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## Responding to the Need for Language Support: Partnership in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education

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# Responding to the Need for Language Support: Partnership in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education

## **Cover Page Footnote**

The authors would like to thank all the members of school-university partnerships who provide language support to students who speak languages other than English.

## Responding to the Need for English Language Support: Partnerships in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education

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*This study explored how school, university, and community partners provided language support to K-12 students whose first language was something other than English. Six English as a second language (ESL) supervisors representing six Virginia school divisions were asked to describe school-university language partnerships. Positioning theory was utilized to frame the interactive ways in which individuals in both contexts influence each other. Research questions were: According to ESL supervisors, how do PK-12 public school divisions and institutions of higher education collaborate on behalf of students whose first language is not English? What do ESL supervisors perceive as ways in which current partnerships could be improved and expanded? Tape-recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed along with information available through the divisions' websites and the Virginia Department of Education. The larger and more established programs offered a greater range of services supported by school-university partnerships compared to smaller and newer programs. Implemented programs represented a variety of theoretical approaches, including bilingual education, sheltered English, dual language, and High Intensity Language Training. All rural, urban, and suburban programs demonstrated creative efforts for leveraging resources via school-university partnerships. The research was conducted over a period of five years and the findings provided a foundation of need from which to develop an ESL dual endorsement program at a university in eastern Virginia. The research underscores the importance of longitudinal school, university, and community collaboration and research.*

The question of how to provide language support to students in the United States can be traced to “missionary efforts to develop written Native American languages and the creation of a written Cherokee language by Sequoyah” (Spring, 2011, p. 131). Members of communities do not always agree on the best approach for language instruction, but most people recognize that fluency in English is crucial for success in educational settings and the workplace in the United States (McEachron, 1998). The National Center for Education Statistics reports that 21% of students, aged 5-17, speak a language other than English in their home or speak English with difficulty (Aud et al., 2011). The National Center for Education Statistics also reports that Virginia is among the top ten states in terms of funding for elementary and secondary schools. Despite this relatively high ranking, resources devoted to language support are scarce, necessitating the need for shared community responsibility. This paper explores the nature of language support offered by school divisions and their university partners for English as a Second Language (ESL) students enrolled in public schools in regions throughout Virginia. Specifically, the authors describe the perceptions of six ESL supervisors regarding the creative ways in which their school divisions offer language support within local communities and through partnerships with colleges and universities. In addition, ESL supervisors' perceptions regarding how

to expand the partnerships are described, along with the authors' interpretations of ways to better understand and promote school-university partnerships. The study is grounded in positioning theory which allows the researchers to interpret the findings in relation to their own roles in the school-university partnership.

### **Positioning Theory and Review of Literature**

When members of the community work together to bring about change they are pursuing transformative goals. Transformative goals are goals that respond to needs or issues that may not be met by the current state of affairs or institutional structures. In the context of education, transformation is a term used to signify expansive learning, change, and innovation (Leach & Moon, 2008). Often these goals require the need to influence others and garner support in the form of monetary resources, human resources, and expendable resources needed to achieve shared goals.

#### **Positioning Theory**

Influencing others and gaining support to achieve transformative goals requires discourse. The process of using discourse to change views and ultimately bring about change is supported by "positioning theory," which maintains that the focus for transformation "is on the way in which the discursive practices constitute the speakers and hearers in certain ways" while providing "a resource through which speakers and hearers can negotiate new positions" (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 62). In contrast to an emphasis upon distinct roles and traditions, positioning "helps focus attention on dynamic aspects of encounters..." (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 43). In the context of this paper, positioning theory is applied to the manner in which interpersonal encounters convey the need for pursuit of common goals. From a constructionist point of view, positioning theory provides a "conceptual and methodological framework that allows one to take into account the specifics of a conversation" with regard to conversational history and the power of statements to shape subsequent actions (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999, p. 2).

Positioning theory supports research that investigates working relationships and, in the current context, illuminates perceived meaning in school-university partnerships. Analyses of these micro-interactions are based upon discourse assumptions outlined by Tirado and Galvez (2007), including the importance that language plays in the production of social reality, the importance placed on the organizational nature of practical reasoning, the intervention of symbolic communication, and the importance of rules and resources that govern social explanations. According to Tirado and Galvez (2007, para. 22) discursive practice is the fundamental core of positioning theory:

Discourse is...a collective and dynamic process through which meanings are constructed, acquired and transformed...The constituent force of each discourse practice is rooted in the fact that we provide the subject's positions. In this sense the theory concedes a special relevance to conversation, so much so that it claims the positioning is a phenomenon of conversation...Once a determined position has been taken, the individual perceives and interprets the world from and through that strategic position. The concrete images, metaphors, narrative lines and concepts are relevant to the particular discursive practice and where they have been positioned.

The pursuit of common and transformative goals among constituents who seek change—school division personnel and university personnel—may reflect motivational differences. Dallmer (2004, p. 43) participated in several school-university partnerships and expressed the following insight on motivational variations, “Collaboration does not mean giving up our differences; it means that we must trust in those differences to accomplish our mutually agreed upon purposes.” Positioning theory illuminates the manner in which individual commitment is grounded in cultural contexts, including work, school, and community. For example, when positioning theory is applied to qualitative research, each member of a research dyad is perceived as influencing the other during the process of information exchange. When such relationships occur over a long-term period, trust is cultivated gradually and can lead to teamwork, collective problem-solving, and non-hierarchical relationships (Tshannen-Moran, 2009).

To investigate this dynamic process, the authors posed the following research questions: According to ESL supervisors, how do PK-12 public school divisions and institutions of higher education collaborate on behalf of students whose first language is not English? What do ESL supervisors perceive as ways in which current partnerships could be improved and expanded?

### **Review of Literature**

Studies investigating change in schools examine policy in local, state, and national institutions and focus on the educators, teachers, administrators, students, parents, and members of the community who respond to and shape these changes. Several of the themes included in this research are curriculum, school culture, teaching practices, structure, and professional development schools (Del Prete, 2006). The professional development school literature features university and school partnerships designed to address educational needs on far-ranging topics such as autism (Agosta, Graetz, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 2004), engineering (Anderson, 2005), and teacher quality and student achievement (Del Prete, 2006). For purposes of focus, the authors chose to feature three empirical studies whose methodologies spanned several years. Like the current study, their longitudinal findings provide insights into the benefits and challenges of developing and maintaining school-university partnerships face-to-face and over time. An examination of ongoing relationships characterized by interpersonal interaction is necessary for understanding how positioning theory can be applied.

In the first study, Parke and Taylor (2008) report findings of empirical research investigating how school-university partnerships affected school reforms over three years. Baker, Rieg, and Clendaniel (2006) report the effectiveness of a math-tutoring school-university partnership spanning ten years, in the second study. In the third study, Price (2009) examined the disparities between the linguistic and cultural diversity of the student population and that of the teaching workforce and how a school-university partnership sought to close the gap over a four-year period.

Parke and Taylor’s (2008) study of a university-middle school research partnership investigated student perceptions of the effectiveness of school reforms, focusing on academics and use of technology, school satisfaction, and respect for others. While it reports findings from six different ethnic groups (Caucasian, Asian-American, African-American, Hispanic, Indian-American and Other), the study does not offer information about the perceptions or academic performance of ESL students or the perceptions of teachers and ad-

ministrators with regard to language support for ESL students. Nevertheless, the findings support the positioning theory framework. The benefits of a school-university partnership were described in relation to transformative elements that came about through newly forged interactions. Specifically, teachers gained a broader perspective of student perspectives, faculty were united for a common good, more professional dialogue emerged among teachers and between teachers and their higher-education partners, teachers as researchers were good role models for pre-service teachers, and teachers collaborated with university faculty to give a conference presentation.

In a second school-university partnership, Baker, Rieg, and Clendaniel (2006) described benefits and limitations of a math tutoring program that utilized university tutors participating in a teacher preparation program. Baker, Rieg and Clendaniel assessed third through sixth grade student gains and interviewed university supervisors. Performance gains for 85% of students were attributed to the long-term nature of the school-university partnership and the consistent tutor-student pairings. Decreases were attributed to absences and the resulting reshuffling of tutor-student pairings, thus underscoring the value of previously established teamwork and collective problem solving strategies, crucial elements that are essential to transformation according to positioning theory.

Baker, Rieg, and Clendaniel noted that the university tutors praised both the university and the schools for providing them with opportunities to have extra experience in a school setting and to receive helpful advice from teaching supervisors. One of the limitations of the study was the lack of information about how data was analyzed, but the overall positive comments obtained from interviews attest to the benefits of the school-university partnership.

The study highlights how a school-university partnership can benefit a targeted student population—those in need of math support. For purposes of the current study, it would have been beneficial had the authors noted any performance differences in relation to the demographical characteristics of the student population such as ethnicity and language.

The third featured study is based on grounded theory whereby the context of the social system is explored and transformed; the social system is the cultural and linguistic diversity of the teaching workforce in Christmas Island, a territory of Australia. Price (2009) noted that one way to overcome the inequitable outcomes of language minority students is to overcome the ethnic disparity in the workforce that teaches them. This approach is relevant to positioning theory and the current study because it examines how a school-university partnership is responsive to language needs for the purpose of enhancing academic, economic, and cultural success. Price, who teaches at Murdoch University, partnered with a secondary school for the purpose of researching an alternative program that was designed to support three female linguistic and ethnic minority educational assistants (EAs) as they transitioned to initial teacher education programs. Price's case study included informal, open-ended interviews, journal writing, field notes and the collection of relevant written documents. Even though the study takes place in a territory of Australia, lower language minority status patterns are evident on an international scale (McEachron & Bhatti, 2005).

Price concluded that "the school's proactive role in developing a close partnership with the university and in allocating funding for the EAs to attend on-campus components and relief time for mentors was crucial...In seeking to change its pedagogical paradigm, it aimed to honour the community in which it was located and build on the diverse languages and cultures of this community" (p. 71). Price's study makes several important contribu-

tions to our literature review. First, she reiterates the importance of school-university partnerships and describes the integral benefits to administrators, education institutions, grant writers, grant providers, educational assistants, teachers, and faculty in tertiary education. Also tantamount is the manner in which she illuminates the reciprocal benefits when transforming hierarchical structures based on colonization to structures that seek relationships built on equity. The reciprocal benefits underscore discursive practice as the fundamental core of positioning theory. Discourse is “a collective and dynamic process through which meanings are constructed, acquired and transformed...” (Tirado & Galvez, 2007, para. 22).

In sum, the three studies reviewed underscore the positive impact that school-university partnerships have when they are: longitudinal, well-organized, jointly-supported, and both parties have mutually shared goals. The studies also demonstrate that school-university partnerships can be a vehicle for exploring dynamic student relationships and performances that may reflect community stasis or cultural transformation. The dynamism described in the literature review illuminates processes that are the essence of positioning theory, that is, the participating constituents influence each other to bring about transformation based on their interaction. The current study expands the school-university partnership research by exploring ways in which ESL supervisors perceive: (1) school-university partnerships on behalf of their divisions’ language programs, and (2) how school-university partnerships can be changed to expand their language programs.

### **Methodology**

The structure of the public school divisions and ESL supervisors selected for the study are described below.

### **Participants**

Virginia has a total of 135 public school divisions (e.g. public school districts) that are divided into eight regions based on an organizational structure developed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) (VDOE, 2011). Letters were sent to ESL supervisors representing 30 divisions that were known to have student populations requiring language support. The ESL demographics were identified from their division’s website or through the Virginia ESL Supervisors Association (VESA). Of the 30 divisions contacted, 14 ESL supervisors (approximately 50%) agreed to be interviewed. From the list of 14 who agreed to be interviewed, the authors selected six individuals who represented six school divisions from four of the eight state designated regions. Selection was based on the following criteria. ESL supervisors would be chosen from: (a) several regions throughout the state, (b) school divisions that represented a range of new ESL programs and established ESL programs, (c) school divisions within the authors’ university region and school divisions outside the university region; the university is The College of William and Mary, a small liberal arts public university located in the eastern region of Virginia, (d) school divisions in which the authors had developed professional relationships and divisions that were geographically remote from the authors or with whom the authors did not have established working relationships, and (e) divisions that represented urban, suburban, and rural areas. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this study, urban refers to cities with a central business district and a population over 200,000; suburban refers to divisions adjacent to urban areas as well as rural areas with populations ranging from approximately 80,000 to 180,000; rural refers to school divisions in the far western region of the state of Virginia, remote from urban areas and with a population under 80,000.

The ESL supervisors were selected from six divisions that have the following characteristics: Division A, Region 1, urban, authors had lived in and/or worked in the division; Division B and Division C, Region 2, suburban, authors had lived in and/or worked in the divisions; Divisions D and E, Region 4, suburban and urban, authors had no work or living experiences within the divisions; Division F, Region 5, rural, authors had no work or living experiences within the divisions. See Table 1 for regional characteristics and relationship between authors and divisions.

Table 1

*Division Characteristics and Relation to Authors*

Division	VDOE*	Context	Population	ESL Program	Author(s)	
	Region				Worked In	Lived In
A	1	Urban	306,935	Established	A2**	A1
B	2	Suburban	180,719	Established		A2
C	2	Suburban	81,077	New	A1, A2	
D	4	Suburban	139,966	Established		
E	4	Urban	207,627	Established		
F	5	Rural	76,314	New		

\* Virginia Department of Education

\*\*A1= McEachron; A2=Martin

**Collection of Data**

For the three ESL Supervisors who were known to the authors and working in the surrounding areas, interviews were conducted over several meetings since the participants and the interviewers lived or worked in close proximity.<sup>2</sup> Information about ESL program development and numbers of ESL students were provided each year to McEachron in preparation for her orientations to the university students who were placed in the schools for field experiences. Thus, when completing the interview schedule (Appendix A), some of the answers to the questions were already known to the interviewers based on ongoing working relationships; therefore the questions were completed in several settings rather than in a formal interview. For the three ESL Supervisors who were not known to the authors, more formal interviews, lasting approximately one to two hours were scheduled and tape-recorded. The interviews took place at the locations where VESA held annual meetings. To supplement the interviews, materials recommended by the participants and materials available through the school divisions' websites were reviewed. The recommended materials reviewed for this study were the Report Cards on the VDOE website and the university and/or community partnerships identified on the divisions' websites. The period of time for data collection spanned 2005-2010. The reason for the extended time period was to examine trends throughout the region with the intent of developing an ESL dual endorsement licensure program at The College of William and Mary. On the one hand, the involvement of the authors in the districts selected for study introduces bias. On the other hand, the selection was deliberate in order to assess future program needs. If Division A, B, and C

<sup>2</sup> For example, during a five-year period before the study began, McEachron required her university students to observe ELL students in classroom settings. Placements were arranged so that the university students who were in a teacher preparation program in Division C could observe ELL students in Division A. Also during this period, Martin worked in Division A (where McEachron lived), then moved to Division B after which she took a position in Division C where McEachron worked.



had been replaced with three other divisions, there would have been greater controls for bias, but the authors would not be able to provide the necessary needs assessment data that university administrators rely on for program development. For these reasons, the authors chose positioning theory to undergird the research methodology. As previously mentioned, positioning theory provides “a resource through which speakers and hearers can negotiate new positions” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 62) and bring about transformation.

### **Instruments**

The interview protocol, shown in Appendix A, was designed by the authors with feedback from Dr. Colin Baker, a renowned expert on multilingualism (Baker, 2011).<sup>3</sup> The final protocol included questions about the following information: background information about the participants, school division demographics, with a focus on ESL students; division policy or philosophy toward language learning for ESL students; community and university partnerships for language support; trends in the instructional policies for ESL students; impact of federal, state and local initiatives on language instruction for ESL students; performance data; attitudes of teachers and administrators toward ESL students; and overall effectiveness of the division with regard to ESL instruction. For the purpose of this article, the authors focus on university partnerships in relation to language support programs. In the Interview Protocol provided in Appendix A this focus appears in question 9.

### **Analysis of Data**

Participants’ comments were reviewed and analyzed by the authors from transcripts prepared by a graduate student and from conversations over the five-year period for which there were no tape-recordings. The authors categorized instructional programs for language support based on a list of categories provided to participants from which they could choose those that best fit their programs or add others. The list, derived from VESA, included: transitional bilingual; maintenance or developmental bilingual education (DBE); immersion; enrichment immersion; special alternative instructional programs (SAIPs); structured immersion; alternate immersion (also sheltered English or sheltered subject matter instruction); preview-review method; concurrent translation; ESL, grammar-based, audio-lingual method; grammar-translation approach; communication-based ESL.

Insight for the first research question, which investigated school-university collaboration, was obtained primarily through the discussions of programs and partnerships, informed by student performance. Insight for the second research question, regarding what ESL supervisors perceive as ways in which current partnerships could be improved and expanded, came from responses that reflected what ESL supervisors perceived as important programmatic needs and future goals.

### **Findings**

The findings described below are organized according to the two research questions. The first question is: According to ESL supervisors, how do PK-12 public school divisions and institutions of higher education collaborate on behalf of students whose first language

<sup>3</sup> McEachron took a sabbatical in Wales to study multilingual education under the tutelage of Dr. Baker. Baker’s textbook *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (2011) has sold over 80,000 copies and has been translated into Mandarin, Korean, Japanese, Spanish, Latvian, Georgian, Greek, and Vietnamese. Martin is a licensed ESL teacher and has taught ESL in Virginia and English as a foreign language in China.

is not English? The second question is: What do ESL supervisors perceive as ways in which current partnerships could be improved and expanded?

### **Partnerships on Behalf of Students Whose First Language is not English**

School-university partnerships influenced ESL program development based on coursework, conferences presentations and more formal partnership arrangements between specific universities and specific school divisions. Participants described a range of instructional programs that were implemented in their divisions, indicating that knowledge of these programs had come from coursework at colleges and universities and/or professional presentations by faculty members at conferences. Division A offered Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). Division B offered bilingual education and language acquisition support based on World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) levels. Divisions C and F offered sheltered English for newly arrived, non-English speaking students. Division D offered dual language (formerly called Spanish immersion), content-based instruction in Science, Social Studies, Language Arts and Math, and intensive instruction for lower level groups. Division E offered English to Students of Other Languages (ESOL) and High Intensity Language Training (HILT) and HILT Extension. Crediting George Mason University with support for program development, the ESL supervisor from Division E stated:

We have a partnership with George Mason so that teachers can take courses in ESL methodologies. We publish a lot of one to two page monographs that give strategies for ESL and there are a lot of workshops that our department conducts. I think that in those ways you build a lot of understanding.

The seamless way in which the ESL supervisor from Division E describes the integrated school-university approaches reinforces how “collaboration between university faculty and teachers can foster shared knowledge, professional growth, and progressive methods of instruction” (Allsopp, DeMarie, Alvarez-McHatton, & Doone, 2006, p. 20). Positioning theory underscores the dynamic character of intergroup relations, and as indicated by this illustration, places the focus on “intergroup relations as process rather than product” (Tan & Moghaddam, 1999, p. 186).

ESL supervisors described the manner in which more formal school-university partnerships enhanced language programs. Divisions D and E were located in close proximity to George Mason University (GMU) where teachers could obtain ESL licensure. In addition, Division D and E had an ongoing relationship with faculty members, some of whom published empirical research on language acquisition. Division D received a Title VII federal grant as early as 1986 which provided resources for language support through collaboration with faculty at GMU. Division E, which also collaborated with faculty from GMU, began providing language support in the mid-1970s and over time provided differentiated instruction for ESL students who had special needs and/or had gifted characteristics.

Division C, the newest program, partnered with community organizations and tertiary education through the College of William and Mary. One community organization, Literacy for Life, is housed at William and Mary and provides community support to adults who need language and literacy support. Many of the adults who are recent immigrants have children attending school in Division C. In 2011, Literacy for Life, William and Mary, and Division C developed partnerships to share resources with the common goal of advancing

literacy for the adults and students in the local community. Shared resources include print materials, office space, volunteers and volunteer referrals, and ESL service experiences for William and Mary students as a component for completing course requirements. In addition, Division C and all other Divisions (A, B, D, E, F) received support from William and Mary if they had been identified as a school in school improvement according to No Child Left Behind (2001) guidelines.<sup>4</sup>

### **Ongoing and Future Needs**

The second research question was: What do ESL supervisors perceive as ways in which current partnerships could be improved and expanded? According to ESL supervisors, school-university partnerships consistently were viewed as enhancing divisional goals in the areas of program evaluation, assessment, and infrastructure.

**Program evaluation and assessment.** For the more established programs, Divisions A, B, D, and E, the challenge of meeting the language needs of the community centered on accessing university expertise in the areas of assessment and differentiated instruction. Participant D's division was fortunate to have been featured in a research study on program evaluation that was published. She valued her division's close proximity to researchers at GMU who collaborated with K-12 educators to develop the study.

Meeting the state and national guidelines for performance reporting created a form of double-assessment that required scheduling and resources. The need for university assistance was expressed in relation to the need to create a more streamlined assessment protocol. For example, Participant E lamented that "the impact for our students has been a lot more testing...we test about five to six thousand kids. So we would like there to be a measure that we would be able to use, and not have to double test." This identified need on behalf of ESL students was symptomatic of the VDOE assessment system, more generally throughout the years of this study. More recently, the VDOE announced that future modifications will include the capacity for assessing the value added measures for individual students (L. Sebastian, personal communication, February 21, 2012).

Participants A and E both talked about the long-term goal of being able to disaggregate data for the purpose of determining how various ethnic groups were progressing as well as being able to more carefully diagnose students who had limited English proficiency and who would benefit from special education and/or gifted services. Participant B had designed a special individualized education program form for LEP students who might be twice-exceptional (Crim, Hawkins, Ruban, & Johnson, 2008) or who might have multiple exceptionalities (Gardner, 1993), modeled after the mandated special education Individualized Education Program (IEP).

**Building social awareness, cohesion, and infrastructure.** For the newer and smaller divisions, the community goals can be characterized as: the need to raise awareness about the pressing demands for language support, the need to create an institutionalized infrastructure to meet language needs, and the hope that such an infrastructure will positively contribute to community integration or enhance social justice. Fostering school-university

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<sup>4</sup> A school is identified for a school improvement plan if it fails to make progress in any category specified by No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 for more than two years. The Office of School Improvement in the Virginia Department of Education partnered with William and Mary to provide support to school divisions that had been identified for school improvement. The partnerships for this purpose were created after the participants had been identified for the current study and this study had no bearing on their selection.

partnerships provided avenues of support. Participant F illustrated resourcefulness by seeking advice about school-university partnerships from a neighboring division since her community did not include a tertiary level institution. Participant F perceived language programs as a means to build cohesion among students, many of whom were recent immigrants. When asked to describe the interaction among the various ethnic and language groups, Participant F described observed dynamics and the potential for change and transformation:

The Russian group and the Hispanic group are closed [to each other]. ... my goal is for the Russian group and the Spanish group not to be entities unto themselves... if that's their choice, then that's fine too, but I want them to be part of the total community...in the PTA, in the Booster Club...

Participant F's sensitivities toward the importance of language as a means to maintain existing bonds and create new friendships are supported by positioning theory. According to Carbaugh (1999, p. 160), "through primarily linguistic interaction, participants publicly constitute social standings...and that these discursive constructions are historically grounded, culturally distinct, socially negotiated and individually applied." Participant F illustrated resourcefulness by reaching out to existing sources of community support while expressing the desire to forge new relationships with institutions of higher learning.

In addition, supervisors in the newer programs, such as Participant F, described VESA as a source of support from local and state agencies in addition to its role in providing access to researchers from tertiary education. Another finding that illuminates the importance of linguistic interaction based on close proximity was the notion that universities are influenced by their surrounding communities and vice versa. In areas where demographics and geography indicated high numbers of families in which English is not the first spoken language and the presence of a college or university, there was a greater likelihood that the universities would include multilingual programs for teachers.

**New university ESL program.** For participants A, B and C, the school-university partnerships were perceived as a source of opportunity for assisting their divisions with an increasing ESL student population. The expectation of a dual endorsement program<sup>5</sup> that might lead to a stand-alone<sup>6</sup> program at William and Mary was perceived as an opportunity for further collaboration as well as a way to identify and recruit licensed ESL teachers. The authors and Participants A, B and C collaborated by offering William and Mary students, who were seeking an ESL dual endorsement, the opportunity to participate in and assist classroom teachers in an ESL Summer Institute for K-12 students. The authors also collaborated with each other and Participant C by making it possible for William and Mary students to work with ESL students as a means to complete course assignments and offer support to classroom teachers.

To summarize, all participants valued the far reach of school-university partnerships, including interaction with college and university professors, as well as the students enrolled in the teacher education programs in tertiary education. University assistance with writing proposals for federal grants and school improvement professional development

<sup>5</sup> The dual-endorsement program is a program that can be pursued by undergraduate and graduate students who are already enrolled in an initial teacher licensure program at William and Mary.

<sup>6</sup> A stand-alone program in ESL is a program for which students can seek licensure for ESL only, without having to be enrolled in another program.

was also mentioned. The articulated goals for language support were academic success as well as the opportunity to build cohesion and social interaction among members of the community.

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

With regard to the first research question, Divisions A, B, C, D, and E described explicit reciprocal school-university partnerships in the areas of action research, field experiences for pre-service students to work with ESL students, and immersion experiences for pre-service students to work with ESL students and their families. Factors that contributed to ongoing partnerships were the proximity of the school divisions to institutions of higher education or researchers who lived and/or worked in the divisions. The fact that Division F drew upon local community sources and reached out to neighboring divisions where school-university partnerships existed has important implications. Universities can be more inclusive by reaching out to school divisions in rural communities.

With regard to the second question, ongoing support for divisions who were faced with the pressure of meeting annual yearly progress (AYP) in relation to No Child Left Behind (2001) legislation was one way in which school-university partnerships could be improved and expanded. This could take the form of assistance with assessment protocols and assistance with school improvement plans. In addition, the opportunity to work with more William and Mary students who were seeking ESL endorsements was perceived as a means for having a direct impact on student learning. The proposition for William and Mary to create a stand-alone program was an expansion that was perceived as contributing positively to school districts because such a program appealed to classroom teachers who already had initial licensure and would like to learn more about how to differentiate instruction for ESL students.

The ESL supervisors provided a variety of insights relevant to school-university partnerships. As participants who had long-standing relationships with faculty members via the ESL stand-alone program at George Mason University, D and E contributed positively to a vision of what might evolve at William and Mary. Assistance with assessment design, professional development, and community leadership to enhance cultural cohesion were crucial potential areas for school-university partnerships. Such conversations reinforced principles of positioning theory whereby discursive practices provide “a resource through which speakers and hearers can negotiate new positions” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 62).

Our findings are consistent with the review of literature which characterized effective school-university partnerships as longitudinal in nature, jointly supported, well-organized, and having mutually shared goals. In addition, the current study highlights the need for colleges and universities to reach out to school divisions that may not be in close proximity, especially school divisions in rural areas. The important leadership role played by professional organizations such as the Virginia ESL Supervisors Association was also noteworthy in that the association’s focus is on language support for ESL supervisors, teachers, students and their families. If other states wanted to promote school-university partnerships for language support, taking a leadership role in establishing a professional organization such as VESA would be an important step. VESA provided an avenue whereby ESL supervisors in communities where there are no universities would have access to university faculty, thus forging a professional partnership, albeit without formal contractual agreements.

From all six ESL supervisors, it became evident that the need for language support in

urban, suburban and rural communities was expanding and that until recently there was a perceived leadership void in the region where William and Mary was located. A more positive way of stating this insight is that the information obtained from ESL supervisors provided a research-based rationale for developing ESL dual-endorsement and stand-alone programs at William and Mary. Positioning theory supports the recalibration of school-university goals based on dynamic interaction and changing partnerships over time.

In addition to gaining a research-based rationale for being transformative at the university level, McEachron, who taught at William and Mary gained pertinent insights about how practitioners use theories as guiding principles for their work. Divisions vary greatly with regard to the application of these theories, and an academician may be expecting more hard-and-fast rules with regard to which theory is being applied and how it has been evaluated. The ESL supervisors, on the other hand, allow greater freedom for their teachers to utilize a variety of best practices based on their teaching experiences, the theorists they have studied, and the research base familiar to ESL supervisors. For example, one ESL supervisor indicated that the teachers utilize approaches based on the coursework they have taken at the university level, while another supervisor cited implemented models based on the empirical research by Collier and Thomas (2004). In addition, while smaller programs seemed to be at a disadvantage because the administrators assumed a variety of roles, in addition to leading ESL programs, the authors became enlightened that VESA provided leadership and a forum for shared resources and guidance for newer programs from the more established programs.

For Martin who worked in the school division, one of the more salient insights gained was the process by which colleges and universities developed programmatic changes to respond to contemporary needs. Having taught and worked in two divisions where the need for language support was a reality and was being responded to by superintendents and principals, she found it informative to observe the process whereby William and Mary pondered how to be responsive to this change in a way that was not spurious. It became apparent that while the schools had immediate needs, the William and Mary needed to survey the situation to document that the trend was not a passing trend and that the need for licensed ESL teachers was significant and ongoing.

One of the limitations of the current study is that the individuals interviewed were ESL supervisors who were lead advocates for language support. They would be the point-of-contact for whom resources for language support would be provided. Because of their role they would be in contact with individuals who would be supportive of language programs. It would be useful to know how the allocation of resources for language support varies in relation to other school programs. That is, a budget analysis of the relative support for language in a divisional context is needed. Another limitation of the current study is that the findings are limited to a sample of six ESL supervisors in Virginia. A national survey would provide a more comprehensive sample from which to make generalizations about ESL supervisors' perceptions of language support throughout the United States. And, as previously mentioned, because the authors have lived and worked in three of the identified divisions, bias is a confounding factor.

### **Conclusion**

School-university partnerships are a unique source for language support and social transformation. The compatible infrastructures of schools and universities provide grant

writing and action research expertise, assessment procedures, field experiences for pre-service students to learn from experienced teachers, and a means for disseminating the results of ineffective strategies as well as best practices. They are often respected institutions that community organizations choose to support. Further research that conducts interviews with ESL supervisors from other divisions will provide a more comprehensive view of school-university partnerships on behalf of language support in Virginia and other states. Additional research on the views of ESL students and their parents or guardians would also provide a more complete picture of the language needs and perceived levels of support.<sup>7</sup>

Lady Nancy Astor, the first female member of the British Parliament, born in Virginia, stated: *Real education should educate us out of self into something far finer: into a selflessness which links us with all humanity* (Lewis, 2012). In addition to the specified ways in which school-university partnerships illustrated shared goals and actions on behalf of language minority students, there are intangible benefits of the research that resonate with this quote. The authors can say with certainty that the individuals who supported language programs for ESL students in each of the six counties were passionate and committed to making a difference so that students would not become marginalized based on the fact that English was not their first language. These principles of social justice were factors that instilled a unifying sense of purpose among members of the school-university partnerships.

In the partnership literature, it is this synergy that is valued by those who participate in school-university partnerships. Walkington (2007) describes a shift in the culture of professional learning for both schools and universities: Approaches and processes may change, but how people communicate, the skills they honor, and the communities they form, become a foundation on which to build transformative goals.

Increased contact and sharing of educational issues between university and school personnel encourages the use of authentic contexts for joint projects and action research, producing meaningful outcomes for school-based ‘problems’ and the contribution to wider educational knowledge. Research collaboration assists school personnel to better understand the nature of academics’ work and the worth of their teaching and research skills. Working together assists in reducing the misconceptions and miscommunication that often occur as a result of keeping the worlds of schools and universities apart (p. 289).

Leinhardt, Young, and Merriman (1995, p. 403) describe the reciprocal benefits of such partnerships: “...true integration involves examination of the knowledge associated with one location while using the ways of thinking associated with the other location by asking learners to particularize abstract theories and to abstract principles from particulars.”

The authors experienced many of the principles described above over the course of the past five years. The research was grounded in positioning theory which reinforces the dynamic character of intergroup relations and the reciprocal nature of transformation. In the end, the school-university and community partnerships that were described in this study became part of the justification for creating a dual endorsement program at William and Mary, thus attesting to the importance of innovation and collaboration when resources are not immediately forthcoming. As the final research report for this article comes to fruition

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<sup>7</sup> For example, W&M was informed by a Division C that parents of the ESL students wanted to enroll in free ESL classes offered by the division but they couldn’t afford childcare so that they were free to attend. W&M and the division arranged for W&M students to serve as volunteer childcare providers while the adults received instruction.

William and Mary is taking steps to build a stand-alone ESL program, since the ESL Dual Endorsement Program enrollment more than doubled from 2011 to 2012. We are grateful to the members of the school-university partnerships who have provided the perseverance and passion to make this possible on behalf of ESL students throughout the eastern region of Virginia and places beyond.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

*Language Support through the Eyes of ESL Supervisors*

1. Name:
2. School District:
3. Number of Students in District:
4. Educational Background
  - a. Level of Education:
    - a. B.A. \_\_\_ M.A. \_\_\_ Ph.D. \_\_\_
5. Number of Years Teaching Experience in Virginia \_\_\_
6. Number of Years Teaching Experience elsewhere \_\_\_ Location(s) \_\_\_\_\_
7. From the research I have done on \_\_\_\_\_ County [Division], it is described as... (select adjectives that apply: urban, rural, with a variety of jobs in agriculture, industry, technology, education, tourism, government, etc). Does this research fit the current situation? How would you describe the types of jobs available or the aspects of lifestyle that might draw people to the county; what is the particular attraction for recent immigrants?
8. Number of students in your county receiving LEP services: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Tell me about your role as an ESL supervisor in the County [Division] of ..... (e.g., number of ESL teachers, their qualifications, how many schools they serve, allocation of resources, sources of funding, how you organize your work with the teachers—roles/expectations, assessment (high stakes testing after NCLB), collaboration with regular classroom teachers, university partnerships, communication with parents, etc.)
10. What are the nations of origin of the LEP students and what are the languages they speak?
11. Can you provide the approximate percentages of each?
12. How would you characterize the policy of your school district with regard to language learning for LEP students?
13. Have there been any significant changes in the way LEP students have been educated in the past five to ten years? If so, how? What have been the influences of federal (NCLB), state, and local initiatives?
14. Is the characterization of the district's policy consistent with your personal positions(s) regarding how to teach English to students whose first language is something else?
15. What impact has No Child Left Behind (NCLB) had on your role as an ESL supervisor?
16. Tell me about the students and their families? Language use, immigration, culture, patterns of adjustment/acceptance in the community.
17. Have you recognized any patterns of performance based on the students' first language, country of origin, or parents' educational and income levels?
18. Tell me about a specific student and his/her family that would represent a success story.
19. Tell me about a specific student and his/her family that would represent a disappointing experience.
20. Elaborate on the families of the children/students-do you know what brings them to Virginia?
21. How would you describe the attitudes of teachers and administrators in your district toward students whose first language is not English?
22. How would you describe the attitudes of community members toward the LEP students and their families? Do you have a sense of their general beliefs about language learning,

appreciation of diverse cultures, multilingual populations, etc.

23. Can you discern levels of integration of the various ethnic groups? That is, do members of the same ethnic group/language tend to socialize together, or is there a certain degree of mixing in social occasions such as cultural events, community activities, places of worship, etc.

24. Is there a specific model or combination of models that best represents how your district prepares LEP students to speak English?

25. How would you describe the influence of the various models listed on this sheet (show separate sheet with the following names): transitional bilingual; maintenance or developmental bilingual education (BDE); immersion; enrichment immersion; special alternative instructional programs (SAIPs); structured immersion; alternate immersion (also sheltered English or sheltered subject matter instruction); preview-revision method; concurrent translation; ESL, grammar-based, audio-lingual method; grammar-translation approach; communication based ESL.

26. If you have had the experience of observing the debates about bilingual education in the United States, particularly with California's Proposition 227, the changing of the Office of Bilingual Education to the Office of English Language Acquisition, and the implementation of the No Child Left Behind legislation, how would you describe your assessment of how Virginia is doing in preparing LEP students? Say, on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being excellent and 1 being inadequate. 1, inadequate; 2, fair; 3, acceptable; 4, good; 5, excellent. Show Likert scale and ask to check.

27. How would you describe how your district is doing in preparing LEP students of a scale of 1-5? Show scale and ask to check.

28. Do you have other important ideas you would like to address that I have not asked about?

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