

Announcing the Final Examination of Heather A. Linville (LLC Cohort 12)

Date and Location: March 13, 2014 at 2:00 p.m.
LLC Conference Room, 422 Sherman Hall

Title: A Mixed Methods Investigation of ESOL Teacher Advocacy: "It's not going in and just teaching English"

English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) teachers are called to act as advocates for English language learners (ELLs) in the main professional standards for initial ESOL teacher certification due to the widely acknowledged belief that ELLs are a population in need of advocacy in K-12 public schools in the United States. Recognizing the lack of empirical research on ESOL teacher advocacy, this mixed methods study investigates ESOL teacher cognitions (beliefs, thoughts, attitudes; Borg, 2006) about advocacy and their actions as advocates. Survey (n=511) and interview (n=15) data confirm that ESOL teachers recognize the need for advocacy and have positive cognitions about advocacy. This research also affirms the inclusion of advocacy in the professional standards, as ESOL teachers believe it is their professional responsibility to advocate for ELLs. Prior professional and life experiences play a role in forming ESOL teachers' cognitions about advocacy, as do their current teaching contexts. The ESOL teachers define advocacy as monitoring for challenges to ELLs' success, speaking up to raise awareness or inform others about ELL issues, providing resources or services, encouraging ELLs, and empowering ELLs to advocate for themselves. Professional responsibility, knowledge of the Standards, years of ESOL teaching experience, a supportive school context for advocacy, and self-efficacy in advocating are predictive of greater advocacy actions. The teacher education program is identified as important in developing awareness of the need for advocacy and in preparing ESOL teachers with the skills needed for their future advocacy work. Finally, a framework for advocacy is presented which identifies the intended recipients of ESOL teacher advocacy (ELLs, ELL families, and ESOL teachers themselves). Potential co-advocates are also identified, ranging from ELLs, their families, and general education teachers, to administrative and community leaders. The final goals of ESOL teacher advocacy are clarified as improving ELLs' educational outcomes, enhancing their life chances, and challenging societal inequities. ESOL teachers are crucial in noticing and speaking up about injustices on behalf of ELLs, thus laying the foundation for larger societal changes that will challenge the injustices that continue to make such advocacy for ELLs necessary.

Dissertation Committee: Beverly Bickel, Chair
Joann Crandall, Co-Chair
Claudia Galindo
Linda Valli
Diane Staehr Fenner

The public is welcome to observe.