

Public Abstract

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Classrooms in the United States are changing as the population of the United States becomes more diverse with growing numbers of English language learners. Immigrants and their families have traditionally settled in larger urban communities, but recent trends indicate a growing number of English language learners are enrolling in rural mid-west public schools. Many of these rural districts have little experience and few resources to meet the needs of this new diverse group of students. As a result, teachers are experiencing academic and cultural challenges of educating students whose first language is not English.

While not all English language learners are immigrants, understanding the historic demographic changes helps to conceptualize the current and future challenges for public schools. Given teachers play a vital role in the education of ELL's, the purpose of this study was to examine elementary teacher perceptions regarding their experience in teaching mainstreamed English language learners in a rural low-incidence school district. This study also explores issues these teachers feel most influence their ability to successfully teach students from diverse cultures and who speak a first language other than English.