

# 3 **The Impact of a Professional Development Program to Improve Urban Middle-Level English Language Learner Achievement**

**Jennifer Friend**

*University of Missouri – Kansas City  
Kansas City, Missouri*

**Ryan Most**

*Kansas City, Kansas Public School District  
Kansas City, Kansas*

**Kenneth McCrary**

*Belton, Missouri Public School District  
Belton, Missouri*

## **ABSTRACT**

*This mixed-methodological study examined changes in perceptions of teachers (n = 70) engaged in a two-year professional development program designed to meet the unique needs of English Language Learners (ELL), and changes in ELL students' (n = 235) math and reading achievement scores. The study was conducted in two urban middle schools in Kansas with high percentages of ELLs and students from poverty backgrounds. Paired-samples t-tests of 2006 and 2007 state math and reading assessments for the ELL cohort demonstrated statistically significant differences in achievement levels, and the students' growth exceeded the gains made in proficiency levels among ELL students statewide. Findings from the qualitative analysis of the teacher surveys include perceptions of the needs of urban middle-level ELLs, pedagogical strategies perceived as effective with ELLs, and recommendations for strengthening relationships among ELL students, their non-ELL peers, and adults. Implications for improved instruction for ELLs include the value of multiculturalism, the need for first language support, and the effectiveness of professional development on elements of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) for all teachers.*