

The Experiences of Teachers and Eastern  
European Immigrant Students in One Southern England Public School

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by

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## **Abstract**

This qualitative case-study research investigated how Eastern European immigrant youth in a southern English public secondary school adjusted to and experienced the British educational system, which involves streaming students into levels of academic ability. The study focused on these students' experiences of day-to-day life in a British secondary school and it explored the challenges and successes that they experienced. The study also investigated the experiences of teachers and administrators involved in the education of immigrant students. Through the use of student and faculty experiences, through recorded interviews, this study sought to understand how educators could improve the ways they are educating immigrant students.

*Keywords:* immigrant students', experiences, streaming, collaborate, improve, pedagogy

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## **Chapter One: Research Topic Introduction**

In this qualitative case-study research, I investigated how immigrant youth in grades 8-10 in one southern English public school adjusted and coped with an educational system that involves streaming students into levels of ability. The experiences of these youth revealed insight and knowledge about how educators can better meet their needs. Streaming is, according to educational researcher Wallace W. Douglas (1966), “segregation of students on the basis of merit” (p. 1), meaning that the students who are deemed to be more capable academically are grouped together, and students who are viewed as less capable academically are grouped together. More specifically, I wanted to investigate the experiences and perceptions of immigrant students and find out what they thought their academic needs were and learn how they experienced school. Through a collaborative effort with teachers and administrators in the school, I intended that this research could facilitate positive pedagogical outcomes to encourage these students on a path of success and fulfillment within their school in Britain.

Oftentimes, when students emigrate from countries around the world, they are less than proficient in the language of their new country. Acquiring a new language is by far the most difficult adjustment for immigrant students to make, and this deficiency sometimes negatively influences the educational practices of teachers. One popular viewpoint on Mexican migrant students in the United States was that “the children of low-wage labor migrants are tracked into the low streams of the educational hierarchy and have lower attainment than their native-born peers” (Alba & Silberman, 2009, p. 1).

I hoped to identify problems and to recommend building on existing instructional and administrative methods in order to develop new strategies to better address the needs of immigrant students.

Some immigrant assistance programs exist in the United States, such as the Migrant Educational Program (MEP) that “provide[d] supplemental services to migrant children...to help ensure that these children have an opportunity to graduate” (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009, p. 684), and in Canada, such as the Open Door Society, whose goal is to “welcome and assist refugees and immigrants to become informed and effective participants in Canadian society” (Saskatoon Open Door Society, 2007). The ultimate goal of this research was to investigate a current situation and to provide recommendations for developing an effective instructional program that could enhance the learning of immigrant student populations in a secondary school in the United Kingdom. The initial research findings could lead to recommendations for improving the school experience for both immigrant students and their teachers.

Despite efforts, many immigrant students continue to under succeed in educational systems worldwide. However, there are also success stories of students coming to Britain, America, and Canada from India and China who surpassed every indicator of success. This fact indicated that educators could do more to reach out to other ethnic groups within their schools (Rothard, Heath, & Lessard-Phillips, 2009).

## **Research Questions**

1. What are the experiences of Eastern European immigrant students and their teachers to transitioning, adjusting, and coping with integration into British schools?
2. How may the outcome of this research influence teacher practice and improve students' learning experiences?
3. How does the tracked placement and experiences of students within British schools influence their self-perceptions regarding school and life as an immigrant?
4. When working with immigrant students, what are the varieties of approaches that teachers take to address the unique learning needs of these students?

## **Researcher Location**

I grew up in suburban St. Louis, Missouri in the 1980s to early 2000s. During the 1990s, the city remained segregated with the white population mainly inhabiting the outskirts of the city while the African-American population remained in the urban areas. This separation existed due to the suburban sprawl of the 1950s, which created cultural boundaries.

However, schools in America became more desegregated in the 1980's when communities began to recognize legislation passed in *Brown Vs. Board of Education* of 1954, which declared that having separate schools for black and white children was unconstitutional. When Chief Justice Earl Warren declared that "We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place," those affected had little idea it would take decades to implement any sort of action that would see changes in the way the youth of America were educated (Smithsonian National Museum of American History, 2009). From a young age, I knew that the urban schools were different than the suburban schools. When driving past them, I noticed broken windows with bars over them and, oftentimes, no school yard. My school was nothing like that, with large play areas and fields, good equipment, and clean classrooms, and I wondered why.

In my teenage years, the inner city was known as the place with drugs, rapists, and murderers in the neighborhoods. Suburban children were led to believe that going to the inner city was equated with putting themselves in harm's way. Other students thought of the students that came from the city to my school as troublemakers. They came from

the rough inner city, and therefore were classified as challenging by suburban teachers, who were often from white, middle class backgrounds. The African-American students were frequently suspended for using profanity or fighting.

I recall that the African-American students experienced more difficulty than I did. I wondered what it was like going to school 45 minutes away and having to wake up at 4:30 am to meet the bus. They were reprimanded for sleeping or swearing in class, but looking back, I can hardly blame them for their actions. Despite being “desegregated” products of *Brown v. Board of Education*, their learning conditions were still inequitable due to their tiring commute.

At school, there were always visible divisions of race. The African-American children controlled the basketball courts while the white children controlled the swing sets or the soccer fields. I recall observing fights between a terrified white child and a dominant, tough black child. The white students seemed afraid of the black students. Were they really tougher or were we, the white children, simply afraid of our differences? I often wish I could go back and talk to the African-American students about their experiences in the suburban school. These realizations about my youth piqued my curiosity about the experiences of populations whose day-to-day lives vary greatly from my own.

My past three years have been rich in learning experiences, because I taught in three different countries: the United States, Mexico, and England, and I did graduate studies in a fourth, Canada. My experiences ranged from teaching history, English, citizenship, and conversation in classrooms in Missouri, central Mexico, and Surrey, England, and also outdoor activities in Hawaii.

I have seen different aspects of the world and gained new perspectives about the wide variations that children experience in education. Based on my experiences, observations, and curiosity, I investigated immigrant students' schooling experiences and those of their teachers. It is these experiences during the past few years that brought me to this research and shaped this context.

Being involved in a summer youth-camp system in Hawaii exposed me to more of the social injustices that exist in the world. The Indigenous populations of Hawaii were entirely absent from my work experience at the camp, despite my working with children from all over the island. Every week, children flew in to attend the camp from the mainland United States and Asia. Given that traditional Hawaiian culture is revered across the state and within the camp, it was odd to me that the Indigenous population was so invisible in the day-to-day life at the camp. The Indigenous culture was celebrated, but the actual people were absent.

I had my first teaching assignment in 2007 in central Mexico, and I was immediately cast into a world of being an immigrant in a country where I stood out. I was excited to begin this challenge, but felt out of place at the same time. For years, Mexicans had been legally and illegally immigrating to the United States and had received a mixed reception. Even though I was a legal immigrant, and I found people friendly, I experienced what millions of immigrants might encounter when moving to places where they have no linguistic, familial, or cultural connections. I began to see the world through a new lens that became less about borders and national identity and more about human connection, regardless of ethnicity or homeland. I began to experience what was like to live as an immigrant, outside of my familiar life.

In Mexico, I was also exposed to the conditions of entrenched poverty. In St. Louis, my family had always discouraged me from visiting poor or crime-ridden neighborhoods. In the winter of 2007, the school at which I taught, organized clothing drives for the poor civilians of Torreon, Mexico. While I was delivering these clothes, I saw people living in a shantytown without access to running water, heat, or food. This experience was a moment of awakening for me to the fortunate circumstances of my life.

After teaching in Mexico, I moved to England to teach near London. I was more comfortable in Britain because of the language familiarity, but some new issues arose. I witnessed the overt streaming of students in classes by ability level, or tracking as it is often known in North America. To reiterate, streaming, according to educational researcher Wallace W. Douglas (1966), is the “segregation of students on the basis of merit” (p. 1). In this system, students are separated into groups or sets (“groups” or “sets” are interchangeable terms used in schools to describe the class categorization), in different classrooms, based on their perceived performance abilities in subjects (Ansalone, 2003; Educational systems, n.d.). In the participant school, sets were given letters, not numbers, corresponding to the ability of the group. In order to further disguise, the letters were in no particular order. The letter system was done for the purpose of masking the ability level of each group, but according to a teacher participant, students are still “very aware of where they are.” Students can be tracked at different levels for different subjects, for the purpose of “a more homogenous student body” within each lesson for the purpose of “better facilitat[ing] the academic progress for students at both ends of the ability spectrum” (Educational systems, n.d.).

The believed benefit of the tracking system is that “students in the high ability tracks are able to move ahead at a faster pace without being slowed down, and students in the lower ability tracks have the opportunity to learn at a pace more suitable to their abilities” (Educational systems, n.d.; Ansalone, 2003). In England students were organized in classes based on their prior attainment, which rated them according to their predicted grades to be earned in the next school year. Within the participant school, there were often six sets (or groups/levels), for each core course, with set one being the highest ability, and set six being the lowest ability.

Additional factors such as the socio-economic status of the school and the individual student data were taken into account when placing students. Teachers were put into a position of power over student placements. Teachers were asked to submit recommendations for level changes for students who could move up to a higher ability or down to a lower ability. I completed these recommendations at the end of terms.

Based on this body of data and recommendations, classes were sorted with students of similarly perceived ability. Overt streaming differs from covert streaming, because students who are covertly streamed have more choice about which classes they end up taking. Nobody tells them exactly what classes they will be in, but students are guided towards choosing certain classes. For example, lower streamed students in the United States, a covertly streamed system, would be encouraged to take Ecology instead of Chemistry, but find the choice would remain theirs. In England, students can opt out of history after year nine. Among my students, there were a higher proportion of set one (the highest ability stream) students continuing in history compared to set five and below.

While my time as a teacher in this system was rewarding, I also found it difficult, and wondered about the experiences of the students being placed into the lower ability sets and how that process impacted their development. I further noticed that there were many immigrant students in the middle and lower sets, despite a policy that immigrant students be placed higher up. I investigated the system of streaming immigrant students into a new education system in order to better understand the effects that emigrating and streaming have on their lives.

While in England, I read “Savage Inequalities,” by Jonathan Kozol (1991). In the book, I found that Kozol’s opinion was that “few things can injure a child more, or do more damage to the child’s self-esteem, than to be locked into a bottom-level track” (p. 119). I wondered if my students in the low tracks in my school felt that way.

I developed the foundation of my research in the UK. In the UK system of overt streaming, I perceived what I believed to be inequalities and inequities and I asked myself: Do students agree with this system of tracking in education or do they believe it is problematic? What is the opinion of students about the effectiveness of streaming? How do students from other countries cope with this system? What impact does this system have on these students and their learning? Are students in the lower streamed levels receiving the same quality of instruction as the students in the top streamed levels? I also wondered about the experiences of teachers as they taught immigrant students.

Becoming a teacher in England was an insightful experience, because I had to learn about tracking and how to adjust my teaching to meet the needs of all my classes. My learning curve was steep and I had difficult times. If I had gone to school in England, and was studying to be a teacher in that system, the adjustment may have been easier.

However, I had to adjust to the new system similar to the ways that immigrant students had to. I felt that the immigrant students and I faced a lot of the same integration challenges, and that our experiences were similar in many ways. They had difficulties as students, and I had difficulties as a teacher.

Although the primary purpose of this research project was to examine the stories of Eastern European immigrant students in a secondary school (years 8-10) and their teachers in the greater London area of England to learn about their school experiences I had many questions. Subsequent questions always arise through planned research that compliments semi-structured interviews within case studies.

Questions arose throughout the year that I wanted to address in my research. A few questions regarding teachers included: (a) What are the perceptions of administrators and teachers with regards to the placement and teaching of immigrant students; and (b) To what extent were there cultural accommodations in place to support immigrant students and assist teachers in providing a positive environment for students?

Another concern I had regarding students was gender. I wondered if the experiences for immigrant girls were different from those of immigrant boys. For instance, Charlton, Mills, Martino, and Becket (2007) stated: “we want to believe that students who are placed in top groups are those who deserve to be there,” and “girls who were achieving least in comparison with other girls, but often higher than substantial numbers of boys, being placed in lower-set/streamed classes than their academic achievements...warranted” (p. 460). Charlton et al. (2007) lead me to consider that there may be more disparities for immigrant girls.

After arriving in Canada for graduate studies, I reflected on these research questions, and I decided that the most effective way for me to conduct this research was to return to England and interview immigrant students attending a secondary school. I was interested in the system of education in the United Kingdom, and I decided to investigate how the system that I experienced as a teacher could be enhanced to provide a better learning environment for both students and teachers.

I wanted to learn about the experiences of these students when they entered the foreign school systems. I also wished to assist teachers in seeking ways to help immigrant students to achieve in school. I believe that if teachers collaborated in a cross-curricular way, students would benefit from educators being more pedagogically aware of students' learning needs within different courses.

I was interested in the success of immigrant students, and as globalization increases, I wanted to investigate the experiences of immigrant populations in schools. Based on this research and possible additional research projects, I wanted to make recommendations for improving immigrant students' experiences in the participant school. Programs should celebrate student diversity, and should be designed to work with students from different countries. They should be geared at a diverse range of English language learners, because studies have shown that:

Children from immigrant families do better academically in English-as-a-second-language classes when they attend schools with a high number of other immigrant students, a study says, but EAL placement has a negative effect on student achievement for English-language learners in schools with small immigrant populations. (Zehr, 2009, p. 1)

Because the participating school had a relatively low population of immigrant students (14% of enrollment), they were mainstreamed with native English speakers, but they were also tracked by ability level. The system that was in place was functional and placed immigrant students in middle and high ability levels to endorse proper English skills.

I was also aware that my building of connections and trust with immigrant students could be difficult to achieve, because the timeframe was brief for this research. My position was not neutral, because I believed that more could be done to accurately place these students, and more could be done in the school as a whole to welcome immigrant students and enhance their learning experiences.

### **Significance of Research**

To reiterate, the purpose of this research project was to examine the stories of Eastern European immigrant students in a secondary school (years 8-10) and their teachers in the greater London area of England to learn about their school experiences. The research was not intended to negatively critique the school or its policies for integration. The research was intended to provide schools and teachers with information about the issues, challenges, and successes experienced by these immigrant students that could assist them in improving their learning experiences. Recommendations resulting from this research provided information that could result in changes to improve immigrant student learning experiences.

Doing cross-cultural research on the phenomenon of tracking and streaming was important, because it is something I have directly experienced as a teacher within the British system. I felt that my experiences as an immigrant teacher often paralleled the

experiences of immigrant students, and therefore led to feelings of empathy, and desire to help them. My experiences led to questions and insecurities for me in the classroom and I wished to improve this situation for both students and teachers.

In addition to the difficulties of being an immigrant student and learning a new language and culture, it is widely accepted among educators that “students placed in low-track classes do not develop positive attitudes” and that “tracking... seems to foster lowered self-esteem” among students within these classes (Oakes, 1985, p. 8). Speaking with these immigrant students and their teachers could help me develop possible strategies that could benefit everyone involved, because the respondents perspectives could help educational planners make the teaching and learning process more meaningful and relevant.

## Chapter Two: Review of Literature

### Tracking

There are different types of schools within the European tracking system. The type of school being focused on in this study was a 1,500 student “multilateral school,” which is described as a school “in which all tracks are offered” (Van Houtte & Stevens, 2009, p. 943). The school had diverse curriculum available, and included different tracked levels for numerous required and elective subjects.

The students at the school were “classified as fast, average, or slow learners” and for the most part “their potential for learning more determines how students are identified and placed” (Oakes, 1985, p. 3). Tracking is a public and stratified display of determined intelligence that is “not equally valued in the school” and all students are “defined by others-both adults and their peers-in terms of these groups” (Oakes, 1985, p. 3).

Furthermore, from studies done in Belgium, it has become apparent that “students in lower tracks develop an anti-school culture to overcome the status deprivation resulting from being in a lower track” (Van Houtte & Stevens, 2009, p. 944). This anti-school problem stemming from the experiences of the lower-tracked students has been a focus of research. Students are often aware of the track they are placed in and will occasionally feel a need to rebel against their placement within school. Some anti-school behaviors that students might exhibit could include being withdrawn, antisocial, disruptive, or violent.

Oakes (1985) described high-achieving students as “a high-achieving *person*, bright, smart, quick, and in the eyes of many, *good*,” whereas the students who are classified at the lower end of the spectrum are often stigmatized as “slow, below average,

and-often when people are being less careful-dummies, sweatogs, or yahoos” (p. 3). In my experience in a British school, I wondered if other teachers might be more willing to spend additional time and effort on the high-achieving students, because they would see better results for their extra effort.

Oakes (1985) pointed out that educators are concerned about the correct placement of students and that schools and teachers are not tracking to diminish the effectiveness of individual educations among students in the lower tracks. She noticed that “school people usually spend a great deal of thought deciding what group students should be placed in” and that if students are placed in “what appear to be incorrect placements” that teachers and the school will remedy the problem quickly (p. 6). I carefully considered my placement recommendations while working in a tracked school. Moreover, the recommendations for moving tracks are often subjective. If a student had worked diligently and made progress, I was able to make the recommendation that he/she should be advanced. My recommendation would then need to be approved by a year leader. If a student deserved to be moved, a case could be presented in support of that student. It was a difficult process and I believed that every change that I made was for the best.

I believe that placement stigmatizations of the lower track are potentially damaging. It is possible that students feel inferior in regards to their future. Knowing that they are placed in a lower track, and viewed as low by their teachers and peers, students could experience decreased motivation and aspirations in school. These tracks tend to steer students towards a direction that “seems most appropriate to their future lives” instead of encouraging the students and helping them find their own niche (Oakes, 1985,

p. 3). Schools should provide more assistance in motivating students to seek out their strengths and pursue success in a variety of fields. By giving students more choices, teachers could help students find something new in school that interests them. It seems that being in a low-track might prove disadvantageous to non-immigrant students, but perhaps the immigrant students view it as a step on a progress ladder that needs to be ascended.

### **Immigration**

Immigration in Great Britain is diverse and is considered to be relatively unselective. Flexible government immigration practices lead critics to say that the immigrant population will not be as productive as they are in places like Canada, who screen on a points system based on skills (Rothon, Heath, & Lessard Phillips, 2009, p. 1405). Much of Britain's immigrant population has been called "postcolonial," because it consists of migrants coming from the territories of the former British Empire (Rothon, et al., 2009, p. 1408). Rothon, et al., (2009) found that immigrants from the past half century came mainly from Ireland, the Caribbean Islands, India, Chinese, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Africa (p.1408-1409).

It was a possibility that the students in my study came from these postcolonial countries, and that their English language usage differed from the majority student population within school. It is the belief of some educators that "street language" or "broken English" or other "vernacular varieties as deviant forms of standard English" and that "vernacular-speaking children are considered...careless or lazy speakers" (Siegel, 2006, pp. 40-41). In conducting this research, it was necessary that I respected any dialect of English of the student and to appreciate their participation and efforts. It was important

for me to remember my own vernacular differences compared to those of the students in the school. Neither way is more correct than the other (Siegel, 2006).

One aspect of the school that I was interested in discussing with students and teachers was the potential use of “instrumental, accommodation, and awareness” educational language programs aimed at immigrant students (Siegel, 2006, p. 44). Instrumental programs “use a vernacular as a medium of instruction to teach initial literacy;” accommodation programs use a method in which “students’ vernacular varieties are not taught, but are accepted within the classroom;” and awareness programs teach standard language “but students’ vernacular varieties are seen as a resource to be used for learning the standard” (Siegel, 2006, pp. 44-45). It has also been posited that “dialect-speaking children in British schools not being aware of specific differences between their speech and standard English” can potentially cause a problem (Siegel, p. 54; Cheshire, 1982). These differences in speech and understanding were considered, especially since I interviewed them using an American dialect of English.

According to studies done between 1991-2000, Britain was also suffering from a higher rate of incomplete schooling compared to that in the United States and Canada. Among men between the ages of 25-44 surveyed in Britain, 51% had an incomplete record for secondary schooling through year 11, compared with approximately 22% in Canada and 13% in the United States (Rothson, et al., 2009, p. 1416). Women in Britain were also more uneducated, with 64% of women recorded as having incomplete secondary schooling. This level of female education compared with 17.7% of women with incomplete secondary school in Canada and 11.2 % incomplete in the United States

(Rothon, et al., 2009, p. 1416). These figures demonstrated that every effort must be taken to assist children in Britain with their educational effort.

The existing research showed that immigrant students, who have re-located or sought refugee asylum in western countries, like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, often faced a difficult period of adjustment (Hickey, 2005). Some factors contributing to this adjustment period were the fact that many immigrant children were “young, unaccompanied by their families,” and that they experienced “acculturation related problems, adjustment difficulties, education related concerns, and psychological and emotional problems” (Hickey, 2005, p. 26).

Immigration around the world includes a large Southeast Asian population, which has experienced a great deal of political instability in recent years. As a researcher, taking into consideration life outside of school and prior experiences of children is very important. Approximately 600,000 immigrants arrived in the UK each year (Office for National Statistics, 2009). The United States has accepted hundreds of thousands of refugees, with the country’s total population consisting of nearly 10% refugees (Hickey, 2005, p. 25). Through the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program, Canada accepted about 25,000 refugees per year (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2009).

Because such a large percentage of the populations were emigrating from Asian countries, schools were being affected. There are cultural differences between the societal and school systems in Europe and North America compared to those in southeastern Asia. The credo in many Asian schools emphasizes “respect for elders, self-discipline and deferred gratification,” which is seen in this study that focused on Eastern European students (Hickey, 2005, p. 30). Some Asian societies even prohibited student dating until

schooling is complete, and they blame western problems, such as teen pregnancy and divorce, on the lack of educational emphasis at home (Hickey, 2005, p. 31). Many students, including participants in this study, coming to Western countries, tend to point out differences in discipline, instruction styles, class size, and access to resources as factors causing difficulties in students adjusting (Hickey, 2005, p. 31).

The perceptions of the Asian students, who had been to school in both their native countries and the Western countries, were insightful. The students viewed the US system as more equitable because “all students have the opportunity to attend school for as long as they would like...Education is for everyone who wants it” (Hickey, 2005, p. 33). On the other hand, parents and students reported that they were afraid to attend or send their children to American schools due to reports of violence. If students fight in their home countries, teachers there are allowed to restrain students, but they are afraid that teachers in the US will not restrain violent action (Hickey, 2005, p. 33). Hickey (2005) stated “refugee students and their families have special needs which may not be met in the current US educational structure,” but there are measures that western educators can take to assist the transition of the immigrant students into our systems (p. 37).

First, a “curriculum of caring” (Noddings, 2003, p. 32) should be developed with the specific students in mind (Fleming, 2007; Noddings, 2003). This curriculum has the interests and needs of students in mind and is “communicated by teachers and enacted in classroom practices informed by teachers’ beliefs about immigrant students and how they learn” (Fleming, 2007, p. 32). Showing these students how they can become part of the school community by being caring educators is crucial to this process.

Some educators, such as Nel Noddings (2003), believed that the incorporation of caring within curriculum is important for the success of all students. Students coming from other countries would need caring educators to help them adapt their lives to living in a new country and this extra effort may “expand our students’ cultural literacy” to become better citizens (Noddings, 2003 p. 59).

Noddings argued that it is necessary to “organize the curriculum around themes of care” and that those themes should include “caring for self, for intimate others, for strangers and global others, for the natural world and its nonhuman creatures, for the human-made world, and for ideas” (p. 59). Basically, we should “teach them to care” because “there is more to life and learning than the academic proficiency demonstrated by test scores” (Noddings, 2003, p. 59 & 64). If immigrant students are welcomed into schools with a caring and welcoming student body and staff, those students will have positive experiences within the school. My research demonstrated a welcoming staff, but not necessarily a welcoming student body. Some were welcoming and some were not. It was an unfortunate fact that immigrant students, including students in my study, “view of the other students and of the life of the school is truly a view from afar, a view from the margins” (Rance-Roney, 2008, p. 18). All students should have the opportunity no matter where they come from or what language they predominantly speak, to gain “a sense of belonging in their ‘school-home’” (Noddings, 2003, p. 64).

In an effort to exemplify what educators can do for immigrant students and how teachers can become caring educators, one could examine the Migrant Education Program in the southwestern United States and the Culture Share Club in New Jersey. The Migrant Education Program is a federally subsidized program aimed at Latino

migrant youth in the United States with the goal “to help ensure that those children have an opportunity to graduate from high school and to meet the same academic achievement standards as other children (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009, p. 684). The teachers that work within this program are all of Latino descent and many of them are the children of migrant workers themselves. These teachers are influential to these migrant students. As one migrant student said, “They are like the symbol that you can do it, too. When I see them, I think: “They did it. Why can’t I do it?” (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009, p. 684).

Some examples of hindrances and limitations experienced by the migrant youth in the United States are frequent relocation, lack of education within the family, and an absence of teachers who work with the lifestyles of these students. These students experienced a large percentage of high school failure due to these limitations (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009, p. 688).

With new or improved mentoring programs put into place for immigrant students in Britain, an environment of caring and connections with school staff could potentially increase student self-esteem and performance (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009; Fleming, 2007). Research from the United Kingdom (Knowles & Parsons, 2009; Dubois & Karcher, 2005) that studied the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) in the United Kingdom, and the classic one-to-one program style prevalent in the United States mentor programs, “found that these programmes had a significant and measurable effect on young people, especially those considered to be at high risk” (Knowles & Parsons, 2009, p. 206).

Much of the existing literature on mentoring focused on the effects that such programs could have upon increasing aspirations, reducing certain behaviors and

antisocial tendencies, as well as effectively educating and training for employment. Studies by Newburn and Shriner (2005) of a British program, Mentoring Plus, “identified positive effects in relation to young people’s engagement in these...areas” but also said “there was no clear evidence that the programme had any impact on offending, family relationships, substance mis-use or self esteem” (Knowles & Parsons, 2009, p. 206; Newburn & Shriner, 2006). While mentorship remains important for reaching out to disaffected students, potentially immigrants, it could be possible to help immigrant students avoid becoming part of this disaffected group by extending proper outreach upon arrival in the destination country.

While adults and teachers could provide adequate mentoring support, it has also been reported that peer-based mentoring programs “fostered strong bonds between mentors and mentees, helped new students and those with limited proficiency in English to integrate more successfully into the school environment and encouraged academic achievement” (Knowles & Parsons, 2009, p. 206; Pringle, Anderson, Rubenstein, & Russo, 1993). While some students in the participant school for this study were unwelcoming, the one’s who were welcoming could participate in a mentoring program of this kind.

The world is changing and schools need to adapt. In 1991, only 15% of all teachers in the United States would face the challenge of teaching an English language learning student, but by 2001, that figure had risen to 42.6% of teachers (Rance-Roney, 2008, p. 17). Many of the immigrant students in the United States face being mainstreamed into classes filled with students already proficient in English. The accepted estimate is that five to seven years of experience is necessary for English

language learners to be as proficient in English as their native speaking peers (Rance-Roney, 2008, p. 17). Incorporating growing numbers of immigrant students is a major struggle facing today's teachers.

Teachers experience strain on their time and efforts every day. Adding students into their classes who do not speak the language spoken in class adds a new dimension of responsibility for the teacher. Teachers need to collaborate regarding the best possible solutions for working with immigrant youth. As the system stands, teachers often “are not fully prepared, lack support systems, and are unable, even with their best effort, to adequately help these students with language development needs” (Rance-Roney, 2008, p. 18). For teachers trying to prove their value as educators, these immigrant students are often viewed “as liabilities and not as resources in the daily life of a school” (Rance-Roney, 2008, p. 18).

Judith Rance-Roney (2008) wrote of her experiences teaching Vietnamese youth in an American classroom and quickly realized that she “needed to take steps not only to support [her] two English language learners in their English acquisition, but also to invest all the students in creating a classroom culture that encouraged shared experiences...that legitimized all class members” (p. 19). Rance-Roney faced the challenging task of bringing her Vietnamese students up to state standards in order to help them graduate. In an effort to help them feel like “worthy and legitimate contributors” she needed to create an environment to develop the students belief in their own abilities (p. 19). Thus, the Culture Share Club was born.

Making students aware of their surroundings can alter classroom dynamics and involvement of immigrant students. The Culture Share Club allowed members to

interview students with different cultural backgrounds from the interviewer, to give presentations displaying similarities and differences, and to share with others. Rance-Roney (2008) also participated by interviewing her Vietnamese students. She believed these methods were beneficial because “ a mutual interview begins the establishment of a mentor relationship with the teacher and provides a culturally responsive connection between home and school” (p. 20).

By bringing the immigrant students’ Vietnamese culture into the class, the students were given the chance to show their American peers aspects about the Vietnamese ways of life. They practiced their English and had the opportunity to show multimedia presentations with pictures and videos of their homes. Rance-Roney (2008) considered one of her greatest accomplishments in “establishing their legitimacy as contributors to co-constructed knowledge” (p. 20). Success stories like MEP and the Culture Share Club are examples of integrating new immigrant students into classrooms across the globe. Such stories can happen in any school in any country, and can positively change the lives of immigrant students in adjusting to their new homes.

Another aspect to take into consideration is the type of school in which these students are placed. Studies have shown that placement in private schools versus public schools can make a difference on student motivation. In a study by Louie and Holdaway (2009), students from Asia, South America, and the Caribbean Islands were observed and interviewed to discover the differences in education received if they attended public schools or Catholic schools in New York City, which is of comparable size to London in terms of population and diversity. Among the perceived differences between Catholic and public schools, “higher teacher expectations of students, a stronger academic

curriculum with more opportunities for advanced coursework, smaller class sizes, and a cohesive community” were the factors that pushed immigrant families to send their children to Catholic schools (Louie & Holdaway, 2009, p. 789).

The alleged higher standards of Catholic schools may not have been proven, but the mission of “caring” once again arose in the Louie and Holdaway (2009) study. Studies have shown that Catholic schooling is “a core curriculum for all students” and is “grounded in a social justice mission to aid the disadvantaged, and in an ethos of caring” (Bryck, Lee, & Holland, 1993, p. 297; Louie & Holdaway, 2009, p. 790; Fleming, 2007).

A theme in these studies of public vs. parochial schooling has been the presence of a caring environment where teachers hold students accountable for their actions and involve the parents in the school-lives of the students. Underperformance and violence in American public schools are the main reasons cited by immigrant families in sending their children to Catholic schools (Louie & Holdaway, 2009, p. 796; Noddings, 2003, p. 59). Many parents also realized that the neighborhood in which they live often determined the school to which their children are sent. Parents become aware of the hierarchy of the public schools and often see that the higher ranked schools are out of their reach, geographically and financially (Louie & Holdaway, 2009, p. 796).

With regards to immigrant parents and their effect on their children’s education levels, I refer to a study (Rothon, et al., 2009), based on the performances of second-generation immigrant students in Britain, Canada, and the United States. Any program that is developed with the immigrant communities in Britain will need to include a parental element in it. Parental involvement is important, because studies have shown that:

There is a strong association between the educational level of the parental generation and that of the second generation, there has been substantial intergenerational progress, especially among women, with most groups performing as well as or better than members of the majority population of the same age and similar parental backgrounds. (Rothon, et al., 2009, p. 29)

Even if parents of the immigrant population have low levels of academic achievement themselves, having a supportive network of motivation in the home can boost the progress of the students.

The Rothon, et al. (2009), and Gibson and Hidalgo (2009) studies have shown that immigrant parents care deeply about the progress of their children, even if they do not have the means of providing assistance to them. The primary motivation for the parents is that they want their children to be more prosperous and successful in life than they were. Many of the migrant parents in the Gibson and Hidalgo (2009) article said that “they themselves felt stuck in their jobs” and that they “viewed schooling as the ticket to a better life” for their children (p. 698). Programs like MEP provided the academic role-modeling and professional advisors needed, while parents could provide the personal motivation and encouragement at home. The influx of immigrants from Europe, Africa, and Asia into Britain should be recognized as providing potential groups that could benefit from a program like MEP.

With regards to tracking, it has been shown that first and second-generation immigrant students were placed in lower tracked classes than were native-born students. These administrative placement strategies could prove to be a hurdle for students with regards to their future professional opportunities. All students should be given the

opportunity to access the higher tracked programs, but if they are receiving poorer quality instruction or if they are misplaced, then their chances of success are lowered. Of the limitations shown in the study, the fact that “only half (of immigrant students) were placed into college preparatory math and English upon entering ninth grade shows that schools aren’t investing in the future of these students because of perceived limitations in their ability” (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009, p. 690).

Based on the reviewed literature, one can see that methods and programs, like MEP or the Culture Share Club, were put in place to assist immigrant student success. International schools provided programs in European schools that did not exist in North American schools and vice versa. Tracking was also more defined and visible in Europe than in the United States and Canada. If there are programs to help immigrant students in European schools, it is feasible that these programs could be improved through continued research.

In concluding this literature review, I address the issue of social justice in the context of this research. Students in affluent schools that attend to the needs of a university-bound, homogeneous, and (usually) white student body will be leaders who make decisions that affect the lives of those who attended the less-affluent schools. It is within these schools that educators are facilitating the “reproduction of the division of labor” and are perpetuating the “mechanisms of domination” that rule the lives of the less affluent (Apple, 2004, p. 2).

Teachers voluntarily take on the responsibility of educating students, regardless of class, gender, ethnicity and religion, but it is true that “particular groups and classes have historically been helped while others have been less adequately treated” (Apple, 2004, p.

10). Students and their families who are immigrants or refugees are often forced to settle in lower-class neighborhoods. Poorer neighborhoods pay lower property taxes, which means less investment in local education.

Schools in these low socioeconomic areas often have been under funded and poorly staffed, and according to Jonathan Kozol (1991):

When you consider that many teachers are afraid to come here in the first place, or, if they are not afraid, are nonetheless offended by the setting or intimidated by the challenge of the job, there should be a premium and not a punishment for teaching here. (p. 30)

All students who attend schools in these poorer areas, including first-generation immigrant students, have been subjected to inequalities in some way. The school in which I conducted this research is not located in a poor area, although individuals with low socio-economic status attended it.

One of my goals in this research was to make a difference in the lives of the students and the teachers who teach them. The experiences of the students had to be described, because they were immersed within the programs being studied.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology Introduction**

The purpose of this research project was to examine the stories of Eastern European immigrant students in a secondary school (years 8-10) and their teachers in the greater London area of England to learn about their school experiences. Research questions inquired about students' likes and dislikes about their school, their opinions on tracking, their challenges of moving to a new country, their schooling in their home countries, their supports they received in-class and extra-curricular, their social life, and their thoughts about what more they feel the school can do to support them in their educational development. Students were asked similar questions regardless of gender or ethnicity.

This research took place under a qualitative case-study methodology that included staff interviews (four participants); student interviews (seven participants); classroom observations; reflective note taking and journaling; and one-to-one tutor sessions with a member of special education learning support staff, three immigrant EAL students, and myself. A case study is defined as “the in-depth study of one or more instances of a phenomenon in its real life context that reflects the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 447). I conducted this case-study with the purpose of exploring the experiences of Eastern European immigrant students in England. The experiences of the participant students are the phenomenon being studied. This particular case, or the school, is “a particular instance of the phenomenon” (p. 447).

I chose interviews as the predominant method of data collection because “the major advantage of interviews is their adaptability,” which, being a teacher suits me,

because I can modify questions in the moment and adapt when a conversation is going in an interesting direction (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 228). I felt that the personal contact with interviews would yield “trust and rapport with respondents, thus making it possible to obtain information that the individual probably would not reveal by any other data-collection method” (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 228). I used interviews because they allowed detailed and elaborate answers.

Upon arrival at the school in April 2010, I filled out forms that would clear me to be in school. Within Britain, any person working in the vicinity of children needs to have a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check, or the List-99, which is a short-term clearance prior to receiving full CRB clearance. Once the paperwork was submitted, I left the school to await approval, which came four days later.

In this study, the interview type was a “key informant interview” (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 243). The key informant groups were teachers and students. The reason that these groups were key informants was because the “interviewer [myself] collects data from individuals who have special knowledge or perceptions that would not otherwise be available to the researcher” (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 243). The student participants narrated their story about immigrating to England and attending school there, and the teacher participants shared their ideas and experiences about teaching these students from other countries. All were detailed stories worthy of the freedom to express that interviews afford.

### **The School**

I conducted the research in a secondary school in the greater London area of England. Within the school, there were 1,550 students with 217 students reported as

having English-as-a-Second Language (EAL), which gave the school a total of 14% EAL enrollment. Of those 217, 199 were reported as speaking a language other than English when at home. The school educated years 7-11, which was roughly equivalent to grades 6-10 in North America. It was a large complex with multiple buildings, which was cited by many student participants as being a point of concern.

### **Selection and Interview of Students**

The first step for the research included locating the participants, which were to be foreign-born immigrants to the United Kingdom who had enrolled in years 7-11 at the participant school. To select participants, I used two methods, a typical case sampling for the “typical cases to study” (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 182), and convenience sampling (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 175). A typical case sample is “a group of cases that represent the middle range of the phenomenon to be studied” (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 657). According to Gall et al. (2007), convenience sampling is simply “a sample that suits the purposes of the study and that is convenient” (p. 175).

I developed the typical case sample protocol in advance of the research, and while it was partially successful in recruiting participants, I had to slightly amend the recruiting process. In order to recruit a large enough student sample, and to successfully conduct this research, students who fit the immigrant criteria, were present within the school, were unsolicited, and volunteered to be a part of the study (the convenience sample), were invited as the process advanced. They were invited with the help of the Special Education Needs department and the EAL Learning Support Assistant, Suzanne. She mentioned the project to them, and they gave their permission, as well as obtained their parents, or guardians, permission.

If this research was to produce ideas for improvements, I wanted improvements “to be effective for the great majority of the individuals to be served,” so I did not look for any extreme or specific participants (p. 182). For this research project, typical participants were students who was born in an Eastern European country, had emigrated to the United Kingdom, spoke communicable English, and agreed to participate in this study to narrate experiences and give suggestions for ways to improve the school. It was also a consideration that some students were able to fluently read neither English nor their native language, in which case, the information would have been read and explained to them.

I was directed to the Special Educational Needs Department (SEN) within school, which was the department that oversaw English-as-a-Second-Language students (EAL), where I was introduced to a teacher participant known as Suzanne. Suzanne was a Hungarian special needs teacher who moved to the UK four years ago. The participant school hired her as an English-as-a-Second Language/Special Education Needs (EAL/SEN) support staff. Her job was to support and oversee the days of 14 foreign-born, EAL students, and she agreed to help me locate participants. Since I was not been fully cleared to be alone in the building with students, I asked Suzanne if she would be present for the interviews so that another adult would be in the room. I gained permission to be in the school, but I had to have an approved adult with me any time that I was with students. Suzanne agreed to be present during all interviews, and all participants agreed, and welcomed her into our interviews.

The process for selecting a student participant was firstly working with Suzanne to select names based upon her recommendations of who would be most likely to want to

participate. Seven students were chosen because it “encourages a wide sampling of views” but it is not too large to be overwhelming during the data transcription and analyzing processes (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 245). Next, I wrote individualized letters, complete with a cover letter from the head teacher (Appendix A), to each student (Appendix B) and each parent/guardian (Appendix C), which were sent via postal service to the home’s of students. The parents and students were instructed to return the form to the head teacher’s personal assistant, who would forward the forms to me. English understanding was not an issue with invited participants. Some parents did not respond due to lack of understanding, so Suzanne explained to the students the meaning to discuss it with their parents.

I did not attempt to contact students other than with the letter. If students did not respond to the letter, they were called by the head teacher’s personal assistant to request either a “yes” or a “no, thank you” response. If a response was still delayed after this follow-up phone call, then the matter was dropped and other participants were sought with the help of Suzanne, who asked several students personally if they would be interested in participating.

Ten students were invited to participate by letter. Of those ten, three agreed to participate. Because three students was such a small sample, Suzanne personally asked more students if they would like to be interviewed. Four additional students, who did not receive letters in the mail, agreed to participate, based on being asked by Suzanne. The students invited personally by Suzanne were a sample of convenience to ensure success of the research. The students “suit[ed] the purposes of the study and [were] convenient” (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 175). They received letters from Suzanne instead of via post. In all,

seven students responded to the invitation during the duration of my presence at the school.

When I received word that a student had agreed to participate, I met with each one individually before an interview took place. I introduced myself and ensured them that they understood the forms and the process of an interview. The main purpose of this introduction was to establish a rapport and to help gain the trust of the student (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 256). After I was certain that all students understood, I scheduled an interview.

I received two responses affirming participation from students through the mail after two days of waiting and immediately scheduled two lunchtime interviews with them. The students were two Czech-born siblings. The girl, Sara, was 15, and the boy, Stephen, was 16. Both were enrolled as year-10 students at the school. They acknowledged that they were excited to participate in a project that directly related to their educational lives and experiences.

In preparation for the interviews, I selected to use a combination of a *general interview guide approach*, which “is based on the assumption that there is common information to be obtained from each respondent, but no set of standardized questions is written in advance,” and a *standardized open-ended interview*, which “involves a predetermined sequence and wording of the same set of questions to be asked of each respondent” (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 247). Prepared questions were taken to each interview, but the delivery was flexible and changed from participant to participant; and the order in which I asked questions changed depending on the flow of conversation and the allowance for alternating conversational direction unique to each participant. Questions,

which were not predetermined, were also asked based on the general flow of an interview. Questions for student participants can be viewed in Appendix F.

I planned to have two interviews with each participant. I derived the follow-up interview questions from unclear or vague statements made during the first interview. The follow-up interviews were a chance for me to probe areas I found interesting or unclear. Some participants completed the second interview and some did not, due to scheduling difficulties or lack of time.

Stephen's first interview was scheduled immediately for the following day during his lunch. Suzanne, Stephen, and I met for a half hour interview in a private room within the school. I recorded the interview.

Stephen's second interview took place two weeks later during lunch. There were some contradictions or uncertainties within his answers of the first interview that I wanted to clear up. I recorded the second interview, which took place in the same location and lasted for half an hour. Suzanne, Stephen, and I were present and the interview questions for Stephen's second interview are in Appendix G.

Sara was ill for a week after her response so her first interview took place three weeks into the research. Suzanne, Sara, and myself were present. The interview, which I recorded, was 45 minutes long.

Sara's second interview was not a recorded standardized open-ended interview, but was an *informal conversational interview* that evolved "entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions in a natural interaction" (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 247). I informed her that I would likely include some details of this conversation in her participant story. The interview happened by chance when we met to discuss some questions she had regarding

the transcript of her first interview. We talked for three quarters of an hour about many aspects of school and her goals for the future with questions generated by “on-the-spot formulation” (p. 249).

The third response came from Matt, a Hungarian student who spoke proficient English. He had been in the UK for nearly five years and no longer required assistance from the school, but he told about his experiences coming into the country and the school. He was not part of the original list of invited students, but his name was suggested to me to get insight from a student who was well adjusted. His mother, Suzanne, asked him to participate. The interview took place during lunch in a meeting room with Matt, Suzanne, and myself, which I recorded. Matt was only interviewed one time because I judged him as having no cultural or language barriers.

The fourth response came from John, a year eight Hungarian student. He had been in the UK for four years and spoke English well. He was suggested to me by Suzanne, and was also not part of the original list of invited students. John’s interview was half an hour in length and took place during the lunch hour with Suzanne and I. Suzanne translated a few of the questions to make sure he understood. He seemed shy and unsure in many of his answers. I recorded the interview.

The last responses came from three siblings from Poland: James and Victor, two year-ten twins, and their younger sister, Michelle, a year-eight student. I had originally only invited Michelle, but the boys expressed interest in participating as well. They also requested to be interviewed as a group. They seemed shy, but were more comfortable being together, so I consented, despite the fact that I thought it could lead to one or more of the participants being interrupted or shut out of the conversation. I invited Michelle at

the beginning of the project, but due to poor attendance, lack of understanding within the invitation letter, and a few cancellations, the siblings were only interviewed the day before the project ended. Their interview took place after school with Suzanne, the siblings, and I present. The boys contributed more to answering questions, so I posed direct questions to Michelle as well.

### **Selection and Interview of Staff**

While waiting for responses to arrive from students and parents, I interviewed teachers. I wanted a group of experienced teachers to interview individually to discuss their thoughts on how the school functioned for its foreign students. I invited eight members of staff, including one head teacher, by a packaged letter, which consisted of the invitation and interview prompts (Appendix D).

The participating staff reflected a “typical case sampling” that “involves the selection of typical cases to study” (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 182). The criterion for selecting a teacher was simply: that they were not a first year teacher; they wanted to share their experiences for the purpose of helping the school; no two teachers were from the same subject area, and that they be willing to spend between one and two hours of their time speaking with me and reviewing their transcripts. Some of the invited participants were unable to participate, due to time constraints, but they agreed to let me observe some lessons if I needed to. Such observations took place in three classrooms. The purpose of the observations was to view what a typical, everyday lesson in which immigrant students participated might look like.

The teachers who agreed to participate include one assistant head teacher who worked within social sciences (Harry), one learning support assistant who was an

immigrant to the UK (Suzanne), one teacher of the year-seven foundation group (Mary), and one physical education teacher (Linda). All participants had a significant amount of experience within education, with no teacher possessing less than five years of professional education experience.

For the interviews, I asked each participant for an hour of their time. I originally planned to do an interview and then a group discussion, but the group discussion could not be arranged due to the time constraints of participants.

I first met with Mary, the year-seven, foundation group teacher for half an hour one day after school. I recorded the interview. After transcribing the interview, I had additional questions, and met with her for an additional interview, also half an hour in length. Mary's additional interview questions are in Appendix H.

I then interviewed Suzanne, the Hungarian EAL learning support assistant. She discussed what she did with the EAL students and how she offered them support not only in lessons, but also outside of class, emotionally, and academically. Suzanne and I only had one formal interview, but she participated in every student interview and met with me individually on many occasions. She was the mother of the student participant, Matt. I recorded her individual interview.

Next I met with Harry, the senior leadership assistant head teacher who had a social sciences teaching background. Harry was invited to participate because he was responsible for the school receiving the international school award by the British Council. As a head teacher, he worked closely with student issues and was a leader regarding questions of diversity in school and international awareness. Our first interview lasted for

an hour of in-depth discussion. Harry was a busy man and was recovering from surgery during my research tenure, so I conducted only one, one-hour session that I recorded.

Linda, the PE teacher, was the last teacher participant I interviewed. There was only one session, which lasted one hour. Her experience was well documented within the interview, which I recorded.

All teacher participants were easily reachable via email in case clarification was needed. Harry provided me with facts and figures regarding the immigrant student population within the school, which is in subsection “The School” on pages 35-36.

### **Conducting the Interviews**

These interviews composed my first research interviewing experience. As a guideline for all interviews, I chose to use a conversational style and the “guidelines for conducting a research interview” provided by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007). In a school with a uniform policy, I wore a suit and tie. All student participant interviews were carried out with a member of staff (Suzanne) in the room. At the beginning of interviews, I reaffirmed the responsibilities of confidentiality. I always met with students in advance and this meeting was not recorded. During interviews, I attempted to speak as little as possible, because “the less the interviewer talks, the more information is produced” (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 254).

Because I worked with EAL students, I attempted to ask questions in as clear a manner as possible, and I often rephrased questions to ensure their understanding. Questions were asked to student participants using basic language, except in the cases of Matt. To get deeper information and greater detail, I often used probes, such as “why?” or “Can you tell me more?” etc.

## Data Collection

Because I used multiple methods of data collection (interviews, observations, journaling, and one-to-one tutor sessions), the strategy I employed to “ensure thorough data collection” is known as *triangulation* or *crystallization*. Triangulation “var[ies] the methods used to generate findings and see if they are corroborated across these variants” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 474). In this case, the various methods I included were: interviewing students; observing classes with participant students; taking minute-by-minute notes to see if class environments reflected what students said (see Appendix E); interviewing staff members to see if the school’s goals for immigrant students were reflected in the answers of the immigrant students; journaling my response to each encounter; and working directly with immigrant students in a small-group English lesson. The multiple data collection methods were ways of checking for connections in data.

Another method I used to “ensure thorough data collection” was the collection of *rich data* (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 475). A way to collect rich data is to use many mediums, such as “interview transcripts and detailed notes or recordings of observations, that are detailed and varied enough to provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on” (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 475).

During interviews, data were collected by means of an audio recording device on my laptop computer using the program, Garage Band.

The advantages of using audio recording include “reduc[ing] the tendency of interviewers to make an unconscious selection of data favoring their biases,” and that “audio recording provides a complete verbal record,” which “speeds up the interview process, because there is no need for extensive note taking” (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 256).

Data collection ended after seven weeks in the school. Time constraints and the emergence of regularities within the data justified ending the data collection.

### **Transcript Approval**

At the end of each interview, I transcribed each interview verbatim, using pseudonyms. Once transcripts were completed, transcripts were delivered to participants.

Allowing the participants to review their transcript and amend their contribution is a strategy to reinforce the research design known as “member checking, which involves having research participants review statements in the report for accuracy and completeness” (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 475). Due to research taking place in England, it was necessary to complete transcription and approval before I returned to Canada to complete the thesis.

Participants were informed that they had the right to alter their contribution to the transcript in whatever way they felt best represented their. Participants were able to change words, delete words or passages, rephrase ideas, add additional information, expand or elaborate on a topic, or make statements more eloquent. All participants had at least one year of English reading experience and were given the opportunity to ask Suzanne or me regarding the contents of the transcripts. Suzanne and I were available for explanations by request.

Once participants were satisfied with the contents, they were instructed to sign the transcript to approve it for potential direct quotation within this master’s thesis. All participants signed their transcripts and returned them to me.

## **Observations**

During the research, I also observed four classroom lessons in which some participant students were present. With Sara (year 10, Czech, age 15), I observed a science lesson and an English lesson. With Stephen (year 10, Czech, age 16), I observed a science lesson and a business studies lesson. The purpose of the observations was to triangulate data by following-up the information gained during interviews, and to gain a personal perspective into what a lesson might be like for these international students.

During the observations, I arrived before the students, sat at the back of the classroom, and did not speak with students for the duration of the lesson. Most students ignored my presence. Throughout the lessons, I took minute-by-minute notes (see Appendix E) to document both what the teacher doing, and what the students were saying and doing. How many times would the teacher check on the student when support was not present? Were the other students on task or disruptive? Did my participant student seem to cope with what was asked of them or were they confused or distracted? I contacted the teacher in advance of the lesson that I wished to view, explained that I was not there to judge his/her teaching, and that I wanted to see how particular SEN students were coping with lessons when they did not have individual support from an SEN learning support teacher, like Suzanne. All teachers approved of my presence.

## **Journaling**

Throughout the process of working on this project, I would regularly journal after interviews or observations. The journaling afforded me the opportunity to reflect and react to what I had witnessed that day. I would ask myself questions, such as, “How does this interview compare to or differ from another?” and “What can future immigrant

students and the school learn from these immigrant students taking part in the interview?”

I occasionally wrote about things that frustrated me, such as students’ removal from English classes.

### **Analyzing Data**

I carried out data analysis using the method of *interpretational analysis*, detailed in Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007). Steps in this approach included segmenting the database, developing categories, coding segments, grouping category segments, and drawing conclusions.

Segmenting the database was the first step of interpretational analysis. In this step, I compiled and segmented all useful data and pieces of data. A segment is “a section of the text that contains one item of information and that is comprehensible even if read outside the context in which it is embedded” (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 466).

I developed categories, which are “construct[s] that refer to a certain type of phenomenon mentioned in the database,” during data collection. The categories were: school success (subcategories: very successful, somewhat successful, not successful), school support (subcategories: very supported, somewhat supported, not supported), school problems, cultural barriers, distraction, social life (subcategories: popular, somewhat popular, unpopular), emotion (subcategories: frustration, happiness, sadness, homesickness, etc.), future, adjustment, and opinion. Gender could have been another category, but it was not a specific area of concern within this research. I did not detect distinct gender-specific differences within the data.

Coding segments took place as I read through transcripts of interviews. I uploaded all transcripts and journal writing into Nvivo, a research-coding program. I read a length

of text and coded that information into the categorical selections. Segments were coded with multiple codes.

I grouped categories at the end of coding. When grouping, I put together segments from each code. For example, I put all codes from “opinion” together in a single word document to note comparisons of “opinion” across participant contributions.

I drew the conclusions based on the comparison and emergence of similarities and differences between participant contributions. I reported conclusions in the results chapter.

### **Time Frame**

I conducted this study over the course of eight weeks within one school. The interviews occurred on a weekly basis at the convenience of participants. During the intermittent time, transcription and data analysis took place. I wrote follow-up questions for specific participants based on previous discussion. The time I allotted for the research and writing process was approximately six months, from May 2010 to December 2010. The research occurred in the school from May 3 - June 18, 2010.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In order to conduct cross-cultural research, I acquired ethics approval. First, I did my best to hone my qualifications for carrying out this research through reading for the literature review. I also took courses in anti-racism at the University of Saskatchewan that exposed me to inequalities and tensions that could exist within a school environment. I contacted one secondary school in southern England, and based on discussions with the head of the school and the teacher in charge of EAL students, we selected a sample of

European first-generation immigrant students. Having different cultures present in the study created a need for me to have awareness of cultural diversity. I conducted this research with patience and consideration for diversity. I made ethical considerations to carry out this research because it is “irresponsible to approach these deep concerns without caution and careful preparation” (Noddings, 2003, p. 62).

In preparation for the University ethics review, I contacted the head of the school to ask for additional ethical procedures. The head confirmed to me via email that any ethical approval from the University of Saskatchewan was adequate approval to carry out research. Jurisdictional ethics approval for this study within the school can be viewed in Appendix A.

There were students whom I taught previously, and who might have been participants. I thought having these students might enrich this research project and could yield rich data. Because I taught them, they already knew me as a person, which would reduce time that was usually needed to create researcher/participant rapport. In order to conduct this invitation ethically, I did not contact these students in advance. I submitted the letters of invitation addressed from the school via postal delivery that invited them to participate in the research study.

In an ethical study of certain groups, I recognized that “there is a real danger of intrusiveness and lack of respect in methods that fail to recognize the vulnerability of students” and that is why I was informative to participants and respectful of their privacy (Noddings, 2003, p. 62). Before the study and interviews took place, full discussions were held with each participant to assist them in understanding the situation and their

right to privacy. As a researcher and teacher, I had “an obligation to protect immature students from making disclosures that they might later regret” (Noddings, 2003, p. 62).

Second, when conducting cross-cultural research, it is of importance to note that some eligible participants may have limited English proficiency. In order to ensure that all participants understood the questions and information forms, participants needed to be partially literate in English and be able to speak English. Students could be partially literate, but should have been able to understand oral English so that procedures could be explained to them in as much detail as necessary to obtain their consent.

For transcript approval, they needed to be able to read English. However, in the event that they could not understand certain words, Suzanne and I were both available for translation and explanations. I was attentive to their limited English skills through asking if they understood, having the participant explain to me what they thought I meant, and having Suzanne present to re-state questions. Suzanne was helpful because the student participants were all students of hers, and she knew their abilities more than I did.

Immigrant students under age 18 were the main focus of the study. I am aware that “written consent is needed from the child’s main caretaker...and also from appropriate school personnel” (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 82). Once permission was given from the school and family, I provided forms for informed consent from the caregiver.

Third, it was important to advise the participants that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. The documents clearly stated that participation was anonymous and voluntary and should include “participants’ understanding that they have the right to withdraw from the research investigation at any time” and that no harm would be done if they choose to do so (Gall, et al., 2007, p. 82).

Once information was collected, participants had the right for privacy and confidentiality of their information and participation. To protect their identities within the study, I referred to the school and participants using pseudonyms.

Because results will be known, it was important to keep the identities of students confidential. In the qualitative case-study methodology I utilized, an individual interview approach was used for interviewing the students, and confidentiality was possible as long as the participants adhered to this agreement. Although respect for the conversations was stressed, once the participants left the confines of the study, it was not possible to keep participants from discussing what was stated. The data that were collected during the study will be kept secure for a period of 5 years in case the need arises to reference any information.

In order to ensure ethical research practices, I consistently reviewed ethics literature leading up to the study. The University of Saskatchewan ethics board also approved the study. This reference to ethics was presented by Gall, Gall and Borg (2007); such as: clarifying benefits to all involved parties, minimizing risks, posing prepared and useful questions, equitable participant selection, informed consent and parental consent, maintaining privacy and confidentiality safeguards, and establishing good hospitality and communication with all involved parties (p. 92).

## **Chapter 4: Student and Teacher Interview Results**

### **Student Interview Results**

All student participants reflected upon their experiences as immigrant students in the United Kingdom. They discussed their transition, integration, and adjustment process in relation to their language needs, their experiences with language, student streaming by ability level, school concerns, and social concerns. Student participants also provided recommendations for how to improve the experiences of future immigrant students within the school.

#### **Stephen and Sara**

Stephen and Sara were siblings from the Czech Republic. At the time of interviews, they had been in England studying at Royal Downs School for one and a half years. The family moved to England because of a work opportunity for their father, and once that they were in England, they wanted to become bilingual and speak English as well as they could. Neither was sure if they would move back to the Czech Republic.

#### **Stephen**

At the time of interview, Stephen was 16 years old and in year 10. When Stephen arrived in England, he was placed in year nine so that he would be at Royal Downs School for the entire two years of preparation for the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) exams. If he had gone straight into his year 10 class, he would have missed a large portion of exam preparation, and would have been in danger of

earning low GCSE exam marks, which could prevent him from getting into year 12 and 13 Colleges. He had a learning support assistant in many lessons per week.

When his family told Stephen they were going to move to England from his home country of the Czech Republic, he said he did not want to come “at first, because I was afraid of it. I thought my English wasn’t so good, but when I moved to England, it was difficult, but not as difficult as I thought it would be.” Similarly to all of the participant students, he had a school buddy that showed him around school for a few weeks. He remembered that:

When we moved to England, my sister and I stayed one or two weeks before we started the new school. We were nervous...because we knew we will start in another school. My first day, when I came to this school, I came here, to this office. One student was waiting for me. In the rest of the school year [of year nine], only two months, I had all lessons with him. He showed me classes, and other things in school. He was helpful, because this school is too big.

### **Sara**

Sara was 15 years old, and a year 10 student. She had learning support assistants present in several lessons per week. She advocated for immigrant students within the school, and was going to be serving as an international student prefect, which is “a student monitor in a usually private school,” in year 11 (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). As an international prefect, she wished to promote patience and to give good advice for international students who enrolled at the school. As an international student, she felt that she could help incoming immigrants adapt to England in a way that English students could not provide.

As an immigrant student, Sara was poignantly aware of the challenges faced by international students. When I asked how her international prefect position, which previously has not existed, came about, she answered:

I applied to be a German prefect. They asked me why I would like to be a prefect. I said that I would organize meetings with foreign students and help them to get new friends. In our year, we have two twins [Victor and James]. They are really nice boys, but they are so outside of the people. I think they speak good English, but they are shy. One of them is in my form and sometimes the boys make fun of him. I think it's really rude, because I don't think that any of the English students can speak in German, or French, or Polish, or Czech what they are saying in English. They aren't thinking so much about it.

Sara envisioned being a leader for the international students around the community. She had a plan for inquiring “if it's possible to meet with out-of-school foreign students, and then with those students we can meet, because we can get more friends from outside of school as well as inside the school.”

She could provide a comforting, empathetic role, similar to the Migrant Education Program (2009) in the United States, in which the mentor has experienced similar difficulties as the mentee. She could also foster “strong bonds between mentor and mentee,” and could help “new students and those with limited English proficiency” (Knowles & Parsons, 2009; Pringle, Anderson, Rubenstein, and Russo, 1993), and help new students with a multitude of issues. She viewed accent barriers with disdain, and commented on the intolerance and impatience of English peers. When asked how she would help a new student with whom she was paired up with, she said:

I can explain to him or her in a better way than an English student, because when I'm talking with, for example, a Hungarian girl, we understand each other more than English people understand. They seem to be too lazy to think about our accents. If I say pronounce it "epple," instead of "apple," then they don't understand me.

During our informal conversational interview, we discussed what she envisioned in the future. She had aspirations and worries, given her situation of moving between countries with different languages. She wanted to become a lawyer, but she was not sure if she would be able to do so, because it would require her to get into certain colleges and universities. Her level of verbal English made her nervous, and she wondered if she should go back to the Czech Republic to study so that one day she could become a lawyer in her home country. She was concerned that her verbal English skills would not progress quickly enough to understand the intricacies of law, to have the language skills required to make compelling arguments, take testimony, and communicate with members of a courtroom.

I asked her if she wished to stay in England after her secondary schooling or go back home. Her social nature and desire to be around her longtime friends emerged when she answered "I don't really know, because the schools and teachers are better in England, but I have a lot of friends in Czech, so I feel happier in Czech than in England."

### **John**

John was 12 years old and in year 8. He moved to England from Hungary and had been in England for four years. Similar to all the student participants, he knew no English upon arrival. He claimed his poor English skills were because he was removed from his

English lessons in Hungary, because he “was naughty” in lessons. His father was offered a job in England, and John was told that he would be moving to a new country with only a week’s notice.

I asked John to tell me about his school in Hungary, which Matt also attended while he was living in Hungary. It had been several years since John had been there, but he described parts of it, including the school size and technological comparisons between Hungary and England.

He said:

It wasn’t modern like here. There were only about 500 students. It was just one building with about four floors, and with a lot less students. We used blackboards. There were a few computers. It had one room with computers.

### **Matt**

Matt was 15 years old, a year 10 student, and had been living in England for nearly 4 years. He was Suzanne’s son. When he moved to England from Hungary in November 2006, he spoke no English. However, unlike most of the other student participants, he immediately started school upon arrival, instead of undergoing a period of adjustment.

When asked if he studied any English in Hungary before arriving, Matt responded, “yeah, I was studying it, but it wasn’t enough to actually speak it properly,” which was an experience shared by Sara, Stephen, and John. Four years on, a person talking to him would have had a difficult time knowing that he wasn’t British.

### **Victor, Michelle, and James**

During my time as an employee at Royal Downs School, I taught history to years 7 through 9. Near the beginning of the year, a Polish girl, Michelle, transferred into my top-set, year 7. Victor and James, her twin brothers, enrolled in year 9. They could speak no English, and she would often cry during lessons or not come to school at all due to a variety of, as Mary said, “genuine illnesses or illnesses related to stress they are feeling.”

Michelle was a main motivation for my wanting to research the experiences of immigrant students in England. I felt I could have done more to help her, but I was often so busy that I did not know how.

I spent seven weeks attempting to organize an interview with Michelle, James, and Victor. They agreed to be interviewed, but on the condition that they would be allowed to be interviewed as a group. I consented, but then on our scheduled interview days, they would cancel or not be in school. I became concerned that I would never get to speak with them. However, our only interview took place on the day before I returned to Canada.

Victor and James were 15 years old and in year 10, while Michelle was 13 years old and in year 8. They arrived in England “nearly two years” ago when their family decided to move “for a better job” and “a new life,” which are reasons why millions of people have emigrated for many years. The teacher participants Harry, Suzanne, and Mary all described the siblings as having a very difficult experience at the school, but during the interview, they gave an entirely different perception of how they were handling their experience in England.

They described their school in Poland as smaller, and with about 500 students, compared to 1,500 at Royal Downs. They also said that the schooling in Poland was much more difficult than in England, because they “have 20 subjects in a year,” and there is “more homework.”

Also, contradictory to what other participant students, and Suzanne, said, the sibling’s claim, “In Poland the behavior is so bad, worse than England.” They said cursing, ignoring teachers, and being rude to each other are more common in Polish schools. In England, “children around will help you, teachers will help you, but if you ask Polish children for help, lots will tell you to go away,” said James.

Like Matt, all three claimed to be settling quite happily in England, and had no intention of moving back to their home country. When they told their friends and family back home that they were moving to England, they received an unsupportive response, and people told them “It isn’t true, that we lie, don’t go there, you will be back in a few months,” said James. But, regardless of the unsupportive nature of their Polish friends and family, all three students said “we will stay here, but maybe our parents might go back sometime,” and that the only way they would move back to Poland is “if we didn’t have any money.”

### **Themes of Data**

Based on the coded data, the major reoccurring themes emerging among student participants included language, streaming, school concerns, and social concerns. Consistently, students mentioned these issues and their levels of happiness and unhappiness related to each.

## **Language**

Students identified the English language as a primary difficulty they encountered in moving to England. Each offered their own experience with trying to learn the language and fit into the society, as well as some of their strategies for acquiring English-speaking skills.

### **Sara and Stephen**

Sara and Stephen discussed their family's collective pact to help each other learn English. With regards to their home life in Britain, Sara described the routine of her and Stephen's family. She said:

On Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and one weekend day, we speak only English. I really hate this time, because I'm always so tired to speak English at home, but they want to, so I have to as well.

Stephen also discussed his family's language skills. He said that his "mom is probably the worst speaker in our family, and dad is the best speaker." Because his dad worked for a British company, and spoke exclusively in English in his workplace, it was understandable that his language skills were the strongest. When asked about what their mom did, Stephen said that, "sometimes she works in a Czech company from Britain, and she learns English in a college for adults."

### **Stephen**

Stephen said his main difficulties were the sciences, subject-specific vocabulary, and multiple languages, which were recurrent among student participants. He said:

Science is very difficult, and...English. German is very difficult for me. The other students have been learning German for four years, and I started to learn German this year, so I'm first year in German. For science, everything is difficult. There are far too many words I don't understand.

His main academic difficulties lay in the fact that he was attempting to learn English while also being placed in a German languages class, and attempting to study difficult scientific vocabulary that would even trouble most native English speakers. I also asked if he believed it would be more useful for him to have two English lessons per day (one class setting and one small-group setting) instead of one English lesson and one German lesson. He responded:

I think that could be useful; a second lesson of English instead of German. Of course, it is better to speak with many different languages, but we are here for English, not for German. I have to learn German just because I am here in England, where children have to learn French or German.

Stephen also mentioned his English ability when commenting on the classes in which he was placed. He thought his sets, or class streams, were okay, but then other times became self-conscious about his English abilities. He said:

Some teachers say I'm clever, but I've got still problems with English. Sometimes in lessons, I'm in good sets. Not top sets, but good sets. My English is not good enough for this set. I think my English set is good, but I think I'm okay in middle sets. Maths is easy, so maybe I could move up, but I think sometimes I've still got problems with English when I have exams...some questions I don't understand some words, so I think the set is okay for maths.

Based on his comments of needing to improve his English before being moved into higher sets, Stephen viewed the streaming system as a hierarchy to ascend as his language improves.

Stephen required school learning support in his lessons because he was an EAL student preparing for GCSE exams. Suzanne and Stephen were a team when it came to his classes. Stephen described his relationship with Suzanne:

She helps me with everything. She's a very nice person. I go to lessons and wait a few minutes, and then [Suzanne] comes to the lesson and helps me with everything. In one day, it can be one or two lessons. Three sometimes. We also do one-on-one English lessons sometimes.

Suzanne was present in all student interviews. Since Stephen's language still needed improvement in order to succeed on the GCSE exams, Suzanne worked with him more than with any other student. She said:

He is one of those whose lessons I go to most often. We do one-on-one on Wednesday and Thursday mornings, because his form tutor was kind and released him from these days. I used to go to all English lessons, because he finds English difficult. I used to go to business studies. Sometimes, I go to science, but I changed those for English. I'm not going to so many science lessons now. I'm not spending fewer lessons, because at first I didn't go to every single English lesson before, and now I'm going to every English and geography, and less science. So it's the same, or more. If I have a free lesson, I go to [Stephen's] lesson.

If time allowed, Suzanne would go to all of Stephen's lessons, but she had other students to assist. This supports the thought that more EAL learning support assistants should be hired by Royal Downs School.

### **Sara**

Sara's English education history prior to arriving in England included a few years of courses before arriving in England, but claimed "it didn't so much help me here, because we were just writing with not so much talking." Upon arriving in England, "that was the problem, because I couldn't talk so much," she said.

Sara and Suzanne both emphasized how being in an English-speaking classroom as an EAL student was difficult, because of the necessity to focus on the language of the teacher. When students are speaking while the teacher is speaking, it creates "noise pollution" that interferes with the understanding of EAL students.

Sara's language worries affected her thoughts for what she would do with her future. She had aspirations that she worried about, given her situation of moving between countries with different languages. She wanted to become a lawyer, but she was not sure if she would be able to do so, because it would require her to get into reputable colleges and universities. With her current level of English, being accepted into such universities makes her nervous, and she wonders if she should go back to the Czech Republic to study so that one day she could become a lawyer in her home country. She was worried that her verbal English skills would not progress quickly enough to understand the intricacies of law and the language content required to make compelling arguments, take testimony, and communicate with members of a courtroom.

**John**

After being in the country for four years, John's language skills were quite close to the level of his year 8 peers. A learning support assistant no longer came to his lessons. When he first arrived in England, he said that a typical day for him involved "trying to learn vocabulary," but that he was unhappy and "would just try to live through the days of school and just go home."

Like Stephen, he was initially placed at a lower level than other children his age. For his integration into schools, he said that his primary school "put me in year four first to learn the language, and then when my English got better, I got moved back into my original class in year five." For language, John said, "they took me out classes, and would teach me some words. They had objects, and they'd put them somewhere, and I would have to say where it is, what it is, and if it's over or under something."

**Matt**

I discussed with Matt a few of the difficulties that he encountered when he arrived at the school with no verbal English skills. I asked what more could have been done to help him. Like Stephen, he cited subject specific vocabulary as being a major problem. He said:

It was in science...where they didn't really help me, because they didn't control the classes. The vocabulary was a problem also in history, in maths too. I had to learn the whole of maths again, like fractions. I didn't know what "fractions" were in English, so I had to learn the whole thing again.

Matt had previously learned substantial portions of the material studied in his new classes, but with words like “fraction,” “radius,” or “democracy,” used to describe the objective of lessons, his language was not making the connection.

He discussed what an average lesson looked like for him during his year 7 classes, and how he got used to daily life at the school. As teacher participant Harry suggested, a buddy system was implemented for Matt.

Matt said:

The first day went quickly. I came into school and there was a guy that showed me around. At the assembly, the year leader called up the guy so I could follow his timetable. I was following him and I felt stupid. I was with him for three weeks until I got my own timetable. I used to hang out with three or four guys, and trying to speak English. I was probably just sitting down and trying to understand what it was that we were doing. If I didn't understand, I'd ask someone.

The special education needs department within the school worked with all EAL/immigrant students who need lesson support. At the time of Matt's arrival in 2006, EAL students worked with Mrs. Donovan. Matt described his experience working with her:

She used to come to my lessons and help me, especially in English and science. She did not speak any Hungarian. She couldn't understand me. Every time she was with me, I was asking, “What does this mean, what does that mean?” She was able to briefly explain what they meant, so I was able to get the point, but not completely. She wasn't always able to clearly explain to me what things meant.

As a suggestion to the issue of English speaking staff not understanding immigrant youth, Matt's solution was that the school should "probably get more teachers that help foreigners, teachers that can actually speak some other languages." I asked Matt if he thought students would benefit from having people on staff from different countries, and he said, "Definitely, they would."

He also said:

There doesn't seem to be many people [foreign students] can talk to. Maybe [the school] could find some of the parents who speak those languages to work in some kind of support role. The children could talk to them, and through them get better at communicating with the teachers. Even with the letters that the school would send home, they gave me the same information that they gave to the English people. It's like we were English. If you don't understand the information you receive, that's just the way it is.

Matt arrived in 2006 in need of English instruction so that he could adjust to life in England. Like many immigrant students, upon arrival, he was placed in French and German classes. When asked if he thought being in French and German lessons was useful, he replied, "not really." Forcing someone with no English skills, living in Britain, to take two languages in addition to English was unwise. Matt was still taking German classes, but when asked if he could speak German after four years, he replied, "not really."

In support of Matt and Stephen's comments questioning the usefulness of taking additional foreign languages, Linda said, "why are we teaching them another language, when they're in a country where they aren't going to use that language? They need to use

English.” However, she was also somewhat supportive of it, saying “you can see that some will pick up both anyway, because once you learn one language, you are receptive to learning others as well.” Mary said, “The argument against it is that often, if you’re learning a language and you’re already becoming bilingual, picking a third or fourth language is actually not that difficult.”

### **Michelle, James, and Victor**

Michelle, James, and Victor had no English classes in Poland before coming to the United Kingdom. They came “with no understanding,” said Michelle. With regards to how long it took them to feel comfortable, and understand English in society and school, James said that it was “half a year or more.” As mentioned by the other participants, the most difficult thing for them to adjust to was “the language,” because they couldn’t “go to shops,” or “when we were asked something, we had no idea how to answer.” In the two years after arriving, the situation improved for them, and “now we can go everywhere, and we have some friends; now is much easier,” said Victor.

Michelle, James, and Victor claimed to have a regimented life dedicated to furthering their English abilities. Victor explained:

When we go home, we always read a book for an hour, then we have a break and some play, and then we again read more. That is what we do everyday. We speak English with dad, who was teaching us first of all before school.

James further added:

When we get home, we don’t go on Xbox or whatever. We read first. We read and translate, and it’s very good. Every day. On the weekend. It’s very helpful. Always speak or write. Read a lot. Don’t leave it.

They agreed with Matt and Stephen that putting English-learners into other foreign languages may not be necessary. Instead of putting new immigrant students into foreign language classes, like French or German, they suggested putting them into an extra English lesson “maybe for a few months.”

If they were to become the buddy helper of future Polish immigrant students, each respondent had an idea for what they would do to assist. James said that he would “translate everything that the teacher says. Go out with them and show them the school, and help; always help.” Michelle said that she would “help with scared students, help with homework, and translate. Victor said that he would simply “help. Don’t leave. When I go somewhere, don’t leave them alone too much. Also, tell them that when I’m not there, tell them who they can go to if they have problems.”

### **Streaming**

Each student was new to the system of streaming students according to levels of ability. Their opinions over their experiences with streaming differed slightly.

When asked to state a preference between mixed ability classes and the set system, Stephen said:

I think this system in England...is better, because when teachers have to teach, they must help children who work slower than another, who is much better. I think set lessons are...slower. In Czech, teachers either help them or say, “you should learn it at home, we must continue in the lesson.”

Like Stephen, Sara preferred streaming because, “when someone is slower and not so clever, he or she doesn’t so much stop the rest of the class. In Czech, there are some not so clever people and sometimes they stop classes from going to better levels.”

She thought that the set system could keep people moving along at the correct pace with teaching that meets their needs. She commented, as did teacher participant Harry, that teaching in lower sets was stronger:

In the lower sets, the teaching is better than in upper sets, because when I was in set four for maths, we had such a good teacher. Then when I went to higher sets, there were good teachers, but not so good like in the lower one. The teaching was slower and clearer.

As far as student tracking and placement were concerned, John was not quite as favorable of tracking as Sara and Stephen were. If forced to choose between tracking placements and students of all abilities being put together, he chose “everybody all together, because then there wasn’t any competition of who is better.” John seemed to defend the argument of Oakes that “tracking...seems to foster lowered self-esteem” among students within these classes, and that competition is a negative influence within the classroom (Oakes, 1985, p. 8).

Overall, with regards to streaming vs. mixed ability classes, Matt supported streaming, as Sara and Stephen did. He said that:

You get close to people when you’re in one [mixed-ability] class, but I think the set is a pretty good idea. If you’re in a good set, then you’ll get classmates that care about life and all that. I’d say the sets are better. You don’t get as many people that misbehave [at the top].

Matt also had concerns about streaming. Contrasting with school policy, as stated by the interviews with Harry and Mary, Matt said he was placed “in really bad sets” upon arrival at Royal Downs. Perhaps the policy has changed since 2006. Despite being placed

in middle-lower sets upon arrival at Royal Downs, he said that he “did not get this whole set system until half-way through year eight.” The fact that he didn’t understand his placement until one and a half years into his time at the school implies that there was a communication barrier between the school and the immigrant home, in which case his suggestion of multi-lingual staff would prove beneficial.

Suzanne, Matt’s mother, identified this confusion as a parent. She desired to have clearer channels of communication between home and school for non-English-speaking families. She said:

I didn’t know anything about differentiation, sets, or what was going on. I didn’t understand why he was in different classes with different people. Nobody explained to us at the beginning. I think it’s important to keep contact with parents and inform them. The education system is really different here than in Eastern European countries.

Matt said that, in the opinion of upper set students, is that lower set students don’t “really care what’s going to happen to them later on in their life,” and they “annoy the teacher.” Harry denied upper set elitism, but Matt’s comment suggested that there might be a point of view among the upper set students that students who streamed lower don’t care about their futures. Matt was in set one and set two classes, except for his maths class, in which he was placed in set four for unknown reasons. He said that he often asked his maths teacher to move him up a set, because he found the work to be “really easy,” and that “maths in Hungary is much more difficult.” In order to move up in his maths placements, Matt was determined to do well on an exam, which was “going to decide a lot.”

Michelle, James, and Victor seemed to have no interest in discussing streaming, except that it was new to them. In Poland, there was no streaming of student abilities, and “it was the same class with the same people.” Michelle said that in Poland, “the classes are all taught at the same level.” They expressed no preference between one and the other.

### **School Matters**

Student participants spoke about the things that they liked and disliked regarding Royal Downs School.

#### **Stephen**

Stephen was complimentary of the teachers he had encountered in England, and described them as “more helpful than in Czech.” In a compliment to Royal Downs, he said, “teachers are very good in this school, and are helpful.” He acknowledged their hectic schedules during lessons, but said they always made time to:

Explain what it is, how it works, and other things. They come help me, but not for too long. Basic things mostly. I think they always explain to me what I have to do, but they also must work with other students.

Stephen mentioned the difficulty of being in a large school, like Royal Downs, compared to his school of 300 in the Czech Republic. He described his typical day in Royal Downs as being chaotic, due to issues moving from one building to another. He said:

I can't say that I don't like it, but I can't say that I like it. At the end of a lesson, I have to go from one part of school to another building, which is in absolutely

another side of school. It's too big so you are going from one building to another building. It's very funny that in the start of the school year, when I get a new timetable, and I have to find different classes for different subjects, I am going around looking. In Czech, we had one classroom or maybe two for science and physics. We used to just stay in one classroom, so it was easy. When we came after holiday in Czech, we would find, on the doors, the names of the class, so we knew we were in the right place.

### **Sara**

Sara was complimentary of the school in several areas, including its teachers, classroom equipment, and its uniforms.

About teachers in England, she echoed Stephen's comments about the friendliness of teachers:

I think the teaching is good, because they are really friendly to the students. They seem to want to help them. I think the teachers are good, but the students are so bad. The students here don't know what Czech teachers are like. The teachers in Czech are so boring. They are not friendly, like in England.

Like John and Stephen, she enjoyed the technological capabilities of most classrooms in England, where the schools in her town were wealthier than was her school in the Czech Republic. She said, "the equipment is better than in Czech, because we don't have interactive tables, boards, and computers in classes."

Regarding uniforms, Sara had an insightful reason for liking them; she felt uniforms helped keep students together, and did not let differences, such as social class, divide students as much. She said:

I like uniforms. We haven't got uniforms in Czech, and I think it's better for children to have a uniform. If we have uniforms, then nobody has any reason to make fun of others by saying, "you are poor and I am rich."

Sara expressed a concern with the behavior of the other students. She critically commented on their rudeness, such as instances of bullying against other foreign students, and their wastefulness, because she believed they were lacking in maturity and responsibility. She explained that:

The classes are so noisy. When they are noisy, I can't concentrate...on the learning. In my top set classes, they are quiet, so I can concentrate for English, and I can learn more than in my business studies class when someone is always saying something. Then I can't understand. Also, in lunches, they are throwing food! I think that's strange, because countries in the world have got food problems, and here they are throwing food. In my business studies class today, someone stole a snack. We got a whole class detention, and we had to sit there for an hour, because nobody would admit who had done it. I don't understand why someone would steal a snack.

In an informal conversational interview with Sara, she mentioned that, of all her classes, her history class was most effective for meeting her learning needs, because the behavior of the students was never out of order. She attributed the ideal learning conditions to the teacher of the class, who had good classroom management. Because the students were on task in this class, Sara did not need to filter any noise pollution, and could concentrate on her work.

**Matt**

When asked about what he liked about Royal Downs School, Matt's answers could be troubling to educators in England, who want to be rated well in academic standings. He said, "You don't have to revise a lot. The subjects are a lot easier, and you can just learn them in the lessons." Because the lessons in England are easier for Matt, I asked him his opinions on the teaching that he received. He was more critical than the other student participants. Some teachers he enjoyed, and some he felt were slightly incompetent. As did Sara and Stephen, he placed some blame on students.

He said:

Some of them are good teachers, but the students usually hold them back. There are usually three or four students that don't actually do the work. They just annoy the teacher, who can't do anything about it like they did in Hungary. So the teachers just carry on or send them to another class.

I asked Matt to describe some specifics of lessons that he felt were properly done and some that he felt were improperly done. He mentioned science at Royal Downs as needing improvement. He commented that:

I don't think the science department is good, because they don't teach you anything. A normal hour of science would be me talking to people. What the teacher usually does is give us a book and tells us to write notes about this page or that page, but you don't actually learn anything through that. The classes are messy, and there are groups of people just sitting around talking to each other. There isn't real instruction all the time. I have two teachers. The woman teacher is quite similar to the guy teacher, but she actually tries to teach us. She's not just

like, “do this,” and then he will just tell us the answers. He sits there, and then after fifteen minutes, he just tells us the answers. We don’t actually have to do any work, because he just tells us.

### **John**

Of the aspects that John preferred over his former school in Hungary, John cited that:

It is more modern [in England]. We get to go on computers. We have smart touch boards that we can use. We used blackboards and stuff at my old school. There was also a much bigger playground than in Hungary. It’s also much bigger and we have to wear uniforms.

I asked John about his experience with his teachers in England compared to those in Hungary. He mentioned art, drama, and history as being his favorite subjects, because his teachers “don’t shout” at him, and it was a more caring environment. If he could give advice to the teachers of England when teaching newly arrived foreign students, John’s advice was that teachers should “pay more attention to them and give them more help than the others.”

Like the other students who had positive comments of the teachers at Royal Downs, James said, “Teachers are very helpful and nice,” while Michelle said, “All my teachers help me a lot.” Some of the strategies that the siblings have noticed teachers using were “giving us easier work in the first days when we come to school, simpler instructions,” “helping extra with homework,” and “translating on a computer.”

Michelle still required assistance from Suzanne in lessons, but James and Victor were mostly independent of learning support assistants. At the beginning of their time at

Royal Downs, they all had a learning support assistant, Mrs. Donovan, who had no language skills other than English. “She was with us in some lessons, and we went to her a lot,” said Michelle. “She would teach us in English, which was very helpful,” commented James. Mrs. Donovan’s role was to “help understand and explain what was happening in a very short way that we could understand,” said James.

While Victor, James, and Michelle might give the impression that they were progressing well, I found that what the teachers said about the sibling’s integration and performance differed greatly.

Mary stated:

There is a family in school at the moment that has been here two years, and is finding it very hard. Their English is quite good, but the school life in general has not been a pleasant experience. There are three of them in the same family, and they tend to stick together. They are often not in school. Whether those are genuine illnesses or illnesses related to the stress they are feeling, I’m not sure, but they’re having an unhappy experience.

To corroborate the teacher perception, Harry said that immigrant students have a difficult experience, especially if they do not start at the school in year seven, when most of the friendship groups are formed. He said:

I think if they don’t start in year seven, especially if they start later, perhaps two or three years down the line, the friendship groups are formed. It’s very difficult to see when I’m walking across the playground at lunchtime. For example, we have a couple of Polish lads, and I always see them eating their lunch outside

together with each other, with nobody else. In general, I don't think their experience in school is a positive one.

### **Social Matters**

Being immigrant students and arriving with little ability to speak English, the students all faced a struggle to become communicative and create social relationships with peers.

Stephen discussed some of the social difficulties he had encountered in his time in the school. These difficulties were similar among all student participants. With regards to some of his communication barriers, which all participants experienced, he said:

Some subjects are very difficult, but also friends. It is difficult to find some friends. I've got some friends, but it's sometimes difficult to speak with them.

Sometimes I don't understand them, so I can't talk with them.

Sara provided detail about her social experiences in her new home. She transitioned into Royal Downs School successfully, but had experienced continuous social issues, one of which was her loneliness and isolation from the student body. While at home in the Czech Republic, Sara said she was a different person than she was in England. She was part of a popular group within the school, and she was happy and outgoing. She also claimed that the school's social environment in England was much harsher than that in Czech, because many students in the school would reach out to those on the outside, to try and bring them into the collective environment of the students. Instead, she noticed instances of bullying against non-British students, such as Victor and James.

In contrast to her former school experience, she now understood how it felt to be an outsider. Like Stephen, she explained, “It’s difficult to find new friends. In Czech, I was very popular and now I am out of the collective. Yes, people talk with me, but it’s not like friends who would ask me to go out with them or go to a cinema or swimming.”

By missing the social life of most of the community’s youth, Sara turned inward to a life of electronic correspondence to keep her social life active. When asked if she was able to keep in touch with her friends in the Czech Republic, she answered, “Yes, on Facebook, but you know I am not so happy [in England], because I had a really good life in Czech and then I had to move, so it’s difficult.”

Instead of talking with her friends in person and interacting with locals in her new location, Sara attempted to maintain contact through Facebook. In comparing both situations, she distinguished them by saying, “It’s quite different because when we were in Czech, a lot of times outside or be out or at home and talking, but here I’m just sitting on Facebook and writing with my friends.”

With regards to her British peers, Sara noticed a distinct barrier between native and non-native English speakers:

She said that:

They are nice to us. They will say hi, but if I’m talking with them for a few minutes, they quickly find someone else to talk to. It’s easier to talk with someone who can speak English than someone who is a foreigner.

She lamented the situation, and said that it was rare that someone would come to her and start a conversation. They were acquaintances, but not true friends, like Sara knew in Czech. Of her acquaintances in England, she reflected:

It's maybe that a lot of people are friendly with me, but it's not to the point of real friends, because in Czech I was with friends and talking with them and they also come to me and talk with me. Here, I have to always talk with them. They never come talk with me. I ask them how they are, and they answer me, "yes, good, I'm good, thank you, how are you?" and that's the end of the conversation.

John said he had a decent social circle in England, but his social experience was not without struggle. He seemed reluctant to discuss his experiences in detail, but a concern of John's was bullying, and the feeling that bullies targeted him because he was from a different country, similar to how Sara feels that Victor and James were targeted because of their immigrant status. Without identifying names, he thought of a few students who regularly bullied him. He explained his experiences with bullies over the years:

People avoid me because I'm foreign. Sometimes when I try to have a conversation with them, they tell me to go away. They say that since I'm Hungarian, I'm embarrassing them. They can tell from my name mostly. They know my name and it's easy to see that it's not a normal English name. They always bully me with jokes. They ask me where I'm from, and I say Hungary, and then they say, "what, you want to eat?" and stuff like that. I really hate that. It happens in form, lunch, and when I walk past them going to subjects. There are a lot of people in my form who don't like me because I'm foreign. I mention it to my form tutor, but my form tutor just says, "don't do that." That's it. That's all they do. Every teacher.

Matt, who had been in England for four years and spoke fluent English, felt right at home and expressed no social concerns. The transition, remembered by Suzanne, was not pleasant for some time. She said, “It was a long fight. He was very angry and didn’t want to move.” Looking back on his move, and his adjustment, Matt said that, “Now it’s all fine and I actually wouldn’t want to move back to Hungary. The school there is much more difficult, and I actually live here now. I probably have more friends here than in Hungary.”

Michelle, Victor, and James were reluctant to discuss their social lives outside of school. Our conversation was more academic in nature. They mentioned having a few Polish-speaking friends in town.

### **Additional Small Group Work**

During the last few weeks that I spent in Royal Downs School, I was worked with a small group of immigrant students alongside Suzanne to assist with their English class work. The students were Stephen (the Czech participant), Raul, a student from Portugal, and Christina, a student from Brazil. All were in year 10. Christina had additional learning difficulties besides being non-English speaking, and was given a mother tongue assessment upon arrival at Royal Downs.

The reason for forming this small group was that their English teacher had decided that three students were not coping well, and needed to be taken out of their English lessons for the rest of term, which was five weeks. In our interviews, Stephen said that English was one of his favorite lessons and his English teacher was his favorite teacher. This teacher excluded Stephen, Raul, and Christina, from regular English lessons for five weeks.

## **Teachers Interview Results**

### **Linda**

Linda had been a teacher for over twenty years within the physical education department at Royal Downs School. She had served as a PE teacher, an assistant (deputy) year head, a key stage two (years 3-6) and key stage three (years 7-9) coordinator, and a curriculum transition coordinator. She also coordinated staff inset (professional development) days and lead the GCSE dance program for year 10 and 11 students.

### **Harry**

Harry had been teaching for 13 years and had been with Royal Downs School for 11 Years. At the time of this study, he was an “assistant head teacher involved in student progress, student tracking, and improving the overall attainment of the students.” He was crucial to the development of diversity awareness within the school and had led the school by receiving the International School Award through the British Council. With regards to the goals of his international school award, Harry stated:

Let’s look inside and make sure that people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and who are becoming adults in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, let’s let them know and make sure they know that we’re living in a global world and in a global community. They [students] need to know about different cultures, about different people, and have empathy with different people around the world. The likelihood is that in their adult life, they will experience that. That is what the international school award is about. It’s about making sure that we make time for that on our curriculum and we do these

things, sometimes little, but that we do them often to promote a global dimension within the curriculum.

### **Mary**

Mary had been present at Royal Downs School for seven years with the special education needs (SEN) department. She started as a learning support assistant and served in that role until the opportunity arose to teach the year 7, foundation group. The foundation group was a group of year 7 students who were identified by their primary schools as having difficulty transferring into a secondary setting due to a variety of learning needs, emotional disorders, or behavioral issues. I became acquainted with Mary during my time with the school, because I taught the year 8, foundation group that she had taught the year prior to my arrival.

### **Suzanne**

Suzanne was a Hungarian teacher who taught for three years in year's six-ten in Hungary before moving to the United Kingdom with her family in 2006. Upon arrival in the UK, she acquired a special needs teaching assistant position in 2008. She worked in that position for two years until being hired at Royal Downs School in January 2010.

Her role was to oversee and support 14 students who were registered within the school as EAL students in need of support in lessons. In addition to being present in lessons, Suzanne provided a form of emotional support for her students in their time of integration. Suzanne was a capable person to serve within that role, because she knew the difficulty in leaving a familiar setting, moving to a new country, and learning a new language.

## **Themes of Data**

Based on the coded data, the major recurring themes among teacher participants included the learning needs of immigrant students, student social challenges, personal instructional strategies, professional development needs, an integration program, and areas of improvement. Teacher participants closed his/her interview by giving their general mission statement concerning their teaching of immigrant students.

## **Learning Needs of Immigrant Students**

Immigrant students who move to a new country will have a difficult time adapting to their new environment. All teacher participants agreed on this point and offered their own insights about the learning needs of immigrant students that they had taught over the years.

### **Linda**

Linda's extensive experience as a physical education teacher gave her a broad perspective when viewing the needs of immigrant students. When asked about their learning needs, Linda identified her concern of teaching her students from other countries. She stated that their most extensive learning needs were:

Being able to understand if English becomes their second language. Also, understanding all the little faux pas and all the little tiny innuendo's where you probably wouldn't think twice about it and it could have a totally different meaning. Or, perhaps they couldn't find it in the dictionary and they're trying to work out what you might mean by that.

In response to this need, Linda developed a pragmatic method of reaching EAL students in her PE classes. She realized that because some students could not understand her words, they took more notice of her body and her actions. Thus, she adopted a visual approach to her teaching. She stated:

They are looking very much at your body language, so I do a lot of visual teaching. I also do a lot of kinesthetic stuff as well. They are learning by doing as well as by seeing. It's a lot of demonstration, so it's much more so than actually speaking, because they can see it happen. They can put it into their own language or their own understanding.

### **Harry**

Harry was a head teacher at Royal Downs School and dealt with issues that many teachers never have to see. When asked about the unique learning needs of immigrant students, Harry discovered a problem he had not really considered before. He stated:

Unique learning needs revolve heavily around language. I have not really noticed any cultural issues [in the classroom]. Maybe because...and this is a fairly sweeping generalization I'm going to make, but if they come from areas where English is therefore a struggle for them, they will come from educational backgrounds which are more firm and strict than ours, and so they tend to not have experienced what we'll call liberalized or progressive education. Many of the times, when I've spoken with students who come from abroad, they often have said some of the things they have found new or strange is the fact that people can talk, people can put their hand up to ask and answer questions, they can work in groups and they can do things like discussions and debates. In particular, when

talking about students who come across from Africa, they are used to being in rows to be a sponge to soak up information. That's the way they are taught, in a very didactic way. They're not really used to learning in the way that we do, although I think I've sort of contradicted myself there. In the first instance, I said there wasn't really a cultural problem, but actually, yes there is, because I do tend to see them being very reserved and very introverted to start with. I'm sure that's also a product of being very worried about their new surroundings and especially if English isn't their first language. I've totally contradicted myself, but I'm glad I did.

### **Mary**

When prompted to give her opinion on the unique learning needs of immigrant children, Mary stated:

The obvious need is the one of language, but I think the one that is easiest to overlook is the cultural change, from the very basics of what's acceptable towards school, what's an acceptable attitude sometimes towards women teachers, to peer groups, to authority in general can be very different in their ordinary home situation or the school's they have gone to before.

In addition to indicating the language learning needs of immigrant children, Mary also stated, "Because they don't have the language to articulate that when they first arrive, it's almost like an invisible disability that they have." In the early stages when students were learning English, they were not able to make language connections or express themselves clearly. The inability to communicate could cause a student to cease attempting to communicate. A disability is defined as "a physical or mental impairment

that substantially limits one or more major life activities,” (The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2008) and while language barriers are challenging they can be temporary, and should not be classified as disabilities. It is interesting to note the language used by the teacher as she made pedagogical sense of this challenge. These students’ language barriers, which certainly provided challenges, impaired their communication activities within their school day until they became more comfortable with the language.

In addition to the learning need of language, Mary expanded with an additional problem that she had seen within the Special Education Needs Department at the Royal Downs School. This problem was that:

Students come in whose primary need is English-as-an-additional-language, but it becomes evident that there is also a learning need there, such as dyslexia, and that is very difficult for us to assess so we’ve had to make special arrangements for them to be tested in their mother tongue [as was done with Christina], because again it depends on what school they’ve come from as to whether those facilities were available when they were in primary school.

### **Suzanne**

Having moved to the UK from Hungary, Suzanne said she noticed a difference in student behavior, some of which was very offensive to her, because she was used to a “more old fashioned” system in Eastern Europe. According to her, “It was a huge difference to teach over there and then be a teacher here,” because “the students behavior

is totally different.” Suzanne expanded on her experiences coming into the British school system:

They are more respectful [in Eastern Europe]. They would never dare to be rude to a teacher. Ever. It was a shock to me when a student just said, “go away from me you stupid idiot!” I was just thinking, “oh my god, what is this?”

I noted to Suzanne that this was a censored comment compared to what I’ve had said to me in classrooms, and she agreed that she was being polite for the recording. She went on to say that:

It was a shock. And how they behave in the classroom sometimes! It’s just totally different [from Eastern Europe]. At home, there are 30 or 32 students in a class with no teaching assistants at all. This type of job [teaching assistant] does not exist. There is some misbehavior as well, but it is easy to control them more than here in England. There are so many behavior issues and it’s not fair to the others who really want to learn.

Suzanne experienced culture shock coming into the classrooms of England, much in the same way that I had experienced the previous year. The main issues that we had to adapt to were student tracking and behavior differences. She and I both had difficulty accommodating the differences between our previous work experiences and that of Royal Downs School.

I asked if she felt the inappropriate behavior issue affects the students with whom she directly worked. “Oh Definitely,” was her response. When I asked how she dealt with this behavior issue, she said “Sometimes, I just take them out of the lesson to work with them separately, because it’s noisy when the others are misbehaving.” I witnessed her

take Stephen out of a lesson to place him in a quieter environment. The greatest difficulty with her students was that “if you are studying in another language, it is necessary to concentrate two or three times harder anyway, and they just try to understand what the teacher says. They can’t focus on their work.”

Suzanne also provided emotional support to her students on a daily basis. With regards to other teachers, she said:

I think that the good teachers really try to understand the emotional side of the situation first of all. I really can’t say enough that these students are in a really difficult situation. Most of them didn’t want to move here. It was not their decision; it was their parent’s decision. I still have two or three who didn’t want to move here and still don’t want to be here. Maybe they need a bit more attention from the teacher when I’m not in the lesson.

During this research project, I observed Suzanne interacting with her students. She had a fantastic relationship with them, but she was limited in the time she had available to spend with each student. At Royal Downs School, she was the only member of staff specifically assigned to EAL and immigrant students.

I asked her to describe the emotional support she extended to students, and her reasoning was influenced by personal experience. “You lose all your friends, your family; It’s very difficult,” she responded. Like the MEP program advisors in the United States, she had been in the same situation as the students, and could share that challenging experience with them. Suzanne extended her support to them outside of the classroom as well, if needed. She said:

I try to be there for them anytime if they need me. If they feel lonely, sad, or neglected, they can come to me. They have a little card with my email address and they can exit their class with the card if they need to. They do come.

She and her students shared the same goal of learning the language in an English speaking society. She said that when she arrived in the country, people would become frustrated with her and she would have to communicate in whatever way she could. “It makes you feel dumb!” she said. She tried to help the students’ progress as quickly as possible with their English skills.

Further, the need of vocabulary was Suzanne’s most pressing concern for her students. Suzanne and Mary both mentioned that due to the specialized vocabulary presented to students in subjects such as chemistry, biology, mathematics, or history, as well as the extensive descriptive vocabulary present in novels that students read for English class, the amount of words students are exposed to on a daily basis was vast.

Royal Downs had several students who were raised in foreign countries, and were raised with English speaking parents. These students would grow up bilingual, and:

There is nothing wrong with their speaking because mum or dad is English, but if they went to an Italian school and learned everything in Italian, then they won’t know the specialized vocabulary, only the very basic words that they might say at home.

I asked Suzanne to elaborate on problematic subject specific vocabulary.

She explained:

I went to a maths lesson with a little girl in year seven. She was sitting next to me and wasn’t doing any work. I said to her ‘Do you understand me? Do you

understand this?’ and she said, ‘Yes, yes I do miss.’ I said, ‘you understand what an even number is?’ and she said, ‘Oh...no.’ Then, after I explained to her what it meant, she knew it. She just didn’t know the words ‘odd and even.’ Imagine when the teachers start saying words like ‘equilateral,’ ‘socialism,’ ‘longitude,’ or ‘hypotenuse.’

### **Student Social Challenges**

In addition to learning needs, Harry was also empathetic regarding foreign students’ difficulty with social integration. When asked about their attitude during adjustment, which greatly influences student happiness and ability to learn, Harry described the difficult social situations that immigrant children face. He said:

It varies between each student. Generally, I think they find it very difficult. I think that’s human nature. Picked up and plunked into a new school, new culture, [and] possibly a new language. This is a very big school, the largest age 11-16 school in the county. I think especially if they don’t start in year seven, if they start later, perhaps two or three years down the line, the friendship groups are formed. It’s very difficult to see when I’m walking across the playground at lunchtime.

Harry provided an example of a girl (Christina), with whom I worked during small-group tutor sessions with Suzanne. Harry stated:

We also have a girl from Brazil, who is such a sweet girl. Her English, when she arrived two years ago, was nonexistent. Now her English is really good. When you talk to her, she’s so happy to talk to you in English, but she has no friends. When it comes to lunchtime, she’s always on her own, sitting on a bench

somewhere, alone, eating her sandwiches. In general, I don't think their experience in school is positive. Sadly, I don't think it's as good as it could be.

Suzanne had an interesting perspective when working with her immigrant students, being an immigrant herself. Similar to Migrant Education Program workers in America, Suzanne had immigrated to the United Kingdom from Hungary, and had to learn the English language from scratch, so she empathizes fully with her language-learning students. Some of the main concerns Suzanne had regarding the learning needs of her students were: a) confidence; b) behavior of other students; c) emotional support; and d) vocabulary. Regarding the confidence level of her students, Suzanne said that:

Every student is different. Some of them speak very good English, but are not confident. There is one year 10 girl, who is bilingual, and she hasn't got any language problems, but her confidence needs to be built up. She finds it difficult to find friends. She's very quiet and shy. When I go to her maths lesson, it's not really because of the language, it's to build up a relationship with her and give some TLC.

### **Instructional Strategies**

One of the goals of this research was ask teachers what types of instructional strategies they have used to accommodate the unique learning needs of immigrant students. Each teacher participant reflected upon their experiences working within diverse English schools.

All teacher respondents stated that successfully acquiring the English skills necessary to function in school was the greatest obstacle to success among students they had taught. When asked about unique learning needs, Harry, a social sciences teacher

with more than ten years of experience stated “unique learning needs revolve heavily around language.”

### **Linda**

Linda emphasized the strategy of clarity in her PE lessons. Having had experience with a dyslexic daughter at home, she looked at the world of education a bit differently.

Linda said:

I would always make sure I’ve got the key words clearly up on the board, as I would do with any child. If I need to spend time sitting with somebody, then I will do that. I do that naturally anyway. The door is always open at the end of the day, and I know that some of them will come back. We’ll sit down and look at things. If they’re not quite sure what a word is in the dictionary, we’ll find a different word for it, because in the English language, there are many different meanings.

### **Harry**

As a teacher leading a diversification movement, Harry tried to be aware of the needs of his immigrant students. I asked him to react to the idea that “teachers have less positive attitudes toward dialect speaking students and lower expectations about their abilities and performance.” He said:

My heart says no. My head would suggest that the fact that it’s just more difficult, and as a teacher it is more difficult, and they have greater needs in terms of time. Since, they are more demanding on a teacher’s time, it makes me think that even if the answer isn’t a clear “yes,” then the perception from the student will be yes. They think that, “I’m sitting here, s/he knows I’m struggling, that I’m not very

good at English, and s/he's not helping me." I can see where the perception of the student might be that there is a more negative outlook to them. I think that if you see them as a challenge and you have empathy with their situation, you'll actually go out of your way to help them hugely more than you would do other students within the group.

I asked Harry how a teacher could make a student feel useful and a part of the classroom without undue demands on a teachers' time and taking away from the time spent with the rest of the students. A strategy he used was:

I taught one of the Polish lads when he arrived here in year nine. He joined a middle band [mid-ability placement] group. I would set the work and explain the work. He was sat next to someone who was trusted, had a good work ethic, who was sensible, and when there were whispered conversations between the two of them, that was taken as that there was help going on there. There was no pressure there as far as classroom management for them. So I sat him in what I considered to be the best place for him. As soon as the others were working, I would go and sit on the other side of him and make sure that he was clear, that they were both clear. I had them working like a little team.

### **Mary**

As a teacher of a foundation [bottom tracked] class, Mary taught the lowest end of ability levels in Britain. Many of her students over the years had been from other countries, and all of her students had specific learning needs, behavioral problems, or emotional difficulties. Like Linda, she emphasized visual strategies in her teaching.

When asked about her recommended strategies for teaching immigrant youth with language, emotional, behavioral, or other learning needs, she said:

The obvious thing that I would do first is that my teaching and learning would be very visual. I say things and back that up with a picture, a gesture, or an action, or I hold up the item in question so it's clear of my meaning. That doesn't deal with the cultural side of things or the social side of things. That's much harder. It's difficult to get a grip with that until their English is better. Or, another way to do it is, if there is another student in school who speaks the same language, you can work through things with the other student as translator.

Mary was aware of the problems that could result from a lack of understanding between the student and the school. Regarding the consequences from a breakdown in communication, Mary stated:

I think there are a lot of misunderstandings and the risk is that the student will find it so hard to explain themselves that they *stop* trying to explain, and then they just stop engaging in the lesson or don't engage socially with their peers until their spoken language has improved. I think it's quite a lonely time for them, potentially.

Placement of students within a classroom can be a difficult maneuver for teachers, because the dynamics of the class can change quickly. Mary, Harry, and I shared a preferred strategy of having student buddies within the classroom. There were considerations to make regarding each student, and with immigrant students, Mary said:

I think you have to be sensitive to their culture, whatever your understanding of their culture is. You've got to be sensitive to the dynamics of them fitting into

your classroom. Any new student might struggle to find friends, but they've got it stuck against them to do that. You have to have patience and respect for them and hope that the other students follow that example so that you don't stop trying to explain just because they don't understand the first time. Maybe consider buddy-ing them up with someone who you think will be patient with him or her. But you need to bear in mind that you don't want the work of the English-speaking student to suffer because they have to constantly explain. I think that is a strategy that a lot of teachers use; sit them next to somebody that they know is on task and interested.

Because Mary had an understanding of the needs of immigrant students, I asked if there was a specific program within the school aimed at cultural integration and home communication. As Suzanne said, school and home communication was very important, and often was neglected. The possible idea of a communication program could make it a full-time job to communicate effectively between schools and home, while employing qualified local citizens who are culturally diverse and multilingual. Regarding the existence of such a program, Mary said:

I'm not sure that there is one. I know there are people trying very hard to do that on an individual basis with a family and one particular student as they come in. It tends to seem as if you are never going to get anywhere at all, because their language is so slow, and then suddenly, after a couple of terms, it's really good. Then you can look more to the cultural side of things. Certainly in the lessons that I have, some staff are very good at talking about the cultures as something, in England, that is important to everyone.

**Suzanne**

As the only person in the school charged with looking after the well being of immigrant students, Suzanne had some suggestions for working with these students. She suggested that “a differentiation might be to give separate work” for EAL students. Her major suggestion meant more English instruction. She said:

I would give them more language support. I mean extra English lessons. Start from the beginning, start from the very bottom to teach the language first. Keep the main subjects, but give additional language support for at least the first year.

I asked her if she felt this extra English could come at the expense of one or two elective courses, and she said, “I think so, but it’s just my opinion. All subjects are important, but the first year the students really need extra language support. It’s also important to learn special vocabulary for each subject.”

**Professional Development**

In a large school with several hundred staff members, instructional consistency was crucial in order to give the students a consistent program that they can expect from all teachers. With built in professional development days in the calendar, the school had the opportunity to effectively, and consistently, train staff about differences that might arise when teaching immigrant students.

**Linda**

When asked how effective the school was in helping the immigrant students achieve, Linda stated, “They will try their hardest, as they will with any of the kids,” but then she also said, “Policies are in place, but whether or not they are implemented

effectively is another matter. We are not consistent enough.” I asked Linda to explain the barriers of implementing lasting change. She said that “the barriers being able to be led from above” have hindered the progress she would like to see. Linda wants “things that everyone is happy with, a base that people can actually work from.”

Most schools have some sort of professional development in place for their teachers. Since education is constantly changing, this training is necessary. Much of this professional development typically consisted of a speaker coming to school, speaking with teachers, and then departing, leaving the teachers with little practical help. Teachers, who could not see the purpose of what they were just told, tended ignore the session. When asked about how the school managed the learning among new immigrant students, Linda stated, “We’ve had training, though it doesn’t seem to be particularly high profile.” She also stated that:

The training we had was somebody who came in, and we had about half a day, but it probably wasn’t even that long. We were given strategies that we could use that we should try to use and emphasize. But, when it’s tacked onto the end of a very busy day, it’s there, it’s been done, a box has been ticked, but is it being followed up? It’s like most things that tend to happen within a busy school. Yes, we should be aware of it, but how many of us actually remember it and remember to use it? It’s not embedded.

I asked Linda how it affected the students when schools did not follow-up on programs that were available to make the education of these students better. She likened it to a “typical British attitude” saying:

We haven't got a huge immigrant intake, but we've got a person who works with them and looks after them. How many of us are really aware of what goes on and what she does with them? I would say very, very few. A student comes into a classroom and the teacher is told, "Oh, be careful, or be aware that they will be very shy, because they haven't got any English." It's just a matter of the typical British attitude. Dumped in the middle, jump into the frying pan, and get on with it. Or burn.

When asked if she felt this system could use some modification for the benefit of the students, Linda replied, "it certainly could." She further stated:

It has to be led from the top. They don't have to do the work, but they have to be supportive and lead and say, "Okay, we want this done." Also, governance has to ask those questions, "is this happening?" There has got to be accountability, there has got to be quality assurance. We are not consistent enough. It's consistency and the barriers being able to be led from above.

### **Mary**

Mary also had a few suggestions regarding professional development. After stating that, with regards to many Eastern European, Asian, and Muslim cultures, "I think we probably don't know very much about them; I certainly feel I don't know much about them," I asked Mary how cultural training worked, which was geared at educating the staff about the existing ethnicities within the school. She said that:

I'm sure cultural training would be beneficial. It could be a relatively short bit of information that you can read through and say, "this is how the family structure

tends to work in these countries, this is how the students are expected to behave in school in these countries, etc.”

Language was a substantial barrier between new immigrant students and their teachers. Mary had a separate professional background in nursing, in which she remembered:

A huge number of women from other countries who came in, and we [nurses] had to learn some basic vocabulary to look after those people. Maybe teachers should have to learn a few words in Polish and the other languages present within this school. Examples would include “do you understand?” which could be useful and meaningful to students. I think it might be useful learning some key phrases for teaching staff to have and just some information gathering about those students so that can be shared with the teaching staff.

Even knowing two phrases in a few different languages could easily help reduce the gap that teachers feel between them and their immigrant students. When told about Suzanne’s suggestion of having specialized vocabulary cards for different subjects and various languages, Mary was supportive, saying:

I think that would be very useful, because you almost need the equivalent of a subject dictionary, either with images to go with the English word or with the word in their language to go with the English word. Although that is an awful lot of work at the outset, particularly if it’s just images and the English word, you can use that for any language, can’t you? It would take hours to do, but once it’s done, you’ve got it forever.

## **Integration Program**

Harry and Mary suggested the possibility of developing an integration program specifically designed for immigrant and English-learning students. They acknowledged the difficulty in setting up such a program, but were enthusiastic about the idea.

Harry stated he “[doesn’t] think it’s as good as it could be.” I asked for some suggestions of what he could offer for improvements. His “holding cell” idea sounded confining in name, but he admitted that this term was “for lack of a better word.” He said:

That would be fantastic if we had the facility and the funds to have a small class, almost like, for lack of a better word, a “holding cell.” When students start, they come in, and they have work, and they work at their own pace, and they’re assessed to see whether they go straight into a normal classroom or whether they stay in a holding classroom with somebody who is experienced in these issues. Maybe they wait a week, maybe a month, maybe six months before they go into normal classes.

I asked Harry what sort of elements could be on a scheme of study for a program like that, and he said:

I think English is the key, but I also think that English is a fantastic medium for exploring other things that they will really find useful, such as the culture of homework at this school, how the school works, extracurricular activities, how parents evenings work, etc. You could use English as a medium to find out about the school. This will lead to their experience of the school being better and would help deal with issues that would or could crop up. Maybe something like that

could be a part-time withdrawal. They're not there 100% of the time so that they're totally out of it.

Harry expressed concern over the scheduling of immigrant students into the mainstream curriculum. In the UK, secondary students were required to take foreign language study within school, which Harry, Linda, and Mary expressed as being an area of concern to them. Harry commented that:

Maybe you don't throw them right into modern languages or maybe you don't throw them into geography and history. They go into the core subjects and then they spend some quality time learning about the school, we get quality school time finding out about them and their abilities, and they progress in their English. I think that would be a terrific idea. The money situation is always going to be the issue there. Additionally, the person running the program would be key. Their level of experience, empathy, and how they could engage with and relate to these students would be absolutely crucial.

While Harry suggested keeping newly arrived immigrant students out of lessons for up to six months for a period of adjustment, Mary also suggested an integration and evaluation program. When asked if she were in charge of handling the integration of immigrant students into Royal Downs School, Mary said:

It might be worth considering that the first week those students are in school, they don't even go to lessons. We'd take them through some absolute basics about life in school and some key vocabulary, some explanations of how things work here, and only then are they integrated into lessons. I know that there are some places

where they have a large number of immigrant students where they do that for quite a few weeks.

While Harry suggested keeping the students either fully out of lessons, out of a few lessons, or merely screening their level before placing them, for upwards of six months, Mary was more reserved about the reality of such an integration program actually taking place. She said:

I don't think that's something we can realistically do, but maybe a week. Give them some background information, make sure they understand what the bell ringing means, all of those things that students who have grown up in this system automatically know.

If such a program were to take place, it could be heavily influenced by the Noddings "curriculum of caring," (Noddings, 2003, p. 32) while also incorporating aspects of the Migrant Education Program (2009) and Culture Share Club (2008) in the United States. Further, immigrant staff, within the school contributed to an awareness of the challenges that immigrant students faced concerning the acquisition of language. This places teachers in a position where their personal experiences contributed to an empathetic environment to enhance both the school and student environment, planned curriculum, and outcomes; thereby, contributing to a successful program.

### **Areas for Improvement**

The other goal was to discuss with teachers the types of mistakes that were being made, and how the school could improve in its handling of immigrant student experiences. Teacher participants within this study were forthcoming with ways in which

the school could almost immediately improve in their handling of immigrant student needs.

### **Linda**

When asked about tracking and the awareness of students regarding their placement, Linda gave an example of the self-deprecating attitude that lower set children have of themselves. She said:

Children in general are very aware of where they are. They are aware of who they are, where they are, and whatever they can be from the age of eight. A lot of it does affect their behavior. They're not really informed of where they are. Kids in PE say to me, "Oh, we're the bottom set," and I tell them, "actually, no, you're not the bottom set, it's just that the best of you have been creamed off the top for different subjects, and the rest of you are mixed ability." Yes, some of them will be from lower sets. They like to call themselves the bottom groups. They think of themselves like that.

Placing immigrant children in a crowded system with many other children with individual needs can be difficult, but Linda offered a solution:

You might have a bright immigrant coming in with nowhere to put them, and I think that's appalling. If there is nowhere to fit them, then they just have to go into this class or that class. I know it's difficult when there isn't enough room in the classroom. If you've got enough to make two top groups with more people coming in, then make two top groups. Don't make one a set two when the people in the set two deserve to be set one. Also, make sure that the teaching reflects the abilities of the children.

## Harry

In a large school, which has a comparatively small immigrant population, racially sensitive issues are bound to arise occasionally. Harry and the other administrators appeared to be adept at dealing with these issues quickly and openly. What he wants is that students:

Think this school is a population where the ethnic boundaries are fuzzy, where everyone mixes together. It's not a pocket of Asian lads here, Polish guys there, and Caribbean's on the other side. We want to spread the distribution among all ethnic groups and create a cosmopolitan mix that is living and being educated in harmony.

Harry referred to a recent example where these issues of race came directly to the forefront of issues when dealing with students. When schools undertake to educate themselves about other cultures, then we can only build our relationship with students in positive ways. Harry said:

I'm thinking at the moment of a little bunch of year 10 Pakistani boys. They have started to get themselves into a little bit of trouble. The common perception is that it's because we've had two brothers join the school, one in year 11, who seems to be fine, and a guy in year 10. The year 10 lad recently has been fairly conniving and a bit of a rebel leader when it comes to anti-school sentiment and saying that the school is racist. He constantly says, "We get blamed for everything." A fire alarm was set off and it turns out it was one of the Asian lads. In the course of investigating the fire alarm, accusations of us investigating them, because we allegedly blame them for everything, whereas when we looked at the camera, it

was clearly one of the Asian lads who did it. What we need to do is have that dialogue with all of the ethnic groups.

When these racial profiling issues started to occur more often, the school administrators enacted a community plan to open the lines of communication. The school administrators explored options for the future, including:

Mr. Randall has gotten in touch with the local mosque youth group. I'm not exactly sure how he is planning on integrating that into school, but I think he wanted to touch base with them, just to let them know that these are some issues that we've had and there is a few of the Pakistani students who are saying some things that we're not comfortable with, such as the school being racist. I think he's getting some advice from them, but I'm uncertain or how that is going to materialize. We have to treat it really carefully. As I said, we've got two or three of them in meetings regularly with Mr. Randall, the deputy head teacher, and the pastoral team. Together, they are talking through some of the issues so we've got a fairly good relationship building there.

### **Mary**

With regards to the ongoing handling of immigrant students and tracking their progress over time, Mary saw room for improvement. Although the population was small, she believed changes could occur to improve the situation:

We don't have a particularly high percentage of students with very little English when they arrive. I'm sure we could do better. We only have one dedicated member of staff for those students, and a lot of the things that she deals with are not directly related to learning. They're related to settling in school and in the

country. If you have two people doing that, then we would double our effectiveness immediately.

Additionally, Mary felt that it would be useful for someone to do more background research on students before they arrived.

It would be useful to know the school structure of where they've come from, maybe some key features of the culture, and maybe to know what they've studied before. We're always guessing where they are against our curriculum. Some of them will be ahead by a long way, particularly in maths and sciences, so to have some knowledge of how the school systems work in the countries that these students have come from would be nice. It would be lovely if teachers knew some key words in their languages. That might be a bit idealistic, but it's possible.

When asked what was one thing that she saw as a mistake that teachers constantly committed, she said:

The thing that I see most is simply repeating the same statement or question again and again without attempting to use any sort of visual cues. So they just say the same thing that they did before and the students look blankly, and often what happens then is the student just nods, or makes some noncommittal response.

### **Suzanne**

For Suzanne, the areas of needed improvement were related to her overcrowded timetable. She simply had too many students for her schedule. She said:

I am the only EAL assistant, so sometimes I feel as if I should be in two or three lessons. For lots of year 10 students, they have maths, history, and other main subjects at the same time. They all need me and I can't be in their lessons at the

same time. I've got two of them, a boy and a girl with learning difficulties, in year 10 who are the most needy ones. I have to decide which lesson I'm going to. The other school I worked in had 12 EAL learning support staff, but that was a more diverse school. We could maybe use two more EAL learning support assistants.

Suzanne and I shared a few of the same students, except that I worked at Royal Down School the year before she started. When I mentioned that one of my strategies for my Polish-speaking student was to translate my instructions via Google, she responded that:

I don't like to do that. In my experience, if you translate everything, the students won't learn the language. I don't want them to translate. When I have one-to-one lessons, I try to support them. They have a science exam in May and I'm doing one-to-one sessions with a year 10 boy. I try to explain things to him as simply as I can, but I don't translate it. Some words I allow him to find in his dictionary. I translate from English to English; only I make it as simple as I can. English is a fantastic language. You have lots of words that mean the same thing and it can always be broken down into more simple words.

Suzanne was unique among participants in the fact that she was an immigrant, a teacher, and a parent of one student participant, Matt. I asked Suzanne if the school was clear about communicating information to her during the integration of Matt into the school. She expressed a need for improving the communication between home and the school. She said:

I was worried a lot. I knew he didn't speak any English. We also didn't really know anything about the school system here. That was the other difficult thing

that was really difficult. I didn't know anything about differentiation, sets, or what was going on. I didn't understand why he was in different classes with different people. Nobody explained to us in the beginning. I think it's very important to keep contact with parents and just inform them. The education system is really different here than in Eastern European countries.

### **Mission Statements**

I concluded each interview by asking participant teachers what their mission was for their immigrant and EAL students. All teacher participants appeared passionate about the wellbeing of students, academically, emotionally, and socially. They all reflected upon their professional experiences in order to provide a quality education for students. From my experience as a teacher in an immigrant situation, I've come to believe the primary function of a school working with immigrant students should focus on language development in order for integration to occur. All approaches need to address the acquisition of language. If language skills improve, so will levels of student confidence, learning, happiness, and social success.

#### **Linda: Mission Statement**

My overall goal and mission is for them to achieve their potential, be happy, and be safe. We need to give them every opportunity they possibly can to achieve those three things. We need to give them support in order to do that.

#### **Harry: Mission Statement**

I'm tempted to say that the broad mission statement shouldn't differ from any other student. The means to actually achieve that is what is crucial here. The

support mechanisms needed to allow that to happen should be in place. We want everybody in this school to have a first-rate education and achieve their potential. We want the standard of teaching and the standard of learning to be first-rate and we want the students to *at least* achieve their potential. I don't think that this will differ for anyone coming in from anywhere else. The mechanisms needed to allow that to happen probably need sharpening up. We've got two jobs at this school. One is to make sure that [students] are fulfilling their potential and coming out of here with fantastic GCSE results. The second, which is just as crucial, is to make sure that they are well-rounded, decent human beings, able to play a valuable role in our society, in many different capacities. There is a whole multitude of things that go along with that. Learning about themselves, learning about their culture, and learning about different cultures are crucial.

**Mary: Mission Statement**

I want for the students to feel safe and happy within the school and to be given guidance and support to develop strategies and techniques that will allow them to access the academic and social opportunities available at school to their full potential.

**Suzanne: Mission Statement**

I want them to feel good in this country. I think that's important and they can come to enjoy learning the language. First, they have difficulties and it's very frustrating, but once they get better, I want them to enjoy speaking a second language. I want them to have an easy time making friends. I think that's

important to feel good and be there for them. They have to be here. They must live here, so my mission is to make them feel good about their lives here and to enjoy learning the language. If they don't feel good about their lives, then they won't make any progress.

### **Lesson Observations**

In order to triangulate data and more fully understand the educational environments of students and the professional environments of teacher participants, I observed several lessons in which Sara and Stephen were students. The purpose for the observations was to view what a normal classroom environment was like for EAL students when they do not have any EAL support, and how they seem to cope with being left on their own. I also wanted to see if what was being said during interviews was realistically happening. During the lessons I observed, there were no support staff members present to assist Sara and Stephen.

#### **Sara: Behavior, Buddy System, and Teacher Consistency**

A lesson I observed with Sara was year 10, set three English. During our interviews, Sara mentioned several times the disruptive nature of her classes, and I witnessed disruptions firsthand in the lessons I observed. The behavior was problematic. The classroom environment was immensely loud with students continuously talking over the teacher. There was literally not one moment of quiet where student volume was not competing with the teacher's voice.

Sara, who is a good English speaker, seemed, from my perception, to have difficulty in focusing on what the teacher was saying while attempting to filter class

noise. This excess noise contributed to an “invisible disability” of language, as Mary had mentioned. There were two students who were continuously disruptive. One girl yelled out continually until falling asleep. The other, a boy, repeatedly was out of his seat, turned around to talk to the people behind him (including Sara), put a bag over his head, and ignored the requests of the teacher to see her outside the classroom.

In accordance with the buddy system discussed by Harry, Sara sat next to a boy who was helpful to her. He kept checking with her and looking at her work to ensure that she understood. After class, the teacher complimented them as a team. In accordance with Harry’s system of placing EAL students next to well-mannered students, I agreed that putting Sara in that spot next to this student was a responsible teaching decision.

As much as I could tell, the teacher was consistently helpful to Sara. The teacher seemed to have empathy with Sara’s situation and regularly checked on her progress. These check-ups came at the expense of losing control of the volume of the class. When the teacher was sitting with Sara for upwards of a minute, the noise level in the classroom exponentially increased every time.

### **Stephen: Isolation, Behavior, Vocabulary, and Group Meetings**

During an interview with Stephen, he mentioned that his set-three business studies lesson was very difficult for him due to complex business vocabulary and the disturbances of other students. When I scheduled the observation, the teacher asked me if I could take notes and then forward any suggestions to her for ways to support Stephen in a way that was not currently being done. The following were my noted suggestions.

Within the lesson, Stephen sometimes had support from Suzanne. However, during the observed lesson, he was on his own with nobody seated next to him. In my

conversations with teachers Harry and Linda, they both noted the importance of the buddy system for all EAL students in order to provide them with a partnership with another student. In that instance, the data did not triangulate with school policies. To reconcile this inconsistency, I made several suggestions to the teacher, at her prompting. Stephen sat on the end of a row with one open seat next to him, presumably for Suzanne. However, if Stephen sat one seat over, he could have a partnership with a student to one side, and a seat for Suzanne on the other side. If Suzanne were absent, Stephen would still have a partner he could talk to about problems.

Second, I noticed that several students within the class were regularly disruptive. The students repeatedly interrupted the teacher when Stephen was trying to listen, and if these students could not refrain from shouting while the teacher explained instructions, Stephen would often miss details of what was expected from him for his assignment. He had to concentrate on English because he was continuously translating. The noise of the other students distracted from the translation process.

Third, Stephen often said that he understood when, in fact, it was not. In our interviews, I asked him if he understood what I meant, he said “yes,” and then when I asked him to re-explain, he could not. A suggestion would be to request him to explain what he thought the teacher meant. Teacher participant Mary also iterated this suggestion during her interview.

Next, because vocabulary was an issue, a suggestion would be to provide Stephen with vocabulary key terms list with simple definitions at the beginning of each unit. If a list was provided early, it would give the EAL students plenty of time to read it, try to

make sense of it, think of their own examples, and if needed, translate it into their first language.

Finally, a broad suggestion would be to meet with Stephen and Suzanne a few times each term. These meetings could be used to review key terminology and clarify concepts. Also, because Suzanne worked with Stephen regularly, this time could also be utilized to help her understand the concepts more thoroughly, so that when she reviewed with Stephen in a one-on-one situation, she would have a clear understanding of the concepts that she was explaining to Stephen.

### **Science**

In our interviews, Stephen mentioned the difficulty he often faced in science, because of vocabulary difficulties and student behavioral issues. I visited a science lesson with Stephen and Suzanne, but I feel that the day was exceptional, given that it was the day of the GCSE examination. The students were on task, working quietly, asking questions, and doing last minute revisions.

The revision topics were listed on the board. They were global warming, genetic engineering, in vitro fertilization, and female hormones. After 15 minutes of revision of the displayed topics, the class was given the opportunity to work in groups with the purpose of discussing and drafting answers to fabricated test questions.

I stayed in the class for 30 minutes, until Stephen and Suzanne left the room to work in a closed quarters environment. The class had a decent working environment, but there was conversation going on in the group discussions, so Stephen and Suzanne opted to work in another room. During the 30 minutes they were present in the room, they were

sitting side-by-side, discussing problems, laughing, and having a good time. She appeared to provide him with the learning support he needed.

After the observation, I discussed the class with Stephen and Suzanne, who both responded that, “It was so quiet!” They said this was not the way it normally was and that students were likely quiet because of their exam that day. They also mentioned that perhaps my presence had a quieting impact upon the class.

## **Chapter 5: Potential for Future Research and Suggestions**

### **Research Recap**

The purpose of this research was to examine the stories of Eastern European immigrant students in a secondary school (years 8-10) and their teachers in the greater London area of England to learn about their school experiences. Several questions focusing on transition, adjustment, and coping with academic and social integration, was asked of the student participants, while questions directed at teachers focused on their experiences teaching immigrant students, and the varieties of teaching strategies they personally used and recommended.

The key student components of this research focused on the reoccurring themes of language (learning multiple foreign languages, difficult subject-specific vocabulary), streaming (nearly unanimous in support of streaming structure), school concerns (behavior among peers, need for better school/home communication), and social concerns (loss of friendship groups, difficulty building relationships with peers). These components unanimously affected schooling experiences.

Among teachers, the key components of the research included the unique learning needs of immigrant students, student social challenges, instructional strategies (kinesthetic, expressions of empathy, student partnerships, visual approach, differentiated work, professional development needs (consistency, policy follow-up, subject-specific vocabulary resources, cultural training), an immigrant integration program (part-time withdrawal from some courses, English-intensive, explore culture), and areas for improvement (no ethnic social boundaries, ethnic community connections, expansion of EAL staff, improve school/home communication).

### **Potential for Future Research**

If I were to conduct this research again, I would continue with the same methodology. I found it to be a thorough, unobtrusive, and friendly way to conduct research and get to know participants. However, one major change for methodology would consist of pursuing the research for a longer period of time and gaining a more even gender ratio.

There are several other directions I would pursue as well. First, I would like to conduct a study entirely focusing on immigrant girls, and another focusing on immigrant boys. This study did not have equal numbers, with a 5:2 ratio of boys to girls. Individualized gender studies would be of interest for reasons suggested by Mary, such as girls having increased opportunity in cultures, such as England. Another reason would be to more clearly delineate the learning differences among boys and girls with respect to learning in a new school, language, and culture.

Second, if researching a topic involving immigrant students, I would pursue a more diverse school, perhaps as outlined in the interview with Suzanne, whose previous school was largely comprised of immigrant students. At 14% of enrollment, Royal Downs had many EAL and immigrant students, but in a diverse metropolis such as London, schools with 50% of enrollment would not be difficult to find. Some differences among these schools could be funding, curriculum availability, school safety, teaching quality, and social structures.

Third, another potential research prospect would address teachers directly and go into more depth studies investigating the development of future programs directed at integrating immigrant students into schools. Teachers in my study said that the immigrant

students in their school appeared unhappy much of the time, so a research framework could consist of developing a pilot program for a school specifically aimed at assisting immigrant students, with the goal of more specifically supporting the learning of immigrant students.

### **Suggestions for Royal Downs**

Based on what students and teachers said throughout the course of this research, I have suggestions to make regarding how Royal Downs could improve the experiences of their immigrant students.

### **Innovative Programming**

Schools should constantly develop their curriculum programming. Granted that it is known that English-language learning immigrant students have additional needs within the school, a school in diverse places, like London, should develop accommodation methods for immigrant students. These suggestions could be carried out quickly or over a period of years.

In my opinion the primary need of immigrant students should be to learn English before placing them into different foreign languages such as German or French. I agree with Linda, the physical education teacher, that when the students already speak another language that they should focus on learning English as well as possible. The purpose of school should not be to confound; the purpose of school should be to assist them.

The advantages of additional English instruction at the expense of a language, such as French or German, are profound. The students are living in a country where their social interactions will take place in English. If students continue to have difficulty

communicating, unhappiness and frustration will continue. They will have an easier time getting to know their peers, making friends, becoming aware of the workings of their new society, and understanding teachers for continual development in school.

Students need more language support, such as having extra English lessons. Teachers could start from the beginning to teach the language first. Teachers could keep the main subjects, but give additional language support for at least the first year of enrollment.

With regards to the students who were taken out of their English class for five weeks, I believe this strategy to be largely obstructive to their English abilities. While a small group approach is beneficial due to a small student to teacher ratio, this small group setting should not come at the expense of integrated English lessons, because students should have maximum exposure to learning the English language.

The students could still receive an hour of English instruction in a small group setting, which could be very effective, but it should not come at the cost of their English classroom experience. In the group, they were being taught English by an overworked learning support assistant who was not an English teacher or even a native English speaker. She had a full timetable, and had to add on top of her schedule, which sacrificed some other EAL students that she could be working with in lessons during that time.

Second, Harry and Mary's suggestion of an introductory class that teaches English from the basic foundation, teaches about the culture within the school, and familiarizes them to the school is a sound idea. As reported by Leung (2002), the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) was becoming more supportive of "the idea of partial withdrawal of ESL students from the mainstream for specialist English language

work seems to be regaining some legitimacy” (Leung, 2002, p. 94; OFSTED, 1998, 2001). Harry’s quote outlined the plan. He said:

That would be fantastic if we had the facility and the funds to have a small class, almost like, for lack of a better word, a “holding cell.” When students start, they come in, and they have work, and they work at their own pace, and they’re assessed to see whether they go straight into a normal classroom or whether they stay in a holding classroom with somebody who is experienced in these issues. Maybe they wait a week, maybe a month, maybe six months before they go into normal classes.

In the cases where teachers are unfamiliar and searching for ways to relate to their immigrant students, the study of Rance-Roney (2008) provided insight. When she said she “needed to take steps not only to support [her] two English language learners in their English acquisition, but also to invest all the students in creating a classroom culture that encouraged shared experiences...that legitimized all class members,” she exemplified a teacher willing to work harder to incorporate students who could be marginalized for quite some time (p. 19). All teachers could integrate immigrant students into their classes and help the student become part of the team atmosphere within the room.

I am generally supportive of this idea, but am aware that it would be more of a long-term future vision, and not something that could be easily implemented due to time, money, and structure. Two advantages of this specialized class could include, more direct English instruction, and the formation of a social circle of students who get to know each other by learning English together. It is possible that these relationships could be lifelong friendships built during a difficult time in their lives.

Third, most immigrant students carry a translating dictionary at school while learning the English language. They often cannot find words they need, due to the subject specific nature of the word. Words specifically mentioned include democracy, fractions, and latitude. Such words often cannot be found in conversational translating dictionaries or translation books. It would be helpful, as Mary explained, for students to have subject-specific vocabulary cards or other visual representations for personal use during revisions.

Mary was supportive, saying that:

I think that would be very useful, because you almost need the equivalent of a subject dictionary, either with images to go with the English word or with the word in their language to go with the English word. Although that is an awful lot of work at the outset, particularly if it's just images and the English word, you can use that for any language, can't you? It would take hours to do, but once it's done, you've got it forever.

Finally, Harry mentioned a strategy that should be made a school requirement with immediate effect. That strategy would consist of buddy work-teams for newly arrived immigrant students. Many teachers do it, but it was obviously not universally implemented within the school because I viewed Stephen sitting alone in a lesson. Often, students were left alone in lessons because of a shortage of EAL learning assistants. However, they could always have a student seated next to them to help. Such an effort would be best during the first three weeks of school, but there is no reason it cannot be enforced for longer periods of time while the students' English improves. It would be necessary to find a student within the class who was willing to work with a new student

and would not feel imposed upon by the strategy. Harry said that he finds someone “sensible,” and “responsible” in these situations.

### **Personnel**

During the interviews, participants mentioned how the school could develop in its professional structure and diversification of staff.

First, while speaking with Matt, I became more aware of the homogeneity of the staff at Royal Downs School. There were a few cultures represented, but the teaching staff was mostly white, British. While it would likely be difficult to recruit and hire immigrant teachers with the necessary British teaching qualifications, if such a candidate was made available, I believe that they should be given serious consideration. Similarly to the Migrant Education Program (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009) in the United States, hiring immigrant teachers could provide immigrant students with a person to talk to about their issues in their own language. When Matt arrived, he felt alone and he thought that if the school employed more staff members, learning support assistants, or community volunteers who speak additional languages, they might help future immigrant students feel less isolation.

Also, according to Mary’s suggestions, it could be helpful if teachers learned a few phrases in the various languages spoken by their students. I believe that such an effort would foster a student’s trust of that teacher, which could lead to a more expressive and open relationships. Examples would include “Do you understand?” or “Are you okay?”

The school and staff have had specific training in the past for cultural awareness, but could follow up with regular, specific training. For a culturally diverse school, this initiative should be important.

Finally, the only EAL-oriented staff member, Suzanne, was consistently overlooked. The importance of her role within the school was key. The students with which she worked spoke highly of her work. Leung (2002) reported a ratio of EAL student to EAL staff at 200:1 (p. 94). To improve on this ratio, there should also be at least another EAL-oriented staff member hired full-time to more fully support the students who need help in their lessons. By only having one EAL staff member, many of the students who need support aren't supported nearly as often as they should be. Suzanne expressed a need to add another teacher to double the effectiveness for student support. The school should consider hiring more learning-support assistants that focus on immigrant students.

### **Improved Communication**

During their first months in England, Suzanne and Matt said that they were unclear about the letters sent home because they were not differentiated at all from the letters sent to the rest of the English-speaking students. Letters could be changed into much simpler English wording or even a family's native language. As Linda and Suzanne mentioned, English can always be simplified.

Due to complex wording, my own research invitation letters were largely ignored for lack of understanding in relating my objectives to immigrant families. In order to facilitate clearer communication with immigrant families, the school should begin attempting to implement a system that would see, over the course of a few years, all

letters sent home customized to the necessary languages. Differentiation should be made, at least for the introductory months of school. Suzanne mentioned how she did not understand much of what was happening at school for some time and that the letters were not helpful to her as a newcomer.

If the school has any multilingual staff, administration could request a translated version of letters to be kept on file. It would be more work in an already busy environment, but the respect gained from immigrant families would justify the time spent.

Several students said they had experienced some negativity among the British students regarding their immigrant status. The school does a decent job of acknowledging cultures from around the world, but perhaps it should bring xenophobia more into the understanding of the student body. The citizenship class, required among years seven and eight, could be a possible venue for improved communication regarding the message of cultural awareness and acceptance.

## **Closure**

In conclusion, the mission statements of the teachers, which emphasized care and compassion, and the desire of the students to integrate into the system, learn, and be accepted, are key components of the total school experience. This research was a rewarding time for me as I learned of the experiences of these students and teachers. For myself, I have heard the students and will put into practice their suggestions. I have also heard my teacher colleagues, and I will attempt to implement their wisdom into my actions and identity as an educator. As human beings, our goals should be to always act for the better good of humanity in whatever capacity that fits within our work. As

participant James said, “Always help.” It is a simple and easy ideal to adopt. Teachers are well placed to influence the lives of their students, their workplace, and raise the social consciousness of all students. Teaching compassion, cooperation, inclusion, and acceptance will ultimately provide these migrant students with the tools to be contributing members within their new society.

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**Appendix A: Head Teacher Ethics Approval**

21<sup>st</sup> April 2010

University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Office  
107 Administration Place  
Saskatoon  
SK S7N 5A2  
Canada

**To whom it may concern**

I have reviewed the research methodology, participant selection criteria, and forms of consent/assent. With the governors of the school, we are able to confirm that the study meets our ethical guidelines for study between the dates of May 1, 2010-June 16, 2010.

With the approval of the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Office, this study meets our criteria for ethical compliance. No further ethical review is needed in addition to the ethical review supplied by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Office.

I have the authority, as head-teacher, to grant permission for this research to take place within my school. No other jurisdictional review needs to be met.

As stated in my previous letter, with my approval and the approval of the University of Saskatchewan, this researcher, Gregory Soden, can conduct his research at our school

Yours sincerely

[Signature]  
Head Teacher

**Appendix A Continued: Head teacher invitation letter attachment**

Dear Parent/Guardian of,

Attached to this letter is an invitation for your child to take part in a research project, which is being led by Gregory Soden, a former teacher of [Royal Downs School]. He is currently pursuing a master's degree in education in Canada. It is envisaged that approximately 4-6 students who have English as an additional language will be involved. The aim of the project is to understand better the experiences of students who emigrate to Britain and how they integrate into the country's educational system. I am fully supportive of Mr. Soden's project and I hope you will allow your child to take part. There is, of course, no obligation to participate, but if you should choose to do so, it would be much appreciated and will be beneficial to the school.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]  
Head Teacher

## Appendix B: Student Participant Assent

### Student Participant Assent

Greetings! I want to take a moment to invite you to be a part of an exciting research project. This purpose of this project is to hear from students, like you, who are new to England and its schools.

This project will not be a part of your regular class work and is completely optional, which means you don't have to participate if you don't want to. If you don't want to participate, or if you decide later on that you don't want to participate any longer, that is completely fine. There will be no penalty and nobody will be angry with you if you want to stop.

This project will involve talking with me and other students about your experiences in your school. We will talk once or twice with just the two of us and we will also talk as a group with the other students once or twice. The project will occur during school hours and will take about 3 hours over the next 2 to 3 months.

Anything that you tell me in our one-on-one conversations will be kept 100% confidential and secret. All information that you share will not be shared with anyone else, including your parents, other children, teachers, or the head teachers. It will be a secret between you and me. The conversations that we have as a group with the other children will not be as secret because we will all be talking together. As a group, we will discuss the need to be trustworthy and not tell anyone else in the world what we talk about as a group.

Once you understand and I have discussed this information with you, you can sign your name if you agree to participate in the study.

Thank you very much and I hope to talk to you soon!

Sincerely,

Gregory Soden

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Participant Signature

---

Date

---

Gregory Soden, Researcher

### **Appendix C: Parent Invitation Letter**

Dear Parent/Guardian of:

Your child is invited to participate in a series of three interviews that will seek to hear the story of their experiences in school. Over the next six weeks, he and I will meet within the school during the noon lunch hour to find out about their experiences within their school. Each interview will last approximately 30 minutes. They will be telling me their story and together we will discover things that they enjoy about school and things that may not work so well for them as a learner. The purpose of this study will be to help make your child's school as effective as possible for them during their time here.

In addition to meeting with me and other students to discuss their experiences in school, it is likely that I will observe a class of your child's. I will not be involved in the class in any way. The purpose of the observation is to observe your child during formal classes and to take note of your child's behavior. For example if your child asks questions; seems to struggle with class work; demonstrates success in learning; appears socially comfortable with peers see what a normal hour of school is like for your child. Your child and I may discuss some details of what I noticed while in their class.

This invitation will not affect their in-class schoolwork and it will not be for a grade. It is completely voluntary and will take approximately one-two hours of their time over the course of 6 weeks. Interviews will take place during the school lunch hour at the school. If at any time they feel that this commitment is too much for them to handle or if they feel at all uncomfortable, they may stop their participation in the study. If they decide to stop, nobody will be upset with them and they will be free to go. Stopping during the study will not result in a penalty of any kind. If they choose to leave the study, all information provided to me up until that point will be destroyed.

Any information that is shared in our one-on-one meeting will be kept private, meaning I will not tell anyone what was said. All identities will be kept private and nothing that is written about our project will reveal individual identities of participants. I will not share personal information or individual statements with friends, family, teachers or the school. However, it is possible that confidentiality could be broken in certain circumstances, such as disclosure of illegal activity or incriminating information that may be subpoenaed by a court of law. Also, because students are being drawn from a small population within the school, it may be possible for participants to identify other participants within the statements anonymously published in the thesis report.

One of our interviews might be as a group with the other participants. If this occurs, we will discuss the need to keep what we discuss during the meeting in the group and not to talk about it in public. However, there is a risk that whatever is said in the group meeting could be talked about by one or more of the other participants. If there is information your child would like to share with me that they don't want to talk about with the other participants, then we can discuss it during our one-on-one meeting. Also, if your child withdraws from the study, their information will not be kept.

The information will be shared in my thesis that I am writing for my Master of Education

degree and perhaps in the form of written papers and /or presentations at Educational conferences. Once the thesis is completed and published, I will contact the school administration and provide an electronic copy and a physical copy of the document. I will provide a letter to the head teacher to inform each of you that access to the document is open to you.

Your child will not be identified. Your child's thoughts will be put together with the other students to tell the story of their experiences in school.

If you give permission for your child to participate in this study, please sign and return the bottom portion of form with your child.

Thank you for your consideration,

Gregory J. Soden, former history teacher at [Royal Downs] School

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board.

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By signing this document and agreeing for your child to participate in this study, you are:

- A) Acknowledging that the research project and consent form has been fully explained and that you understand it.
- B) Acknowledging that you have received a copy of the consent form
- C) Understanding how data will be used
- D) Understanding that your child will have a chance to review their personal transcript for personal editing and clarification
- E) Understanding that the signed consent forms will be stored separately from the data sets

---

Parent/Guardian Printed Name

---

Parent/Guardian Signature

---

Date

Contact Information: should you require further information.

Gregory Soden, 306-979-3668, [gregsoden@gmail.com](mailto:gregsoden@gmail.com), 810 Arlington Ave. Saskatoon, SK, S7H 2X4, Canada

Dr. Brenda Kalyn (Supervisor)  
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Research Ethics Office  
University of Saskatchewan  
Box 5000 RPO University  
Saskatoon SK S7N 4J8  
Toll-Free Telephone Number: (306) 966-2975

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to research the experiences of immigrant students and teachers with regards to integration, tracking, and teaching in a school in southern England. It will seek to find aspects of the educational system that are meeting the needs of these students and other aspects that are not meeting their needs. These could be issues of integration, how students are streamed into ability level, language difficulties, and attention from the teacher during and outside of class time. This study will gain information on the experiences of immigrant students with the intention of understanding students' experiences from their point of view. It is hoped that by learning about students' experiences, educators may create better programs to help with the successful integration of immigrant students within schools.

## **Appendix D: Teacher Invitation Letter & Interview Prompts**

Dear Friend & Colleague,

You are being cordially invited to participate in a collaborative research project aimed at bettering the educational experiences of immigrant students while also improving teaching strategies and inter-departmental communication. Participation in this research project is optional.

Over the course of 6 weeks, we will meet individually 2 or 3 times to discuss the needs of immigrant students and what is currently being done to support their learning needs and successfully integrate them into our classrooms. We will discuss your previously used teaching strategies that you have used, what more you feel could be done to assist these students, and then we will collaborate among various departments in order to create cross-curricular consistency among our teaching. The time required of you to participate in this study will be approximately 2-3 hours in total.

Although I would be honoured to have you, you are not required to participate. If you do agree to participate, but for whatever reason need to withdraw during the study, you are absolutely able to do so. If you withdraw, I will not be angry or upset and there will be no negative repercussions.

I will not share personal information or identify any of your contributions with you personally and any direct quotations incorporated into the study will be given a pseudonym.

This collected data will be transcribed into print and will be incorporated into a master's thesis about the experiences of immigrant students in your school and your experiences teaching them. Direct quotations will be used within the finished product and you will have a chance to review your personal transcript in order to retract or rectify any statements that you do not wish to be included.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Saskatchewan's Behavioural Research Ethics Board

You may reach the researcher, Gregory Soden, at any time via email at: [gregsoden@gmail.com](mailto:gregsoden@gmail.com)

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Gregory J. Soden

By signing this document and agreeing to participate in this study, you are:

- F) Acknowledging that the research project and consent form has been fully explained and that you understand.
- G) Acknowledging that you have received a copy of the consent form
- H) Understanding of how data will be used
- I) Understanding that you will have a chance to review your personal transcript for personal editing and clarification

---

Participant Printed Name

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

**Appendix D Continued: Possible Teacher Discussion Points**

1. I want each of you to think of the immigrant students you have or have had within your classes. Without naming any specific names, let's discuss some of their unique learning needs, their attitudes, and your strategies for accommodating those needs.
2. In your perceptions while teaching, do you think that your immigrant students are having a good experience in school? Why or why not?
3. If you were to be part of a program specifically aimed at the success of immigrant students, what would be your main contribution? Think of your successes you have had with these students and how your successes could be aimed at a cross-curricular model.
4. What do you perceive to be the main challenges of immigrant students? Why do some appear to adjust and perform better than others in your opinions?
5. How are British schools (or one school) managing learning among new immigrant students?
6. Studies have shown "that teachers...have less positive attitudes towards [dialect] speaking students and lower expectations about their abilities and performance, and that this leads to lower results." Do you believe this to be true? Why or why not? (Siegel, p. 59)
7. How can (does) knowledge of immigrant/refugee groups assist schools in expanding or improving indicators of success among these students?
  - a. To what extent are they effective in channeling them into success in achievement and integration into British society?
  - b. What are the barriers in these programs and what is being done to improve them?
8. From your experiences, what does each of you believe to be the issues of importance when having immigrant students and multiple ethnicities present in your classroom? How do you handle this responsibility?

9. Do you think that researchers, such as Kozol and Oakes, are correct when they say that there is a disparity in the quality of teaching and planning that students in top ability sets receive compared with students in lower ability sets? Do you have any personal experience with this?
10. What is your overall goal for the immigrant students that you teach?
11. Do you think that students' awareness of their placement (class set) within school negatively affects their attitude towards school?

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to research the experiences of immigrant students with regards to integration, tracking, and teaching in a school in southern England. It will seek to find aspects of the educational system that are meeting the needs of these students and other aspects that are not meeting their needs. These could be issues of integration, how students are streamed into ability level, language difficulties, and attention from the teacher during and outside of class time. This study will gain information on the experiences of immigrant students with the intention of writing a recommendation for the development of a program aimed at integrating immigrant students into the school under the best possible conditions.

**Appendix E: Class Lesson Observation Example**

English Lesson Period 2, June 10 with participant Sara

9:50-Work on Shakespeare writing. [Teacher] says Sara has a difficult time and has confided her loneliness to her about her popularity at home vs. lack of friends here.

9:52-full class of 32 students, I am at a seat tucked in the back corner. Students popping in. Sara is second student to arrive. I think the group is a pretty high set?

9:55-Sara has her materials ready, students talking a lot, there is a surprise spelling test over Shakespearian words

9:57-High level of chatter, students arriving very late, room is a nice environment with big windows and lots of work on the walls. Spell test begins, students talking over teacher. Word 1-Shakespeare, Word 2-Confidential. LOTS of delay between words due to distracting conversation. It would be very easy to cheat, as everyone is talking. Sara not talking at all. Teacher waits for silence for a very long time between words.

10:00-#3-Theatrical, #4 Alliteration, #5 personification, #6 ceaselessly, #7 independently. Constant chatter-LITERALLY non-stop. I can understand Sara's frustration with not being able to concentrate in here. I can't even follow what is happening. Some of the students who aren't talking are staring off into space, bored from distraction.

10:07-Starting to go over answers. Students make loads of celebratory comments or complain that they got the answer wrong. Sara has a helpful boy next to her. The class is easily as chatty as the last business lesson I was in. Girl next to me is a severe distraction. Sara gets 5/10 spelling words correct.

10:12-finally done checking answers. Class has not been silent. Boy next to Sara seems pleasant to her. Class is insanely chatty. Not a good environment for learning English.

**Appendix F: Student Interview Questions**

1. How old are you?
2. How old were you when you moved to England?
3. When was it decided that your family would move to England?
4. Why did your family move here?
5. What is your history with learning English?
6. Can you tell me about your schooling in your home country?
7. How is education here different to your education there?
8. What is interesting or exciting about coming to school in a new country?
9. What is most difficult about coming to school in a new country?
10. Tell me about your experiences in this school. What do you like and dislike?
11. How do you view yourself as a student compared with students who are from Britain?
12. What do you think of the quality of teaching you get at this school?
13. What do teachers do to help you?
14. What kind of support do you get from special education needs (SEN) department?
15. What more or what additional things could teachers do to help you in and out of lessons?
16. Do you feel that you are in the correct placement within school? Is your class set correct for you?
17. Tell me about the behavior that you notice among other students. Does their behavior help or hurt your educational experiences?
18. Were your teachers, friends, and family back home happy for you that you got to move here?
19. Are there any things you feel that you could improve upon? Effort? Conversation skills? Etc.
20. What advice would you give to students who move to England and become students at this school?

### **Appendix G: Stephen Interview Number Two**

1. How much do you think your English has improved since you got here? Do you think that those five years of English in Czech Republic were good?
2. Why is this school better? You said your old school was more challenging and the students were better behaved, so why exactly is this school better?
3. You said there were no class sets in Czech. Which do you prefer? All one class or classes with different ability sets? Why?
4. Do you like having one big exam here or the old system of having regular tests throughout the school year?
5. How many students were in your old school?
6. What did your old teachers say to you when they found out you were moving to Britain? Were they happy for you?
7. Do you think taking German is good for you or would you benefit more from another English instruction hour instead?
8. You said that students here are terrible. Can you give some specific examples of what you've seen students do in this school?
9. You said teachers are helpful, but you also said that they only explain very basic things and they take a very long time to come talk with you. Are they actually that helpful? It's okay to say that they aren't if you don't think that they are.
10. What does Ms. [Suzanne] do for you every day?
11. How do you think you are comparing with students who are from Britain?
12. You were giving the impression that you sometimes think you aren't good enough in English for the middle and upper sets. Would you rather be in the lower sets?
13. Did your old school have as many resources as this school?

## Appendix H: Mary Interview Questions Two

What is acceptable culturally towards women teachers? Some students may not be used to women in positions of power. What are some of the issues you have personally experienced being a woman teaching immigrant students?

The visual approach seems to work well for you because it transcends ability disparity and language difficulties. Examples of visual application to middle sets? What have you seen other teachers do that are good that you have liked?

Are there any things that you see teachers do over and over with EAL students that are flawed, but never fixed?

Is there something teachers or departments can do to accommodate EAL/immigrant students, such as specialized vocabulary cards for each unit, simpler level work, etc.?

In another interview, it was suggested that an additional class of small ratio English lessons could be useful. Instead of having an elective course, such as a German or woodworking course, students would have specialized English in a very low ratio setting, such as 1:3. Do you think this would be useful?

Can we look at the cultural aspects of countries before the students can explain it to us? Not every teacher can, obviously, due to time constraints, but certainly some person within the school can be tasked with researching country/school details so we can know a bit about the new students? Someone can research school systems/family structure/highly practiced traditions and make an information packet for teachers who will have the student?

You said Asian girls often have a different experience here than in their home country. What more can you say about this? Do you have any specific examples?

Good family support is often very important for student achievement. How does immigrant family support compare with many of the families from Britain? Do you find one to be more or less supportive than the other?

When immigrant students are put into middle and top set classes, there are often 30 other students in the class. Larger groups=less attention for students new to Britain. Does this lead to students getting ignored?

Student basic vocabulary guides for specialized classes, but also a basic vocabulary guide for teachers for the languages present in their classroom! Could provide a very caring extension and be very meaningful to the students

Are students aware of their academic placement in school? Do you think that students in lower streams have a poorer attitude towards school than students in upper sets?

Need more information upon arrival. When a school hears that a student will be transferring in, is it possible to find out what the old school is and request information on them? Is there any process like this that exists or is it just accepted that we know next to nothing about the student?

In this circumstance with you, the planning that goes into your classes is exquisite. I keep reading all researchers who say that the planning is poorer for lower set classes. Do you know anything about London schools that might corroborate this?