



AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Jennifer Newby for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education presented on June 6, 2013.

Title: A Comparative Analysis of Two English Literacy and Civics Programs in Oregon.

Abstract approved:

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Larry D. Roper

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives of education professionals who manage, coordinate, and instruct in the English Literacy and Civics Education Grant (EL/Civics) Programs in Oregon community colleges. The study compared the EL/Civics Grant Program to the conventional English as Second Language (ESL) programs offered at two community colleges. The impetus for this study was the desire to better understand, from the perspective of adult literacy practitioners, how and why students in the EL/Civics Grant classes continue to demonstrate higher skill level completion rates than their counterparts in conventional English as a Second Language classes. The study was guided by the following question: Why do the Oregon EL/Civics programs demonstrate higher student skill level completion rates than do the Oregon ESL programs?

A comparative, descriptive case study was conducted to explore the answers to this question. Data collected from each college were analyzed to create five overall themes that represent the perspectives of the study participants: (1) EL/Civics is integrated into the general ESL program providing seamless movement between class levels within the ESL program; (2) EL/Civics classes are contextualized, use authentic materials and contexts, and connect the classroom with the community; therefore resulting in better instructional outcomes achieved; (3) consistent engagement in professional development positively impacts instruction; (4) same assessment were used and practitioners were knowledgeable about placement and progress ; and (5) the majority of students in the EL/Civics classes share the same native language and home country. The study provides insight into the professional wisdom of educators as it relates to program design, intructional delivery methods, learning outcomes, and professional development within a contained literacy program.

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A Comparative Analysis of Two English Literacy and Civics Education Programs in  
Oregon

by  
Jennifer Newby

A DISSERTATION

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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Jennifer Newby, Author

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## A Comparative Analysis of Two EL/Civics Programs in Oregon Section 1: Focus and Significance

*Every citizen should understand the basic principles that underlie the threats to our environment, the trends in our global economy, and the possible effects of changes in tax, welfare, education, and other social policies. As our communities become a part of an interdependent world, we need every citizen prepared to participate in local, political, and civic arenas and to help maintain and improve the quality of life in our country. (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy [NCSALL], 2002, p.1)*

Since 2000, the United States (U.S.) has been experiencing a significant wave of immigration (Federation for American Immigration Reform, 2006). With this surge of immigration has come an increase in the number of individuals who speak a language other than English. According to the 2010 U.S. Census data, approximately 58 million U.S. residents out of 283 million residents age five and older speak a language other than English in the home (20 percent). Of those 58 million residents, 41 percent have little to no English proficiency, making simple everyday activities that native English speakers take for granted a difficult and overbearing experience (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The culture with which these immigrants are confronted in the U.S. is very different from that of their homelands; and they must learn to navigate very complex systems with little to no English language skills.

The percentage of non-native English speakers in this country is increasing at a rapid rate and according to population predictions will continue to increase at its current rate for the next decade. A glance at the states that experience high levels of immigration shows a more striking picture. In the state of California, 43 percent of the state population speaks a language other than English in the home; in New Mexico, 36 percent; in Texas, 34 percent; and in New York, 30 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). If considering the

percentages above in conjunction with demographic data from the U.S. Census Population Predication charts and the influx of immigrants to the states surrounding them, the percentage of the U.S. population that speaks a language other than English in the home should continue to increase.

Although English as a Second Language (ESL) programs have existed for many years, there is a new challenge for organizations that offer ESL classes. ESL classrooms are no longer places where students acquire only English literacy, but also places where they learn about the complex nature of American society. This challenge is due to the changing needs of the adult English language learner as a result of the extent to which the immigrant population has changed. “Composed largely of Hispanics and Asians, the immigrant population today sharply contrasts with the European dominated immigration population from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (Tolbert, 2001, p. 5). Tolbert (2001) also states that “the immigrant population today is different than in years past not just in terms of size and origin, but also economic status (reduced economic status)” (p. 6). The new challenge facing ESL programs is that of how to combine English Language instruction with civic education so that the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations are able to better engage in the communities in which they live and work.

In response to this challenge, the U.S. Department of Education funded a two-year English Literacy and Civics Education (EL/Civics), \$7 million, demonstration project in 2000. The purpose of this two-year project was to provide and make more accessible English literacy instruction and civics education to English Language Learners (Tolbert, 2001). The U.S. Department of Education funded twelve pilot projects in the

following ten states: California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Texas (Tolbert, 2001). Each of the twelve projects received funding between \$300,000 and \$700,000. At the same time that the U.S. Department of Education was using National Leadership funds to award demonstration projects, Congress authorized the EL/Civics formula grant to all 50 states under Title II of Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) of the amended Workforce Investment Act (Tolbert, 2001). In 2000, the first year of the grant, \$25.5 million in formula grant funds were awarded to 31 of the 50 states and to the District of Columbia. Of that \$25.5 million, Oregon received \$226,975.

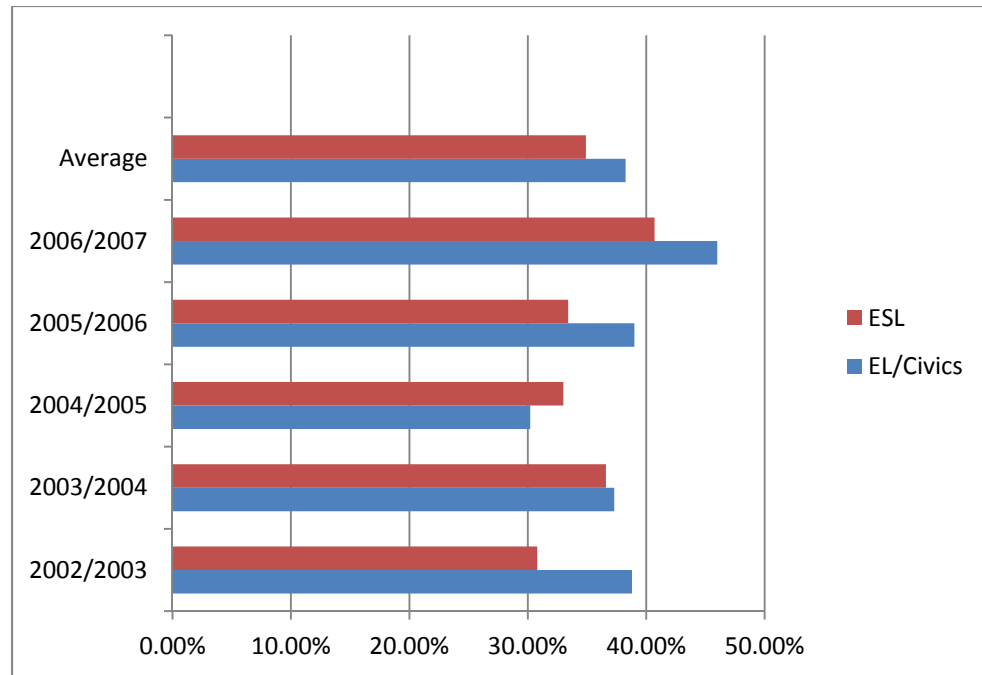
In 2001, the federal government increased the EL/Civics budget allocation to \$70 million. These funds were dispersed to the 50 states and the District of Columbia as additional funds within the Adult Education State Grants that each state already received to administer Adult Education programs such as Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Education Development (GED) Preparation, and English as a Second Language (ESL). In 2001, of the \$70 million, Oregon received \$616,375. Since 2001, on average, Oregon receives approximately \$550,000 in EL/Civics funding each year.

Of the EL/Civics funds received by Oregon each year, 82.5 percent are dispersed to the 12 community colleges eligible to receive EL/Civics dollars and the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) retains the remaining 12.5 percent for administrative costs. The funding is dispersed on the basis of a three year rolling average of enrollment. In Oregon, the 12 community colleges that receive federal funding have the flexibility to increase the number of ESL students served

using the grant funds and the required minimum 25 percent in-kind/match funds that each organization must provide.

States and local programs alike were pleased to receive additional funds to serve Limited English Proficient students considering the fact that in most states, the number of students enrolled in ESL programs comprise over 47 percent of the students served by Adult Education programs nationwide (Tolbert, 2001). EL/Civics programs have been providing instruction in English literacy and civics education in the U.S. for the past 12 years. After 12 years, significant amounts of data have been collected about the participants in the EL/Civics programs in all states. Using the required National Reporting System to report annual student data to both the state and federal government, there now exist sufficient data to view trends and patterns within and across programs. A consistent pattern has been noticed from the quantitative data collected on the EL/Civics programs in Oregon.

Although the EL/Civics grant has been in effect since 2000, this study focused on a five year period data set starting with the first year (2002) that data were accurately collected from the 12 programs in Oregon through the year prior to the study being conducted. Collectively and individually, the EL/Civics programs in Oregon demonstrate higher student skill level completion rates as measured by federal and state approved standardized assessment tools than regular ESL programs in Oregon (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1. Comparison of Oregon Statewide Completion Rates 2002-2007*

This particular data pattern raises the following three questions: (a) Why do the Oregon EL/Civics programs demonstrate higher student skill level completion rates than do the Oregon ESL programs? (b) If Oregon is experiencing this phenomenon, are other states as well? and (c) If the phenomenon in Oregon is reflected nationally, what are the implications?

Research suggests that adult educators need a framework in order to make decisions, direct practice and policy, and achieve program objectives (Boone, Jones, & Saffit, 2002; Caffarella, 2002; Sork, 2000). When implementation of the EL/Civics grant first began 12 years ago, no type of focused framework existed to guide the local programs in achieving the outcomes of the grant. However, in 2005, a small group of

adult education practitioners developed a more structured guide to help instructors intentionally integrate civic content with English language instruction.

Interestingly, the data over the life of the EL/Civics grant program in Oregon illustrated continued and consistent increased skill gain, which translates to skill level completion by students. It is not only minor skill level completion, but demonstrated higher skill level completion gains by students in the EL/Civics program compared to students in the regular ESL programs in Oregon. This phenomenon could be of interest to ESL practitioners, adult education administrators, state and federal policy makers, and the local community.

As federal accountability measures continue to increase, states will be in a better position to justify federally distributed monies if they can demonstrate strategic program planning based on research data linking various factors to increased student skill gain. Not only does increased skill gain have the potential for increased funding, it has the potential to directly impact the speed with which students are progressing through ESL programs and transitioning into other programs in the college and ultimately more rapidly transitioning into the workforce. Conducting research to explore why EL/Civics students are demonstrating higher skill gain in comparison to regular ESL students may provide critical information that potentially justifies increased funding, strategic program planning, and curriculum development for both the EL/Civics and ESL programs and improved transition into other community college programs, 4-year universities, and living wage occupations.

### *Research Purpose and Questions*

As demonstrated by the three questions stated in the previous section, it is clear that research on this topic could identify important information about how to increase skills of the non-native English speakers who are served by the Adult Basic Skills (ABS) Programs in Oregon. Adult Basic Skills programs are comprehensive adult education programs that provide instruction and support for ABE, GED, and ESL. The findings of this research could have implications at the state and national level as related to strategic program planning, design, curriculum, and funding.

The purpose of this research is to understand, from the perspective of adult literacy practitioners, why Oregon EL/Civics programs are demonstrating higher levels of student skill gain as compared to other Oregon ESL programs. For the purpose of this study, skill level completion is determined by the measures of literacy gain on the federally approved standardized assessment tools necessary to complete one or more Federal Educational Functioning Levels as set by the National Reporting System [NRS].

The NRS measures skill gain through approved standardized assessments such as Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) and Basic English Skills Test Plus (BEST Plus). The skill gain increments on the assessments are organized into Educational Functioning Levels for both Adult Basic Education/Adult Secondary and for English as a Second Language programs. For English as a Second Language Programs, the NRS developed five Educational Functioning Levels with corresponding scale score ranges for the standardized test series approved by the U.S. Department of Education for use by ABS programs. The five NRS Educational Functioning Levels are: Beginning



ESL Literacy, Low Beginning ESL, High Beginning ESL, Low Intermediate ESL, and High Intermediate ESL (see Appendix A for a full description of the NRS Educational Functioning Levels for ESL).

The federally-approved standardized assessment tools used in Oregon to track skill gain of adult ESL students are (a) BEST Plus and (b) CASAS. Both EL/Civics and ESL programs throughout the state of Oregon use these assessment tools. Since these are two approved assessment tools, they have both been calibrated to the National Reporting System English Literacy levels determined by the U.S. Department of Education.

This study is a comparative case study of two EL/Civics programs in Oregon. Currently, 12 community colleges in Oregon receive federal funding to administer EL/Civics programming. The data collected from the 12 EL/Civics programs in Oregon (see Figure 1, page 5) indicate both singularly (at each site) and cumulatively (across the state) that student skill gain as demonstrated through skill level completion in EL/Civics programs is higher than in the ESL programs. In order to understand how the EL/Civics programs in Oregon are demonstrating higher student skill gain in comparison to the ESL programs, data were collected from the two colleges that demonstrated the highest student skill level completion percentages in EL/Civics as compared to ESL at those sites.

The data collected for this study relates to the following categories: (a) student demographic information (i.e., intake and exit skill levels, education level from home country, native language, literacy in home language, employment, etc.); (b) program design; (c) curriculum development; (d) instructional strategies; and (e) instructor

professional development. Data were collected from Adult Basic Skills State Directors, State EL/Civics Program Coordinators, EL/Civics Instructors, ESL Instructors, classroom observations, and various curriculum artifacts such as lesson plans, course and program learning outcomes, and materials used in the classrooms.

With this focus in mind, the overarching research question this study investigated was “From the perspective of adult literacy practitioners, why do EL/Civics programs in Oregon demonstrate higher student skill level completion rates than their counterpart ESL programs?” Imbedded in that question is the question: What factors might influence increased student skill gain and level completion in the EL/Civics programs in Oregon as compared to ESL programs? Since this study explored the perspectives of education professionals, a theme analysis of data was conducted from the two sites. From the data collected themes emerged that could aid practitioners (administrators and instructors) in Oregon in conducting strategic program planning for both the EL/Civics and ESL Programs.

From the review of literature on ESL student skill gain it was found that there are particular factors that may contribute to increased skill gain: (a) particular student demographics, (b) programming, (c) curriculum and/or instructional strategies, and (d) professional development. Therefore, additional research questions were developed based on past research on ESL programs. Each of the questions is focused on a particular category that captures the entire picture of EL/Civics programs in Oregon at both a local and state level. The secondary research questions are:

- Could student demographic factors have a relationship to increased skill gain and level completion rates?
- Could certain aspects of programming relate to increased student skill gain and level completion rates?
- Could curriculum and/or instructional strategies influence student skill gain and level completion?
- Could instructor professional development have a relationship to student skill gain and level completion rates?

In summary, the purpose of this study was to understand, from the perspective of EL/Civics practitioners, why the EL/Civics programs in Oregon consistently outperform (demonstrate higher student skill level completion rates) than the ESL programs. In an attempt to achieve this understanding, it was important to collect detailed qualitative data from study participants about what they believed contributed to this particular phenomenon as well as support those data with quantitative data collected about students in both programs. The findings of this study will be beneficial to any ESL practitioner searching for examples of programs that regularly achieve increased student skill gain. The findings from this study could help inform practice, policy, and programming as it relates to instruction for non-native English speakers in the state of Oregon and other states.

#### *Significance of Study*

The significance of this study is based on the following reasons: (a) the shifting demographics in the United States; (b) the consistent skill gain increases by students in

the EL/Civics programs in Oregon; (c) the future impact of performance-based funding in Oregon as it relates to student skill gain; and (d) the fact that, to date, no formal research has been conducted on EL/Civics grant programs.

*Demographics in the United States Are Shifting*

When considering the shifting demographics of the United States, it is critical to examine the percentage of persons whose first language is not English and to ponder the impact of non-native English speakers on the educational system of the country.

Additionally, it is critical to examine the data on the foreign-born individuals in the United States. Foreign-born refers to anyone who is not a U.S. Citizen at birth and includes naturalized U.S. citizens, immigrants, temporary migrants, refugees, and illegal immigrants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 20 percent of the U.S. population speaks a language other than English in the home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In California, 43 percent of the population speaks a language other than English in the home. In New Mexico, the percentage is 36 percent; in Texas, 34 percent; in New York, 30 percent; and in Oregon, 14 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). If the population predications are accurate, in 45 years the United States may be a country where half of the population does not speak English as a native language. According to the most recent U.S. Census survey, 13 percent of the U.S. population is foreign born. As such, it will be important that policy makers prepare for this shift by developing frameworks that continue to increase access to language acquisition and civic engagement within the educational systems of the United States.

*Student skill level completion rates in EL/Civics programs*

Over the past 12 years, the EL/Civics programs in Oregon have consistently demonstrated better student skill level completion rates than the regular ESL programs in Oregon. This trend merited further investigation because of the possibility of positively influencing non-native English programming in Oregon. This study illuminates five common themes across the two EL/Civics programs investigated that relate to increases in student skill gain and skill level completions. Once shared, the findings could affect how EL/Civics programs are designed and implemented across the state and even in other states similar to Oregon, where Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title II funds are allocated to the community colleges to provide services to ABS populations. Additionally, the findings could influence how ESL programs are designed and implemented both in Oregon and in other states.

Increasing skill gain is a goal of all ESL programs; from the student to the instructor to the administrator. Adult Basic Skills administrators, instructors, and policy makers across the nation want students to progress and demonstrate successful acquisition of what they have learned. They especially want ESL students to gain better English skills so that they can navigate daily tasks in the U.S. with greater ease. They want them to increase their skills so that they can function as better family members, community members, and workers. The faster ESL students can increase their English skills, the easier they will encounter daily tasks that native English speakers take for granted such as going to the doctor; understanding a child's teacher at parent-teacher conferences; and interacting in a more meaningful way with co-workers, bosses, and

peers in the U.S. As such, if the EL/Civics programs in Oregon have consistently demonstrated higher student skill gain and higher skill level completion rates than general ESL programs, then it behooves ABS policymakers and stakeholders such as instructors and administrators to investigate why this phenomenon exists.

*Future impact of performance-based funding*

Between 2000 and 2008, the state-allocated resources received by the 17 community colleges in Oregon to provide Adult Basic Skills Programming, including EL/Civics funding, were based on two factors (a) a base grant to each institution and (b) enrollment reimbursement based on a three year rolling average of a college's federally reportable headcount (MPR Associates, 2006). Federally reportable headcount refers to the number of students enrolled who have both a pre-test and a post-test match within a program year. During those years, colleges receiving funding from the State to provide Adult Basic Skills services only had to focus on one thing: ensuring that any student who is enrolled in the ABS program has a pre-test and a post-test and at least 12 instructional contact hours.

In July 2006, the Oregon Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD), the agency that distributes funding for ABS programs, hired a consulting group to research formula funding options that might suit the Oregon system. The Oregon CCWD decided that starting in fiscal year 2009-10, funding for Adult Basic Skills programs would be based on a formula that is a combination of base funding and performance funding. The portion of funds based on performance will use the following measures taken directly from the National Reporting System for Adult Education: (a)

educational gain, (b) learner entered or retained employment, (c) learner entered post-secondary, and (d) learner received a GED. To receive federal funds for Adult Basic Skills instruction in Oregon, program must meet the measures listed above. The penalty for not meeting a measure results in fewer dollars being distributed to a program.

At the time of this study, the EL/Civics funding continues to be distributed based on a three year average of enrollment. However, if EL/Civics programs in Oregon consistently demonstrate higher levels of student skill gain and level completion and since Oregon has moved to a performance-based funding formula where a core measure is educational gain, then the significance of this study is great. The findings of this study could influence how program administrators implement and distribute funding for both EL/Civics and ESL programs in Oregon.

### *Uncharted Territory*

English as a Second Language has been a field with much research on various aspects of programming, student learning, classroom design, pedagogy, and learning styles. However, to date, no one has conducted any formal research on the EL/Civics programs in the U.S. This study may be the first formal research project focused specifically why the EL/Civics program is uniquely meeting the needs of its students.

The major reason that research has not been conducted on the EL/Civics program is rooted in the data mechanism deployed by the U.S. Department of Education, the fiduciary agent for WIA, Title II funds. Although each state has the capacity to disaggregate the EL/Civics data from the ESL data; at present, the U.S. Department of Education only collects aggregate data on the ESL populations served by each state. This

means that the EL/Civics data reported by each state is subsumed in the ESL data and reported in aggregate form to the U.S. Department of Education. Oregon has been tracking ESL and EL/Civics data separately, and 12 years' worth of compelling data were enough to merit a research project about this topic. The implications could reach farther than just the EL/Civics programs in Oregon. The findings from this research could directly impact how programs that serve non-native English speakers are designed, implemented, and evaluated.

#### *Summary*

Shifting demographics, consistent increased student educational gain, the future impact of performance-based funding, and lack of research on this topic are important factors when considering the overall significance of this study. This study has the potential to resonate at a national level due to a need for research in this area. With the focus of English as a Second Language Programs shifting toward helping non-native English speakers in the U.S. become active and engaged community members, parents, and workers, this study is timely and critical.



## Section 2: Review of Significant Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a lens through which to better understand the need for research on the topic of the English Literacy and Civics Education (EL/Civics) Grant program. The literature review is divided into the following categories which provide a more in-depth rationale for conducting this research: (a) current adult English as a Second Language (ESL) practice in the United States; (b) description, background, rationale, and impetus for the English Literacy and Civics Education funding; (c) instructional strategies in ESL classrooms; (d) effective program planning in Adult Education Programs; (e) native language support and student skill gain; and (f) instructor professional development. The categories above were chosen for the following reasons:

- **Current Adult ESL practice:** In this section, current promising practices in the field of Adult ESL in the United States are discussed. The rationale for this section is that it is important to understand the context of ESL practice in order to better comprehend the impetus for the targeted funding for EL/Civics.
- **Description, background, and rationale for EL/Civics:** In this section readers are provided with the background, rationale, and impetus for EL/Civics Education in the United States. There is an emphasis placed on the national exposure and attention of this grant and an argument in support of the need for policy makers to continue to support funding for this program. A federal definition of English Literacy and Civics Education as well as various state and local definitions are provided. From those definitions, a working definition for the purpose of this

study was developed. Additionally, the current practice of EL/Civics in Oregon, including the components, themes, practices and the audience, are discussed.

- **Instructional strategies in the ESL classroom:** In this section, research that connects curriculum and instructional strategies that have been found to directly impact student skill gain is discussed. The focus here is to connect past and current research with the findings of this study. This research will support and add to what has already been learned about the influence of curriculum and instructional strategies on the skill gain in English of non-native English speakers.
- **Program Design in Adult Education:** In this section, adult education program design is discussed. How programs are designed and implemented may influence student success and progress. A review of adult education program models and theories are explored.
- **Native language support and literacy skill gain:** In this section, the connection between certain student native language support in the classroom and literacy skill gain is explored. Recently, there have been studies that have linked student native language support to increased student skill gain in literacy students. This section also relates to one of the research questions posed in this study about student demographics and skill gain.
- **Instructor Professional Development:** This section relates directly to one of the research questions that was posed about whether or not intentional and habitual instructor professional development as related EL/Civics could influence student

skill gain. Whether or not researchers have discovered a connection between these two factors is explored.

### *Search for Literature*

Although the search for literature on this topic was laborious, it forced the researcher to be creative and explore domains that were not obvious upon first reflection. The literature search began with a review of recent dissertations on community colleges. The search continued to include the following tools to further investigate the topic of English Literacy and Civics Education in educational databases such as Academic Search Premier, ERIC, and others via the EBSCOhost interface, the Oregon State University on-line catalog, the Portland Community College on-line catalog, the Summit Alliance, the Dissertation Abstracts database, and other literary resources. In addition to the listed resources, various national literacy sources were scoured such as National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), National Center for Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL), and the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA). Additionally, the publication sections of the American Association of Community Colleges, The League for Innovation in the Community College, and the American Association of Community College Trustees websites were reviewed for articles and briefs about English language and literacy instruction and civic education.

To search for appropriate literature in the topic area, various combinations of the following keywords were used: ESL, English literacy, English language, civic education, civic engagement, assessment, evaluation, adult learners, community college, two-year colleges, higher education, education, contextualized learning, project-based learning,

and content-based learning, program planning, effective program frameworks, program planning models, program evaluation, content standards, professional development, native language support, and curriculum standards. To keep track of keyword combinations, a list of keywords and the various combinations were used to avoid repetition. As new words were discovered during the literature search process, they were added to the list.

*Current Adult English as a Second Language Practice in the U.S.*

In order to better understand the context of the EL/Civics program, it is important to understand the current state of ESL programming in the United States. For the past 15 years, the field of Adult English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction has been the fastest growing area of adult education in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). This fact remains true today as record numbers of immigrants are seeking English language classes across the United States. Although the topic of immigration has been increasingly political over the past few years, organizations providing services have seen steady increases in the number of non-native English speakers seeking language acquisition services.

More than 2.5 million adults are served in federally-funded adult education programs in the U.S. Of these 2.5 million adults, 1.14 million of these adults are enrolled in ESL classes (U.S. Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2009). In other words, approximately 45 percent of these students are non-native English speakers seeking ESL services. However, these numbers do not fully represent the scope of ESL students needing services (Fitzgerald, 1995; USDOE/OVAE 1995; 2003). Across the United

States, overwhelming numbers of waiting lists demonstrate the need for increased ESL services. Unfortunately, insufficient funding, resources, and classroom space often prohibit Adult Education programs from meeting the demand. As such, the demand for ESL services extremely outweighs the ability to provide adequate services to all who seek them (Chisman et al, 1993).

In addition to such high demands for instructional services, ESL programs nationwide vary in scope and content (CAELA, 2007). In the United States, ESL service providers vary from state to state. Depending on the state, federally-funded ESL classes can be found in social service agencies, community colleges, faith-based and community-based organizations, as well as local businesses. In Oregon, the Adult ESL programs that are funded by federal Title II, Workforce Investment Act dollars are provided in the 17 community colleges. Adult ESL students enroll in classes because they want to pursue the following goals: (a) “improve English language skills; (b) address personal, family, and social needs; (c) meet work demands and pursue better employment; and (d) pursue further education opportunities” (CAELA, 2007). Although the goals of ESL programs are similar and student-focused, there does not appear to be any type of standardization of instruction (Shoemaker, 1996, as cited in Kuo, E.W, 2000). For example, programs may choose to focus on a generic style curriculum that aims to improve students’ abilities in the areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking or to offer ESL classes with specific contexts such as survival English, family literacy, life skills, workplace ESL, and citizenship (Chisman et al, 1997).

Even without standardization, the majority of ESL programs are focused on the functional aspects of language learning or the core language function areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Crandall and Sheppard, 2004). Many ESL programs deliver what can be termed as general ESL where the focus is directed toward providing instruction to improve students' skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The structure of these general ESL programs is aimed at moving students through a progression of courses providing language and literacy instruction. Many programs that provide general ESL instruction do so by creating leveled classes based on language and literacy abilities of students entering the program. The majority of federally-funded ESL programs implement a structure of classes based on the Federal Educational Functioning Levels. Many of these programs infuse life skills into the curriculum as well allowing for the instruction to address the many contexts of students' goals.

Survival English classes are focused on teaching the students the basic foundations of English so that they can, in essence, "survive" in the U.S. The goal is to increase student language skills, primarily listening and speaking, to a level where they can communicate about basic needs (food, home, school, doctor, etc.). These classes focus more on basic language acquisition as opposed to literacy skill development in English. The key focus of survival English programs is to provide students with phrases and expressions that would allow for increased interaction in their communities.

Family Literacy ESL programs focus on intergenerational literacy with the key premise being that the relationship between parent and child is important in many cultures and equally so in American society. This relationship can influence and increase

literacy in both generations (Chisman et al, 1997; Weistein, 1998). The primary goal of family literacy programs is to increase the school achievement of children by promoting parental involvement in academic activities. It is common for family literacy programs to be housed in community-based and faith-based organizations and attached to other federal programs such as Head Start. Family literacy curriculum may contain elements of life skills, but also include instruction related to parenting, supporting one's children in school, and becoming involved in the academic life of one's child.

Workplace ESL or Vocational ESL programs are often tied to specific work industries such as healthcare, construction, culinary arts, and clerical. These programs have content-specific curriculum for a variety of industries and combine English language instruction and work-related content. Some workplace ESL classes target students whose goal is to gain employment or to improve employment opportunities. These programs may offer instruction focused on pre-employment strategies such as resume-building, job searches, and interviewing within the context of learning English. Additionally, there exist companies that host ESL classes on sight for workers who need to increase their English skills specific to the industry in which they work (e.g. fish canning companies in coastal towns, auto factories, etc.).

Historically citizenship education classes have been the traditional platforms for immigrants to learn English in the United States while preparing to take the citizenship test. Since colonial times, citizenship programs for newcomers to the U.S. have been sponsored by churches, schools, and the government. Citizenship education is focused on the learning about U.S. history, the three branches of U.S. government, and the Bill of

Rights. Typically, citizenship education is in a different category than other types of English literacy education such as general ESL, family literacy, and others because of its solitary focus on the institution of the government and its core connection to citizenship (Comeau-Kronenwetter, 1998).

While the goal of ESL programming is to provide English language instruction to students whose native language is not English and the majority of adult ESL programs in the U.S. aim to support these students by providing general ESL classes focused on language skill acquisition, there is a lack of structure or standardization across programs. Some programs, based on either student goals or institutional goals, offer content-specific instruction; however, these are not the majority of classes offered. The EL/Civics grant is an example of a program that contextualizes language instruction within the content of civic engagement. It is important to note that EL/Civics programming, although provided in all states, is not a mainstream program.

#### *Description, Background, and Rationale for EL/Civics Education*

A majority of students in English as a Second Language classes are disadvantaged, economically and educationally. Data indicate that “immigrants of today are more likely to be poor and remain poor longer than immigrants of the past” (Tolbert, 2001). The main cause of this poverty issue is the lower education levels of today’s immigrants (Tolbert, 2001). The truth of the matter is that learning English alone is not enough anymore. Limited English Proficient students, with few resources, need more than English literacy. They need knowledge and understanding to help become active and informed community members, parents, workers, and neighbors. The purpose of the



EL/Civics program is to provide civic education through English literacy instruction.

Civics education is teaching students how to be active community members and why they should be active by providing them with a comprehensive understanding of U.S. culture, government, and educational system.

*What is EL/Civics?*

EL/Civics or the English Literacy and Civics Education Grant is a federal literacy program of which the objective is to provide English literacy and civic education to non-native English speakers in the United States.

The federal definition of civic education is

“an educational program that emphasizes contextualized instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation, and U.S. history and government to help learners acquire the skills and knowledge to become active and informed parents, workers, and community members”

(Tolbert, 2001).

Legislation directly related to English Literacy and Civics Education began in 1998 with the amendment to the Workforce Investment Act [WIA] of 1998. EL/Civics funding falls under Title II of the Workforce Investment Act which is also titled the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act [AEFLA] of WIA. Under Title II, each state was given a formula grant to administer EL/Civics programs. EL/Civics funding is in addition to the formula grants awarded to each state under Title II of WIA for English as a Second Language, Adult Basic Education, and GED Preparation services.

In response to the amended Workforce Investment Act, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education [OVAE], a branch of the U.S. Department of Education, offered discretionary grant funds for EL/Civics Grant Demonstration Program in 1999. The EL/Civics Grants Demonstration Program was designed “to help states and communities provide limited English proficient adults with expanded access to high quality English literacy programs linked to civics education” (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). The USDOE used National Leadership Funds, as provided from Title II, section 243 of the AEFLA, to provide funding for 12 two-year EL/Civics Pilot projects. The rationale behind this project was that the USDOE recognized the importance of researching new and promising practices in the area of English Literacy and Civic education. One of the purposes of exploring new and promising practices was so that other states could benefit from effective EL/Civics program. As a result, other states could plan and design effective programs based on evidence provided from the 12 pilot projects. At the time of her policy report Tolbert (2001) indicated that it was too soon to tell how effective the 12 EL/Civics Demonstration Projects were. However, she indicated that the Demonstration projects appeared to model promising practices for the field of EL/Civics and that, hopefully, they would be shared and adopted by other states as models for the program across the U.S. (Tolbert, 2001).

Since Tolbert’s (2001) EL/Civics Policy Update Report was written there has not been formalized research conducted regarding the effectiveness of EL/Civics programs in the United States. In addition, there has not been any follow up to the twelve demonstration projects.

In order to understand how Oregon has approached implementing the EL/Civics program, it is first important to place the program within the context of ESL instruction in Oregon. As such the following section discusses how ESL services have been delivered in Oregon. Following the ESL section is a section on EL/Civics delivery in Oregon.

### *ESL practice in Oregon*

Adult Education and Literacy services have been a part of the community college mission and programming in Oregon since the 1970's (Strawn & Walker, 2004). Over several decades, Oregon has made it a priority to provide adult education and literacy programs that are "on par with all other community college programs" (Strawn & Walker, 2004). Providing English as a Second Language programs is a critical piece of adult education and literacy programming in Oregon. With a population of over 3.8 million, 18 percent of Oregon residents are non-native English speakers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). According to data collected by the Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development, 45 percent of students enrolled in adult education programs in Oregon are ESL students (Oregon CCWD, 2008).

The majority of English as a Second Language Programs in Oregon are offered by the 17 community colleges in the state. All community colleges in Oregon receive federal funding in the form of Workforce Investment Act, Title II dollars to provide ESL services in their communities. The agency responsible for distributing funds is the Oregon Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development. At the local level, community colleges are responsible for developing ESL curriculum, learning outcomes, and instructional strategies that best fit the needs of the non-native English population as well

as make sure they are in alignment with federal, state, and institutional requirements. Although much autonomy is given to local programs to design and implement ESL programs, all local ABS programs must adhere to federal and state regulations that govern the distribution of federal funds for ESL services.

Because of the diversity of populations served, program settings, and unique institutional practices and policies at the individual community colleges in Oregon, it was important to create a state system that would serve both the needs of the students and the colleges. In recognizing the needs of the Limited English Proficient population in Oregon, programmers of Adult Basic Skills programs in the state decided to create a framework for evaluating all adult education and literacy programs, which includes ESL instruction to ensure quality instruction that meets the needs of students. Although the Adult Basic Skills programs at each of the community colleges operate autonomously with regard to curricula and instructional offerings, they all operate within the state Total Quality Management [TQM] context (Strawn & Walker, 2004). The staff at the Oregon Office of CCWD, in collaboration with the Oregon Council of Adult Basic Skills Directors (OCABSD), a group comprised of all ABS Directors from the 17 community colleges in Oregon and the Oregon Department of Corrections, developed the TQM Model to help ABS programs at the colleges meet federal and state regulations (Strawn & Walker, 2004). Within the TQM Model are eight Indicators of Program Quality (IPQs) (see Appendix B), against which all Adult Basic Skills Programs in Oregon are measured. All Adult Basic Skills programs follow the TQM Model for “strategic

planning, program improvement, recruitment, transition, retention, instruction, skills assessment, and yearly program evaluation” (Strawn & Walker, 2004, p. 62).

In addition to using the TQM Model as a method for evaluating the effectiveness of ESL programs in Oregon, programs have accountability measures related to skill gain that must be met at both the state and federal level. Each year the 17 ESL programs in Oregon negotiate the percentage of skill gain within each National Reporting System ESL Educational Functional Level. There are five ESL Educational Functional levels (see Appendix A) which are directly correlated to scores on federally approved standardized assessments required of all programs receiving federal funds for ESL. The Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development uses skill level completion rates as one of the performance measures in the funding formula equation. The federal government uses the skill level completion rates performance as one piece of the funding formula equation for providing Oregon with funds.

Both the IPQ framework and the federal accountability measures guide ESL practice to a certain degree. Just as ESL programming and instruction are not standardized across the nation, they are not standardized in Oregon. Although the IPQ document provides a set of standards (see Appendix B) against which each ESL program in Oregon is measured, this document does not ensure standardization of curricula or instructional practices across the state. As a result, each of the 17 community colleges has developed separate curricula for ESL instruction.

With the majority of the ESL programming in Oregon occurring in the community colleges, it is important to mention that there are ESL programs in

community-based, faith-based, and non-profit organizations as well as the county library system throughout the state. These programs do not receive federal funding to provide ESL instruction and therefore do not have to adhere to the IPQ framework or accountability standards set by the federal and state governments. As such, although Oregon has a framework that guides ESL practice overall, it only applies to those programs that receive WIA, Title II funds. Many of the ESL programs that occur in the community organizations take the form of survival English, conversation classes, and tutoring. If one were to glance at ESL programming from an outside perspective, one would see two very independent systems operating: (1) the large community college ESL program infrastructure and (2) the smaller, community operated, unstructured ESL programs.

#### *EL/Civics Practice in Oregon*

EL/Civics programming in Oregon exists within the community college ESL infrastructure since EL/Civics funding is administered in a similar fashion as that of the standard grant funds awarded through WIA Title II. Twelve of the 17 community colleges receive funding to administer the EL/Civics program at their sites. As with general ESL instruction in Oregon, EL/Civics instruction is not standardized across the state. However, there are specific requirements related to EL/Civics instruction that provide a more cohesive instructional framework than for general ESL programming. All Oregon grantees must comply with the following requirements: (1) utilize the state-generated EL/Civics Planning Guide to inform instruction, (2) incorporate *Crossroads Café* or *On Common Ground* instructional series into instruction, (3) incorporate

innovative instructional strategies into program offerings, (4) expand the educational services of the institution's ESL program through EL/Civics classes, (5) demonstrate strong community partnerships, (6) participate in state-initiated professional development training and activities specifically focused on civics curriculum development, and (7) submit quarterly lesson plans to the State EL/Civics listserv as a way to share instructional resources.

The first requirement, that each program must utilize the standard Oregon EL/Civics Planning Guide (see Appendix C), is a tool to aid programs in clearly outlining the following: (1) the approved civic objectives to be taught during the academic year, (2) the specific instructors responsible for teaching the chosen civic objectives, (3) the specific classes and terms in which the civic objectives will be taught, (4) the specific language and literacy objectives that correspond directly to the civic objectives that will be covered in the classes, and (5) the *Crossroads Café* or *On Common Ground* episodes that will be used in conjunction with the civic objectives taught. This planning tool provides a common instructional framework and a common language for describing and discussing instruction in all of the EL/Civics programs in Oregon.

#### *Program design in Adult Education Programs*

Adult Education programs exist for several reasons. According to Knowles (2002) the purpose of adult education programs is “to produce changes in the behavior of individuals, learning groups, and systems, strongly emphasizing adult education’s responsibility to bring about changes in society” (Knowles, 2002, p. xiv). Adult Basic Skills programs are Adult Education programs that provide instruction in Adult Basic

Education, GED preparation, and English as a Second Language (which can also include EL/Civics instruction). Because Adult Basic Skills programs are fundamentally focused on producing change: change in students, change in society, change in systems, it is critical that conceptual planning occur when developing such programs. The EL/Civics program is one such adult education program. It focuses on the combination of English literacy and civic education with the desired outcome being that participants increase their English literacy skills and become engaged community members, parents, and workers. As such the EL/Civics program is an outcomes-based program focused on what learners will do outside the classroom. Therefore, it is critical for an outcomes-based program like EL/Civics to be based on a model that possesses an accountability function to ensure outcomes are met.

Because of the dynamic and evolving organizational and societal contexts in which adult basic skills educators function, “no single programming model can address adequately the myriad diverse adult learners; their societal, cultural, economic, political, and technological contexts; and their highly complex, ever-changing needs” (Boone et al., 2002, p. xv). However, a strategically planned delivery system can “provide adult educators with the critical concepts and processes needed to develop effective and meaningful programs with and for adult learners” (Boone et al., 2002, p. xvi). For the purpose of this study it is critical to consider the element of program design as it relates to the research question regarding factors that may influence student skill gain and skill level completion, both on a national level as well as on a state level.



In order to consider the element of program design as part of this research related to EL/Civics, it was critical to review the theories of adult education program models. Using Boone and colleagues' (2002) meta-analysis of 13 programming models as a guide, the program planning models of adult education planning theorists (the 13 reviewed by Boone et al.) were synthesized by categorizing them into the common themes that make up an effective adult education program planning model. A greater understanding of the various programming models for adult education enabled the clustering of the similarities between the models and use of the themes as a basis for thinking reflectively about EL/Civics programming in Oregon and in the two colleges selected for the study. The meta-analysis done by Boone and his colleagues identified the following characteristics of effective program planning models:

- Effective program planning models are holistic systems that are composed of interrelated and integrated parts that form a whole (Boone et al., 2002). Within these systems, three major interrelated processes exist: (a) planning, (b) design and implementation, and (c) evaluation and accountability (Boone et al., 2002).
- Effective program planning deals with change: In order for an adult education program planning model to be considered effective, it must address change in some form or another (Tyler, 1949; Lippitt et al., 1958; Knowles, 1970; Freire, 1970; Boyle, 1981; Boone et al., 1970; Cervero & Wilson, 1994).
- Effective program planning models identify learner, community, and/or program needs (Tyler, 1949; Lippitt et al., 1958; Beal et al., 1966; Knowles, 1970; Freire,

1970; Boone et al., 1970; Kidd, 1973; Boyle, 1981; Brookfield, 1986; Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Houle, 1996; Sork, 2000; Boone et al., 2002).

- Effective program planning models focus on how to select and organize the learning experience/learning situation and learner activities (Tyler, 1949; Lippitt et al., 1958; Knowles, 1970; Boone et al., 1971; Kidd, 1973; Boyle, 1981; Brookfield, 1986; Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Houle, 1996; Sork, 2000; Boone, 2002; Caffarella, 2002).
- Effective program planning models set program goals, outcomes, and/or objectives (Lippitt et al., 1958; Beal et al., 1966; Knowles, 1970; Boone et al., 1971; Brookfield, 1986; Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Caffarella, 1994; Houle, 1996; Sork, 2000; Boone, 2002).
- Effective program planning models identify resources such as personnel, fiscal, and instructional resources (and others) (Lippitt et al., 1958; Beal et al., 1966; Knowles, 1970; Boone et al., 1971; Brookfield, 1986; Caffarella, 1994; Houle, 1996; Boone, 2002).
- Effective program planning models identify, consider, and plan administrative and organizational structure to support the program (Lippitt et al., 1958; Beal et al., 1966; Knowles, 1970; Boone et al., 1971; Boyle, 1980; Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Caffarella, 1994; Houle, 1996; Sork, 2000; Boone, 2002).

In discussing program design and program planning, for the purpose of this research project, it is important to consider the framework that is used to evaluate WIA Title II (ABE, GED, and ESL) programs in Oregon. The framework that guides program design

and development at the 17 colleges that receive WIA Title II funding for adult education programming in Oregon is a framework called The Indicators of Program Quality (Appendix B). The Indicators of Program Quality framework was developed in response to the federal requirement that all states receiving WIA Title II monies have in place a set of quality indicators for local programs that are granted funds for adult basic skills programming.

The Indicators of Program Quality framework is divided into eight program areas: (1) Program Administration, (2) Recruitment, (3) Orientation, (4) Assessment for Accountability and Instruction, (5) Retention, (6) Transition and Completion, (7) Support Services, and (8) Instruction. Inherent in the IPQ document is the concept that program design and planning should occur in all areas, not just program administration. The IPQ document is a living document that is meant to provide guidance to local ABS directors, coordinators, and instructors as they make decisions related to program design and continuous improvement of instructional programs (CCWD, 2004; updated in 2008).

Program design and planning are critical elements of an effective adult education delivery system because of its direct impact on how instruction will meet the needs of adult students. If this is true, then program design potentially could affect student outcomes and ultimately, skill gain. If a program is poorly planned and designed, it would be apparent in several ways including student progress. Therefore, it is important to consider program design and planning when conducting research on an instructional program such as the EL/Civics program in Oregon.

### *Instructional strategies in the ESL classroom*

Research suggests that certain instructional practices conducted in ESL classrooms correlate directly to student language and literacy skill gain. Three of the most compelling current practices are (1) the use of content-based instruction (Kasper, 1997; Sticht, 1997); (2) the bringing of the outside world into the classroom through the use of authentic, real-life context and materials (Freire, 1970; Purcell-Gates, 1998; Condelli et al., 2002); and (3) the use of students' native language to support English language acquisition (Purcell-Gates, Degener & Jacobson, 1998; Condelli et al., 2002).

In this section these promising practices used in ESL classrooms across the United States are discussed. The rationale for discussing these instructional strategies is to give context to the research questions used to guide this study. The theory behind the above-mentioned instructional practices is that research has indicated that these approaches yield higher levels of content understanding coupled with higher rates of literacy gain (Sticht, 1997). If this is true, then it could be assumed that students in EL/Civics programs that have incorporated said instructional strategies could possess greater civic knowledge and higher literacy skills than students in general ESL classes.

#### *Content-based ESL instruction*

Content-based ESL Instruction is an instructional approach that integrates second language instruction with subject matter instruction (Reilly, 1998). In essence it focuses on the meaning of the subject matter or content of that which is being taught while supporting the acquisition of second language by ESL students. There are typically three criteria for content-based instruction [CBI], which are the "use of authentic language and

text, subject matter core, and appropriateness to the needs of students” (Strycker et al., as cited by Alejos Juez, n.d.). The theory behind content-based instruction is that language acquisition is more quickly facilitated because of the emphasis placed on content that is meaningful to the learner (Sticht, 1997). The focus of CBI is shifted from “learning language per se to learning language through a relevant learning context” (Alejos, Juez, n.d., p. 3). Many researchers have found that content-based instruction “provides purposeful, meaningful, and authentic opportunities for ESL students” (Brown, p. 2) to practice language skills and retain language development. Brown (2004) suggests that there are four significant benefits to implementing a content-based instructional approach in the classroom: (1) ESL students learn age-appropriate content knowledge reflective of the content learned by other college students in traditional, mainstream classes which in turn is a motivation factor for ESL students to continue to learn; (2) through content-based instruction, students are exposed to authentic texts, materials, and real life contexts making English more engaging and meaningful; (3) English becomes more meaningful because students are learning the language, not about that language; and (4) students learn vocabulary specific to the content-area of focus. This point is vital because research links meaningful vocabulary development to academic success (Senechal & Cornell, as cited in Brown, 2004).

Although content-based instruction is a promising instructional practice, this strategy is not as widely implemented as one might assume. This is an important distinction to make because it directly bears relevance to this research. There are two significant issues related to skillfully implementing content-based instruction: the

demands of the content knowledge on the part of the instructor that results in deterrence from the amount of preparation required to effectively instruct using a content-based approach and instructors often shy away from teaching language within the context of content because they feel a lack of expertise in a particular content area (Brown, 2004). Implementing content-based instructional approaches requires a great deal of initiative, effort, and practice on the part of an instructor. Yet, as previously stated, research is indicating that this instructional approach is a promising practice that yields higher skill achievement by students.

#### *Authentic context in the ESL classroom*

Understanding how and why adult ESL students achieve language skill gain is important to researchers and educators. Educators often wonder why some students seem to demonstrate increased skill gain when others do not. Recent research has indicated that the use of authentic materials in the adult literacy classroom leads to increased literacy development and practices by students outside the classroom (Jacobson, E., Degener, S., Purcell-Gates, V., 2003). Authentic context in a classroom refers to the use of learner-contextualized materials and activities in a way that they would be used in the lives of learners outside the classroom (Jacobson, E., Degener, S., Purcell-Gates, V., 2003). Authentic materials are “real life” materials that are intended for use by the target community (Erkaya, 2005). In the case of ESL, the target community is the native English-speaking community.

The theory behind the use of authentic context in ESL instruction is that by creating learning opportunities that are contextualized to learners’ lives and interests, the

motivation to learn increases resulting in the ability to acquire critical language skills more rapidly. By using authentic context in ESL instruction and, therefore, contextualizing the learning content by using authentic materials and activities, students are able to construct meaning from instruction based on the context of real-life situations (Imel, 2000). The use of language outside the classroom appears to be a key factor in increased language skill development.

In a separate study about the literacy practices of adult learners, researchers discovered that literacy students were more likely to engage in literacy activities outside the classroom after being exposed to authentic contexts and materials in the classroom (Purcell-Gates, 2000). Additionally in the *What Works Study for ESL Students*, it was found that the connection of literacy to the outside world created significant difference in reading skills development of students (Condelli et al, 2002). When considering the application of authentic context in the ESL classroom, it is crucial to consider the purpose of the materials used to create the learning situation. The primary purpose of authentic materials and activities should be the same as it would be outside the classroom, in other words, the purpose should be a “real life purpose.” (Jacobson et al, 2003). Not only is purpose important, but also strength of the connection of those materials or activities to what a student may engage in outside the classroom. A critical aspect of utilizing authentic context in the ESL classroom is the meaning the student attaches to that context that causes her or him to engage outside the classroom.

Research on the use of authentic materials in classrooms indicates that those classrooms in which authentic materials are used result in more communicative and

natural learning environments than those in which textbooks alone are used (Erkaya, 2005). Additionally, the authentic materials lend themselves to the development of critical thinking skills and increased social interaction on the part of learners (Lawrence, as cited by Erkaya, 2005).

The use of authentic context in the ESL classroom lends itself well to the civic objectives of the EL/Civics program in Oregon. When considering topics such as employment or health care, for example, many authentic materials and contexts could be utilized in the ESL classroom to effectively increase students' connection to the outside world in ways that would promote continued use language outside the classroom.

#### *Native language support and literacy skill gain*

Over the past 15 years there has been much debate in ESL professional circles about the role of students' native language in the classroom. Research suggests that the use of native language in ESL classrooms supports literacy skill development (Florez, 2000; Rivera as cited by Wrigley, 1993). However, many ESL professionals adhere to an English-only approach to instruction in their classrooms (Auerbach, 1993). Regardless of which side of the debate one stands, there is compelling literature in the field that supports the rationale for using native language in the ESL classroom.

Research conducted with adult ESL students indicates that reading support in the native language assists with the acquisition of and ability in English (Carlo & Skilton-Sylvester; Wagner and Venezsky, as cited by Rivera, 1999) as well as provides evidence that first language literacy development and support are strongly correlated to the successful development of the second language and academic achievement (Auerbach,



1996; Rivera, 1999). Furthermore, research indicates that literacy skills developed in the native language transfer to second language skill development and that those skills may be the biggest predictors of second language acquisition success (Thomas & Collier, 1997).

Research on native language support provides evidence that this instructional practice has been successful where learners share a common language (Wrigley, 1993). As a result, one of the challenges of native language support in the adult ESL classroom is that the student composition of many classrooms represents multiple language groups. As such, it could be difficult for one instructor to provide support in all students' home languages. However, promising practices indicate that the use of native language need not be restricted to support from only the teacher to the student. Often one of the most effective uses of the first language to support English language acquisition is simply allowing students from the same language groups to informally support one another by using the native language for clarification and understanding. Some educators suggest allowing students to determine how and when native language support can occur in the ESL classroom (Auerbach, 1993). Using this student-centered approach to native language support demonstrates respect for and acknowledgement of students' language and cultures, in turn, creating a safe, comfortable, and respectful learning environment (Condelli et al, 2005).

Another challenge of native language support is how to structure that support to most effectively benefit the students. For many instructors, native language support is viewed as a bridge to English language skill development. Although it appears

transparent, what does effective native language support look like? There are a variety of program models ranging from concurrent instruction to subsequent instruction to English instruction with some support in native language (Rivera, 1999). Concurrent models implement native language instruction in tandem with English language instruction and are often considered to be bilingual in nature. Using native language to support English language acquisition varies by instructor and is often tied to pedagogical beliefs and learning theories to which the instructor subscribes (Rivera, 1999).

Subsequent models, also called sequential models, are ones where students engage in native language literacy development until certain reading levels are met. At that time, students move to an ESL classroom (Rivera, 1999). In addition to models used by programs, instructors may provide native language support in a variety of ways based on preferred language learning theories and beliefs. Therefore, individual programs and even individual instructors must determine how native language support should be integrated into learning. Regardless of the native language model used by a program, evidence shows that use of native language to support second language development is a successful practice in adult ESL programming.

#### *Instructor professional development and student achievement*

The literature related to professional development is extensive. Perhaps thousands of articles and studies have been written on this broad topic. However, upon closer inspection, little research has been conducted on the connection between teacher professional development, changes in teaching practices, and increased student achievement (DiCerbo & Duran, 2006; Yoon, K.S., Duncan, T., Lee, S.W.-Y., Scarloss,

B., & Shapley, K, 2007). Although the literature on this topic is limited and contradictory, it is worth discussing as a means to explore in more depth the possible connection between instructor professional development, teacher change, and student skill gain in the EL/Civics programs in Oregon.

An additional item of note is that much research has been conducted on professional development in K-12 education, but very little research exists on the effectiveness of Adult Basic Education (ABE/GED and ESL) professional development. As a result, the adult education field must rely on what has been researched in K-12 education (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). This is an important fact to note because the needs of adult education instructors and students contrast greatly compared to K-12 instructors and students. For this study, the researcher reviewed as much literature as could be discovered related to adult education and instructor professional development. However, as previous researchers on this topic have noted, there was a heavy reliance on research related to professional development, teacher change, and student achievement from K-12 education.

From the literature emerged five key elements related to the connection between teacher professional development, its influence on teacher's classroom practices, and increased student achievement: (a) content-focused, subject matter intensive professional development activities; (b) professional development focused on how students learn; (c) professional development activities utilizing specific teaching techniques directly related to subject matter and curriculum; (d) intensity and duration of professional development;

and (e) the design and coherence of professional development (DiCerbo & Duran, 2006; American Education Research Association (AERA), 2005; Yoon et al., 2007).

The literature suggests that professional development that is content-focused, content-specific, and rooted in the subject matter taught by instructors is a key element in influencing increased student achievement (Yoon et al, 2007; DiCerbo & Duran, 2006, and AERA, 2005). The connection lies in the deliberate focus on providing professional development activities centered on specific content and subject matter taught in the classrooms. By providing training related to specific content areas, teachers increased their knowledge, confidence, and teaching skills in the subject matter they taught (AERA, 2005). Studies found that professional development activities “focused on particular content area or curriculum [were] more effective at changing teacher practice and influencing student achievement” (DiCerbo & Duran, 2006, p. 6) than those focused on general learning. Similar findings were discovered in two recent studies (Jeanpiere, Oberhauser, & Freeman, 2005; Garet et al, 2001) in which focusing on “content knowledge had strong, positive relationship with changes in teacher knowledge, which in turn strongly influenced changes in teacher behavior” (DiCerbo & Duran, 2006).

Participating in professional development designed around how students learn is valuable to educators and is a key element of the connection between professional development and student achievement. One of the most effective methods of delivery is to provide professional development activities modeling the same strategies to be used in the classroom with students (DiCerbo & Duran, 2006; Yoon et al., 2007). In addition to modeling teaching and learning strategies, the opportunity to engage in active/inquiry

learning activities is critical. By including elements of active and inquiry learning strategies in professional development, instructors are offered the opportunity to use critical thinking skills such as exploration, reflection, practice, and problem-solving. These are the same skills that teachers strive to impart on students. Some research suggests that when teachers are actively involved in activities focused on increasing their understanding and application of knowledge, the more likely they are to apply what they learn to the classroom (AERA, 2005).

In a study on the factors that impact instructor change, Garet et al. (2001) found “that professional development that includes opportunities for teachers to become actively engaged in discussion, planning, and practice lead to greater change in teacher behavior” (DiCerbo & Duran, p.8 ). In their review of literature on this topic, Snow-Renner & Lauer (2005) found that when professional development contains opportunities for active learning there is a greater change in instructional behavior which, in turn leads to increased student achievement. Overall, the “knowledge received in professional development sessions has an impact on program design and delivery and on teaching and learning in classrooms” (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2008). The common theme in the research on professional development and teacher change is that:

“professional development can help teachers gain new knowledge and adopt new practices, [but] opinions differ concerning the factors – professional development model, school or program context, system or policy directives – that must be in place for teacher learning and change to take place” (Smith & Gillespie, 2007, p. 214).

Related to modeling teaching and learning strategies that teachers can use in the classroom and how students learn, an equally important element of professional development linked to increased student achievement is implementing professional development that focuses on those instructional strategies that are specific to the particular content area and curriculum (DiCerbo & Duran, 2006). This element makes sense because in order for professional development to be effective and to be worthwhile it must provide opportunities for teachers to connect what they learn with what they teach. This application of learning is critical, though not a guarantee, for improving instructional practice and student achievement. Cohen and Hill (2001) found that “teachers whose learning focused directly on the curriculum they would be teaching were the ones who adopted the practices taught in their professional development” (AERA, 2005). Furthermore, Garet et al. (2001) found that teachers were more likely to change instructional practices when professional development was linked directly to their daily experiences and aligned with the standards and assessments used to inform their instruction.

Both the design and the intensity of the professional development are elements that can have an impact on increasing teacher change, which may result in student achievement. Professional development is offered in multiple formats. Some examples include formats such as conferences, trainings, workshops, institutes, in-class support, resource centers, and communities of practice or learning communities. These formats can be divided into traditional professional development and reform professional development. According to Garet et al. (2001), traditional formats are those that include

workshops and conferences and reform formats are those that include learning communities, resources centers, and in-class support. In their study, they found that reform formats were most likely to contain activities that extended over longer periods of time. In another study, Jeanpeirre et al. (2005) showed that in addition to professional development over an extended period of time that follow up experience with opportunities for interactions were important for fostering change in teacher behavior. Professional development over longer periods of time is an important factor in increased instructional change. In Boyle's (2005) research he reported teachers who participated in long term professional development activities paired with mentoring or active and inquiry-based learning demonstrated change in teaching practices. Although evidence suggests a connection between the intensity and duration of professional development and teacher change, it is unclear if the teacher change resulted in improved student achievement.

### *Summary*

The purpose of the literature review is to provide background and rationale for conducting research on the topic of the EL/Civics grant program in Oregon. By reviewing work by other researchers in the areas of ESL practice, promising instructional strategies in adult ESL classrooms, and the connection between instruction, professional development, teacher change, and student achievement, the research questions for this study were connected to previous empirical evidence. The connection between the literature and the research questions is a deliberate one that lends itself to fostering a better understanding the EL/Civics program in Oregon in an attempt to provide a

potential framework for considering continuous improvement in the ESL programs in the state. Since the EL/Civics data indicate a significant difference in performance (skill level completion rates) as compared the general ESL programs, it is important to understand the program in more depth.



### Section 3: Design of Study

*“The key philosophical assumption, [sic], upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by the individuals interacting with their social worlds. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, ... ( Merriam, 1998, p. 6)*

#### *Methodology*

This research falls under the umbrella of qualitative research in that it focuses on “discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied” (Merriam, 1998, p.1). For the purpose of this research, Denzin and Lincoln’s (2005) definition of qualitative research was adopted:

Qualitative research is a situation activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, materials practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world into a series of representations, including the field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 3).

In reference to the above cited definition of qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) provide the following caveat: “Indeed, any attempt to give an essential definition of qualitative research requires a qualitative analysis of the circumstances that produce such a definition” (p. 28). Qualitative research is interpretive and descriptive in nature. The interpretive paradigm is concerned with constructing meaning,

understanding, and sense-making from social contexts (Hultgren & Coomer, 1989; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Neuman, 2003; Bogdan & Bilken, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Gall, et al., 1996). Interpretive researchers focus on how social reality is constructed, how individuals experience daily life, and how things get done (Neuman, 2003). The interpretive paradigm is concerned with reality and how it is perceived by individuals within the context that multiple realities exist and co-exist. This paradigm posits that individuals construct their own realities and interpret their own realities. This methodology was adopted because the researcher was interested in understanding how and why the EL/Civics programs in Oregon continued to demonstrate higher levels of student skill gain as demonstrated through skill level completion rates than the regular ESL programs. The researcher wanted to understand what meanings the study participants attached to this phenomenon from their unique perspectives as program administrators, coordinators, and instructors. From a collective perspective, a deep and holistic investigation was conducted in an effort to create a state perspective on the programs in Oregon.

In order to understand why students in Oregon EL/Civics programs have consistently demonstrated higher skill level completion than students in the general ESL programs, it is critical to understand the experience of those who are most intimately involved with the implementation of the EL/Civics program. Study participants were Adult Basic Skills State Directors, State EL/Civics coordinators, and EL/Civics faculty. Understanding the meaning that each of these stakeholders possessed as related to the EL/Civics program created a multi-layered montage that reveals a holistic picture of the

EL/Civics program in Oregon which was paramount to the researcher. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) discuss the concept of qualitative researchers as “bricoleurs”, as makers of quilts and/or montage. This study required that the researcher become a “bricoleur” in order to weave together and juxtapose the multiple program perspectives so that one image or quilt or picture was created revealing multiple realities that exist within the context of the EL/Civics program across Oregon. The end result is something like a collage or quilt of multiple EL/Civics programs in Oregon.

#### *Key Concepts of Methodology*

The methodology chosen is the interpretive approach. Interpretive is an approach that can be traced to two 19<sup>th</sup> century German sociologists/philosophers Max Weber and Wilhem Dilthey. They believed that humans must understand the internal and personal reasons that guide human decision-making (Neuman, 2003). Neuman (2003) states the goal of interpretive researchers is “to develop an understanding of social life and discover how people construct meaning in natural settings. An interpretive researcher wants to learn that which is meaningful or relevant to the people being studied or how individuals experience daily life” (p.76). Assumptions related to interpretive methodology are that:

- multiple realities exist and can co-exist;
- reality is constructed and interpreted by individuals;
- reality is constantly changing;
- researchers are concerned with values and how humans interpret values as part of reality;
- individuals create their own meanings;

- humans are creatures who attempt to make sense of their world;
- the researcher take a naturalistic approach, meaning participants are studied in their natural settings or within a natural context;
- the researcher use description, when aiming to describe, in detail, particular situations in an attempt to provide meaning and understanding;
- the researcher is concerned with process and how parts work together to create a whole;
- the researcher seeks meaning and understanding;
- the process is emic in that it is concerned with understanding participant perspectives;
- researchers are human, as such, try to make sense of the world and have own meanings and perspectives (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998; Gall, et al., 1996; Merriam, 1998; Neuman, 2003).

#### *Major Authors Related to Methodology*

Major authors related to methodology are Bogdan & Biklen; Carr & Kemmis; Dilthey; Gall, Gall & Borg; Neuman; Merriam; and Schutz & Weber. Many of these authors are considered to be experts in methodology in educational research. Because this study examines a phenomenon within adult education it was critical for the researcher to reference the work of educational researchers. These authors conclude that an interpretive researcher is interested in learning how people construct meaning in natural settings. In the case of this research, the meaning is created by the EL/Civics and ESL practitioners

that were interviewed and the natural setting was the community college EL/Civics program/classroom.

*Criteria for Truth Used in the Methodology*

In qualitative research the criteria for truth depends on the methodology with which the researcher has approached the study. In this case, the approach used in this study was from an interpretive orientation. An interpretive orientation or approach means that the researcher is “attempting to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). As such, criteria for truth for a study with an interpretive orientation would require that the theory made sense to those being studied and that it allowed the audience to understand the reality of those being studied (Neuman, 2003). In the context of qualitative research, making sense to those being studied equals truth in that as humans we understand our realities within the social rules and boundaries that we create for our realities. Therefore certain experiences would not have meaning if we socially and culturally did not give meaning to those experiences.

In qualitative research it is the same concept. In order to ensure truth in the data collected, it must make sense to the participants as related to their reality. Additionally, it is important for research to be understood and to have meaning within the academic community as well as to any audience that has an interest in the research topic. Thus in qualitative research using an interpretive approach, the researchers must walk a fine line between assuring that the data collected and the research findings resonate truthfully for participants and for readers.

In order to ensure that the findings of this study made sense to those being studied as well as represented the truths that they had shared with the researcher, member checking was conducted with all participants whom were interviewed. Each participant had the opportunity to read the transcriptions of her or his interviews as well as the opportunity to read the findings of the research. All participants had the opportunity to give feedback and input so that the research was accurate, honestly represented her or his reality, and made sense to her or him as participants.

In conducting qualitative research, it is important that the audience understand the reality of the participants. As a strategy to achieve this objective, the study will be made available to a group of ABS State Directors and EL/Civics State Coordinators outside of the group of participants. The intent would be to provide access to this research to the stakeholders invested in the EL/Civics initiative at a state level. This research has provided findings in both individual and cross-case analysis so that the audience will clearly see the reality of two EL/Civics programs in Oregon. In addition, the goal is that a more general audience will be able to relate to the reality of the study participants.

#### *Research Method*

According to Merriam (1998) “a case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (p.19). Since the researcher is interested in meaning and understanding from the perspectives of the stakeholders of EL/Civics programs, the method used for this study will be the case study. According to Creswell (1998), a case study is a bounded system. A bounded

system can be a program, a site, an event, or an individual that is bounded by time and place (Creswell, 1998).

The case for this study is two of the 12 community colleges in Oregon that implement the EL/Civics Program. The EL/Civics Program is a bounded system in that it is a specific grant program with targeted funds that states can use only to carry out the purpose of the grant. As a result, it is bounded by the grant requirements and objectives. Additionally, it is a program bounded by time in that it is a time-sensitive grant offered on a three-year cycle. This particular time restraint is unique because since Congress has continued to defer the re-authorization of the Workforce Investment Act, the grant has continued for 12 years as opposed to three (2000-present).

This study is a both a descriptive and a comparative case study. Descriptive case studies present a detailed account of the phenomenon under study, in this case, the EL/Civics Program in Oregon (Merriam, 1998). Descriptive case studies are important and useful in that they present “basic information about areas of education where little research has been conducted” (Merriam, 1998). Often innovative programs and practices are the focus of descriptive case studies as well as the basis for future research in these new, creative areas where little research is found. More often than not, phenomenon studied using the descriptive case study approach foster conceptual frameworks upon which to build continued research in the once “new” area (Moore, 1986, as cited in Merriam, 1998). Since there is little research in the area of EL/Civics and because of its innovative approach to language acquisition by combing literacy and civic content, descriptive case study is an approach that matches well with this area of study.

The objective of the descriptive case study is to describe in great detail the events and inner workings of a particular issue, program, or phenomenon thus affording greater understanding by readers about the topic under study (Merriam, 1998). This type of case study works nicely with the research topic and questions because of the researcher's interest in understanding why Oregon EL/Civics Programs demonstrate higher student skill level completion rates than ESL programs. Conducting a descriptive case study allows for the exploration of the reasons generated by the study participants about why and how increased skill level completion rates are occurring in the EL/Civics programs in comparison to ESL programs.

In addition to being a descriptive case study, this study is both a collective and comparative case study. More than one site was researched. In the case of this study, two EL/Civics programs in the state of Oregon were studied. First, the findings are presented as individual cases. Then a cross-case analysis was conducted to identify common themes shared by the sites and to identify differences between individual cases that could be used to create a typology of effective programs related to increased student skill gain.

There are two purposes for studying more than one site. The first purpose is to gain greater insight and understanding of how individual EL/Civics programs are designed, delivered, and implemented by collecting detailed information for each of the sites. By collecting data from individual sites, the researcher is able to investigate more thoroughly all aspects of an EL/Civics program. The second purpose is to gain a more holistic perspective on EL/Civics programs in Oregon by taking the data collected from each of the sites and illuminating common themes. These common themes across the data



illustrate a more holistic portrait of the EL/Civics programs in Oregon. The combination of detailed data collected by site and the emerging of themes from the collective data will reveal greater insight into how EL/Civics programs continue to promote higher student skill level completion than ESL programs.

#### *Major Authors Relating to Method*

Major authors related to case study are: Bassey, Creswell, Hamel, Merriam, Stake, and Yin. If methodology is defined as “the application of the principles of reasoning to scientific and philosophical inquiry” (Agnes, 1999, p.906) then method can be defined as “a way of doing anything” (Agnes, 1999, p. 906). The authors versed in the case study method concur that the method is not easily definable. However, the majority of the authors conclude that “case study is a research design that is descriptive and non-experimental” and that “a critical characteristic is that is a bounded system” (Barone, D.M , 2004).

#### *Strengths and Limitations of Method*

The case study was chosen as the most appropriate method for this research because the method offers meaning, understanding, and a rich, holistic account of the phenomenon of the EL/Civics program. The strength of the case study method is that it is a process of inquiry that seeks to create meaning, to foster understanding, and to illuminate the complex issues associated with a research topic. Because the case is bound by time, place, or in the case of this study, program, this method offers a unique in-depth and detailed exploration of a particular topic area. Additionally, case studies are rooted in

real-life situations resulting in insights and access to participant experiences and realities as related to the research topic.

Case study is a method that can give voice to an area of educational research that using statistical analysis and drawing numerical correlations alone cannot. It is often from the themes drawn from this type of research that further research is constructed.

Additionally, the case study method has proven effective for informing educational policy and practice (Merriam, 1998). As such, because it is a type of field research, the case study method “better captures situations and settings which are amenable to policy and program intervention” (Collins and Noblit, 1978, as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 41). Collins and Noblit (1978 as cited in Merriam, 1998) also indicate that “field studies are better able to assess social change than more positivistic designs and change is often what policy is addressing” (1998, p. 43). With this research the researcher is interested in informing policy and practice at both a state and national level. As a result, using the case study method would provide policymakers and practitioners with much needed information related to how EL/Civics is delivered in states that are meeting federal performance.

The researcher must be cognizant of the limitations of this type of method, because as with all methods, if one is not, it may be detrimental to the research and how it is perceived in the academic community. Some of the limitations considered for this type of approach include the inability to generalize the findings to larger population or to make predictions from research findings. Case study, especially a descriptive case study, is often considered too wordy with long, detailed descriptions that may cause

policymakers and educators to lose interest (Merriam, 1998). For many there are issues of reliability and validity as related to data collected with this lack of rigor being attributed to the bias and subjectivity of the researcher (Merriam, 1998). Depending on the researcher and her or his worldview, validity and reliability are approached differently (Creswell, 2007). For many qualitative researchers, validity refers to the trustworthiness or credibility of the data, the interpretation of the data by the researcher and how the data collected reflect the truth.

Because qualitative researchers are searching for understanding, they must reflect on the validity of the data analysis by asking, 'Did I accurately and truthfully reflect the perspective of the study participants?' (Creswell, 2007). To answer that question, researchers have to rely on themselves, the study participants, and readers (Creswell, 2007). Some strategies that researchers can employ in an attempt to ensure validity in a case study are triangulation, clarification of researcher bias, and member checking.

Reliability refers to stability of the data, the data analysis, and the interpretation of data. The case study is often criticized on the grounds of researcher sensitivity and bias. Many critics believe that qualitative researchers are too close to the subject matter and inject the research findings with their personal opinions and biases which lead to criticism regarding reliability and validity of data. As a researcher it is important to state biases upfront as related to the topic so as to not decrease the reliability of the findings. As such, a personal disclosure statement has been included below in an attempt to be transparent about biases as related to the research topic.

### *Personal Disclosure*

Because of the researcher's intimacy with the research topic, it is important to state a bias. The research and data has been presented as honestly and objectively as possible and from the perspective of the study participants, not the researcher. However, the researcher recognizes that it is part of the qualitative research process to provide interpretation of the data and leave it up to the reader to create her or his personal interpretation of the research findings. A full personal disclosure is available at the end of the study as Appendix D.

As explained in Sections 1 and 2 of this manuscript, EL/Civics is a literacy program in which language instruction is combined with civic content. EL/Civics is a content-based program where the hope is that through instruction of content, students will gain literacy skills. In Oregon, as a state, the data collected on the EL/Civics programs in Oregon have shown consistent demonstration of student skill level completion rates over the life of the grant and, more specifically, for the time period during which the study was conducted. The data collected over the course of the grant generated curiosity on the part of the researcher as to why the Oregon EL/Civics programs consistently demonstrate higher student skill level completion rates than ESL programs. Out of this curiosity came the research topic. Although, the researcher was personally and professionally invested in the EL/Civics program, the impetus for the study was a dedication to finding meaning and understanding that could help professionals in the field of adult ESL.

As described above, the researcher has been involved with the EL/Civics program in Oregon. In a quest to seek a more in-depth understanding of the program, this research

study was pursued and conducted. The decision to approach the study was from an interpretive standpoint was deliberate and born out of a desire to understand why and how EL/Civics programs continue to demonstrate high student skill gain as exemplified by student skill level completion rates as compared to ESL programs in Oregon.

The data for this study have been presented as honestly as possible and from the perspective of the study participants. However, as a qualitative researcher, it is recognized that part of the process is to leave it up to the reader to create her or his own interpretation of the research findings.

#### *Research Sites*

This study is a multi-site case study in which more than one Oregon EL/Civics program was researched. Of the 17 community colleges in Oregon, 12 receive EL/Civics grant funds and administer EL/Civics programming. The researcher decided to study two of the 12 colleges that administer the EL/Civics grant as opposed to studying all 12 programs. The two sites for the study were chosen based on the following criteria: (a) demonstration of higher student skill gain (level completion) in the EL/Civics program in comparison to the general ESL program and (b) representation of both rural and urban populations in Oregon. The criteria for site selection were based on two desired outcomes for this study: to understand why study participants at the selected sites believed their EL/Civics programs were demonstrating higher students skill level completion than their counterpart ESL programs and to share the findings from the research with the EL/Civics educators in Oregon so that they can improve their programs. The researcher decided to study one urban and one rural college because the findings would be more useful to

EL/Civics educators if they could identify with the size and location of the program studied. It was important to study two programs with demonstrated success in two different areas of the state. The researcher was interested in discovering if there were similarities in the themes although differences in size and location of the program.

With completion rate data procured from the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development, a table was created in order to better compare the completion data to inform the selection process. Using the table below (see Table 1), the rows that represented colleges with the highest skill level completion rates in the EL/Civics program across the five years of data [2002-2007] in comparison to the completion rates in ESL for the same years were identified and highlighted. There were three colleges that consistently demonstrated high student skill level completion rates in EL/Civics programs versus ESL programs over the five year data set. Of the three colleges, two represented urban localities and one represented a rural community. Comparing two programs from different localities was intriguing because of the interest in the potential for discovering common themes regardless across both programs despite size of population, differences in resource allocations, and various differences in community characteristics. For that reason, it was determined that one urban college and one rural college would be researched and compared against the other. In order to determine which of the two urban community college programs that would be studied, the completion rates of both schools were compared (see Table 2) using the same criteria as was used with the previous process. There was one college that consistently demonstrated higher completion rates across the five year span in the EL/Civics program

as compared to its counterpart ESL program. As a result, the college (Community College 6) with the higher completion rates in EL/Civics versus ESL was chosen to participate in the study.

**Table 1: Completion Rates for EL/Civics and ESL in Oregon**

College Name/Grantee	Completion Rate EL/Civics					Completion Rate ESL				
	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07
OR Community College 1	24.4%	28.6%	20%	15%	31%	26.7%	22.7%	17.9%	16.9%	27.8%
OR Community College 2	48.7%	38.3%	30.2%	25%	34%	38.9%	40.2%	38.6%	25.1%	29%
OR Community College 3	48.7%	43.6%	43.6%	45%	35%	35.2%	36.6%	37.6%	34.1%	38.3%
OR Community College 4	31.2%	26%	33.8%	27%	30%	34.4%	26%	27.7%	30.8%	24.8%
OR Community College 5	28.7%	40.8%	26.1%	18%	38%	29.4%	39.3%	23%	16.1%	35.2%
OR Community College 6	49.7%	48.2%	60.9%	63%	68%	37.6%	35.6%	39.6%	45.5%	49.3%
OR Community College 7	27.7%	19.4%	16.3%	49%	63%	27.2%	17.2%	52.6%	43.4%	52.4%
OR Community College 8	37.5%	32.4%	28%	32%	31%	34.3%	30%	27.4%	33.3%	29%
OR Community College 9	35.6%	32.2%	19.6%	30%	41%	22.5%	18.7%	20.2%	29.3%	38.5%
OR Community College 10	41.3%	49.1%	37%	42%	43%	33.4%	41%	26.5%	30%	39.6%
OR Community College 11	41.9%	33.9%	23%	56%	50%	42%	41.5%	21.9%	35.3%	39.6%
OR Community College 12	25.3%	25%	29.6%	36%	36%	24.4%	15.7%	18.8%	23.5%	34.9%
OR Statewide	38.8%	37.3%	30.2%	39%	46%	30.8%	36.6%	33%	33.4%	40.7%

**Table 2: Data comparison of two Oregon urban schools**

College Name/Grantee	Completion Rate EL/Civics					Completion Rate ESL				
	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07
OR Community College 3	48.7%	43.6%	43.6%	45%	35%	35.2%	36.6%	37.6%	34.1%	38.3%
OR Community College 6	49.7%	48.2%	60.9%	63%	68%	37.6%	35.6%	39.6%	45.5%	49.3%
Difference between C6 and C3	1% (C6)	4.6% (C6)	17.3% (C6)	18% (C6)	33% (C6)	2.4% (C6)	1% (C3)	2% (C6)	11.4% (C6)	11% (C6)

Once the two colleges that met the criteria were chosen for participation in the study, two tables per college were developed. These tables were visually easier to read and therefore enabled one to quickly and more clearly see the contrast between

completion rates for each program of study [EL/Civics vs. ESL] (see Table 3 and Table 4).

**Table 3: OR Community College 6**

<b>Program</b>	<b>02-03</b>	<b>03-04</b>	<b>04-05</b>	<b>05-06</b>	<b>06-07</b>
EL/Civics	49.7%	48.2%	60.9%	63%	68%
ESL	37.6%	35.6%	39.6%	45.5%	49.3%
Difference EL/C vs. ESL	12.1% (EL/C)	12.6% (EL/C)	21.3% (EL/C)	17.5% (EL/C)	18.7% (EL/C)

**Table 4: OR Community College 10**

<b>Program</b>	<b>02-03</b>	<b>03-04</b>	<b>04-05</b>	<b>05-06</b>	<b>06-07</b>
EL/Civics	41.3%	49.1%	37%	42%	43%
ESL	33.4%	41%	26.5%	30%	39.6%
Difference EL/C vs. ESL	7.9% (EL/C)	8.1% (EL/C)	10.5% (EL/C)	12% (EL/C)	3.4% (EL/C)

In looking at both Table 3 and Table 4, it is clear that for each year starting in Program Year 2002-03, the EL/Civics grant program outperformed the ESL program in both of the selected colleges. Of note is the fact that OR Community College 6 has the best completion rates over time in the EL/Civics program in Oregon with the most recent data indicating that 68 percent of the students completed a level (see Table 1). In other words, 68 percent of the students in the EL/Civics program made demonstrated skill gains on standardized assessments as compared to 49.3 percent in the ESL program. Another interesting note about the OR Community College 6 EL/Civics program is that each year the student skill level completion rate increased within the data set.

#### *Data Needed*

Data were collected that responded to the research questions posed in Section 1 of this study (see Table 5). Data collected from study participants were related to how the EL/Civics programs and ESL programs in Oregon are designed and implemented at each



of the study sites. In addition to the participants in the study, the data collected are considered to be beneficial to the field of Adult Basic Skills as well as all EL/Civics stakeholders.

**Table 5. Data collected as based on research questions.**

Questions	Methods	Sources	Purpose
1. Could student demographic factors have a relationship to student skill gain?	Review of demographic data collected from each college studied.  Classroom observations.  Interviews with ABS Directors, EL/Civics Coordinators, EL/Civics instructors, and ESL instructors.	2001-2007 TOPS/NRS data collected from the Oregon CCWD on the 2 sites.  Notes from classroom observations.  Interview transcripts.	To find common student demographics across the EL/Civics programs in Oregon.
2. Could certain aspects of program planning/design and implementation have an effect on student skill gain?	Interviews with ABS Directors, EL/Civics Coordinators, EL/Civics instructors, and ESL instructors.  Review of individual EL/Civics annual reports for each college.	Interview transcripts.  Annual reports.  Documents shared by interviewees.	To understand how the participants perceive factors that may contribute to increased student skill gain. To discover themes related to program design/planning that may be similar across the programs.
3. Could curriculum and/or instructional strategies influence student skill gain?	Interviews with ABS Directors, EL/Civics Coordinators, EL/Civics instructors, and ESL instructors. Review of individual EL/Civics annual reports by college.  Classroom observations.	Interview transcripts.  Annual reports.  Documents shared by interviewees.  Notes from classroom observations.	To understand how curriculum and instructional strategies are different (or similar) in EL/Civics and ESL programs. To discover themes that may be similar across the programs.
4. Could instructor professional development play a role in student skill gain?	Interviews with ABS Directors, EL/Civics Coordinators, EL/Civics instructors, and ESL instructors.  Review of individual EL/Civics annual reports by college.	Interview transcripts.  Annual reports.  Documents shared by interviewees.	To understand how programs perceive a connection between student skill gain and instructor professional development.

### *Study Participants*

The ten participants who participated in this study were: (a) Adult Basic Skills Directors (2 participants), (b) EL/Civics Instructors (6 participants), and (c) ABS Intake and Assessment Specialists (2 participants). The ABS Director of each program was interviewed because of her/his big picture perspective as related to overall programming in the Adult Basic Skills programs, her/his understanding of the connection to other programs of study, and her/his understanding of how the EL/Civics program fit into the program overall. EL/Civics instructors were interviewed because they were most intimately involved with the instruction of required civics objectives in their classrooms and they were the most knowledgeable about the impact of the civics instructional framework on instruction. Lastly, the ABS Intake and Assessment Specialists at each site were interviewed because their primary function was to assess literacy skills and enroll students in both ESL and EL/Civics classes, and they offered an important perspective, especially related to how students were assessed, placed, and transitioned within the ABS programs studied.

### *Data Collection Procedures*

In-person interviews using set interview questions were conducted with the ten study participants listed above. The Study Protocol is attached containing both interview questions and the classroom observation outline (see Appendix E). Correspondence with study participants was conducted via e-mail, and the researcher kept detailed notes of the research process, as well as examined various documents such as instructional materials and submitted reports. When conducting in-person interviews, a voice-recording tool was

used. Upon completion of the interviews, all of the digital interviews were professionally transcribed by a paid professional transcriptionist.

All e-mail correspondence was copied and filed into research folders on a computer and backed up on various storage devices for safe-keeping. The interview questions were open-ended in order to solicit honest, open responses from participants. Because the researcher was intimately knowledgeable about the EL/Civics grant, the questions were framed and reflective responses were implemented during the research process to encourage the participants to fully explore their answers to the questions posed. When observing EL/Civics classrooms the researcher took field notes as both an observer and a participant depending on the situation. Researcher reflections, thoughts, and comments were kept in a notebook throughout the study and were categorized by site. Additionally, programmatic, instructional, and grant-related documents that were relevant to the study were collected.

#### *Strategies to Ensure Soundness of Data, Data Analysis, and Interpretation*

Strategies to ensure the soundness of data, analysis, and interpretation included member checking, triangulation, peer review, and clarification of researcher bias (Creswell, 1998). Although all the aforementioned strategies are extremely important, it was critical to this study to clarify researcher bias of and intimacy to the topic of study order to ensure accurate and sound data.

#### *Strategies for Protection of Human Subjects*

In June 2005, the researcher completed the Oregon State University Collaborative Institutional Review Board (IRB) Training Initiative online course in the Protection of

Human Subjects and received certification for this training. As a graduate student at OSU, the researcher abode by the rules and regulations that govern research involving human subjects. The study proposal was examined by the OSU Institutional Review Board to ensure compliance. All subjects participating in the study were assured anonymity as well as to the sites being researched, if the chosen sites elected to do so. Before conducting any interviews or collecting any data, the Informed Consent Document was issued and explained in full detail to all study participants (see Appendix F).

#### *Summary*

By adopting an interpretive orientation to this research and using a case study method to collect data, meaning and understanding embedded in the experiences of EL/Civics stakeholders has been sought. The desired outcome is that this research will inform policy and practice related to ESL and education for non-native English speaking adults at the national and state level. As a result, the researcher chose to conduct research on the perspective of adult literacy educators. By taking an interpretive approach to the research and using the descriptive qualities of case study, the researcher allowed the topic to be explored more deeply and opened avenues to future research.

#### Section 4: Presentation of Data and Data Analysis

*“The researcher attempts to see ‘processes and outcomes that occur across many cases, to understand how they are qualified by local conditions, and thus develop more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanation’ (Merriam, 1998, p. 195).”*

The purpose of this research was to investigate the perspectives of education professionals who manage, coordinate, and instruct in both the English Literacy and Civics Education Grant and English as a Second Language Programs in Oregon Community Colleges. Of the 12 community colleges in Oregon that provide EL/Civics programming, two programs were chosen for this study: Oregon Community College 6 and Oregon Community College 10.

##### *Data Analysis Approach and Procedures*

According to Hatch (2002), “data analysis is a systematic search for meaning (p.148).” In an attempt to analyze the data for this study in a systematic manner, an analysis model that best helped the researcher discover meaning was employed, as it related to the research questions that were posed. In order to most effectively discover meaning from the research questions; a typological analysis of the collected data was conducted. A typological analysis of data involves dividing the overall data set into categories based on predetermined typologies (Hatch, 2002). To competently employ a typological analysis, one must follow a series of steps to ensure quality analysis. In general there are six basic steps to a typological analysis: (a) Step 1: to identify the typologies to be analyzed, (b) Step 2: to read data and mark entries related to the typology, (c) Step 3: to read the entries marked in the data and create a summary sheet where main ideas in entries are recorded, (d) Step 4: to look for patterns, relationships,

themes within typologies, (e) Step 5: to read data and code entries according to patterns identified and keep a record of what entries go with which elements of your patterns, (f) Step 6: to decide if the patterns are supported by data (Hatch, 2002).

The typologies created by a researcher frame an entire analysis and therefore, it is a critical step in the analysis process. This study lent itself well to this type of analysis since the research questions were constructed conscientiously to collect information related to specific topics. As such the research questions, and subsequently, the interview questions/topics, were used as a source for generating the typologies for the study. After determining the initial typologies for analysis based on the research questions, the researcher read through the interview transcripts searching for themes that organically originated from the data to add to the typology. Table 6 represents the typology that was used for analyzing the data collected for the study.

**TABLE 6: Data Typology.**

<b>Typology Category</b>	<b>Definition</b>
A. Program Design	How the program is designed from class schedules, orientation, intake processes (how students are registered into EL/Civics classes), and how it is integrated into larger ABS program.
B. Instructional Approach	How instruction is presented via curriculum, learning outcomes, strategies, methods, materials and approaches.
C. Professional Development	How professional development has impacted instruction from the instructor's perspective.
D. Student Demographics	Impressions of the demographic composition of students in EL/Civics program.

<b>Typology Category</b>	<b>Definition</b>
E. Assessment	What types of standardized assessments being used by the program and how they might impact student skill gain.
F. Reason for increased skill gain in EL/Civics classes as compared to general ESL classes.	Perspectives about how and why the data indicates that students in EL/Civics program demonstrate increased skill gain on standardized assessments as compared to general ESL students.
G. Differences between EL/Civics and ESL	Perspectives on the fundamental differences between EL/Civics instruction and ESL instruction.

The data analysis for this study is divided into four parts: (a) data analysis for Oregon Community College 6, (b) data analysis for Oregon Community College 10, Downtown Campus, (c) data analysis for Oregon Community College 10, Wooded Campus and (d) a cross-case analysis of both Community College 6 and Community College 10. Since Community College 10's ESL program had completely different program designs at the two campuses where EL/Civics classes were taught, it was determined that the findings would be more interesting if each campus were analyzed separately as well as the entire program comprehensively.

The typology illustrated above (Table 6) was used to analyze the data from each college into the four parts discussed in the previous paragraph. After the typology was developed to analyze the data that were collected, the interview transcripts were read for each college separately and entries were marked, or coded, related to the created typology categories and the research questions. This was accomplished by reading through the data for a college several times focusing on one typological category at a time and searching for evidence that related to the specific typology, marking it for further reference. After

each typology search, an evidence summary page was created for each typology. Once the data had been reviewed by typology and evidence was found that supported each, a summary sheet for each interview was created by typological category. Creating summary sheets for each interview by typological category helped illuminate the themes arising from the data. Next, each of the summary sheets was reviewed, by college/campus for each individual that had been interviewed, and themes were identified by reducing the codes into themes within the typology. A theme sheet was developed for each of the following: (a) Oregon Community College 10, Downtown Campus, (b) Oregon Community College 10, Wooded Campus, and (c) Oregon Community College 6. Both of the theme sheets for the Oregon Community College 10 sites were read and then synthesized into a single theme sheet for the college. Finally, all of the theme sheets were reviewed and a single cross-college theme sheet by typology was compiled.

The last piece of the analysis was to review the coded interviews to retrieve the supporting evidence in the data for each of the themes that arose both at the individual campus level to the cross-college level that could be used in the narrative descriptions of the two colleges.

#### *Program Profiles*

Oregon Community College 10 is located in the southern region of the state of Oregon. The college has a service district of 4,442 square miles that covers 2 large, rural counties. The combined population of the two counties is 274,341. The college serves approximately 14,500 students on 3 campuses and at a variety of college learning centers and community locations around the district. The 3 campuses are located in a mid-sized



city (population 75,000), a small town (population 25,000), and a small, rural town (population 6,000). Of those 14,500 students, an average of 526 students is enrolled in English as a Second Language classes. Of those 526 ESL students, an average of 230 is enrolled in EL/Civics classes per year (see Table 7). The Oregon Community College 10 Adult Basic Skills Division offers ESL and EL/Civics classes on two of the three campuses as well as at locations in the community such as churches and community centers.

**Table 7. OR Community College 10 ESL and EL/Civics 5-Year Enrollment Figures.**

<b>OR Community College 10</b>	<b>2002-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>5 year average</b>
<b>ESL Program</b>	455	527	482	573	596	526
<b>EL/Civics Program</b>	276	277	257	145	191	230

Oregon Community College 6 resides in a county that is 4620 square miles and has a population of 322,959. The main campus of the community college is located in city with a population of 148,000, 45% of the county population. The college serves approximately 17,000 students across a 4600 square mile area that ranges from the Cascade Mountain range to the Central Oregon Coast. In addition to the main campus the college has several learning centers located throughout its service district. Of the 17,000 students served by the college, an average of 708 students is enrolled in English as a Second Language classes. Of those 708 ESL students, an average of 162 students is enrolled in EL/Civics classes per year (see Table 8). Although Oregon Community College 6 offers ESL classes on the main campus and at many outreach centers, it only offers EL/Civics classes at the Downtown Center.

**Table 8. OR Community College 6 ESL and EL/Civics 5-Year Enrollment Figures.**

OR Community College 6	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	5 year average
<b>ESL Program</b>	870	804	618	606	645	708
<b>EL/Civics Program</b>	193	193	138	167	122	162

*Data themes by site**Oregon Community College 10: Downtown Campus*

Downtown Campus resides in the downtown of the largest city in the county. The campus is more urban than rural in comparison to the Wooded Campus located 30 miles away in a smaller town. The campus is situated on several blocks of the central downtown area and is surrounded by restaurants, coffee shops and many local businesses. The ESL and EL/Civics classrooms are located in a refurbished department store building.

There were five significant themes that emerged from the data from the Downtown Campus at Oregon Community College 10 to describe the reasons for increased skill gain in EL/Civics students. The themes fell into the following typological categories: (a) Program Design, (b) Instructional Approach, (c) Professional Development, (d) Assessment, and (e) Student Demographics.

Under the typology of Program Design, the overall theme that emerged was that EL/Civics is integrated into the general ESL program at the campus and that is completely seamless to students. Students do not sign up for an EL/Civics class, specifically, nor are they told that they are enrolled in an EL/Civics class. EL/Civics classes at the Downtown Campus are blended into the design of the ESL program. For example, at the Downtown Campus, there are four levels of ESL classes. Each year, it is

determined that EL/Civics will be taught at a specific level by a specific instructor. When students are assessed to determine their proficiency in English and for placement into a class, they are notified of the level into which they will be placed. The only individuals who are aware that the class is an EL/Civics class are the instructors and the EL/Civics coordinator. One study participant articulated the integration of EL/Civics into the program by stating:

“We have four levels of ESL and the EL/Civics teachers are integrated in the ESL program. For example, this term we have our nighttime staff, we have four classes, Beginning through Advanced, and all of the teachers are EL/Civics, but that can change term to term. It is transparent to the student, they don’t know they’re in an EL/Civics class, and that’s not said anywhere. It’s just that it is informing the teacher’s instruction. They might talk about civics, they might use that word, but we never say in our scheduling or in our discussions with students that you are in an EL/Civics class.”

Another participant indicated that “When they [students] come in, they don’t say, ‘I want to be in a civics class.’ They say they want to learn English, and then they are put into those level classes.” Additionally, this participant stated:

“EL/Civics students or students who are later identified as being in EL/Civics are not treated differently and they’re not assigned classes specifically,…” “What makes them Civics or not is whether that instructor is paid by the EL/Civics budget and is designated as an EL/Civics instructor for the year.”

Within the Instructional Approach typology, the theme that emerged was that EL/Civics instruction differs from general ESL instruction in curriculum, instructional materials, and instructional approach. The curriculum used in the EL/Civics classes is the EL/Civics Planning Guide that each college develops annually. The curriculum used in general ESL classes is the textbook. Additionally, the instructional materials used in EL/Civics differ from those used in general ESL classes in that there is a focus on using the *Crossroads Café* video series, authentic materials, and the civic objectives chosen for

the year. The instructional approach used in EL/Civics focuses on connecting the community and the classroom by bringing students out into the community as well as inviting the community into the classroom. A study participant indicated the difference by stating:

“I would say that the EL/Civics classes differ not so much primarily in materials, but in approach. This year we focused a lot on, as you know, getting speakers in and integrating that into what students are learning. To me, that is one of the biggest differences – speakers and also field trips. So it’s more about getting the students out into the community, bringing the community to the students.”

Another study participant summarized the difference this way:

“...the instructors work really hard to bring in real-life things and experiences. They are doing things that connect the students more to their world, their life, their community. They’re having speakers come in to talk to them about a myriad of subjects.”

And another participant discussed the differences between ESL and EL/Civics instructional approaches in this way:

“A lot of them [instructional approaches] are the same, but I think bringing the community into the classroom is stressed more [in EL/Civics classes], and vice versa, bringing the students out, and also the authentic materials are just specific to EL/Civics.”

In the category of Professional Development, the emerging theme was that all EL/Civics instructors participated in the state-facilitated professional development opportunities, which included attendance at quarterly regional EL/Civics meetings and the spring all-State EL/Civics meeting. The study participants expressed an overwhelming sentiment that the professional development opportunities offered through the EL/Civics grant program had positively impacted the quality of their instruction. The study participants said the following about how professional development has impacted their instruction:

“.. the professional development provided by EL/Civics directly impacts the quality of teaching and the conscientiousness behind it.”

“I know that they [the instructors] have special trainings. I know that they must be bringing back something that they are learning for those trainings. And they’ve got to be presenting something differently in the classroom.”

“[I] believe that professional development is the reason [for increased skill gain] – it creates stronger teachers who are more accountable and more collaborative...”

In the Assessment category, it was documented that at the Downtown Campus of Oregon Community College 10 the CASAS Listening and Reading tests were used to assess student skill level and gain and the reading assessment tool was used for placement into a class level. One fact that stood out was all of the instructors could articulate very clearly the assessment process, who was responsible for specific aspects of assessment such as pre-testing, post-testing, and were able to interpret CASAS assessment scores into levels as they corresponded to class level.

In the Student Demographics category, the emergent theme was all interviewees agreed that most students in the EL/Civics program were Hispanic or Latino. The interviewees indicated they believed between 60% and 80% of their students spoke Spanish as a native language. One participant said “our population is 80%, if not higher, Latino.” Another participant indicated that he “would say that probably 60-70% of our students are Spanish-speaking, and most of them are from Mexico.” The actual numbers collected from the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development not only support those perceived percentages, but actually demonstrate an even higher percentage than perceived by the interviewees. The state-reported data collected on the EL/Civics students attending class at the Downtown Campus indicated

that 91% of the students in the EL/Civics program at that location were Hispanic or Latino (CCWD, 2008).

In summary, at Oregon Community College 10's Downtown Campus several themes emerged from the following five typologies (a) Program Design, (b) Instructional Approach, (c) Professional Development, (d) Assessment, and (e) Student Demographics. The table below outlines the themes that correspond to the typologies identified in this study (Table 9).

**Table 9: OR Community College 10 Downtown Campus Themes by Typology**

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Program Design	EL/Civics is integrated into the general ESL program and the process for accessing an EL/Civics class is seamless for students.
Instructional Approach	EL/Civics differs from general ESL in curriculum, instructional materials, and instructional approach.
Professional Development	Instruction is reported to be positively impacted by professional development.
Assessment	Students are assessed using the CASAS Listening and Reading tools and participants knowledgeable about placement and progress assessment.
Student Demographics	Majority of students in EL/Civics program are Hispanic or Latino.

#### *Oregon Community College 10: Wooded Campus*

The Wooded Campus of Oregon Community College 10 is located in the outskirts of a lovely small town in a beautiful wooded area. The campus is more rural than the Downtown Campus. Two ESL classes are offered on the Wooded Campus in contrast to the eight offered on Downtown Campus. There is one EL/Civics class on Wooded Campus, which is the Beginning/Intermediate ESL class.

There were four significant themes that emerged from the data from the Wooded Campus at Oregon Community College 10 to describe the reasons for increased skill gain in EL/Civics students. The themes fell into the following typological categories: (a) Program Design, (b) Instructional Approach, (c) Professional Development and (d) Assessment.

In the Program Design category, the participants believed the following aspects impact the skill gain of students in the EL/Civics program on campus: (a) the EL/Civics class is integrated in the program and is transparent to students, (b) the program is open entry, open exit, and (c) the orientation, registration, assessment, and placement of the students are done individually. One study participant shared:

“My class isn’t called an EL/Civics class as such; it is incorporated into the levels and it has to do more with the instructor. I just happen to be teaching [that level], so that’s where it is at. For the students it is a seamless integration. They wouldn’t know the difference. If they go from [level] one to two, two to three, they’re not going to know, oh, I’m in a civics class or I’m not in a civics class.”

Additionally, the participants felt students might have increased skill gain because of the individual attention they receive through the open entry, open exit process. “Because it is an open door, we just try to serve them whenever they come in the door and we accommodate them. I feel like they get really good service because they have contact with me.”

In the area of Instructional Approach, interviewees indicated that as a result of the EL/Civics class being thematically organized the lessons taught were better than those taught in the general ESL class on campus. One participant noted: “In regular ESL, I might not be as thematically oriented if I’m going by what I used to do. In regular ESL

there is less interest in trying to bring what I call the outside world into the classroom or sending students out into it, so less incorporation of authentic experience or authentic materials.”

In the category of Professional Development, the participants strongly believed instruction was better as a result of the professional development opportunities offered to EL/Civics participants. The practitioners described the better instruction by stating that they felt their instruction was more organized, their lesson plans were more focused and flowed more clearly and that the contextualization of the language within the themes created a more relevant approach to teaching English. Participants felt that as a result of the state-sponsored professional development the instructor always returned to the classroom with new ideas and new instructional approaches which in turn made them stronger instructors.

In the area of Assessment, it was indicated by study participants that all students entering both the ESL and EL/Civics programs were given standardized assessments on an individual basis. The assessment tool used with all students was the BEST Plus, a listening and speaking tool. Similar to the study participants at Downtown Campus, the participants at Wooded Campus were able to clearly articulate the assessment process and the roles each played in ensuring that students were assessed, placed and post-tested properly.

In summary, at Oregon Community College 10's Wooded Campus a variety of themes emerged from the following four typologies (a) Program Design, (b) Instructional



Approach, (c) Professional Development, (d) Assessment. The table below outlines the themes that correspond to the typologies identified in this study (Table 10).

**Table 10: Oregon Community College 10 Wooded Campus Themes by Typology**

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Program Design	EL/Civics is integrated into the general ESL program and the process for accessing an EL/Civics class is seamless to students.
Instructional Approach	EL/Civics classes are thematically organized and as a result the instruction is better than in general ESL classes.
Professional Development	Instruction is reported to be positively impacted by professional development.
Assessment	Students are individually assessed using the BEST Plus assessment tool and participants knowledgeable about placement and progress assessment.

### *Oregon Community College 6*

The EL/Civics classes at Oregon Community College 6 are only offered at the college's Downtown Center, which is located in the heart of downtown, near the public library and the bus station, in a refurbished department store building.

There were five significant themes that emerged from the data from Oregon Community College 6 to describe the reasons for increased skill gain in EL/Civics students. The themes fell into the following typological categories: (a) Program Design, (b) Instructional Approach, (c) Professional Development, (d) Assessment, and (e) Student Demographics.

In the category of Program Design, the study participants indicated that the EL/Civics classes were integrated in the overall ESL program at the Downtown Center

and were transparent to the student. Additionally, at Oregon Community College 6, the EL/Civics classes are only taught at specific levels (Levels 3 and above). At the time of data collection the classes were Level 5, Level 6 and Level 3. They did not offer EL/Civics classes at levels lower than Level 3. As one participant stated: "Being in an EL/Civics class is transparent to the student. Students are placed into levels. If they are placed into level, 3, 5, or 6 in the evening, they are in a Civics class."

For the area of Instructional Approach, all study participants discussed the use of the EL/Civics Planning Guide to inform their instruction, the use of authentic materials in addition to textbooks, and that they taught the concepts of language within the context of the civic objective being taught. Participants indicated that these instructional approaches were significantly different than those used in the general ESL classes they had taught. Additionally, the participants felt there could be a relationship between increased student skill gain and the connection to the community and the real-life application of the civics objectives. The instructors interviewed put more effort into connecting the students to the outside community that they believe it had an impact on students skills. One study participant noted that "there is an overlying theme in the EL/Civics classes that focus the instruction differently than general ESL classes." A study participant articulated it like this: "EL/Civics has layered context and it is a way to focus the class. Teaching grammar with the context of a theme is different than for ESL classes which are more grammar focused." Another participant stated that "EL/Civics classes have more connection to the community interaction and involvement – field trips, speakers, etc." and "ESL classes are

skills-based and less focused on the everyday life and connection to community that EL/Civics is.”

The study participants felt that the state-sponsored EL/Civics professional development offerings had impacted their instruction. It had influenced and changed how they taught. It was through these professional opportunities that they were able to share ideas, activities and practices with other instructors from around the state. The participants indicated that one reason EL/Civics students were demonstrating higher skill gains on assessments could be related to the enrichment of their instruction as a result of consistent professional development. One participant summarized the sentiment by stating “I feel that the professional development impacts my instruction and that I have learned so much therefore influencing and changing my instruction.”

At Oregon Community College 6, the EL/Civics students are tested using both the BEST Plus and the CASAS Reading assessments. All students are put through an intake process that requires they first be assessed using the BEST Plus assessment. If they “top out” or score too high for the score to be considered valid, then the students are given the CASAS Reading appraisal. Additionally, it was noted that all interviewees were knowledgeable about the intake and assessment processes for EL/Civics students.

In the category of Student Demographics, the study participants acknowledged that a high percentage of the students in their EL/Civics classes were Spanish-speakers. The data collected from the state database indicated that this is the case with 84% of the students in the EL/Civics program as native Spanish-speakers (Hispanic or Latino).

In summary, at Oregon Community College 6 a variety of themes emerged from the following five typologies (a) Program Design, (b) Instructional Approach, (c) Professional Development, (d) Assessment and (e) Student Demographics. The table below outlines the themes that correspond to the typologies identified in this study (Table 11).

**Table 11. Oregon Community College 6 Themes Across Typology**

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Program Design	EL/Civics is integrated into the general ESL program and the process for accessing EL/Civics classes is seamless to students.
Instructional Approach	EL/Civics classes are thematically organized and as a result the instruction is better than in general ESL classes.
Professional Development	Instruction is reported to be better as a result of professional development.
Assessment	Students are individually assessed using the BEST Plus assessment tool and the CASAS Reading tool. Participants were knowledgeable about placement and progress assessment.
Student Demographics	Majority of students in the EL/Civics program are Hispanic or Latino.

#### *Cross-site Themes*

After separately analyzing the data from Oregon Community College 10 and from Oregon Community College 6, a cross-case analysis of both programs was conducted to determine if there existed common themes. Common themes were identified in five of the typologies: (a) Program Design, (b) Instructional Approach, (c) Professional Development, (d) Assessment, and (e) Student Demographics.

In the category of Program Design, the common theme was that participants indicated that EL/Civics was fully integrated into the ESL programs at the selected sites and that the process for placing into an EL/Civics class was seamless because the EL/Civics classes are part of the overall ESL class offering in each program. Just as important, the process for placing into an EL/Civics class was identical to placement into general ESL classes and was a completely seamless process for the students. For example, a new student enrolling in the ESL program would participate in the intake and assessment process. The results of the assessment would determine into which class he/she would be placed. If his score determined placement into a Level 5 EL/Civics class, the student wouldn't be told that he/she was enrolling in a Civics class, but rather that he/she was enrolling in a class to learn English. Once in class, the student would learn English within the context of the civic objective being taught. In both programs at both colleges this was the case; EL/Civics was fully integrated into the ESL program and was a seamless process for the students.

Within the typology of Instructional Approach, at all study sites it was found that participants believed that the difference between ESL and EL/Civics instruction was in the use of the Planning Guide to inform instruction, the use of authentic materials and contexts, and the connection between classroom and community. The participants believed that these different instructional approaches bore significantly on students' skill gain on standardized assessments.

Across sites there was a strong belief among study participants that engagement in the state-sponsored professional development trainings positively impacted the quality of

instruction. From the perspective of the study participants, the EL/Civics quarterly meetings enabled them to share best teaching practices and gain professional wisdom from peers. The consistent access to professional development is believed by the participants to enhance teaching techniques and directly impact the instruction and ultimately student learning.

Interestingly, it was noted that both colleges used both the BEST Plus and CASAS Reading assessment tools to test, place and track skill gain of students. Whether or not this has any significance will have to be determined in another study.

Lastly, in the EL/Civics programs at both colleges there were extremely high percentages of students whose native language was Spanish, 90% at one and 84% at the other. In this case, at both colleges, the study participants perceived a very high number of students who spoke Spanish as a native language. The data collected from all sites as well as the quantitative data collected from CCWD support this perception.

As with the individual sites, the themes that were revealed through the typology were linked to the research questions for this study. For the cross-case analysis, a table with the typologies and the themes within each typology was created just as were created for each individual site (Table 12).

**Table 12. Cross-site Typology by Themes.**

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Program Design	EL/Civics is integrated into the general ESL program and the process is seamless for students.
Instructional Approach	EL/Civics classes are thematically organized and as a result the instruction is better than in general ESL classes.  EL/Civics classes use authentic materials

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Themes</b>
	and contexts.  EL/Civics classes focus on the connection between the classroom and the community.
Professional Development	Instruction is better as a result of professional development.
Assessment	Students are individually assessed using the BEST Plus assessment tool and the CASAS Reading tool. Participants knew about placement and progress assessment.
Student Demographics	Majority of students in the EL/Civics program are Hispanic or Latino, sharing the same native language.

### *Summary*

This chapter focused on the analysis of the data and the themes that arose from the data at each of the sites and then, collectively. Across the sites it was found that almost identical themes emerged from the data as related to the research typology. As a way to conclude this section of the study, it is important to reflect on how the themes that emerged from the data across the sites address the four research questions: (a) Could certain aspects of program design relate to increased student skill gain and level completion rates? (b) Could curriculum and/or instructional strategies influence student skill gain and level completion? (c) Could instructor professional development have a relationship to student skill gain and level completion? or (d) Could student demographic factors be connected to student skill gain and level completion? Table 13 provides a visual overview of the themes shared across sites that pertain to each research question.

**Table 13. Research Questions and Themes.**

Question 1: Could certain aspects of program design have an effect on student skill gain/level completion?	Question 2: Could curriculum and/or instructional strategies influence student skill gain/level completion?	Question 3: Could instructor professional development play a role in student skill gain/level completion?	Question 4: Could student demographic factors be connected to student skill gain/level completion?
<p>EL/Civics fully integrated into general ESL program and is transparent to student.</p> <p>BEST Plus and CASAS assessment tools used at both sites.</p>	<p>Theme-based instruction using pre-approved Civic Objectives, use of authentic materials and contexts, connection between classroom and community make EL/Civics instruction different from ESL classes resulting in better instruction.</p>	<p>Consistent engagement in professional development positively impacts instruction.</p>	<p>Majority of students in EL/Civics classrooms share same native language and home country.</p>



## Section 5: Discussion and Implications

*“Writers need to balance content about their subject matter with good research discussions. The sections of a report need to interrelate so that a proposal or a final study is an integrated set of ideas.” (Creswell, 2005)*

The final section of a research study is intended to bring the reader back full circle to where we started; the research questions. The final chapter brings closure to those questions by discussing the major themes that arose from the research study data. The purpose of this study was to more clearly understand, from the perspective of practitioners, why Oregon EL/Civics programs were demonstrating higher levels of student skill gain as compared to Oregon ESL programs. This chapter discusses the findings from the research as it relates to the review of literature, addresses implications for practice, suggests directions for future research in this area, and provides a personal reflection on the topic.

### *Discussion and Reflection*

This section discusses and reflects upon the significance of the collected data as related to the research questions posed at the beginning of the study, in particular as related to both the themes that arose from the data as well as the literature review in Section 2. The overarching research question that guided this study was: “From the perspective of study participants, why do EL/Civics programs in Oregon demonstrate higher student skill completion rates than their counterpart ESL programs?” The secondary research questions used to focus the main research question were:

- 1) Could student demographic factors have a relationship to increased skill level completion rates?

- 2) Could certain aspects of programming relate to increased student skill level completion rates?
- 3) Could curriculum and/or instructional strategies influence student skill level completion rates?
- 4) Could instructor professional development have an impact on student skill level completion rates?

The secondary research questions were developed based on previous research on ESL student skill gain and were included to help focus the study on areas relevant to EL/Civics. In discussing the research questions, it is important to align the themes from the data with the research. As each research question is discussed, it is discussed within the context of the typology used to analyze and organize the data. The typology that guided the data analysis and organization was divided into seven areas based on the research questions: (a) Program design, (b) Instructional Approach, (c) Professional Development, (d) Assessment, (e) Student Demographics, (f) Perceived reason for increase skill level completion in EL/Civics, and (g) Differences between EL/Civics and ESL.

#### *Discussion of Research Question # 1*

The first research question asked: “Could student demographic factors have a relationship to student skill gain?” Across all study sites, the consistent theme that arose related to student demographics was that the majority of the students enrolled in the EL/Civics classes at Oregon Community College 6 and Oregon Community College 10 were native Spanish-speakers. There is research that suggests that native language

support while learning another language can increase skill acquisition in the learned language. Additionally, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests that the use of students' native language in the ESL classroom is an effective, if not necessary, practice and that using native language resources can be beneficial at all levels of ESL (Auerbach, 1993). In this study, it was not determined if the instructors who were interviewed spoke Spanish or not. Additionally, the results of this study do not provide conclusive support of the research question. In this study, it was discovered that a very high percentage of students at both study sites spoke Spanish as a first language, yet there was not convincing evidence that there were formal processes for providing native language support to students in the classroom as a way to promote increased literacy skill gain. At the same time, the researcher's professional experience allows her to posit that many ESL instructors welcome the use of students' native language in the classroom as a vehicle to make linguistic skill gain in English. In the classrooms that were observed for this study, instructors were observed allowing, if not encouraging, students to use their own language with peers to help them understand what was taught in English. Unfortunately, because this study did not yield conclusive evidence in this area, one must recommend that further research be conducted on the connection between native language support and student skill gain.

#### *Discussion of Research Question # 2*

The second research question asked was: "Could certain aspects of programming be related to student skill gain?" Two themes arose from the study related to programming: (1) the EL/Civics classes are integrated into the overall ESL program at

the colleges studied resulting in a seamless process for students and (2) both colleges used the CASAS and the BESTPlus assessments for placement and progress assessment tools. From a program design perspective it is interesting that both colleges chose to integrate the EL/Civics program into the ESL program that was already designed as opposed to creating a new, stand alone program. When reflecting on what adult education theorists consider crucial elements of effective program planning models, a particular practice comes to mind: “Effective program planning models are holistic systems that are composed of interrelated and integrated parts that form a whole” (Boone et al., 2002). Peter Senge once wrote: “From a very early age, we are taught to break apart problems, to fragment the world. This apparently makes complex tasks and subjects more manageable, but we pay a hidden, enormous price. We can no longer see the consequences of our actions; we lose our intrinsic sense of connection to a larger whole” (Senge as cited in Josey-Bass, 2000, p. 13). Both Oregon Community College 6 and Oregon Community College 10 ESL programs made the decision to focus on the larger whole, in this case their ESL programs as a whole, when making program planning decisions related to the EL/Civics program. Each program chose to integrate the EL/Civics program into the larger whole of the existing ESL program instead of making EL/Civics a stand-alone, separate, add-on program in which students could choose to enroll. Whether or not the program directors and instructors were contemplating adult education program planning model theories is unknown. However, it is conceivable that familiarity with adult education learning theory and program planning models in conjunction with knowledge and use of the Oregon Adult Basic Skills Indicators of

Program Quality framework influenced the decision to integrate the EL/Civics classes into the overall ESL program at each college was somewhat strategic. However, this possibility was not explored in depth in this study; therefore there is not concrete evidence that the program directors at both schools were influenced by adult education learning theory and/or adult education program planning models when deciding to integrate the EL/Civics programs into the overall ESL programs at their sites. The program directors had knowledge of the Oregon Indicators of Program Quality because they are the required standards used for evaluation of Oregon ABS programs. However, it was not explored in depth the degree to which the IPQs influenced program design. It would be an interesting future study to investigate the effectiveness of program planning and design.

Equally fascinating is that both Oregon Community College 6 and Oregon Community College 10 use the same assessment tools to place and progress test EL/Civics and ESL students. What is interesting is that although they use the same standardized assessment tools, they are not used in the same way. Oregon Community College 6 uses the BESTPlus for lower level ESL students, then transitions to the CASAS Reading once a student has topped out (meaning the student has a score that is too high to be considered valid) on the BESTPlus. Oregon Community Colleges 10 uses CASAS Reading at the Downtown Campus and the BESTPlus at the Wooded Campus. Of equal interest is that although they use the same tools, but in different capacities, there was a clear understanding on the part of all interviewees about the use of the assessment tools for placement, progress testing, and transition. Each instructor and director spoke

knowledgeably about how the tests were administered, how students were placed, how students were progress tested. In the researcher's professional experience working with all 12 EL/Civics programs and all 17 ESL programs in Oregon, this is a unique phenomenon.

As discussed in the literature review section of this study, program planning of adult education programs is critical to meeting the needs of the learners. One way to ensure that learner needs are met is to design a program using the following assumptions to guide program planning as outlined by Boone and colleagues (2002): (a) "that programming is directed toward change in behavior of the individual adult learner, of learner groups, and of institutionalized learner systems", (b) "that programming is a decision-making process", (c) "that programming is a collaborative effort", (d) "that programming in adult education is a system; its parts are interrelated, ordered, and linked to form a collective whole", and (e) "that programming is the principal means by which the adult education organization obtains systematic and continuous feedback" (pp. 3-5).

In conclusion, the data that were collected from each of the study sites suggests that program design is an important component of adult English as a Second Language programs. What was discovered was intriguing in that both study sites integrated the EL/Civics program into the overall ESL program, making it part of the progression of courses that an ESL student might encounter. However, one is left with more questions than answers as related to this research question. An entire research project could be dedicated to this topic alone.

*Research Question #3*

The third research question asked was: “Could curriculum and/or instructional strategies influence student skill gain?” Three themes emerged from the data related to this question: (1) that theme-based instruction based on the approved Civics Objectives resulted in better instruction in the EL/Civics classroom as compared with the ESL classroom, (2) that the use of authentic materials and contexts positively impacted instruction, and (3) that the intentional connection between classroom and community resulted in more effective instruction in the EL/Civics program as compared to the ESL program. Study participants believed that these three instructional strategies/approaches impacted how they instructed and ultimately, students’ language acquisition.

Each of the Oregon EL/Civics programs is required to select, at a minimum, three approved Civic Competency Areas and corresponding Civic Objectives as instructional foci each program year (June 30-July1). The Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development adopted the California Civic Objectives as the approved list of objectives from which an Oregon EL/Civics programs are allowed to choose. Each college that has an EL/Civics grant submits a Planning Guide that outlines which Competency Areas, Civic Objectives, and corresponding Language and Literacy Objectives were chosen. The theory behind theme-based or content-based instruction is that language acquisition occurs more quickly than with non-content-based instruction because there is an emphasis placed on content that is meaningful to students (Sticht, 1997). Research suggests a linkage between content-based instruction and student skill gain (Brown, 2004; Wiesen, 2000; Kasper, 1997; Sticht, 1997; Case et al; 2005). The

principal reason for selecting the EL/Civics grant program as an area of research was that the cumulative data suggested that something was occurring in EL/Civics programs that was influencing skill gain. Although as a whole, all Oregon EL/Civics programs, demonstrate higher skill gain percentages than their counterpart ESL programs, the two sites chosen for the study demonstrated the highest difference between the two programs. When showed the skill gain data as part of the interviews, independent of one another, the study participants believed the reason for the higher levels of student skill gain in the EL/Civics classes were directly related to the use of content-based instruction (using the civic objectives to frame instruction).

Secondly, the study participants articulated a belief in the use of authentic materials related to the civic objectives as significant to the skill gain difference. Authentic materials and contexts mean that instruction is enhanced through the use of materials that students would use and/or encounter in their lives outside the classroom. Research on use of authentic materials and context in ESL classrooms showed that “when they [learners] used authentic materials inside the classroom, they were more likely to engage in literacy activities outside the classroom (p. 1, Purcell-Gates, Degener, Jacobson, and Soler, 2001 as cited by CalPro, 2007)”. Engaging in literacy activities outside the classroom is a key to acquiring language.

Lastly, the study participants felt that a contributor to student skill gain was the connection between classroom and the outside world. Connection between the classroom and the community is achieved in a variety of ways; for example, through fieldtrips, guest speakers, attending community events as a group. The theory is that by engaging students



with the community as a classroom activity, they will be more likely to engage on their own outside the classroom, resulting in increased exposure to native English speakers and ultimately increased English literacy skills. In the study conducted by Condelli et al. (2003), it was discovered that in the ESL classes where the teacher frequently connected the outside world to the classroom, there was positive linear growth of English literacy skills. This suggests that when instructors make use of a deliberate connection between the outside world and the classroom as an instructional strategy, it appears to be effective in increasing student language skill gain (Condelli et al., 2003).

It is intriguing that the three themes that emerged from the data in this study related to instruction echo findings in many ESL research projects. Of the answers to the four research questions that were posed, the answers that were found to the question about instructional strategies as well as professional development, discussed in the next section, appear to be most closely tied with significant research on the adult ESL population and how language and literacy skills are best acquired.

#### *Research Question # 4*

The final research question asked was: “Could instructor professional development have an impact on student skill gain? Across both study sites, participants indicated that their involvement in consistent professional development had a positive impact on instruction. Participants felt that since engagement in professional development had an impact on instruction that it must have some impact on student language acquisition. Because this study was exploratory in nature, it did not look in depth at the direct impact of the instruction of teachers who participated in targeted

professional development activities on student skill gain. Instead the study focused on the perceptions of EL/Civics professionals of their engagement in professional development activities as related to the impact of said activities.

All Oregon programs with an EL/Civics grant are required to have instructors attend quarterly State-sponsored professional development. All of the EL/Civics instructors interviewed for this study regularly participated in the professional development activities provided by the state. In reviewing literature about the connection between professional development and increased student achievement five key elements were discovered to have an impact: (1) content-focused, subject-matter, intensive professional development activities; (2) professional development focused on how students learn; (3) professional development activities utilizing specific teaching techniques directly related to subject matter and curriculum; (4) intensity and duration of professional development; and (5) the design and coherence of professional development (DiCerbo & Duran, 2006; AERA, 2005; Yoon et al., 2007). The impression from the study participants was that by actively participating in the provided professional development activities that they learned new strategies and approaches that they incorporated into their instruction. The organization and development of the quarterly EL/Civics professional development opportunities is coordinated by an advisory committee comprised of EL/Civics instructors and coordinators from six of the EL/Civics programs in Oregon and the educational specialist from CCWD. The role of the EL/Civics advisory committee is to represent the interest of EL/Civics instructors in Oregon and work with CCWD to organize, develop and, in many cases, help facilitate the

quarterly professional opportunities. When developing professional activities for the field, the advisory committee takes into consideration many of the key elements listed above that have been shown to impact student skill gain. However, the advisory committee has been planning professional development activities without having researched the connection between professional development and student gain, but instead with their knowledge of best practices in professional development. Professional development activities are specifically designed for Oregon EL/Civics instructors with a focus on the civic objectives, program objectives, connecting the classroom to the community, and authentic materials. The meetings are delivered by modeling good instruction, using multiple modalities to accommodate a variety of learning styles, following an effectively sequenced lesson plan format that supports how adults learn, providing opportunities for instructors to share professional wisdom as it relates to EL/Civics instruction, and engaging all instructors in content-specific activities. EL/Civics instructors commit to participating in four full days of professional development per year; one day in the fall, one day in the winter, and two days in the spring. Each full day of professional development is 6 hours in length with additional participation on a state-wide wiki. As such the instructors become a community of learners sharing professional wisdom and focusing on best practices in civics literacy instruction for adults.

In summary, upon closer examination, the five key elements of sound professional development that have been shown to effect instruction and, in turn, positively impact student skill gain, are present in the professional development

opportunities designed for EL/Civics instructors in Oregon. Professional activities are tied closely to the approved civic objectives used in instruction, model instructional strategies that can be used with students in the classroom that are specific to the civic objectives, are provided continuously and consistently each year (intensity and duration), and designed to foster a community of learners. As mentioned in the previous section about instructional strategies and student skill gain, a study about the effect of professional development on instruction and student skill gain seems a logical research direction. This topic is discussed at greater length in the section on implications of this study on future research directions.

#### *Implications for Practice*

In addition to discussing the themes that arose from the study related to the research questions, it is important to reflect upon the potential implications for practice. The themes that arose from the research provide an opportunity for the field of adult education to gain insights from the professional wisdom of the Oregon practitioners who participated in this study. Of the themes that emerged from this research, there are three themes that could have direct implications for practice in Oregon. In this section potential implications for practice are discussed as related to each of the three themes for three groups: (1) for administrators of ABS programs, (2) for ESL instructors, and (3) for ESL students. The implications for practice are discussed as they relate to administrators, instructors, and students within the context of the theme itself. As is the nature of qualitative research, it may occur to the reader that there are more implications for practice than those presented. However, as a researcher and as a professional in the field

of adult education, the researcher believes the three groups for which the implications for practice are discussed are the ones for which the findings could have the most impact and through whom the most change could occur.

*Theme 1: EL/Civics classes integrated into the overall ESL program*

When prompted to discuss how the EL/Civics program was designed at their respective sites, all of the study participants indicated that the EL/Civics classes were integrated into the overall ESL program and were not offered as separate, stand alone courses. As mentioned in the previous section in the discussion about research question #2, the fact that both the program at Oregon Community College 6 and at Oregon Community College 10 integrated EL/Civics classes into the already designed ESL programs was an interesting discovery as part of this research. Instead of choosing to make the EL/Civics program a stand-alone, elective class, EL/Civics classes were integrated into the already developed ESL class structure. As Boone and colleagues (2002) propose, effective program planning models focus on how to select and organize the learning experience and learner activities. It is important for ABS administrators that manage EL/Civic grants to consider that, perhaps, greater success would be evident if EL/Civics was thoughtfully integrated into the already existing ESL program. Aside from EL/Civics, this theme has implications for how administrators plan the activities of additional external grant programs as well as external education initiatives. Most Requests for Proposals attached to grant funds require some level of sustainability past the end date of the grant cycle in order to award funding. By integrating the EL/Civics classes into the already existing ESL program, there is more likely to be a continuation of

the program if and when the grant cycle ends. The integration approach seems more in alignment with organizational theorists such as Margaret Wheatley who suggests that organizations need to be holistic and “viewed as an integrated system rather than as a collection of discrete parts” (1999, p.12) and Peter Senge who stresses the importance of interconnectivity within a whole within organizations.

As an external observer of the EL/Civics programs in Oregon, it seems that the choice on behalf of the two colleges that participated in this study to weave the EL/Civics program into the already existing fabric of the ESL program was a wise one for two reasons. First, it integrated the EL/Civics program into the already existing design of the ESL program at that college, therefore giving the program equal value as the general ESL program. Secondly, by integrating the EL/Civics program into the existing ESL program, it is invisible to the student and becomes part of the course offerings in the department. Because of its integration, it could be argued that even without funding, the program could still exist.

*Theme 2: Instructional Strategies used in EL/Civics classes*

All of the study participants overwhelmingly indicated that a critical difference between the instruction in the EL/Civics classes and the ESL classes were that EL/Civics classes were contextualized, used authentic contexts and materials, and connected the classroom to the community. At the two colleges that participated in this study, the literacy practitioners felt that the instructional strategies used in the EL/Civics classes were distinct from those employed in general ESL classes and that the differences lied in how the instruction was contextualized, materials made authentic, and how the students

in the classes were connected to the community. In an era of increased interest in performance-based funding and outcomes assessment, it would seem that this theme carries major implications for practice for administrators, instructors, and ultimately, students. For administrators and instructors in Oregon, whose ABS programs are funded using a performance-based funding model, it would seem important to begin conversations about how to replicate the instructional strategies used in the EL/Civics classes in the general ESL classes because of the apparent connection between increased student skill gain on standardized tests and instruction in the EL/Civics classes. Indeed, if students are experiencing increased skill gain in EL/Civics courses as compared to general ESL classes as a result of instructional strategies, then the benefits of gaining English skills more quickly would be great for the students. Students would more quickly be able to participate in the fabric of the community in which they are living as workers, family members, and community members.

*Theme #3: Participation in quarterly professional development activities positively impacted instruction*

As discussed in the literature review section as well as in the section dedicated to the discussion and reflection of the findings of this research project, research has suggested that certain elements related to the content, focus, delivery method, intensity, and design of professional development activities have a positive impact on instruction. All of the instructors who participated in this study have been actively participating in the Oregon EL/Civics professional development activities throughout the course of the grant. Additionally, instructors, not interviewed, also participate in the quarterly EL/Civics professional development activities. In Oregon, a stipulation to the continuation of

funding is that each college receiving EL/Civics grant funds must have instructors attend the appropriate professional development activities. The perception of the study participants is that engagement in the EL/Civics professional development activities has directly and positively impacted their instruction. The study participants believe that the changes in their instruction as a result of participating in the EL/Civics professional development opportunities have a direct connection to increased student skill gain as compared to counterpart ESL classes. With increased focus on outcomes assessment and performance-based funding, this finding has significant implications for practice in Oregon and nationally. Additionally, for students, the implications related to increased skill gain are important. Students want to learn English well and as quickly as possible so as to participate more fully in daily life in Oregon. If professional development has a positive impact on instruction and in turn, is helping students gain greater English skills, then it not only benefits the program, but also the students.

#### *Implications for Future Research*

The purpose of this research was to better understand, from the perspectives of adult literacy practitioners, why the Oregon EL/Civics programs were demonstrating higher levels of student skill gain as compared to Oregon ESL programs. The hope in conducting this research was to discover insights into this phenomenon from the professional wisdom of those instructors and administrators who work intimately with the EL/Civics grant program every day. While the themes that arose from the data collected in this study provide suggestions about why students are demonstrating higher skill gain on standardized assessments in EL/Civics programs, they also emphasize a need for



continued research in this area. As such, in this section four possible future research topics are presented for consideration.

1. Contextualized ESL instruction compared to non-contextualized ESL instruction as it relates to increased skill development in adult non-native English speakers. This study focused on exploring what practitioners believe to be the reasons for increased skill gain in EL/Civics classes versus ESL classes. One of the themes that arose from the study was that the practitioners believed that it could be related to how instruction is contextualized in the EL/Civics classes at their sites. A study could be conducted that compares the skill gain of students in those classes where instruction is contextualized with the skill gain of students in classes where instruction is not contextualized.
2. The impact of native language majority on skill gain in adult ESL classes. The two programs that were studied had EL/Civics classes with native language majority, which could impact student skill gain as a result of native language peer support or the instructor's ability to help in the students' native language. An interesting study could be conducted on this topic. For example, it would be interesting to compare and contrast adult ESL classes that have native language majority with adult ESL classes that have do not. Another study could look at the impact of native language support in the ESL classroom.
3. The impact of professional development on instruction and student skill gain. All of the study participants interviewed for this research project indicated that a key difference between the EL/Civics classes and the general ESL classes they taught

was that EL/Civics instructors participated in quarterly state-sponsored professional development activities. The participants believed that the involvement in these professional activities positively impacted their instruction and could be a factor in student skill gain. A study that investigated the impact of professional development on instruction and student skill gain in adult ESL programs would be a logical future research project.

4. The importance of program design and sustainability of programs. Many experts in the field of adult education have suggested the importance of program design (Boone et al, 2002). The theme that arose from this study was that if the EL/Civics grant program was fully integrated into the existing ESL program. Therefore, EL/Civics classes were part of a student's course of study in ESL. Having been involved in grant programming for many years, the researcher wondered how important program design is to the sustainability of grant programs or pilot projects. With grant funds being the bulk of funding for adult education programs, it would be interesting to conduct a study on the relationship between program design and implementation and the long-term sustainability of grant programs (seed money).

The purpose of Chapter 5 was to offer a discussion of the themes that arose from the data within the context of the original research questions as well as discuss implications for practice and future research. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives of Oregon EL/Civics practitioners in order to better understand why Oregon EL/Civics programs are demonstrating higher levels of

student skill gain as compared to Oregon ESL programs. The main purpose for researching perspectives of practitioners was to seek the professional wisdom of the individuals who provide instruction and instructional support each day to adult ESL students. Their professional wisdom is beneficial to any literacy practitioner searching for program models where student skill gain is consistently high. In the role of an educator, the researcher has learned much from the ten study participants and is thankful for their dedication, compassion, and willingness to share their wisdom with other educators. One hopes that this study provides, at a minimum, provocative suggestions about how to design an ESL program that focuses on student-centered instruction and student skill gain.

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APPENDICES

## Appendix A: National Reporting System Educational Functioning Level Descriptors ESL

Literacy Level	Listening and Speaking	Reading and Writing
<p><b>Beginning ESL Literacy</b></p> <p><b>Test Benchmark:</b> CASAS scale scores: Reading: 180 and below Listening: 180 and below BEST Plus: 400 and below (SPL 0-1)</p>	<p>Individual cannot speak or understand English, or understands only isolated words or phrases.</p>	<p>Individual has no or minimal reading and writing skills in any language. May have little or no comprehension of how print corresponds to spoken language and may have difficulty using a writing instrument.</p>
<p><b>Low Beginning ESL</b></p> <p><b>Test Benchmark:</b> CASAS scale scores: Reading: 181-190 Listening: 181-190 Writing: 136-145 BEST Plus: 401-417 (SPL 2)</p>	<p>Individual can understand basic greetings, simple phrases and commands. Can understand simple questions related to personal information, spoken slowly and with repetition. Understands a limited number of words related to immediate needs and can respond with simple learned phrases to some common questions related to routine survival situations. Speaks slowly and with difficulty. Demonstrates little to no control over grammar.</p>	<p>Individual can read numbers and letters and some common sight words. May be able to sound out simple words. Can read and write some familiar words and phrases, but has limited understanding of connected prose in English. Can write basic personal information (e.g., name, address, telephone number) and can complete simple forms that elicit this information.</p>
<p><b>High Beginning ESL</b></p> <p><b>Test Benchmarks:</b> CASAS scale scores: Reading: 191-200 Listening: 191-200 BEST Plus: 418-438 (SPL 3)</p>	<p>Individual can understand common words, simple phrases, and sentences containing familiar vocabulary, spoken slowly with some repetition. Individual can respond to simple questions about personal everyday activities, and can express immediate needs, using simple learned phrases or short sentences. Shows limited control of grammar.</p>	<p>Individual can read most sight words, and many other common words. Can read familiar phrases and simple sentences but has limited understanding of connected prose and may need frequent re-reading. Individual can write some simple sentences with limited vocabulary. Meaning may be unclear. Writing shows very little control of basic grammar, capitalization and punctuation and has many spelling errors.</p>
<p><b>Low Intermediate ESL</b></p> <p><b>Test Benchmarks:</b> CASAS scale scores: Reading: 200-210 Listening: 200-210 BEST Plus: 439-472 (SPL 4)</p>	<p>Individual can understand simple learned phrases and limited new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly with frequent repetition; can ask and respond to questions using such phrases; can express basic survival needs and participate in some routine social conversations, although with some difficulty; and has some control of basic grammar.</p>	<p>Individual can read simple material on familiar subjects and comprehend simple and compound sentences in single or linked paragraphs containing familiar vocabulary; can write simple notes and messages on familiar situations but lacks clarity and focus. Sentence structure lacks variety but shows some control of basic grammar (e.g., present and past tense) and consistent use of punctuation (e.g., periods, capitalization)</p>
<p><b>High Intermediate ESL</b></p> <p><b>Test Benchmarks:</b> CASAS scale scores: Reading: 211-220 Listening: 211-220 BEST Plus: 473-506 (SPL 5)</p>	<p>Individual can understand learned phrases and short new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly with some repetition; can communicate basic needs with some help; can participate in a conversation in limited social situations and use new phrases with hesitation; and relies on description and concrete terms. There is inconsistent control of more complex grammar.</p>	<p>Individual can read text on familiar subjects that have simple and clear underlying structure (e.g., clear main idea, main, chronological order) can use context to determine meaning; can interpret actions required in specific written directions; can write simple paragraphs by recombining learning vocabulary and structures; and can self and peer edit for spelling and punctuation errors.</p>

Appendix B  
Oregon Adult Basic Skills Education Indicators of Program Quality:  
Summary and Link to Full Document

**A. Summary**

**Program Area 1: Program Administration**

- Definition:** Systems that promote continuous improvement of services to learners.
- Goal:** To support the effective implementation of the Indicators of Program Quality and increase the quality of programming.
- Outcome:** Program meets its Title II Basic Comprehensive, Corrections, Outreach, and EL/Civics Grants goals and performance levels.

**Program Area 2: Recruitment**

- Definition:** Systems that promote continuous improvement of services to learners.
- Goal:** To support the effective implementation of the Indicators of Program Quality and increase the quality of programming.
- Outcome:** Program meets its Title II Basic Comprehensive, Corrections, Outreach, and EL/Civics Grants goals and performance levels.

**Program Area 3: Orientation**

- Definition:** A process to help learners and program providers make informed decisions about enrollment and participation based on learner goals and skills.
- Goal:** The enrollment and participation of appropriate learners.
- Outcome:** The program's orientation process provides the necessary information for learners to make informed decisions about enrollment and participation.  
Increase in the percentage of learners who attend orientation.  
Learners make informed decisions about enrollment and participation.

**Program Area 4: Assessment for Accountability and Instruction**

- Definition:** A process of measuring and documenting learners' skills to determine Oregon Educational Functioning Levels, program placement, progress, and achievement.
- Goal:** Learners are appropriately assessed, and results are documented and used for appropriate placement and instruction.
- Outcome:** Increase in the percentage of learners who are assessed and documented for accountability.  
Increase in the percentage of learners who are progress tested showing progress and achievement for accountability.
- Learners are placed, and their progress assessed, in appropriate instructional programs.

**Program Area 5: Retention**

**Definition:** A process to assist and encourage retention of learners long enough to meet goals and realize skill gains.

**Goal:** Program retains learners long enough to meet goals and gain skills.

**Outcome:** Increase in the percentage of learners who complete a skill level or meet a goal before leaving the program.  
Decrease in the percentage of learners who leave the program before completing a skill level or meeting a goal.  
Program sets retention goals annually.

**Program Area 6: Transition and Completion**

**Definition:** Learners advance based on achievement of learning goals.

**Goal:** Learners advance to next steps in their roles as worker, family member, and citizen.

**Outcome:** Increase in the percentage of learners who complete or advance one or more educational functioning levels.  
Increase in the percentage of learners who enter employment that identified entering employment as a goal.  
Increase in the percentage of learners who achieve employment retention that identified employment retention as a goal.  
Increase in the percentage of learners who were placed in post-secondary education that identified post-secondary education as a goal.  
Increase in the percentage of learners who received a secondary school diploma or GED that identified secondary school diploma or GED as a goal.  
Increase in the percentage of learners who are still progressing within the same level.

**Program Area 7: Support Services**

**Definition:** The resources and services that support learner participation and success.

**Goal:** The program provides access or referrals to support services within and outside of the program.

**Outcome:** Learners access support services necessary for participation and success in the program.  
Available support services match identified support service needs.  
Instructors understand available support services and make appropriate referrals.

**Program Area 8: Instruction**

**Definition:** A system in which instructors integrate curriculum, instructional delivery, and assessment in a positive environment to meet program and learner goals.

**Goal:** Instruction maximizes learner and program attainment of goals.  
**Outcome:** Program meets Primary Performance Measures (Accountability Policy and Procedures Manual).  
Program and Learners meet Learner Goals (Accountability Policy and Procedures Manual).  
Program attains goals related to instruction.  
Learners attain individual primary and secondary goals.

**B. Link to Full Document on the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development:**

[www.oregon.gov/CCWD/ABE/Word/IndicatorsProgramQuality.doc](http://www.oregon.gov/CCWD/ABE/Word/IndicatorsProgramQuality.doc)





**Table 2: Integrating Objectives into Instruction (           name of institution           )**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CO #	Language/Literacy Objectives Covered	Corresponding Basic Skills (R, W, S, L)	Instructional Activities Indicate with an * those activities which specifically include authentic content/context as described in the 2006-07 study circles training.	Integrating <i>Crossroads Café</i> or <i>On Common Ground</i> into Civics Instruction (Episode/Title)	Student Skill Level(s) (Educational Functioning Levels)	Assessment Skill Area and Tool (R, W, S, L) CASAS FWA, CASAS R, CASAS L, BEST Plus

**Table 3: Instructor Needs Assessment (           name of institution           )**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CO #</b>	<b>Professional Development Resources</b>	<b>Instructional Resources</b>	<b>Data Resources</b>	<b>Other Resources</b>

#### Appendix D: Personal Disclosure

At a young age I was fortunate to have parents that traveled. They felt that it was important that my brother, sisters, and I receive education both inside the classroom and out in the world. As a result, they took us on trips around the globe. From these early travel experiences I developed a travel bug that kept me hopping continents throughout my twenties.

My travels included a two year assignment in the Peace Corps, in the Republic of Cape Verde. It was there that I first took classes that combined language instruction with lessons about culture. As part of our initial training, we were placed with host families and required to attend government developed language and culture training. At the same time that I was learning Criolu and Portuguese, I was learning about how to become a community member, a worker, and, in some sense, a citizen of Cape Verde.

Intrigued by this idea, I used it as the basis for teaching my classes on the island of Sao Nicolau, Cape Verde, where I was assigned to teach English at the only high school. I decided that in addition to teaching English as I had been assigned, that I would infuse my instruction with something more: content areas focused on culture, community, work, and life in the U.S. In essence, I created a content-based English curriculum to use with Cape Verdean high school students. The content was interesting to the students because many of them had family members who had emigrated to the U.S. Many of my students planned to go to the U.S. to live with family once they were finished with school. In the end, it was an experiment that worked well. By focusing on content that

was interesting to the students, they learned literacy skills faster. I wondered if something like this existed in the United States.

Currently, I work as an Instructional Dean at Central Oregon Community College (COCC), where I am responsible for several academic areas. One of the areas for which I am responsible is the Adult Basic Skills Department. The Adult Basic Skills Department at COCC offers courses in basic reading, writing, math, listening, and speaking. The program offers EL/Civics courses as well. Previous to my work at COCC, I worked at the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development as a State Education Leadership Specialist. One of the projects for which I was responsible was the oversight of the EL/Civics grant program at a state level. I worked closely with each of the community colleges in Oregon that receive federal funding to administer EL/Civics programming.

Previously, I worked at Portland Community College as an Interim Division Dean of the Adult Basic Skills Division. As part of my work, I was responsible for the implementation of the EL/Civics grant at the college. As a result of all of my positions in community colleges, I have had intimate exposure to and experience with the EL/Civics program at both the local and state level.

I chose a qualitative approach because I was driven by the nature of my topic and research questions as well as by my personal worldview. My worldview is consistent with that of qualitative and interpretive research in that I constantly seek understanding and meaning in my daily life, both personally and professionally. I appreciate that my experience of a particular situation may be different than another person's experience of

the same moment. I recognize that although our experiences may be different that they both represent reality and that they can co-exist. I also understand that those realities can change at any time. I believe in a holistic, systems approach to learning and work that includes all perspectives.

## Appendix E: Interview Protocol

### **PROTOCOL**

#### **Brief Description**

Approximately 47 million U.S. residents speak another language in the home. Of those 47 million residents, 45% have little to no English proficiency. The English as a Second Language (ESL) programs of today are different than those of the past in that the classroom is no longer a place where students only learn English, but is also a place where students learn about the complexities of living, working and raising families in the U.S. As such, ESL programs have begun to focus on a new strategy of combining language instruction with civic education so as to better engage Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations in the communities in which they live and work. The purpose of the research study is to investigate the perspectives of education professionals who manage, coordinate, and instruct in both the English Literacy and Civics Education Grant (EL/Civics) and English as a Second Language Programs in Oregon Community Colleges. The study will compare the EL/Civics Grant Program to the conventional ESL programs offered at two community college sites. The impetus for the study is that the researcher is interested in understanding how and why students in the EL/Civics Program continue to demonstrate higher skill gain than their counterparts in conventional English as a Second Language programs. The study will provide insight into the professional wisdom of educators as it relates to program design, curriculum development and design, learning outcomes, and instruction within a contained literacy program. There is a lack of formal research on the English Literacy and Civics Education Program. This study will contribute knowledge because it will be the first formal research study about the EL/Civics grant. The findings of this study could lead community colleges to reevaluate how ESL programs are designed. The results of this research may be used for publication and presentation.

#### **Background and Significance**

There are four significant reasons that support the impetus to study the EL/Civics Grant Program in Oregon:

- The shifting demographics in the United States - According to the most recent U.S. Census, over 18% of the U.S. population speaks a language other than English in the home. Oregon reflects the national trend of shifting demographics, with 12% of its population speaking a language other than English in the household. If national population predictions are accurate, in 45 years the United States may be a country where half the population does not speak English as a native language. This shift will certainly impact how education is designed and delivered. It will be important for the educational policy makers in Oregon to prepare for this shift by developing frameworks designed to effectively increase

language acquisition and actively engage residents to participate in their communities. In order to develop effective educational frameworks, it is important to study programs with demonstrated student skill gain.

- Demonstrated student skill gain in EL/Civics Programs in Oregon – Over the past six years, the EL/Civics Programs in Oregon have consistently demonstrated higher student skill gain than conventional English as a Second Language programs in Oregon. This is a trend that merits further investigation because of the possibility of positively impacting educational programming for non-native English speaking adults in Oregon. My findings could impact how EL/Civics and ESL programs are designed and implemented across the state of Oregon.
- Future impact of performance-based funding for Adult Basic Skills Programs in Oregon – In 2009, the Oregon Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development will begin distributing WIA –Title II monies to Community Colleges using a performance-based funding formula. If the EL/Civics Grant programs in Oregon are demonstrating higher levels of student skill gain and Oregon is adopting a performance-based funding structure, the study could highlight some areas to help increase student skill gain at local programs, one of several measure of performance within the funding formula.
- Uncharted Territory – To date no one has conducted formal research on the EL/Civics Grant Programs in Oregon.

### **Methods and Procedures**

Two research sites will be chosen for this research study. Research sites will be chosen based on demonstrated increased student skill gain in the EL/Civics Program as compared to student skill gain in the conventional ESL program at that site. The two sites with the most significant gain in the EL/Civics programs as compared to counterpart ESL program will be chosen to participate in the study. The data collection methods and procedures will involve the following: a) interviews with site staff, b) collection of existing data, and c) classroom observations.

For the interview component of the study, the following individuals will be chosen to participate based on their different levels of expertise as related to the EL/Civics grant at each study site: Deans or Directors of Adult Basic Skills Programs, EL/Civics Grant Coordinators (if this applies), EL/Civics instructors, and ESL instructors. Upon IRB approval, potential participants will be contacted by phone or e-mail using a recruitment letter/script. A follow up telephone call to seek out their interest in participating in the study may be required. If they agree to volunteer, an informed consent will be sent via e-mail immediately which they will be asked to sign and return. Open ended and semi structured interviews will occur with the participants involved. The first interview with the participant will be face-to-face at a location determined by the participant and will last approximately 60 minutes in length. The second contact will be via telephone or e-mail correspondence, in which participants will be given the opportunity to clarify,



verify, or expand transcribed information from the first interview. A final telephone or face-to-face interview may be required and if so, it is expected to last approximately 60 minutes. In person and telephone interviews will be audio taped. E-mail correspondence will be logged and securely filed.

Based on the interviews with participants, I will collect existing data about the both the EL/Civics and ESL programs at each site. I anticipate the data I collect will be as follows: a) student demographic information (such as age, gender, ethnicity/race), b) student assessment data (pre and post test scores for students enrolled in EL/Civics and ESL classes at the site), and c) student attendance information. All of this information will be collected in aggregate form in order to protect the privacy of student identity.

Additionally, I will observe EL/Civics and ESL classes at each site as a way to collect more in depth perspective related to the following instructional: program design, curriculum, instructional strategies, and content.

The tentative timeline for the research study is as follows:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Seek potential study participants.	During the month following IRB approval (April 2008)
Contact potential participants via telephone or e-mail.	During the month following IRB approval (April, 2008)
Gather signed consent forms	During the four weeks following IRB approval (April – May, 2008)
Face to face interviews conducted with participants.	Eight weeks of the study (May – June, 2008)
Meet with participants by telephone or via e-mail correspondence to clarify or verify information.	Eight weeks of the study (May – June, 2008)
If necessary, conduct final interview by telephone.	Eight weeks of the study (May – June, 2008)
Collect existing site data	Eight weeks of the study (May – June, 2008)
Observe classes	Eight weeks of the study (May – June, 2008)

### **Risks/Benefit Assessment**

**Risks:** Participants may have discomfort with audio taping of the interviews. Instructors and/or students may feel uncomfortable during the classroom observations, therefore creating a less natural learning environment. Risk will be minimized by keeping the names of participants and their institutions confidential. Pseudonyms will be given to each participant and the names of institutions, locations, and organizations directly linked to participants will be changed.

**Benefits:** There may be no personal benefit for participating in the research study. However, there may be some professional benefit as a result of the reflective aspect of the interview questions. Participants may come to a greater understanding of how their EL/Civics and ESL program are designed and delivered. As a result, participants may make positive changes to existing programs that serve non-native English-speaking adults.

**Conclusion:** There are no foreseeable risks or direct benefits to participation in this research study.

### **Participant Population**

**Number of participants to be recruited:** The total number of participants expected to be recruited in the study are between 8-10 (2 Adult Basic Skills Directors, 2 EL/Civics Coordinators, between 4 and 6 EL/Civics and ESL instructors).

**Participant characteristics:** The participants in the case study are current Adult Basic Skills Directors, EL/Civics Coordinators, and EL/Civics and ESL Instructors at community colleges in Oregon.

**Method of selection:** Potential participants will be gathered by purposeful sampling. The researcher will ask the two Adult Basic Skills programs in Oregon whose EL/Civics programs have demonstrated the greatest skill gain as compared to the conventional ESL program to participate in the study.

### **Subject Identification and Recruitment**

Participants will be identified by purposeful sampling as described above. After selecting the two sites based on performance data, the researcher will send a recruitment letter to potential participants and follow up by telephone to inform them of the study and seek their participation. Participants who agree to be involved in the study will be requested to sign and return the informed consent document

### **Compensation**

Participants will not receive any compensation for participation in the study.

### **Informed Consent Process**

The researcher will first seek participant consent in a telephone conversation during the recruitment phase of the research. During that conversation, the researcher will describe the scope, nature, and time commitment of the data collection to the potential participant. If the subject agrees to participate in the study, an informed consent will be mailed immediately for the participant to sign and return.

### **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Records of participation in this research project will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Audio files will be transcribed verbatim by a transcriber hired by the student researcher. The transcriptionists' professional ethics require confidentiality. All written and recorded information, including interview notes, observation notes, and existing data gathered during this study will be kept in a locked storage cabinet. Jennifer Newby, the student researcher, and Dr. Larry Roper, primary investigator, will be the only ones to have access to the securely stored data.

All data gathered during the course of this study will be destroyed upon completion of Jennifer's dissertation. In the event of any report or publication from this study, the identity of participants or observers will not be disclosed. Results will be reported in a summarized manner in such a way that participants cannot be identified.

### **Attachments**

- Recruitment Letter
- Informed Consent Information
- Tentative Interview Questions
- Tentative Observation Form

## RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Director/Coordinator/Instructor:

I am writing to solicit your interest in participating in a study I am conducting for my doctoral research as a student in the Oregon State University Community College Leadership Program. The proposed topic of my dissertation is An Evaluation of English Literacy and Civic Education Programs in Oregon. The study will be an exploration of the perspective of EL/Civics educators as it directly relates to the demonstrated performance of your program. I am seeking to understand, from your perspective, how and why students in your EL/Civics program continue to demonstrate higher levels of skill gain in comparison to students who participate in your general ESL program. You are being invited to participate in this research study because you are (the ABS Director, EL/Civics Coordinator, EL/Civics instructor, or ESL Instructor) in one of the two community college's whose EL/Civics programs have the highest demonstrated student skill gain over the course of the life of the grant in the state of Oregon.

There is a lack of original research on the EL/Civics Programs in Oregon and across the nation. If you agree to be a participant in this study, you will be working with me to contribute to the research on the topic of EL/Civics and the effectiveness of this important grant program that serves so many non-native English-speaking adults in the state of Oregon and in the United States.

Your participation in this study would involve a total maximum of 3-6 hours. Our first contact would be an in person interview lasting approximately 60 minutes in length. The second contact via telephone or e-mail correspondence, in which you will be given the opportunity to clarify, verify, or expand transcribed information from the first interview, will last approximately 60 minutes in length. A follow up telephone interview may be required and if so, would last approximately 60 minutes. If you are an instructor, I am also would like to observe your class as part of my research.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please contact me at [jnewby@pcc.edu](mailto:jnewby@pcc.edu) or 503-706-9285. After confirming your interest, I will ask you to sign and return an Informed Consent Document that describes your role and protection as a participant, and will schedule the first interview with you.

The English Literacy and Civics Education Grant is a unique literacy program that helps many Limited English Proficient students gain language skills as well as promotes engaged citizenry. I look forward to your help in contributing new knowledge to the field of adult literacy

Thank you,

Jennifer Newby  
Doctoral Candidate  
Oregon State University  
College of Education

## **INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT**

Project Title: **An Evaluation of English Literacy and Civics Education Programs in Oregon**  
 Principal Investigator: **Larry Roper, School of Education**  
 Co-Investigator: **Jennifer Newby, Student Researcher**

### **Purpose of the study:**

This is a dissertation research study. The purpose of the research study is to explore the perspective of EL/Civics educators as it directly relates to the demonstrated performance of your program. I am seeking to understand how and why students in your EL/Civics program continue to demonstrate higher levels of skill gain in comparison to students who participate in your conventional ESL program.

### **Purpose of the Informed Consent Document:**

The purpose of the Informed Consent Form is to give you the information you need to help you decide whether or not to participate in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any questions about the research, what you will be asked to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not. This process is called “informed consent.” You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

### **Why am I being invited to participate in this study?**

You are invited to participate in this research study because you are an ABS Director, EL/Civics Grant Coordinator, an EL/Civics Instructor, and/or an ESL Instructor at a community college in Oregon that receives funding for and administers the EL/Civics Grant Program. Your National Reporting System (NRS) data reveals that your EL/Civics Grant outperforms your ESL program in a significant capacity. The total number of subjects expected to participate in the study are 8-10. There is a lack of original research on the EL/Civics Programs in Oregon and across the nation. If you agree to be a participant in this study, you will be working with me to contribute to the research on the topic of EL/Civics and the effectiveness of this important grant program that serves so many non-native English-speaking adults in the state of Oregon and in the United States.

### **What will happen during the study and how long will it take?**

If you agree to participate, your involvement will last for approximately a total of 3-6 hours. The first contact will last approximately 60 minutes in length. The second

contact, in which you will be given the opportunity to review and correct the transcript from the first interview, will last approximately 60 minutes in length. A follow up interview may be required and if so, it is expected to last approximately 60 minutes. If you are an instructor, I will be observing your EL/Civics and/or your ESL class.

The following procedures are involved in this study:

- Approximately two weeks following the first interview, you will receive a typed transcript of the interview via e-mail. Upon receipt of the transcript, I, Jennifer Newby, will contact you by telephone or by e-mail to clarify or verify or expand upon transcribed information from the first interview. If we communicate via telephone, the call will last a maximum of 60 minutes.
- If a final interview is needed, Jennifer Newby will contact you by phone to ask follow up questions. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes and with your permission will be audio taped.
- Classroom Observation: I will visit your class and observe the following aspects: course design, curriculum, content, and instructional strategies.

### **Are there any risks involved by participating in the study?**

Although I do not anticipate any risk to you as a participant, participants may feel uncomfortable with the audio taping of the interviews or during the classroom observation. Risk will be minimized by keeping the names of participants and their institutions confidential. Pseudonyms will be given to each participant and the names of institutions, locations, and organizations directly linked to participants will be changed.

### **Are there any benefits to participating in this study?**

There may be no personal benefit for participating in the research study. There may be no personal benefit for participating in the research study. However, there may be some professional benefit as a result of the reflective aspect of the interview questions. Participants may come to a greater understanding of how their EL/Civics and ESL program are designed and delivered. As a result, participants may make positive changes to existing programs that serve non-native English-speaking adults.

### **Compensation:**

You will not be paid for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

Records of participation in this research project will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. However, the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies involving human subjects) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. It is possible that these records could contain information that personally identifies you. In the event of any report or publication from this study, your identity will not be disclosed. Results will be reported in a summarized manner in such a way that you cannot be identified.

Participants will be identified on tape by name. Audio tapes will be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist whose professional ethics require confidentiality. All tapes will be kept in a locked storage cabinet. Further, the student researcher, and Dr. Larry Roper, will be the only ones to have access to the securely stored data.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate at all. If you agree to participate in this study, you may stop participating at any time. During interview sessions, you are free to skip any questions that you would prefer not to answer. If you decide not to take part, or if you stop participating at any time, your decision will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. Should you decide to withdraw, some data collected prior to your withdrawal may be included in the study results.

**Who do I contact if I have questions?**

Questions are encouraged. If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: **Jennifer Newby, 4745 NE 15th Ave., Portland, OR; Email: [jnewby@pcc.edu](mailto:jnewby@pcc.edu) or Dr. Larry Roper, School of Education, (541) 737-2759; Email: [larry.roper@oregonstate.edu](mailto:larry.roper@oregonstate.edu).** If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at (541) 737-4933 or by e-mail at [IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu).

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Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

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(Signature of Participant)

(Date)



## TENTATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Tell me about your EL/Civics/ESL Grant Program:

How is the program designed? Who developed the program design?

How do students access and enter the EL/Civics or ESL Program?

What level learners are taught in the EL/Civics/ESL Program?

Are the EL/Civics/ESL courses offered on campus, off campus, or both?

What is the assessment process for students in the program?

Describe the students in the EL/Civics/ESL program.

What is the curriculum used in EL/Civics/ESL?

What types of courses are offered in the EL/Civics Program/ESL Program: discreet skill classes, integrated skills classes, both?

What are the details of the course offerings for EL/Civics/ESL (hours/week, how many weeks per term, number of courses offered, and schedule of classes)?

Is the program outcomes-based? If so, what are the course/program outcomes?

How do you know the program outcomes are being met/accomplished/achieved?

Is there a curriculum framework for the program?

What are the data collection processes and procedures for the EL/Civics/ESL Program?

What type of instructional strategies do you use in your EL/Civics (ESL) class?

How do you integrate civic outcomes with language instruction in your EL/Civics class?

Do you participate in professional development as related to EL/Civics or ESL?

The NRS data collected on students who participate in your EL/Civics program indicate a significant skill gain when compared to the conventional ESL program at your site: Why do you think that is? In your opinion, what do you think could contribute to the increased skill gain by students who participate in EL/Civics?

## **TENATIVE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION OUTLINE**

### **Category I: Instructional Preparation and Organization (Curriculum and Planning)**

A. Instructional Design: The instructor designs lesson that reflects course outcome guide for EL/Civics (ESL).

B. Planned Lesson connected to instructional design: The instructor has planned a lesson that demonstrates evidence of goals, scope, and sequence.

### **Category II: Instructional Strategies**

C. Language Skills: The instructor requires students to use listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

D. Variety of Instructional Techniques/Activities: The instructor uses a variety of instructional techniques.

E. Groupings: The instructor uses a variety of student groupings (whole class, pairs, groups).

F. Classroom Focus: The instructor uses an appropriate balance between teacher-centered and student-centered activities.

G. Instructional Materials: The instructor uses a variety of materials giving students the opportunity to practice language in authentic contexts.

### **Category III: General Classroom Climate Observations**

H. Comments about classroom observation, notable instructional practices, etc.

## Appendix F: Official Informed Consent Document

Project Title: **An Evaluation of English Literacy and Civics Education Programs in Oregon**  
Principal Investigator: **Larry Roper, School of Education**  
Co-Investigator: **Jennifer Newby, Student Researcher**

### **Purpose of the study:**

This is a dissertation research study. The purpose of the research study is to explore the perspective of EL/Civics educators as it directly relates to the demonstrated performance of your program. I am seeking to understand how and why students in your EL/Civics program continue to demonstrate higher levels of skill gain in comparison to students who participate in your conventional ESL program.

### **Purpose of the Informed Consent Document:**

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Participant's Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

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(Signature of Participant)

(Date)