELL students. Third, the post-*Lau v. Nichols* case of *Castaneda v. Pickard* of 1981 and the evaluation of ELL programs in regard to educating ELL students is discussed. This is important due to the fact that it took a major stance in the direction ELL programs would evolve, especially for the 20 years prior to President George Bush's law, NCLB, in 2001. Fourth, the NCLB Act of 2001 was designed to

close the achievement gap among subgroups and accountability. This law is significant because it brought a focus on the assessment and measuring progress of ELL students similar to that of non-ELLs. The NCLB component related to subgroup achievement, specifically AYP is reviewed. Finally, Florida policies including the META consent decree to inspect the training needed for educators to be effective teachers for ELL students is examined. This policy is meaningful and provided districts and schools the opportunity for ELL students to be taught by highly qualified teachers. Teacher certification and staff development has been included in the passing of the above policies and laws leading to increased opportunities for all ELL students.

#### **Title VI of the Civil Acts of 1964**

This act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in any program that receives funding. The federal government has the authority to address the needs of ELL students and require states and districts to follow the act. School districts are required to develop a plan to assist ELL students and help them overcome language barriers and to ensure that they can participate in the district's educational programs and succeed (USDOE, 2011). With this act, ELL students must receive appropriate funding and be provided an adequate education.

#### ***Lau v. Nichols (1974)***

This case played a prominent role in expanding the rights of ELL students nationwide. The case indicates that if states require ELLs to pass high stakes tests in order to be promoted or to graduate, the states must ensure those students have access to the appropriate curriculum. This law requires that students receive English language instruction and be treated with equality. “There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for

students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education” (*Lau v. Nichols*, p. 566).

### ***Castaneda v. Pickard* (1981)**

After the *Lau* decision the *Castaneda v. Pickard* case also concerning the education of ELL students gained attention. The case established three criteria when evaluating a district's program for ELL students: (a) Is the program based on an educational theory recognized as sound by some experts in the field or is considered by experts as a legitimate experimental strategy? (b) Are the programs and practices, including resources and personnel, reasonably calculated to implement this theory effectively? and (c) Does the school district evaluate its programs and make adjustments where needed to ensure language barriers are actually being overcome? (U.S. Court of Appeals, 1981).

### **No Child Left Behind**

The 2001 federal law of NCLB holds states and districts accountable for budget and high stakes assessments. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) was signed into law as the NCLB Act. The purpose of this law was to provide accountability for all and to attempt to reduce the gap between majority and minority students.

### **ELL Link to NCLB 2001**

The NCLB Act of 2001 added a component for ELLs. Previously, federal law allowed states to exempt first-year ELL students and to administer an alternative assessment. The new component stipulates that ELL students during the first year of enrollment in U.S. schools would take the state’s mathematics and science assessments.

In addition, schools would have the option of giving the reading or language arts content assessment.

States are not required to include results from the mathematics and science or if given, the reading/language arts content assessments in AYP calculations, which are part of the accountability requirements under NCLB. This is an option for states and would allow the flexibility for schools to get credit for improving English language proficiency from year to year. ELL students have no opportunity to show mastery because if they are recent arrivals it is a difficult situation for both states and students (Devoe, 2007).

Subsequently, states and districts should be provided flexibility in an effort to be held accountable. To be able to meet the demands of NCLB, states and local schools are mandated to ensure the English oral language, reading, and writing skills of all ELL students are evaluated; however, it does not specify how each state ought to measure these skills (Gitomer et al., 2005). In addition, NCLB gives states the freedom to find the best methods of instruction and does not dictate a particular method of instruction for learning English and other academic content (Maryland State Department of Education [MSDE], 2009).

NCLB is directly connected with measuring student growth, which is measured by AYP. ELL students are required to take a test to measure English proficiency and to increase the percentage of ELL students making progress in learning English, attaining English proficiency, and making AYP (National Education Association, 2006). Although classified as ELL students, they do not count toward proficiency until after 2 years in U.S. schools; therefore, their accomplishments will likely be underestimated if they are assessed in the same way as their monolingual peers (La Celle-Peterson & Rivera, 1994).



Current federal and state laws do not mandate a specific monitoring tool to view successes or failures of ELL students.

In January 2012, the FLDOE was granted an NCLB waiver. The result was that Florida would have to count the academic performance of students with disabilities and students still learning English in its school-grading formula in all the same ways that nondisabled, native English speakers are counted. This forces schools to recognize all students regardless of their subgroup and include them in the overall school grade measure based on the FCAT results.

### **Assessments for Accountability**

Accountability for NCLB 2001, as related to ELLs, means the inclusion of all ELLs and former ELLs in assessments on state content and achievement standards and their increased visibility in accountability systems to improve their instruction and achievement (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2007). NCLB requirements have pushed states to develop needed assessments to measure ELL students' language proficiency. The rush to meet NCLB requirements has left states without the expertise, time, or resources to document or address fundamental validity issues that are raised from ELL assessments (U.S. Government Auditing Standards [USGAS], 2007). This issue has raised some questions from critics across the nation. Many educators welcome NCLB for ELL students; however, many others question exactly how the law is applied to such students (Devoe, 2007). Educators understand the professional responsibility to have every student proficient by 2014 under NCLB. This goal has been reviewed by the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Students Testing, that says state tests show ELL students' performance is generally 20 to 30% below that of non-ELL students (Devoe, 2007).

## **Adequate Yearly Progress**

A major goal of NCLB is to close the achievement gap (USDOE, 2004). The mechanism to determine whether states are making progress to close the achievement gap by 2014 is AYP (USDOE, 2004). Each state's assessment measures student performance in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science based on ethnicity, SES, students with disabilities, and English Language proficiency subgroups to determine AYP calculations. Table 1 shows the percentage needed to meet AYP requirements in the state of Florida from 2008 to 2014. Each target indicates the minimum percentage that students in a particular subgroup must obtain in order to be proficient in reading and math.

Table 1

### *Annual Adequate Yearly Progress Proficiency Targets*

Year	Reading	Mathematics
2008-2009	65	68
2009-2010	72	74
2010-2011	79	80
2011-2012	86	86
2012-2013	93	93
2013-2014	100	100

## **Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test**

The FCAT is used to determine if schools make AYP as well as to make decisions about grade promotion and retention, and high school graduation. The state of Florida calculates AYP based on 39 benchmarks. A participation rate (at least 95%) and proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science comprise the model. The results are

further broken down by subgroups—racial (White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian), SES, Exceptional Student Education (ESE), and ELLs. Lastly, graduation rates for high schools, writing proficiency, and school grade of A, B, or C complete the 39 criteria that are recorded. Schools that are graded a “D” or “F” cannot make AYP. Under NCLB, schools that do not make AYP may be given sanctions (USDOE, 2004). In July 2008, the state of Florida added a Differentiated Accountability (DA) model, which provides services through specific interventions and regional support to schools referred to as “school in need of improvement” (SINI), including planning for or implementing restructuring. As requirements become more challenging to meet, the state is requiring certain districts and/or schools to follow a model where they are monitored and required to implement certain programs to increase proficiency and meet the AYP target.

In January 2012, Florida was granted a waiver from the federal government to report Florida’s Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs) in compliance with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The AMOs replaced AYP and allowed the state of Florida to report their performance in academic achievement (FLDOE, 2013). The key component of the AMOs is that targets are determined separately for each school and subgroup and shows whether a school or subgroup is on track to reduce its percentage of non-proficient students by half by the year 2016-2017. For each school and subgroup, a separate target is set for 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017 (FLDOE, 2013). The AMO for each year equals the percentage of students scoring proficient in 2010-2011 plus 0.5 times the percentage of non-proficient students in 2010-2011 divided by the 6 years to reach the target. Therefore, each school will have a different target based on their academic progress.

According to the FLDOE (2012), the percentage of English language learners proficient in FCAT Mathematics increased from 21% in 2001 to 39% in 2010. Furthermore, the percentage of English language learners proficient in FCAT Reading has increased from 11% in 2001 to 28% in 2010. Although, the data show an increase over time, accountability has risen and paved a tougher road for school leaders. The AMO target for ELLs will be different for many schools based on their academic achievement.

### **Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment**

Florida uses the Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment (CELLA) as a tool to measure the progress of K-12 ELL students' proficiency in English, thus ensuring the skills needed in school to achieve at high levels academically (FLDOE, 2011). The CELLA consists of a listening, speaking, reading, and writing assessment in K-12 schools. This assessment serves as Florida's evidence to show accountability in accordance with Title III of the NCLB Act. Title III requires states to use their Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) to show annual increases in the number or percentage of ELL students who become proficient in English and who make progress toward this goal. ELL students are tested annually using the CELLA. ELL students must score a level 3 on the FCAT Reading in addition to scoring proficient on the listening, speaking, and writing sections of the CELLA to be exited from the ESOL program. Moreover, it serves as a guide to identify the strengths and weaknesses of ELL student and plays a vital role in the decision-making process regarding placement or exit from the ESOL program (FLDOE, 2011).

## **ELL Policies in Florida**

Following a lawsuit, Florida was the first state that took a step in ensuring federal policies were implemented to guarantee that ELL students are provided a public education (McDonald, 2004). The META Consent Decree added a class action complaint filed by advocacy groups in Florida (Fla. Stat. 1003.56(2), 2009). META addresses the civil rights of ELL students; foremost among those rights is their right to equal access to all education programs. As the number of ELL students increased, the standards became more apparent and the issues of accountability for ELL students began to be scrutinized (USDOE, 2010). In addressing these rights, the Consent Decree provides a structure that ensures the delivery of instruction to which ELL students are entitled (FLDOE, 2011). “The plaintiffs alleged that the State Board of Education had not complied with its obligations under federal and state law to ensure that Florida school districts provide equal and comprehensible instruction to LEP students” (MacDonald, 2004, p. 3). These are the six areas of the decree:

1. Identification and assessment
2. Equal access to appropriate programming
3. Equal access to appropriate categorical and other programming for  
Limited English Proficient (LEP) students
4. Personnel
5. Monitoring
6. Outcome measures

Each area of the META consent decree is paramount to the success of an ELL student in Florida. This class action lawsuit led to the development of the six areas of the decree leading to ELL students getting an equal education with the proper resources.

## **Florida Funding**

In this section, three topics related to Florida funding of ELL students are discussed: First, Title I under the federal law determines how funds are appropriated to qualifying schools. This is significant to the study because ELL students in Title I schools receive additional support and funding. Title I identifies whether or not students qualify for free and/or reduced lunch status based on the school's enrollment and students' financial status.

Second, Title III of the NCLB Act provides funding to schools to ensure they have qualified teachers and paraprofessionals to support ELL students. This is important to this study due to states being required to establish AMAOs based on the school's coding of ELL students. Many teachers and paraprofessionals keep active documentation of ELL students. This requirement is reviewed by the USDOE to ensure states are following policies for ELL students. If the requirements are not followed states and districts may lose funding.

Finally, Florida's Educational Finance Program defines the processes and procedures used to determine funding to school districts. According to the (FLDOE 2011), the intent of the program is to guarantee each student in the Florida public education system has the availability of programs and services appropriate to his or her needs. The state's expectation is that the funding provided should increase student achievement. However, over the past several years, Florida's funding has been disrupted by the political landscape where large tax cuts have been implemented to meet new initiatives such as Medicaid cost (Dougherty & Natow, 2009). Therefore, funding has decreased for all districts and schools resulting in less available funding for ELL students (FLDOE, 2010).

## **Title I**

Title I is a federal program provided to schools based on criteria. Title I focuses on the academic achievement of schools who qualify for funds because of the proportion of students from low-income backgrounds. Under this law are specific provisions for ELL students for annual assessment and monitoring of progress of language acquisition. Once the student has been enrolled in a U.S. school and classified as ELL, he or she is to be assessed in the same manner as native English speakers. The funds provided should be utilized to assist ELL students. For example, a specific book, programs, and materials shall be purchased to provide supplemental materials to students.

## **Title III**

This policy requires states to establish AMAOs, which sets targets for acquisition of English language proficiency and the academic achievement of ELL students in the district. The targets are set and states receive the funding for students, which are given to districts once schools have submitted their enrollment and coding of students. Schools receive additional teachers and paraprofessionals who work directly with ELL students to provide them academic support following federal and state policies.

## **Florida Educational Finance Program**

The Florida Department of Education uses the Florida Educational Finance Program (FEFP) as a mechanism to provide funding to school districts. This applies to ELL students because their coding (program 130) provides additional funding beyond non-ELL students. According to the FLDOE (2011), the intent of the program is: “To guarantee each student in the Florida Public Education system the availability of programs and services appropriate to his/her needs which are substantially equal to those available to any similar student notwithstanding geographic differences and varying local

economic factors” (p. 12). The FLDOE focuses on providing equitable funding to all students resulting in the proper resources leading to increased student achievement. The students are identified as full-time equivalent (FTE) which is tied to one student on the membership roll of one school program or a combination of school programs. Each ELL receives appropriate funding for up to 6 years in the ESOL program. Although schools do not receive funding past the sixth year for ELLs, it is still the school’s responsibility to provide appropriate services to the students for their duration in the ESOL program.

### **Identification and Entrance to ELL program**

Federal and state laws require that ELL students receive instructional support and services that make classroom instruction meaningful and productive (Goldenberg & Rutherford-Quach, 2010). Being able to identify which students qualify for ELL services is critical for school leaders to ensure needs are met. Each state has an identification process. The process begins with the home language survey that evaluates the primary language of a student as they enter a school district. This is completed for all students in Grades Pre-K-12 entering Broward County, site of the study, for the first time (BCPS, 2011). Many states, including Florida, use the *Home Language Survey*, an instrument that asks parents what language or languages are spoken in the home.

Second, the IPT and language classification instruments used to determine placement of ELL students are reviewed. Ballard and Tighe (2002) developed the original IPT in the early 1980s consisting of a series of standardized testing instruments for students in Pre-K-12. Today, Florida and other states across the United States utilize this tool to assess ELL students. The test evaluates students’ oral language, reading, and writing in English and are designed to be scored quickly and efficiently (Bailey & Butler, 2002).



Finally, the codes used to determine the status and period of time for students enrolled in the ESOL program are presented. This statewide approach has provided districts with a uniform way of identifying ELLs for services. According to BCPS (2011), coding plays a vital role in the school identifying the growth of students and a way of ensuring the resources (funding for 6 years) are provided to assist in attaining the goal of proficiency.

### **Home Language Survey**

In Broward County, Florida, the process to identify ELL students includes three important steps. First, is to complete the home language survey. This is completed for all students in Grades Pre-K-12 entering Broward County for the first time (BCPS, 2011).

Many states, including Florida, use the *Home Language Survey*, an instrument that asks parents what language or languages are spoken in the home. If a language other than English is spoken at home, a more formal assessment is given due to the possibility that the student's English proficiency may be limited. However, the home language survey has no data to verify or determine a student's needs based on a parent's response to a question, resulting in criticism (Abedi, 2006). While the current practice may identify the needs without careful monitoring, a student may be affected. Moreover, the home language survey may misplace a student for services they may not necessarily need (Goldenberg & Rutherford-Quach, 2010). Many critics feel this process is limited and by using just a few questions runs the risk of failing to properly identify potential ELL students (Kossan, 2009; Zehr, 2010). Therefore, to assist with the process the state of Arizona has changed their policy. In 2009, it was stated that Arizona districts no longer had to ask about home language. They are to use only one question: "What is the primary

language of the student?” Parents focus on only the primary language (Goldenberg & Rutherford-Quach, 2010).

### **IDEA Oral Proficiency Test and Language Level Classifications**

If the home language survey shows the student needs to receive ESOL resources, the second step is to administer the IPT within 20 days. Each school site must have one district trained oral language assessor (BCPS, 2010). Ballard and Tighe developed the original IPT in the early 1980s consisting of a series of standardized testing instruments for students in Pre-K-12. The tests evaluate students’ oral language, reading, and writing in English and are designed to be scored quickly and efficiently Bailey & Butler (2002). Districts have been able to provide placement efficiently due to the IPT. Third, based on the results of the IPT, students will be enrolled in ESOL services through a specific reading or language arts class.

As accountability measures rose under NCLB, the IPT was revamped to provide states with an instrument to be used to support their standards. Prior to developing this system in 2005, data were collected to develop AMAOs, thus providing an overall proficiency score (Ballard & Tighe, 2008). Table 2 explains language classification and descriptors utilized in Broward County Public Schools (BCPS, 2009). Students are identified with a district language classification based on the results of the IPT.

Table 2

*Broward County Schools Language Level Classifications*

Language Level Classifications	Descriptions
A1	Non-English Speaker or minimal knowledge of English demonstrates very little understanding cannot communicate meaning orally unable to participate in regular classroom instruction.
A2	Limited English Speaker demonstrates limited understanding communicates orally in English with one or two word responses.
B1	Intermediate English Speaker communicates orally in English, mostly with simple phrases and/or sentence responses makes significant grammatical errors, which interfere with understanding.
B2	Intermediate English Speaker communicates in English about everyday situations with little difficulty but lacks the academic language experiences and difficulty in following grade level subject assignments.
C1	Advanced English Speaker understands and speaks English fairly well makes occasional grammatical errors may read and write English with variant degrees of proficiency.
C2	Advanced English Speaker understands and speaks English fairly well makes occasional grammatical errors may read and write English with variant degrees of proficiency.

**English Language Learner Codes**

The state of Florida assigns each ELL student an ELL code. Until he or she exits the ESOL program, they are coded as an LY meaning the student is Limited English Proficient and is enrolled in classes specifically designed for ELL students. If the student is identified as LF they are followed up for a 2-year period after having exited the ESOL program. Once the 2-year follow up period ends, the ELL student is coded as an LZ. This is intertwined with the language classifications A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, where ELL students who are LYs are entitled to receive ESOL services (BCPS, 2011). The coding plays a

vital role in the school identifying the growth of students and ensuring the resources (funding) are provided to assist in attaining the goal of proficiency.

### **Length of Time in the United States, Gender, and Age**

#### **Links to Language Proficiency**

This section reviews research pertaining to how length of time in the United States, gender, and age impact academic achievement skills and second language acquisition.

#### **Academic Skills and Learning**

English proficiency is referred to as cognitive academic language that focuses on language proficiency where ELL students can function appropriately. According to Snow (1993), older children acquire a second language more rapidly than younger children due to more advanced cognitive skills. However, over time younger ELL students overtake older students and acquire higher levels of proficiency.

Cummins (1981, 2001) states there are two types of language that ELLs need to acquire: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS are the language skills needed for social interactions. Both of these languages usually develop within 6 months up to 2 years of age. CALP refers to formal academic learning, which includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing about subject area content material. These types of languages are essential for ELLs to develop fluency and academic proficiency. Moreover, Cummins (1981, 2001) argued that for an ELL to become conversationally adept, it could take 2 to 5 years. Furthermore, it could take 5 to 7 years for the same students to become academically proficient. Salinas (2006) confirms that it takes a limited English proficient child 4 to 7 years to learn a second language well enough to function at grade level in a

mainstream academic setting. Part of Cummins' findings states that an educational environment supports a student's primary language. If a child is capable of transferring between the first and second language, the child will then be able to experience how language organizes their reality.

Collier (1987) argues that most ELLs reach average performance in 4 to 7 years. Similarly, Hamayan and Damico (1994) argue that normally it takes 5 to 7 years for academic proficiency. This is a critical time for the ELL students where they must be supported by both the ESOL and mainstreamed teachers in the new language being learned. Because the rate of second language acquisition is not the same for all students, Hamayan and Damico emphasize the importance of a student to continue to speak and learn in their native language at home so their emotional and intellectual development is left unharmed. Having a positive experience may lead to proficiency, ability to develop, and a personality leading to overall success.

### **Age**

A major challenge for educators is that students enter the United States at various ages throughout K-12, and research has found that age plays a vital role in ELL students' language proficiency. According to Snow (1993), older children acquire a second language more rapidly than younger children due to more advanced cognitive skills. Therefore, school leaders must support their teachers and provide them with the necessary skills to teach ELL students of all ages. Age and grade level may play a role in the development of the second language of ELL students affecting their language proficiency.

## **Gender**

According to Chavez (2001), gender should be examined more closely in order to discover possible achievement gaps in students. Gender is defined as the personal traits and position in society connected with being a male or female (Carl, 2012). School educators view gender in different ways. For example, most teachers do not view gender differences in ability in children unless those children are performing poorly (Carl, 2012). According to Dee (2005), if a student perceives that a teacher has an interest in him or her, that student is more likely to be successful. Some male and female students respond differently to teachers, thus showing a critical importance for educators to be aware of societal views resulting in an influence of achievement in schools. Gender biases exist between boys and girls and interaction must be reflected over a period of time (Tiedemann, 2002). There is a current lack of research on the links between gender and ELL students' academic performance.

## **Second Language Acquisition**

In 1983, Krashen and Terrel examined the stages of development for second language acquisition. In 2006, Hill and Flynn identified similar stages for second language acquisition. According to the research, preproduction, early productions, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency are the five stages of second language acquisition.

All students who are ELLs participate in the English/Language Arts through ESOL program which is designed to enable these students to communicate and achieve academic success in their English-speaking environment (BCPS, 2010). All students are provided opportunities, which promote the recognition, understanding, and acceptance of individual uniqueness, interdependence, and cultural diversity within a pluralistic society

(BCPS, 2010). This program provides students the academic skills to progress through the stages and acquire the second language.

### **Socioeconomic Status**

According to Schenpf (2007), the lower the SES the poorer the language skills of immigrants, which becomes a difficult barrier to advanced education. Immigrant students of a lower SES, on average, take longer to master English (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). ELL children from low SES families show lower levels of educational attainment that result in higher dropout rates, lower grades, and fewer completed years of schooling (McDonald, 2004; Vanderkooy, 2011).

Research suggests that both individual (e.g., family SES) and contextual (e.g., quality of education and safety of school/neighborhood) factors play a role in the educational attainment of immigrant youths (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2006). This section reviews research that addresses individual and contextual factors that may impact the educational attainment of low SES ELL students.

### **Internal and External Factors**

The development of ELL students is often affected by internal and external factors. Some of the internal factors are biological, psychological, social, and emotional while some external factors are family, cultural and the environments such as school (Gonzalez, 2001). Given that some immigrant youths dealing with language barriers and acculturation issues are twice as likely as native born youths to live at or below the poverty line, SES often provides a better understanding of the notable attainment gap among various ethnic groups (Schnepf, 2007).

ELL students often come from backgrounds of lower SES and are categorized as members of an ethnic or racial subgroup whose testing data must be disaggregated and

reported per NCLB requirements (Gitomer et al., 2005). The day-to-day community issues that affect families of low SES and a lack of English proficiency create challenges for ELL students in schools. School policymakers and leaders must realize schools serving a high number of ELLs tend to be large, urban, and serve minority students—while other schools (low LEP or no LEP) tend to be smaller, serve a predominantly white population, and are mostly suburban and rural, respectively (De Cohen & Clewell, 2007). Economically struggling families often lack the physical, mental, and emotional resources to formulate and maintain a relationship with their child’s school (Voltz & Morrow, 1999).

ELL students are more likely than their native English-speaking peers to have an immigrant parent, to live in low-income families and to be raised in cultural contexts that do not reflect mainstream norms in the United States (Capps et al., 2005; Hernandez, 2006). Many immigrant students come to the United States from highly impoverished backgrounds with both parents working to maintain a decent living. Moreover, many parents work two or more jobs to maintain the family. At times the immigrant children have never attended formal schooling and have little to no literacy in their first language.

According to Gonzalez (2001), SES has a high correlation with student’s achievement in school. Research shows that students who live in higher SES areas tend to have higher achievement than those in lower SES areas. The most powerful predictor of school performance is SES; the higher the SES of the student’s family, the higher his or her academic achievement (Boocock, 1972; Deil-Amen & Tevis, 2010; Halvorsen et al., 2012). SES often predicts grades, test scores, grade retention, truancy, suspensions, high school dropout, attendance, and amount of years in formal schooling (Phillips, 2011).

The National School Lunch Program, established in 1946 under the National



School Lunch Act, provides free and reduced-price lunches (FRL) to schoolchildren from economically disadvantaged families (Education Information & Accountability Services Data Report, 2012). Many students from low SES areas receive free or reduced meals. Moreover, ELL students often fall under the same numbers as low SES students. Each year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) publishes income guidelines for program eligibility that factor household income and size in relation to federal poverty guidelines. In 2009-10, for instance, a student from a four-person household in Florida with annual household income less than \$28,665 is eligible for free lunches (USDA, 2010). Subsequently, SES, FRL, and academic achievement are tied together (Collier & Thomas, 2002). Research showed that SES as measured by paid, reduced price, and free lunch having some considerable influence on student achievement (Sekar, 2009).

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Latino students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have typically scored 2 years behind other students in the fourth grade (White-Clark, 2005). Moreover, over 70% of Hispanic students in Grades 4 and 8 are eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) as compared to less than 30% of white students (Reuters, 2011). Students in lower socioeconomic groups have less educational opportunities, less access to financial resources when they are needed, fewer experienced teachers, and fewer opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with adults in their schools (Gitomer et al., 2005).

### **Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement**

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assessed the comprehensive literacy skills of Grade 4 students in 35 countries and found that students scores were similar based on SES status. The Program for International Student Assessment assessed reading, math and science scores of 15-year-old children in 43

countries and found that students score alike according to SES. This shows ELL students' academic achievement is similar in various parts the world. Both stages of schooling showed that there was a significant relationship between SES in terms of high and low and academic achievement in all countries (Adams & Wu, 2000). Furthermore, American studies found a robust interaction between SES and academic achievement. Children from lower SES homes are more likely to be at higher risk for school failure than children with a similar neonatal record from higher income families (McLoyd, 1998).

According to Thomas (2006), children from low-income families often do not receive the stimulation and do not learn the social skills required to prepare them for school. Many of these children face parental inconsistency and are faced with routines that derive from frequent changes of primary caregivers, lack of supervision and role models. Socioeconomic status correlates positively with good parenting, which, research has found, improves academic achievement (DeGarmo, Forgatch, & Davis, 1999). Students of low SES are faced with inconsistencies that lead to lack of school readiness resulting in lower student achievement.

There are prior studies that have shown the lack of cognitive development students of low SES backgrounds. For example, Wills (2007), students from low SES backgrounds scored lower on a receptive vocabulary test than higher SES children. The evidence was obvious in showing that poor children arrive at school at a cognitive and behavioral disadvantage. According to Phillips (2011), as six-year-olds enter school from affluent families, they have spent 1,300 more hours in indoor and outdoor recreation, churches, businesses, and other non-school, non-home, and non-caretaker settings than children from low-income families. Differences are greater still (1,800 hours) between children of parents with less than a high school education than children of college

graduates. This shows the challenge that school leaders face with low SES students in comparison to those from high SES households.

### **Ethnic Groups**

Ethnic group gaps in educational attainment relate to the substantial differences in SES between Black and White groups (Fry, 2003). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), a large gap between ethnic groups exists reporting the percentages living in poverty as 8% of Whites, 11% of Asians, 22% of Hispanics, and 25% of both Blacks and Native Americans. One particular group, Haitians, have relatively high levels of educational attainment in comparison to other immigrant groups. However, Haitians from high SES backgrounds are more likely to attain higher levels of education. As a result, Haitian immigrants' success is tied to SES backgrounds (Nicolas et al., 2009). Many Haitian students do not come from high SES backgrounds. Haitian immigrant youths are twice as likely as native-born youths to come from families with a low SES (Fry, 2003). Many ELL students live in low SES communities, therefore, are likely to attend overcrowded, inner-city schools with limited resources, where the costs of providing adequate educational services are viewed as excessive, instead of essential (Schnepf, 2007). This has been portrayed as critical when it comes to educating ELL students and ensuring success.

### **Curriculum and Instruction of ELL Students**

ELL students come from various backgrounds and therefore teachers are expected to integrate English and the students' heritage languages (Lopez, 2010). Effective curriculum planning is needed to prepare students for academic success in English (Brisk, 2006). Examining how students differ on motivational constructs, as well as variables that influence ethnic identity, provide much needed evidence about the potential effects

of education reform efforts on students (Lopez, 2010). Today, education is geared toward all students to be college and career ready (Common Core State Standards [CCSS], 2010). In this section, three topics are discussed.

First, mainstreaming of ELL students is explored. Mainstreaming is an educational method that combines all types of learners (e.g., special education, ELL) into regular classrooms instead of separating them. The majority of teachers have not received specialized training in working with ELL students; however, ELL students are receiving most of their academic instruction from the regular education teachers (McKnight & Antunez, 1999; NCES, 2007 Spangenberg-Urbschat & Pritchard, 1994). One key concept is effective planning that is vital to prepare students for academic success in English (Brisk, 2006).

Next, accountability measures pertaining to highly qualified teachers in all classrooms is reviewed. This is significant because teachers must know and be able to apply theories related to the effect of culture in language learning and school achievement for ELLs from diverse backgrounds (FLDOE, 2011). Being highly qualified was imposed by the NCLB Act to ensure all teachers receive training to be able to work with specific groups of students such as ELLs. Teacher sensitivity to each student is a key to helping him or her adjust to life in the United States while preserving the student's home culture (Short & Echevarria, 2005).

Lastly, the requirement of the ESOL endorsement for all educators is examined. This is important because the Consent Decree in Florida provides details for specific requirements for ESOL certification, inservice training, and sets standards for personnel delivering ESOL instruction (FLDOE, 2011).

## **Mainstreaming**

In education, mainstreaming, which is having all students in the general population, has become a regular practice. This approach includes ELLs as they are often assigned to regular classrooms to be mainstreamed with students whose native language is English. In spite of their limited understanding of English, instruction is presented to them as native speakers. The majority of teachers have not received specialized training; ELL students are receiving most of their academic instruction from the regular education teachers (Spangenberg-Urbschat & Pritchard, 1994).

The mainstreaming laws have overtaken classrooms and regardless of a teacher's development or lack thereof they are expected to produce successful results. The ELL student enters an environment where they may feel isolated and struggle to belong resulting in academic challenges.

## **Highly Qualified Teachers**

With the accountability measures under NCLB, policies affecting ELL students, classroom teachers have been forced to change their instruction and training to benefit all students, including ELLs. Title II requires states to have a highly qualified teacher in every classroom. Moreover, teachers are required to teach students who require English language development. In order to meet high expectations, school leaders are expected to provide professional development programs for teachers that promote sustained interaction between the teachers being trained and their instruction in the classroom.

ELL students' success is tied to teacher development. Teachers must know and be able to apply theories related to the effect of culture in language learning and school achievement for ELLs from diverse backgrounds (FLDOE, 2011). Moreover, teachers must be able to identify and understand the nature and role of culture, cultural groups,

and individual cultural identities. Teacher sensitivity to each student is a key to helping him or her adjust to life in the United States while preserving the student's home culture (Short & Echevarria, 2005). At times teachers tend to associate poor English language skills with lowered cognitive abilities (Abedi, 2006), and they also tend to have ELL students removed from mainstream classrooms to ease their burden (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2006). For example, although many Haitian students are motivated to succeed in school, their desires are often restricted by their status as ELLs (Vanderkooy, 2011). Teachers must increase their knowledge and identify the needs of ELL students.

### **English Speakers of Other Languages Endorsement**

The Consent Decree described earlier details specific requirements for ESOL certification, inservice training, and sets standards for personnel delivering ESOL instruction (FLDOE, 2011). One of the critical requirements of the Meta Consent Decree is not only for ELL students to have equal access and comprehensible instruction but also to be taught by quality personnel. As a result, all teachers and administrators are required to be ESOL endorsed and trained to teach ELL students in their classroom. The training is divided among subject areas based on a category system. Table 3 shows the categories by subject area that are a requirement for teachers in the State of Florida. It is believed that increasing teachers' skills to incorporate strategies into lessons will in turn improve the experiences of ELL students providing them with more comprehensive tools such as strategies and activities in order to increase their overall achievement in the classroom and on assessments.

Table 3

*ESOL Endorsement*

Category	Subject/Position
Category I	Reading, English/Language Arts, Developmental Language Arts
Category II	Math, Science, Social Studies, Computer Literacy
Category III	P.E., Music, Art, Speech Pathology, Media, Foreign Language, Vocational
Category IV	Guidance Counselors, Administrators

Teacher development is required for ELL success and per the consent decree, is mandated for teaching ELL students. The continued increase in the number of ELL students and requirements of NCLB act have led to administrators ensuring qualified personnel are instructing students. Cummins (1981, 2001) stated a student’s first language (L1) serves an important role in supporting conceptual understanding in the second language (L2). ELL students should gain access to concepts in their L2 through their L1 lexicon.

**Chapter Summary**

This review of literature examined a plethora of topics: (a) the increasing population of ELL students in K-12 schools; (b) the relationship between school size and student achievement; (c) the achievement gap that exists between Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking immigrants; (d) the policies and laws identifying the educational treatment of immigrant Haitians and Hispanics; (f) the funding practices for ELLs under federal law; (g) the choice and access to specific curriculum for recent arrivals; (i) how length of time in United States, age, gender, and SES are related to academic achievement and performance on standardized tests for ELLs.

Based on this literature review, it is concluded that the achievement gap has remained wide since the 1960s. The current growth of the ELL population has increased the number of LEP students in K-12 schools. The students' academic achievements are below that of their counterparts. The lack of closing the achievement gap, minimal number of years in the United States, and low SES have hindered many ELL students in keeping up with the rigor and expectations under federal, state, and district requirements. Title I and Title III have called for strong accountability for ELL students under NCLB. Obstacles such as language and formal education prior to the arrival to the United States, have held many students back from achieving success and imposed large hurdles for teacher and school leaders. A student's first language is a predictor for student success. As school leaders, administrators must be willing and able to implement the policies for ELL students and increase overall student achievement.

Next, Chapter 3 will describe the methodology used to determine academic success of Haitian and Hispanic ELL students among several variables.



### 3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELL students' number of years in the ELL program and their academic achievement as indicated by performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading. The study also sought to determine whether or not elementary school size (total student population), ELL student count (total number of ELL students in a school), school SES (percent of free and reduced lunch), student gender, and student home language (Haitian-Creole and Spanish), individual SES, and individual IPT moderate the relationship. The critical purpose of this study was to investigate factors that can improve the reading performance of ELL students in elementary school settings.

#### **Research Design and Methods**

This study analyzed archival student and school data available to the public from the FLDOE and BCPS as well as data that required permission from BCPS. The aggregate student data included student reading test scores, student gender, number of years in the ELL program, individual SES, and individual IPT for both Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking students. The school data included school size (total student population), ELL student count (total number of ELL students in a school), and school SES based on percentage of free and reduced lunch) for both Haitian- Creole- and Spanish-speaking students. Student and school data were analyzed via SPSS, version 22, using moderating variables through multiple regression.

## **Research Questions and Null Hypotheses**

The overarching research question was: Is there a relationship between number of years that Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs were in the ELL program and their academic performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading?

Sub-questions of the study and null hypotheses are:

1. Is there a relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading (level 1-5) by Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs?

Ho1. There is no relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs.

2. Is the relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs moderated by:

- a. Elementary school size (small, medium, large)
- b. ELL school population (number of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELL students)
- c. SES (school percentage of free and reduced lunch)
- d. Student gender
- e. Student home language (Haitian-Creole and Spanish)
- f. SES (individual students)
- g. IPT (level of language proficiency)

Ho2. The relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs is not moderated by elementary school size.

Ho3. There relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs is not moderated by ELL school student count.

Ho4. The relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs is not moderated by student gender.

Ho5. The relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs is not moderated by student home language.

Ho6. The relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs is not moderated by SES.

### **Site of Study**

The site for this study was BCPS, a large urban public school district in southeastern Florida that is the second largest school district in the state of Florida and the sixth largest school district in the United States (BCPS, 2013). There are 232 public schools that serve a population of over 258,000 students. According to BCPS (2013), this district has 35,104 ELL students, including 21,832 Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking students, and 2,461 enrolled in the third grade. All 141 of the elementary schools have at least one Haitian-Creole- or Spanish-speaking ELL student (BCPS, 2013). Furthermore, Spanish and Haitian-Creole are the top two languages represented in Florida where 496,044 Spanish speakers and 63,429 Haitian-Creole speakers are in the schools throughout the state (FLDOE, 2012), According to the FLDOE (2013), the percentage of

eligible students for free and reduced lunch (SES) in Broward County is 56.89%, approximately 148,048 students of the 260,235 total subjects in the analyses.

### **School Selection**

The district has 141 elementary schools. Elementary schools were selected based on a sample of ELL students in Grade 3 whose primary language is Haitian Creole or Spanish. Only traditional (K-5) elementary schools were included. First, the researcher eliminated the alternative and charter schools. Second, the schools that had a population of ELL students in grades Kindergarten to third during the 2012-2013 school year were identified. The study focused on ELL students' third-grade Reading FCAT. Once the schools were identified, specific data on the number of years in the ELL program and the students' test scores were analyzed.

### **Data Sources and Procedures**

Data collection for this study involved obtaining public data on the BCPS and FLDOE websites. Public records, specifically the home language survey were reviewed to determine elementary school size, school ELL population, and SES. Permission from the district was required to obtain the specific student data for this study (third-grade Reading FCAT scores and number of years in the ELL program). The data collected were based on the 2012-2013 school year.

### **Reading FCAT Scores**

The district's Student Assessment and Research Department had Reading FCAT scores based on the students' ESOL classification, and they were provided via email once permission has been granted. The data requested were for specific third-grade students who speak Haitian-Creole or Spanish in the selected schools. The data were categorized by FCAT level (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5). According to the FLDOE (2013), a level 2 or higher is

needed for end of the year promotion while a level 3 is considered meeting proficiency.

### **Elementary School Size**

Data on elementary school size were obtained via the Internet from the district's demographics and student assignments department website. This area was available to the public, and there were data for each individual school in the district. Elementary school sizes were not categorized. Individual school numbers were used.

### **ELL Student Count**

The total number of ELL students in a school is publicly available from the school district's ESOL department via the Internet.

### **Number of Years in ELL**

Number of years in the ELL program was obtained from the district's ESOL department website. Each student name has an entry date into the ELL program.

Therefore, the number of years was divided in the following manner:

1. Kindergarten (July 2009-June 2010) = 3 years
2. First grade (July 2010-June 2011) = 2 years
3. Second grade (July 2011- June 2012) = 1 year
4. Third grade (July 2012- June 2013) = less than 1 year

### **Socioeconomic Status**

SES was obtained by the FLDOE (publicly available). The state lists each school's percentage of students approved for free and reduced-priced meals.

### **Student Gender**

Student gender for the Haitian-Creole and Spanish speakers was obtained in the school district's ESOL department via the Internet. The students who met the criteria of less than 1 year, 1 year, 2 years, or 3 years were included in the data analysis.

### **Student Home Language**

The language type was obtained by the district's ESOL department via email. Students who were coded Haitian-Creole or Spanish speakers were included in the study. There were two types of demographics that was numerically coded: language for each group, 1 = Haitian-Creole or 2 = Spanish.

### **Data Analysis**

Once all data were collected and coded for the tested variables, the analysis was performed. The bivariate correlation was used to test the relationship between the number of years in the ELL program and academic achievement results for third-grade student FCAT Reading proficiency and the moderator variables (elementary school size, ELL student count, school SES, student gender, student home language, individual SES, and IPT individual score). A multiple regression was used to test the moderation hypotheses. For the moderator analysis, all variables were centered to decrease the effect of collinearity. The alpha level was set at .05 for the analyses.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter 3 presented the research design for the study. The methodology and statistical techniques in this study examined the relationship between Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking students' number of years in the ELL program and their academic performance moderated by a number of variables. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study.

#### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This study examined the relationship between Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELL students' number of years in the ELL program and their academic achievement as indicated by performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading. The study also sought to determine whether or not elementary school size (total student population), ELL student count (total number of ELL students in a school), school SES (percentage of free and reduced lunch), student gender, and student home language (Haitian-Creole and Spanish), individual SES, and individual IPT moderate the relationship. This chapter begins by reintroducing the research question, two sub-questions, and six null hypotheses that guided the study followed by describing data screening and results from the statistical analyses of data. The chapter concludes with a summary.

##### **Research Questions and Null Hypotheses**

The research questions and null hypotheses were:

1. Is there a relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading (level 1-5) by Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs?

Ho1. There is no relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs.

2. Is the relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs moderated by:

- a. Elementary school size (small, medium, large)
- b. ELL school student count (number of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELL students)
- c. SES (school percentage of free and reduced lunch)
- d. Student gender
- e. Student home language (Haitian-Creole and Spanish)
- f. SES (individual students)
- g. IPT (level of language proficiency)

Ho2. The relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs is not moderated by elementary school size.

Ho3. The relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs is not moderated by ELL school student count.

Ho4. The relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs is not moderated by student gender.

Ho5. The relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs is not moderated by student home language.



Ho6. The relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking English Language Learners is not moderated by SES.

### **Data Screening**

The researcher received 141 records of school data from the school district, and 17,388 records of student data. The elementary school records provided the school name, student count, free and reduced lunch percentage, school size, and percentage of ELL students. The student records provided each student's school name, grade, race, free and reduced lunch rate, ELL and non-ELL, date of entry into ELL program, primary language, and FCAT Reading level.

All the variables of interest were examined in Excel and through SPSS 22 for accuracy of data entry and missing values. The data were examined and after review, the student data had 13,093 records missing values of interest such as FCAT, IPT, and ESE. In addition, another 3,091 were deleted due to non-ELL status. Therefore, 16,339 records were deleted leaving 1,204 students for the student data analysis that met the criteria.

### **Descriptive Analysis**

SPSS computer software was used to determine the correlation analysis, moderator analyses, and *t* test methods in order to answer the two research questions and six null hypotheses. Several pieces of data were recorded and gathered. Table 4 shows each of the data sources for the specific languages Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking students. For example, out of the 1,204 student records reviewed, 423 were classified as Haitian-Creole-speaking students versus 782 classified as Spanish-speaking students. Based on these data, the number of years that the students were enrolled varied based on their language.

Table 4

*Number of Students and Year Enrolled in ELL Program by Language*

Primary language	Number of students	Year entered ELL program
Haitian-Creole	422	
	144	prior to July 2009
	143	July 2009-June 2010
	36	July 2010-June 2011
	50	July 2011- June 2012
	49	July 2012- June 2013
Spanish	782	
	189	prior to July 2009
	283	July 2009-June 2010
	63	July 2010-June 2011
	90	July 2011- June 2012
	157	July 2012- June 2013

In order to determine the relationship between the number of years in the ELL program and FCAT Reading score by Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking students, a correlation analysis was used. The moderation analysis was used to determine whether the relationship between years and FCAT score is changed (moderated) by each of the specified moderator variables. The alpha level was set at .05 in order to determine the significance of all the hypotheses. The data results provide a critical look at the achievement for Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking students.

### Results to Answer Research Question 1

Is there a relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading (level 1-5) by Haitian-Creole- and Spanish speaking ELLs? The researcher utilized the descriptive statistics presented in Table 5 to investigate the relationship between number of years in the ELL program using the LEP date and third-grade FCAT Reading level.

Table 5

*Frequencies for Entry Date Into the ELL Program and FCAT Reading Achievement Level  
(Haitian-Creole and Spanish Speakers Combined)*

FCAT Reading						
Level	Prior	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	
1	181	174	58	76	135	
2	109	174	27	46	30	
3	37	66	9	9	28	
4	4	11	5	7	11	
5	2	1	0	2	2	

The data (see Table 5) show the number of ELL students scoring a level 1 or 2 on the FCAT Reading, meaning they are not proficient, was approximately 84% (1,010 students out of 1204 students). This represented the majority of the student count. Table 6 shows that only 194 students scored at the proficiency level (level 3, 4, or 5). Those who scored at the proficient level passed the test, and the other students failed, indicating an achievement gap. Only 16% of the students scored a level 3 to 5 as opposed to 84% who scored a level 1 or 2.

These data also show that one cannot predict the score of an ELL student may receive based on his or her entry date to the ELL program. In reference to the number of years in the ELL program and the third-grade FCAT Reading level, the Pearson Correlation value ( $r = -.021, p > .05$ ) indicated no significance, therefore making it impossible to distinguish the correlation from zero. This indicates one cannot predict FCAT scores based on the number of years in the program.

Table 6 shows the comparison between the Haitian-Creole and Spanish ELL students on their FCAT Reading achievement levels. The larger percentages of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking students scored at the level 1 or 2 level, 88% (56.2 + 32), and 81.6% (49.5 + 32.1) respectively. Consistently, the majority of the ELL students scored below proficiency (below level 3). A 2-tailed  $t$  test showed no significant difference between FCAT Reading scores of Haitian-Creole and Spanish students. The results showed a value of .004 pertaining to the primary language of ELL students. A  $t$  test was completed to compare the two means, Haitian-Creole and Spanish, and their score. The value  $.002(df) = .004, p > .05$  in this case would be considered significant; however, the value of .004 is unable to reject the null hypothesis—that there is a relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance of the ELL students—based on their primary language.

Table 6

*Frequencies for the Comparison Between the Haitian-Creole and Spanish ELL Students and Their Achievement on the FCAT Reading Test*

FCAT Reading Level	Haitian-Creole		Spanish	
	Number of students	%	Number of students	%
1	237	56.2	387	49.5
2	135	32.0	251	32.1
3	40	9.5	109	13.9
4	8	1.9	30	3.8
5	2	0.5	5	0.6

### **Results to Answer Research Question 2**

Is the relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading test of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs moderated by: elementary school size (small, medium, large), ELL school student count (number of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELL students), gender, SES (school percentage of free and reduced lunch), student gender, student home language (Haitian-Creole and Spanish), SES for both individual students and by school, and IPT (level of language proficiency)?

Multiple moderator analyses were performed to determine the predictability of the number of years in the ELL program between each of the moderating variables and the FCAT Reading levels. Using the SPSS system, tests were conducted to test the moderating effects. Table 7 shows the test of moderating effects for the variables to identify the predictors for school size, ELL student count, school SES, student gender,

student home language, individual students SES, and IPT level. For example, analyses were conducted such as the FCAT score was predicted from the number of years, the potential moderator, and the product moderator and number of years. All variance inflation factors (VIFs) met the criterion of fewer than 10 meaning there were no difficulties with collinearity.

Table 7

*Moderating Effects of Seven Variables on the Relationship Between the Number of Years in the ELL Program and FCAT Reading Levels*

Moderator	Product-term Beta	df	p	VIF
Primary Language	.046	1.494	.135	1.147
ELL Student Count	-.048	-1.500	.134	1.267
School SES	-.078	-2.196	.028	1.576
Student Gender	.042	1.481	.139	1.003
Student language	.046	1.494	.135	1.147
Individual SES	-.082	-2.528	.012	1.301

A moderator test was used to show whether the relationship between number of years in the ELL program and FCAT score changes as a function of each moderator. Four of the moderation null hypotheses were not rejected, except for the two SES variables. This shows that the school and individual SES do play a role in the relationship between number of years in ELL program and the FCAT Reading level. As previously defined in Chapter 2, low SES leads to an increase in the percentage of students eligible for FRL meals. These schools tend to have the greater academic and programmatic needs.

Six hypotheses were tested. Again, the moderation was significant for both school and individual SES. It can be concluded that the degree of relationship between number of years a student is in the ELL program and FCAT score of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELL students is higher as SES increases. As SES decreases, the relationship decreases, meaning that the student most likely will score a level 1 or 2 on the FCAT Reading test.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter 4 presented the results of the data analysis. First, the research questions were reintroduced and the null hypotheses that examined the relationship between number of students in the ELL program and FCAT Reading Levels. The relationship between those who scored at the proficient level (passed) versus those who scored non-proficient was significant. Only 16% of the students scored a level 3 to 5 as opposed to 84% who scored a level 1 or 2. Next, the researcher utilized descriptive analysis and outlined the two research questions with six null hypotheses to present the student records in the study. Each null hypothesis with the exception of one rejected the null hypothesis on this study. Chapter 5 discusses the findings and how they link to prior research. The conclusions are presented with implications for future research and recommendations for educational leaders and policymakers regarding ELL students.

## 5. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter provides a summary and discussion of the results that were presented in Chapter 4. It revisits the research problem, and reviews the primary methods used in the study. Implications and conclusions are discussed.

### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELL elementary students' number of years in the ELL program and their academic achievement, indicated by performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading in BCPS. The study then sought to determine whether or not elementary school size (total student population), ELL population (the number of ELL students in a school), SES (school's percentage of free and reduced lunch), FCAT Reading proficiency by school (third grade), student gender, student home language, SES (individual students), and IPT (level of language proficiency) moderate the relationship.

The following two questions guided this study, and each is answered below in the discussion of findings:

1. Is there a relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading (level 1-5) by Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs?



2. Is the relationship between number of years in the ELL program and performance on the third-grade FCAT Reading of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs moderated by:

- a. Elementary school size (small, medium, large)
- b. ELL school student count (number of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELL students)
- c. SES (school percentage of free and reduced lunch)
- d. Student gender
- e. Student home language (Haitian-Creole and Spanish)
- f. SES (individual students)
- g. IPT (level of language proficiency)

The need for this study was established in Chapter 1. Many immigrant groups have immigrated to the United States from countries where English is not their native language, and they represent a large portion of the overall immigrant population (McDonald, 2004). Educational attainment is important to ELL families and the future success of their children (Kepley, 2011). Research indicates there will continue to be a dramatic increase in K-12 students who come to U.S. schools without proficiency in English (Gitomer et al., 2005), which puts them at risk of not being successful in school. Students who cannot read or write in English have a greater chance of dropping out of school and they often face a lifetime of diminished opportunity (Gingras, & Careaga, 1989; NCLR, 2007). ELLs are among the country's lowest-performing students, scoring far below the national average on the reading portion of the NAEP and completing high school at very low rates (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). According to the National Graduation Rates (2007), approximately 50% of Blacks and Hispanics graduate

from high school compared to the 70% nationwide average. There is currently little research available on Haitian-Creole and Hispanic ELL students and how they have fared on state assessments that are critical to promotion and graduation.

School leaders must be aware of the challenges and how to meet the needs of ELL students so that they can achieve at mandated performance levels in school and be promoted with their peers. Furthermore, public schools in the United States are attempting to manage the transformation currently taking place with the emergence of ELLs, the fastest growing subgroup in the nation (NCELA, 2009). ELLs have become a sizeable population that today's school leaders must understand and closely monitor in order to provide them with an appropriate education that fosters student achievement. Therefore, it is critical to investigate factors that can improve the performance of ELL students in K-5 school settings.

Chapter 2 provided the literature review with several key components. First, it documented and traced the increasing population of ELL students in K-12 schools. Second, the relationship between school size and students' achievement was presented. Third, the achievement gap that exists between Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking immigrants and other groups and how they have been affected, over the years was examined. Fourth, policies and laws were examined in order to identify how the educational treatment of immigrant Haitians and Hispanics is affected specifically by policies and legislation enacted to close the achievement gap between majority and minority students during 1960-2012. Fifth, funding practices for ELL students under federal law were examined to identify how ELLs were affected. Sixth, the choice and access to specific curriculum for recent arrivals was explored. Finally, research that examined how the length of time in the United States, age, gender, and SES are related to

academic achievement and performance on standardized tests for ELLs was reviewed.

Chapter 3 outlined the methods used in the study. Archival student and school data available to the public from the FLDOE and BCPS as well as data that require permission from BCPS was used to conduct the study. The aggregate student data included student reading test scores, student gender, and number of years in the ELL program, individual SES, and individual IPT for both Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking students. The school data included school size (total student population), ELL student count (total number of ELL students in a school), and school SES based on percentage of free and reduced lunch) for both Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking students. Student and school data were analyzed via SPSS, version 20, using moderating variables through multiple regression.

Finally, Chapter 4 presented the results of the study. The chapter began by reintroducing the two research questions and six null hypotheses that guided the study followed by describing data screening and results from the statistical analyses of data. This final chapter discusses the results.

### **Limitations of Data Collection**

This study was limited by the available data generated by the district's archival database. The student data had 13,093 records missing values of interest such as FCAT, IPT, and ESE. In addition, another 3,091 were deleted due to non-ELL status. Therefore, 16,339 records were deleted leaving 1,204 students for the student data analysis that met the sampling criteria. Although this district is large, the available bank of archival data that met sampling criteria was much smaller than had been expected. This extreme reduction in data may have caused the remaining data to have a stronger stance than anticipated and causing a bias in the results.

## **Discussion**

The results of this study are discussed in an attempt to understand what the results mean and to develop the next steps for research and practice.

Two variables related to SES showed a significance. The analysis of various moderating variables revealed some important findings.

Each of the moderating variables were used to determine whether or not a relationship existed between number of years in the ELL program and performance of the third-grade FCAT reading for Haitian-Creole and Spanish speakers. The study found that only two—school and individual SES—showed a relationship. Although there is little prior research on this topic, Chapter 2 discussed individual SES. The results align with other research confirming that many ELLs come from backgrounds of lower SES. The day-to-day community issues that affect families of low SES and a lack of English proficiency create challenges for ELL students in schools. School policymakers and leaders must realize schools serving a high number of ELLs tend to be large, urban, and serve minority students (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Consequently, other schools (low LEP or no LEP) tend to be smaller, serve a predominantly white population, and are mostly suburban and rural, respectively (De Cohen & Clewell, 2007, p. 2). According to Jensen (2009), children raised in poverty rarely choose to behave differently, but they are faced daily with overwhelming challenges that affluent children never have to confront, and their brains have adapted to suboptimal conditions in ways that undermine good school performance.

Cognitive academic language focuses on language proficiency. According to Cummins (1981), for second language acquisition to occur, it must first be developed in the student's native language. He also discussed that it takes approximately 5 to 7 years

for students to become academically proficient. Therefore, the results of this study shows the potential need for more academic time needed for students to show success. On the other hand, Collier (1987) argues that it takes about 4 to 7 years for ELL students to reach their average performance. Regardless, both Cummins' and Collier's research shows that it takes several years to acquire a new language. With the challenges many ELL students face due to lack of early schooling or first language acquisition, there is more difficulty in attaining academic success early on. Therefore, the results presented in the previous chapter show the reason for the low achievement scores is the background knowledge that students may not acquire in the early stages. The FCAT reading creates difficult situations for ELL students. Furthermore, according to Hamayan and Damico (1994), for emotional and intellectual develop to continue, it important for ELL students to continue to speak in their native language. The positive experiences lead to more success in school.

SES and academic achievement are key factors to this studies results. Phillips (2011) emphasized the differences in early exposure for children of low versus high SES is key to early school performance. As a result, high SES students tend to come to school with higher readiness than low SES students due to their involvement outside of the home and school. Many children of high SES families spend more than 1,300 hours in recreation than low SES families. The early exposure often transforms into early academic development and achievement. High SES students have a greater challenge to succeed than low SES students based on early exposure, opportunities, and school readiness.

### **Individual and School Socioeconomic Status**

The relationship between number of years in the ELL program and FCAT is higher as SES increases. The degree of relationship between number of years in the ELL program and FCAT score for of Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking ELLs is higher as SES increases. This finding is consistent with some past studies. According to Gonzalez (2001), SES has a high correlation with students' achievement in school. Research shows that students who live in higher SES areas tend to have higher achievement than those in lower SES areas. SES often predicts grades, test scores, grade retention, truancy, suspensions, high school dropout occurrence, attendance, and number of years in formal schooling (Charters, 1963). According to Schenpf (2007), the lower the SES the poorer the language skills of immigrants, which becomes a difficult barrier to advanced education.

Students of low SES background are affected negatively in comparison to their counterparts. For example, the most powerful predictor of school performance is SES, that is, the higher the SES of the student's family, the higher his or her academic achievement (Boocock, 1972; Deil-Amen & Tevis, 2010; Halvorsen et al., 2012). This study showed that both the individual and school SES status had a relationship with the number of years in the ELL program and FCAT reading level.

### **Implications for Policy**

Under federal law ELL students are required to take a test to measure English proficiency and to increase the percentage of ELL students making progress in learning English, attaining English proficiency, and making AYP (Public Education, 2006). Over the years policies have been revamped leading to changes by states and districts. Some data show an increase over time; however, the accountability has risen and paved a

tougher road for students and school leaders. For example, according to the FLDOE (2012), the percentage of English language learners proficient in FCAT Mathematics increased from 21% in 2001 to 39% in 2010. Furthermore, the percentage of ELLs proficient in FCAT Reading has increased from 11% in 2001 to 28% in 2010.

Based on the research findings a more comprehensive study of number of years in the ELL program and the state achievement test is needed. Specifically, the state of Florida changed from the FCAT to Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) in spring of 2015. The goal in each classroom is for teachers to provide high quality instruction that provides each student the opportunity to be college and career ready. The FLDOE revised the CCSS into what are now known as the Florida Standards in February 2014, approving 99 revisions to the original standards that were accepted in 2010 (Dunkelberger, 2014). The CCSS are a comprehensive set of K-12 standards that specify what K-12 students should know in reading and math.

These standards now replace the previous ones and based on data from this study, the increase in rigor would affect ELL students' academic achievement. The standards were created due to the discontinuation of NCLB and are included as one of many initiatives in the Obama Administration's Race to the Top legislation (Guisbond, Neill & Schaeffer, 2012; USDOE, 2010). The Florida Standards are tested using the FSA that includes more than just multiple choice or simple fill-in-the-blank questions. Students are being asked to write and respond in different ways that assess students' higher order thinking skills (FLDOE, 2014). Informational text is also very important in the new standards. The Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS) now mandate that by fourth grade, 50% of all text in elementary school classrooms should be nonfiction, also referred to as informational text (Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts,

2010). This forces school leaders to revamp their approach for all students and expose them to the appropriate text. Therefore, a wide variety of texts such as biographies, speeches, opinion pieces, and graphs that are appropriate for students. Because students are more likely to be exposed to nonfiction in their careers or in college, it is necessary that students understand how to read and analyze these types of texts (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014).

### **Implications for Future Research**

Future research is needed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the SES status of schools and individual student status in relation to the academic achievement of ELL students. Continued research on the socioeconomic factors for second language learners may be of value. Additional qualitative studies to understand out how specific factors affect ELL students' success on state achievement tests, such as language, student age, and location in the United States may provide insight as to why some students succeed while others do not.

### **Recommendations for K-20 Leaders**

ELLs have become a sizeable population that today's school leaders must understand and closely monitor in order to provide them with an appropriate education that fosters student achievement. The paradigm shift to increase student achievement for all students can only occur if K-20 leaders collaborate with policymakers to effectively influence ELL students. The increase in ELL students in public education shows the need to make adjustments.

In Florida, this will require a new way of thinking that is also focused on preparing students for the FSA English Language Arts that replaced the FCAT Reading. School leaders must provide professional development to all teachers to increase



teacher's knowledge based. This student group has more than doubled over the past 20 years (NCELA, 2009). Today, there are over five million ELLs in the United States, about 11% of the public school population (LETC, 2011).

Educators must understand that it is their professional responsibility to increase student proficiency. For example, the goal of the NCLB Act was to have every student proficient in reading and math by 2014. Yet the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Students Testing indicates that state tests show ELL students' performance is generally 20 to 30% below that of non-ELL students (Devoe, 2007). In the end, all stakeholders desire for all students to achieve especially ELLs who currently stand behind their counterparts.

### **Conclusion**

This study has added to the educational leadership field by providing information on ELL academic achievement for both Haitian-Creole- and Spanish-speaking students. This study concludes that there is a relationship between the number of years in the ELL program and FCAT reading level (measured by FCAT) for both individual and school SES status. Specifically, there is a stronger linkage between number of years in the ELL program for high SES students than low SES students. School leaders must now strategize to create the best conditions and opportunities to teach ELL students and lead them toward success. Across the nation and in Florida, the site of this study, there is currently an achievement gap for ELL students based on their SES status. Many approaches are attempted to provide solutions however, it still remains a challenge to solve the achievement issue of ELL students.

## Appendix

### Permission to Conduct Study and to Name Research Site Institutions



**Institutional Review Board**

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<http://www.fau.edu/research/researchint>

Michael Whitehurst, Ed.D., Chair

DATE: May 16, 2014

TO: Patricia Maslin-Ostrowski

FROM: Florida Atlantic University Social, Behavioral and Educational Research IRB

IRBNET ID #: 547728-1

PROTOCOL TITLE: [547728-1] An examination of academic performance of Haitian-Creole and Spanish speaking English Language Learners based on the number of years in the ELL program

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF NOT HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

EFFECTIVE DATE: May 16, 2014

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The Florida Atlantic University Social, Behavioral and Educational Research IRB has determined this project does not meet the definition of human subjects research according to federal regulations. Therefore, it is not under the purview of the IRB.

We will keep a copy of this correspondence on file in our office.

If you have any questions or comments about this correspondence, please contact Elisa Gaucher at:

Institutional Review Board  
Research Integrity/Division of Research  
Florida Atlantic University  
Bldg. 80, Rm. 106  
Boca Raton, FL 33431  
Phone: 561-297-0777

\* Please include your protocol number and title in all correspondence with this office.

**This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations,  
and a copy is retained within our records.**

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