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## Latino Academic Resilience: Stories of High Achieving Middle School ELLs and the Teachers and Families That Help Them Succeed

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LATINO ACADEMIC RESILIENCE: STORIES OF HIGH ACHIEVING MIDDLE  
SCHOOL ELLs AND THE TEACHERS AND FAMILIES THAT HELP THEM  
SUCCEED

BY

MARCELA ASTUDILLO

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN  
EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

AND

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

2015

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DISSERTATION

OF

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RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

2015

## ABSTRACT

A general definition of resilience is an ability to thrive and succeed in a variety of areas related to our lives despite adversities we may face. The more specific term referred to as "academic resilience" deals with achieving academic success despite difficulties within an academic setting. As compared to the regular education population of native speakers of English, English Language Learners have higher high school dropout rates and have a more difficult time experiencing academic success than their native speaker counterparts. In this study, I explore the comments of six academically resilient middle school Latino ELLs and seek to understand from their own perspective the teacher practices that most help them. I also explore the opinions of these students' teachers and parents. My goal was not only to learn from student voices about what helps them but also to try to connect these voices to those of their teachers and their parents. After extensive interview coding and analysis, I learned that students say they learn better in classrooms where teachers often go beyond the call of duty of simply planning and carrying out lessons, classrooms where teachers practice innovative pedagogies, classrooms where teachers are persistent about all student learning and, finally, classrooms where general literacy is emphasized. These findings are important and helpful to teachers who seek to maximize the impact of their work when it comes to educating their ELL population.

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## CHAPTER 1: A BRIEF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND MEMORY ON WHAT IT FELT LIKE TO BE AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER IN THE UNITED STATES

Thirty-three years later, these memories I am about to describe, remain and stay engrained so vividly in my mind.

Not only are these simply memories; they are personal feelings, thoughts, and experiences of my life that, as they tend to be for all human beings with theirs, became part of ME.

Evening of March 7, 1982

I had never seen the runway lights of an airport late at night. I had never been in an airport. At 11-years-old, I looked across this dazzlingly lit open space in Santiago, Chile, filled with red and blue flashing lights, and somehow knew some immensely drastic changes were about to take hold of my life. I then stared up to look at the night stars I had seen so many times before but this time they were much more intense and vivid. This completed the moment I needed to say goodbye to my homeland.

I somehow understood, even at this young age of 11, the severity of what was about to happen. My parents, brothers, and I left Chile in early March, 1982 and arrived in the U.S. the following day. Upon arriving, I experienced the bitter snow for the first time and I realized our lives had been turned upside down. It would take a great deal of time, pain, and struggles for me to feel fine and at home again.

One of the first places where I experienced a number of emotional and academic difficulties was school. Upon entering the school system, I was no longer a regular student, like I was back in Chile. I was now a new immigrant ELL student. For about a year and, in most cases, not as a result of any kind of mean spiritedness but because of circumstance, I felt depressed, isolated, shunned, and discriminated against. I was so alien to all that was going on around me because I couldn't communicate with or relate to this new, huge and amazing country and to this cultural amalgamation that had welcomed me, but at the same time, made me feel so different.

I am now a middle school teacher who has never forgotten the immense challenges I faced when I first entered school in the U.S. I now also realize that I had a much easier time succeeding in school than most of the Latino ELLs of today because I had a college educated parent who managed to quickly move up the income brackets and so our poverty was only temporary. Although we were never wealthy, we became at least members of the lower middle class. I also had a mom who let me know from a very young age that attending college was non-negotiable and necessary for success in life.

Now, close to 33 years after my US arrival and after twelve years of experience teaching in an urban school district and being an education doctoral student, I clearly understand why I became interested in research related to Latino English Language Learners, in particular, Latino ELLs who manage to succeed academically despite all of the challenges they face. I clearly understand that my story of adversity and eventual success was unique to ME and that there is no other like it. For this reason, I wanted to learn about others. I want to meet and speak to Latino ELLs who are showing immense potential to succeed in academics despite all of the difficulties they face. I consider the

Latinos in my study resilient for many reasons but primarily because they were achieving all A's and B's on their report cards within the general education classroom despite the fact that:

- They are still expected to lack the English language proficiency necessary to master many academic tasks.
- They are considered poor and attend schools where at least 90% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunches.
- They have parents who can provide encouragement but who don't speak English well enough to be able to directly assist them with their school work.

I was fascinated and wanted to learn more from and about these “resilient” students who manage to succeed and defy the odds against a number of detrimental effects related to being placed under the ELL umbrella.

## CHAPTER 1: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM, JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The number of Latino English Language Learners (ELLs) nearly doubled between 1990 and 2006 and projections estimate that by the year 2050 there will be a larger number of Latino students than Euro-American native English speakers. Recent statistics have indicated that the ELL population comprises the fastest growing student population in the US. (Chawthon, 2010; Fry & Gonzalez, 2008). Latino ELLs face a variety of serious academic, social, and emotional challenges as they transition through schooling in the US (Berliner, 2009; Reynoso, 2008; Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008). Issues of poverty and segregation, according to some researchers, are currently having a tremendous impact on the academic achievement of ELLs.

“Because America’s schools are so highly segregated by income, race, and ethnicity, problems related to poverty occur simultaneously, with greater frequency, and act cumulatively in schools serving disadvantaged communities. These schools therefore face significantly greater challenges than schools serving wealthier children, and their limited resources are often overwhelmed” (Berliner, 2009, p.1).

In addition to issues of poverty, ELLs are also faced with academic demands and challenges that greatly surpass the academic demands of native speakers (Chawthon, 2010). According to NAEP (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010) there is at least a 36-point scale score difference between ELL and non-ELL students. This academic achievement gap is likely the result of one of the greatest and most pervasive academic challenges faced by, not just Latino ELLs, but all ELLs. This challenge is the demand that they must simultaneously learn a new language (English) and also master the content of a variety of academic areas. In addition, mastering the demands that are

entailed in the different academic content areas requires that ELLs have the ability to perform using the same academic language that native speakers have already learned. According to Zehler et al. (2003), 85% of ELLs are able to communicate orally in English but have difficulty using English for academic functions. Cummins (1981) refers to conversational language as “Contextualized Language.” Cummins (1981) identifies this informal language as supported by meaningful interpersonal and situational cues of shared experiences, interests and motivations. This conversational, non-academic language, can develop fairly quickly, within one to three years. However, the more difficult academic language, the one that takes much longer to achieve and the one that is necessary in order to perform at least satisfactorily on the yearly required multiple choice tests and many other school related tasks is referred by Cummins (1981) as “Abstract Language” or “CALP” (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). This type of language needs to be supported in most classroom discourse since it includes working with such academic tasks as reading the language of textbooks, writing essays, and completing multiple choice tests. Mastery of this Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) takes five to seven years to develop in a second language (Cummins, 1981). As a result, many of these ELLs who still lack the academic language proficiency perform poorly on standardized assessments which many times can be a criterion for high school graduation and places them at a severe academic disadvantage as compared to native language speakers. (Cawthon, 2010).

Despite the many challenges faced by ELLs in today’s schools, some existing “educational resilience” research at the high school and college level indicates that certain Latino ELLs attending today’s public and urban schools manage to succeed

exceptionally well despite the large number of adverse circumstances they face (Reynoso 2008; Werner, 2006; Franquiz & del Carmen Salazar, 2004). Researchers Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1994) define educational resilience as "the heightened likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences" (p. 46). Research specifically on Latino academic resilience indicates that teachers can enhance academic resiliency by going above and beyond their duties as teachers and by taking special interest in their students' first language and cultural background. Wang & Holcombe (2010) draw upon the self-determination theory framework (SDT) and say that the degree to which students perceive that their school's social context meets their personal and psychological needs will determine their level of engagement and efforts to succeed academically. Other than their student peers, students' social interactions in schools are mainly comprised by those they experience directly with their teachers. Also, this school engagement is considered to be malleable and responsive to interactions between the students and those around his/her learning environment (Wang & Holcombe, 2010).

Very few studies exist that focus on high achieving Latino ELLs at the middle school level and the environmental factors that enhance their academic resilience. The great body of research that does exist on academic resilience is at the high school level and to a lesser degree at the college level. In addition to my interest in this middle school population that has not been the focus of resilience research in the past, very limited research has focused on middle school ELL student voice and what they say regarding what contributes to their academic success despite the many challenges they face.

Wilson & Corbett (2001) offer one of the few studies that exists at the middle school level that focuses on student voice and thoughts on effective teacher practices. However, this study is based on a regular student population and is not specific to ELLs. There is certainly a great need for middle school level research specifically pertaining to ELLs. Adolescence is a critical period when students begin to seek relationships with nonparental adults outside of the home (Wang & Holcombe, 2010). Also, the problems of student disengagement in school starts to become particularly acute during the middle school years and then persists into high school (Wigfield, Eccles, Schiefele, Roeser, & Davis-Kean, 2006).

The purpose of this study is to contribute to research that already exists on the key factors that support the academic resilience of certain high achieving Latino ELLs. The unique aspect of this proposed research is that I intend to gather data from middle school ELL students' by documenting their own voices. I intend to hold conversations with Latino ELL students at the middle school level in order to explore what they say about the types of teacher pedagogical practices that they feel promote their academic resilience. This focus will draw on research pertaining to adversities faced by Latinos in today's public schools (Berliner, 2009; Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008; Gutierrez & Jaramillo, 2006) and the impact that teacher qualities and pedagogical practices have on Latino academic resilience and students' desire to engage in academic work (Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Benard, 1991, 1997; Franquiz & del Carmen Salazar, 2004; Reynoso, 2008). Research findings indicate that schools can enhance the academic resilience of Latino ELL students by training teachers to reach beyond the constraints of institutional

structures to create caring and supportive relationships between students and staff (Benard, 1991, 1997).

Past academic resilience research has neglected to ask students themselves about resiliency-promoting factors within their environments, specifically as they relate to qualities that their teachers possess and specific pedagogical practices that they carry out that students feel promote their academic resilience and success. This is significant because most that drives our current educational reform excludes student opinion. In addition, my proposed exploratory study will focus specifically on ELLs at the middle school level. This is a student demographic and age level that has not been focused on. I want to emphasize that one of the unique aspects of my proposed research will be my attempt to gather data from the students' own words and described experiences. The goal here will be to produce certain findings that may warrant a serious plan to shift education reform policies in order to begin to target the specific academic, social, emotional, and psychological needs of ELLs, more specifically in this case Latino ELLs.

Researchers that have informed my thinking on resilience in general and specifically academic resilience include Reynoso, 2008; Franquiz & del Carmen Salazar, 2004; and Werner, 1984, 1992, 2006. These researchers, specifically Werner, have thoroughly explained and studied environmental protective factors that have helped youngsters achieve resilience throughout different stages of their lives. Werner studied populations of all ages from Hawaii and Reynoso and Del Carmen Salazar have explored teacher-related protective factors at both the high school and college level.



## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Latinos ELLs and Adversities

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 defines ELLs as students who meet the following criteria:

1. Age 3-21
2. Enrolled or preparing to enroll in elementary or secondary school.
3. Not born in the US or native language is not English.
4. From an environment where a language other than English has a significant impact on their level of English proficiency.
5. Migratory and comes from an environment where English is not the dominant language.
6. Has difficulty in speaking, reading and writing or understanding the English language to the point that it will deny the individual the ability to meet the state's proficiency level of achievement and the ability to achieve in classrooms where English is the language of instruction (Cawthon, 2010).

Latino ELLs are currently attending our country's most poor, urban schools. Researchers like Waxman (1992) say that solely attending a school that is considered an "at risk" school can be considered an adverse situation. Many of the threatening and challenging circumstances faced by ELLs are related to poverty. Latino ELLs face serious inequities, as compared to native English learners when it comes to the education

they receive in schools (Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, L. 2008; Gutierrez & Jaramillo 2006; Spring 2009; Berliner 2009).

“Because America’s schools are so highly segregated by income, race, and ethnicity, problems related to poverty occur simultaneously, with greater frequency, and act cumulatively in schools serving disadvantaged communities. These schools therefore face significantly greater challenges than schools serving wealthier children, and their limited resources are often overwhelmed” (Berliner, 2009, p.1). In addition to the fact that ELLs attend mostly segregated urban schools that have high concentrations of poverty, these very schools also tend to be under-resourced (Gutierrez & Jaramillo, 2006; Berliner, 2009; Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008). Researchers Gordon & Song (1994) state that certain risk factors like poverty can reliably predict certain negative outcomes for youth and claim that poverty has been identified as a specific predictor for criminality.

Berliner (2009) refers to six key out of schools factors (OSFs) related to poverty that are likely to be responsible for seriously challenging the health, learning opportunities, and academic success of students who live in poverty, like the majority of Latino ELLs attending our public schools. The OSFs Berliner describes are: (1) low birth-weight and non-genetic prenatal influences on children; (2) inadequate medical, dental, and vision care, often as a result of inadequate or no medical insurance; (3) food insecurity (4) environmental pollutants; (5) family relations and family stress; and (6) neighborhood characteristics. Berliner (2009) says these OSFs are related to a host of poverty-induced physical, sociological, and psychological problems that students often bring to school,

ranging from attention disorders, neurological problems to excessive absenteeism, linguistic underdevelopment, and oppositional behavior.

The Majority of Latino ELLs also attend some of the poorest urban schools in the country which tend to have a disproportionately high number of teachers who lack the qualifications they need for quality instruction (Uriarte, Tung, Lavan & Diez, 2010; Tung, 2008; Hanawar, 2009; Sylva Mangiante, 2011). According to a report published in 2008 by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Act, New York State had one certified English as a second language teacher for every 116 ELL students. That lags behind other states, such as Washington state and Massachusetts, where there is one certified ESL teacher for every 76 and 66 ELLs respectively. (Tung, 2008).

### Testing Practices and Achievement Gap

Cawthon (2010) says that “Many who are former LEP’s (Limited English Proficiency) come with a history of struggle and academic challenges faced by the fact that they had been simultaneously learning English and academic content ( Cawthon, 2010, p.7). Researchers like Crawford (2009) and Walsh (2009) say that the NCLB legislation is largely failing ELLs because it includes achievement targets and assessments considered unrealistic and invalid for ELLs who have been in the country for only a short period of time. This contradicts the basic principals established by Lau v. Nichols (1974), a supreme court decision that demanded a better and more adequate education for ELLs. In the Lau V. Nichols decision, Justice William O. Douglas writes, “We know that those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom experience wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful (Walsh, 2009).

Research Center data published in Education Week (2011) and Wentworth, Pellegrin, Thompson & Hakuta (2010), says there is a significant and increasing national achievement gap between English-learners and all non-ELL public school students on both national and state-developed tests. Only 12 percent of 4th grade ELLs scored “proficient” or higher in mathematics on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2009, compared with 42 percent of students not classified as ELLs. The gap was considerably wider in eighth grade math NAEP results in 2009. Only 5 percent of eighth grade ELLs were proficient in math, compared to 35 percent of non-ELLs. In reading, only 3 percent of eighth grade ELLs scored proficient compared to 34 percent of non-ELLs. In some cases and at some grade levels, the achievement gap between the ELLs and the native speakers has widened throughout recent years (Wentworth, Pellegrin, Thompson & Hakuta, 2010).

### Dissonance Between Research and Classroom Practice

Researchers link adversities faced by Latino students in today’s schools to dissonance among classroom practice, educational research and recent policies that affect their ways of learning. Since the early 1980s, but especially since the enactment of NCLB, the majority of the classroom instruction that currently serves ELLs does not match research that exists on how to best educate this population (Garcia, O., Kleifgen, J. & Falchi, L., 2008).

Currently, the most common way of instruction is English As a Second Language programs (ESL). ESL programs emphasize the use of English as the mode of instruction,

rather than students' naïve language. Prominent research on ELLs has found that there is a cross-linguistic relationship between the students first and second language and that proficiency in the first language aids academic achievement in the second language (Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008; Cummins, 1981).

Also, some states provide time limits for ELLs to master English language and enter mainstream classroom (Wentworth, Pellegrin, Thompson, Hakuta, 2010). These time limits contradict views and research that claims that key factors that affect second language proficiency include the age of the students at the time they are exposed to the second language, the quality of the education that students received in their first language, and the type of instruction that is provided to them for acquiring the second language (Samway & McKeon, 2007).

### Resilience Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Resiliency Framework focuses on the strengths possessed by youths, families, communities and schools and how these strengths can promote the healing and health of youth who encounter adverse circumstances during certain periods of their lives (Benard, 1991,1993). This social and behavioral sciences framework attempts to move away from a standard focus on risk, deficit and pathology to the many potential strengths that families, schools and communities have and the crucial impact that these strengths can have upon the development of the struggling youth. The essence of the Resiliency Framework is grounded on the belief that everyone has an innate resilience that can be promoted by factors within our environments and focuses on optimism and probability

while at the same time attempting to lessen the impact that the more standard focus on at risk and high risk can have on the perpetuation of racism and stereotyping (Benard, 1991, 1993).

Researchers such as Benard (1991, 1993); Henderson & Milstein (1996) and Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1995) have paid considerable attention to the role that schools can play in fostering “academic” resilience and have formulated theoretical models of how schools may foster resiliency in students. Henderson (2007) developed the model of a resiliency wheel which she describes as, “a synthesis of the environmental protective conditions that research indicates everyone can benefit from having in their lives” (Henderson, 2007, p.10). Two of the most important protective factors described by Henderson’s resiliency wheel deal with teacher and student interactions. The wheel serves as a primary organizational rubric for helping in the fostering of resilience in students. The wheel is divided into six sections which include the essential environmental protective conditions. They are: 1. Providing care and support, 2. Setting high but realistic expectations for success, 3. Providing opportunities for meaningful contribution to others, 4. Increasing positive bonds and connections, 5. Setting and maintaining clear boundaries, and 6. Developing needed life skills (Henderson, 2007, p. 10).

## Urie Bronfenbrenner's Theoretical Framework

The concept of academic resilience and more generally “resilience” draws extensively from the work of Russian American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) and his Ecological Systems Theory. Bronfenbrenner was co-founder of the Head Start program in the US and has described his theoretical perspective as the relationship that exists among the developing person, the environment this person comes into contact with and the interaction between the two (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). “The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded.” p.21.

Ecological theory is the study of human development in relation to the environment with which the human comes into contact. Tudge, et al., (1997) have defined ecology as, “the study of organism-environment interrelatedness.” (p.73). Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes these series of important environmental interactions as a number of different contexts that can play a crucial role in the development of children into adults. The context within which the child is embedded is referred to as the Microsystems context. This context is made up of the environment where the child lives and moves. Examples of those who lie within this context are family members, childcare and school teachers, peers, and religious institutions or spiritual groups the child comes

into direct contact with. This context is the one of pertinence when describing academic resilience research since much of this research concludes that it is those people with whom the child comes into direct contact who can play a critical role in their academic success and their resilience despite adverse conditions.

Another context described by Bronfenbrenner is the Mesosystem, which he says lies right outside of the Microsystems context. This Mesosystem deals with interactions that occur between those involved in the smaller Microsystems context. These could include how parents interact with teachers and how the child's neighbors interact with each other. The child is not directly involved in this context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

#### Definition of Resilience

The terminology and science of resilience and risk have emerged mainly from health sciences and particularly from investigations in psychopathology (Keyes, 2004). Some pioneering psychologists like Werner (1984, 1992), Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen (1984), and Rutter (1979) were among the first to bridge the study of risk and resilience to bring this dual focus into the science of human development (Keyes, 2004).

Researchers Masten, Best & Garmezy (1990) define resiliency as “a process of or capacity for, or the outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging and threatening circumstances”

( p.459). Rutter (1990) suggests that the term resilience refers to “... the positive pole of the ubiquitous phenomenon of individual difference in people's responses to stress and adversity” (p.181).



Werner (1984, 1992, 2006), who has been involved in decades of longitudinal studies related to resilience, describes resilience as one's ability to bounce back from vulnerability. Werner (2006) describes resiliency as never fixed or concrete and says that human beings throughout their lives may go back and forth from vulnerability to resiliency and that this is in fact the phenomenon many refer to as resilience. So one may be resilient today as a child in a certain context but not 10 years from now and then again, yes, later in adulthood.

### Academic Resilience

Although very similar to the definition of the general term "resilience," the more specific term "academic resilience" places the definition within the context of schooling and is more specifically related to students who face major adversities within this context. One of the most commonly described definitions of academic resiliency involves a student's capacity to adapt and thrive even under some major adversities (Waxman, Gray & Padron, 2003). Resilient students are: "students who succeed in school despite the presence of adverse conditions" (p.1).

It is important to know how to recognize students with strong academic resilience and have an understanding of the types of characteristics that these students will display to someone from the outside, like a teacher or researcher.

### The Personal Qualities Dimension of Academic Resilience

There are two dimensions of resilience. One dimension relates to personal qualities possessed by individuals who display signs of resilience and another dimension relates to factors outside of the individual referred to as “protective factors.” These protective factors are found within an individual’s environment and can promote and enhance resilience (Benard, 1991, 1993). Goodwin (2007) describes academically resilient students as those who have

- Adaptable in temperament; flexible; able to tolerate ambiguity
- Optimistic
- Able to anticipate problems and then solve them logically
- Creative
- Positive self-esteem
- Able to see humor in self and life situations
- Curious; able to learn from experience
- Able to “read” people well
- Durable and independent
- Able to have an a Internal locus of control
- Achievement-oriented

Benard has found that there are four personal characteristics that resilient children typically display:

- social competence,
- problem-solving skills,
- autonomy, and
- a sense of purpose.

Some factors that can enhance resilience have been considered to be protective buffers that transcend ethnic, social class and geographical boundaries and are said to be helpful to us as members of the human race, no matter what our ethnic background (Werner, 2006). Researchers have found that these universal protective factors can enhance the resilience of students from a wide span of cultural backgrounds, including students who are: African American, Asian American, Latino and Native American. These protective factors include:

- Having at least basic competence in reading skills;
- Having close bonds with competent and emotionally stable caregivers;
- Having religious faith and a belief that life has a meaning;
- Having close relationships with both family members and adults outside of the home, like teachers in school settings;
- Having experiences with community activities that foster cooperation, like being a big brother or big sister to someone or participation in church groups where they were not considered passive recipients.

### Environmental Factors as Dimension of Resilience

This second dimension of academic resilience is the one my study explores. The “environmental protective factors” aspect of resilience research deals not with individual traits possessed by the resilient youth but rather with the presence of “protective factors” within youth environments that can enhance the chances of academic achievement and

success for them (Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Benard, 1991, 1997). There is an extensive relationship among all developing beings, the environment these developing beings come into contact with, and also the interactions between the two (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Resilience research indicates that an appropriate education program, positive guidance, and a caring socialization with adults are crucial components in building resiliency in at-risk youth (Reynoso, 2008; Franquiz & del Carmen Salazar, 2004; Todis, Bullis, Waintrup, Schultz, D'Ambrosio, 2001; Breandtro & Cunningham, 1998; Gonzales & Padilla, 1997).

Teacher attitudes and practices can provide some crucial support that is considered to be necessary in order to minimize the effects of risk (Waxman, Gray, & Padron , 2003; Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Benard, 1991, 1997). Researchers say that there are so called “Turnaround teachers” who naturally have resiliency-building attitudes and who can model the resilient behaviors they want from their students (Waxman, Gray, & Padron , 2003; Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Benard, 1991, 1997). These Turnaround teachers are able to provide three protective factors that buffer risk by bestowing students with the human-kind basic needs of safety, love and belonging. Also, these teachers understand the importance of providing students with respect and a sense of accomplishment and learning (Benard, 1991). These three protective factors provided by Turnaround Teachers are high expectations, caring relationships and opportunities to participate and contribute. Delpit (1996) says that having high expectations can guide students’ behavior and challenge them beyond what they believed they could do. Wang & Holcombe (2010) draws upon the self-determination theory framework (SDT) and say that the degree to which students perceive that their school’s social context meets their

personal and psychological needs will determine their level of engagement and efforts to succeed academically. Also, this school engagement is considered to be malleable and responsive to interactions between the students and those around their learning environment (Wang & Holcombe, 2010).

Stover ( 2005) states that a good and healthy school climate is the key to academic success in urban schools: “a school’s climate is probably the best predictor of whether a school will have high achievement, more so than socioeconomic status of students or the school’s past level of achievement” (Stover, 2005, p.1). Perkins (2006) describes the effects that a positive school climate can have on students attending urban schools. According to this research, schools with a positive school climate have: higher student achievement, higher morale among students and teachers, more reflective practice among teachers, fewer student drop-outs, reduced violence and better community relations (Perkins, 2006; Bryant & Kelly, 2006, p.ii).

Researchers such as Benard (1991, 1993); Henderson ( 2007); Milstein (1996) and Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1995) have paid considerable attention to the role that schools can play in fostering academic resilience and have formulated theoretical models of how schools may foster resiliency in students. Henderson (2007) developed the model of a resiliency wheel which she describes as, “a synthesis of the environmental protective conditions that research indicates everyone can benefit from having in their lives” (Henderson, 2007, p.10). Two of the most important protective factors described by Henderson’s resiliency wheel deal with teacher and student interactions. The wheel serves as a primary organizational rubric for helping in the fostering of resilience in students. The wheel is divided into six sections which include the essential

environmental protective conditions. They are: 1. Providing care and support, 2. Setting high but realistic expectations for success, 3. Providing opportunities for meaningful contribution to others, 4. Increasing positive bonds and connections, 5. Setting and maintaining clear boundaries, and 6. Developing needed life skills (Henderson, 2007, p. 10).

Another external, environmental resiliency promoting factor is the presence of supportive relationships with adults in young people's lives other than teachers. These adults include parents and caregivers (Reynoso, 2008; Werner, 2006; Franquiz & del Carmen Salazar, 2004; Todis, Bullis, Waintrup, Schultz, D'Ambrosio, 2001; Brendtro and Cunningham, 1998; Gonzales & Padilla, 1997). A close bond with a competent, emotionally stable caregiver is considered an essential component in the lives of children who overcome adversity. The close bonds can include not just the nurturing of parents and guardians but also nurturing from grandparents, aunts or uncles and siblings. (Werner, 1984).

#### Classic Early Resilience Research

The concept of resilience and risk originates from the areas of health sciences and investigations in psychopathology (Keyes, 2004). Pioneering psychologists and researchers in this area are Werner (1984, 1992, 2006), Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen (1984), and Rutter (1979). These researchers were among the first to bridge the study of risk and resilience and to bring this dual focus into the science of human development. (Keyes, 2004). Werner (1971, 1977, 1982, 1992, 2001, 2006) studied a large youth sample from Kauai, Hawaii, of about 700 beginning at birth in 1955. Werner and other

researchers studied this sample for over three decades. Many from this sample were born into chronic poverty and many of the parents involved had less than eight years of education. Some of these parents had either physical handicaps or signs of psychopathology, including substance abuse. About one-third of this sample fell under the umbrella of high risk which meant that they possessed four or more risk factors as individuals which included, family instability, low socio-economic status, poor emotional support within family, and little educational stimulation.

Findings included that resilience is based on countless interactions between child and adult or adolescent and the opportunities these children were provided throughout their lives (Werner, 2006). Protective factors present in the lives of resilient children include personal temperaments that elicit positive responses from family members and strangers, close bonds with caregivers during the first year of life and in middle school and adolescence active engagement in acts that required helpfulness (Werner, 1971, 1977, 1982, 1992, 2001, 2006).

Garnezy, Masten, & Tellegen (1984) studied about 200 children from urban areas in the United States, as well as children with congenital heart defects and children who were physically disabled. Competence was used as the dependent variable in this study and multiple measures were used, including classroom behavior, academic success, and interpersonal competence. Also, Rutter (1979) studied a sample from Isle of Wigh in England and inner London children. These children had experienced risk factors related to parental and marital discord, overcrowding or large family size, parental criminality, maternal psychiatric disorder, or placement in government care. Rutter (1979) found that a single risk factor or stressor did not have a significant impact. However, combinations

of two or more stressors did diminish the likelihood of positive outcomes for these children. Also, any additional stressors increased the impact of all other existing stressors. These classic resiliency studies identified protective factors that buffered the impact of the stressors (Rak & Patterson, 1996). These protective factors included both personality traits of the subjects themselves and also environmental protective factors which combined to create positive outcomes in some of the children.

#### Academic Resilience Research and Important Role Teachers and Schools Play

Wilson & Corbett (2001) conducted a study with Philadelphia middle school students. This study is based in student voice and seeks to understand the types of teachers that students learn best from and overall prefer. These Philadelphia middle school students indicated that they learn more and better from teachers who:

- Push students to complete classwork
- Are able to manage classrooms
- Are willing to stay after school and offer students extra help
- Are able to explain assignments well
- Frequently vary assignments
- Display and show respect toward students and their outside world

Swanson & Spencer (1991) say there are a number of ways schools can enhance the resiliency process:"

- Educators should increase access to academically challenging programs



- Forge alliances between schools, churches, organizations and businesses
- Increase funding for early childhood programs
- Increase parental involvement.
- Have heterogeneous grouping rather than tracking by ability
- Update technological equipment

A school climate where a general care and respect is shown to students of culturally diverse backgrounds is also an important finding in research that describes school cultures that can maximize academic resilience and can play a crucial role in academic achievement (Brand, Felner, Seitsinger, Burns, and Jung, 2007; Lazar, 2006; Moll, Amanti, Neff, Gonzalez, 1992). Bartolome (1994) uses the term “humanizing pedagogy” to describe schools with teaching that "values the students' background knowledge, culture, and life experiences, and creates learning contexts where power is shared by students and teachers” (p. 248).

According to Brand, Felner, Seitsinger, Burns, and Jung (2007) supporting and valuing student cultural backgrounds can play an important role for the academic performance, aspirations, and self-expectations of minority students. These researchers also found that this type of support can moderate the impact of poverty on students’ academic performance and motivation and that gaps between students from low-income families and those from more affluent families are significantly smaller in schools that have higher levels of respect and support (Brand, Felner, Seitsinger, Burns & Jung, 2007).

A collaborative project conducted in 1992 between classroom teachers and anthropologists (Moll, Amanti, Neff, Gonzalez, 1992) claimed that by capitalizing on the knowledge that exists in students' homes based on culture, skills, social activities that they called "funds of knowledge" teachers can create the types of lessons that will be engaging and interesting to students and that will far exceed the quality of the standard disconnected lessons that exist in schools. Efforts to create engagement and connection to lessons like this one are crucial when it comes to the fostering of academic resilience because they provide students with the necessary motivation to learn and they also create opportunities for students to feel accepted and valued in terms of their culture and language. Researchers in these "funds of knowledge" study focused on students from Mexican backgrounds living in Tucson, Arizona and spent long hours visiting the students in their homes with their families. Delpit (1996) says the following about the importance of being open to learn from and of using the culture of their students and their families in their lessons: Teachers "must learn to be vulnerable enough to allow our world to turn upside down in order to allow the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness" (p. 47).

## CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

### Overall Design

The goal of this study was to learn about teacher qualities and practiced pedagogies that promote the academic resilience of Latino middle school English Language Learners (ELLs), all from the perspective of the academically resilient ELL students themselves. In addition, this study also compares what these students say regarding the reasons for their academic success to the opinions and perspectives of their teachers and their parents. This study used a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research accepts the social constructivist worldview paradigm. The goal is to rely on participants' views of the subject being studied. The assumption within this paradigm is that individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences and that these meanings are varied and multiple. Meanings and understandings are formed through interactions with others (Cresswell, 2009). The paradigm used in this study is interpretivist/constructivist because the intention is to understand the world through the descriptions of these students and through the interpretation of their comments (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

Research questions were formulated to guide this study which aimed to focus on one of two dimensions of existing academic resilience research. The one dimension of existing academic resilience research that this study did not intend to focus on deals with the innate and natural personal qualities that some students have that can facilitate their academic resilience in school (Benard, 1991, 1993; Goodwin, 2007). The goal of this study was to explore the second, very important dimension of academic resilience. This second dimension is described by the literature as "protective factors" that are present

within these students' environments that can help these students be academically successful. These protective factors are described as purely environmental and have no relationship to these students' personal and innate qualities (Werner, 2006). This second dimension of resilience research more specifically indicates that there are factors that promote and enhance the academic resilience of students and that these deal with qualities possessed by people that are present within these students' immediate environment. These would be primarily their teachers and families (Reynoso, 2008; Werner, 2006; Franquiz & del Carmen Salazar, 2004; Benard, 1991).

The qualitative data collection utilized were *interviews* using digital audio recorders, hand written notes, and brief questionnaires that were made available to be answered either orally or in written form. According to Patton (2002), there are three kinds of qualitative data: interviews, observations, and documents. The observations consisted of hand written researcher notes taken by the researcher while conducting the interviews. Interviews and/or questionnaires were completed by a total of 16 participants. The participants included six students, five teachers and five parents.

Through the data collected from the student interviews and parent and teacher questionnaires, I attempted to answer three general research questions. The interviewing involved a cultivation of conversation skills and its ultimate goal was to produce knowledge (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p.2). A semi-structured and deductive approach to the interviews was used for data collection (Patton, 2002, p.43). I aimed to research questions whose main characteristics are that they be "feasible, clear, significant, and ethical" (Frankell & Wallen, 2009).

### My Research Questions:

1. What do academically resilient middle school ELLs (criteria for selecting these students is found in up-coming characteristics of study population section) say are the teacher qualities and practiced pedagogies that contribute to their academic resiliency? (interviews)
2. What do the teachers of academically resilient Latino ELLs say are the key factors that contribute to these students' academic success? (choice of brief questionnaire to be responded to in written form or orally through voice recorder).
3. What do the families of academically resilient ELLs say they do to help contribute to their success? (choice of brief questionnaire to be responded in written form or through voice recorder).

The longest and most extensive interviews were conducted with six middle school monitored Latino ELL students. "Monitored ELLs" are English Language Learners who have been exited from a bilingual, ESL or Dual Language program within the past two years and are presently attending regular classes that use all English instruction. These interviews were all audio recorded and lasted between 30 to 45 minutes each. All students chose to respond to questions in English. Two out of the six student participants chose to explain some of what they wanted to express in their native Spanish when provided with that option. The goal of the student interviews was to hold conversations with them in order to grasp and comprehend their opinions and perspectives on the teacher qualities and the family supports that helped them succeed exceptionally well academically. The student data were collected through a four question semi-structured interview. (Student interview instrumentation and parent/teacher interview instrumentation are provided at the end of this section, each is labeled accordingly).

All student and teacher participants were assigned pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy. Also, I assigned pseudonyms to any teacher names mentioned by students in order to maintain their privacy.

This semi-structured student interview included the four main following questions:

1. What do you think helps you do well in school?
2. Do you think teachers affect how you do in school? Explain
3. Tell me about a teacher who has helped you? What did they do that helped you?
4. Are there people at home who help you do well in school? Tell me about the specific people at home who help you and tell how they help you.

Data collected from the five teachers and five parents who took part in this research were collected through a questionnaire composed of two questions. Both teachers and parents were asked identical questions.

\*Both teacher and parent

The questions were worded as follows:

1. What do you think helps this student/your child succeed academically?
2. Do you think that you, as this student's teacher /parent, play any kind of a role in helping him/her succeed? How? Explain.

The teachers and parent subjects were directly related to the student participants. The teachers selected for this research were the ones the students had mentioned as those educators who either possessed personal qualities and/or practiced pedagogies that helped

them achieve academically. The parents selected for participation in this research were the students' parents. Teachers and parents were provided the choice of either responding to questions in writing or through audio recorder. All five teacher participants chose to respond to the two questions through use of audio recorder. Four out of the five parents chose to respond to research questions in writing.

In addition, not surprising to the researcher, all parents chose to receive and respond to research questions in their native language of Spanish. For the purpose of the analysis process, I first transcribed any oral responses verbatim in Spanish and then translated.

Kvale & Brinkman's seven stages of interview inquiry served as a guideline and framework for data collection (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p.102). These seven stages are:

1. Designing – plan research design before interviewing, formulating a purpose of the investigation. The why and the what.
2. Conduct interviews
3. Transcribe – transcription of oral speech to text
4. Analyzing – (3<sup>rd</sup> step to analysis) decide on modes of analysis – During transcription, I condensed and interpreted meaning of what was said and sent meaning back to the one being interviewed in order to facilitate a response like, “I did not mean that” or “that is precisely what I was trying to say”(4<sup>th</sup>) (p.102).
5. Recorded interview is analyzed by interviewee alone or with co-researchers by transcription and through possible use of computer program. (Coding of themes and categories was created by researcher alone).

6. Verify the validity or in Lincoln and Guba's words (1985) the trustworthiness of the data. I was able to do this by asking questions, such as; does interview study investigate what is intended? are results consistent? I checked for this during the entire data analysis process.
7. Reporting – on findings – I created a readable product

Within Hymes' (1962) theoretical framework and his work on the ethnography of communication, speech is positioned as the heart of the defining unit of analysis as the researcher seeks understanding from the subject's point of view within a specific cultural setting and context (Fitch, 2005; Hymes, 1962). Ethnographic theoretical framework was appropriate since speech is the form of communicative activity. The setting of the interviews was a quiet classroom or guidance office within the school building during after school hours. The setting of the teacher questionnaires was middle school #1 (where most research took place) either during or after school hours. Four out of the five parents, all from middle school #1, responded to the questionnaire outside of school and sent responses back to researcher with the student. One parent participant, the only parent participant from middle school #2 (one parent and one student from this school participated in the research), responded to the questionnaire through a voice recorder in the school setting during after school hours. This was inside the building of middle school #2.



## Design Components

### *The researcher*

The questionnaires were the instruments used for this ethnographic study. Bias can sometimes be managed when ethnographers work in teams and are able to check different reactions, reasoning and impressions with each-other. In this study, I, the researcher, worked alone. Certain measures were taken to make sure that as the teacher researcher did not influence the participants. First, I am also a teacher in the building where most of the research was conducted so sought out student participants who were not my current students. None of the participants were or had been former students.

In order to deal with any bias or any possible influence I may have had on these student participant responses, I specifically made an effort to have them discuss teachers who were currently teaching them. All of the student participants successfully discussed helpful practiced pedagogies and other teacher qualities that had helped them in the present but also in a past and that did not include the teacher researcher. Only one out of the two student participants who had been a former student was specifically asked to discuss teachers other than researcher for risk of bias or to prevent any kind of pressure when it came to responses. I made this request in order to prevent the possibility of this student feeling pressured to discuss teacher qualities or pedagogical practices possessed and practiced by me, as the teacher researcher.

### *Validity /Reliability*

This was a qualitative study so the focus of the validity and reliability was specifically on qualitative methods. None of the data collected included a control group, a

comparison group, or a pre-test/retest. The quality of analysis in this study was assessed on two dimensions: Credibility and transferability.

In order to maximize the credibility of the data, throughout the interview process, I interpreted meaning of what was said constantly by sending interpreted meaning back to the interviewee. This was done by often paraphrasing their responses back to them and asking them if this was precisely what they were trying to say (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Whenever in doubt, I confirmed with them if the idea/analysis grasped by the interviewer was indeed the idea they had attempted to convey (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). I also asked all of the participants at the end of the interview to reflect on the interview and all that was said in case they wanted to add anything that they felt may have been missed. Also, throughout the interview, I constantly checked the "trustworthiness" of the data by reflecting on whether the questions being asked investigated what was intended and whether results seemed consistent (Lincoln & Gubba, 1985).

In this study, I attempted to maximize the credibility of the findings by also asking student participants' teachers and their parents to answer similar questions about their student's academic resilience/success. It was important to also know what the adults in their lives attributed to their success. These multiple data sources allowed for data triangulation to be achieved and created opportunities for these students' teachers and parents or guardians to participate through a brief questionnaire. As a result, an enhanced credibility to this study resulted which allowed me to achieve more believable interpretations of the findings.

Another area that promotes the credibility of this study is my background. At the time of this research, I had been teaching urban middle school students in the same school district where the data were collected for 12 years. My experience working with and teaching this population created a greater likelihood that comments and opinions were clearly and accurately understood and interpreted. Also, students, parent participants and I are all bi-lingual in Spanish and English and this allowed ideas to be clearly expressed and understood in both English and Spanish language. Two of the student participants and all five parent participants used the Spanish language to at least express some of their thoughts and this did not create communication or data analysis difficulties for me. My first and native language is Spanish.

The use of transferability in this study created a responsibility to constantly compare the collected data or sample to other related and available research on the same topic: In this case, academic resilience and ELLs. To clarify, it was important for me to be able to compare my own personal findings in this research to other, similar or related research in the field and, as a result, be able to conclude that my data results are transferable – similar - to existing research.

#### *Characteristics of Participating Middle schools*

The research conducted in this study took place in two middle schools that are part of an urban district in the northeast.. Five out of the six students interviewed attended a middle school that will be referred to as middle school #1. This middle school had a student enrollment of approximately 900 students in grades 6-8 at the time of the research. Approximately 97% of the student population of middle school qualifies for

free/reduced meals. Student demographics in this middle school are as follows: 19% black, 72% Hispanic, 3.7% white, 5.3% other. This middle school is located within the largest public school district in the state with an enrollment rate of about 24, 000. Middle school #1 included 3 administrators, 74 teachers and 24 support staff. Other student demographics information indicated that about 21% of the student population in middle school #1 is considered LEP (Limited English Proficient), 19% receives special education services or has IEP's (Individualized Education Plans). In addition, according to active School Improvement Plans (SIP), 17.6% of the students who attend this middle school are proficient in math and , 26.5% are proficient in writing and 30.1% are proficient in reading. All five teachers and five out of the six parents who took part in this research were affiliated with middle school #1.

A total of two of the sixteen participants in this research attended or were affiliated with a second middle school in the same district. I will refer to this school as middle school #2. This second middle school had a total student enrollment of 860 students at the time of this research. Similarly to middle school #1, middle school #2 had students attending grades 6-8 at the time of this research. Approximately 93.6% of this student population qualifies for free/reduced meals. The demographics of this second middle school are as follows: 14.2% black, 68.4% Hispanic, 3.1% white and 14.3% other. Middle school #2 included 3 administrators, 57 teachers and 21 support staff. Other student demographic information indicates that 19.4% of the students were considered LEP (Limited English Proficient), 19.1% received Special Education or had IEP's (individualized Education Plans). One student and one parent who took part in this research were affiliated with middle school #2.

### *Characteristics of the Study Population*

In order to seek out and determine the study population that fit the criteria for this research, a meeting was held with both the principal or assistant principal and a school guidance counselor of each school. This meeting was necessary in order to explain the goal of the research and then to identify the middle school students who fit the criteria of this research. Building principals had to authorize research within their building. The goal was to find at least six student participants (Reynoso, 2008) who were “academically resilient” middle schoolers. This qualification for “academically resilient” is drawn from research conducted by Gonzalez & Padilla (1997) on the academic resilience of Mexican American high school students.

The criteria for student participant selection was the following:

1. Monitored ELL (English Language Learner). This means the student had to have been exited out of either a bilingual, ESL or a dual language program within the past two years.
2. Identified as Hispanic/Latino demographic background
3. Received all A's and B's, no more than 1 C, on most recent report card
4. Described by at least one current teacher as an academically high achieving student in an all English, regular education classroom despite being of ELL status.

The guidance counselor in the first participating middle school, middle school #1, was critical in helping to find monitored ELLs within this middle school and was able to provide a list of ELLs/monitored ELLs for each grade level in grades 6, 7, and 8. A

district official along with a guidance counselor at middle school #2 also helped identify monitored ELLs from this middle school. The middle school #1 guidance counselor also helped researcher contact the guidance counselor and principal of the second middle school, middle school #2. After being provided with a list of monitored ELLs in both schools, the researcher narrowed down the list of possible research participants by reviewing these students' grades, alongside the guidance counselor. After reviewing monitored ELL student grade data, I narrowed down the list to students who were currently receiving all A's and B's, no more than one C on their report card, both during that present school semester and also the previous school semester. I then contacted each particular student with the help of guidance. The sample chosen for this study was considered purposeful sampling. A total of at least 12 students were found to fit the criteria in both middle school #1 and middle school #2. I received parental consent from six out of the twelve. The other six possible research participants did not demonstrate interest in participating in the research themselves or had parents who were not interested or refused.

Five out of the six students who agreed to participate in this research also had parents sign consent forms for their own, personal participation in the research, in addition to the parental consent forms they signed for their child's participation, these parents had to sign a second consent form for themselves. Five out of the six parent participants had children who attended middle school #1. Also, one parent from middle school #1 did not agree to participate, although they did agree to sign a consent form for their child to participate. Also, one parent from middle school #1 signed a consent form for their own participation but did not consent for their child to participate. This

particular student was a sixth grader and was identified by the researcher as one who fit the study criteria. One parent agreed to participate from middle school #2. This parent was the father of the single student participant from school #2.

All of the student participants spoke a language other than English at home (Spanish). Four out of the six participants indicated they were ELLs born in a country outside of the United States. One of the six ELLs had been exited from an elementary school dual language program within the past two years. Five out of the six participants had been exited from either an ESL or bilingual program within the past two years. The gender breakdown of student participants included three males and three females who ranged in ages from eleven to fourteen years-old. These included three eighth graders, two seventh graders, and one sixth grader. The youngest participant was an 11 year-old male and was the only student participant from middle school #2. In addition, all student participant attendance rates ranged from 93% to 100% at the time of the interview. Two out of the six student participant had an attendance rate of 100% at the time of the research. More specific characteristics of the six student research participants are as follows:

1. Male, 11, 6th grade, all A's and B's on current and previous semester report card. 100% attendance rate at the time of research. (Spanish speaker of Mexican background, born in the US)

2. Male, 13, 7th grade, all A's and B's on current and previous semester report card. 96% attendance rate at the time of the research (Spanish speaker of Guatemalan background, born in the US)

3. Female, 13, 8th grade, Straight A student with one exception, a B+, received in an advanced Algebra class. 97% attendance rate at the time of the research (Spanish speaker, born in Dominican Republic).

4. Female, 14, 8th grade, All A's and B's on current and previous semester report card. 94% attendance rate at the time of the research. (Spanish speaker, born in Dominican Republic)

5. Male, 13, 8th grade, straight A student at the time of the interview (a previous B+ achieved in an earlier semester on an Accelerated Math class. 98% attendance rate at the time of the interview. (Spanish speaker, born in Equatorial Guinea in West Africa and described as Latino by family).

6. Female, 12, 7th grade, straight A student with one exception, B+ received in science, 93% attendance rate at the time of the interview (Spanish Speaker born in Dominican Republic).

The five teacher participants were all teachers at middle school #1. Four out of the five teachers were white and one was Latina. Teacher participant gender breakdowns included one male, 52 years-old and four females. One out of the four females was in her early 50's and described herself as having 25+ years teaching experience. The remaining female teacher participants were in their early to mid twenties and were completing their second or third year as a classroom teacher at the time of their participation in this research. Subjects taught by teacher participants included math, science and English Language Arts. Three out of the five teacher participants were mathematics teachers, one taught English Language Arts and one taught Science.



Five out of the six parents who were part of the study population were the parents of the student participants in the study. Five of the six parents were affiliated with Middle School #1 and one was affiliated with middle school #2. One out of the six student participant parents did not return the personal consent form for participation in the research and only returned a consent form for their child. One parent participant returned a personal consent form for participation in the research but did not return consent form for their child. So one parent participated in the research without having their child participate. This was the only parent who participated in the research who did not also have their child participate.

#### *The Consent Process and Research Time Period*

On October 22, 2013, the study was approved by the Public School District's Institutional Review Board. At that time I began the application process for the University of Rhode Island Institutional Review Board. As part of the University of Rhode Island regulation, the researcher was required to first obtain permission from the district prior to applying to their institution's IRB. Also, As part of the university's IRB process, I also had to obtain permission from the administrators of both participating middle schools. A signed authorization letter from middle school #1 was received in December, 2013 and the administrator authorization letter for middle school #2 was received in May, 2014.

The data collection process lasted a total of four months. I started data collection in late February, 2014 and ended data collection in June, 2014. The first step in the data

collection process was a meeting with the school's guidance counselor. In February, 2014 I met with the guidance counselor of middle school #1 and explained the goal of the research. I then asked for the guidance counselor's informed consent to participate. After the guidance counselor consented to participate in the research, he provided a list of all monitored ELLs from the middle school #1 building, including 6th, 7th and 8th graders. With the assistance of a guidance counselor, I then obtained the report card grades of these monitored ELLs and narrowed down the list according to research criteria.

The data collection then continued when I met with the monitored ELLs who fit the criteria for this research. I provided students with a description of the research, the procedures, benefits, confidentiality guidelines and their rights as participants. This included their right to refuse to participate. If they agreed to participate, they were asked to take home a parental consent form to be signed by parent or guardian. This was required since all student participants were under the age of 18 at the time of this research. I met with ten students who fit the criteria in middle school #1 and four who fit the criteria in middle school #2. Five out of the ten students from middle school #1 agreed to participate in the research and returned signed parental consent forms. One out of four students who fit the criteria in middle school #2 agreed to participate and returned parental consent forms.

After students were interviewed, I asked student participants to bring home two questions to be answered by their parents/guardians. I explained that in order for answers to be analyzed parents/guardians had to sign a separate consent form for themselves. Hand-written parental answers to the two questions, along with parent consents were provided by all but one of the student participants, a total of five from middle school #1.

Sole parental participant from middle school #2 chose to respond to the two questions via an audio, digital voice recorder.

Data gathered from teacher interviews were also collected within a four month period, March through June 2014. I found the teacher participants for the research after interviewing the students. The teachers who were asked to take part in this research were all teachers who had been described by students as current teachers who practiced pedagogies and/or had personal qualities they felt helped them succeed academically. I asked five teachers to take part in this research and all five agreed to participate. All five teachers worked with students at middle school #1 at the time of this research. A total of sixteen participants took part in this research. All of these interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded in order to look for themes and patterns among all responses.

Student interviews took place during the child's afterschool program or after school hours in order to not interfere with regular school schedule. Five out of the six student interviews took place in the school, inside a quiet classroom. One of the six student interviews took place inside a guidance counselor office during after school hours. Interviews were conducted within a 16 week period, starting the first week of March, 2014 and ending the first week of June 2014. Three out of the five students were interviewed twice for clarification purposes and also so that researcher could follow up with information mentioned by the participant during the first interview (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

Each initial student interview lasted between 25 and 35 minutes. Follow up interviews with three out of the six student participants lasted between five and ten

minutes. Even though the researcher expected student participants to be fluent in English, they were encouraged to verbalize ideas in Spanish, if they felt this was necessary for a through explanation or answer to a question. Two out of the six students interviewed answered at least part of the questions in Spanish.

I initiated student interviews with knowledge and background/demographics questions which sought to acquire factual information about the student such as age and nationality (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Also, I was aware that Latino ELLs come from extremely diverse backgrounds and any reader of this research would most likely be interested in knowing about these children's nationalities and other demographic information such as age. These questions also helped the researcher build rapport with students since these questions tended to have a more personal tone and students responded well to the idea that I was interested in getting to know them on a more personal level before the more formal semi-structured interview began. In addition to the use of a voice recorder during the student interview, I also took notes, in case any important side observations needed to be taken as students responded to a question.

As a result of student responses to question 3 which asked student participants to describe a teacher who has helped them, I then found these teachers and asked for their participation for the teacher portion of the research. All five teachers who were asked to participate agreed to sign consent forms. The teachers that the researcher asked to participate were teachers named by these students as ones who have the qualities that help them be academically resilient. These teachers were asked to answer two questions either verbally or through written questionnaire, depending on choice. All teachers chose to respond via voice recorded instrument.

These questionnaire items revolved around their perceptions regarding why these students are resilient and successful with the idea of comparing what they said to responses given by students for purpose of trying to find a relationship/connection between the two. An attempt to find patterns in the responses provided by teachers, parents, and students was important in order to show evidence of data trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) so that I not only relied on the thoughts and responses of students when reporting my findings. Teachers were also able to provide a very interesting perspective here because they were the ones who had firsthand knowledge of the student's academic performance and classroom behavior.

### *Data Analysis*

After each interview, I transcribed the interviews verbatim on a Word document. The goal from the very beginning was to develop a manageable classification and coding scheme of primary patterns (Patton, 2002). The first step in analysis was to read each transcript closely by writing comments in a section on right side margin of interview transcript. I organized this information on a Word document chart which included questions asked on left column, responses/utterances on middle column, and comments on right side margin. It was this right side margin labeled "comments" that included the initial coded categories which I labeled using mini color coded stickies with comments written directly on them (Patton, 2002). Throughout this initial student interview analysis, I developed a total of about ten categories for all four questions asked. As I analyzed each student interview, I looked for a link between any new emergent patterns and patterns that had been previously observed (Patton, 2002). During this process of

analysis, I looked for recurring words or themes that were present in responses from all interviewees to see which ones predominated.

I started with a large amount of categories and themes that resulted from analyzing each of the student interviews. As mentioned previously, this resulted in about ten categories/themes. Then these coded transcripts were coded again on a Word document that focused only on each question asked. These were written on four word table documents, one for each of the questions asked. I created this second attempt at coding in order to narrow down even more discernible patterns that had emerged (Frankell & Wallen, 2009). This time I narrowed down the themes and patterns from ten to four main categories.

Below is the instrumentation used for all research interviews. These instrumentation documents were required by the district's IRB process which preceded the university IRB process requirements

## Student Interview Instrumentation – Script (English)

<p>I am researching students who do extremely well in school. Your guidance counselor has told me that you are an outstanding student and I want to learn about you and the things that teachers and your parents do that help you. Your honest answers to the questions will help schools and teachers understand how to help students like you do a great job in the future.</p>
--

Your identity will be kept confidential in order to maintain your privacy.

Your participation is voluntary.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the office of the Vice President for Research, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telephone: (401) 874-4328.

The first question I want to ask you is:

1. What do you think helps you do well in school?

(Follow up, if needed)

Be as specific as you can

2. Do you think teachers affect how you do in school?  
(Follow up) – How? What are some specific things teachers do in their classroom that you feel help you be successful?
3. Tell me about a teacher who has helped you? What did they do that helped you?

Ok last question is:

4. Are there people at home who help you do well in school? Tell me about the specific people at home who help you and tell how they help you?

## Final Remarks

I want to thank you for participating. There may be a follow up interview in about a week in case I need you to clarify something.

### Parent/Teacher Interview Instrumentation

#### **Script provided to parent or guardian and teacher (English version)**

I have recently interviewed your son/daughter /student about how well they have been doing in school. Your child/student thinks that you have done a lot to help them and have been a big help in their success. I am hoping that you are willing to answer a few questions about your child/student

Your identity will be kept confidential in order to maintain your privacy.

Your Participation is voluntary.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the office of the Vice President for Research, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telephone: (401) 874-4328.

1. What do you think helps this student succeed academically?
2. Do you think that you, as this student's teacher /parent, play any kind of a role in helping him/her succeed?



(Follow up) if response is yes - How do you help them?

**Script Provided to Parent or Guardian (Spanish version)**

Hola como esta? recientemente entreviste a su hija/hijo/estudiante sobre el gran trabajo que hacen en la escuela y sobre las exelentes notas que sacan. Su hijo/a me ha dicho que usted ha sido una gran ayuda para ellos. Le pido que este dispuesta a responder algunas preguntas sobre su hijo o hija

Su identidad se va a mantener confidencial

Su participacion es voluntaria

Si tiene alguna pregunta de este estudio puede consultar con Vice President for Research, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telefono: (401) 874-4328.

Spanish Version of questions above available for parents:

La primera pregunta es:

1. Que piensa usted es lo que le mas le ayuda a su hijo/hija a que le vaya tan bien en la escuela?
2. Usted como el padre, madre de este estudiante ayuda a este estudiante a que le vaya bien en la escuela?
3. (proxima oregunta) si respuesta es si, Como lo/la ayuda?

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### Summary

As stated on the previous chapter on the Methodology of this research, I collected qualitative data over a four month period. Themes and categories emerged from a total of sixteen data sources which included six extensive student interviews, five teacher questionnaires, and five parent questionnaires. Interviews and questionnaires were transcribed, some translated from Spanish to English and then coded in order to determine answers to three main research questions.

The first and most important of these research questions was, "what do academically resilient middle school ELLs say are the teacher qualities and practiced pedagogies that contribute to their academic resilience?" According to qualitative data collected from six ELLs who ranged in ages from 11 to 13, there are a number of both pedagogical practices (dealing specifically with instruction) and affective practices (dealing with the perceived emotions and feelings teachers express toward them, like providing care, support, advice, and encouragement, not related to instruction) that these students say contributed to their academic success.

The second research question was "what do the teachers of academically resilient Latino ELLs say are the factors that contribute to these students' academic success?"

The third research question was "what do the families of academically resilient ELLs say they do to help contribute to their success? The second and third research questions mentioned above attempted to explore the idea of whether teacher and parent perceptions would differ from the perspective of the academically resilient students themselves.

Being able to explore the ideas of the teachers and the parents helped me strengthen the validity of the research.

In this chapter, i will answer the three research questions by dividing the qualitative data that emerged into different categories that resulted from analyzing all of the data collected. One of the things that I will explain in detail in this chapter is what the researcher determined to be the broad categories and more specific themes yielded by the research. The categories of all interviews were initially determined and then revised throughout the analysis process. The prominent and specific student, teacher, and parent responses will be described and discussed as the researcher explains the determined broad categories that resulted from the analysis all participant responses.

#### Question 1

"What do academically resilient middle school ELLs say are the teacher qualities and practiced pedagogies that contribute to their academic resilience?"

According to qualitative data collected from six ELLs who ranged in ages from 11 to 13, there are both pedagogical practices (dealing specifically with instruction) and affective practices (dealing with things like providing care, support and encouragement, not related to instruction) that these middle school academically resilient ELLs say contributed to their academic success.

In addition to the more general research findings, a very interesting and surprising finding was discovered. An overwhelming number of student responses attributed the academic success to their own personal qualities, attributes as learners. The nature of these qualities were not related to natural ability or innate skills, instead they were mainly

to their personal hard work and persistence as learners. I discovered that before students were ready to discuss teacher and parental supports, most initiated their thoughts on the factors that promoted their success by describing their own personal work ethic and personal strategies as learner. As a result of this finding, I determined that resilient middle school ELLs see themselves as having a prominent sense of control in terms of whether or not they achieve and succeed academically.

After an extensive qualitative analysis, both dealing with teacher pedagogical and affective practices but also dealing with general personality traits, I was able to connect and link findings to four broad and main categories which are described/coined as follows:

1. "Going Beyond the Lesson" (includes both pedagogical and affective practices)
  2. Innovation(solely pedagogical practices)
  3. "Persistent Instruction" (related to teacher personality, affective practices)
  4. "Literacy Emphasis" (solely pedagogical practices).
- 
1. "Going Beyond the Lesson" (pedagogical practices)

A major theme in the findings was something I decided to describe as "Going Beyond the Lesson." When students were specifically asked about the teachers or teaching practices that they felt significantly promoted their academic resilience in the classroom, students described teachers who not only taught the required mini lesson or major lesson but who also put in an extensive amount of work and effort into other areas, not necessarily related to the way and manner of instruction. These teachers that students described as "Going Beyond the Lesson" encouraged and specifically taught "skills" like

Note Taking. Also, teachers who helped them achieve were teachers who knew how to take steps back from a lesson and knew how and when to break the new material down, teachers who were always willing to stay afterschool to answer their questions and teachers who not only taught but "explained well" and repeatedly if necessary. Many times the teachers these students cited had methods of differentiating instruction set up as part of the entire class routine of teaching and learning.

One significant theme that emerged as students attempted to answer the questions related specifically to the teacher practices that help them was their tremendous need to truly understand. Maybe, not just understand, but a repeatedly expressed need to master the content being taught in the classroom. Once again, the names of all research participants were changed to pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy

Interviewer: You are doing a very good job with your grades. Everyone who I've spoken to about you says great things about how you are doing academically. So when I ask you, what helps you do well? What do you think it is? What's the first thing that comes to your mind?

Francisco: " I get help by the teachers a lot, when I need help I ask them questions that help me understand the problem better, like for example, if you don't understand a question, you have to tell the teacher so you really get it."

Interviewer: Do you think teachers affect, either positive or negative or in general, how you do in school?

Francisco: "I think teachers affect me positively."

Interviewer: Ok tell me more about that

Francisco: "Like they help you when you need help, like they break down information for you to understand it.. They make it basic and they give you examples, like my math teachers give lots of examples and lots of ways of posing the same questions, like I follow what she did."

Interviewer: Ok, alright, anything else that comes to mind? ..You said something about teachers, I have a question that goes specifically to that but what were you thinking when you threw that out?

Alberto: "Umm, they like explain things to me, like things that I don't get and that helps...A teacher that I had before, her name was Miss M, she was like, at first, I didn't understand because I didn't speak English, she helped me a lot."

Interviewer: How did she help you? What kinds of things did she do?

Alberto: "Umm, she explained things, she showed you things, she helped you do work, she was always there to help me out..yeah."

Alberto was a 14-year-old seventh grader whose parents were native of Guatemala. He described noticing a big difference between the learning and help he was given when substitutes were filling in for teacher absences vs. when the regular teacher was present.

Interviewer: Umm... so some affect how you do in a more positive way, uh, better than others and how so?

Alberto: "Some are like willing to teach you."

Interviewer: Tell me what you mean by that, what do you mean by that, they actually like working with you?

Alberto: "They actually like (working it out) with you, doing work and stuff like that."

Interviewer: Ok, so spending the time to explain things thoroughly?

Alberto: "Yeah, explain, like some just give you work and they just go do something else."

A surprising finding was student's keen ability to understand the concept of how teaching and learning works. It often reminded me of Lev Vygotsky's (1978) theory called "zone of proximal development" in which students are said to be continuously working at different levels of cognitive development and that learning is a step by step process which requires a teacher to guide and assist students as they move along these learning stages of understanding and mastery. Both Yaslyn (female 7<sup>th</sup> grader) and Francisco (male, 7<sup>th</sup> grader) described below seemed to have a very clear understanding of this internal step by step learning process and were both able to describe specific personal experiences within their different levels or zones of development. Yaslyn described the difficulty of transitioning from a bilingual class to a class with all English instruction and how one teacher was able to have a good grasp of when she was ready to move to the "all English setting." Yaslyn was a female, native of Dominican Republic who had been in the US for four years at the time of the interview. Below, she explains that as a result of efforts by her fifth grade elementary school teacher, she was able to be placed in the right type of class, according to her level of English proficiency at the time.

Yaslyn: "The other one (all English class) was really hard for me...cause I wanted to start in easy, step by step and then go into harder stuff, by the end of fifth grade, I started doing harder English with the other teacher."

Although all students responded to questions differently, this common theme of teachers being willing to go above and beyond the call of duty of simply teaching "the single lesson." was an over-arching theme throughout the interview process of students.

Interviewer: Do you think that in either way shape or form teachers affect how you do in school?

Benjamin: Yes, because teachers are there to help you take notes and umm they also help you when they let you stay afterschool to work on something you haven't learned yet or need help on."

Interviewer: Tell me about a teacher who has helped you? And what did they do to help you be the great student that you are?

Benjamin: "My kindergarten teacher, Miss Sanchez, she umm, she used to give us a lot of homework about like writing our name and math problems, like tracing over our name and then writing it over again on a blank piece of paper..and she would give us, umm, like problems about what is different from this frog to the other..and which two frogs look the same."

Benjamin: " My fourth grade teacher, she used to, umm, when I had her, she, if you didn't get something, she used to have a little table so the people that didn't get it, would go to the table and she'll go over it. But if you still didn't get it, she'll still let you



stay there until you get it a little bit. The table used to be in the corner and she would call everybody up if we didn't get it and they would go and she would teach them another, like another problem, an easier one so they could kind of get it a little bit."

Interviewer: Think of those really good grades you've had this year or even last year and , umm, you know in addition to anything you've said, is there anything else that you think helps you do well?

Jenny: "Umm, learning more vocabulary or asking a teacher for help, if I need, like to come in after school and staying so that they could help me understand stuff better."

Jenny: "One teacher, I really think, she helped me a lot was Mrs. Hernandez, she was always there for me, she would always help me, she would stay, if I wanted in lunch or afterschool. I had her in sixth grade till seventh grade, I don't have her now. But she would always tell me to stay focused, to not give up, if I needed help, to go to her and even now, she still tells me that if I need help, I can go to her. I see her every morning because her classroom is right next to mine...I did really good in math last year because she would always explain everything and do her best so that her students could understand.. She really taught us well, if people didn't understand, she would stay in the same lesson for days."

When describing the pedagogical practices that were useful and helpful to her success, student B mentioned teachers who are constantly checking for understanding or what education experts call "progress monitoring." Also, a more prominent and more recent educational term more often used to describe this pedagogical practice is

"formative assessment." Yaslyn, 7<sup>th</sup> grade female participant mentioned that teachers who ask a lot of questions from students throughout their instruction and teachers who are always checking for understanding are the ones she sees as extremely helpful to her success.

Interviewer: Is there any other way that teachers help you do well in school?

Yaslyn: "They make sure I stay on track and don't fall behind..and they also ask me questions about how I'm doing in groups, if I'm having trouble and if I have to change my seat..I like my math teacher, doesn't take a lot of time explaining it to the class, (instead) she asks individually, 'are you doing ok? Do you understand?' Do you want me to help you?' "

Interviewer: Tell me about a teacher who has helped you? So now what I mean by that is a teacher that you can think of, the first one that comes to your mind, could be from your past, younger, it could be, currently, it could be from last year, the first one that you feel, hmm, , oh my goodness this teacher really helped me get that A because of how she did things or what she did or he did, tell me about that.

Francisco: "Mrs. Harris"

Interviewer: Yeah, tell me about Mrs. Harris

Francisco: "She gave us a lot of examples of things and we also played games about things we needed help with. She gave us examples and many practices, we had..she also made sure everybody understood, like what was going on, yes she made sure everybody understood."

Interviewer: Umm, how did she do that? Tell me how she did that?

Franciso: "Like, she always came around and checked our work, like made sure. And she would call on people like to tell the answers and come do it, come and do the work on the board."

Interviewer: So even if you didn't volunteer, you'd get called on?

Francisco: "Yeah"

Interviewer: So it was a way of making sure everyone was understanding?

Franciso: "Yes, she would make sure everybody was on track."

Two out of the six students interviewed mentioned the same teacher, Mrs. Hernandez as the top teacher who had helped them perform with excellence in the area of math within the school they were currently attending. Both Jenny and Francisco had this teacher in the past. This teacher will also be discussed in the "Persistent Teaching" category.

"Going Beyond the Lesson" - Teachers Way of Being (related to teacher actions in the classroom and overall affective practices).

There were times during the interview when I became interested in the teacher personal qualities/characteristics that particular students preferred. In this section labeled "Beyond the Lesson- a teacher's "way of being" students described teacher practices that the researcher connected to a teacher's personal attitudes and actions, other than what will later be describe as "persistent practices." These teacher practices and actions are more related to affective practices, like the expressed emotions and feelings of teachers

that seem to be related to their overall “way of being and acting” in the classroom. For example, a teacher's show of care and respect toward students. Unlike the "Persistent Teaching" section which deals more with having high expectations and being demanding about all student learning. Therefore, in the second part of this section, referred to as "Going Beyond the Lesson," students will describe the teacher’s individual qualities that they preferred and responded well to. These types of “teacher’s way of being” traits were related to affective practices. In this section, students described teachers who helped them be academically successful as teachers who:

were patient and calm, were willing to share about their lives in order to give advice about the importance of an education, took some type of special interest in them as individuals, and were "nice" and "respectful" toward their students.

Interviewer: Is there anything about the personal qualities of a teacher that you feel you respond well to? Let's say, think of teachers that you have A's or A+s for vs. somebody that you have a B for only, is there something about the personality that you respond to better than others?

Benjamin’s response to the above question relates to what appears to be an appreciation for teachers who express an overall calm demeanor and patience as they teach. This student does specifically say this as the follow up question is asked.

Benjamin: "Yeah, umm, my A+ teacher this year.., she umm, she goes over it like really slowly and it helps you think about it..it helps us like really get the problem and the math lesson or any lesson."

Interviewer: Is there anything about the personality of that teacher that you like better and why?

Benjamin: "Not the ones that are more serious, like the ones that are like calm..cause they help me like better, like without screaming. Cause when teachers are screaming, it makes me like want to rush. I guess I get things wrong."

When asked about the teacher qualities that he responded well to and at the same time teachers that he felt motivated him more than others, Alberto mentioned teachers who both opened themselves up in sharing life stories with the intent of providing advice about future success and the importance of an education.

Alberto: "Umm, also teachers affect you because they give you like things that happened in their lives."

Interviewer: Oh, tell me about that, what do you mean?

Alberto: "Like they were friends with this very smart person but the person started getting in trouble and at the end they didn't get good grades and they didn't get to go to good places."

One student, Yaslyn, mentioned a teacher who seemed to take special interest in her in both 4th and 5th grade. According to this student, this teacher took the time to really help "her" as an individual learner. This teacher also helped encourage her to sign up for the College Crusade Program which helps students both at the elementary and middle school level prepare for a college career.

Interviewer: Tell me about a teacher who has helped you, in particular, and what did they do to help you and I want you to think, the best way of handling this question is, think of the first one that comes to mind, the first instinct.. 'yes, I remember that this particular person really helped me do well' and it could be the same person you talked about before but it could be a current teacher too.

Yaslyn: "I think Miss Henderson from fourth grade and from fifth grade."

Interviewer: Tell me about this teacher

Yaslyn: "She told me to read a lot and I took that advice."

Interviewer: Anything else that you remember that this particular teacher did to help you do well, like be an A student?

Yaslyn: "Umm, she told my fifth grade teacher to put me in her class cause I was bilingual still so more Spanish than English and now I have more English than Spanish so I am better than before."

Interviewer: Ok and so what you are saying is, hmm, I'm trying to understand what they did for you, what change was made, I want to make sure I understand.

Yaslyn: "I went from Miss Hartson's class, well it was two totally different classes, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, they were both bilingual."

Interviewer: Ok

Yaslyn: "So then after when I got more stronger with my English, I stayed in one bilingual and one all English, not two bilingual...(Miss Hartson) actually also helped me get into Crusades."

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about that program

Yaslyn: "It tells us to go to college and not drop out, umm, they umm, we do computers, it's like we read and then we do a quiz and then we do a quiz again and then we move up and get better and better.."

Interviewer: What was it about her that you think (makes) her somebody worth talking about?

Yaslyn:" She was strict but she was nice and she is nice...when I did the paragraph she said, "you can do it and I did it and I made the college Crusade, I wrote a letter to the College Crusade saying what I wanted to be in the crusade."

Interviewer: Umm, so she says, 'you can do it' before you actually wrote it, it wasn't like praise like 'wow' this is such good writing, she gave you a kind of confidence beforehand. What did that mean to you? Why is that important to you?

Yaslyn: "That meant a lot to me because that actually helped me get in and get stronger in my English and I didn't give up half way."

Interviewer: Can I ask you, has there been any other teacher, for totally different reasons or similar reasons that you feel has helped you do well, maybe this year, somebody this year that you feel helps you do a good job and you don't have to say yes, I

just want you to think, you know, if it doesn't come, don't say it, but has there been anyone this year that you can think of that you feel has helped you remain an A student."

Yaslyn: "Maybe Miss Jacobs"

Interviewer: Tell me about what she's done.

Yaslyn: " She's been my teacher for two years now."

Interviewer: Two years, you had her last year as well?

Yaslyn: "Yeah"

Interviewer: Ok

Yaslyn: "You're gonna get better and better', you can be a better person than everybody in the class, cause there's bad people in the class and there's good...sometimes I think I'm doing really bad and she says I'm doing awesome."

Interviewer: So she said that to you, 'you can do a great job' was she talking about behavior or was she talking about academics?

Yaslyn: "Academics"

Before some of the students were willing to share about the teacher's actions in the classroom that they preferred, many had to be specifically asked about these. Francisco, for example, a 13 year-old Spanish speaker from Equatorial New Guinea, took some time before answering specific questions about teachers in a non-academic way.



Interviewer: Can you think of other things, other ways...you are answering very academically which is really what I am after, but I also want to know, are there any other things that Mrs. Hernandez did or any other teacher that helped you say, hmm, I really want to do well for this teacher because there's something else, there' something about this teacher, the things that she did, action-wise, what else do you respond well to?

Francisco: "Like she treated people really nicely and like with a lot of respect."

One of the female participants was a 14 year-old eight grader, born in Dominican Republic. This female student came from a single parent home, headed by her dad. She was one of two student participants who came from single parent homes. This student, who will be referred to as Berenice, had come to live in the US at 5 years-old but at 9 years-old moved with her family to live in Bolivia. She had returned to the US three years later at age 11.

Interviewer: Tell me about a teacher that comes to mind. .hmm, someone who has helped you, what was it that they did to help you, in terms of giving you and helping you do a great job in school. Think of the one, and I would go with my first instinct and be able to tell me what it is specific that this teacher did.?

Berenice: "There is a teacher, but I don't remember really her name , umm, it was my fourth grade teacher."

Interviewer: In Dominican Republic?

Berenice: "No, here in (names the elementary school in the district). Well, she was very supportive of me. And even when I was doing bad, even when she noticed that I

was doing bad in writing and reading, she even got me a tutor to help me. Yeah, she was really a smart math teacher . That's where I got the smart part of math because she taught me a lot."

She then continued to explain pedagogical practices that this teacher used that will be discussed in detail in the "innovation" section of the research findings. This student, along with Francisco, was one of the students who were not immediately forthcoming about personal "teacher way of being" preferences as related to what she felt helped her do exceptionally well in terms of academic performance.

Interviewer: In addition to what you just said, is there anything you can say about this one particular teacher that you believe was very helpful for you?

Berenice: "Umm, well not just in academics but when I was in fourth grade, I didn't have a lot of friends and I didn't really want to go to lunch sometimes cause I had like no one to sit with so she would let me just stay in her room, mostly on Wednesdays, I always waited for Wednesday to go back to her classroom."

Interviewer: What did that mean to you? Why was that something that made you feel or that you can still remember up until this day? Tell me about that experience with her letting you come have lunch with her every week, tell me more about that.

Berenice: "Because at least she didn't make me feel alone cause she was there, she would talk to me and help me with my math too."

Interviewer: What kinds of things did you do when you were with her, when you had lunch in her room. Are there any particular interactions that you remember that you enjoyed?

Berenice: "She taught me how to write fast on the computer. I didn't really know how to write fast but she could just look at the keyboard."

Interviewer: Any other qualities that you feel and maybe now you can do this for me (Berenice), think about someone other than this fourth grade teacher, is there anyone else?

Berenice: "Teacher?"

Interviewer: Yeah, teacher wise, any kind of quality at all that you can think of, another person that had qualities that you can think of that helped you in any way, shape or form, helped you be the great student that you are, in terms of motivation, like oh yes, I really want to do well in this class because something is happening that I feel like they're motivating me so I want to do well for this particular teacher.

Berenice: "Miss Smith"

Interviewer: ok

Berenice: "Like she's a really cool teacher. I don't know why math teacher as well."

Interviewer: Oh, interesting

Berenice: "Yes" (laughs)

Interviewer: What is it that you like about what she does?

Berenice: "Well, she teaches math, she doesn't like talk boring, she's actually like more hyper and motivated about it. When we do good in a test, like everyone does good in a test, 85% or above, she gets us to go to the gym first period and sometimes she gives us something to eat, if we do good and bring like a uniform and all that stuff."

This finding I describe as "Going Beyond the Lesson" refers to both specific above and beyond actions the teacher takes to make sure all students are learning and include things like, being willing to stay after school, and constantly finding ways to differentiate instruction. This category also includes a preference for specific "personal qualities" of teachers as they relate to their "way of being" in the classroom. An extensive amount of analyzed data was linked back to this category described as "Going Beyond the Lesson."

## 2. Innovation

When answering questions about teacher pedagogical practices that students felt had a major influence on their academic performance and achievement, five out of the six middle school ELLs interviewed focused on the use of innovative practices in the classroom. These "Innovative" practices were all considered to be non-traditional practices and activities that mainly involved hands on experiences, movement within the classroom, games and projects. Although much of the detailed hands on and real life learning experiences were described mainly as happening within science classrooms, students also mentioned experiences dealing with the use of innovation within English

Language Arts, Mathematics and Social Studies classrooms. Also included in this section is the overall use of technology in the classroom.

Francisco described learning through games and cooperative work as something that significantly contributed to his academic achievement.

Interviewer: Give me a little more on that

Francisco: "Like how the teacher teaches?"

Interviewer: Yeah, ways that teachers do things in the classroom that help you understand, in addition to what you already said, lots of examples, they kind of go over things with you well, can you think of others, other than math?

Francisco: "Like in English, we play games, like bingo, like they have the sentences and the definition of the word and like she reads out the sentence, like she reads out the definition and you have to figure out the word."

Interviewer: And it's a game that you play, do you play it individually or is it in groups?

Francisco: "In groups"

Interviewer: How do you feel about working in groups?

Francisco: "I feel great."

Interviewer: Why?

Francisco: "Because, like, I help people when they need help and we just, we help each-other out."

Interviewer: Is it always a good experience?

Francisco: "Yeah"

Interviewer: Why? You kind of already said it, I just want you to tell me more

Francisco: "Cause I like working with people like could help me with any trouble and I could help them with it, if they need help. It also gets the work done faster cause you could divide the work and each person has to do like a part."

Alberto, along with the two other student participants explained in detail activities that could be described as the renowned educational philosopher John Dewey (1938) did in his writings related to "experiential learning." Like Dewey (1938), Alberto, described the importance of actually "doing" in the classroom, like carrying out experiments or actively working things out on his own. These types of hands on, real life experiences were cited as ones that truly helped them understand the concepts and ideas being learned in the classroom.

Interviewer: I want to ask you more specifics about a teacher, teachers that you've responded well to that you feel helped you. I want you to think of specific activities, lessons, that you've gone through whether this year or in the past that you feel have been really good at helping you understand things, the kinds of things that teachers do, activities that teachers do that help you do well, that help you understand topics well.

Alberto: "Umm, I'll go back to my fifth grade teacher."

Interviewer: Please

Alberto: "She used to do a lot of experiments with us."

Interviewer: Science?

Alberto: "Yeah"

Interviewer: Alright, tell me about that

Alberto: "That helped a lot because we literally saw what happens and we always had to make our theory of what's gonna happen with things."

Interviewer: Ah, alright, a theory, like prediction based on facts that you saw, right, right, and so can you think of a specific activity in science that you still remember that you really enjoyed?

Alberto: "Umm, let's see" (hesitates a bit)

Interviewer: You can take a moment, hands on, you were seeing, you were observing, you were touching, try to think of something you remember that you thought was pretty cool that you did, maybe in science.

Alberto: "Oh, like one time we were learning about electricity and we got like motors and started working with them, like making fans and things like that."

Interviewer: Like how to light up?

Alberto: "Light bulbs"

Interviewer: (laughs) I actually taught that one year, I actually taught elementary and that was really fun, kids get into it, umm, very nice so this hands-on science, has come up a lot with students. Would you say this is accurate, like away from the textbook reading and notes?

Alberto: "Yeah"

Interviewer: Because you are actually doing it?

Alberto: "Cause actually reading books is sort of boring."

Interviewer: I almost feel like I want a couple of more sentences about that, the difference between hands on and reading from books.

Alberto: "So you visualize it but it's better that you literally see it because sometimes you feel like it's not true, umm, I didn't believe that no matter how heavy the thing is, they would not hit at the same time, that's what I thought."

Interviewer: Ooh, like volume, weight, I'm trying to remember the kind of activity that you are talking about.

Alberto: "Umm, wait I know the name, it's Newton's Laws"

Interviewer: Newton's Laws, alright tell me

Alberto: "So one law was that no matter how much the thing weighs, if you drop them at the same time, they would literally hit at the same time to the ground. So we tried the theory and it turns out we were wrong."



Interviewer: So no matter what their weight, your original theory was that if you dropped them at the same time..

Alberto: "The heaviest one was going to drop, fall down first."

Interviewer: And that's not the case?

Student: "No, not the case."

As Berenice remembered pedagogies that had truly helped her learn and understand the mathematics material being taught, she recalled a math lesson that used "real life" objects. As this student remembered the great teacher practices of who she remembered being a very special and memorable teacher from her elementary years, she remembered a lesson about things that come in groups. She said that this lesson helped her grasp a simple concept like the meaning of " a dozen."

Interviewer: She taught math in a way that helped you understand?

Berenice: "Yeah, like there was a point where I didn't know what dozen means, like I thought it was just like one. (One dozen). She would say imagine there is 12 eggs, that's a dozen and that's why they call it a dozen of eggs and that's why I remember - dozen. Every time I hear dozen, that is why I think of her cause she reminds me of eggs, well that doesn't make sense." (laughs)

Interviewer: I understand, yeah.

During a follow up interview with this student, her ELL status was made apparent as she struggled a bit to verbalize classroom pedagogical practices used by her social studies teacher.

Berenice: "Well like in Mr. J's classroom, like my social studies teacher, something that he does really helps me remember, he, uhhh" ..(struggles)

Interviewer: Take as much time as you need

Berenice: "I don't even know"

Interviewer: oh, ok

Berenice: "He shows by image"

Interviewer: Ok so for example, give me an example,

Berenice: " Like uhh, he'll put a lot of images in one page but won't show the vocabulary, now he tells us the word the day before and then the next day we have to find out like, we have to remember what the word meant by the picture."

Interviewer: Oh, interesting, so he'll give you, alright, so I'm trying to understand so there's a vocabulary word that he wants to go over that has to do with the unit and what he'll do is give you the word the day before, he teaches the word, ex, let's say example, democracy-and he'll tell you what it means and then, the next day..

Berenice: "He'll show a picture of democracy (that exemplifies) but won't say, 'this is democracy' you'll have to like find out for yourself to see if you remember what it means."

Interviewer: So alright, so that's great umm. So kind of revisiting vocabulary in a different way, not just like word and that's what it means, can you think of anything else?

Berenice: "Umm, in Mr. M's (her science teacher) cause he does the same thing, he demonstrates by science, in science like today we were doing a project, he would fill a can up and put it in a little tube and measure it..he would bring cans he can demonstrate or he has this measure that I forgot what it's called and he would measure stuff through there. And he would actually, like, let us do stuff too, like projects..there's long tables in Mr. M's classroom, four people in each table and those are your groups and so you have ..so there was one time you had to find..oh (struggles) sorry that was another time."

Interviewer: That's ok, a specific activity

Berenice: "One time he made a mystery mix and then he gave us a lot of ingredients and so we had to find the mystery mix, like he showed us how the mystery mix bubbled or fizzed and so we had to make a mix similar to the mystery mix."

Interviewer: Why do you think that helps you learn better?

Berenice: "Because you've done it before because when you read it from a book you read from some perspective like this and all that stuff but you don't really know because you haven't done it yourself. I think it's better to do it, like on your own and get results."

Benjamin, the youngest and only sixth grade student research participant, whose parents are native of Mexico, was attending his first year as an exited bilingual education student.

Interviewer: Do you find certain activities more fun than others in class? uhh, what are those? Maybe tell me a little bit about that, the kinds of things you like better than others?

Benjamin: "Umm, in fifth grade, science we used to work with animals, like crayfish, beetles and like find out how they used their parts they have to survive."

Interviewer: Why did you think that was fun?

Benjamin: "Cause we were working with animals and not just like.."

Interviewer: Directly with the animals. This wasn't like a pencil, a book and a paper

Benjamin: "No, we used to get to touch them and feel how they feel, their texture and we had to write this down and see if they felt soft or rough."

Yaslyn described Miss Hartson as someone who took the time to get to know her and to truly encourage her as an independent learner. She also described how this teacher used some non-traditional activities to teach some of her content. These activities also included cooperative group work.

Interviewer: Is there anything else about how she teaches English?

Yaslyn: "The repeat carousel" (carousel activity where students walk up to different chart papers hanging up throughout the classroom, students move generally in clockwise order, to answer the different questions posted on a topic).

Yaslyn: "She puts posters up and we have to answer questions on it, like on a poster...She tells every group to get umm a poster and then they go around clockwise and then they answer the questions and then people stand up to read what it says on the poster."

Interviewer: How often does she do this?

Yaslyn: "A lot"

Interviewer: "And why do you think that you like this activity? Why do you think it helps you learn well?"

Yaslyn: "Cause maybe, umm (struggles a bit) I don't know, it's just, then you know what other people are thinking and umm..You learn more, so there's like seven posters and we, every group, say my group has to go through all seven posters and then we see what other people have written and then other people see what we write."

Interviewer: What I want you to do is think of another teacher and I think, specifically, think of other than Mrs.J.. a second person that comes to your mind, specific qualities about this person, that you think, yes, this really helped me learn, this really helped me understand. Maybe it was the personality, it was how he or she spoke to you, something about it made you react well to this teacher.

Francisco: "Miss Keene"

Interviewer: Tell me about that

Francisco: "She puts it in funny ways, like she makes learning fun."

Interviewer: Examples?

Francisco: "Like she would show us from examples, like on her computer, she shows us like a person online, like that's about it."

Interviewer: Like, in other words, like a sort of You Tube kind of thing..where the person is showing how to do the problem?

Francisco: "Yeah"

Interviewer: So she'll actually show you that on the computer, isn't that interesting.

Francisco: "Yeah, that really helped me."

Interviewer: Ok, why?

Francisco: "Well, first of all, the guy that was on it, he broke it down into pieces and he showed us examples and other examples, like what they would do."

Interviewer: Aah, would you say that you respond really well to just technology help or are there other kinds of things that are not really technology that you also like?

Francisco: "Like fun projects , we did like a project in class about math, you would go around and pick a problem and then like do it."

Interviewer: What do you mean like do it?

Francisco: "Like stations, you go to different stations and you do different problems. That really helped me."

Interviewer: So in one period , like we only have 45 minute periods, you would be moving around into different stations?

Francisco: "Yeah"

Interviewer: So that is the aspect of fun, like you were moving around?

Francisco: "Yeah, so you're not staying on one place, you are moving around."

A second prevalent finding in this research is something I will simply describe as “Innovation.” Academically resilient ELLs who took part in this research had a strong preference for hands on and innovative practices in the classroom. These included presentation of content through things like games, projects, experiments, technology, and anything else that can be considered non-traditional practices.

### 3. "Persistent Instruction" (affective practices)

"Persistent Instruction" refers to teachers who not only do things that are considered above and beyond instruction but who specifically "push" or "challenge" students to succeed. The term persistent was chosen by the researcher because of its general meaning of having a firm course of action despite any difficulties we may encounter. It was understood from these middle school ELLs that the teachers who they admired and identified as instrumental to their academic resilience and success were teachers who had high expectations of them and teachers who pushed them throughout this journey of education. These teachers carried out their work with what appeared to be a high regard and belief in a student's ability to "get it" and placed demands on them and

pushed them as long as was necessary to reach the end goal of understanding the concepts and ideas that were being taught.

Francisco: " I think that every teacher is a big influence on me because they help me every day and they tell me I could do better, they tell my parents and they push me to do more and more every day."

Interviewer: Probably the best way to handle this is the first instinct that comes to your mind...I do really well in this class because the teacher does this when he or she teaches.

Yaslyn: "I think it's because my teachers push me to do my best, to their highest expectations and be realistic."

Interviewer: What do you mean by that?

Yaslyn: "They won't let me slack off, they just keep pushing so I can do better."

Two of the students interviewed mentioned teachers who required all of the students to actively participate in class.

Interviewer: So can you think of another teacher, in addition to her, after the fourth grade, or before the fourth grade, that also helped you and how did they help you?

Benjamin: "Umm, my fifth grade teacher, Miss Corvo, in reading, she made us stand up and read out loud, a story, like a paragraph and if you didn't say, umm, some words right, she would have gone over it with you and would stay until you got it."



Interviewer: "Ahh, you remember those specific examples from kindergarten, what is it about those kinds of activities that you feel helped you?"

Benjamin: "If you didn't get it, she would help, she would stay afterschool with you and, umm, until you got it."

Alberto: "Yeah, like some teachers, they tell me that I'm smart but that I need to do more explaining, they always tell me that."

Interviewer: Umm, how did she do that, tell me how she did that?

Francisco: "Like she always came around and checked our work like made sure and she would call on people like to tell the answers and come do it, come do the work on the board."

Interviewer: So even if you didn't volunteer, you'd get called on?

Francisco: "Yeah"

Interviewer: So it was a way of making sure everyone was understanding?

Francisco: "Yes, she would make sure everyone was on track...And like she pushed you to do well and she pushes you and she like challenges you."

One of the students who focused primarily on "affective" type actions (as described in section called "Going Beyond the Lesson") as being primarily helpful to her excellence in academic achievement also managed to articulate and attribute her success partly to a type of persistent approach in teaching.

Interviewer: Do you feel that somebody, whether it's Mrs. Hernandez or somebody else, paid close attention to you, giving you feedback and all that, does that, do you think help you with your perception of yourself as a learner?

Jenny: "Yes, I think because they really, umm, they are helping me so I do my best and that helps me feel good too. I really want to learn more because they push me to do that and they're telling me that as an advice or something like that to do it, to keep on learning so that really makes me feel good."

I will describe the third finding as "Persistent Instruction." This includes academically resilient ELLs description of teacher's that "pushed them" specifically as ones that were helpful to their successful classroom learning. Most students chose the phrase teachers that "pushed me" all on their own. These teachers have also been described by similar research, such as Wilson & Corbett (2001), as teachers who always have and maintain high expectations of all of their students.

#### 4. Literacy Emphasis

A final research finding related to pedagogical practices that academically resilient middle school Latino ELLs mentioned as being helpful to their academic success was an overall emphasis on literacy within the classroom. Most of the students interviewed seemed to place value on areas related to: Vocabulary, speaking, reading, writing and spelling. Some spoke of practices with literacy as helpful in general terms but others placed a special importance to these areas specifically because of an awareness

that they continued to struggle with English proficiency and that emphasis on literacy would help them overcome this hurdle.

Yaslyn, for example, expressed an immense awareness of both past and present struggles with the mastery of the English language.

Interviewer: The question is do you think teachers affect how you do in school? Do they have anything to do with whether you do a great job or not a great job?

Yaslyn: "Yeah"

Interviewer: Alright, tell me how

Yaslyn: "They help me if I need correcting, spelling correction and they help me build my vocabulary."

Interviewer: Tell me about a teacher who has helped you, in particular, and what did they do to help you...the best way of handling this question, think of the first one that comes to mind, the first instinct...'yes I remember that this particular person really helped me do well.' And it could be the same person that you talked about before but it could be a current teacher too.

Yaslyn: "I think Miss Henderson from fourth and fifth grade."

Interviewer: Tell me about this teacher

Yaslyn: "She, in fourth grade, she helped me a lot."

Interviewer: How?

Yaslyn: "She spoke to me more in English than Spanish so I could understand more...She told me to read a lot and I took that advice." (This teacher was described by the student as a bilingual speaker of both English and Spanish).

Later in the conversation, Yaslyn spoke of a current teacher who also helped her do well in terms of her emphasis on vocabulary. Student B seemed to express a very personal awareness that reading, even on her own, without teacher assignment or involvement, was helpful for her as a learner.

Yaslyn: "And she encouraged me to get better (and start) and keep on practicing vocabulary and other things that I needed."

Interviewer: Ok, great, anything else that we may have missed?

Yaslyn: "Reading helps me a lot."

Interviewer: Tell me about that, what do you mean reading, like be specific

Yaslyn: "I read books when I get home sometimes."

Interviewer: For pleasure? Totally not for assignments

Yaslyn: "Yeah"

Interviewer: "Ok, tell me more."

Yaslyn: "I think it helps me speak better and it helps me build on my vocabulary and it helps me read better cause I really don't like reading in front of a lot of people and I don't really like talking so, it helps me."

Interviewer: Do you read every night?

Yaslyn: "No, I read yesterday actually but it wasn't like a book, it was like on my phone, people write stuff online and it's really good and I think it could help me."

Interviewer: What kind of stuff?

Yaslyn: "Fiction, they're good...you can write your own stories and actually I'm writing one."

Benjamin: "Umm, my fifth grade teacher, (Miss Corvo?) in reading, she made us stand up and read out loud, a story, like a paragraph and if you didn't say, umm, some words right, she would have gone over it with you."

Alberto: "Umm we would sit at tables, she gave us books that we could read, she always came and helped us."

Interviewer: So answer questions about the actual book that you had, something that you didn't understand, you also mean like trying to figure out how to say words?

Alberto: "Yeah"

Alberto was one of two students who had been previous students of the researcher. (The other student was Yaslyn). These two students were currently attending seventh grade and had been in the researcher's sixth grade Social Studies class the previous year. The interviewer explained to this student that it was important for the research that he not mention experiences in the researcher's classroom itself because the goal of the interviewer/teacher researcher was to learn but also to make sure that no

students felt pressured in any way to have to mention the researcher's pedagogical practices as ones that had been particularly helpful to them.

Interviewer: I was going to say like try to not because I feel like kids who have been my former students, that's why I'm trying to interview not former students, very sweet of you to say, Im doing this because I want to learn how to get even better , it's very sweet if you actually mean it but I almost want to stay away from any kind of possibility of you feeling pressured to say that because, here I am a former teacher in front of you , umm, and you might feel, like , umm, 'if I don't say that, she's going to feel bad.'

Alberto: "No it's not."

Interviewer: Yes, so I want you to think of somebody else (I'll ask you questions about me after, whatever it is that you liked about me, I want to know, but think of somebody else.)

Alberto: "Umm, my fourth grade teacher."

Interviewer: Tell me

Alberto: "Her name was Miss George..yeah she always liked to read books with us, she always , like, read poems.."

Berenice: Like he'll put a lot of images in one page but won't show the vocabulary, now he tells us the word the day before and then the next day we have to find out, like we have to remember what the word means by the picture...umm, like umm racism, the word racism he taught us the other day and then he showed us a picture of

someone saying something, like a white person saying something bad to a black person or..like bathrooms for white and bathrooms for black..sorry, yes."

Jenny, an eighth grader and native of Dominican Republic who had only been in the US for four years, was one of two students (the other was Yaslyn) who mentioned work and activities in the classroom related to literacy as particularly helpful to her as an English language learner (ELL). Four of the other students interviewed mentioned literacy related activities but didn't explicitly say that these were helpful because of their ELL status.

Interviewer: So the first question.. (researcher addresses student B by name) is what is it that you think helps you in school? In general, when you think about school, what is it that you think helps you do such a great job?

Jenny: "I think staying focused in school helps me. Doing all my homework when I get home. Asking for help if I need it, researching stuff that I will need, like reading books to help me improve my English, umm learning more vocabulary or asking help from a teacher, if I need, like come in after school and staying so that they could help me understand stuff better."

Interviewer: Do you find yourself though, maybe working a little harder for certain teachers than for others and pulling out, as a result, maybe getting that higher A+, instead of an A- or you know, in your case, yeah, umm A+ instead of an A-(Jenny was a straight A student at the time of this research) or A instead of a B+, do you find yourself doing that for some teachers and why?

Jenny: "Yes, I do that with my English teacher and math, or , yeah, like in science, I don't. I do my work but I don't really like to learn a lot, well, I like to learn but I'm not really focused to learn science a lot."

Interviewer: Why?

Jenny: "I don't think what I want to do has anything to do with science but still I do my work. I think my English, I push a lot, I do my best, my hardest I can...I think when I grow up I'm going to need a lot of English in my life, if I want to succeed, I need, I want to learn really well English so I could really, umm, accomplish what I want to do in life, like being a lawyer really takes a person to really speak well English because you wouldn't only do it for yourself but you have to do it for others too. So you have to understand every concept of English for you to be able to speak in front of a large audience."

Jenny also mentioned the importance of literacy based practices within the math classroom as particularly helpful to her understanding of the concepts.

Jenny: "If people didn't get it, umm, we would do a lot of projects that had to do a lot with what we learned. Umm, we would present in front of our classmates so that if they could understand it better by us telling them.."

Jenny later spoke of another teacher, an ESL teacher who sometimes worked with her and a few other ELLs, in a small group outside of the classroom.



Interviewer: What qualities do you think she has that are helpful for you as a learner and help you do a great job, or not qualities, what did she do that helped you, specifically, you kind of already said that, but I just want to hear it again.

Jenny: "Umm, she would help us a lot, she would describe stuff, explain it better so, give us an example of a definition if we needed help with a word that we didn't understand in a sentence if we were stuck on something."

A fourth and final finding that resulted from the analysis of student responses regarding teacher pedagogies and classroom practices that resilient ELLs preferred was related to a teacher's willingness to practice basic literacy skills with them. Academically resilient ELLs said they learned successfully from teachers who taught their subjects through the emphasis of reading, writing, and basic vocabulary development. These students specifically said that teachers who spent classroom time reading books and building vocabulary skills were the ones who helped them the most.

### Findings Related to Student Personal Qualities

This research aimed to answer three research questions. The first and most important of these research questions was, "What do academically resilient middle school ELLs say are the teacher qualities and practiced pedagogies that contribute to their academic resilience?"

The second research question was "what do the teachers of academically resilient Latino ELLs say are the factors that contribute to these students' academic success?" The third

and final research question was "what do the families of academically resilient ELLs say they do to help contribute to their success?" In this chapter, I focus on analyzing the qualitative data collected that has answered these three questions. However, this brief section will describe an interesting and perhaps very important finding related to ELL middle school student perceptions on what helps them. As research was completed, transcribed, analyzed, coded and recoded, the researcher became aware of the following question - not of the researched questions. This question is related to the ideas of whether students perceived themselves and their own personal strengths and personal practices as learners in the classroom as mainly attributable to their academic success or whether they thought it was teacher practices that helped them be successful. The researcher discovered that students attribute their academic success mainly to things that they themselves do as learners. These personal attributes and " learner practices" should be considered separately when compared to what teachers do in the classroom that students said helps them be academically resilient. I based this finding on the first interview question posed to all student participants,

"What do you think helps you do well in school?"

After responses for this specific first question were analyzed and coded, the responses / utterances related to students' own personal actions and attributes as compared to teachers actions were greatly predominant. Initial responses to this question included thirty seven related to personal qualities and actions versus only seven related to specific teachers actions and six related to something other than teachers or personal qualities. Only two out of the six students who initially responded to the question about what helps them included teachers as part of the answers.

Comments related to personal student personal actions and attributes included,

Yaslyn:

"Well, I get surrounded by like smart people that actually do a good job. I mean they work and they are trying to do something to get better at..and umm they do wanna be someone

When I get out of here, I like to hang out around people like that cause, it's just like it sometimes reflects (on)me, how I want to be and all that stuff."

Yaslyn:

"What helps me do well in school is umm, read, a lot."

"But I like working alone more than (in groups)..cause I do my work faster and do it better."

"Cause I like everything around me to be calm and not a lot of people fooling around I guess."

"Speaking English at home..cause I don't speak English with my mom or my dad but I speak it with my friends and maybe my cousins because some of them don't know English and I'm the only one, like, that knows the language."

"Because I don't speak the best, I don't speak really clear but if I speak more English I could get better."

Jenny:

"I think staying focused in school helps me."

"Doing all my homework when I get home."

"Asking for help if I need it, researching stuff that I will need."

"Like reading books to help me improve my English."

"Umm, learning more vocabulary or asking help a teacher, if I need, like come in after school and staying so that they could help me understand stuff better."

"Umm, I consider myself a good student because I really behave, I do my work."

"I always stay focused on school, I'm not a bad girl at home either or in school."

When asked specifically whether she thought teachers affect how she does in school, student responded,

"I don't think teachers affect how you do in school..they want the best for us as students."

"No, I don't think, we make our own choices, we have to decide if we want to learn or not."

"I always stay focused, I do decide to do my work, not like other kids that they, it's not teachers who impact them but themselves because they don't want to do work, they just come to school to do other stuff."

Francisco:

Francisco and Alberto were the only two who included teachers as part of what helped them do well in school. But these same two students then went on to cite several other things they themselves did in the classroom that helped them).

"Like I get help by the teachers, a lot. When I need help, I ask them questions that help me understand the problem better."

"I study and try my best in all my classes and in my work."

"I always asked my teachers lots of questions in math."

"Cause I didn't understand what she was doing so I asked her about three times."

Benjamin:

"Umm, to study every night after there's a test and to take notes."

"Umm, I usually take notes about everything in the class so I don't forget what we learned about."

"Never being later to class so I don't miss anything..Cause if the class starts late, you might miss important information."

Alberto:

Alberto and Francisco were the only two who included teachers as part of what helped them do well in school. Teachers were mentioned briefly initially but then these students proceeded to cite examples of personal actions as helpful).

"Umm, things that help me do well in school are like, the teachers, like, and I like pay attention in school."

"I sit in the front row, listen to the teachers."

"Also, to my friends, I only talk to them when it's social time..yeah."

## Question 2

The second research question was "What do the teachers of academically resilient Latino ELLs say are the factors that contribute to these students' academic success?"

The second and third research questions explored the idea of whether teacher and parent perceptions would differ from the perceptions of the academically resilient students themselves. Throughout the student interview process, all student participants were asked about the types of support they received from home as well as from their teachers. I only focused, however, on discussing the findings related to the specific research questions to ensure the validity of the research. It was also important for me to compare responses of students to those of the adults within these students' immediate environments to see if the perceptions among the adults and the children differed and, if so, how.

One major finding within the context of comparing the thoughts and perceptions of the teachers to the thoughts and perceptions of the students in regards to what helps these middle school Latino ELLs achieve excellence in academics was that they both described qualities of the students themselves as learners as predominant when attributing reasons for their academic success. So teachers, as well as students responded to this question, "What helps you do well in school?" (asked to students) and "What do you think helps this student succeed academically?"(asked to teachers) by describing the students themselves as having the most impact. Two of the five teachers interviewed were an exception in the sense that they were both willing to first attribute the reason for the academic excellence of the Latino ELLs to the parents and home environments of the

students. However, after attributing the reasons of academic success to the parents and home environments, these two teachers then quickly proceeded to describe the students themselves, as the other three teachers did. So none of the teachers initially attributed their students' success to their own practiced teacher pedagogies or personal qualities but instead attributed their academic resilience to either students' personal attributes or both their home environments and personal attributes. In comparison, students brought up parents as important only when specifically asked about those at home who helped, not when researcher asked the open ended question, "What helps you do well in school?"

After asking a much more general and broad question regarding the causes of these ELLs' academic resilience and success, the researcher focused in a bit more on inquiring about the specific practices that these teachers carry out that they felt might play a role in aiding the student success. The second, more specific question asked of teachers was, "Do you think that you as a teacher play any kind of a role in helping her/him succeed? How?" The researcher learned that the teachers of these academically resilient ELLs described some of the same types of pedagogical practices described by the students as helpful to them but that the language used by the teachers was different. The adult educators responded using what the researcher will simply refer to as a teacher language with a "purposeful tone." This teacher language had a more purposeful tone as it described what they thought were helpful practiced pedagogies because it included a much more clear rationale as to why certain practiced pedagogies would be beneficial to ELLs, in particular. This more "purposeful tone" in the teacher language leads the researcher to conclude that the teacher had previously acquired a specific knowledge base about researched and published best practices regarding the instruction of ELLs in the



classroom. On that thought, something that students were not able to do that teachers were is to talk about things like, cooperative grouping, the use of technology, hands on practices, and the importance of truly getting to know students, as specifically related to classroom pedagogies that help the learning and understanding of those who struggle with English proficiency (ELLs). Although I did not directly ask teachers the question, I was able to infer that these teachers had been, at some point in their career, trained in pedagogies that are considered as "best practices" when it comes to the instruction of ELLs and so for that reason were able to more clearly explain and use a more "purposeful tone" as they described a rationale for each of the classroom pedagogies they used that they thought had been particularly helpful for these students.

The first question teachers were asked was, "What do you think helps this student succeed academically?"

*Teacher Initial Responses related to Student Personal Qualities as Learners*

Female Teacher who spoke of Berenice: "Umm, well first off she, when I think of her, she's just an amazing student in her own right and I think she would be successful regardless of ...I was surprised that she was an ELL student, like I had no idea until she was, you know, taken out of the Access Testing... I don't know if I did anything specifically for her, like anything different in a sense."

Teacher Who Spoke of Yaslyn: "I would first just like to commend her for her maturity level. I think that as a seventh grader, she has incredible drive and persistence. She has the ability to ask openly for help which is quite unusual for her age range. On top of her thirst for knowledge and craving for feedback, both positive and negative, gets her to a

level of reflection and then modification in her work to make it the best she possibly can. She is also such a strong participator in both reading and writing in the classroom and especially in her writing."

Teacher who spoke of Student Francisco: "Francisco has a lot of intrinsic motivation and that is something that he came to me with. When I spoke to his prior teacher, Mrs. Hernandez, she also communicated to me that he demonstrated proficiency on many of the math subjects prior to coming to my classroom...He also has the ability to isolate his own weaknesses and seeks to improve upon them."

As mentioned earlier, two of the five teachers who responded to questions regarding these ELLs' success in academics, first mentioned their parents and home environments as they responded. These teachers then went on and discussed these students' personal qualities as the root cause of their success. These two teachers who discussed parental support initially, as the principal reason for the students' success, were also the older teachers and the teachers with more classroom experience than the other three teachers interviewed. Mrs. Hernandez, who spoke of her thoughts on the academic success of student C, had 25 years classroom teaching experience. This was the teacher that two of the six ELL participants, Francisco and Jenny, mentioned as one who had personal qualities and who practiced pedagogies that helped them. The other teacher who initially mentioned the home environment in his initial response to the question related to what helps these students succeed was Mr. Smith, the only male teacher interviewed, who spoke of student Berenice. This teacher had over 10 years classroom teaching experience.

*Teacher Initial Comments Related to Parents and Home Environment*

Teacher who spoke of Jenny (Hernandez): "I think that what helps her is her home environment, she doesn't have both mom and dad at home. She does have a mom that demonstrates a respect for education. I believe the mom is also educated beyond high school, I don't know if she graduated from college but I know she must have had one or two years of college so because of that I believe Jenny has been taught that education is important. And one of the reasons why they come to this country is because of the opportunities that education offers them here, for free. So I think that's the main reason why she succeeds."

Interviewer: You've had personal experience with her mom being involved?

Teacher who spoke of Jenny: "Yes, her mom always came to the parent teacher conferences, mom always wanted to know how she was doing, never missed any of them. Umm, she would write back and forth if she had to find out, touch base. She was an involved mom and I think that's why. "

Interviewer: The first question is what do you think helps this student succeed academically?

Male Teacher Who Spoke of Berenice (Mr. Smith): "Well, umm, it's obvious that maybe her parents are involved because she comes in prepared with her homework done. And she's ready to actually start work. So parent involvement is always a huge thing for kids to be able to be successful."

As mentioned earlier these teachers then proceed to comment about student personal qualities as the others did.

Teacher who spoke of Jenny (Mrs. Hernandez): "She has the ability, naturally, so math comes easy for her, umm, you have to teach it to her once and she will understand what is being taught."

Teacher who spoke of Berenice (Mr. Smith): "The language that's being used also, umm, and so with her it's easy. It's one of her strengths so she's got that part of her brain that does the logic and the math well and picks it up quickly so that's another reason why she was successful in my class...And umm, just contact with your teachers, after the day's over, she'll go home but she'll email me with questions. So she'll actually question, you know, 'How am I supposed to do this?' 'I forgot how to do that.' But she's following up and she's emailing questions and she's trying to get in touch with me after school, umm through engrade which is very helpful."

After analyzing teacher responses to the second question , "Do you think that you as a teacher play any kind of a role in helping her/him succeed? How?" I learned that the teachers of these academically resilient ELLs described some of the same types of pedagogical practices described by the students as helpful to them but that this was done with a different language than the more basic language used by the students. The four predominant things described by the teachers that they felt were helpful in promoting their ELLs' academic resilience included the use of cooperative work in the classroom, having high expectations of them as learners, providing opportunities for lots of hands-on work, and the importance of truly getting to know them as individuals learners. This was

very similar to some of the findings shared by the students when they described the teacher practices that helped them.

In the following section, the researcher will, therefore describe teacher responses according to these four categories:

- A) Cooperative grouping
- B) Having high expectations of them(described in student findings sections as an example "Persistent Instruction" )
- C) Use of hands on practices, and
- D) The importance of truly getting to know students.

After transcribing the teacher data and comparing to student data, I was able to infer that these teachers had been, at some point in their career, trained in pedagogies that are research based and specifically helpful when instructing ELLs and so for that reason were able to more clearly explain why they thought these classroom practices were helpful for these particular students, ELLs. This teacher language contained a "purpose" and a "rationale" as to why they carried out certain practices in the classroom and were able to explain why the nature of these practices, in their opinion, were specifically helpful to ELLs.

*A)Teacher Comments related to Cooperative Grouping /Innovation*

Female Teacher Who Spoke of Yaslyn: "We sit in groups, like I always have kids sit in groups of three and umm, giving her sort of like a leadership role in her group as well because she is really strong. I put her with another student who just recently joined us

who's also an ELL student and with another who is struggling a little bit more and she does a really nice job of kind of taking what I'm teaching and then breaking it down even better for the kids...

"Giving her kind of that leadership role is helping her still continue to stay engaged, still kind of keep working with material and try to make it even more clear for her to understand so she could better explain it to the students who she is working with...

"umm like I said, sitting in groups and encouraging student talk, like I really like the students to like think through and struggle through themselves which I think is important."

Teacher Who Spoke of Yaslyn: "I've allowed her to do extension projects and occasionally work alone or with a partner rather than follow the full group lesson because sometimes she just needs something different from the rest of the class and usually it is something that is past what the others are doing.

" I think she has a stronger ability and I want to build on that skill rather than hold her back with the others. I've also instructed her to coach other students in the class."

*B)Teacher Comments Related to Having High Expectations (Persistent Instruction)*

Male Teacher Who Spoke of Berenice: "Instead of going, well, that's ok, you know, I'll take it (assignment) late or, I'll take it, you know, half done, I don't. I say 'no this is not done, you have to finish it' and they begin to realize that I'm here for them to learn rather than here to be their buddy and that relationship starts to develop as a partnership, not a friendship.

"I'm demanding..yeah but I'm fair."

Teacher who Spoke of Jenny: "So me being constantly on her, not to get on her nerves but just letting her know I am here to be the one to let you know 'this is what you need to know how to do in high school..."

"I think she is a serious student so she wanted that structure and she was able to learn the routines quickly enough."

Teacher Who Spoke of Francisco: What might I do to help Francisco succeed? In my classroom, I try to keep directions as explicit as possible by both speaking them multiple times, having to repeat them and also posting them the entire time students are working...For (refers to Francisco), I make it a point to stop by him more often..students that I know that have language ahh..I will stop by a little more frequently just to ask them to reiterate what they are doing and then check in with them, catching the errors at the time."

*C)Teacher Comments Related to Hands on/Innovation*

Male Teacher Who Spoke of Berenice (Mr. Smith): "As a science teacher it's a little bit easier to be successful because we do a lot of hands on stuff and I think that (Student A) is ELL so a lot of language based stuff is maybe a barrier but yet hands on stuff is not.

" So if I tell her about density, that's one thing but if she's experimenting with density, it sinks in because it doesn't matter what language you speak when you find out about experimenting with liquids or solids.

" Whatever you're doing..hands on stuff is very powerful for someone who has a language barrier so that's important for us."

This teacher also spoke of the importance of keeping things interesting and innovative as important for overall engagement when it comes to students in general but also specifically in reference to Berenice.

"Umm, making it interesting so they'll actually want to walk through that door the next day, instead of the same boring lecture or yet another worksheet."

" You want it to be interesting so that they can go, 'so what's going to happen today?' and so that they're coming in everyday, that's also very important."

*D)Comments Related to "Going Beyond The Lesson," (affective practices) and the Importance of Getting to Know These Students Well as Learners.*

Teacher who Spoke of Jenny: "And so with her, umm, I made it a point of telling her that it wasn't about the beauty, she has the beauty, that's natural, umm, but it's about intelligence that she needs to acquire. Letting her know that it's important to be beautiful and smart at the same time and even be athletic if you have that in you because colleges are looking for that so maybe just saying that to her, 'you know, you have that part of it, you have the beauty, now you just need to acquire the knowledge.' And with her it was something that she realized that this knowledge stuff is important.

"So me being constantly on her, not to get on her nerves but just letting her know I am here to be the one to let you know, 'this is what you need to know how to do in high school.."



"I think it's important for the students to know that you respect them and that you care about where they are coming from, who they are and just take a little bit of interest on something. Like I touched upon her beauty and I think that's how she allowed me to be part of her life, for me to get close to her."

"umm with other students, it might be the sports that they play that I might say something about."

"So yeah, taking an interest in a child's personal life, is something that kids like, they may not tell you they do.

" But I know that once you take an interest into something that they like, they enjoy, then they will be more willing to do what you ask them to do."

Teacher Who Spoke of Jenny: In response to the second question, first I'd just like to say I try to get to know all of my students personally but (refers to Jenny) I just like her as a person."

" She is both beautiful both outside and in. Umm so I really created this strong relationship with her on a personal level that doesn't just work in the classroom but works outside it. "

"We've corresponded through text, we've written letters back and forth over these last two years. I've done my best to make sure that she knows that she can come to me and feel comfortable talking to me about even the most uncomfortable and personal issues."

" Umm so I think that does play into the fact that when you know a person and feel that you can trust a person in a classroom that just makes it so much easier and better to have that academic role as well."

### Question 3 – Parent Findings

The third research question was, "What do the families of academically resilient ELLs say they do to help contribute to their success? The parents of the academically resilient ELLs were in accordance that there are four essential things that they successfully do as parents to help their children achieve academic resilience in school. One of them is that it is extremely important to be somehow involved in their child's school and their child's overall education. This was both expressed in terms of either being physically present at parent teacher conferences but also in terms of helping with the daily supervision of their child's homework.

In addition, the parents of the academically resilient ELLs also expressed that it was important to hold constant conversations with their children. During these conversations, parents passed on a message about the great value of a school education and that this education is directly related to their future success. For example, working hard in school will eventually allow them to do such things as go to college and obtain meaningful and rewarding careers. Finally, parents also felt that they had helped their children by finding ways to motivate them to want to learn. Lastly, three out of the five parents interviewed said that of crucial importance to their children' success was their ability to be firm with daily routines such as going to bed early and getting up early in the

morning to ensure good attendance, supervising and monitoring their afterschool hours and providing them a good breakfast.

All five parents responded to the questions in Spanish. I transcribed the responses in Spanish and English. Both are organized below into the different categorized findings.

The first finding was related to parents stating that their involvement in their child's school both in terms of presence at the school functions but also in terms of checking and supervising their daily assigned homework was important.

*A) Parents say Their Overall School Involvement is Important to their Child's Success in School (including daily check-ins and help with Homework)*

Interviewer question in English ( Jenny's mom): Do you think that you as this student's parent play any kind of a role in helping him/her succeed? How do you help him/her?

\*This question was posed to parent in Spanish as follows, "Usted como padre or madre de este estudiante, ayuda a esta estudiante a que le vaya bien en la escuela? Como Le Ayuda?"

Mom, (Jenny): "Visiting the school and speaking to her teachers about any deficiencies or struggles that I observed."

Original Response in Spanish (madre de Jenny): "Visitando la escuela y hablando con los profesores sobre las deficiencias que haya observado."

Dad, (Francisco): "Well, helping him with his homework, his mom is always on him, letting him know he needs to improve on that."

Original Response in Spanish (Benjamin): "Bueno tambien ayudandolo en sus tareas, su mama siempre esta tras de el diciendole que tiene que mejorar en esto."

Interviewer Question to parent of student B (mom): What do you think helps your child succeed academically?

\*This question was posed to parent in Spanish as follows, "Que piensa usted es lo que le ayuda a su hija a que le vaya bien en la escuela?" "Como Le ayuda?"

Mom (Yaslyn): "I believe that we as parents are the ones who influence the lives of students the most. When parents and families are involved in school, students tend to perform better and their opinions about school are more positive. I support my daughter, I'm always asking her questions about her classes, I like to support her academic work. I supervise her homework...."

Original response in Spanish (Madre de Yaslyn): "Pienso que los padres somos los primeros maestros y los que ejercemos la mayor influencia en las vidas de nuestros hijos. Cuando los padres y las familias se involucran en las escuelas, los ninos tienden a destacarse mas y sus opiniones sobre la escuela son mas positivas. Apoyo a mi hija, siempre le hago preguntas sobre la clase, me gusta apoyar sus esfuerzos academicos, superviso su tarea.."

Mom (child not interviewed ): "Making sure she has her homework done before bedtime."

Original Response in Spanish (hija no fue entrvistada): "Estar segura que tenga la tarea de hogar hecha antes de acostarse.."

Dad, student D: "He must study a lot and complete his daily homework and class work exercises.. At home, we, his parents, help him focus on reading and completing homework."

Original Response in Spanish ( Francisco's dad): "Y tambien tiene que estudiar mucho y hacer sus ejercicios en casa y en clase...en casa nosotros, sus padres, le enfocams a practicar la lectura y llevar acabo sus tareas."

*B)Parents Pass on the Message to Students Regarding the Great Value of an Education*

Researcher question posed to Parent of Student B (mom): "What do you think helps your child succeed academically?"

\*This question was posed to parent in Spanish as follows, (madre de Yaslyn) "Que piensa usted es lo que le ayuda a su hija a que le vaya bien en la escuela?"

Mom (Yaslyn): "I supervise her homework and I always let her know the importance of a good education and that she must always be responsible with her homework assignments."

Original response in Spanish: (Madre de Yaslyn): "Siempre le hago saber que la educacion es muy importante y que hay que cumplir con las tareas."

Dad (Benjamin): "What I mean is, we did not finish our schooling and that he must do better so he can go to college and have a career that is stable. My wife went to college but in Mexico"

Original response in Spanish: (Padre de Benjamin): Osea que no terminamos nuestros estudios, que el tiene que hecharle ganas para que vaya al "college", tener una carrera fija. Ah, de hecho mi esposa fue a la universidad pero fue en Mexico."

Interviewer question to parent of student not interviewed: Do you think that you as this student's parent play any kind of a role in helping him/her succeed? How do you help him/her?

\*This question was posed to parent in Spanish as follows, "Usted como padre or madre de este estudiante, ayuda a esta estudiante que le vaya bien en la escuela? Como Le Ayuda?

Mom, student not interviewed: "Educating her, speaking to her about her studies and how important they are for her future."

Original response in Spanish (student not interviewed, mom) : "Y educandola, hablandole de los estudios, el cual es importante es para su futuro."

Dad (Francisco): "In addition, we help him understand the importance of education to their lives and for their future."

Original response in Spanish (padre de Francisco): "Por otro lado le hacemos comprender la importancia de los estudios en su vida, especialmente para su futuro."

*C)Parents find ways to "Motivate" their Children to Want to Learn or say their Child's Personal MotivationHelps Them*

Mom (Yaslyn): ""Motivation to learn, in this sense, seeking the help from teachers in the academic areas that she needs help in..my help primarily consists of trying to motivate her to complete her daily homework assignments, to motivate her to read daily."

Original response in Spanish (madre de Yaslyn): "Motivacion en aprender, esto asi, buscando asesoria con los maestros de las asignaturas en la que le falta informacion..Si mi ayuda primordial consiste en motivarla para que cumpla con sus tareas diarias, entusiasmarla en la lectura diaria."

Benjamin's dad, who was a native of Mexico, discusses the importance of motivating his son to be more and accomplish more than he himself did. He mentions that one of the things he, himself, did not do is pursue a college education and that he wants something different for his son.

Dad (Benjamin): "Well, what I've always done with him is motivate him and set good examples. For example, letting him know that he should always try to achieve academically, that he must not be like us , he should try to be better on his own."

Original response in Spanish (padre de Benjamin): "Bueno lo que yo siempre he hecho con el es motivarlo, darle ejemplos. Por ejemplo diciendole que tiene que sobresalir, que no tiene que ser como nosotros que tiene que salir adelante el mismo.

Mom: "I motiva (Yaslyn): "Tell her to continue doing what she is doing. To practice her reading, to always be a role model to her classmates. I like her to be independent at school."

Original response in Spanish: (madre de Yaslyn): "La animo para que siga adelante, a que practique la lectura, que sea siempre un modelo a seguir para sus companeros. Me gusta que sea independiente en la escuela, Sobre todo, la escucho y soy flexible."

*D)Parent Supervision of Daily Routines and the Importance of Attendance*

The following is a response to the first and more general question asked, "What do you think helps your child succeed academically?" (Spanish)"Que piensa usted usted es lo que ayuda a su hijo a que le vaya bien en la escuela?"

Dad (Francisco): "He must go to bed early each night, he must have breakfast very early in the morning and he has to listen to teacher directions."

Original response in Spanish (Franciso): "Tiene que dormir temprano cada dia. Tiene que desayunar bien temprano por la manana y escuchar las instrucciones dadas por los maestros."

Mom, student not interviewed: "Getting up early for school and arrive to school ready to learn....getting her up early so that she has a productive day at school."

Original response in Spanish (estudiante no entrvistada, madre): "Levantandose temprano para la escuela. llegar a la escuela preparada para estudiar..levantandola temprano para que tenga un dia mas productivo en la escuela."

Mom, student B: First of all daily attendance and the teacher efforts to achieve proposed objectives."

Original response in Spanish (Yaslyn's mom): "En primer lugar, la asistencia diaria y el esfuerzo de los profesores para alcanzar los objetivos propuestos."



The above parent was one of two parents who mentioned teachers as having an impact on their child's academic performance. The other parents, parent whose child was not interviewed, said the following about teacher impact. "Teachers have a lot to do with whether my daughter does well in school. Students learn from their teachers." I did not consider this an important finding since only two of the five parents interviewed mentioned teachers as responsible and this was done very briefly as part of other more detailed responses.

### Summary of Research Findings

In this chapter the researcher described the qualitative data collected primarily from middle school Latino ELLs considered to be high achieving and academically resilient. Qualitative data were also collected from their teachers and their parents regarding factors they perceived as helpful and related to these students' success. The qualitative data collected attempted to answer the following questions, "What do academically resilient middle school ELLs say are the teacher qualities and practiced pedagogies that contribute to their academic resiliency?" Students said that the types of pedagogical practices that helped them were teachers who effectively explained and broke down concepts being taught, teachers who were willing to do all that was necessary for them to understand information being taught, including staying after school and willing to answer any and all of their questions. Also, students said the teachers who helped them achieve were those who used lots of innovation within their instructional practice and those who emphasized literacy in the classroom. Finally, teachers who helped them were those who always held high expectations of them as learners. The types of teacher personality and affective practices that they felt helped them be

academically successful and resilient were described as caring for them as individual learners and always encouraging and supportive when it came to their educational progress. These teachers were also described by some students as, nice, calm, and respectful. I categorized these findings into four areas. The category terms I selected were:

1. "Going Beyond the Lesson" (includes both pedagogical and affective practices)
2. Innovation (solely pedagogical practices)
3. "Persistent Instruction" (related to teacher actions and words)
4. "Literacy Emphasis" (solely pedagogical practices).

One of the unexpected findings was that before students were ready to discuss teacher and parental supports, most initiated their thoughts on the factors that promoted their success by describing their own personal work ethic and personal strategies as learner. As a result of this finding, I determined that resilient middle school Latino ELLs see themselves as having a prominent sense of control in terms of whether or not they achieve and succeed academically.

The second research question was, "What do the teachers of academically resilient Latino ELLs say are the key factors that contribute to these students' academic success?" The rationale for this question was to compare student ideas on the reasons for achievement and resilience to the ideas of the teachers. As a result of exploring the teachers' perspectives on these particular students' academic achievement, I learned that teachers mostly agreed with the pedagogies and teacher qualities that students described

as helpful to them as learners but that the language used by the teachers was different and indicated a deeper analysis of the rationale for the classroom practices and personal actions. This indicated to the researcher that teachers had probably been exposed to professional development and other prior experiences that had allowed them to describe the pedagogies and affective practices with more detail and analysis than the students were able to do.

The third research question was, "What do the families of academically resilient ELLs say they do to help contribute to their success?" I was also interested in exploring the difference among the ideas of students, teachers and parents when it comes to helping to enhance the academic resilience and achievement of the middle school Latino ELLs. I discovered that parents have a much more unique and different perspective on the things they do to help their children achieve academically, with one exception. The one thing that both parents and students believed was helpful was their daily task of homework monitoring. Both parents and students believed that daily monitoring of homework was an important practice when it comes to helping these students perform well academically. Other than this idea, parents thoughts on how they provided help differed from those of teachers and students. Parents said that the four things that they mainly do to help is be involved in their child's school and school work, including daily checks and help with homework. Also, parents said they constantly pass on a message to their children that education is valuable and very much needed for their future success. Thirdly, parents said that it is important for them to find ways of motivating their children to want to learn and to complete academic tasks while at home and also within school. Finally, parents said they provided constant supervision of daily routines such the amount of time their

children spend on electronics at home and on providing structure with bedtime schedules in order to ensure their children maintain good attendance at school.

To summarize, students and teachers have very similar ideas on the types of teacher practices, both in terms of practiced classroom pedagogies and teacher actions, that help middle school Latino ELLs succeed academically. On the other hand, the parents of the Latino middle school ELLs believe that they also play an important role in their children's academic success. However, their ideas on what helps their children succeed are different than those of their children's teachers.

## CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS

Research in general has often neglected to use student voice in issues related to educational reform. A significant aspect of this study is that student voice and perspective plays a primary role in determining the “resiliency promoting factors” that help promote these students’ academic achievement and overall resilience in school. My hope is that, in the future, there is more effort to seek out student voice when determining educational best practices overall goals of school improvement plans.

These students’ stories of resilience did indeed remind me of my own personal resilience as a young Latina ELL 30 years ago. Just as I did, these students had some inner qualities that promoted their academic resilience but they also had a number of people within their immediate environment that helped them succeed, including their parents and teachers. As a result of this doctoral research on academic resilience, I learned some key things that give me great hope and inspiration. As a current educator of middle schoolers within an urban school setting, I need this hope and inspiration daily. First and foremost, we all possess resilience. The level of resilience within us, however, can fluctuate depending on the specific adversities we face, our own personal qualities, and the support systems within our immediate environments. This is an extremely important finding for teachers like me because we all “need” to know that there is great potential in all of our students to achieve and succeed within our educational institutions and as they transition into adulthood from the middle schools and high schools.

Another implication and something this researcher also learned is that schools with high numbers of Latino ELLs, particularly at the middle school level but also, I

would argue, at all school levels, should begin to adopt programs like those proposed by Henderson, Benard, & Sharp-Light (2007). These authors have a variety of resources related to promoting the academic resilience of students within the school settings and includes websites, such as [www.resiliency.com](http://www.resiliency.com) and books with practical ideas for overcoming risks and building strengths in youth, families, and communities. All school, especially those that have high numbers of students who experience adversities, such as ELLs, should begin to implement resiliency building structures as part of their school improvement plans.

The middle school Latino ELLs in this study showed that they possessed both some individual inner qualities that helped to promote and enhance their academic resilience but there were also key “environmental factors”, specifically related to teacher practices, that helped to enhance these students’ academic resilience. Much of what students said about their own abilities as related to mastering academic content and achieving academic success in school was validated by prominent previous research in this area. (Benard, 1991, 1993; Goodwin, 2007). Researchers have described some inner, personal qualities of academically resilient students as:

- Adaptable temperament; flexible; tolerates ambiguity
- Optimistic
- Able to anticipate problems and then solve them logically
- Creative
- Have positive self-esteem
- Able to see humor in self and life situations
- Curious; learns from experience
- Able to “read” people well

- Durable and independent
- Able to have an a Internal locus of control
- Achievement-oriented

When specifically asked about how teachers and those within their immediate environment helped them, students also echoed, to a great extent, the literature on the environmental factors that promote academic resilience. These environmental “protective factors” specifically related to supports from their teachers and schools (Henderson, 2007). Some of the most important protective factors described by Henderson’s resiliency findings deal with some special teacher qualities and classroom practices that can help provide an organizational rubric for helping in the fostering of resilience in all students. These teacher practices include:

1. Providing care and support
2. Setting high but realistic expectations for success
3. Providing opportunities for meaningful contribution to others
4. Increasing positive bonds and connections
5. Setting and maintaining clear boundaries
6. Developing needed life skills. (Henderson, 2007, p. 10)

Although the Latino ELLs in this study had just recently been exited out of the bilingual or ESL setting (in one case a dual language program), they demonstrated immense potential to succeed in academics despite the many difficulties that could have

hindered their success. These students were achieving all A's and B's on their report cards from all English general education classroom work, despite the fact that:

- They were still working on the mastery of the English language proficiency necessary to master many academic tasks.
- They attended schools where at least 90% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunches.
- They all had parents who could provide encouragement but who didn't speak English well enough to be able to directly assist them with their academic work.

The data analyzed in this qualitative study suggest that the six participating Latino ELLs at the middle school level feel that there are some specific teacher pedagogical and affective practices that can have a major impact on both their motivation and their ability to learn effectively within the classroom. The "affective" practices described a teacher's specific "way of being" or actions in the classroom and their ability to show respect and care for their students. The pedagogical practices related strictly to instruction and the specific ways that teachers "teach" or present the content to students, e.g. use of cooperative grouping, ability to break down information, methods of checking for understanding. Further and more specific implications within these specific findings are as follows:

*Implications of the Theme Findings:*

*Use of Innovation, Going Beyond the Lesson Going Beyond the Lesson, and Persistent Instruction*



The researcher found it extremely exciting and rewarding to learn that, for the most part, students and teachers are in accordance when it comes to the types of classroom practices that help Latino ELL middle school students succeed academically.

Both students and teachers agreed that effective teaching is about much more than knowing how to carry out a lesson but includes things like making an effort to get to know students well and having high expectations of them. One way of describing this finding is as follows; much of what goes on in the classroom involves a very reciprocal type of relationship between teacher and student and when effective classroom practices are accepted and understood by both teachers and students in a similar way, what goes on in the classroom is harmonious and beneficial to both. When both students and teachers agree on the kinds of classroom practices that help each of them achieve their goals, the classroom will be considered a successful setting for student learning. The goals being; teacher goal to impart knowledge and understanding and the student goal to understand and learn. These research findings indicated that the academically successful and resilient Latino ELLs had managed to achieve this harmony and common understanding with certain teachers.

### *Innovation*

Reaction of the researcher to some of the findings in this study were both good and exciting but also concerning. One of the practices that both teachers and students said were beneficial to maximizing overall students' academic success and resilience was the use of innovation in the classroom, the two main innovative practices mentioned by both teachers and students as helpful was the use of experiential "hands on"

opportunities and cooperative learning. (The researcher previously defined innovative practices as those considered "non-traditional" classroom practice, such as sitting in rows, learning directly from textbooks or passively learning from direct instruction by the teacher). Experiential and hands on learning (Dewey, 1938) is currently and has been in the recent past endorsed by proponents of best practices, specifically within both mathematics and science curricula. Schools of education and both current and recent professional development offered to teachers of these two academic areas, in particular, have focused on training teachers on the importance of hands on in the classroom. These hands on are helpful for the instruction of ELLs because students are not relying on written language to understand or demonstrate what they are learning. The findings in this research show that this focus on hands-on practices, in particular when it comes to students with special needs such as the ELLs, has been perceived and accepted by both teachers and students as an effective way of teaching and learning abstract concepts and ideas within the classroom.

On the other hand, one troubling implication of this finding is how it fits within the current focus on standardized testing within public schools throughout the nation. Multiple choice testing, like the most recent PARCC testing (The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers), is currently being implemented by schools throughout the nation. The general perception of the current educational reform movement indicates that students' ability to do well in these standardized tests is indicative of academic success. If this focus on standardized tests within schools continues, there will be very little room for teachers to continue the hands on practices that both they and students say are effective because the message to teachers will be to

spend more and more time preparing students for the tests and less time using innovative practices in the classroom. Current ways of preparing students for standardized tests includes shuffling student desks into rows and away from cooperative groups and having extended paper and pencil and computerized reading and writing practices. This goes directly against what students and teachers said was effective.

#### *Going Beyond the Lesson – Teacher Affective Practices*

The "affective" practices of the teacher were described by students as things like the actions and words and the care and respect teachers showed toward them as learners. Virtually all of the students interviewed said that the teachers that most motivated them, the most memorable ones, and the ones they learned from the most were the teachers who seemed to care for them as individuals, not just as students in their classroom. These teachers showed them respect and kindness and made attempts to extend supports beyond the teaching and learning tasks of the classroom. This finding implies that those who are involved in teacher education should place more emphasis on the importance of caring relationships in the classroom.

#### *Persistent Instruction/Going Beyond the Lesson*

Students in this study described good and effective teachers as ones who were "persistent" in pushing and challenging them to succeed. The term "persistent" can be generally defined as a firm course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition. It was understood from these middle school Latino ELLs that the teachers who they admired and identified as instrumental to their academic resilience and success were the ones who held high expectations of them as learners. They described these teachers as ones who

pushed them throughout this journey of education. According to these students' perceptions, these good and effective teachers carried out their work with what appeared to be a high regard and belief in the students' ability to "get it" and placed demands on them that were necessary if the end goal was understanding the concepts and ideas that were being taught. Also, students indicated that these teachers would be willing to go through a variety of means to make sure students understood concepts and ideas of the content to the point that they would make themselves available after school hours and during lunch periods to offer teaching supports.

This above finding indicates that schools need to provide viable opportunities and special encouragements to teachers so that they are more available to students at times outside of class. This does not seem like a difficult task since many, if not all teachers, already spend a considerable amount of time in their classroom either before or after school hours. Part of this time can be made available for student help when needed. Teachers and students need to be aware that this "extra help" is available and also extremely valuable in efforts to enhance the academic performance of students, like ELLs, but also all students. These extended classroom supports can easily be an added component to an overall vision plan of a school, a vision that communicates the idea that the adults in the building are willing to do whatever it takes to educate those who struggle and need and request assistance with their learning.

## Research Issues and Limitations

One of the possible limitations of this research was created by the fact that the research was conducted by someone who teaches in the same building where most of the research takes place. This could be considered a limitation since this may deter students from expressing themselves as openly as possible about teacher practices in general. There is always a possibility that students were somehow influenced by the fact that the interviewer was a teacher herself and that it could have affected students' ability to express themselves more openly and honestly on the topic of effective teacher practices. The researcher attempted to minimize possible issues of openness and honesty by limiting the number of students who had been her own personal students. Only two of the six students who participated had been previous students of the researcher. Also, in order to try to eliminate the possibility of student pressure to respond to questions a certain way, the researcher asked them to discuss teachers other than herself.

As the researcher reflected back on the overall findings of this research, she also realizes that it may have been beneficial to focus more of the interview follow up questions on the overall student goals as learners in the classroom. One goal that was expressed clearly by at least a couple of the participants was related to a "need" to understand and grasp the material being taught. They expressed a need to "get it," whatever it was that was being discussed in the classroom. Exploring their academic goals as individual learners have yielded some interesting finding.

Another possible issue or limitation of this research involved the teacher interviews. Not all of the teachers that were mentioned by students as ones that had made

a positive impact to their academic resilience participated in the research. All six students interviewed mentioned teachers that they had several years in the past, during their early academic years. It would have been difficult or virtually impossible to be able to track these teachers down since most worked in a district where teachers don't always stay within one school but move around, even possibly to other levels, positions, or districts. Another area related to teacher interviews that troubled the researcher was the instrument chosen by two of the five teachers interviewed. Two of the five teachers chose to record answers to their questions on their own personal time. This is understandable in view of the amounts of demands on teachers' time. Nonetheless, this did not allow me to ask follow up or clarifying questions of these two teachers which would have made the findings on teacher perception of why certain students experienced success as compared to others much more thorough. Finally, the findings of this research could have also been enhanced by having a larger number of student participants.

#### *Future research*

My goal throughout the time of the interviews was to find a good balance in terms of the gender of the students who participated in the research. I found early on that the number of females who fit the criteria for student subjects considered academically resilient outnumbered the number of males who showed up on the data sheets provided by the guidance counselor. This prompted me to think about the possibility of expanding this research to make it more of a comparative study between male and female ELLs in order to possibly explore the difference in the male perspective on teacher practices that help them succeed versus the female perspective on the same. Also, within this very possible future research, the researcher might want to explore the question of why there

may be more female resilient students versus male, at the middle school level. I do not have a clear answer or understanding on as to why this might be and would be interested in exploring this type of comparative study.

In addition, I also noticed that the most memorable teachers mentioned by these students as those who had helped them learn and be successful were those at the early elementary level. Several students mentioned their third grade teachers. This suggests that students are responding more positively to teachers in early elementary years as compared to teachers in late elementary or middle school level. Once, again, I would be interested in knowing and understanding what happens during these early elementary years that does not happen at the middle school level. Analyzing students' comments on this would be an interesting topic for future research.

### Conclusion

The goal of this research was to explore students' responses and opinions on the teacher classroom practices that they felt helped them achieve academic resilience. Another goal was to speak to these academically resilient and successful students' teachers and parents to see if their perceptions were similar to those of the students. The main goal of the researcher was to gain a deep understanding of the types of teacher practices that help Latino ELLs at the middle school level be successful in school. It made sense to speak to those academically resilient students themselves to seek these answers.

Although there may have been a few limitations to this study, the researcher discovered important information regarding what students say about what helps to both

motivate them to succeed and also obtain a clearer understanding of the types of teacher practices that they felt have had a major impact on their academic success. The findings of this research were extremely informative and useful for the teacher researcher. I hope that parents, teachers, and students themselves are able to have access to this research in the future in hope that we can all work toward improving the education of our Latino ELL population.



## Appendix A

The University of Rhode Island

Department of: education

Address: 46 Upper College Rd. Kingston, 02881

Title of Project: *"Latino Academic Resilience: Stories about High Achieving Middle School Latino ELLs and the Teachers and Families that Help Them Succeed."*

### **CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH (Students, English Version, to be signed by parent)**

Our names are Marcela Astudillo and David Byrd and we are from the University of Rhode Island. Your child has been invited to take part in a research project about students who have shown to display academic excellence in a regular education setting despite being considered an English Language Learner (ELL).

This research will mainly involve an interview based on four questions where they will share their story of academic success. The Interview will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes and they will be audio-recorded. A second, much shorter interview, will also take place in order to clarify comments from first interview. This will take place after school hours.

This study is meant to help students like them, educators, and others learn from their story so that more students can succeed academically like they have.

Student identity will kept confidential in order to maintain their privacy.

Participation is voluntary.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the office of the Vice President for Research, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telephone: (401) 874-4328.

You have read the Consent Form. Your questions have been answered. Your signature on this form means that you understand the information and you agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant (or parent)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Typed/printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Typed/printed name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of agreement to audio record interview

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number where I can contact you \_\_\_\_\_

***Please sign both consent forms, keeping one for yourself. Please return signed copy to school with your child.***

## **INFORMED CONSENT FOR RESEARCH (student, Spanish version)**

The University of Rhode Island

Department of: education

Address: 46 Upper College Rd. Kingston, 02881

Title of Project: Stories of academic Resilience

### **FORMA DE AUTORIZACION PARA ESTUDIO**

Nuestros nombres son Marcela Astudillo y David Byrd y somos de la Universidad de Rhode Island. Su hija/hijo ha sido invitado a tomar parte en un estudio sobre estudiantes que demuestran exelencia academica en clases regulares de la escuela aunque todavia son considerados en un periodo donde estan aprendiendo ingles. (ELL)

Este estudio sera basado mayormente en una entrevista basada en cuatro preguntas donde ellos hablaran sobre su exelencia academica. Es posible que se haga una segunda entrvista mucho mas corta donde se pueden aclarar cosas dichas durante la primera entrevista. Esta entrevista sera grabada y durara aproximadamente 30 a 40 minutos. Estas entrevistas se haran durante un tiempo al fin del dia escolar.

.

El proposito de este studio es ayudar a estudiantes como el/ella, profesores, y otros a aprender sobre su historia de gran trinfo academico.

La identidad de ellos se mantendra confidencial para mantener privacidad.

Su participation es voluntaria.

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante, puede llamar a la oficina del Vice President de Estudios academicos, 70 Lower College Hill Road Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telefono: (401) 874-4328.

Ha leido esta nota de permiso y sus preguntas han sido respondidas. Su firma debajo significa que usted entiende la informacion y esta de acuerdo con participar en este estudio.

\_\_\_\_\_

Firma de padre/madre

\_\_\_\_\_

Firma de investigadora

\_\_\_\_\_

Su nombre deletreado

\_\_\_\_\_

Nombre de investigadora deletreado

\_\_\_\_\_

Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

Firma de permiso para grabar entrevista

\_\_\_\_\_

Numero telefonico donde podemos contactarlo/la

---

***Por favor firme una copia y Mandela devuelta a la escuela con su hijo/hija. Por favor mantenga la otra copia para usted.***

The University of Rhode Island

Department of: Education

Address: 46 Upper College Rd. Kingston, 02881

Title of Project: *"Latino Academic Resilience: Stories about High Achieving Middle School Latino ELLs and the Teachers and Families that Help Them Succeed."*

## **CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH (guidance)**

Our names are Marcela Astudillo and David Byrd and we are from the University of Rhode Island. You have been invited to take part in a research project about students who have shown to display academic excellence in a regular education classroom despite being considered an English Language Learner (ELL)

Your involvement in this research will only request that you help us find students in your building that fit the following criteria:

1. ELL that have been exited from ESL, bilingual or dual language program within the last two years
2. Hispanic
3. All A's and B's on report card during previous and current year

You, as guidance counselor, do not need to participate in any interviews.

Our goal is to interview some of these students and possibly some of these students' teachers and parents or guardians.

This study is meant to help students, educators, parents, and others learn from stories of ELL academic resilience which includes things that teachers and/or parents can do to help them reach this academic success.

All names of research participants will be kept confidential in order to maintain your privacy.

Participation is voluntary.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the office of the Vice President for Research, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telephone: (401) 874-4328.



## CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH (teachers, English version)

The University of Rhode Island

Department of: Education

Address: 46 Upper College Rd. Kingston, 02881

Title of Project: *"Latino Academic Resilience: Stories about High Achieving Middle School Latino ELLs and the Teachers and Families that Help Them Succeed."*

Our names are Marcela Astudillo and David Byrd and we are from the University of Rhode Island. You have been invited to take part in a research project about students who have shown to display academic excellence in regular education classrooms despite being considered an English Language Learner (ELL).

This research will mainly involve answering two questions about some selected students either through interview or through writing (whichever you choose). These questions will help you share your thoughts on their story of academic success. Interviews are estimated to last approximately 10 to 20 if you choose to be audio-recorded. Answering the questions in writing may take even less.

This study is meant to help students, educators, and others learn from stories of ELL academic resilience which includes things that teachers and/or parents like you do to help them reach this academic success.

All names of research participants will be kept confidential in order to maintain your privacy.

Participation is voluntary.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the office of the Vice President for Research, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telephone: (401) 874-4328.

You have read the Consent Form. Your questions have been answered. Your signature on this form means that you understand the information and you agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Typed/printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Typed/printed name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Signature to accept tape recording of interview

\_\_\_\_\_

*Please sign one consent form and give to interviewer and keep the other for your records.*

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH (teachers, maestros, Spanish version)

Universidad de Rhode Island

Departamento de Educacion

Direccion: 46 Upper College Rd. Kingston, 02881

Titulo de Proyecto: Resiliencia Latina Academica: *Historias de Estudiantes (ELL) de Escuela Media y Los Maestros y Familias Que Le Ayudan a Tener Exito*

Nuestros nombres son Marcela Astudillo y David Byrd y somos de la Universidad de Rhode Island. Usted ha sido seleccionado para tomar parte en un estudio sobre estudiantes que demuestran excelencia academica aunque todavia estan aprendiendo Ingles (ELLs)

Este estudio les pedira que responda dos preguntas sobre uno o dos estudiantes. Usted puede responder por grabacion o por escrito (Lo que usted prefiera). Estas preguntas le ayudaran a que usted exprese lo que piensa sobre el gran exito academico de estos estudiantes. Entrevistas son estimadas a durar alrededor de 10 o 20 minutos. Si responde por escrito, quizas menos.

El proposito de este estudio es ayudar a estudiantes, educadores y otros a aprender de estudiantes que han tenido un gran exito academico aun estando aprendiendo Ingles. (ELLs). Parte de este estudio tambien incluye la perspectiva de los padres y maestros de estos estudiantes.

Los nombres de todos los participantes se mantendran confidenciales para mantener su privacidad.

Participacion es voluntaria

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante, puede contactar la oficina del vice presidente de estudios academicos de la Universidad de Rhode Island: 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telefono: (401) 874-4328.

Usted ha leído esta carta de informacion. Su firma significa que entiende la informacion y que esta de acuerdo con participar en este estudio.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma de Participante

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma de Entrevistadora

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre deletreado de participante

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre deletreado de entrevistadora

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

Firma de aceptar ser grabado \_\_\_\_\_

***Por favor firme una copia y entregue a entrevistadora. Mantenga la otra copia para su informacion propia.***

## CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH (Parents, English version)

The University of Rhode Island

Department of: Education

Address: 46 Upper College Rd. Kingston, 02881

Title of Project: *"Latino Academic Resilience: Stories about High Achieving Middle School Latino ELLs and the Teachers and Families that Help Them Succeed."*

Our names are Marcela Astudillo and David Byrd and we are from the University of Rhode Island. You have been invited to take part in a research project because your child is currently achieving with academic excellence despite being considered English Language Learners.

This research will mainly involve answering two questions about your child either through interview or through writing (whichever you choose). These questions will help you share your thoughts on their story of academic success. Interviews are estimated to last approximately 10 to 20 if you choose to be audio-recorded. Answering the questions in writing may take even less.

This study is meant to help students, educators, and others learn from stories of ELL academic resilience which includes things that teachers and/or parents like you do to help them reach this academic success.

All names of research participants will be kept confidential in order to maintain your privacy.

Participation is voluntary.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the office of the Vice President for Research, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telephone: (401) 874-4328.

You have read the Consent Form. Your questions have been answered. Your signature on this form means that you understand the information and you agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Typed/printed Name

Typed/printed name

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Signature to accept tape recording of interview

\_\_\_\_\_

*Please sign one consent form and give to interviewer and keep the other for your records.*

### **Standard Informed Consent (Parents)**

Universidad de Rhode Island

Departamento de Educacion

Direccion: 46 Upper College Rd. Kingston, 02881

Titulo de Proyecto: Historias de Exito Academico de Estudiantes (ELL) de Escuela Media y Los Maestros y Familias Que Le Ayudan

### **CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH (Spanish Version, Permiso Para Estudio)**

Nuestros nombres son Marcela Astudillo y David Byrd y somos de la Universidad de Rhode Island. Usted ha sido seleccionado/a porque su hijo/a ha demostrado exelencia academica aunque todavia esta aprendiendo Ingles (ELLs)

Este estudio les pedira que responda dos preguntas sobre su hijo/a. Usted puede responder por grabacion o por escrito (Lo que usted prefiera). Estas preguntas le ayudaran a que usted exprese lo que piensa sobre el gran exito academic de este estudiantes. Entrevistas son estimadas a durar alrededor de 10 o 20 minutos. Si responde por escrito, quizas menos.

El proposito de este estudio es ayudar a estudiantes, educadores, padres, y otros a aprender de estudiantes que han tenido un gran exito academic aun estando aprendiendo Ingles. (ELLs). Parte de este estudio tambien incluye la perspectiva de los padres y maestros de estos estudiantes.

Los nombres de todos los participantes se mantendran confidenciales para mantener su privacidad.

Participacion es voluntaria

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante, puede contactar la oficina del vice presidente de estudios academicos de la Universidad de Rhode Island: 70 Lower

College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telefono:  
(401) 874-4328.

Usted ha leído esta carta de información. Su firma significa que entiende la información y  
que está de acuerdo con participar en este estudio.

\_\_\_\_\_

Firma de Participante

\_\_\_\_\_

Firma de Entrevistadora

\_\_\_\_\_

Nombre deletreado de participante

\_\_\_\_\_

Nombre deletreado de entrevistadora

\_\_\_\_\_

Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Fecha \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix B

### STUDENT INTERVIEW INSTRUMENTATION (English Version)

I am researching students who do extremely well in school. Your guidance counselor has told me that you are an outstanding student and I want to learn about you and the things that teachers and your parents do that help you. Your honest answers to the questions will help schools and teachers understand how to help students like you do a great great job in the future

Your identity will be kept confidential in order to maintain your privacy.

Your participation is voluntary.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the office of the Vice President for Research, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telephone: (401) 874-4328.

The first question I want to ask you is:

5. What do you think helps you do well in school?

(Follow up, if needed)

Be as specific as you can

Next question

6. Do you think teachers affect how you do in school?  
(Follow up) – How? What are some specific things teachers do in their classroom that you feel help you be successful?

7. Tell me about a teacher who has helped you? What did they do that helped you?

Ok last question is:

8. Are there people at home who help you do well in school? Tell me about the specific people at home who help you and tell how they help you?

### **Final Remarks**

I want to thank you for participating. There may be a follow up interview in about a week in case I need you to clarify something.

### **STUDENT INTERVIEW INSTRUMENTATION (Spanish version)**

Estoy estudiando a estudiantes que les va muy bien en la escuela. Tu consejero/a me dijo que eras un excelente estudiante y me gustaría aprender de ti y las cosas que tus maestros y padres hacen para ayudarte. Tu honestidad respondiendo estas preguntas le ayudara a las escuelas y a los maestros entender como ayudar a estudiantes como tu hacer un gran trabajo como tu en el future.

Tu identidad se mantendra confidencial para mantener tu privacidad.

Tu participation es voluntaria

Si tienes alguna pregunta sobre tus derechos como participante de este estudio, puedes contactar:

70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telephone: (401) 874-4328.

La primera pregunta es:

1. Que piensas tu que te ayuda a hacer un buen trabajo en la escuela?

(Siguiendo si es necesario)

Dime mas con detalles

Proxima pregunta

2. Tu piensas que maestros/maestras afectan como te va en la escuela?

(Siguiendo) – Como? Cuales son algunas cosas especificas que maestros hacen en su salon da clase que te ayudan a ser tan buen estudiante?

3. Cuéntame sobre un maestro/maestra que te ha ayudado? Que hicieron que te ayudo?

Ok, ultima pregunta

4. Hay gente en tu casa que te ayuda a que te vaya bien en la escuela?  
Dime/cuéntame sobre esta gente en tu casa que te ayuda?

## Comentarios Finales

Te quiero agradecer por tu participación. Quizás tenga algunas preguntas esta próxima semana sobre lo que respondiste hoy.

## Appendix C

### **TEACHER AND PARENT INTERVIEW INSTRUMENTATION (English version)**

Your identity will kept confidential in order to maintain your privacy.

Your Participation is voluntary.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the office of the Vice President for Research, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telephone: (401) 874-4328.

3. What do you think helps this student succeed academically?
4. Do you think that you, as this student's teacher /parent, play any kind of a role in helping him/her succeed?

(Follow up) if response is yes - How do you help them?

### **TEACHER AND PARENT INTERVIEW INSTRUMENTATION (Spanish version)**

Su identidad se va a mantener confidencial

Su participacion es voluntaria

Si tiene alguna pregunta de este estudio puede consultar con Vice President for Research, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telefono: (401) 874-4328.

Spanish Version of questions above available for parents:

La primera pregunta es:

4. Que piensa usted es lo que le mas le ayuda a su hijo/hija a que le vaya tan bien en la escuela?
5. Usted como el padre, madre de este estudiante ayuda a este estudiante a que le vaya bien en la escuela?

(proxima pregunta) si respuesta es si,  
. Como lo/la ayuda?

## Appendix D

### **COMMENTS RELATED TO "GOING BEYOND THE LESSON" (includes both pedagogical and affective practices)**

Yaslyn: She helped me, umm, she actually helped me get into (college)crusade. It tells us to go to college and not drop out , umm, they , umm, we do computers , it's like we read and then we do a quiz and then we do a quiz again and then we move up and get better and better.

When I did the paragraph she said, 'you can do it' and I did it and I made the college crusade. I wrote a letter to the College Crusade saying why I wanted to be in the crusade. That meant a lot to me because that actually helped me get in and get stronger in my English and I didn't give up half way.

Cause I wanted to start in easy, step by step and then go into harder stuff which at the end of fifth grade, I started doing harder English with the other teacher.

I don't know, I think that their unique personalities is what makes them special and makes me try harder.

Sometimes I think I'm doing really bad she says I'm doing awesome.

Jenny: One teacher, I really think, she helped me a lot was Miss., she really supported me a lot , she gave me her extra time if I needed help.

She was always there for me, she would always be giving me advices to stay focused. She would always help me, she would say if I wanted to stay for lunch or after school, umm I had her for math, I had her since sixth grade till seventh grade, I don't have her now.

But she would always tell me to stay focused, to not give up, if I needed help, to go to her and even now she still tells me that if I need help I could just go to her...

Yeah, yes I see her every morning because her classroom is right next to mine so she is always telling me. that 's how, she really helped me in math last year, I really did good, I think in math last year because she would always explain everything, do her best so that all her students could understand.

Umm, we would present in front of our classmates so that if they could understand it better by us telling them but she really supported me alot , umm she helped me as much as she could.

Umm, it makes me feel good because I have a person who I can talk to or help me if I need help or anything like that, she supported me even though if I didn't do good in class or if I had some bad days sometimes or if I just didn't get the correct stuff, she still was there for me.

Umm, yes, she would help us a lot, she would describe stuff, explain it better so, give us an example or a definition if we needed for a word that we didn't understand in a sentence if we were stuck on something.

Francisco: Like they break down information for you to understand it...they make it basic,usually, to understand

Like my math teachers give lots of example and lots of ways of posing the same question, like I follow what she did.

Benjamin: Yes, because teachers are there, they help you take notes and umm they also help you... they let you stay after school to work on something you haven't learned yet or need help on.

Like she treated people really nicely and like with a lot of respect.

Alberto : Umm, she explained things, she showed you things, she helped you do work, she was always there to help me out, yeah.

And when we had problems trying to read, she always came and helped us.



**COMMENTS RELATED TO USE OF INNOVATION (solely pedagogical practices)**

Berenice: Like uhh, he'll put a lot of images in one page but won't show the vocabulary, now he tells us the word the day before and then the next day we have to find out like, we have to remember what the word meant by the picture.

He'll show a picture of democracy but he won't say 'this is democracy', you'll have to like find out for yourself to see if you remember what it means.

Umm, in Mr. Cs class cause he does the same thing, he demonstrates by science,

like today, I think, yeah today, we were doing a (can?) project..he would fill a can up and put it in a little tube and measure it.

Because you've done it before because when you read it from a book you read from some perspective like this and all that stuff but you don't really know because you haven't done it for yourself. I think it's better to do it, like on your own and get results.

She tells every group to get umm a poster and then they go around clockwise and then they answer the questions and then people stand up to read what it says on the poster.

Jenny: We would do a lot of projects that had to do a lot with what we learned.

Francisco : Like in English, we play games, like vocabulary games, like bingo, like they have the sentences and the definition of the word and like she reads out the sentence, she reads out the definition and you have to figure out the word.

(About Cooperative Grouping)Because like I help people when they need help and we just, we help each-other out. ..cause I like working with people that like could help me with any trouble and I could help them with it, if they need (help?) It also gets the work done faster cause you could divide the work and each person has to do like a part.

She gave us a lot of examples of things and we also played games, like flashcard games.

Like fun projects, we did, like, a project in class about math, you would go around and pick a problem and then like do it. Like stations You go in different stations and you do different problems...that really helped me.

She puts it in funny ways, like she makes learning fun.

Alberto : She used to do like a lot of experiments with us... That helped a lot because we literally saw what happens and we always had to make our theory of what's going to happen with things.

Oh, like one time we were learning about electricity...and we got like motors and started working with them, like making fans and things like that. Cause actually reading (text) books is sort of boring..

COMMENTS RELATED TO "PERSISTENT INSTRUCTION." (related to what  
"teachers do" in the classroom )

Yaslyn: They make sure I stay on track and don't fall behind.

And they also ask me questions about how I'm doing in that group, if I'm having trouble and if I need to change my seat.

She was strict but she was still nice and she is nice.

I think that every teacher is a big influence on me because they help me every day and they tell me I could do better, they tell my parents and they push me to do more and more every day.

I think it's because my teachers push me to do my best , to their highest expectations and (they are) realistic.

They won't let me slack off, they just keep pushing me so I can do better.

I like the my math teacher, she doesn't take a lot of time explaining it to the class and she asks individually, are you doing ok? Do you understand? Do you want me to help you?

Jenny : She really taught us well, if people didn't understand, she would stay still in the same lesson for days...if people didn't get it , umm,

Francisco: She also made sure everybody understood, like what was going on.

Yes, she made sure that everybody understood.

Like she always came around and checked our work like made sure..

And she would call on people like to tell the answers and come do it, come do the work in the board... she would make sure everybody was on track.

And like she pushed you to do well and she pushes you and she like challenges you.

Benjamin: But if you still didn't get it, she'll still let you stay there until you get it a little bit.

And if you didn't say umm some words right, she would have gone over it with you and would stay until you got it.

If you didn't get it, she would help, she would stay after school with you

Alberto: Yeah like some teachers, they tell me that I'm smart but that I need to do more explaining, they always tell me that..

#### COMMENTS RELATED TO LITERACY EMPHASIS

Yaslyn: What helps me do well in school is umm read, a lot

Reading helps me a lot. I read books when I get home sometimes.

They help me if I need correcting, spelling corrections and they help me build my vocabulary more and more.

She told me to read a lot and I took that advice.

And she encouraged me to get better and start and keep on practicing vocabulary and other things that I needed to.

For a job, my mom says you need to know both languages because then if somebody in Spanish needs help talking in English you must help them and I would like to do that.

I do another one here on Saturdays but it's like we go to gym and then like we talk about poetry and some writers.

Jenny: Like reading books to help improve my English

Umm, learning more vocabulary or asking help a teacher, if I need, like come in after school and staying so that they could help me understand stuff better.

Benjamin: Umm, my fifth grade teacher Miss C in reading, she made us stand up and read out loud, a story, like a paragraph.

My kindergarten teacher, Miss S, she umm, she used to give us a lot of homework about like writing our name and... like tracing over our name and then writing it over again on a blank piece of paper.

And she would give us umm , like problems about what is different from this frog to the other and which two frogs look the same.

Alberto : Yeah, she always like read books with us, she always like read poems.

And when we had problems trying to read, she always came and helped us.

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