The Everyday Challenges Facing Teachers of English Language Learners: A South Hadley Public Schools Case Study

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To better understand the professional needs of teachers of English Learners (EL) in the South Hadley Public School District, this study examined the qualitative insights provided by teacher interviews. The current study aimed to accomplish two goals: first, to capture the voices of teachers in the field regarding their beliefs about strengths and challenges in working with English learning students. Secondly, the current study aimed to identify the common themes expressed amongst educators in order to strategize possible future solutions for the public school district. The qualitative data analyzed in this study came from six one-on-one semi-structured interviews with educators in South Hadley’s public schools. All interviews were conducted in the spring of 2016. Three themes that were constantly referenced in this data included references to: additional supports for teachers, the difficulty in identifying a child for EL or Special Education services, and collaborating between EL teachers and classroom teachers. In this presentation, I will discuss these themes in detail and apply these results to the greater educational policy context facing public schools in Massachusetts.