4-9-2021

Equity Leadership for English Learners During COVID–19: Early Lessons

Magaly Lavadenz

Linda R. G. Kaminski

Elvira G. Armas

Grecya V. López

frontiers in Education

ORIGINAL RESEARCH
published: 09 April 2021
doi: 10.3389/feduc.2021.636281

Equity Leadership for English Learners During COVID-19: Early Lessons

Magaly Lavadenz, Linda R. G. Kaminski, Elvira G. Armas and Grecya V. López*

Center for Equity for English Learners, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA, United States

This article provides the findings of an exploratory, qualitative study on distance learning policies and practices from a purposeful sample of five California school districts and 25 district and school leaders with large numbers and/or larger percentages of current or former English Learners. To understand the extent to which leaders address English Learners'/Emergent Bilinguals' (EL/EM) needs during the pandemic, we posed the following research question: What are leaders' local policies and practices in designing and implementing distance learning to promote equity for English Learners? We gathered three key district policy documents across three moments during the pandemic: (1) COVID-19 Operations Written Reports (Spring 2020), (2) School Reopening Plans (Summer 2020), and (3) Learning Continuity and Attendance Plans (Fall 2020). We also conducted interviews and triangulated data sources using grounded theory to analyze and understand how equity is framed and implemented. Data triangulation and iterative rounds of coding allowed us to identify three inter-related findings: (1) leading in the crisis of connectivity and bridging the digital divide; (2) maximizing diverse ELs' learning experiences; and, (3) building from collaborative leadership cultures to collaborative virtual leadership cultures. Using these key findings, we conceptualized the framework for equity leadership for English Learners to address the needs of this underserved population. We conclude with a call for further examination, in both leadership preparation as well as in policy implementation research.

Keywords: educational leadership, equity, COVID-19, English Learners, collaborative culture, equity partnerships

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:
Kay Fuller,
University of Nottingham,
United Kingdom

Reviewed by:
Phil Taylor,
University of Nottingham,
United Kingdom
Sue Garton,
Aston University, United Kingdom

****Correspondence:***
Magaly Lavadenz
magaly.lavadenz@lmu.edu

Specialty section:
This article was submitted to Leadership in Education, a section of the journal Frontiers in Education

Received: *01 December 2020*
Accepted: *10 March 2021*
Published: *09 April 2021*

Citation:
Lavadenz M, Kaminski LRG, Armas EG and López GV (2021) Equity Leadership for English Learners During COVID-19: Early Lessons. Front. Educ. 6:636281. doi: 10.3389/feduc.2021.636281

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19, a global pandemic not encountered in almost 100 years, dramatically altered the context of education beginning in March 2020. California Governor Gavin Newsom ordered school closures on March 19th, and educators unexpectedly had to pivot to distance learning for all students. We conducted this study between July and September 2020, a time when the duration of the pandemic and school reopening were still unclear in California. In the midst of this pivot to distance learning were California's 1.1 million English Learners (ELs) for whom in-person language development learning suddenly ceased[1].

[1]The term "English Learners" is used to refer to students who speak a language other than English who receive specialized instruction in English and, if enrolled in a Bilingual/Dual Language program, also receive instruction in their primary language. The authors acknowledge and encourage the use of the term "Emergent Bilingual Learners" given its focus on the potential to leverage bilingualism as a resource, both cognitively and socially (García, 2009). At present, "English Learners" remains the term used in federal policy, legislation, and court cases and is used in this paper for consistency with federal terminology.

We situate our study within the broader California education policy "ecology" (Weaver-Hightower, 2008) reforms in finance, accountability, and instruction for ELs. The 2013 Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and associated Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP)[2] center equity as a guiding principle to provide additional allocations for increased or improved services for targeted student populations of ELs, low-income students, and foster/homeless youth (Armas et al., 2015; Humphrey et al., 2017; California Education Code, 2018; Lavadenz et al., 2019).

During this same period of finance and accountability reform, California clarified expectations for providing a quality curriculum for the state's ELs. The state's approach rests on critical federal legislation and judicial cases, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimous ruling in *Lau v.* Nichols (1974), and the Castañeda (1981) decision which collectively prohibit discrimination and demand access to an effective educational program (Lhamon and Gupta, 2015; Hakuta, 2020).

California state policies stipulate that EL programs must ensure that this group of students: (1) "acquire full proficiency in English as quickly and effectively as possible," and (2) "achieve the same rigorous grade-level academic standards that are expected of all students" within a reasonable amount of time (California Department of Education, 2019). To accomplish these goals, the state requires Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to provide an evidence-based instructional program that incorporates *integrated* English Language Development *(iELD)*, instruction in which the state-adopted ELD standards are used in tandem with the state-adopted academic content standards, and *designated* ELD, *a "protected time" during the day when teachers use ELD standards to "build into and from content instruction."* (California Department of Education, 2014, pp. 108 and 115).

Our study occurs at a time when state policies for iELD and dELD are not fully implemented at the local level (Hopkins, 2016). Additionally, research on school finance policy implementation that provides differentiated and additional funding for ELs has found that the quest for equity for ELs is "still elusive" even after 5 years (Lavadenz et al., 2019). This study concluded that state and local leadership, along with critical stakeholder engagement is critical in achieving equity as one of California's "pillars" of accountability.

Eight years into this significant school finance, accountability, and instructional reform and with the onset of COVID-19, the pivot to distance learning challenges the education system in ways unimagined. To explore how the pandemic impacts one of our most vulnerable student groups, our research team set out to address the following research question: *What are leaders' local policies and practices in designing and implementing distance learning to promote equity for English Learners?* We interviewed superintendents and other leaders from five representative districts across the state for a total of 25 district- and site-level leaders. Additionally, we analyzed three sets of COVID policy documents – the COVID-19 Operations Written Report, School Reopening Plans, and the Learning Continuity and Attendance Plans (LCPs) – to understand how equity is framed and implemented during the pandemic. To inform our discussion on equity leadership for English Learners, we begin with a review of the research literature on supports for effective education for English Learners, educational leadership, and the intersection of race, culture and ethnicity. We follow with a summary of three key findings from the interviews and document review from which we derive emergent themes. We then discuss these themes and propose a framework of equity leadership for English Learners.

[2]The LCAP is a 3-year plan that describes district/school goals, actions, services, and expenditures to support positive student outcomes that address local needs and California's Eight Priorities related to academic performance, including EL progress in learning English, academic engagement, and school conditions and climate. Source: https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/lc/.

LITERATURE REVIEW

> *"It turns out that leadership not only matters; it is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning…"* Wallace Foundation in Leithwood et al. (2004) *How Leadership Influences Student Learning: Review of Research (p. 3).*

If leadership matters, then it is important to consider what comprises effective education for ELs, educational leadership in general, and the intersection of culture, race and ethnicity with leadership. We begin with a summary of key research on the connections between effective education for English Learners and the important roles leaders play in supporting teachers and families of English Learners.

Supporting Effective Education for English Learners: Leadership Matters

Drawing from the extant literature on evidence-based and effective practices for English Learners, Santos and Hopkins (2020) signal the importance of developing educator capacity with systems-level design and collaboration as central to supporting English Learners. Developing local policies that include constituent perspectives, goal setting, and action planning through cycles of examination to understand the impacts of these actions should also address the distinct needs of specialized needs of distinct groups of EL students, including newcomers, students classified as ELs who have been in the United States 3 years or less (Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), 2015). Thus, effective leaders enact leadership as widely distributed throughout the system, based on a shared vision and coherence (Scheurich and Skrla, 2003; Honig, 2006; Hopkins, 2016) and lead the focus on equity for ELs throughout the system.

Local policy-making as a leadership practice is central to EL success; this includes the articulation of a comprehensive English Language Development program (Gándara and Orfield, 2010). EL programmatic policies include providing professional learning opportunities to enhance expertise for teachers of ELs, to build teachers' knowledge about the curriculum and school context, to engage in inquiry about their own practice, and to deepen subject and linguistic knowledge for teaching ELs (Goldenberg, 2008; Scanlan and López, 2014; Faltis and Valdés, 2016; National Academies of Sciences Engineering and Medicine, 2017). The genesis for effective

curriculum and instruction for ELs stems from an assets-orientation and fosters positive relationships with students (López et al., 2020) simultaneously responding to the development of linguistic and academic content knowledge and skills to high analytic levels that prepare students for success in college and career (Saunders et al., 2013; Umansky et al., 2020). Professional learning for teachers of ELs (López, 2017) engages them and their leaders in inquiry cycles about their own practices as part of continuous improvement (Mavrogordato and White, 2020).

Effective leaders of ELs also commit to family and community engagement through policies, programming, and their own practices, and build trust with typically marginalized communities (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Mapp and Bergman, 2019). They consistently analyze, and modify their beliefs and practices (Lucas et al., 2018) specific to school contexts and lead the creation of established process and organizational conditions that produce policy and program goals intended to impact capacity outcomes. Next, we turn to the literature on the evolution of views of educational leadership and how perspectives of education leadership inform our study.

Views of Educational Leadership

> *[S]ystemic, historical, and sociopolitical roots of inequities; the conception of leadership as enacted through community; and the focus on building coalitions with people and organizations across the community all have implications far beyond the school walls.*
>
> Galloway and Ishimaru (2017, p. 27)

Reviews of leadership theories and conceptualizations of leadership have evolved from the mid-20th century to contemporary times, and reveal models of distributed leadership, instructional leadership, teacher leadership, and transformational leadership (Goddard and Miller, 2010; Gumus et al., 2018). According to Lambert et al. (2016) more contemporary views of leadership have evolved to include notions of "transformational leadership (TL) [which] is not about the behaviors (traits) of a charismatic individual but about the practices that are distributed collaboratively among staff members. Relationships are interdependent and involve parents, community members and professional staff. The idea that leadership emanates from a single leader has receded as a dominant concept" (p. 9). As implied by this definition, views of educational leadership evolved from a single authority who "shared" or distributed leadership/authority/power with others, to leaders who support and collaborate with teachers, parents and community members to maximize their equity practices and partnerships (Clark-Louque et al., 2019). Building from Burns' 1978 seminal work on transforming leaders that focused on improving organizational qualities and effectiveness, Shields' (2010) study of transformative leadership challenges inappropriate uses of power and privilege that create or perpetuate inequity and injustice. Shields proposes that unlike organizationally focused transformational leaders, transformative leaders actively and purposefully attend to the broader social, political, and structural inequalities faced by marginalized student populations in order to create better schooling conditions for underserved students.

To further address the focus on marginalized and underserved student populations, educational leadership conceptualizations and theories have begun to address equity as a core principle in leadership policies, practices, and competencies. Galloway and Ishimaru's (2017) study of equitable leadership, for example, notes that "only 6% of school superintendents and 20% of principals are people of color" (p. 7). Their study, in which over half of the 40 participants self-identified as people of color, charts out 10-high leverage practices for equity leadership; they underscore personal and collective inquiry around issues of identity, values, biases, assumptions, and privileges within themselves and systemically, and the importance of modeling and risk-taking to challenge inequities. Equitable school leaders, they contend, insist on excellence and engage with families as partners to create school and district cultures through the equitable allocation of resources and systemic improvement. The dynamic nature of schools and our students also requires leaders to support teachers' practices through *culturally sustaining pedagogies* embedded into professional learning systems (Paris and Alim, 2014). These practices and policies for professional learning "seek to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (p. 88). The large percentage of leaders of color in Galloway and Ishimaru's identification of practices for equity leadership raises the issue of intersectionality between leadership and culture, race, and ethnicity reviewed below.

The Intersection of Culture, Race, and Ethnicity in Equity Educational Leadership

Building from a more extensive and substantive body of work of scholars such as Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay (2002), among others who conceptualize the need for teachers to respond to culturally and linguistically diverse students, Khalifa et al. (2016) propose a culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) framework, consisting of four strands: critical self-awareness, CRSL and teacher preparation, CRSL and school environments, and CRSL and community advocacy. He synthesized the research literature on the types of teaching and leadership required for the schooling needs of underserved student populations to encourage the expansion of transformational leadership approaches to close achievement gaps; leaders must clearly understand their role in addressing students' culture and their school culture. The unique contributions and perspectives of leaders of color require further research, as Guinier and Torres (2002) cited in Santamaría and Santamaría (2012) conclude: "there is scant literature available identifying and celebrating the positive attributes of education leaders from historically oppressed groups and those who identify with them, and ways in which these individuals acquire mainstream institutional access to create real change" (p. 7). Few studies emphasize the role, abilities and impact of education leaders of color, and the corresponding relationship between leaders of color in supporting teachers and marginalized student populations (Franco et al., 2013). As a bridge within the equity leadership research gap, Santamaría (2014) applied Critical Race theory and critical multiculturalism to study how leaders of color who practice transformative leadership to promote more

socially just and equitable student outcomes can guide teachers on how to ensure equity in resources and practices. She contends that leaders of color "are less focused on looking good and more focused on doing good" (p. 357). As we next describe in the methods section below, the sampling procedures in our study were not purposely aimed to the selection of leaders of color. Nevertheless, the actions and practices that ensued due to the intersectionality of leaders' cultural, linguistic, racial and/or ethnic identities informs our approach to interrogating equitable leadership practices and policies of the leaders in our study as we return to the instantiations of equitable leadership for ELs during the pandemic, particularly in light of the superintendents and other leaders of color in our study.

METHODS

We employed an exploratory qualitative phenomenological case study design (Yin, 2018) to document and understand school and district leaders' policies and practices regarding the education of ELs during the pandemic. English Learners in California public schools total nearly 1.1 million students, the largest number of any state, and represent 18.63% of enrollment (Data Quest, 2020). This investigation "explores a real-life. . . multiple bounded system (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. . . [to] report a case description and case themes" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). We delimited the case to include a two-tiered purposive sample of districts and leaders engaged in delivering distance learning to high numbers or high percentages of English Learners during COVID-19. We used grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) to identify a set of interrelated categories and applied deductive and inductive processes to interpret and conceptualize data. These cycles of grounded theoretical approaches resulted in the key findings that allowed us to answer our research question to generate a substantive theory of leadership for equity for ELs during COVID-19 from those findings. This framework may be applied in diverse contexts and replicated in other studies.

Sampling Approach

We selected the districts in this study using a two-tiered purposive sampling method consisting of a network approach to initially select sample districts and their superintendents, followed by a snowball sampling approach wherein selected superintendents identified leaders within each district (Merriam, 2009; Timonen et al., 2018; Merriam and Grenier, 2019). Network sampling refers to the selection of study participants based on a predetermined selection criterion in order to study a sub-population of interest thoroughly. We established the following selection criteria to identify five sample districts in California:

- Enrollment of high numbers or high percentages of current or former English Learners
- Geographic representation across the state and urban, suburban, and rural locations
- Superintendent as a proven leader of linguistically and culturally diverse school districts as evidenced by:
  - Recognition of excellence in leadership through peer nomination for participation in statewide leadership networks or organizations
  - Recognition of excellence in leadership by regional organizations.

Superintendents from the purposively selected school districts subsequently nominated key district- and site-level leaders for participation based on their expertise and knowledge in leadership, teaching, and learning for diverse student populations. Participants (n = 25) represent a variety of role types and school levels. **Table 1** provides an overview of district demographics. Our sample consists of five districts altogether—one from a large urban city, three from large suburbs, and one from a rural mid-size city. The percent of Ever-English Learners[3] across districts ranged from 25.8% to 67.4%. We interviewed

[3]In California, the term "Ever English Learners" refers to the aggregate student group comprised of those who are current EL students plus Reclassified Fluent Proficient English Learner (RFEP) students who have met English proficiency and academic criteria to exit English Learner status.

TABLE 1 | District demographics, interview participants, and district-level policy documents.

District*	Grade span	Student population	English Learners N (%)	Ever English Learners** N (%)	Locale***	Geographic location in California	N Interviews		N Documents		
							District leads	School leads	COVID-19 operations report	Reopening plan	Learning continuity plan
Marina	K-12	7,729	1,880 (24.3%)	3,799 (49.1%)	Suburb, large	Southern	3	3	1	1	1
Ocean	K-8	30,793	8,110 (26.3%)	12,073 (39.2%)	Urban, large	Central	2	2	1	N/A	1
Reef	K-12	9,321	1,067 (11.4%)	2,402 (25.8%)	Suburb, large	Northern	2	2	1	1	1
Sand	K-8	6,131	3,240 (52.9%)	4,135 (67.4%)	Suburb, large	Southern	3	2	1	1	1
Shell	7–12	11,653	1,323 (11.4%)	3,938 (33.8%)	City, midsize	Southern	3	3	N/A	1	1
Totals							13	12	4	4	5

Source: http:www.ed-data.org.

**Pseudonyms are used here to protect the identity of district personnel who participated in this study.*

***Source: California Department of Education Dataquest (2019–2020). The term Ever English Learners refers to the aggregate number/percentage of students who are either current or former English Learners (Reclassified Fluent English Proficient).*

****Source: National Center for Education Statistics (2020).*

thirteen district-level leaders and twelve school leaders. Twenty out of the twenty-five participants are leaders of color. We use pseudonyms to protect confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and their districts. Additional demographic information is provided in **Supplementary Table 1**.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred over a 3-month period following the onset of the pandemic between July and September 2020. Data sources included interviews and local policy documents relevant to this study. We employed data triangulation process across multiple sources to counter threats to trustworthiness, such as reactivity, researcher bias, and respondent bias (Denzin, 1989).

Interviews

We conducted individual virtual semi-structured interviews with each of 25 district and school leaders. The research team recorded and transcribed all interviews via Zoom. Each of the interviews was approximately 45 to 60 min. Across the five districts, we interviewed a total of 13 district-level administrators serving as superintendents, assistant superintendents, and director/coordinator of English Learner services, and 12 school-level administrators serving as principals. We developed the Leadership for English Learners during COVID-19 Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (see Document 1 in **Supplementary Materials**) to understand the policies and practices that supported ELs during COVID-19 school closures. This protocol standardizes a purpose statement and a total of nine interview questions for all respondents. The nine questions are organized into three sections, namely: (1) roles and responsibilities transitions, (2) family partnerships and support, and (3) advice to other educators. We also included a question to check for generalizability.

Documents

In addition to collecting interview data, we obtained several local policy documents for each participant district: (1) COVID-19 Operations Written Reports, (2) Reopening Plans, and (3) Learning Continuity and Attendance Plans (LCPs). We intentionally selected these documents because their completion and publication were either strongly recommended or mandated by the California Department of Education to hold districts accountable for continued teaching and learning during the COVID-19 school closures. These accountability policies were intended to ensure that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) operate safely, collaborate with their bargaining units, offer quality distance learning opportunities, and maintain communication with the families they serve. **Supplementary Table 2** provides background information on each of these documents.

Data Analytic Procedures

We used the constant comparative method (Hutchinson, 2001) to conduct three rounds of coding of the interview transcripts. We started with *a priori* coding based on educational leadership and effective practices for ELs literature described in the literature review (e.g., Scheurich and Skrla, 2003; Mapp and Bergman, 2019; Santos and Hopkins, 2020). These were broad in nature (e.g., policy, practices, etc.). We then identified specific emergent codes—created from the examples of policies and practices that were used by school leaders in their response to the COVID-19 school closures (e.g., collaboration, decision-making) and then returned to the interview transcripts to apply these emergent codes in what was our second round of coding. Once complete, we conducted a third round of coding to both validate the emergent coding already conducted and to look for any nuances among them that could result in potential new codes. This led to the development of new emergent codes (e.g., changing/flexibility in job description, specialized instruction for ELs) which we operationalized and applied to all of the interview transcripts (see **Supplementary Table 3** for our Code Book). Our final step was to conduct several rounds of data validation to ensure that the final codes were applied as defined in our codebook for both *a priori* and emergent codes.

To analyze district policy documents, we used cycles of grounded analytic approaches (Charmaz, 2006) to identify emergent themes across districts; we repeated this approach for each type of policy document (e.g., themes in districts' reopening plans, themes in districts' COVID-19 operations written reports, etc.). We then created district-level qualitative memos for each district which summarized their policy documents and coded interview data as part of our data reduction and analysis processes. To triangulate our data within and across districts, we clustered codes into substantive categories and then compared these category codes across interview transcripts and documents. The iterative processes in our grounded theory approach allowed us to refine ideas, identify conceptual boundaries, and to confirm the "fit" and relevance of conceptual elements (Charmaz, 2006) to generate a consistent picture of how leaders developed and actualized equity policies and practices for ELs. Engaging in these analytic procedures allowed for our conceptualization of an Equity Leadership for English Learners Framework. We first present the results of our analyses and then describe how those findings informed the development of the Equity Leadership for English Learners Framework.

RESULTS

Interviews with 25 leaders and analysis of relevant policy documents across the five districts allowed us to respond to the research question: *What are leaders' local policies and practices in designing and implementing distance learning to promote equity for English Learners?* It is important to note that all of those interviewed addressed the food and housing insecurities that vulnerable communities in their districts faced, as emphasized in a recent Phi Delta Kappan article, *"[f]or most school superintendents, COVID-19 has been the biggest professional challenge of their careers. . .. The moment has come not just to take half-steps toward equity in K-12 education but to take a real stand for it"* (Starr, 2020). We present the findings on leadership thematically based on the interrelated policies and practices designed by these leaders to implement equitable distance learning for ELs in their schools and districts. The three sets of policy documents (the COVID-19 Written Operations Reports,

Reopening Plans, and Learning Continuity and Attendance Plans) and the interviews temporally coincided with the onset of the pandemic, with the immediate and urgent need and struggle for devices and connectivity, the planning processes for online and/or hybrid teaching, and the implementation of those plans in preparation for the fall launch of the school year. Using grounded theory as the analytic approach, we strove to first learn what leaders did during the initial months of the COVID-19 crises and then to identify emerging themes that inform our understanding of equitable leadership. Multiple cycles of coding, memo-writing and interpretation allowed us to identify key actions of this set of predominantly leaders of color to show the "what" of leadership, while illustrating the "how" to help us find the meaning of these actions. We describe "what" policies and actions were taken to meet ELs' needs in this section. The discussion section that follows completes the iterative cycles of grounded theory to generate the framework for equity leadership for ELs.

Our analysis indicated that, from the onset, leaders' heightened sense of already existing inequities that would be worsened by the pandemic was evident; their actions, revealed through written policies and interviews, centered on three overarching findings: (1) leading in the crisis of connectivity by accelerating outreach to the most vulnerable families and students; (2) maximizing diverse ELs' learning experiences; and, (3) building from collaborative leadership cultures to collaborative virtual leadership cultures.

Finding 1: Leading in the Crisis of Connectivity by Accelerating Outreach to the Most Vulnerable Families and Students

As the principal of one elementary school in the Ocean School District noted: "*Our model here. . .is that when [family members] call on the phone, we take care of it that minute. If we have to go to your house, we're going to have come out with our protective gear and we're going to walk you through it. Make sure you're logged on and ready to go before we walk away from your home."* As districts across the state and nation acted to ensure access to internet connectivity and to secure digital learning tools for students, families, and teachers, the leaders in our study recognized and prioritized those most in need in their communities. As such, every district in our study recognized that additional outreach and support was needed for families of ELs to ensure they had devices and internet connectivity for online learning. At the onset, all staff, regardless of role-type or job description, was deployed to contact students and families disengaged from or unable to connect to distance learning.

The stories shared, particularly by school principals across the five districts, reflected their dedication to doing "whatever it takes" to meet their students families' connectivity needs, as reflected by the principal from Sand: "*I've had my attendance clerk face timing with parents to show them where to turn on their device, where to click. We're emailing them, we're texting them. Really doing as much outreach as we possibly can*." The Director of EL Services and Categorical Programs in Marina School District represents an educator whose leadership for ELs began in the classroom (Russell and Von Esch, 2018). She has consistently built trust and provided EL expertise to her colleagues and administrators and during distance learning she has aligned structural and instructional practices to provide equitable learning opportunities for ELs and their families. She immediately recognized the need to differentiate services and support for this vulnerable population and indicates, "*There was no way that we could just hand newcomers a packet and expect for them to access their learning that way. So those were the first families that we reached out to and said, "Do you have a device? Can you get online? And this is how we're going to help because we really needed to make sure they had access to their teacher."* District leadership also demonstrated keen awareness and proactive interactions with families of multiple language backgrounds.

Finding 2: Maximizing Diverse English Learners' Distance Learning Experiences

Spring learning efforts began with a frenzy to get materials to students, and leaders worked through the summer to retool education. The following excerpt from our interview with the EL coordinator at Shell paints the picture of a massive effort to create paper packets for students. She states, "*Directors were creating the lesson plan templates for content area with instructions for the parents in multiple languages and one of the coordinators and I were tearing apart books and scanning them in. We made sure that the very next week, our students had something to work on at home*." Opportunities for differentiation and evidence-based instructional practices for English language development were folded into plans for synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Examples from districts' local documents represent current practices for ELs: "Language scaffolds for ELs will be delivered during synchronous instruction. . .differentiated assignments will be provided during asynchronous time blocks." Just as all districts' plans for implementing distance learning were phased in, plans for returning to in-person instruction were also phased; the first to return according to their plans were students with exceptional needs and in most cases, this included ELs and signaled practices such as: "Pedagogical practices like SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English) for students in all grade levels and content areas will support synchronous and asynchronous instruction."

Districts' Reopening Plans needed to project for the unknowns in regards to whether the small cohort model would include the return of English Learner students, specifically that this model would target: "English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) Level 1 and 2 students, all long term English Learners and students at risk of becoming long term English Learners." Similarly, another district's plan specified, "We anticipate six small cohorts to be the first to return. We anticipate the total number of students will be 114 including newcomers."

All districts described efforts to augment services and supports for ELs including positioning additional staff to work directly with students, tutoring, targeted professional learning for teachers and support for staff, and technology support for parents. In one district, "a summer school program was

specifically designed to address the learning needs of newcomer English Learners." Another district planned to offer, "additional supports using *Imagine Learning*[4] in addition to the integrated ELD instruction that students receive." Four out of five districts included processes to identify and continuously monitor the language proficiency of ELs. These districts detailed plans for using state and/or local assessment data to plan intervention including small group instruction, tutoring, and intensive support beyond the regular school day. The following excerpts from districts' local policy documents support this finding:

- *Wonders* ELA/ELD curriculum-based assessment data will be reviewed
- School staff will continue to monitor all ELs needing extra support through quarterly monitoring using *ELlevation*
- Students unable to complete the summative ELPAC from 2019 to 2020 will complete the test by the end of October
- Online diagnostic/formative assessments

Finding 3: Building From Collaborative Cultures to Collaborative Digital Leadership

"*It was crisis management for the first 3 months. . . to support basic needs—food distribution, computers, internet."*

Each district included a number of distinct collaborative efforts that preceded the pandemic; these district and school-level structures included a variety of long-standing commitments to ELs, including language development and content area curricular reforms. Differentiated staffing practices originally in place prior to the pandemic allowed staff to continue their work virtually and in other ways to support EL students. As one high school principal states, "*. . .One of the things we wanted to continue. . . is the bilingual instructional assistants, [especially] for our [beginning level] ELs. . .and to make sure that the bilingual instructional assistant also had that access."* A superintendent comments about the district's work over the summer months:

By May and June and July, we were busy trying to make sense of it all. So that was the planning, creating task forces, creating curriculum committees. I'm happy to start planning because I realized, whether or not we would end up in person, we were going to end up . . . in distance learning again completely. So, we started planning for that; that was the right choice. We were one of the first districts to say that we were going to start distance learning only. And so that helped reassure teachers, too.

Districts' policy documents also identified the transition from existing teams, or collaborative structures to cross-divisional committees and teams as this representative example from one district's LCP plan reflects:

The district's English Learner Instructional Specialist Team worked with the districts' Curriculum Team to develop high-quality resources to support ELD instruction during distance learning.

An elementary principal describes how multi-role teams worked together in the early phase of the pandemic:

I actually have a team that I put together. . .a campus supervisor, a behavior intervention specialist, a secretary, attendance clerk, a librarian, and a family and community engagement coordinator. . .We go out in the community after we make our calls. . . maybe about 10:30 am. . . to take out devices. . .. Oh. . .when I think of the people that are supporting all of the technology!

All districts described similar immediate efforts to pivot students to distance learning by providing rich examples of collaborative efforts that highlighted their flexibility to take on additional or altogether different job roles to transition and support students and teachers into remote learning.

There were numerous other policies we uncovered that were unique to each school district and were testaments of district and school leaders' commitment to all students and to equitable service for those most affected by the pandemic. These policies and practices were unique in that they were customized for their respective communities. **Table 2** exhibits policies and practices that, based on the data collected, were unique to each district.

These findings compelled us to further engage with the data to then examine the relationships between and among the key findings (Timonen et al., 2018). We returned to the district-level memos to re-interpret and conceptualize the ways in which our participants' leadership policies and practices responded to ELs during the pandemic (Kolb, 2012). The final iteration of our grounded theory approach is presented in the discussion section that follows. This iteration allows us to further interpret the findings in order "to gain a better understanding of the characteristics (properties) and possible variation (dimensions) of categories and concepts that are emerging in the data"

TABLE 2 | Policies/practices unique to individual school districts.

District	Unique policy/practices
Marina	The district's Parent Advisory Committee Plus (PAC+) met virtually to review and provide input and feedback on the COVID-19 operations report during development.
Ocean	In a survey of teachers, just over 20% of teachers reported being very skilled/confident with teaching virtually. The district allocated three additional days for staff training to address this need at a cost of over $2.6 million.
Reef	A social emotional learning planning team was established consisting of a subcommittee of teachers, counselors, social workers, and health personnel that focused on lesson development for elementary and secondary as well as a universal social emotional screener to assess student need at the start of the 2020–2021 school year.
Sand	The district's goal was to ensure continuity for transitioning students into virtual learning and back to in-person learning. With that aim, the district's teaching and support staff shared practices during professional development to continue to incorporate SEAL, SDAIE strategies for English Learners in all grade levels and content areas through online instruction.
Shell	The district instituted a four-tiered intervention and support plan for 2020–2021 starting with (1) universal screening in Math and ELA for all students, (2) student support teams for students failing two or more classes, (3) subject specific support from 4 to 6 pm, Monday–Thursday, and (4) access to free and unlimited tutoring in real-time contracted by the district.

[4]Imagine Learning, Wonders and Elevation are all commercially published curricular resources that support English Learner language and content learning.

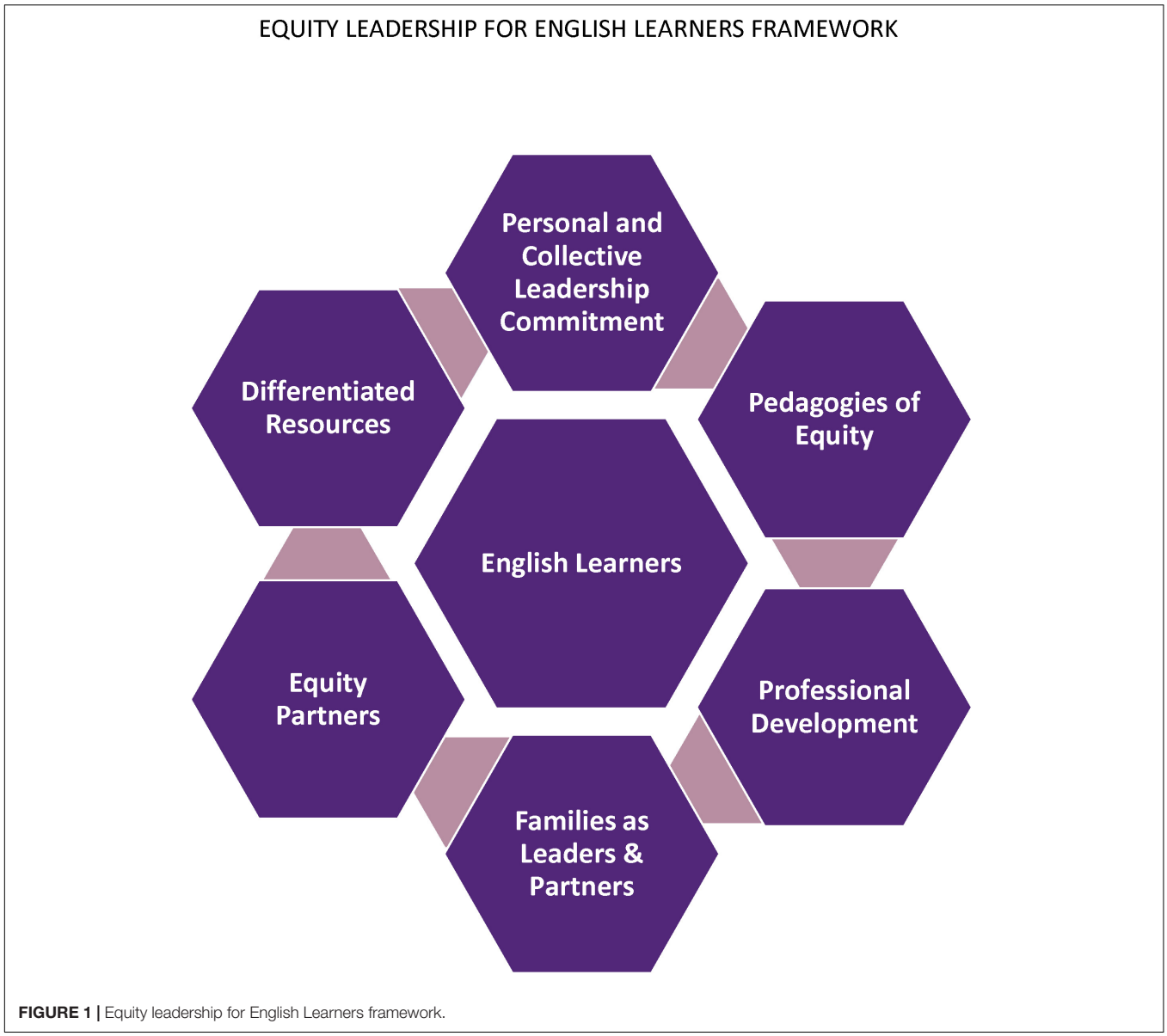

FIGURE 1 | Equity leadership for English Learners framework.

(Timonen et al., 2018 p. 8). As a result of these grounded analytic processes, we propose equity leadership for ELs as both theoretical and practical insights into the intensity and extensiveness of leaders' actions that inform the six themes described in the discussion section.

DISCUSSION: EQUITY LEADERSHIP FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

We conceive equity as comprised of a set of inter-related concepts to address deficit notions of the resources of Communities of Color that have fueled intolerance, bigotry, and assimilation throughout the history of United States public education and which are ingrained in social institutions (Valencia, 2010). Thus, we define equity leadership as two dimensional: 1) equity is the acknowledgment of inequities, lack of access, resources, opportunities, and academic and linguistic outcomes; and 2) equity is actualized through agency (individual and collective actions) to counter injustice and oppression, including differentiation and the distribution of resources based on the needs of those who have been historically marginalized and oppressed. Equity is achieved when outcomes change.

Across all of our districts, our analysis of site and district leaders' descriptions and evidence from local policy documents, led to the identification of six interrelated themes that are constructed from the findings: (1) Personal and Collective Commitment; (2) Pedagogies of Equity; (3) Professional Development; (4) Families as Leaders and Partners; (5) Equity Partners; and (6) Differentiated Resources. In what follows, we present these six themes accompanied by representative quotes. Based on our discussion of these six interrelated themes, we

then conceptualize a framework for equity leadership for English Learners (see **Figure 1**).

Personal and Collective Commitment

"*Less of me and. . . more of all hands on deck. . ..*"

Although not originally identified as one of the selection criteria, 20 out of 25 participants in our study were leaders of color, and their perspectives and actions in creating local policies, including supporting teachers of ELs and other marginalized groups in their districts and communities reflected their equity vision; their actions could be assessed as culturally responsive and sustaining (Franco et al., 2013; Paris and Alim, 2014; Santamaría, 2014). Their personal leadership style, words, and behaviors reflect their commitment to equity and guided what Rimmer (2016) describes the essential work of equity leaders. Their personal investments of time were also reflected in their actions as leaders as one superintendent reflects, *"Why?. . . because this is one-on-one [for students, staff, and families]. . .* A high school principal extends, "*I ended up reaching out to the teachers and say, "You only have 35 kids in your second period, I need to call every single one of them." I created a Google Sheet in Google Drive that all the teachers had access to and all of the students' information was there, like the name and phone numbers."*

All district-level leadership recognized the importance of building and hiring other district-level leaders with English Learner expertise in a role designated as such, as well as English Learner experts at the site-level to support ELs and their teachers.

All of our participants shifted to distance learning after having built a strong collaborative foundation and equity-focused foundation in their districts. As the Superintendent of Ocean District observed, "*In terms of our equity-based support model, all those major guiding principles, components, have been built by everyone, everybody on the team. Nothing was really built by me. . .I just facilitated the new structure."* According to Marina's Assistant Superintendent the pandemic brought *"[even] more of a collaborative manner. . . the school re-imagination team (has)parents and students. . .to really hear their perspective. . .and having the teachers' union be an early [participant]."*

Reflecting on his experience during COVID-19, one high school principal in Marina School District shared,

> *I think the part that makes me happy right now is the kids are talking. So, I think that's a credit to the teachers because they're trying to get the students to participate. I think it's a credit to the parents because they want their kids to participate, even though they're stressed out to the max about how is my kid going to learn? How am I going to go to work and make sure that my kid is learning? And I think that's a credit to the district that has such [a] great support network. That's not accidental. I don't think anything that's happening is by accident. The system was built to support it.*

Pedagogies of Equity

"[Keeping] English Learners in mind is keeping them in the center. . .. that has been our pedagogy."

The foundation for effective curriculum and instruction for ELs includes the development of both linguistic and academic content knowledge and skills to a high analytic level that prepares students for success in college and career (Saunders et al., 2013; Umansky et al., 2020). Interviews across all districts described purposeful efforts during distance learning with the goal of ensuring that ELs continued to have access to rigorous curriculum. Leaders advocated for three essential strategies: (1) sustaining the use of the adopted curriculum, (2) continuing designated and integrated English Language Development, and (3) increasing or improving services to support ELs. Analysis of the interviews provides an understanding of administrators' thinking and reasoning regarding how to achieve this equity goal for ELs even during the crisis presented by COVID-19.

Sustaining the Use of Adopted Standards-Based Curriculum Through Online Learning Platforms

> *"Teachers are still using the curriculum as they normally would. But now they're using more of the digital formats."*

District leaders reported that teacher leaders and specialists supported their colleagues to continue the use of the adopted standards-based curriculum while adapting instructional strategies to the online/distance learning platform(s). The Reef School District COVID-19 Operations Report included an example of this: "EL Coaches and EL Mentors support teachers to scaffold lessons utilizing best practices for English Language Development (ELD)." The Sand School District superintendent noted a question raised during planning for online instruction, *"How can we be more engaging using the different kinds of digital resources that we have?"* Discussing instructional strategies, an elementary principal in Marina School District noted, *"Before it was just the highlighter. . .But now, they're. . .trying to do that in the digital formats."* A rigorous curriculum plus digital tools was only the first step in these exemplary districts' efforts. Equally important was ensuring that EL students participated in a rigorous English Language Development program.

Differentiated English Language Development for Diverse English Learners

> *"And when we designed our curriculum during the summer we built in the different question and language stems that they would need for each unit at the different levels of language proficiency."*

Study districts all implemented a comprehensive ELD program as a matter of local policy (Gándara and Orfield, 2010), consisting of both designated and integrated ELD through the schedule, the curriculum, and the initiatives dedicated to meeting the specialized needs of ELs such as newcomer students, long term ELs, and ELs in dual language programs. Ocean School District provided dELD through both synchronous and asynchronous instruction and monitored the balance between the two, as noted by the EL coordinator "*. . . [ELD] can't be more asynchronous than synchronous. I actually checked those schedules."* The LCP from Marina School District identified scheduled times for elementary students outside of the regular school times for dELD, ". . .dedicated blocks of time in the morning and afternoon will be used for designated ELD and support for students with disabilities" which allowed students

with intersectional needs to receive online instruction in both areas. After this initial implementation, their innovative schedule was highlighted in a national webinar on distance learning.

Beyond scheduling, leaders developed instructional resources for dELD. In Sand School District the EL coordinator supported the asynchronous lessons noting, *"So teachers are provided with the introductory lessons for each cognitive skill with a zoom video that they could assign to students asynchronously."* The Marina School District EL coordinator met the challenge of providing sufficient opportunities for ELs to speak during dELD indicating, *"...the teachers utilized Google slides to embed some language frames...and then embed links...where the students would record their oral rehearsal."* Schoolwide implementation of EL strategies for all students ensured lessons were comprehensible for EL during iELD. School site-level leaders and EL Coordinators across districts indicated their focus on ELs as they observed, "*We have almost 46 to 47% ELs here on our campus [in Ocean]. So, everything we do is always with the emphasis and reflection and thought process of ELs."*

District leaders also recognized the specialized needs of three distinct groups of EL students: newcomers, students classified as ELs who have been in the United States 3 years or less (Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), 2015), long term ELs (LTELs), students who have been enrolled in a United States school for 6 years or more and have not been reclassified as fluent English proficient (Olsen, 2014); and ELs in Dual Language programs. The Shell School District LCP documented that "...designated supports for Long Term English Learners...are also being offered to address academic language acquisition." According to the superintendent, "These supports included digital resources that came with the curriculum that we had already adopted, but we hadn't purchased in the past...It has the English Learner supports already embedded [and] an additional system online." ELs in Dual Language (DL) immersion programs, and even these programs themselves, also needed support. The Sand School District EL coordinator noted, "*Site leadership needed reassurance that Dual Language CAN BE done in virtual spaces."*

Expanding Services and Supports

> *"The theme [in our district] right now for this new phase is support for success. Multiply that by 100 when it comes to our most vulnerable students, and by that, ELs, of course."*

Districts ensured that EL students had access to devices, internet connectivity, and head phones as described by the Ocean School District LCP so "...English Language Learners will have increased access to...early language literacy development, and be able to...engage in discussions to acquire language skills." We found that district leaders actively leveraged the crisis to increase services for ELs. As the Shell School District superintendent observed, "*I think that the COVID-19 exposed a number of gaps that we have within our educational system, not only in our district.... Many of our parents might be able to hire tutors...but specifically our English Learners don't have those additional supports...*" Districts used this emergency to address many of these inequities impacting ELs. Some districts purchased additional online components of their adopted curriculum as seen above. In their Operations Report, Ocean reported "...access to Spanish materials to ensure EL students identified as Emergent received the supports to access content during the COVID-19 closure." The Reef LCP increased support noting, "Further, the student services department will be working with classified staff members to ensure that our low-income students, foster students, and English Learners are aware of and participate in academic and social emotional support..." The EL Coordinator in Shell observed, *"This year, in the middle of a pandemic, we rolled out our first time in the district universal screening."* Districts hired additional bilingual instructional aides and arranged for afterschool tutoring, homework help and summer school for newcomers.

Significantly, leaders recognized the need for ELs, especially newcomers, to return to in-person instruction as soon as possible. The superintendent of Sand School District stated, *"There are some students that I want to bring back.... They are newcomers who can't...understand, and especially [if they speak] languages other than Spanish. They have the hardest time because they can't access, they need reality, they need total physical response, they need to see. And so, they need to come in."*

Districts planned and implemented learning hubs – small groups of students with specialized needs who come to school before the schools are opened to all students. In Shell School District, the EL coordinator observed, *"One of our next steps is to provide our ELs...whether they're newcomers or Long term, it doesn't matter. We're going to start with a small cohort."*

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, these leaders repeatedly demonstrated the ability to anticipate and respond proactively to the needs of ELs. Superintendents played a key role, but they were not alone. Assistant superintendents, EL directors and coordinators, principals, and teacher leaders all contributed to meeting ELs' needs. Leadership was evident, widely distributed throughout the system, based on a shared vision and coherence (Scheurich and Skrla, 2003; Honig, 2006; Hopkins, 2016), and led the focus on equity for ELs throughout the system.

Professional Development – Addressing the Digital Divide Through Effective Teaching for English Learners

> *"If you want teaching and learning to be solid, you have to have strong professional development...."*

The *National Study of English Learners and Digital Learning Resources* (United States Department of Education, 2018) surveyed 700 teachers of ELs regarding their use of digital learning resources (DLRs) and support features, including visual, auditory, translation, and collaboration and found that teachers use general DLRs rather than those designed specifically for EL students; very few teachers reported assigning DLR use to EL students outside of the classroom, and they reported barriers to using DLRs with EL students that stemmed from students' lack of technology resources at home. Linking this finding to the research base on effective teachers of ELs indicates that they build their knowledge about the curriculum and school context, engage in inquiry about their own practice, and deepen subject

and linguistic knowledge for teaching ELs (Goldenberg, 2008; Faltis et al., 2010; National Academies of Sciences Engineering and Medicine, 2017). They also support the development of family engagement strategies, policies, and programs (Mapp and Bergman, 2019), consistently analyze, and change their beliefs and practices (Lucas et al., 2018). Professional learning targeting both the use of EL-specific DLRs along with EL research-based pedagogies is essential for the development of effective EL instruction during remote learning.

Examples from policy documents include:

- Elementary and secondary schools have teacher leaders, EL coaches and EL mentors, who are provided extra professional development related to English language instruction and acquisition.
- The needs of EL students are being met by ensuring that all teachers have access to integrated ELD online materials as well as designated supports for the long term English Learners which are also being offered to address academic language acquisition. Additionally, bilingual para educators have been trained to provide additional support as needed to students.

All districts significantly increased professional development both for technology and to meet the equity pedagogies focused on ELs. The director of English Learners in Sand School District, shared the impact of the switch to remote learning on their professional development, *"It really forced us as a district to reevaluate the urgency for that need [technology training for teachers]. The whole department and the whole division started to think about how we were going to provide professional development for our teachers. And so the technology TOSA and one of our EL TOSAs got together and developed the series of professional development."* The Marina School District Director of English Learners described their professional development focused on using effective strategies and the ELD standards,

> *. . .for our first professional development day we offered an introductory workshop to the teacher toolkits [for EL instruction] and then. . .we had links to those [toolkits]. They are available digitally, as well as the ELD standards. And then as the year goes on what we are planning is, instead of kind of a large-scale big kind of PD, is how we are working a little bit more intentionally using our TOSA teachers.*

The shift to online professional learning was implemented as a result of districts' longer-term planning around ELD as these enhanced collaboration across divisions whose professional development agendas may not have intersected previously.

Families as Leaders and Partners

"We really need the parents to partner with us. . .."

The Migration Policy Institute's recent report (Sugarman and Lazarín, 2020) indicates that schools' efforts to support student learning at the onset of the pandemic fell short for many ELs and students in immigrant families; researchers who conducted this investigation identified key barriers, including the lack of access to digital devices and broadband, school-family communication gaps, and parents' limited capacity to support home learning. A bright spot of this study reveals that our sample district participants appear to have broken down some of these barriers and actualized promising practices that exemplify equity leadership. These include: intentionally prioritizing family-school partnerships, systematizing outreach, offering multilingual communication, and differentiating support for families of ELs – a testament to personal and collective commitment to address systemic inequities magnified by the pandemic.

At the onset of the pivot to distance learning, the primary focus across our sample districts was to ensure students and families had devices, internet connectivity, and information on how to access online learning sessions. Most study participants expressed views about families as leaders and partners in distance learning that represent counternarratives to research that indicated school systems struggle to meet the instructional and linguistic needs of ELs and communities with large EL populations, especially those challenged by communicating with parents who may have limited fluency in English (Tarasawa and Waggoner, 2015). These counternarratives offer opportunities for leaders to individually and collectively become actors within systems to enact equity through transformative action (Miller et al., 2020).

Proactive Outreach and Communication

"The parents are calling, and we're calling the parents and abuelitas [grandmothers], too."

Evidence from participant interview data and documented practices in local policy documents are reflective of research-based practices for family and community engagement. Most notably, these districts exemplify how districts can apply the core tenets of the Dual-Capacity Framework for Family-School Partnerships (Mapp and Kuttner, 2013; Mapp and Bergman, 2019) in distance learning contexts. These core tenets include the identification of challenges specific to school contexts and the creation of established process and organizational conditions that lead to policy and program goals intended to impact capacity outcomes.

Leaders expressed their sense of obligation and commitment to the families of English Learner students and identified specific actions to engender trust amongst school communities at a time when families and students are experiencing a triple pandemic (Cornelissen and Hermann, 2020). In Marina School District leaders consistently emphasized in their words and actions the need to reimagine family engagement based on expressed needs, including social-emotional support, food, and technological skills. Interview data and policy documents stressed that the expansion of multilingual communication was an important aspect of supporting families. A K-8 principal shared, *"Communication is everything. I think it's about continued communication in multiple languages, if we're going to talk about [differentiating for] our English Learners."* Additionally, the district's Local Continuity and Attendance Plan stipulates a commitment to shared decision-making:

Our core value of working collaboratively meant that our students, parents, and families worked alongside district staff to identify challenges and develop solutions. As our parents, students, and staff embraced the [district] spirit of collaboration and continual improvement they co-created the plan for school in the fall with the lessons from spring in mind.

A principal in Sand School District describes how she enlists community support to respond to parents who, "*may be overwhelmed by the kids experiencing isolation, the lack of being able to play and be social, work with their peers.*" This principal not only solicits district counselors to conduct outreach, she also leverages the assets her community liaisons contribute by facilitating mental health workshops for families. Although there was variation across our districts in the ability to provide multilingual communication, leaders expressed a consistent will to systematize proactive outreach to families of ELs, and they also identified innovative use of technology to provide access to distance learning. In Ocean School District, local policy documents identify the use of communication systems such as ParentSquare to increase the ability of staff to send messages to parents who speak a language other than English or Spanish. Reef School District leaders describe the creation of technical assistance videos provided in Spanish for families to assist their students. The district Language Line and translators are available to all schools and families to ensure that all communication, especially including instructional materials, are accessible. Notably, per the Learning Continuity and Attendance Plan, Reef Adult School offers English Language Development classes for parents as well as assistance with technology and distance learning. The Director of EL and World Language Programs in the Ocean School District describes her leadership efforts to empower families and provide a counternarrative to the deficit perspectives that often prevail. "*We needed our families, especially our EL parents that were so worried that they thought they weren't good enough, they weren't smart enough to teach and help their kids, to empower them to say, 'No, we're going to help you.*"

Differentiated Support for Family and Student Engagement During Distance Learning

"I think if your parents feel safe enough to ask you for something or tell you something's not right, it's because they trust you. . .."

Bryk and Schneider (2002) contend that social exchanges within a school community are dependent on social relationships, or relational trust. Leaders' actions validate these expectations and can result in enhanced collective capacities to support organizational change. The aforementioned Dual-Capacity Framework (Mapp and Kuttner, 2013; Mapp and Bergman, 2019) includes trust as an essential process condition, and our study participants proved to be pioneers in creating organizational conditions and establishing policy and program goals for equity leadership in distance learning intended to impact capacity outcomes for ELs. Based on interview and local policy document analyses, leaders expressed their intent to affect beliefs and values in the virtual learning space and their actions indicated they differentiated services and support for family and student engagement.

Our study also provided exemplars of efforts to get parents to engage with each other—a strategy that was described across several districts. They recognized the importance of connecting parents to share, answer, even commiserate with each other in their new role as parent and co-teacher during distance learning. The EL Coordinator in Shell School District repurposed requisite District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC) meetings to "*have a power group, a group of parents coming together. . .It's just a place for them to be able to speak*." Even though the district has other family meetings such as their "Supper with the Superintendent," the EL Coordinator responded to parents' expressed need for differentiated support to create a safe place where families could share, "*Hey, I'm struggling with this. What are you guys doing? How do I address that?*" Similarly, our analysis of local policy documents, namely the COVID-19 Operations Reports, also revealed concerted efforts to connect with families for delivering high-quality distance learning opportunities.

We should note that in our triangulation of data sources, we gathered more evidence of families as partners than families as leaders. The state-required Learning Continuity and Attendance Plan required districts to actively seek input from parents in the development of their plans for school reopening. Some districts used established parent leadership committees to support this; others used surveys to gather parent perspectives and preferences. We contend that an essential component of family engagement is the inclusion of families as leaders and that all families and especially those of marginalized groups like ELs, must be emboldened to be leaders and full partners in the development of plans for programs and services. Recent research supports the assertion that transformative possibilities emerge when we move from individualistic, deficit-based approaches to families to tapping nondominant parent, family, and community knowledge and collective capacities in the theory, policy, and practice of learning and systems change for educational equity (Barajas-López and Ishimaru, 2016).

Equity Partners

"[Our community partners] could get a better deal on [hotspots] than we could."

District leaders strategically and intentionally accessed their political, economic and social capital to support ELs throughout the pandemic. They actively sought out additional funding sources that would allow them to obtain to circumvent institutional, financial, and personnel roadblocks and to implement prompt and decisive action during the pandemic. During the initial pivot and continuing during the initial months of distance learning, all leaders in our study asserted their commitment to focusing on immediate needs to ensure all students would have the best education possible in a very difficult situation. The most pressing immediate needs were devices and internet connectivity for students to participate in distance learning from home. Many districts had to purchase devices; all had to obtain hotspots for internet connectivity. We found instances where administrators enlisted the support of city leaders to access lower pricing and ensue delivery of the needed technology. For example, the Sand Elementary School

District superintendent described her assessment of existing district resources and equity partners' political capital to address the digital divide in her district's community. *"We were all busy trying to buy hotspots and, you know, find that information for our families, we ended up partnering with the city because the police, because they could get a better deal than we could."*

A high school principal in Marina District highlighted the benefit of the district's reliance on social capital to engage community partners in supporting English Learner newcomer students and other high needs populations to achieve online connectivity.

> *Community foundations came together and donated a total of about $55,000 to help us plug that gap, and we're now in the process of doing what we can to get students connected with a real internet connection, rather than just a wi-fi hotspot so that the hotspots would be used for people [our newcomer population] where there is no possibility of internet connection.*

Even more challenging as competition for hotspots increased, some districts found themselves with delivery promised, and then rescinded by the telecommunications companies as larger districts began to place their orders, leaving medium-sized districts empty-handed. The superintendent from Ocean school district relied on political capital to ensure delivery. The superintendent expanded his community support to include elected officials and government agencies to advocate for his most vulnerable students and families.

> *Originally we were supposed to start school on August 17 but [our telecommunications company] overpromised and underdelivered. They were supposed to get us all the devices that we needed, or hotspots, by the 13th or 12th and they never did. So, we had to get on the phone with their top leader. They said, "Well we can't get them to you for another 2 weeks." I said no, so we ended up calling the governor's office. Then we talked to [our congressional representative] at Washington. . . and he made phone calls, the governor made phone calls, and all of a sudden we got all the hotspots.*

We observed that leaders across all of our districts leveraged various forms of capital— cultural, social, political and economic—to connect with each other, their communities and with other partners to leverage key resources for the families most in need. These actions came not from a deficit mind set but rather from a place of commitment and connection (Clark-Louque et al., 2019).

Differentiating Resources: Recognizing and Responding to Equity Gaps

> *"That was tough for us to realize the inequities. . .we saw the extreme disparities. . . " "I go back to this idea. . .one size doesn't fit all."*

California's Local Control Funding Formula is designed to achieve equity through differentiated funding policies at the local level, inclusive of additional funding for targeted student groups such as ELs (Humphrey et al., 2017; California Education Code, 2018). All case study district- and site-leaders stated that the shift to distance learning required them to recognize and act on equity gaps exacerbated by the pandemic, resulting in policies and practices that differentiated human and digital resources. Our results illuminate several exemplars of equity-focused, critical leadership (Santamaría, 2014) that result in key vertical decision-making processes related to finances, resources and staffing focused on vulnerable populations (Edley and Kimner, 2018; Allbright et al., 2019).

Leveraging Resources to Differentiate Services for English Learners

Consistent with the American Institute for Research (2020) survey of public education's response to COVID-19, our study found that leaders in the selected case study districts prioritized resources to support ELs and their teachers. When describing both the initial pivot and ensuing months of distance learning, all leaders in our study asserted their commitment to focusing on the pressing needs to ensure all students would have the best education possible in a very difficult situation.

Our triangulated interview and local policy document analyses highlighted our study participants' commitment to local policy coherence and vertical articulation for resource distribution (Edley and Kimner, 2018; Allbright et al., 2019) during distance learning. Leaders in our case study districts responded to the resource and staffing challenges of the pandemic by addressing the limitations of schooling under quarantine in a way that is consistent with their values and beliefs for educational equity (Rogers and Ishimoto, 2020).

Shell School District Superintendent exemplifies this congruity as he states, *"We feel that we have to . . .through our supplemental and concentration grant funds to really provide those students that they were intended to be used for, those additional resources so we can compensate for some of those areas that they may have greater challenges in as compared to the general population."*

Most district local policy documents corroborated this commitment to differentiated resource allocation during distance learning by explicitly stating the intent to increase or improve services for ELs as well as delineating actions and services based on student outcome data sources. The following example from Sand K-8 School District specifies an additional dimension in their Local Continuity and Attendance Plan wherein they commit to providing access to the full curriculum and extended learning opportunities.

> *The actions and services outlined in this plan have been principally directed toward English Learner and low-income students based on both qualitative and quantitative data. Funds have been directed to support educational programs aimed at enhancing the development of both academic literacy and English as a second language, extended and enhanced programs in the arts, sciences, mathematics, and other extended learning opportunities beyond the school day.*

Additionally, Sand K-8 School District exemplified coherence across ongoing initiatives and funding as evidenced by multiple policy documents that stipulated LCAP funds earmarked for increasing learning supports for target students, including counselors in every school, social-emotional learning,

visual and performing arts, and a 1:1 in-school iPad and Chromebook program.

Responsiveness to English Learner Typologies

In most districts, leaders emphasized the importance of differentiating and/or repurposing staffing based on specific English Learner typologies, including newcomers and Long term English Learners. The assistant superintendent of educational services in Marina K-12 School District described the needs of late-arrival newcomer students (Guatemalan population) and expressed the issues of extra time and resources to obtain sufficient credits to graduate. "*Spend more money to prolong their [newcomer's] day or can we think creatively in terms of just their curriculum or how they spend their day or why does it have to be just these six periods? So those are the things I think about in terms of resources for our most vulnerable kids."*

Local policy documents also indicated an increase in supplemental materials and staff to support ELs. "Additionally, bilingual para educators have been trained to provide additional support as needed to [English Learner] students."(Shell School District LCP)

Similarly, leaders in Reef School District included the following in their COVID-19 Operations Report and their Local Continuity and Attendance Plan. "In addition to the work of EL coaches and mentors, the [Reef School District] provides support to EL students and families telephonically, as well as online. The Language Line and translators are available to all schools and families to ensure that all communication, especially including instructional materials, are accessible."

Overall, leaders in our study affirm their personal and collective responsibility to provide differentiated resources as they actualize their responsibility for and commitment to education equity during the pandemic (Edley and Kimner, 2018; American Institute for Research, 2020).

CONCLUSION

> *"Our English Learners can and will succeed through this all if we as teachers reach out, and, again, maintain the rigor, maintain the relevance, make it relevant to their life, value who they are. Multilingualism is an asset, especially during this time of COVID."*

This study demonstrates the value of grounded theory to examine policies and practices of leaders of color during the early phases of COVID-19 as they relate to one of the most vulnerable populations in our nation—English Learners. The global pandemic brought into crisis most, if not all, of the major societal institutions. As we explored how education leaders enacted equity through their actions, words, and written documents, our observations led us to conceptualize equity leadership for English Learners as a framework during the pandemic. Our analysis did not include the experiences of English Learner students, nor of their teachers directly; these limitations warrant that further research should extend far beyond the duration of the pandemic. Indeed, the leaders in our study expressed as much and are now planning for the learning recovery that will undoubtedly need to occur across our nation for our children most in need. As one middle school principal in Reef School District summarized:

> *I see it as an opportunity to interrupt how we've always done things in education, being an institution with structures and systems. We know that we have an opportunity and a responsibility as leaders to examine those systems and structures and identify ways where it's not working. We know that the systems are not working for all of our students and so, if this is an opportunity, I just encourage everybody…to examine what we've been trained for [what an equitable] education can look like and [what equitable] teaching and learning can look like and find those opportunities where we can make shifts to better support our students.*

This also has implications for leadership preparation programs; creating equity policies requires that emerging leaders have the knowledge and tools that implementing equity policies in schools demands.

Our framework proposes conceptual clarity regarding equity leadership by defining six empirically generated themes that addresses the need for coherence in systematizing equity. This framework includes the aligned effort of educators across all levels of the educational system, even including outside partners. Nevertheless, the six themes of our framework warrant further exploration; indeed most, if not all, could readily apply to other marginalized student groups and would require specificity related to each student groups' unique needs. In fact, the Equity Leadership for English Learners Framework does not solely reflect the policies and practices of leaders of color alone; they are generative and require testing and replication (Lucas, 2003).

We end on a note of appreciation for educators, students and families. We sought to understand excellence in leadership during the pandemic; we found evidence of systemwide examples of excellence *and* equity from deeply committed educators. The district and site-level leaders in our study recognized the importance of high-quality curriculum for English Learners, the professional development to enact this curriculum, the value of partnerships with families and community support, and the wisdom and courage to differentiate resources through the lens of equity.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Loyola Marymount University IRB. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

ML is Distinguished Professor and founding Executive Director of the Center for Equity for English Learners in the School of Education at Loyola Marymount University. Her research addresses the intersections and impact of policies and practices for culturally and linguistically diverse students, their teachers and school leaders. LK is an Adjunct Professor in the School of Education at Loyola Marymount University where she teaches courses in Educational Leadership. She recently retired as Superintendent of Azusa Unified School District in California. EA is the Director of Programs and Partnerships for the Center for Equity for English Learners and Affiliated Faculty in the School of Education at Loyola Marymount University. For over 30 years she has collaborated with TK–12th-grade educators and conducted research in the areas of leadership, curriculum, integrated standards-based instruction, assessment, and family/community engagement in culturally and linguistically diverse settings. GL is a Research Associate with the Center for Equity for English Learners in the School of Education at Loyola Marymount University. She has 20 years of experience conducting educational program evaluations and utilizing mixed methods for research on culturally relevant and responsive education. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

FUNDING

CEEL-LMU gratefully acknowledges support and partial operational funding provided by the Sobrato Philanthropies to advance this work.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2021.636281/full#supplementary-material

REFERENCES

Allbright, T. N., Marsh, J. A., Hall, M., Tobben, L., Picus, L. O., and Lavadenz, M. (2019). Conceptualizing equity in the implementation of california education finance reform. *Am. J. Educ.* 125, 173–200. doi: 10.1086/701247

American Institute for Research (2020). *National Survey of Public Education's Response to COVID-19 [Webinar]*. Washington, D.C: American Institute for Research.

Armas, E., Lavadenz, M., and Olsen, L. (2015). *Falling Short on the Promise to English Learners: A Report on Year One LCAPs*. Californians Together. Long Beach, CA: Californians Together.

Barajas-López, F., and Ishimaru, A. M. (2016). 'Darles el Lugar': a place for nondominant family knowing in educational equity. *Urban Educ.* 55, 38–65. doi: 10.1177/0042085916652179

Bryk, A. S., and Schneider, B. L. (2002). *Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

California Department of Education (2019). *English Language Arts/English Language Development (ELA/ELD) Framework, 2014*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.

California Education Code (2018). *California Education Code §52064*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.

Castañeda (1981). *Castañeda v. Pickard, 648 F.2d 989* (*5th Circuit*).

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory*. London: Sage Publications.

Clark-Louque, A. R., Lindsey, R. B., Quezada, R. L., and Jew, C. L. (2019). *Equity Partnerships: A Culturally Proficient Guide to Family, School, and Community Engagement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Corbin, J., and Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3rd Edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cornelissen, S., and Hermann, A. (2020). *A Triple Pandemic? The Economic Impacts of COVID-19 Disproportionately Affect Black and Hispanic Households*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University: Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Data Quest (2020). *Data Quest – Student & School Data Reports*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.

Denzin, N. K. (1989). *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*, 3rd Edn. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Ed-Data (2020). 2019–20 Enrollment and Student Demographic Data. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.

Edley, C., and Kimner, H. (2018). *Education Equity in California*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University: Policy Analysis for California Education.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Public Law 114–95. (2015). Available online at: https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-114publ95/pdf/PLAW-114publ95.pdf (accessed March 24, 2021).

Faltis, C., Arias, M. B., and Ramírez-Marín, F. (2010). Identifying relevant competencies for secondary teachers of english learners. *Biling. Res. J.* 33, 307–328. doi: 10.1080/15235882.2010.529350

Faltis, C. J., and Valdés, G. (2016). "Preparing teachers for teaching in and advocating for linguistically diverse classrooms: a vade mecum for teacher educators," in *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, eds C. Bell and D. Gitomer (Washington, D.C: American Educational Research Association), 549–592. doi: 10.3102/978-0-935302-48-6_8

Franco, C. S., Ott, M. G., and Robles, D. P. (2013). "Lessons learned. cultural assets inform actions," in *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership*, ed. M. Grogan (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass), 93–110.

Galloway, M. K., and Ishimaru, A. M. (2017). Equitable leadership on the ground: converging on high-leverage practices. *Educ. Policy Anal. Arch.* 25, 1–36. doi: 10.4324/9781315176093-1

Gándara, P., and Orfield, G. (2010). *A return to the "Mexican room": The Segregation of Arizona's English learners*. Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA.

García, O. (2009). Emergent bilinguals and TESOL: what's in a name? *TESOL Q.* 43, 322–326. doi: 10.1002/j.1545-7249.2009.tb00172.x

Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *J. Teach. Educ.* 53, 106–116. doi: 10.1177/0022487102053002003

Goddard, R. D., and Miller, R. J. (2010). The Conceptualization, measurement, and effects of school leadership: introduction to the special issue. *Elem. Sch. J.* 111, 219–225. doi: 10.1086/656298

Goldenberg, C. (2008). Teaching english language learners: what the research does – and does not– say. *Am. Educ.* 32, 8–24.

Guinier, L., and Torres, G. (2002). *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gumus, S., Bellibas, M. S., Esen, M., and Gumus, E. (2018). A Systematic review of studies on leadership models in educational research from 1980 to 2014. *Educ. Manag. Adm. Leadersh.* 46, 25–48. doi: 10.1177/1741143216659296

Hakuta, K. (2020). A policy history of leadership dilemmas in english learner education. *Leadersh. Policy Sch.* 19, 6–9. doi: 10.1080/15700763.2020.1714665

Honig, M. I. (2006). "Complexity and policy implementation," in *New directions in Education Policy Implementation: Confronting Complexity*, ed. M. I. Honig (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press), 1–25.

Hopkins, M. (2016). Beliefs in context: understanding language policy implementation at a systems level. *Educ. Policy* 30, 573–605. doi: 10.1177/0895904814550073

Humphrey, D., Koppich, J., Lavadenz, M., Marsh, J., O' Day, J., Plank, D., et al. (2017). *Paving the Way to Equity and Coherence? The Local Control Funding Formula in Year 3*. Stanford, CA: Local Control Funding Formula Research Collaborative.

Hutchinson, S. A. (2001). "Education and grounded theory," in *Qualitative Research in Education: Focus and Methods*, eds R. R. Sherman and R. B. Webb (Abingdon, OX: Routledge Falmer), 123–140.

Khalifa, M. A., Gooden, M. A., and Davis, J. E. (2016). Culturally responsive school leadership: a synthesis of the literature. *Rev. Educ. Res.* 86, 1272–1311. doi: 10.3102/0034654316630383

Kolb, S. M. (2012). Grounded theory and the constant comparative method: valid research strategies for educators. *J. Emerg. Trends Educ. Res. Policy Stud.* 3, 83–86. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199922604.003.0004

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! the case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory Into Pract.* 34, 159–165. doi: 10.1080/00405849509543675

Lambert, L., Zimmerman, D. P., and Gardner, M. E. (2016). *Liberating Leadership Capacity: Pathways to Educational Wisdom*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Lavadenz, M., Armas, E. G., Murillo, M. A., and Jáuregui-Hodge, S. (2019). Equity for english learners: evidence from four years of california's local control funding formula. *Peabody J. Educ.* 94, 176–192. doi: 10.1080/0161956X.2019.1598113

Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., and Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How Leadership Influences Student Learning.* Review of Research. New York,NY: Wallace Foundation.

Lhamon, C. E., and Gupta, V. (2015). *Dear Colleague Letter*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division and Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights.

López, F. A. (2017). Altering the trajectory of the self-fulfilling prophecy: asset-based pedagogy and classroom dynamics. *J. Teach. Educ.* 68, 193–212. doi: 10.1177/0022487116685751

López, F. A., Desai, M., and Tintiangco-Cubales, A. (2020). "Asset-based pedagogy: student, family, and community engagement for the academic and social-emotional learning of multilingual students," in *Improving Education for Multilingual and English Learner Students: Research to Practice. California Department of Education*, eds P. Krizo and A. Calinsky (Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education), 63–114.

Lucas, J. W. (2003). Theory-testing, generalization, and the problem of external validity. *Sociol. Theory* 21, 236–253. doi: 10.1111/1467-9558.00187

Lucas, T., Strom, K., Bratkovich, M., and Wnuk, J. (2018). Inservice preparation for mainstream teachers of english language learners: a review of the empirical literature. *Educ. Forum* 82, 156–173. doi: 10.1080/00131725.2018.1420852

Mapp, K. L., and Bergman, E. (2019). *Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, Version 2*. Available online at: https://www.dualcapacity.org/ (accessed November 1, 2020).

Mapp, K. L., and Kuttner, P. J. (2013). *Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Mavrogordato, M., and White, R. S. (2020). Leveraging policy implementation for social justice: how school leaders shape educational opportunity when implementing policy for english learners. *Educ. Adm. Q.* 56, 3–45. doi: 10.1177/0013161x18821364

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 6th Edn. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., and Grenier, R. S. (2019). *Qualitative Research on Practice: Examples for Discussion and Analysis*, 2nd Edn. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, R., Liu, K., and Ball, A. (2020). Critical counter-narrative as transformative methodology for educational equity. *Rev. Res. Educ.* 44, 269–300. doi: 10.3102/0091732X20908501

National Academies of Sciences Engineering and Medicine (2017). *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, doi: 10.17226/24677

National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *Common Core of Data*. Available online at: https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/ (accessed November 1, 2020).

Nichols, L. V. (1974). *414 U.S.* 563.

Olsen, L. (2014). Meeting the unique needs of long-term english language learners. *Natl. Educ. Assoc.* 1, 1–36. doi: 10.4324/9781315151236-1

Paris, D., and Alim, H. S. (2014). What are we seeking to sustain through culturally sustaining pedagogy? A loving critique forward. *Harvard Educ. Rev.* 84, 95–100.

Rimmer, J. (2016). *Equity-Centered Capacity Building: Essential Approaches for Excellence & Sustainable School System Transformation*. Available online at: https://capacitybuildingnetwork.org/article9/ (accessed March 24, 2021).

Rogers, J., and Ishimoto, M. (2020). *Learning Lessons: U.S. Public High Schools and the COVID-19 Pandemic in Spring 2020*. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access.

Russell, F. A., and Von Esch, K. S. (2018). Teacher leadership to support English language learners. *Phi Delta Kappan* 99, 52–56. doi: 10.1177/0031721718767862

Santamaría, L. J. (2014). Critical change for the greater good: multicultural perceptions in educational leadership toward social justice and equity. *Educ. Adm. Q.* 50, 347–391. doi: 10.1177/0013161X13505287

Santamaría, L. J., and Santamaría, A. P. (2012). *Applied Critical Leadership in Education: Choosing Change*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Santos, M., and Hopkins, M. (2020). "Creating schools and systems that support asset-based, high-quality instruction for multilingual learners," in *Improving Education for Multilingual and English Learner Students: Research to Practice.* California Department of Education, eds P. Krizo and A. Calinsky (Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education), 413–504.

Saunders, W., Goldenberg, C., and Marcelletti, D. (2013). English language development: guidelines for instruction. *Am. Educ.* 37, 13–39.

Scanlan, M., and López, F. A. (2014). *Leadership for Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Schools*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Scheurich, J. J., and Skrla, L. (2003). *Leadership for Equity and Excellence: Creating High-Achievement Classrooms, Schools, and Districts*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin press.

Shields', C. M. (2010). Transformative leadership: working for equity in diverse contexts. *Educ. Adm. Q.* 46, 558–589. doi: 10.1177/0013161X10375609

Starr, J. P. (2020). *Real Leadership for Educational Equity: If Not Now, When? Phi Delta Kappan*. Available online at: https://kappanonline.org/leadership-educational-equity-now-starr/ (Accessed November 1, 2020).

Sugarman, J., and Lazarín, M. (2020). *Educating English Learners during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Policy Ideas for States and School Districts*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

Tarasawa, B., and Waggoner, J. (2015). Increasing parental involvement of english language learner families: what the research says. *J. Child. Poverty* 21, 129–134. doi: 10.1080/10796126.2015.1058243

Timonen, V., Foley, G., and Conlon, C. (2018). Challenges when using grounded theory: a pragmatic introduction to doing GT research. *Int. J. Qual. Methods* 17, 1–10. doi: 10.4135/9781529716658.n1

Umansky, I. M., Hopkins, M., and Dabach, D. B. (2020). Ideals and realities: an examination of the factors shaping newcomer programming in six US school districts. *Leadersh. Policy Schools* 19, 36–59. doi: 10.1080/15700763.2020.1712731

United States Department of Education (2018). *National Study of English Learners and Digital Learning Resources*. Washington, D.C: United States Department of Education.

Valencia, R. (2010). *Dismantling Contemporary Deficit Thinking: Educational Thought and Practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Weaver-Hightower, M. B. (2008). An ecological metaphor for educational policy analysis: a call to complexity. *Educ. Res.* 37, 153–167. doi: 10.3102/0013189x08318050

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications*, 6th Edn. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.