

EDL 520: Module 2 Critical Thinking

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When comparing the CO-PSAT evidence-based reading and writing academic achievement data over the past seven years, there is a stark difference in the academic achievement of the student body as a whole compared to multilingual learners (MLs). Overall, Fort Collins High School exceeded expectations with regards to academic achievement, 85%, in 2023. Comparatively, however, the rating for multilingual learners was “does not meet” expectations for current performance at 1% (Colorado Department of Education, 2024). See data presented in Appendix A. Due to these differences, a team of English Language Development (ELD) teachers at Fort Collins High School would like to investigate why achievement is low for MLs in reading and writing.

The ELD team is motivated to determine the root cause of the very large achievement gap presented by the CO PSAT achievement data. This particular data was chosen because it is the same data presented in the school’s unified improvement plan (UIP). What the percentages do not reflect is the number of students represented by the data. For the 2023 year’s achievement data, the 85th percentile rank included an achievement N-count of 628, whereas the 1st percentile rank for MLs had an achievement N-count of 20 (Colorado Department of Education, 2024). Currently, there are 1910 students enrolled for the 2024-2025 school year at FCHS, and 129 students are MLs, 6.75% of the school population. One of the reasons that MLs are underrepresented in the CO PSAT data is that many students choose to opt out of taking the test. Approximately two-thirds of the MLs receiving ELD services at FCHS have an English proficiency level of NEP, non-English proficient, due to the Newcomer students program housed at FCHS. Nevertheless, the data that is presented, as well as the fact that a majority of the ELD students at FCHS are NEP level, suggest that literacy interventions for all MLs is a necessity.

Engaging in the root cause analysis using the 5 Whys protocol allowed the ELD team to streamline the approach to developing a counter-measure to the identified issue (*5 Whys*, n.d.). The ELD team currently consists of 5 full-time ELD teachers. As the numbers of MLs at Fort Collins have increased over the years, so have the number of teachers. However, the growth in recent years has felt exponential. It is easy for the team to argue the need for more funding and staffing, but the argument becomes significantly stronger with the data and root cause analysis to back it up.

The counter-measure developed by the ELD team was: Strategically correlate ELD staff and student schedules so that every ML has the opportunity for literacy intervention in content classes. Additional support will be provided by a newly hired intervention specialist.

Traditionally, the ELD teachers at FCHS have struggled to provide literacy support to the number of ML students within the ELD program. Students with lower English proficiency levels have a targeted English Language Development class, whereas students with limited English proficiency might receive lesser support through a co-taught content area class, where the class is team taught with an ELD teacher. Unfortunately, there are times that some ML students receive neither of these supports, and hence may not receive any direct literacy intervention. The first step to remedy this issue is to ensure that each ML at FCHS has access to literacy intervention in some form within their schedule, whether it is a ELD class, a co-taught class, or through a pull-out option with a newly hired academic interventionist. The next level to the counter-measure is to ensure that the literacy intervention that MLs receive are robust enough that they will show improvement in reading and writing, such as interventions suggested by Morita-Mullaney, Gao, and Zhang (2023), i.e. development of oral language, a focus on literacy in the native language, and explicitly teaching reading. A professional learning community

course proposal for the 2024-2025 school year has been submitted and approved. The co-teaching PLC will allow content area teachers to collaboratively plan for embedding literacy supports within content area classes. In conjunction with these interventions, there is a need for a research-based English language development curriculum for the targeted ELD classes. District leaders are aware of this need, and the curriculum adoption process is projected to begin in Fall of 2024.

The Colorado Department of Education English Language Development Guidebook describes guidance for how to implement Colorado's READ Act for MLs. Following the requirements of the READ Act in conjunction with meeting the needs of English language learners, by law, can be complimentary, but also should address the respective needs of each. As stated in the guidebook, "Literacy intervention instruction for MLs should be carefully planned to provide the individualized linguistic supports and scaffolds necessary to ensure MLs can access the content of the intervention and should be provided in addition to, not in place of, core literacy instruction and the LIEP" (*English Language Development Guidebook Chapter 5: Components of an Effective Language Instruction Educational Program*, 2023, p. 10). The root cause analysis and suggested interventions aim to provide the necessary supports for MLs, particularly MLs also on READ plans. In providing these supports for MLs, the goal is not just to narrow the academic achievement gap, but also to support the overall language development and proficiency for the English learners at Fort Collins High School.

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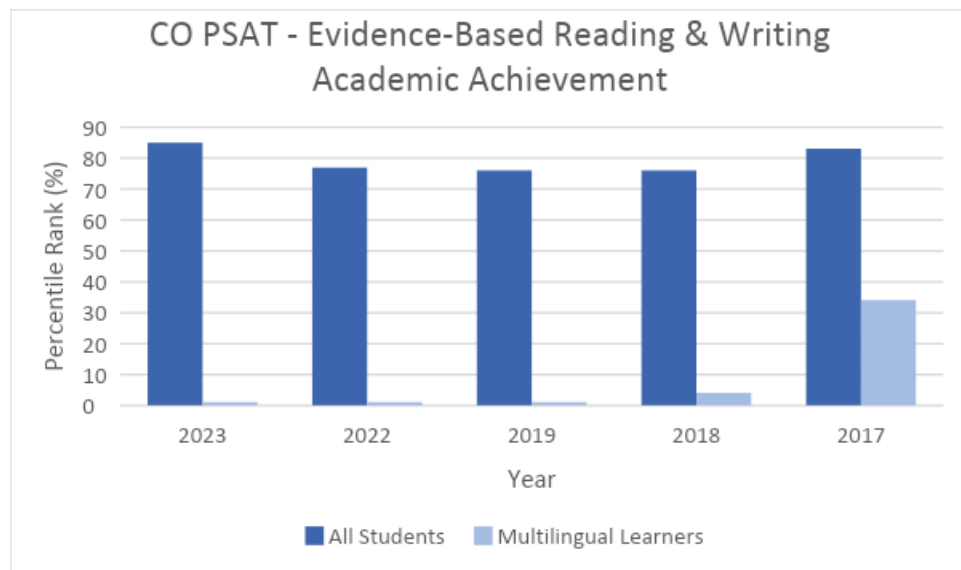
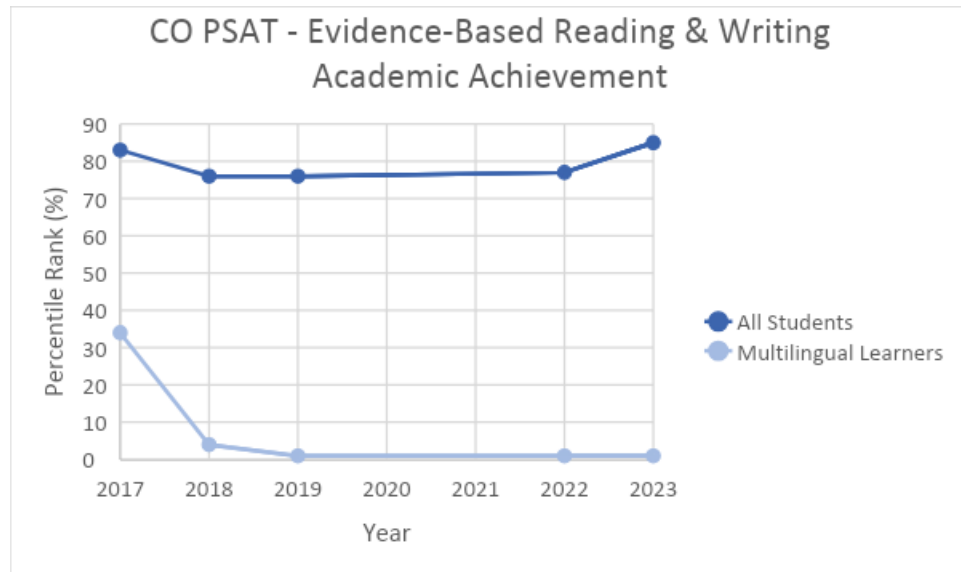
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Appendix A

Reading & Writing Academic Achievement Data for Fort Collins High School



Appendix B

Root-Cause Analysis

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graph TD; A[ ] -- Why? --> B[ ]; B -- Why? --> C[ ]; C -- Why? --> D[ ]; D --- E[ ]
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The diagram is a vertical flowchart template for Root-Cause Analysis. It consists of five empty rectangular boxes with rounded corners, arranged vertically. The first three boxes are connected by downward-pointing arrows, each containing the text "Why?". The fourth and fifth boxes are not connected by an arrow.