

TEACHERS' EVALUATION PRACTICES  
AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE  
UTILITY OF ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

by

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ABSTRACT

Little is known about the assessment philosophy or classroom assessment practices of teachers working with students with learning disabilities. The purpose of this study then was to broaden the knowledge base in this area. Using a type III, case study design (Kazdin, 1982), the measurement activities of six learning assistance teachers and an equal number of teachers of the learning disabled were examined. During a structured interview, participants were queried about their assessment philosophy, their methods for data interpretation, and the kinds of assessment tools and strategies they typically use to evaluate student performance. Additionally, they were asked to discuss the primary concern they have about the measurement devices they regularly employ. The subjects also described the types of assessment information available to them when a student is referred to their program and rated the utility of this information for instructional planning. Finally they were questioned about what they would like to see happen in the field of assessment in the future.

An examination of the subjects' response patterns revealed several important themes. First, the teachers'

espoused philosophy on assessment did not necessarily agree with actual classroom practice. Second, while teachers reported using a myriad of assessment devices to monitor student progress, they also expressed concerns about the "technical" adequacy of many of these devices as well as the time required to manage some of them in the classroom. Third, they indicated that the types of assessment information available at the time of referral were not always the most useful for the development of remedial programs. Finally, the subjects reported a need for more time to conduct assessments of their students as well as for more time to consult with their colleagues and other professionals about their assessment findings. On the basis of these results, problematic areas in the assessment of learning disabled students were postulated. Subsequently seven "principles" were proposed in an effort to describe characteristics which may be necessary for the development of an effective classroom assessment program for this population. Additionally, it was suggested that further research is needed on the measurement practices of teachers working with learning disabled students as a number of questions remain to be answered.

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I would like to thank my supervisory committee for their insights and guidance. In particular, I would like to thank my supervisor for his continual support and encouragement.

## DEDICATION

To my parents, for their unconditional love and support.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

To date, the assessment of youngsters with learning disabilities has been a controversial and troublesome endeavour (Tindal & Marston, 1986; Tucker, Stevens, & Ysseldyke, 1983). While assessment activities have been pervasive and important in this field, investigators have primarily concentrated on examining the appropriateness and efficacy of this practice. In fact, at least five different assessment-related dilemmas are discussed in the professional literature: (1) the problems associated with translating conceptual definitions of learning disabilities into assessment procedures that are defensible from either a scientific or a practical viewpoint (Tindal & Marston, 1986; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Epps, 1983; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, Shinn, & McGue, 1982); (2) the difficulties inherent in the identification of assessment-intervention links (Ysseldyke & Mirkin, 1982); (3) the existence of bias and discrimination in assessment (Marozas & May, 1988; Ysseldyke & Regan, 1980); (4) the misuse of tests and test scores (Jenkins, Deno, & Mirkin, 1979; Thorndike & Hagen, 1969; Ysseldyke & Shinn, 1981); and (5) the strengths and limitations of formal assessment devices for special education populations (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1988; Wallace & Larsen, 1978).

However, despite this plethora of research on a wide range of measurement-related issues, little has been written about either the actual availability and/or usefulness of assessment information in an educational context or about the measurement techniques that teachers of learning disabled (LD) students commonly employ in evaluating academic achievement.

#### Purpose and Definition

The purpose of conducting this thesis was to describe the assessment practices of two constituent groups: (1) teachers who are responsible for the day to day instruction of students placed in special classes for the learning disabled, and (2) teachers who provide learning assistance for LD students who are integrated in the regular classroom. The intent was to compare and contrast the methods used by these two groups to assess student performance as well as to identify similarities and/or discrepancies in their perceptions of the availability and usefulness of assessment information for instructional purposes.

For the purpose of this thesis, assessment is generically defined as the means by which information is collected for the purpose of making decisions for and about students. However, during the presentation of the theoretical models, this definition is narrowed somewhat in

that oftentimes the discussion focuses on how these conceptual orientations are applied to the assessment of youngsters with learning disabilities. Nevertheless, it is recognized that these models are equally applicable across educational realms.

### General Overview

The issue of assessment is a complicated one in that several different types or models of assessment have been differentiated by previous writers. Some authors have suggested that the focus of assessment should be on the child. That is, the initial assumption made in the assessment process is that the problem lies within the student and all subsequent testing is aimed at documenting the nature of the dysfunction (Mercer & Ysseldyke, 1977). Other professionals have proposed a model of assessment which focuses on the task, the child, the environment, as well as the interactions which occur between these factors by evaluating the process of learning (Meyers & Lytle, 1986; Meyers, Pfeffer & Erlbaum, 1985). Between these two positions lies a myriad of other models which emphasize some differing combination of task, environment, and/or learner characteristics (e.g., the pluralistic model, the psychoeducational model). In addition, within the parameters of each of these models, a variety of techniques

or methodologies intended to assist in the assessment of youngsters with learning problems have been posited.

To realize the purpose of this thesis, then, it was first necessary to describe and define the various models of assessment which have or presently are influencing the way in which educators measure academic performance. Next, the many theoretical conceptions or prototypes of assessment are synthesized into one of the following four typologies: the medical model, the psychoeducational model, the task analysis model, and the ecological model. While it is acknowledged that these categories are somewhat artificial in nature and that considerable overlap exists between them, they are merely intended to encapsulate several differing perspectives on assessment into a coherent, organized, and representative picture of current thinking in the field. A further step involved an exploration of the various measurement tools or procedures that are commonly associated with each of the four models. Together, these first two steps provided a framework for discussing the types of research questions postulated and the methodologies employed by previous authors in their efforts to gain a better understanding of the assessment process.

### Research Questions

Over the years the research on assessment has changed considerably in scope and focus. Initially, investigators were primarily interested in determining whether formal assessment devices were reliable and valid indicators of academic performance. Thus, they typically conducted studies which either examined the overlap between standardized tests and curricular content (Floden, Porter, Schmidt, & Freeman, 1980; Jenkins & Pany, 1978), or compared those tests which purported to measure similar constructs (Reeve, Hall, & Zakreski, 1979; Ysseldyke, Shinn, & Epps, 1981). More recently, professionals in this field have become concerned classroom assessment practices. That is, they have come to recognize the importance of describing and evaluating the perceptions and practices of those who are directly responsible for measuring student performance or achievement (e.g., regular education teachers, special educators). This change in orientation has resulted in the emergence of what would appear to be two complementary types of studies.

First, researchers have focused their attention on the assessment activities actually performed by teachers. In this vein, they have studied the responses of regular education teachers to such questions as how they assess their students, what kinds of measurement instruments they

use most frequently in determining a pupil's final grade, how they utilize data derived from standardized tests, what they believe are appropriate and inappropriate uses of this type of information, and what concerns them about the assessment devices or methodologies they use on a regular basis (Anderson, 1989; Bateson, 1989; Salmon-Cox, 1981; Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1985). In general, findings from these sorts of investigations have indicated that regular education teachers prefer to evaluate their students with instruments they have developed and use standardized test scores only as a means by which to confirm their own assessments. Do these results also account for the classroom assessment practices of teachers of learning disabled students?

Second, researchers have studied teachers' perceptions of the availability and/or usefulness of several differing types of assessment data. The purpose being to identify the kinds of assessment information that are routinely available to teachers when a child is placed in their program and to determine which of these are important or useful in the planning of instructional activities or goals. Many of these studies have sampled the views of either regular education teachers or teachers of emotionally disturbed/behaviorally disordered students, and investigators have generally reported that these individuals

consider the less accessible types of assessment data to have greater educational relevance (Zabel, Peterson, Smith, & White, 1982; Zabel, Peterson, & Smith, 1986). However, it is not clear if these perceptions are shared by those working with the learning disabled population. Is it fair to suggest that teachers of LD students also perceive a discrepancy between the kinds of evaluation data they have at their disposal when a child is referred to their program and the utility of this data in the planning of individual education programs?

In more specific terms, the questions posed in this thesis are:

- (1) What model of assessment is most commonly subscribed to by teachers of LD students?
- (2) How do these teachers make sense of or interpret their evaluation data?
- (3) What types of measurement tools or strategies do teachers of LD students regularly use to assess academic performance?
- (4) What concerns do these teachers have about their choice of assessment instruments or methodologies?
- (5) What kinds of assessment information are typically available to teachers of LD students when a youngster is placed in their program?

- (6) How useful is this data in the planning of individual education programs?
- (7) What types of changes would these individuals like to see happen in the field of assessment in the future?
- (8) Do the responses of teachers of LD students change as a function of their job description (i.e., those teaching LD students on a fulltime basis versus learning assistance teachers) and/or as a function of the grade level of their pupils?

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review for this study is organized around two major themes. First, a discussion of four theoretical models of assessment and the types of measurement tools or methodologies commonly associated with each is presented. Second, investigations that have been conducted in relation to these conceptual models are explored.

#### Theoretical Models of Assessment

##### The Medical Model

One of the most frequently cited and discussed of the models for assessment is the medical model (Lidz, 1987). Proponents of this model subscribe to the notion that some dysfunction or disturbance within the child is responsible for his/her academic difficulties (Lidz, 1987; Mercer & Ysseldyke, 1977). Thus, it would seem that this approach to assessment can be described and defined by four assumptions: (a) An observed problem has a cause; (b) this cause lies primarily, if not exclusively, within the organism exhibiting the problem; (c) if found, the nature of the cause is suggestive of a particular treatment; and

(d) It is necessary to search for the cause in order to engage in treatment.

Because the medical model is "cause-oriented," all learning problems are thought to be physiological or biological in origin (Mercer & Ysseldyke, 1977). Therefore, the measurement instruments assess biologically determined symptoms. That is, the assessment procedures utilized are designed to search for deficits or signs of pathology in such areas as vision, hearing, fine and gross motor coordination, neurological integrity, general physical health, and developmental growth. Those who use this model of assessment obtain a physical or biological profile of the student. This allows them to identify and document the specific nature and degree of the disturbance as well as prescribe an appropriate treatment plan.

#### The Psychoeducational Model

The psychoeducational model is currently the most widely accepted and practiced approach to assessment (Sattler, 1988; Tindal & Marston, 1986; Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Graden, Wessen, Algozzine, & Deno, 1983). This model, like the medical model, is based upon the premise that learning difficulties result from internal deficits or dysfunctions. Thus, causes of observed dysfunctions are posited to exist within the individual manifesting the dysfunction. However,

proponents of the psychoeducational approach focus on the abilities or processes that are assumed or demonstrated to be necessary in order for a child to accomplish a specific educational task. The assessor strives to document deficit areas and to prescribe therapeutic activities that will strengthen or compensate for areas of weakness. For example, an assessor using the medical model may hypothesize that a neurological impairment is causing the student's reading problem. An assessor using the psychoeducational model, on the other hand, would analyze the functional prerequisites of the reading process, assess the child's capacity to perform each of these components, and recommend techniques by which the child could improve his/her reading ability by developing compensatory skills.

Rather than attributing a certain problem to a certain cause, Bateman (1967) uses the term "correlated disability" to describe an aspect of functioning that can be learned which then improves the child's success in an academic skill. Within the psychoeducational model, the goal is to identify correlates of academic success and failure. For instance, one need not prove that poor visual discrimination causes a child's reading problem, but instead, it is sufficient to demonstrate that the child's improved discrimination effects an improvement in reading.

Thus, three basic assumptions are implicit in the psychoeducational model: (a) a deficit area in some way, either by association or cause, accounts for or represents the nature of the disability; (b) an individual can learn to compensate for or strengthen a deficit and thereby improve his/her achievement; and (c) assessment measures are accurate enough to identify deficits and low scores represent low areas of functioning (Mercer & Ysseldyke, 1977).

Proponents of the psychoeducational approach to assessment, then, believe that there are specific abilities or processes that underlie the acquisition of academic skills and that for most children failure to acquire academic skills is a direct result of fundamental ability and/or process deficits. When children fail academically, batteries of tests are administered, usually by the school psychologist, to identify the defects that are contributing to or causing failure. These measurement instruments typically assess such domains as cognition, perception, psycholinguistics, and psychomotor functioning. Remedial programs are subsequently instituted to alleviate or ameliorate the deficits, with the belief that such remedial instruction is a necessary prerequisite to academic success (Mercer & Ysseldyke, 1977; Tindal & Marston, 1986).

### The Task Analysis Model

While advocates of the medical and psychoeducational models focus their attention on the learner, other professionals analyze the task to be mastered, isolating the sequential components of the task and the demands that the task places on the learner. In applying the task analytic model of assessment the child's learning environment and experiences are emphasized as opposed to his/her physical or psychological makeup (Howell & Morehead, 1987; Lidz, 1987). Unlike the previously discussed approaches to assessment, within the task analytic model there is no search for ability or process dysfunctions. Assumptions regarding causality are viewed as irrelevant (Stephens, Hartman, & Lucas, 1978); instead focus is on assessment of current child characteristics (usually skills) and on prescription of specific interventions based on a child's present level of academic skill development. The model is a test-teach-test model in which specific treatments have empirically demonstrated outcomes. Moreover, the primary assumption is that academic success or failure is due to an interaction between the child's mastery of the skills that are prerequisite to successful completion of an academic task and the characteristics of that task (Howell & Morehead, 1987; Lidz, 1987; Ysseldyke & Salvia, 1974).

Those who advocate a task analytic viewpoint, then, reject the notion that for most youngsters underlying process or ability deficits cause academic difficulties. When children fall academically, complex behaviors are task analyzed and efforts are directed toward identifying those enabling behaviors that children do and do not demonstrate. Within this model, standardized tests are not usually utilized. Instead, specific assessment strategies (e.g., criterion-references measures) are designed to ascertain the extent to which youngsters demonstrate particular skill development strengths and weaknesses. Interventions are then directed toward the teaching of behaviors (skills) which foster academic success (Howell, Kaplan, & O'Connell, 1979).

#### The Ecological Model

The final model to be discussed is the ecological model. Generally speaking, advocates of this approach adhere to the belief that the child and his/her environment should be viewed in totality rather than as entities which function discretely and separately. Consequently, ecological assessment "is geared to an analysis of a student that takes into account the many environments in which the student operates, as well as the student's interactions in those environments" (Wallace & Larsen, 1978, pp.99-100).

Contrary to the aforementioned models where the evaluative focus is either upon the child or the characteristics of a specific educational task, the emphasis in the ecological model is placed on the interrelationship between environment and behavior. The purpose of the assessment process, then, is not only to evaluate the learner but also to identify the situational factors which may, in fact, result in the onset and/or which may maintain the learning problems which are being manifested.

A primary assumption of the ecological model is that a reasonable estimate of student performance can be obtained only if a wide variety of assessment techniques (e.g., interviews, observations, teacher-developed assignments) are utilized and if those procedures adequately reflect how the student behaves under a number of different conditions (Bachor, 1990; Wallace & Larsen, 1978). This means that ecological assessment usually involves the collection of data across time. Instead of relying on single measurements, the assessor develops a comprehensive diagnostic "picture" of the student and his/her classroom ecology. This includes information ranging from how the child behaves during instruction and independent work time to how he/she interacts with his/her teachers and peers. Thus, the assessment process is not only much longer than has traditionally been the case but also includes more

active participation from teachers, children, parents, and other relevant people (Meyers & Lytle, 1986; Meyers, Pfeffer, & Eribaum, 1985). Moreover, the goal of assessment is not to label, classify, or place a student in a particular program. Rather, it is to identify the interrelationships between the student and the educational setting so that intervention programs can be developed to assist him/her in acquiring those skills that are essential to "normal" learning and/or to circumvent or modify those situations that are particularly deleterious to the child (Meyers, Pfeffer, & Eribaum, 1985; Wallace & Larsen, 1978).

### Summary

In sum, there would seem to be four prevalent models of assessment--the medical model, the psychoeducational model, the task analytic model, and the ecological model. These approaches may best be described along a continuum. At one end of the continuum are assessment practices that focus on the discovery of process or ability dysfunctions, those within child characteristics that are believed to be causative of academic difficulties. At the other end of the continuum, emphasis is on the discovery of experiential deficits, gaps in the student's experience or learning of skills that act to impede future learning of more complex skills. And, nearer the center of the continuum the focus

Is on identifying what combination of factors or variables, internal and/or external to the student, may be working together to hinder or impair the learning process.

These models are of importance because of their utility in conceptualizing the framework in which academic assessments have typically been conducted. However, similar to all models, they are theoretical in nature and as such they do not delineate the specific techniques used in the compilation of assessment data. Thus, it is necessary to translate theory into practice by examining the kinds of assessment tools and strategies that are utilized within the parameters of each of these approaches.

#### Diagnostic Tools Used In Assessment

In the medical model learning problems are defined in terms of biologically determined symptoms. Consequently, data are generated primarily from tests designed to assess the child's physiological makeup. Typically, assessors using this approach depend on such instruments as The Halstead Neuropsychological Test Battery for Children, The Reitan-Indiana Neuropsychological Test Battery, and the Snellen Test. These devices measure such physical characteristics as visual acuity, gross and fine motor control, sensory-perceptual maturity, memory, and neurological functioning (Erickson, 1987; Mercer &

Ysseldyke, 1977). Audiometric tests are also used within this model as are instruments which assess expressive and receptive language functions. In addition to these tools, four other assessment strategies appear to be frequently utilized: (a) dietary charts and height by weight indexes which are employed to obtain data on the child's physical growth and nutritional patterns; (b) medical reports from the child's physician; (c) health history inventories; and (d) interviewing techniques which are usually used to review, with the parents, the child's past and current health conditions and to help identify those children who may be in need of a more thorough examination by a specialist (Oakland & Goldwater, 1979). Thus, within the medical model, the emphasis is upon the use of measurement tools which assist in the identification of specific physiological aberrations which may be attributable to or causative of a youngster's academic difficulties.

In contrast, a person conducting a psychoeducational assessment is interested in evaluating the child's strengths and weaknesses in perceptual, cognitive, psycholinguistic, and/or psychomotor abilities, functions, capacities, or processes (Lidz, 1987; Mercer & Ysseldyke, 1977). As a result, the measurement instruments utilized do not, for the most part, focus on the child's constitutional makeup but rather provide data on how youngsters learn and behave in

relation to individuals possessing similar characteristics. However, despite this fundamental difference between the two models, the principal means of data collection is still the test. More specifically, within the psychoeducational model, extensive use is made of norm-referenced measurements (Stone, Cundick, & Swanson, 1988). Typically, a school psychologist administers a series of standardized tests designed to identify those ability or process deficits presumed to be correlated with poor academic performance. Although the battery of tests given varies as a function of the child being assessed, some of the following measures are typically administered: (a) general intelligence tests - for example, The Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Wechsler, 1974) and The McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities (McCarthy, 1972); (b) academic achievement tests - for example, The Stanford Achievement Test (Gardner, Rudman, Karlsen, & Merwin, 1982), The Peabody Individual Achievement Test (Dunn & Markwardt, 1970), and The Wide Range Achievement Test - Revised (Jastak & Wilkinson, 1984); (c) diagnostic tests in reading - for example, The Gates-McKillop-Horowitz Reading Diagnostic Tests (Gates, McKillop, & Horowitz, 1981), The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty (Durrell & Catterson, 1980), and The Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests - Revised (Woodcock, 1987); (d) diagnostic mathematics tests - for example, The Stanford

Diagnostic Mathematics Test (Beatty, Gardner, Madden, & Karlisen, 1985); (e) tests of oral and written language - for example, The Goldman-Fristoe Test of Articulation (Goldman & Fristoe, 1986), The Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (Kirk, McCarthy, 1968), and The Test of Written Language (Hammill & Larsen, 1983); (f) personality-behavioral measures - for example, The Vineland Social Maturity Scale (Doll, 1965), The Scales of Independent Behavior (Bruininks, Woodcock, Weatherman, & Hill, 1984), The Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist (Walker, 1970), and The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (Hathaway & McKinley, 1967); and (g) perceptual-motor tests - for example, The Bender Visual Motor Gestalt Test (Bender, 1938), The Developmental Test of Visual Perception (Frostig, Maslow, Lefever, & Whittlesey, 1964), and The Developmental Test of Visual-Motor Integration (Beery, 1982). A more comprehensive test that samples behavior from several domains may also be included in the assessment battery. One of the most common of these is the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery (Woodcock, 1978) which is an individually administered multiple skill battery designed to assess cognitive ability, academic achievement, individual interests, and scholastic aptitude. In addition to these more formal measures, interview and observational data as well as information from teacher-made assignments

and examinations is often utilized to evaluate the child's daily performance within the classroom. Moreover, depending on the reason the child is referred for assessment, data provided by a physician or specialist (e.g., an ophthalmologist or an audiologist) may also be collected.

Like the medical and psychoeducational models, the chief data-gathering technique used within the task analytic model is also the test. However, the emphasis in this approach is on obtaining information about the individual's mastery of a particular set of skills and about his/her readiness to address the next level of instructional objectives. Consequently, those conducting task analytic assessment rely on data derived from either curriculum-based or criterion-referenced measures (Howell & Morehead, 1987; Mercer & Ysseldyke, 1977). While curriculum-based and criterion-referenced assessment are not synonymous methodologies, both focus on determining the extent to which the child has mastered the material in a specific curriculum. Thus, the testing tasks are defined specifically by the child's curriculum and they facilitate clear goal setting for the child in relation to the curriculum. Generally, curriculum-based measures are developed by the teacher (Howell & Morehead, 1987), whereas criterion-referenced tools are often constructed by an external examiner in cooperation with the teacher and are

directly related to the teacher's curriculum and the criteria being used to assess the child. However, because the construction of such measures can be time-consuming, ready-made criterion-referenced tests are often adopted (Mercer & Ysseldyke, 1977). The most common of these are such diagnostic devices as the group administered Prescriptive Reading Inventory (CTB/McGraw-Hill, 1980) and the Diagnostic Mathematics Inventory (Gesell, 1983). Also included in this category are tests designed to be administered on an individual basis. For example, The Keymath Diagnostic Arithmetic Test (Connolly, Nachtman, & Pritchett, 1976), The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (Karlisen & Gardner, 1985), and The Brigance Diagnostic Inventories (Brigance, 1977). The latter, however, offers a more comprehensive assessment than those previously mentioned in that it measures a wide range of important skills, concepts, and behaviors as opposed to focusing on a single skill or subject area (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1988). Within this model, additional data may also be collected through interviews with the child to determine his/her understanding of a particular task as well as through behavioral observations of the child's response patterns to a set of task requirements (Ysseldyke & Mirkin, 1982).

Finally, the ecological model incorporates many of the aforementioned assessment tools. Those conducting

ecological assessments also depend on data gathered through the use of observational techniques and interview procedures. However, unlike the other models, this approach places far less emphasis is placed on standardized testing devices. While the assessor may make use of information derived from norm- or criterion-referenced measures, this data is typically used in a supplementary fashion. In general, he/she relies far more heavily on data collected through the use of cumulative history analyses, behavioral rating scales, checklists designed to ascertain the presence or absence of specific skills or characteristics, comparative and continuous observations of the child's day to day performance in the classroom, and sociometric measures (Bachor, 1990; Bachor & Crealock, 1986; Wallace & Larsen, 1978). These procedures are also frequently accompanied by questionnaire techniques designed to assess cognitive strategies and learning styles, verbal self-report measures obtained before and after the learning task, working with the child as a co-investigator, work sample analysis techniques, and "think aloud" procedures (Bachor, 1990; Bereiter & Bird, 1985; Meyers, Pfeffer, & Erlbaum, 1985; Meyers & Lytle, 1986). Thus, within the ecological model, the assessor may select from a wide range of assessment techniques and may vary the tools he/she chooses to employ in a particular situation in accordance with the

specific data necessary to effectively analyze the student, the task, and the learning environment. Moreover, the "content" of the measurement tools may also be varied continually in order to meet the unique evaluative needs of each child (Bachor & Crealock, 1986; Meyers, Pfeffer, & Eribaum, 1985; Wallace & Larsen, 1978).

### The Focus of Assessment Research

Having outlined and described four common theoretical models of assessment and the types of measurement associated with each, the question arises concerning how investigators have attempted to study these approaches. Based on the framework provided above, it follows that research in this area should not only be extensive but should reflect the myriad of differing techniques and procedures available to those conducting educational assessments. However, it would seem that this has not always been the case. While much has been written about the strengths and weaknesses of current assessment practices, a great deal of this research has been devoted to the study of standardized measurement tools (e.g., Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1988; Wallace & Larsen, 1978). In fact, a large body of the assessment research has been focused on examining the extent to which standardized testing devices are reliable and valid indicators of academic performance. To answer this type of question

researchers have generally employed one of two methodologies: (1) test by curricular comparisons, or (2) test by test comparisons. A sample of these studies are reviewed in the following sections.

### Test by Curricular Comparisons

Several authors have studied the relationship between formal testing instruments and curricular content. A consistent finding has been the lack of congruence between the material taught and the tests utilized to measure academic performance. For example, Jenkins and Pany (1978), after examining the vocabularies of five popular reading curricula, did a content analysis of frequently used standardized achievement tests of decoding and reading skills. They demonstrated that there was little overlap among the tests and the curricula. More specifically, any given standardized achievement test differentially sampled the vocabularies of the various reading series. Thus, a pupil's reading score was likely to be a function of the curriculum he/she was placed in or the test administered. In a recent replication of this study, Shapiro and Derr (1987) reported similar results. Using updated and more frequently employed reading series as well as three different achievement tests, these authors also found little overlap between what was being taught and what was being

tested. They too concluded that scores attained on a standard reading achievement subtest may be an artifact of the particular test administered and/or the specific curriculum in which the child received instruction.

Using a slightly different methodology, Floden, Porter, Schmidt, and Freeman (1980) analyzed the content coverage of four test series in fourth grade mathematics. They then compared their analyses and noted that "although . . . the tests [were] quite similar in some respects, striking differences [were] also evident" (p.111). In general, they reported considerable variation in the content of the tests and concluded that the tests did not necessarily measure the same achievement, creating the potential for incongruity between the content of instruction and the measurement outcome.

#### Test by Test Comparisons

In addition to comparing formal testing devices to the curriculum, researchers have also performed test by test comparisons. In fact, the use of this methodology has resulted in a plethora of research. Investigators have compared the performance levels of normally achieving and educationally handicapped children using such instruments as The Bender Gestalt Visual Motor Test, The Wechsler Intelligence Scales, and the Developmental Test of Visual

Motor Integration (Breen, 1982; Breen, Carlson, & Lehman, 1985; Brown, 1977; DeMers, Wright, & Dappen, 1981). Studies have also been conducted contrasting the performance of LD students on the Luria-Nebraska Neuropsychological Battery - Children's Revision to their performance on the Minnesota Percepto-Diagnostic Test (Snow, Hartlage, Hynd, & Grant, 1984). Moreover, several authors have examined the relationship between the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children and the Visual Aural Digit Span Test, The Stanford-Binet, and the McCarthy Scales (Hooper & Hynd, 1985; Lyon & Smith, 1986; Naglieri, 1985).

However, perhaps the two most commonly compared tests have been the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery (WJ) and the Wechsler Intelligence Scales. This has particularly been the case in special education research where the WJ has generated considerable discussion regarding the appropriateness of this tool with LD populations. Soon after its appearance on the market, researchers began investigating the concurrent validity of the battery with both the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - Revised (WISC-R) and the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS-R). Using a sample of 51 school-identified LD students, Reeve, Hall, and Zakreski (1979) compared performance on the WISC-R and the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability (WJTC). These authors found that, while the correlation of the two

test performances (i.e., 0.79) was the same as that reported by Woodcock (1978), the LD students' "cognitive ability" as measured by the WJTCA was approximately one standard deviation below that measured by the WISC-R. Similar findings were reported by Ysseldyke, Shinn, and Epps (1981). In that study, "cognitive ability" of 50 school-identified LD students was again compared. Like their colleagues, Ysseldyke et al. noted that the mean performance of LD students on the WJTCA was significantly lower than that on the WISC-R. These two studies prompted Sattler (1988) to caution that the WJTCA and the WISC-R may not be comparable. More recently, other researchers have questioned the concurrent validity of the WJ by demonstrating that a wide range of educationally handicapped populations tend to perform more poorly on the WJTCA than on the WISC-R (e.g., Cummings & Sanville, 1983; McGrew, 1986). In contrast, Gregg and Hoy (1985), in comparing the performance of LD college students on the WAIS-R and the WJTCA, revealed that the differences in their subjects' performances on these two instruments were minimal. Moreover, they suggested that the discrepancies that did exist, specifically between the WJ aptitude scores and the scales of the WAIS-R, may have arisen because the tests are designed to assess different skills. Similarly, Shinn, Algozzine, Marston, and Ysseldyke (1982) have proposed that while LD students tend to attain

lower scores on the WJTCA than they do on the WISC-R, this difference may be best explained in terms of the kinds of behaviors sampled in the WJ battery. More specifically, they have argued that LD students obtain the results they do because the subtests of the WJTCA are more achievement or product-oriented than those of the WISC-R. This has led them to suggest that, for LD populations, the WJTCA may not be an accurate measure of cognitive ability. Thus, the results of comparisons between the WJ and the Wechsler Intelligence Scales have, at best, been mixed. Based on these studies, conclusions about the comparability of these two assessment tools do not appear to be forthcoming. Moreover, this apparent inconsistency in the research findings seems to be representative of a majority of the investigations that have used test by test comparisons as the primary research methodology.

#### Other Trends in Assessment Research

In more recent years, researchers have begun to express a greater interest in less formalized assessment procedures. This is not to suggest that they have abandoned studies on the efficacy of standardized tests. Rather, it means that research on assessment practices has slowly changed in focus and scope. In keeping with the emergence of the ecological model which posits that multiple sources of data should be

used in assessing children, investigators have come to recognize that it is not enough to focus on one dimension of the assessment process (i.e., testing). Consequently, there appears to be a movement towards describing and evaluating all of the many types of measurement activities that actually occur within the classroom (e.g., Anderson, 1989; Bateson, 1989; Salmon-Cox, 1981; Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1985).

This change in orientation has naturally been accompanied by a change in research methodology. Because of the emphasis on developing a more complete and accurate picture of current assessment practices, researchers have turned to the education community for answers to their questions. That is, they have begun to seek information from those individuals who are most responsible for measuring academic achievement or performance. The most common ways in which they have elicited data from this group have been through the use of surveys/questionnaires, interviews, and/or some combination of both. What follows are exemplars of studies in which one of these methods has been employed.

Survey Research. One means by which researchers have attempted to garner information about measurement-related issues has been through surveys/questionnaires and/or some

variation of a survey-interview format. Most recently, investigators have used this methodology to address such topics as the ecology of classroom evaluation and the availability and/or utility of assessment information in making placement and/or instructional decisions. However, because interest in classroom assessment practices has been a relatively new phenomenon, a dearth of literature in this area presently exists. In addition, in a large proportion of the studies undertaken, researchers have tended to depend, almost exclusively, on one of three constituent groups for their data: regular education teachers, school psychologists, and/or special educators.

1. A fair amount of attention has been devoted to studying the attitudes and concerns that regular education teachers have regarding student evaluation as well as the procedures and techniques they use in assessing academic performance or achievement. For example, Stiggins and Bridgeford (1985), in order to broaden their understanding of classroom assessment, constructed a questionnaire designed to probe the measurement practices of 228 elementary and secondary teachers. Teachers were queried about their patterns of test use, their preferences and attitudes toward both published and teacher-developed tests, and the role of performance assessment in the classroom. The latter being defined as "the observation and rating of

student behavior and products in contexts where students actually demonstrate proficiency" (p.273). These authors reported that their subjects not only preferred teacher-developed measures to standardized tests but also that structured performance assessment was a key measurement tool in the classroom. They also found that the preference for teacher-constructed tests increased with grade level. That is, the higher the grade level, the greater the tendency for teachers to report using their own assessments rather than published tests. Also increasing with grade level were teachers' concerns about assessment. Approximately 85% of the secondary teachers surveyed as compared to 60% of the elementary teachers expressed some qualms about the quality of their own subjective tests. They were particularly interested in ways in which to improve the development and subsequent effectiveness of these instruments. Furthermore, both elementary and secondary teachers were concerned about the amount of time required to construct and use their own tests, feeling that this process often interfered with the students' instructional time. These results led the authors to propose a series of action plans designed to not only address the role of teacher-developed measures in the classroom, but also to examine ways in which the quality of these tools could be both monitored and enhanced. Included

among these were more in service training for teachers and more qualitative research on classroom evaluation practices.

More recently, Anderson (1989) and Bateson (1989) have discussed the measurement practices of teachers in British Columbia. Each of these authors has described the results of a survey which asked regular education science teachers of grades 4, 7, and 10 to respond to a wide range of questions about science teaching, including items which dealt specifically with their use of certain types of measurement devices in evaluating student achievement. In regards to the queries on assessment, both Anderson and Bateson have reported that teachers use a number of methods to gather information about their students' progress or performance. Some of these include laboratory write-ups, written reports, projects, subjective tests, anecdotal records, and teacher-made objective tests (the latter being rated by the teachers as the most important in the determination of a student's final science grade). These researchers also noted that both elementary and secondary teachers indicated little reliance on standardized objective measures, although there were several Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests available for their use. Additionally, they found that, while grade 10 teachers supported the use of a schoolwide exam to determine a portion of a student's final grade, they were not interested

In basing student assessment on provincial or district-wide exams. Thus, like their American colleagues, Anderson and Bateson have also established that regular education teachers tend to prefer their own instruments to assess student achievement. Moreover, they too have concluded that, in order to improve the quality of current measurement techniques or methods, it is necessary for the research community to devote greater attention to what is happening in the classroom.

2. In addition to attempting to determine and describe the measurement practices presently in use and the extent of variation in practice, investigators have also studied the utility of a broad range of assessment instruments. To do so, they have often compared and contrasted the judgements of regular education teachers to those of school psychologists. For instance, in a national United States survey, Thurlow and Ysseldyke (1982) asked school psychologists and regular education teachers to list the ten most useful assessment procedures for planning instructional programs for handicapped students. The results of their survey indicated that significantly more school psychologists than teachers listed standardized tests as their first choice, with significantly more teachers than psychologists listing informal measures as their first choice. However, it is important to note that standardized

measures were mentioned most frequently by both groups. Teachers and psychologists also differed in the types of standardized tests they considered to be useful for instructional purposes. While school psychologists cited the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - Revised, The Bender Visual Motor Gestalt Test, and The Wide Range Achievement Test as the tests most frequently used for instructional planning, teachers showed no consensus for any particular test being most frequently used, but tended to favor tests measuring specific academic domains. The authors interpreted these findings by suggesting that the discrepancies between these two groups were likely to be due to either a difference in the expertise level of psychologists and teachers or because teachers consider fewer types of data useful to instructional planning.

3. Special educators have also been asked for their input on the usefulness of a variety of assessment tools, particularly standardized tests. However, studies which focus on the concerns of this constituent group have not been abundant. In fact, Willgosh (1983) is among the few Canadian researchers who has dealt with this subject. This author sent questionnaires to 148 randomly selected Alberta special education teachers asking them to rate their familiarity with and the usefulness of several different kinds of standardized assessment devices. The questionnaire

grouped instruments into types measuring intelligence, achievement, perceptual organization and memory, language facility and reading, arithmetic, and adaptive behavior and personality. Teachers were queried about how often they used these tools as well as how useful they were in providing relevant information for instructional planning. Willgosh found that 80% of the special education teachers reported using the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - Revised most frequently and 51% rated this instrument as useful for instructional planning. Other tests rated as being used by as many as a third to a half of the sample tended to measure academic domains (e.g., Keymath, Stanford Diagnostic Arithmetic Test, Canadian Test of Basic Skills, and Peabody Individual Achievement Test) consistent with Thurlow and Ysseldyke's (1982) teachers. However, in every case the teachers' rating of use exceeded their perceptions of the usefulness of these types of instruments for instructional planning. These findings led Willgosh to conclude that special educators have some definite concerns about the utility of the information derived from standardized measures. Consequently, she has proposed that further research in this area is needed and should focus on, among other things, the relative importance these individuals attach to informal as compared to formal assessment procedures.

To some extent, the suggestions posited by Willgosh (1983) have been incorporated in the work of a group of American researchers who have been interested in examining the availability and usefulness of different types of assessment information for planning special education programs (Zabel, Peterson, Smith, & White, 1982). These authors asked 683 teachers of emotionally disturbed/behaviorally disordered (ED/BD) students to indicate which of 15 types of data--ranging from standard IQ and achievement test scores to anecdotal records, formal behavior observations, and sociometric measures--were typically available to them for instructional planning when an ED/BD student is placed in their program. They were then asked to rate the importance of each of the types of information in designing appropriate programs for their students using a Likert scale. Zabel et al. reported that some types of information were readily available to most teachers when youngsters were placed into their ED/BD program. These included intellectual assessment, standardized achievement assessment, and health history/family information. However, other kinds of data such as descriptions of regular classroom expectations/requirements, behavior rating scales/checklists, and behavior observation data were unavailable to more than half of the teachers surveyed. In

addition, discrepancies were apparent in ED/BD teachers' reports of availability of various types of assessment information and ratings of their usefulness in designing educational programs. Specifically, several of the more available types of information (e.g., intellectual assessment, standardized achievement assessment, and health history/family information) were considered less useful than several of the less available types of information (e.g., statement of intervention techniques already attempted, formal behavior observation data, and behavior rating scales/checklists). On the basis of these findings Zabel et al. concluded that, although the types of assessment information routinely available may contribute to the determination of a student's handicapping condition, they were not perceived as very useful by those directly responsible for planning individual education programs - namely, teachers of ED/BD students. They also proposed that one result of this perception was that their sample believed that the assessment data usually available to them was often lacking in educational relevance.

In a later replication of this study, Zabel, Peterson, and Smith (1986) reported somewhat different results. They discovered that, of the 291 ED/BD teachers surveyed, at least 50% of the respondents indicated that all but 2 of the 13 types of assessment information listed were available to

them when a youngster was referred for placement in their program (2 items were deleted from the 1982 questionnaire). Moreover, all 13 types of information examined were seen as having some value in planning instructional activities. However, as in the earlier study, none of the five most useful types of data were among the five most available. Nevertheless, notable increases did occur for several of the more useful types of information between the first and second study. Included among those that showed gains were statements of intervention techniques already attempted, formal behavior observation data, and descriptions of regular classroom expectations/requirements. The authors regarded these results as encouraging, suggesting that they indicated that significant progress had been made in the collection of assessment information for ED/BD students. In addition, they maintained that the observed changes between the two studies were likely to be reflective of an increased awareness, among those responsible for assessing ED/BD students, of the importance of deriving data from a number of different sources.

Interview Research. Investigators have also employed interviewing techniques in their efforts to study classroom assessment practices. However, this has clearly been a less popular methodological choice, and researchers have tended to draw their samples from populations of regular education teachers. For example, Salmon-Cox (1981) interviewed 68 elementary teachers about their attitudes concerning student evaluation. During this time, she asked her subjects three main questions: (a) how they assessed children; (b) how they used the information from standardized achievement tests; and (c) what they thought were appropriate and inappropriate uses of such information. In speaking with the teachers, she found that the majority typically used standardized achievement tests to confirm their own assessments which were based primarily on observations, teacher-made tests, and "interactions" or "interviews" with students. Moreover, she reported that teachers felt that data from achievement tests should not be used in isolation, that is, without regard to other information nor should it be used to "label" children or prejudge their potential performance. Using a similar methodology, Edelman (1981) found that teachers were of the opinion that mandated testing programs did not warrant their cost, using fewer tests provided the same information, and teacher evaluations provided more accurate information about student abilities.

Other researchers have also shown that, when asked, regular education teachers indicate a preference for their own assessment devices as opposed to standardized instruments (e.g., Gullickson, 1985; Madaus, 1981).

### Summary

Four different research methodologies for examining educational assessment practices have been reviewed. Authors using the first two methods, test by curricular comparisons and test by test comparisons, have clearly demonstrated that standardized tests often do not measure what is being taught in the classroom (Floden, Porter, Schmidt, & Freeman, 1980; Shapir & Derr, 1987), and that tests propounding to measure similar constructs are frequently not found to be comparable (Cummings & Sanville, 1983; Reeve, Hall, & Zakreski, 1979). Those professionals employing one or both of the latter two methodologies, questionnaires/surveys and/or interviews have primarily been interested in describing the ecology of classroom assessment. Since this is a relatively unexplored area, researchers have, for the most part, concentrated on ascertaining the views of regular education teachers (Anderson, 1980; Bateson, 1989; Salmon-Cox, 1981; Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1985). In these studies, it has been established that regular education teachers prefer to use

their own evaluation techniques rather than standardized assessment devices. It has also been reported that this preference increases with grade level as do teachers' concerns about the quality of their own assessments. Moreover, investigators have found a discrepancy between the types of measurement procedures that school psychologists consider useful for instructional planning for handicapped students and those regarded as helpful by regular education teachers (Thurlow & Ysseldyke, 1982).

In the few studies that have involved special educators, the results have been similar. Teachers of ED/BD students have indicated that the kinds of assessment information available to them when a child is placed in their program are not necessarily the most useful in the development of individual education programs (Zabel, Peterson, Smith, & White, 1982; Zabel, Peterson, & Smith, 1986). Additionally, special educators have claimed that, while they often use standardized tests to assess a student's present level of functioning, they frequently question the utility of these measures (Wilgosh, 1983).

However, the results obtained thus far in the literature provide little illumination on the classroom assessment practices of teachers working with the learning disabled. We have yet to identify the methods of assessment typically used by teachers of LD students, nor have we

examined these teachers' views on the availability and usefulness of measurement data for planning relevant academic programs. Furthermore, in the methodologies employed to this point, the focus has been on determining the general evaluation activities of fairly large samples of regular education teachers and/or special educators, especially teachers of ED/BD students. To date, even those investigators who have utilized interviewing techniques have not conducted an in-depth, case specific study designed to probe and describe the assessment concerns and/or practices of any one particular constituent group. Consequently, this study was undertaken to advance these research directions.

## CHAPTER 3

## METHOD

Design

The research design for this study was a type III, descriptive case study (Kazdin, 1982). The intent was to describe the assessment philosophy and classroom assessment practices of teachers working with students displaying learning difficulties. To this end, differences/similarities in the philosophy and practices of the entire sample were investigated. Differences/similarities in the teachers' perceptions of the availability and usefulness of measurement data for instructional purposes were also examined. Finally, the subjects' views and practices in regards to assessment were considered in relation to their job description and the grade level of their students.

Sampling Procedure

Subjects for this study were sought from the following two groups: (a) teachers who offer learning assistance to students integrated in the regular classroom, and (b) teachers who instruct special classes of LD students. Two teachers--one from each of these respective categories--were selected from a) the elementary level, b) the intermediate

level, and c) the secondary level. In order to control for the variance due to differing degrees of experience, only teachers having a Bachelor of Education with at least three special education courses and a minimum of three years teaching experience were asked to participate in the study. The subjects were drawn from two of the school districts in the Greater Victoria area. At the outset, it was recognized that the small sample size as well as the voluntary nature of the teachers involved would affect the generalizability of the results.

### Subjects

A total of 12 teachers participated in the study. All 12 were nominated by their respective Superintendent of Schools and agreed to participate after an initial telephone interview.

The sample consisted of 6 LA teachers (1 male, 5 females) and 6 LD teachers (2 males, 4 females). Six of the subjects were selected from the Greater Victoria School District, while the remaining six were chosen from the Saanich School District. In total, eight schools participated in the study. In the Greater Victoria School District, the elementary LD and LA teacher were not from the same school. In the Saanich School District, this occurred at the secondary level. At all other schools, both the LD

and the LA teacher consented to the interview. All subjects met the minimum requirement of three years teaching experience with the years of experience ranging from 5 to 25 years. The average for the entire sample was 14 years. Eleven of the 12 participants taught on a full time basis, while the one remaining (an elementary LA teacher) held a .65 position.

### Instrument

The primary means for data collection in this study was through the use of a structured interview. The format of the interview was developed by the researcher and required the subjects to answer a combination of open- and close-ended questions.

In constructing this device, it was necessary to develop two different kinds of lists. The first one described commonly used measurement tools and the second delineated various types of assessment information (e.g., formal behavior observation data, statements of teaching strategies already attempted). Both of these lists were generated from this author's earlier presentation of diagnostic tools used in assessment as well as from the work of previous researchers (e.g., Anderson, 1989; Salmon-Cox, 1981; Willgosh, 1983; Zabel, Peterson, Smith, & White, 1982; Zabel, Peterson, & Smith, 1986). Additionally, the six

optional choices detailed in the question dealing with teachers' concerns about assessment were drawn from the "levels of concern" model proposed by Hall, George, and Rutherford (1977) and more recently from the work of Stiggins and Bridgeford (1985). Finally, all other questions in the interview focused, in some fashion, on ascertaining the subjects' assessment philosophy and thus originated from the theoretical discussion of the four differing models of assessment (see Appendix A for instrument).

#### Pilot Study

In order to ensure the validity of the research instrument, the interview was pilot tested with two teachers--a secondary LD teacher and an elementary LA teacher. Both teachers met the criterion for participation outlined earlier in this chapter. As a consequence of these interviews, two changes were made in the interview format. First, the fourteenth question was added, as both teachers felt that subjects should be given the opportunity to comment on future directions for the field of assessment. Second, question 4 was changed from "How do you interpret measurement data obtained from your own assessment activities or those of your colleagues?" to "How do you interpret measurement data obtained from the assessment

activities of your colleagues?" This change was made because both teachers indicated that the initial portion of the original question was a replication of question 3. No other changes occurred in the interview format as a result of the pilot study.

### Procedure

Prior to data collection, each subject was contacted by the researcher. At this time, the purpose of the study was fully explained, permission to tape record the interview was obtained, and an appointment for the interview was scheduled. All interviews were conducted by the author and invariably followed the format outlined in the instrumentation section.

During the initial phase of the interview, the researcher and the teacher became acquainted and each subject was offered a copy of the interview format. Following this, the interview began with a series of questions dealing with the subjects' assessment philosophy. Teachers were first queried about the types of procedures and techniques they typically use to evaluate student performance. They were then asked to describe the model of assessment which influenced their choice of these measurement tools. Additionally, participants were questioned about the strategies they usually employ in their

interpretation of evaluation data. This led into the second part of the interview which was designed to ascertain information about the actual classroom assessment practices of teachers of LD students. Here, each of the 10 measurement tools listed in question 6 were individually presented and the subjects were asked to select the option--no use, little use, some use, or frequent use--which most aptly described their use of this instrument. In addition to being tape recorded, space was provided on the interview sheet for the recording of the subjects' responses to this question and to all of those which preceded or followed. During this segment of the interview, the participants were also given the opportunity to elaborate on specific aspects or components of their classroom assessment practices.

The focus of the interview then shifted to the identification of some of the teachers' anxieties about assessment. This section contained questions intended to uncover teachers' perceptions of their own assessment needs by asking them to identify their primary concern about each of the ten assessment instruments described in the sixth question. Teachers were asked to indicate their chief concern by selecting one of the following options: (a) lack of information about a particular method, (b) competence--lack of experience or skill in using that specific device, (c) time management--amount of time necessary to develop

and/or administer that particular strategy, (d) adequacy or effectiveness of the measurement tool, (e) no major concern, and (f) other concern. In order to ensure that the subjects understood and remembered each of these options, they were given a list of these choices with their respective definitions prior to questioning.

In the third segment of the interview, concentration was placed on exploring teachers' views on the availability and usefulness of assessment information for instructional planning. Fifteen differing types of assessment information were individually presented to the teachers and they were asked to specify which of these are typically available when a student is referred to their program. Here, subjects were required to select one of the following four choices--never available, rarely available, occasionally available, and frequently available. Additionally, participants were presented with another four options--no importance, little importance, some importance, and very important--and were asked to rate the usefulness of each of the same 15 types of data for designing individual education programs. Teachers were also given the chance to comment on other forms of assessment data which were not included in the interviewer's list.

Finally, in the last section of the interview, subjects were requested to speculate on whether improvements had

occurred, over the years, in the quality and usefulness of the assessment data available when a student is referred to their program. At this time, they were also asked to express their views on what they would like to see happen in the field of assessment in the future. Upon completion of the interview, each participant was thanked and a second meeting was arranged. This time was scheduled so that subjects could review the interview transcripts to ensure their validity.

Transcription of the interviews was performed by the author and commenced after the initial 12 interviews were completed. When the transcripts were returned to the participants, they were asked to listen to their reply on the tape recorder and then read the transcribed answer. This particular procedure was adopted because, in the interest of preciseness and coherence, many of the teachers' responses were paraphrased. This gave all the subjects the opportunity to comment on the accurateness of the transcript as well as to refine or revise the information presented in the document. All revisions to the transcript were made in the presence of the teacher so that the possibility of misunderstanding or error was reduced. The second interview was adjourned when the subjects were completely satisfied with their responses to the 14 interview questions. Once

again, the participants were thanked and were invited to enquire about the results at a later date.

The Initial Interview took approximately 1 hour, while the follow-up Interview required another 30 minutes. The entire body of data was collected in a 5 week period. To prevent researcher bias, no data was examined until the data collection process was completed. Despite the inclusion of the second interview to verify the data obtained from the sample, a recognized limitation of this procedure was the lack of control for possible discrepancies between the verbal reports of the subjects and their actual behavior.

#### Research Questions

Since the data generated by this study was entirely descriptive in nature, it was not appropriate or logical to propose and test a specific set of hypotheses. Instead, the following series of research questions were advanced.

- Q1. What model of assessment is generally adopted by teachers of LD students? Does the espoused model reflect the actual assessment practices of these individuals?
- Q2. How do teachers of LD students interpret the data derived from their own assessment activities or those of their colleagues?

- Q3. What types of measurement tools or strategies do these subjects actually use to assess student performance?
- Q4. Do teachers of LD students have a primary concern about the assessment instruments they use? If so, what is it?
- Q5. What types of assessment information are typically available to these teachers when a student is referred to their program?
- Q6. Is this measurement data viewed as being useful or helpful in the planning of individual education programs?
- Q7. In recent years, has there been an improvement in the quality of the evaluative information that is available to teachers of LD students when a student is referred?
- Q8. What would these individuals like to see happen in the field of assessment in the future?
- Q9. Do the responses given by these teachers, to the above questions, vary as a function of their job description and/or the grade level they teach?

## CHAPTER 4

## RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the results obtained from the interviews conducted with each of the 12 teachers who agreed to participate in this study.

To review, the interview consisted of four major sections. First, teachers were queried about their assessment philosophy. Here, the intent was to determine the "model of assessment" commonly adopted by each of the participants as well as to identify the methods that were generally employed in the interpretation of assessment data. Second, subjects were required to rate their use of 10 different assessment instruments and then to specify the primary concern they had about using each of these tools. Third, respondents were asked to indicate which of 15 types of assessment information are typically available to them when a student with learning difficulties is placed in their program. Subsequently, they were asked to rate the usefulness of each of the types of information in designing appropriate educational programs for their students. Fourth, teachers were given the opportunity to comment on the quality of the assessment information received when a student is referred to their specific program as well as on

the kinds of changes they would like to see happen in the field of assessment in the future.

Results are summarized according to the aforementioned categories. The overall goal of the analysis is to describe the assessment philosophy and classroom practices of teachers working with youngsters with learning disabilities. Inferences about the measurement activities of all teachers dealing with learning disabled students have not been made for two reasons. First, the practices described generally reflect what teachers say they do; not necessarily what they do second, while representative, the small sample size may affect the resultant data patterns.

#### Assessment Philosophy

In this section, responses to the first five interview questions are described.

To identify the model of assessment typically adhered to by teachers of learning disabled (LD) students, participants were asked the following question: "What kinds of assessment instruments or strategies do you regularly use to assess student performance?" All subjects responded to this question in a similar manner in that each of them reported that they supported an ecological approach to assessment. In general, respondents were of the opinion that student performance could only be adequately and

accurately assessed through the use of a number of complementary strategies and techniques. This position is perhaps most succinctly represented by a high school learning assistance (LA) teacher who stated:

I cannot make decisions about a student's academic standing solely on the basis of his [her] score on a single assignment or examination. What I try to do is gather information from several different sources such as interviews with the student and other teachers, classroom observation, tests, and assignments.

Other examples of this position can be found in interview #2, #7, #9, and #12, located in Appendix B.

Moreover, 11 of the 12 subjects reported using a similar methodology in that they all indicated that they typically used standardized measurement devices at the beginning and conclusion of the academic year, while relying almost exclusively on their own assessment strategies for the remainder of the year. In rank order, the standardized tests listed as most frequently used by this group included: (1) KeyMath Diagnostic Arithmetic Test (Connolly, Nachtman, & Pritchett, 1976), (2) Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests - Revised (Woodcock, 1987), (3) Schonnel Spelling Test (Schonnel, 1979), (4) Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities (Woodcock, 1978), (5) Test of Written Language (Hammill & Larsen, 1983), (6) Wide Range Achievement Test (Jastak & Wilkinson, 1984), (7) Monroe Sherman (Monroe & Sherman, 1978), (8) The Durrell Analysis of Reading

Difficulty (Durrell & Catterson, 1980), and (9) Brigance Diagnostic Inventories (Brigance, 1978). All 11 respondents reported using these devices in a pre-post-test fashion. That is, as a means by which to initially assess a student's academic abilities and then as a way to measure academic progress at the conclusion of the school year. The remaining participant, a high school LD teacher, did not subscribe to this specific pattern. This individual described her use of standardized tests as sporadic, revealing that she only utilized these types of devices when she was required to do so or when all other measurement alternatives had been exhausted.

However, all 12 teachers agreed that assessment involved more than the administration of a battery of standardized tests. Consequently, they all maintained that their principal mode of evaluation was through the use of a combination of "teacher-driven" assessment techniques. In rank order, these included: (a) teacher-developed examinations, (b) teacher-made assignments - written and oral, (c) observation of a student performing a specific task, (d) observation of a student's behavior in the classroom, (e) written records of the student's daily performance, and (f) interviews with the student, parent(s), and other professionals involved with the student. Two LD teachers (one at the elementary and one at the intermediate

level) also indicated that they use computer programs such as "Fact Master" to monitor their students' performance in mathematics. Additionally, all 12 subjects agreed that assessment was an ongoing process and that, at any given time, one measurement strategy may be more effective than another.

Subjects were then asked: "Under ideal circumstances, what other types of assessment activities would you like to conduct?" Here, a combination of the following three themes emerged: the need for more time to assess students, the need for more time to consult with students, other teachers, and paraprofessionals, and the need for more time to collect observational data on students. The first of these themes was particularly prevalent among LD teachers in that all six respondents cited this need. In contrast, five of the six LA teachers included the third theme in their replies. Finally, three of the six LA teachers and a like number of LD teachers mentioned the second theme. Moreover, this theme was expressed most frequently by LA and LD teachers at the intermediate level. Thus, grade level and job description appear to have had some influence on the subjects' responses.

However, while the latter question elicited some variation in the participants' response patterns, this was not evident in the third and fourth questions. When asked,

"Once you have collected your assessment data, what do you do with it?", all 12 respondents provided an answer very similar to that of an elementary LA teacher who stated:

Once I have gathered my assessment data, I map it out so I have a visual picture. From this, I develop hypotheses regarding the student's strengths and needs. That is, I look for patterns or trends - for example, an inappropriate use of a strategy - that will help me pinpoint where the child is having difficulty. I then translate this information into a remedial program. I also discuss my assessment findings with my colleagues so that they have the opportunity to concur or elaborate on them.

Similarly, the teachers' replies to question four also revealed unanimity. Here, participants were asked, "How do you interpret information obtained from the assessment activities of your colleagues?" A prototype of the typical response to this question comes from an intermediate LD teacher who made this statement:

In terms of the information I receive from others, I ask myself such questions as: How meaningful is this data? How accurate is it? Does it reflect the abilities of this student? On the basis of these answers, I use the information to plan or modify my remedial activities. I also use the assessment data of others as a way to confirm my own evaluation of the student's areas of need.

In essence, then, all respondents maintained that they generally relied on their own experience to determine how to handle not only their own assessment data but also that which they have received from their colleagues. Further examples of this position can be found in the interviews located in Appendix B.

Finally, subjects were also required to respond to the following question: "Given optimal circumstances, would the methods you use to make sense of information derived from your own measurement practices or those of your colleagues change or be altered in any way?" Here again, a majority of the respondents offered similar replies. In fact, 11 of the 12 participants indicated that, if given the opportunity, they would like to have more time to discuss their assessment findings with their colleagues. It was postulated that this would allow for a more comprehensive examination of the data and consequently a better "match" between the student's needs and the subsequent treatment plan. One secondary LA teacher also reported that in addition to more consultative time, he would like the opportunity to become more knowledgeable in the area of standardized testing. This, in his opinion, would result in a better understanding and a more educated interpretation of the data obtained from these instruments. He also believed that this would facilitate the use of this information in the planning of individual education programs. Finally, the remaining respondent (an elementary LD teacher) indicated that he was comfortable with his present data interpretation techniques. However, he did state that if more time was allotted to pursue this activity, the resultant education

programs may be "more individual specific and perhaps more reflective of the student's needs."

### Assessment Tools Used In the Classroom

Results obtained from questions six through nine are described in the following section.

In question six, a number of common instruments and procedures were listed and teachers were asked to rate their use of each for student evaluation purposes. The response frequencies for all 12 respondents in relation to types of methods used to collect information about student performance are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

### Assessment Tools Used In the Classroom

Instrument By Use	Respondent Group					
	Elementary		Intermediate		Secondary	
	LA	LD	LA	LD	LA	LD
No Use						
Anecdotal Records						
Teacher-Made Objective Tests						
Min.Of Ed. Classroom Ach. Tests	2	1	2	1	1	2
Other Standard Ach. Tests	2		1	1	1	1
Subject spec- ific tests						
Projects/ Assignments						
Subjective Eval. Oral tests	1		1			

(table continues)

Instrument By Use	Respondent Group					
	Elementary		Intermediate		Secondary	
	LA	LD	LA	LD	LA	LD
<b>No Use (cont.)</b>						
Obs. of class- room beh.						
Student's self- reports						
<b>Little Use</b>						
Anecdotal Records						
Teacher-made						
Objective Tests						
Min.of Ed.		1		1	1	
Classroom Ach.						
Tests						
Other standard						
Ach. Tests						
Subject speci- fic tests		1			1	
Projects/ assignments						
Subjective Eval.						1
Oral tests						
Obs. of class- room beh.						
Student self- reports						
<b>Some Use</b>						
Anecdotal Records						
Teacher-made	1			1		
Objective Tests						
Min.of Ed.						
Classroom Ach.						
Tests						
Other standard			1	1		1
Ach. Tests						
Subject speci- fic tests	1	1	2	1	1	1
Projects/ assignments		1	2			
Subjective Eval	.	1	1	1	1	
Oral tests		1	1	1	1	1
Obs. of class- room beh.	1	1	1		1	1
Student self- reports		1		1		

(table continues)

Instrument By Use	Respondent Group					
	Elementary		Intermediate		Secondary	
	LA	LD	LA	LD	LA	LD
<b>Frequent Use</b>						
Anecdotal	2	2	2	2	2	2
Records						
Teacher-made	1	2	2	1	2	2
Objective Tests						
Min.of Ed.						
Classroom Ach.						
Tests						
Other standard						
Ach. Tests						
Subject speci- fic tests		1			1	1
Projects/ assignments	1	2		2	2	2
Subjective Eval.	2	1	1	1	1	2
Oral tests	1	1		1	1	
Obs. of class- room beh.	1	1	1	2	2	1
Student self- reports	2	1	2	1	2	2

LA = Learning Assistance teacher

LD = Learning Disabilities teacher

Min.of Ed. Classroom Ach. Tests = Ministry of Education  
Classroom Achievement  
Tests

Other Standard Ach. Tests = Other Standardized Achievement  
Tests

Subjective Eval. = Subjective evaluations

Obs. of Classroom Beh. = Observations of Classroom Behavior

As indicated in the above table, four major trends in the data emerge. First, teachers use a wide variety of assessment devices to gather data on student performance: anecdotal records, teacher-made objective tests, projects/assignments, subjective evaluations, observation of classroom behavior, and student self-reports. Second, regardless of grade level or job description, teachers

appear to use anecdotal records most frequently in the evaluation of student performance. This strategy is followed closely by teacher-made objective tests and student self-reports. Third, subject specific measuring devices (e.g., Test of Written Language, KeyMath Diagnostic Arithmetic Test) and oral tests seem to be used on a more teacher specific basis as evidenced by the larger variation in the subjects' responses. Fourth, Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests and other standardized achievement tests (e.g., Wide Range Achievement Test, Canadian Test of Basic Skills) appear to be the instruments least used in the assessment of student performance. Additionally, when given the opportunity in question seven to mention any other measurement devices regularly used, no other strategies were offered. In general, respondents indicated that the list presented was comprehensive and accurately reflected their classroom assessment practices.

Teachers were then asked to identify the assessment tool or strategy they found to be most helpful in evaluating the performance of their students. Here again, commonalities in the data appeared. First, LA and LD teachers at both the intermediate and secondary levels were most likely to list teacher-made objective tests, classroom assignments/projects and student self-reports as very useful. Second, in addition to student self-reports, LA and

LD teachers at the elementary level mentioned observations of classroom behavior most frequently. Lastly, 6 of the 12 subjects reported that their written records on their students' daily performance assisted in the evaluation process.

Finally, in question nine teachers were requested to identify their primary concern about each of the 10 assessment techniques previously presented. An examination of the data revealed that every teacher interviewed expressed some concern about Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests and other standardized achievement tests. In each instance, teachers indicated that their primary concern about these types of instruments was their adequacy. For the most part, they felt these measures often failed to reflect true student characteristics and generally did not meet important instructional goals such as identifying material to teach or reteach.

"Adequacy of Instrument" was also the primary concern expressed about subject specific measuring devices. Here again, a majority of teachers maintained that the data obtained from these instruments frequently did not represent a student's actual abilities. Those not expressing this concern were four LD teachers at the elementary and secondary level. Two from this group (one elementary and one secondary teacher) indicated that they had no concern

about using subject specific measuring devices, whereas the remaining two selected time management as their major concern. These latter individuals were primarily uneasy about the amount of time required to administer these types of instruments as they felt that this activity often interfered with instructional time.

A less consistent response pattern emerged for teacher-made objective tests. Of those expressing concern, the following three were identified: (a) time management, (b) adequacy of instrument, and (c) competence. However, the main trend to appear in the data was derived from the informal comments offered during the interview. At that time, all of the respondents indicated, in some fashion, that they sometimes wondered if their tests were challenging enough, focused on the students' "real skills," and/or aided in the learning process. They also reported that they were continually searching for ways to improve on the quality of their tests as they believed that they could always be better.

Teachers were more definitive in their choice of a principal concern for anecdotal records, projects/assignments, and observations of classroom behavior. Here, 8 of the 12 teachers interviewed selected time management for each of the aforementioned tools, reflecting an uneasiness with the amount of time required to

manage these modes of assessment in the classroom. The remaining subjects chose the "no concern" category with this choice being made most frequently by LA and LD teachers at the secondary level. Again, this held true for all three measurement devices.

Respondents were also fairly unanimous in their expressions of concern about subjective evaluations and student self-reports. Most were uneasy about the subjectivity of these devices, feeling that the information yielded from these sources should be supported by other types of assessment data (e.g., classroom assignments or examinations).

Finally, oral tests elicited the fewest statements of concern, with only one quarter of the participants reporting some concern. This group was comprised entirely of LA teachers who were concerned with the amount of time required to utilize this assessment strategy in the classroom. More specifically, they indicated that while they would like to do more oral testing, they often felt that this was not a realistic possibility because too much of the teacher's time had to be allocated to one particular student.

#### Availability and Utility of Assessment Information

Teachers' responses to questions 10 through 12 are presented in this section.

Subjects' ratings of the availability of 15 types of assessment information at the time of referral as well as their ratings of the usefulness of this information for instructional planning are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Types of Assessment InformationTypically Available and Degree of Usefulness

Type of Information	Available				Useful			
	N	R	O	F	N	L	S	V
Standard Ach. Assessment								
Learning Assistance								
Elementary			1	1		2		
Intermediate				2	1	1		
Secondary			1	1	1	1		
Learning Disabilities								
Elementary				2	1	1		
Intermediate				2	1	1		
Secondary				2		2		
Intellectual Assessment								
Learning Assistance								
Elementary			2				1	1
Intermediate			1	1			1	1
Secondary			1	1				2
Learning Disabilities								
Elementary				2			2	
Intermediate				2				2
Secondary				2			2	
Neurological and/or Neuropsychological Assessment								
Learning Assistance								
Elementary				1	1			2
Intermediate				1	1			2
Secondary	1	1						2

(table continued)

Type of Information	Available				Useful			
	N	R	O	F	N	L	S	V
Neurological and/or Neuropsychological Assessment (cont.)								
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>								
Elementary			1	1			2	
Intermediate				2				2
Secondary			1	1			1	1
Criterion-referenced Assessment								
<b>Learning Assistance</b>								
Elementary			1	1	1		1	
Intermediate	1		1		1			1
Secondary	1			1		1		1
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>								
Elementary			1	1			1	1
Intermediate				2				2
Secondary			1	1				2
Assessment Data on Vision, Hearing, & Speech Development								
<b>Learning Assistance</b>								
Elementary				2			1	1
Intermediate			1	1			2	
Secondary			1	1				2
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>								
Elementary				2				2
Intermediate				2				2
Secondary				2				2
Health History/ Family Information								
<b>Learning Assistance</b>								
Elementary	1	1						2
Intermediate		2						2
Secondary	1	1						2
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>								
Elementary		2						2
Intermediate		2						2
Secondary	1	1						2
Behavior Ratings from School Personnel								
<b>Learning Assistance</b>								
Elementary			1	1			1	1
Intermediate			1	1				2
Secondary				2				2

(table continued)

Type of Information	Available				Useful			
	N	R	O	F	N	L	S	V
Behavior Ratings from School Personnel (cont.)								
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>								
Elementary			1	1				2
Intermediate			1	1			1	1
Secondary			1	1			1	1
Statements of Teaching Strategies Already Attempted								
<b>Learning Assistance</b>								
Elementary			1	1				2
Intermediate			1	1				2
Secondary			1	1				2
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>								
Elementary	2							2
Intermediate	1	1						2
Secondary	2							2
Personality, Self-concept Data								
<b>Learning Assistance</b>								
Elementary			1	1				2
Intermediate			1	1				2
Secondary				2				2
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>								
Elementary				2			1	1
Intermediate			1	1				2
Secondary			1	1			1	1
Description of Regular Classroom Expectations								
<b>Learning Assistance</b>								
Elementary	1	1						2
Intermediate	1	1						2
Secondary		2						2
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>								
Elementary		2						2
Intermediate		2						2
Secondary		2						2
Formal Behavior Observation Data								
<b>Learning Assistance</b>								
Elementary	1	1					1	1
Intermediate	2							2
Secondary		1	1				1	1

(table continued)

Type of Information	Available				Useful			
	N	R	O	F	N	L	S	V
Formal Behavior								
Observation Data (cont.)								
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>								
Elementary		2				1		1
Intermediate		2				1		1
Secondary	1	1				1		1
Sociometric Data								
<b>Learning Assistance</b>								
Elementary		2						2
Intermediate	2					1		2
Secondary	2							2
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>								
Elementary	1	1				1		1
Intermediate		2				1		1
Secondary	1	1						2
Data from Teacher-Made Objective Tests								
<b>Learning Assistance</b>								
Elementary		2				1		1
Intermediate	1	1				2		
Secondary		2						2
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>								
Elementary				2		1		1
Intermediate			1	1		1		1
Secondary			1	1		1		1
Data from Classroom Assignments/Projects								
<b>Learning Assistance</b>								
Elementary			1	1				2
Intermediate			1	1		2		
Secondary				2				2
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>								
Elementary			2				1	1
Intermediate			1	1			1	1
Secondary			2				1	1
Subjective Evaluations								
<b>Learning Assistance</b>								
Elementary			1	1				2
Intermediate			1	1			2	
Secondary			1	2				2

(table continued)

Type of Information	Available				Useful			
	N	R	O	F	N	L	S	V
Subjective Evaluations (cont.)								
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>								
Elementary			1	1			1	1
Intermediate			1	1				2
Secondary			2				1	1

Available - N=Never R=Rarely O=Occasionally F=Frequently  
 Useful - N=No L=Little S=Some V=Very  
 Ach = Achievement

As illustrated in table 2, only one type of information-- standard achievement assessment data--was unanimously rated as being readily available but was considered to have little use for instructional purposes. Conversely, several kinds of information were rated relatively-to-extremely valuable but were among those reported to be less available. Five types of information fell into this category: (a) Health/history/family information, (b) Personality/self-concept data, (c) Description of regular classroom expectation/requirements, (d) Formal behavior observation data, and (e) Sociometric data. In addition, five other types of assessment information were judged as being both available and useful by all of the respondents. These included intellectual assessment data, assessment data on vision, hearing, and speech development, behavior ratings from school personnel, data from classroom assignments, and subjective evaluations.

However, it is important to note that while no distinctive grade level trends appeared to emerge, the

subjects' job description did seem to have some bearing on the results. The majority of LA teachers indicated that neurological/neuropsychological assessment data was typically not available to them when a student was placed in their program. Nevertheless, all six participants perceived this type of information as having a great deal of value for program planning. LD teachers, on the other hand, not only rated neurological/neuropsychological assessment data as useful but also reported that it was readily available. This difference, however, may be attributable to the educational system because students who are identified as candidates for placement in a classroom for the learning disabled are generally referred for neurological/neuropsychological testing. As a consequence of this requirement, LD teachers are much more likely to have access to this kind of information.

LA teachers also reported that, while they believed that data derived from teacher-made objective tests would be useful for instructional planning, this information tended to be less available to them. Again, LD teachers indicated that this type of data was both available and useful. However, unlike their counterparts in learning assistance, LD teachers revealed that they rarely received "statements of teaching strategies already attempted." Despite this, both groups agreed that this was useful information.

Additionally, while LD teachers reported that criterion-referenced assessment data was usually available to them, LA teachers provided disparate responses ranging from never available and not useful to occasionally/frequently available and very useful, suggesting an uncertainty about how this mode of assessment can be best utilized within the parameters of learning assistance.

Finally, when asked, in question 12, if there were any other types of assessment information available to them when a referral is made to their program, all of the teachers responded negatively. In general, they agreed that the list provided adequately reflected the kinds of data presently included in the referral package.

#### Teachers' Perceptions on Assessment

In this final section, the respondents' replies to questions 13 and 14 are discussed.

When asked, "Do you think that the quality and the usefulness of the types of assessment information available at the time of referral has improved over the years? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think that little change has occurred?", 9 of the 12 participants responded affirmatively. In examining their reasons for this improvement, three common beliefs were expressed. First, all 9 teachers claimed that the information in the referral

package was much more descriptive and detailed. As one elementary LA teacher stated,

There seems to be an increased effort to describe the "whole child." That is, to outline his [her] specific strengths and needs by not only providing typical examples of his [her] academic work but also by discussing his [her] physical, psychological and socio-emotional development. We are no longer receiving a couple of test scores and a few general comments.

Second, the respondents described the information included in the referral package as more "user friendly." By this it was meant that, because the data was more comprehensive and anecdotal in nature, it was easier to translate into relevant and workable remedial programs. Finally, the subjects reported that they had seen an increase in the number of opportunities they had to discuss the assessment information included in the referral package with not only those professionals directly involved in the referral process but also with their colleagues. This, they felt, resulted in a better understanding of the students' needs as well as the adoption of a more collaborative approach to instruction.

Two of the remaining three teachers (an elementary LD teacher and an intermediate LA teacher) stated that they had seen little change in the quality of the assessment data included in the referral package. However, they perceived this as being positive because they both were satisfied with

the information they currently receive and could not identify any troublesome areas. Finally, an elementary LA teacher maintained that there had been no improvements in the referral package primarily because "teachers and psychologists continue to rely too heavily on standardized test scores to evaluate a student's progress." This individual indicated that the referrals she received were often vague and were in lack of a "thoughtful analysis of what the student could and could not do."

Lastly, teachers answered question 14: "What changes or improvements would you like to see happen in the field of assessment in the upcoming years?" The typical reply to this query involved two components. First, a majority of the respondents revealed that they would like to see a continuance of the trend toward the use of multiple assessment tools and strategies to evaluate student performance. Second, they envision an assessment process that includes input from everyone involved in a particular remedial program - the classroom teacher, the student, parents, the school psychologist, paraprofessionals, the speech/language pathologist, and so forth. Additionally, half of the participants (4 LD teachers and 2 LA teachers) noted that they would like to have more time allotted to assess their students. These teachers felt that, because of constraints on their time, they were often unable to

complete all of the measurement activities they believed to be necessary to obtain a "truly accurate" picture of their students' performance. Finally, five LA teachers expressed the need for more in-services and workshops on the mechanics of assessment. This desire is best stated by a secondary LA teacher:

I would like to see LA teachers have the opportunity to develop a stronger foundation in assessment; one which includes a solid working knowledge of fundamental assessment techniques. Namely, how to develop a test, how to administer and interpret a standardized test, how to analyze work samples, how to collect accurate observational data, and so on. This, I think, can only be accomplished if more training in this area is not only made available but is a continuing requirement for employment.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is threefold. First, it is to interpret the results of the study and, in so doing, answer the research questions. Second, it is to discuss the importance of the study in the context of the theoretical and practical issues raised by previous writers. Third, it is to suggest directions for future research efforts.

#### Interpretation

In order to provide a comprehensive discussion of the results, each of the nine research questions posed at the conclusion of chapter three are now individually addressed.

Q1. What model of assessment is generally adopted by teachers of LD students? Does the espoused model reflect the actual assessment practices of these individuals?

Respondents were very definitive in their philosophical position in that they all reported adhering to an "ecological" model of assessment. They maintained that the assessment process should be continual and should involve the use of many different kinds of data collection techniques. Most of them envisioned assessment as an integral component of the day to day activities occurring in

the classroom. Yet, when asked how they translate this "philosophy" into actual practice, their explanations revealed a strong affiliation with the psychoeducational model of assessment. Eleven of the 12 teachers claimed to do some standardized testing at the beginning and end of the academic year, while utilizing their own methods for the remainder of the time. The primary reasons cited for adopting this approach was that standardized test information provided a starting point from which to develop a remedial program and then this data assisted in the evaluation of student progress at the conclusion of the program. The less structured assessment procedures were seen as a means by which to monitor a student's learning on a more regular basis and to keep the remedial program on track. This process, so described, is much more in accordance with the psychoeducational model which encourages the educator to identify the students' strengths and weaknesses and then provide remedial activities in these areas.

The contradiction between assessment philosophy and practice may be due, in part, to a discrepancy between the teachers' belief system regarding assessment and their actual abilities. It may be that teachers believe in an ecological approach to evaluation but they do not have the training/skills or confidence to implement such a model.

Similarly, it may be that the subjects felt that the most acceptable response would be one which espoused a philosophy which was in keeping with an ecological model, despite incongruency with their actual practice. Finally, perhaps the replies of this sample of individuals are indicative of a general state of confusion amongst LA and LD teachers. With the many changes occurring in assessment as a consequence of the Year 2000 document, it could be that these individuals are either uncertain about the mechanics involved in moving from philosophy to classroom practice and thus are relying on the procedures they are most comfortable with, or they feel that the methods they are currently employing are those which are mandated by the ecological model. In either case, it would seem that these teachers may be in need of not only a clearer understanding of the tenets of ecological assessment but also a more structured set of guidelines on the components involved in the adoption and implementation of such an approach in the classroom.

Q2. How do teachers of LD students interpret the data derived from their own assessment activities of those of their colleagues?

In examining the results, it becomes apparent that data interpretation may be an area of concern for teachers working with youngsters with learning difficulties. Most of the subjects could not report employing a specific method

for condensing or interpreting either their own assessment data or that obtained from outside sources. For the most part, they maintained that they used their "experience" to guide in the organization or the "mapping out" of assessment information. Most teachers stated that, because of their knowledge of their students, they could reliably judge the validity of the results garnered from most assessment procedures. In a similar manner, they also reported that they relied on experience to determine how to translate information gleaned from an assessment portfolio into an effective remedial program. However, when asked what they would like to change about the methods they utilize for data interpretation, the majority indicated that they would like to have more time to consult with their colleagues and other professionals about their assessment findings. This suggests that these teachers may be uncertain about their own abilities in this area and may feel that it would be beneficial to have a "second opinion." Again, given all the changes resulting from the Year 2000 document, this sense of trepidation is somewhat predictable since LA and LD teachers are now being confronted with and expected to handle large amounts of descriptive data. Where at one time they had a series of norms or discrete, numerical points to aid them in the data analysis process, now it is a much more subjective procedure which requires the condensation of several

different types of information such as anecdotal notes, written assignments, and observational data. Perhaps, for this reason, more consultation time is perceived as a way to not only obtain a more accurate reading of the students' academic standing in the classroom but also as a means by which to confirm the "fit" between the assessment data and subsequent remedial programs.

Q3. What types of measurement tools or strategies do the subjects actually use to assess student performance?

Teachers claimed to frequently use three types of measurement tools or strategies to assess student performance: anecdotal records, teacher-made objective tests, and student self-reports (interviews with students). To a lesser extent, they also reported using classroom projects/assignments, subjective evaluations, and observations of classroom behavior. These findings appear to indicate that teachers of LD students are attempting to employ a wide variety of assessment techniques which is in keeping with their espoused "assessment philosophy." However, as mentioned earlier, all but one teacher agreed that standardized testing was an integral component of the evaluation process. Yet, when later asked which option - no use, little use, some use, or frequent use - most aptly described the use of both standardized achievement tests and subjects specific measuring devices, the majority chose no

or little use. In a similar vein, in both the assessment philosophy section of the interview and when they were queried about which measurement tool(s) they found to be most helpful for student evaluation, none of the participants' top three responses included anecdotal records. Despite this, all 12 teachers claimed that they frequently used this tool to assess a student's performance. In fact, this was the only procedure that received the same ranking - frequent use - by the entire sample. Moreover, while student self-report was not among the top five strategies reported to be regularly used in the assessment philosophy section, almost all of the subjects rated it to be frequently used in question six of the interview and it was also chosen by both LA and LD teachers as one of the tools most useful in evaluating student progress. Additionally, several of the respondents gave subjective evaluations a frequent use rating yet many of them later indicated that they were apprehensive about using this method because they questioned the objectivity and reliability of the data accrued from this approach. Thus, it would seem that, as a group, these individuals were not entirely consistent in their response patterns. Perhaps this too is reflective of the current state of change and upheaval in the field of assessment. It may be that, at this point, LA and LD teachers are not quite certain about

which instruments or procedures they "should" be using to assess student performance.

Q4. Do teachers of LD students have a primary concern about the assessment instruments they use? If so, what is it?

Despite the fact that all of the teachers indicated that they were well-informed about the assessment tools they use and, for the most part, were competent administrators of these devices, they still managed to express some concern about each of the ten assessment tools presented. Even when they selected the "no concern" option, subjects were not reluctant to express a desire to become better skilled at implementing a particular technique. Overall, the most frequently expressed concern involved the "adequacy" of not only their own tests but also published tests. Teachers reported that they often question their use of testing procedures, particularly those of a standardized nature, because they wondered if these devices provided an accurate representation of the students' "true abilities." In addition, participants frequently indicated concern about their ability to effectively integrate certain types of assessment given the time constraints imposed by the classroom. These included projects/assignments, observations of classroom behavior, anecdotal records and, to a lesser degree, oral tests. Finally, there was also

some concern expressed about the subjectivity and the potential misuse of information derived from such strategies as student self-reports and subjective evaluations.

It would seem, then, that the participants in this study were concerned about the adequacy or quality of their testing instruments, feel they do not have the time to effectively implement many of their data gathering techniques, and worry about the subjectivity of others. Yet, despite this, they report using most of these devices on a regular-to-frequent basis and do not appear to be in the process of making any significant changes which would perhaps allow for improvements in their methods of assessment. Paradoxically, though concerned, many of the subjects seemed to lack the means, time, or simply the interest in addressing these concerns by revising their present data collection procedures.

- Q5. What types of assessment information are typically available to the respondents when a student is referred to their program?
- Q6. Is this measurement data viewed as being useful or helpful in the planning of individual education programs?

Because these questions are interrelated, they are dealt with simultaneously.

It would appear from the data reported that LA and LD teachers typically have a number of different kinds of information available to them when a child is referred to their respective programs. Furthermore, this information is viewed as helpful in the development of individual education programs. Yet, at the time the student is placed into a program some types of data teachers believe would be most useful to them are frequently unavailable. Namely, health history/family information, description of regular classroom expectations/requirements, formal behavior observation data, and sociometric data. One explanation for this situation may be that in the process of screening and identification of children with special needs, some kinds of information are routinely collected. Assessment data on vision, hearing, and speech development and achievement and IQ scores are such examples. In contrast, information of a more "qualitative" nature may not be as forthcoming because, until recently, there seemed to be no outright acknowledgement of the importance of this kind of data in the development of individual education programs.

The subjects also rated one type of assessment information as being readily available but not particularly useful for instructional planning - standardized achievement assessment. This finding, however, is somewhat inconsistent with statements given earlier in the interview in that many

of the participants indicated that they often used the information from these sorts of devices as a basis from which to build their remedial programs. Once again, it would appear that the respondents in this study were grappling with the problem of where, how, and when to not only use but report using standardized test information.

Additionally, there were some differences in the data that appeared to be attributable to the teachers' job description. LA teachers reported that neurological/neuropsychological data and data from teacher-made objective tests was usually not available to them, while LD teachers claimed that they rarely received "statements about teaching strategies already attempted." However, it is difficult to account for these differences because they may be an artifact of the small sample size and thus are specific to these teachers; or, they may be reflective of existing differences in entrance requirements to a LD class or a LA program. For example, because students entering a LD class must undergo neurological/neuropsychological testing prior to placement, this type of information is likely to be more accessible to LD teachers.

Finally, it is important to note that the subjects did indicate that there were a number of types of information available to them when a child was referred to their program. They also reported that this information was

useful for instructional planning. This suggests that there is some satisfaction with the quality of the referral package. That is, it appears that LA and LD teachers generally believe that they have access to information which is helpful in the development of individual education programs for their students.

Q7. In recent years, has there been an improvement in the quality of the evaluative information that is available to teachers of LD students when a child is referred to their program?

Seventy-five percent of the sample responded to this question affirmatively. In general, they indicated that the data included in the referral package has become more descriptive and "child-centered" and therefore is more "user friendly." That is, it is easier to translate into appropriate remedial programs for their students. They also noted a tremendous improvement in the opportunity to consult with other colleagues and professionals about the information provided in the referral, making it easier to obtain a clearer understanding of the students' needs right from their initial involvement in the LD class or the LA program. These reported changes appear to indicate progress in the collection of assessment data for the referral package. It would seem that the evaluative data included is now being gathered from several different sources as

evidenced by the teachers' greater satisfaction with not only the types but also the quality of the information available to them when a student is referred. This perhaps suggests that the kinds of data rated by the sample as unavailable but useful for instructional planning - health history/family information, personality/self-concept data, descriptions of regular classroom requirements/expectations, formal behavior observation data, and sociometric data - may become easier to access if the trend continues toward more multifaceted, descriptive referrals and more opportunities for consultation about these referrals.

Q8. What would the participants like to see happen in the field of assessment in the future?

The majority of the respondents stated that they would like to see a continuance of the use of multiple assessment strategies to evaluate student performance as well as a continuance of a team approach to assessment. In addition, LD teachers suggested that they would like to be given more time to assess their students, while LA teachers revealed the need for more workshops in the area of assessment because this was perceived to be a primary weakness of the profession. These suggestions indicate that the subjects support the movement toward the use of more "authentic" measurement strategies as reported earlier in the interview and as outlined in the Year 2000 document. However, it also

appears that the teachers are somewhat overwhelmed by the prospect of having to adopt this "new" approach to assessment as demonstrated by their requests for both additional time to perform evaluation-related activities and for more training in this area.

Q9. Do the responses given by these teachers, to the aforementioned questions, vary as a function of their job description and/or the grade level they teach?

In this study, job description and grade level taught appeared to have very little bearing on the resultant data. The only instance when grade level seemed to have a noticeable effect on the results was when subjects were required to identify the assessment tool(s) or strategy(s) they found to be most helpful in evaluating student performance. Here, LA and LD teachers at the intermediate and secondary levels listed teacher-made assignments and examination and student self-reports, while in addition to student self-reports, teachers at the elementary level reported using observational techniques; a finding which is probably reflective of the differing and increasing academic demands and expectations found at the intermediate and secondary levels.

Job description had a slightly stronger impact on the data as indicated by the variation in the participants' responses to interview questions 2 and 14. In general, LA

teachers seemed to believe that they were in need of more time to collect observational data on their students and reported that they would like to see more in-services offered on the subject of assessment. On the other hand, LD teachers were of the opinion that more time needed to be allotted for them to conduct assessment activities in the classroom. However, these differences are fairly minimal given the overriding consensus of agreement elicited by the 14 interview questions.

This unanimity of the teachers' responses appears to suggest that, regardless of grade level or job description, there are a variety of conflicts extant in the area of classroom assessment. All 12 of the subjects seemed to be struggling with the question of how to translate an ecological philosophy of assessment into a decisive set of classroom measurement practices. In this vein, they appeared to be attempting to address such problems as how to use standardized assessment information, how to interpret data derived from less structured assessment techniques (e.g., anecdotal records, observational data), how to collect "authentic" measurement data within the time constraints of the classroom, and how to improve upon the quality of the data gathering methods typically utilized. Similarly, respondents seemed to be grappling with the notion of whether they should report what they actually do

or what they believe they "should" do, as evidenced by the inconsistencies in their replies to many of the interview questions. It would appear that some of the data garnered was affected by the subjects' trepidation to admit to using assessment strategies which are, at present, regarded by many as "taboo."

On a more positive note, the level of agreement between the respondents seems to imply that these individuals are aware of some of their needs in the area of assessment. Both the LA and the LD teachers maintained that a multidisciplinary approach to assessment should continue because this allowed for the development of a more comprehensive picture of the students' strengths and needs. They also supported the belief that more time needs to be allocated to assessment in the classroom as well as to team consultations about assessment data. These teachers then appear to recognize the importance of assessment and want to ensure that they have the time and the resources available to enable them to conduct fair, accurate, and meaningful evaluations of student performance. Additionally, while none of the subjects appeared to be in the process of initiating changes in their measurement practices, they all agreed that they would like to become more knowledgeable and skilled in the development, administration, and interpretation of the assessment devices and strategies they

usually employ to monitor their students' progress. The recognition of this need, in and of itself, should be perceived as a positive sign.

### Summary

To summarize, as a group, the subjects' responses were very consistent. They all supported an ecological model of assessment, relied heavily on experience and knowledge of their students for the interpolation of assessment data, primarily used the same sorts of assessment tools and strategies for evaluating student performance, and were most concerned about the time requirements and the technical adequacy of the assessment instruments they typically used. Moreover, the majority of the participants generally rated the same types of assessment information as being either available/useful or unavailable/useful, perceived there to have been improvements in the quality of the assessment information available in the referral package, and finally, believed that there should be a continuance of the use of more "personalized" assessment procedures in the future.

However, despite this overriding consistency, a closer examination of the data revealed numerous inconsistencies between many of the interview questions. For example, there were discrepancies in assessment philosophy and reported classroom practice, differences in the ratings and the

actual use of certain data gathering instruments, inconsistencies in the methods utilized for data interpretation, uncertainties about when and how to employ specific assessment methodologies, and lastly, discrepancies between a reported desire to improve upon the effectiveness of the assessment techniques employed and an apparent lack of movement in this direction.

Yet, it is important to note that all of the participants appeared to be aware of their possible shortcomings in the area of assessment. This is evidenced by the number of occasions subjects reiterated the need for more consultation time to verify or validate assessment findings, more time to conduct assessments in the classroom, and more training or in-service on assessment. It is equally important to recognize that the contradictions and inconsistencies found in the 12 interviews may be reflective of a pervasive problem in the area of classroom assessment. It may be that teachers of LD students are struggling to find their "niche" in assessment. As bore out by the data obtained from this study, it would appear that they may be having difficulties assimilating and integrating the mandates of the Year 2000 document with their existing assessment philosophy and their current evaluation practices.

### Importance

This study has important practical and theoretical implications. In order to address these, the following two observations are discussed. First, the assessment practices and concerns of teachers of LD students are not all that different from those of regular education teachers and special educators, as reported by previous writers. Second, many questions regarding the classroom assessment practices of LA and LD teachers remain unanswered.

Several researchers have found that regular education teachers prefer to use their own assessment tools and strategies as opposed to more standardized assessment devices (Anderson, 1980; Bateson, 1989; Gullickson, 1985; Madaus, 1981; Salmon-Cox, 1981; Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1985). Additionally, investigators have reported that regular education teachers use a variety of different measurement procedures to assess student progress, including teacher-made objective tests, anecdotal records, projects and assignments, and subjective tests (Anderson, 1989; Bateson, 1989; Gullickson, 1985). These findings are replicated in this study in that the 12 teachers interviewed expressed similar themes.

Previous authors have also shown that regular education teachers are primarily concerned with the quality or adequacy of the assessment instruments they typically

employ, particularly teacher-developed tests, as well as with the amount of time required to develop and administer their own assessment tools (Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1985). These concerns were also echoed by the participants of this study.

Moreover, in regards to the availability and utility of assessment information three major trends have emerged. First, researchers have demonstrated a discrepancy between the types of information school psychologists consider to be most useful for instructional planning and those perceived to be most helpful by regular education practitioners (Thurlow & Ysseldyke, 1982). The latter group indicated that informal measurement data was most beneficial, while the former listed standardized assessment data as most useful. Second, special educators were found to be of the opinion that standardized testing information was not particularly useful in the planning of instructional programs (Wilgosh, 1983). Lastly, it was reported that teachers of emotionally disturbed/behaviorally disordered (ED/BD) students rated various types of assessment information as being available when a student was placed in their program but also indicated that this data was not necessarily the most useful for planning remedial activities (Zabel, Peterson, Smith, & White, 1982; Zabel, Peterson, & Smith, 1986). In a similar vein, these authors also

established that there were certain kinds of assessment information not available in the referral which would be most helpful for instructional purposes. These included statements of intervention techniques already attempted, formal observation data, and descriptions of regular classroom expectations/requirements. While there was some variation in the availability/utility ratings of the LA and LD teachers in this study, the same three trends became evident in the participants' responses. All 12 subjects agreed that informal measurement data, and not standardized information, was most useful in planning remedial education programs. They also indicated that there were some discrepancies between the availability and utility of the assessment information included in the referral package. However, the types of information they rated as useful but not available were slightly different from those reported by their ED/BD counterparts; a result which may be attributable to differences in either the perceived needs of these two groups or in the sample size of this study. Because only 12 teachers were interviewed, this finding may be unique to the teachers involved.

Yet, despite the similarities that seem to have emerged between this study and the results described by previous writers, several questions remain to be answered. Thus far, there is no clear explanation for the observed

Inconsistencies between classroom assessment practice and assessment philosophy. Similarly, questions surrounding data interpretation have not been adequately addressed nor has there emerged a definitive understanding of how data analysis information is translated into actual remedial programs. Additionally, little is known about how teachers of LD students actually use their assessment tools and procedures. For instance, "Do teachers collect the same assessment information on all of their students?", "How representative of the child's repertoire are the types of information collected?", "How do LA and LD teachers identify their daily assessment goals?", and so forth. The results of this study appear to provide a beginning point in the area of classroom assessment in that the subjects' responses seem to be instrumental in the identification of these gaps in our current knowledge base. That is, the teachers' response patterns have been useful in highlighting the specific areas of strength and need in assessment thereby making it less difficult to speculate on ways in which to facilitate or improve upon the effectiveness of the present evaluation practices of this population. Thus, it is possible, from this data as well as from the works of recent authors (Anderson & Bachor, 1990; McLean, 1990), to generate a series of principles or qualities which may assist in the eventual determination of the characteristics that should

comprise a classroom assessment program for teachers of LD students. In this vein, the following 7 "principles" for classroom assessment are postulated:

- (1) There should be a congruence between the practitioners' beliefs in regards to assessment and the actual evaluation practices utilized. Without this congruence, the goals of a classroom assessment program may never be achieved.
- (2) The assessment strategies employed should be relevant to what is happening in the classroom. Along these lines, the procedures used should be a direct reflection of the skills being taught.
- (3) The methods and techniques used to assess student performance should be ones which ensure that each student is given the opportunity to demonstrate his/her mastery of a particular academic goal.
- (4) The assessment instruments selected for use should be manageable and practical. Because time management appears to be a major concern, it is important that the procedures available for use are viewed as viable. That is, they are ones which can be easily implemented during the course of the school day.

- (5) There should be a systematic method for data collection. That is, the procedures utilized should be applied consistently across students and across educational settings.
- (6) A consistent method for organizing and interpreting assessment information should be utilized. For example, observational data should be condensed and interpreted in the same manner as would apply to anecdotal data or data from classroom assignments/projects.
- (7) A standard set of guidelines for reporting assessment information should be developed. This would ensure that the true nature of the data is not "lost" between collection and translation into written records.

#### Future Directions

The following suggestions should be considered as possible points of departure for future research efforts in this area:

- (1) Because of the small sample size, further research is needed to clarify the results of this study. More specifically, research is required to determine if these results remain consistent with those obtained from other samples of LA and LD teachers.

- (2) The inconsistencies in subjects' response patterns suggests that further attention needs to be directed toward investigating the relationship between assessment philosophy and actual classroom practice. This may assist in the identification of explanations for the effectiveness, or conversely, ineffectiveness of a particular philosophical model or approach to assessment.
- (3) In general, more research on the classroom assessment needs of teachers is needed. To date, only a limited understanding of either the classroom assessment environment or the most pressing concerns of LA and LD teachers has been obtained. That these individuals conduct the majority of the assessments on students and that they have concerns about many of the measurement tools they use is known. Thus it is recommended that future research should be conducted on not only what teachers need to become more confident and effective assessors, but also on quality control issues that affect the teachers' use or interpretation of data derived from a particular measurement tool or strategy.
- (4) More research should be directed toward the examination of existing programs or toward the designing and implementation of "new" training programs or in-service

Intended to assist teachers of LD students in "fine tuning" or further developing their assessment skills.

### Conclusion

To summarize, the purpose of this study was to describe the classroom assessment practices of teachers of LD students. In doing so, a number of themes became apparent. To name a few, it was discovered that LA and LD teachers use a variety of techniques to assess student performance; they believe that assessment is a continual process that should be performed on a daily basis; and, they report that they would like to see more time allotted to them to conduct assessments on their students. However, along with these general trends came several inconsistencies and contradictions in the data. These teachers appear to be grappling with their own views on assessment as well as with the role and function of assessment in the classroom. Thus, further research is needed to clarify what types of assessment activities are occurring in the classroom as well as to broaden our understanding of the underlying philosophy which drives these practices. If this is accomplished, it may be possible to use principles such as those delineated above to develop a more meaningful, thorough, and analytically consistent approach to the evaluation of students with learning difficulties.

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APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW FORMAT

INTERVIEW FORMAT

Interview #

School \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Job Description \_\_\_\_\_

Years of Experience \_\_\_\_\_

A. Introductory Remarks

B. "Assessment Philosophy"

QUESTION 1

What kinds of assessment instruments or strategies do you typically use to assess student performance?

QUESTION 2

Given optimal circumstances or ideal conditions, what types of assessment activities would you like to conduct?

QUESTION 3

Once you have collected your assessment data, how do you interpret this information? (i.e., What types of strategies do you use to organize and/or make sense of it?)

**QUESTION 4**

How do you interpret measurement data obtained from the assessment activities of your colleagues?

**QUESTION 5**

Given optimal circumstances, would the methods you use to make sense of information derived from your own measurement practices or those of your colleagues change or be altered in any way?

### C. Assessment Tools Used In the Classroom

#### QUESTION 6

Which of these options--no use, little use, some use, or frequent use--most aptly describes your use of the following measurement tools in assessing student performance?

(Interviewer will circle subject's response.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Anecdotal records (e.g. work habits, attitudes)				
Teacher-made objective tests				
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests				
Other Standardized Achievement Tests (e.g. Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Peabody Achievement Test, Wide Range Achievement Test)				
Devices measuring specific subject areas (e.g. Test of Written Language, KeyMath, The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty)				
Projects/Assignments				
Subjective evaluations (i.e. how teachers think their students are progressing)				
Oral tests				
Observations of classroom behaviour				
Student's self-reports (i.e. asking students about their progress)				

QUESTION 7

Are there any other measurement devices, not mentioned here, that you use on a regular basis? If so, what are they?

QUESTION 8

Which one assessment tool do you find most helpful for evaluating the performance of your students? (Subjects will be encouraged to list more than one choice if they feel that a set of instruments are equally useful.)

QUESTION 9

Given the following six optional concerns, what is your primary concern about each of the measurement tools described above?

- Options - Lack of Information = a  
 Competence = b  
 Time management = c  
 Adequacy of Instrument = d  
 No concern = e  
 Other, please specify = f

Instrument	Major Concern
Anecdotal records	
Teacher-made objective tests	
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	
Other Standardized Achievement Tests	
Subject-specific Measuring Devices	

## Question 9 (cont.)

Instrument	Major Concern
Projects/Assignments	
Subjective Evaluations	
Oral Tests	
Observations of Classroom Behaviour	
Student's self-reports	

## D. Availability and Utility of Assessment Information

QUESTION 10

What types of assessment information are typically available to you when a child is placed in your program?

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Standard achievement assessment				
Intellectual assessment				
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				
Criterion-referenced assessment				
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				
Health history/family information				

## Question 10 (cont.)

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				
Personality, self-concept data				
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements				
Formal behaviour observation data (e.g. behaviour check-lists)				
Sociometric data				
Data from teacher-made objective tests				
Data from classroom assignments/projects				
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				
N = Never Frequently	R = Rarely	O = Occasionally	F =	

**QUESTION 11**

Given the following choices--no importance, little importance, some importance, and essential/very important--how would you rate the usefulness of the following types of assessment information for instructional planning?

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Standard achievement assessment				
Intellectual assessment				
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				
Criterion-referenced assessment				
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				
Health history/family information				
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				
Personality, self-concept data				
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements				
Formal behaviour observation data (eg. behaviour check-lists)				

## Question 11 (cont.)

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very

## Sociometric data

Data from teacher-made  
objective tests

Data from classroom  
assignments/projects

Subjective evaluations  
(e.g. "I think that it  
is necessary to . . .")

QUESTION 12

Are there any other kinds of measurement data available to you that have not been listed? If so, what are they and how useful do you perceive them to be for instructional purposes?

QUESTION 13

Do you think the quality and the usefulness of the types of assessment information available at the time of referral has improved over the years? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think that little change has occurred?

**QUESTION 14**

What changes or improvements would you like to see happen in the field of assessment in the upcoming years?

**E. Final Remarks**

Definition of TermsQuestion 9

- A. Lack of Information - lack of background knowledge or information about the assessment instrument or procedure.
- B. Competence - concerns about your level of skill or experience in using the measurement device
  - uncertainty in regards to interpreting the results derived from the assessment instrument.
- C. Time Management - concerns about the amount of time required to develop and/or administer the assessment tool.
- D. Efficacy of Instrument - concerns about the adequacy or effectiveness of the instrument in assessing student performance.
- E. Other Concern - please specify.
- F. No concern.

APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEW DATA FROM TEACHERS

INTERVIEW FORMAT

## Interview #1

School	<u>Brentwood Elementary School</u>
Grade	<u>1 - 5</u>
Job Description	<u>LA</u>
Years of Experience	<u>9</u>

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A. Introductory Remarks

B. "Assessment Philosophy"

QUESTION 1

What kinds of assessment instruments or strategies do you typically use to assess student performance?

A. I depend mainly on the following strategies:

1) Observation of the student's behavior in the classroom and observation of how he [she] completes a particular task.

2) My own assignments which I develop to evaluate specific skills.

3) Interviews with the student to help identify the problem.

Usually once or twice a year I also use KeyMath & The Alberta Assessment Branch Diagnostic Reading Program. I administer these tests to collect additional diagnostic

Information as well as to evaluate student progress. I try to use as many assessment tools as possible because I feel that we can only develop effective remedial programs if we have a portfolio of several different kinds of data on a student.

### QUESTION 2

Given optimal circumstances or ideal conditions, what types of assessment activities would you like to conduct?

A. I would like more time to do more observations of the student in the classroom. I believe this would assist us in pinpointing the student's area(s) of difficulty earlier in his [her] academic career.

### QUESTION 3

Once you have collected your assessment data, how do you interpret this information? (I.e., What types of strategies do you use to organize and/or make sense of it?)

A. Once I have gathered my assessment data, I map it out so I have a visual picture. From this, I develop hypotheses regarding the student's strengths and needs. That is, I look for patterns or trends - for example, an inappropriate use of a strategy - that will help me pinpoint where the child is having difficulty. I then translate this information into a remedial program. I also discuss my

assessment findings with my colleagues so that they have the opportunity to concur or elaborate on them.

QUESTION 4

How do you interpret measurement data obtained from the assessment activities of your colleagues?

A. I basically use this information as a way to verify my own assessment findings. If I feel there are large discrepancies between the two, I will often check with person who provided the assessment data and/or I will conduct further assessment activities with that student.

QUESTION 5

Given optimal circumstances, would the methods you use to make sense of information derived from your own measurement practices or those of your colleagues change or be altered in any way?

A. I would like to have more time to discuss my assessment findings with the classroom teacher. This, I feel, would ensure a more accurate interpretation of the data.

### C. Assessment Tools Used In the Classroom

#### QUESTION 6

Which of these options--no use, little use, some use, or frequent use--most aptly describes your use of the following measurement tools in assessing student performance?

(Interviewer will circle subject's response.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Anecdotal records (e.g. work habits, attitudes)	1	2	3	4
Teacher-made objective tests	1	2	3	4
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	1	2	3	4
Other Standardized Achievement Tests (e.g. Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Peabody Achievement Test, Wide Range Achievement Test)	1	2	3	4
Devices measuring specific subject areas (e.g. Test of Written Language, KeyMath, The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty)	1	2	3	4
Projects/Assignments	1	2	3	4
Subjective evaluations (i.e. how teachers think their students are progressing)	1	2	3	4
Oral tests	1	2	3	4
Observations of classroom behaviour	1	2	3	4
Student's self-reports (i.e. asking students about their progress)	1	2	3	4

QUESTION 7

Are there any other measurement devices, not mentioned here, that you use on a regular basis? If so, what are they?

A. No.

QUESTION 8

Which one assessment tool do you find most helpful for evaluating the performance of your students? (Subjects will be encouraged to list more than one choice if they feel that a set of instruments are equally useful.)

A. Observation of a student working on a particular task.

Written records of the student's day to day progress.

Discussion with the student to help identify the problem area.

QUESTION 9

Given the following six optional concerns, what is your primary concern about each of the measurement tools described above?

Options - Lack of Information = a  
Competence = b  
Time management = c  
Adequacy of Instrument = d  
No concern = e  
Other, please specify = f

(please see next page)

## Question 9 (cont.)

Instrument	Major Concern
Anecdotal records	e
Teacher-made objective tests	d
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	d
Other Standardized Achievement Tests	d
Subject-specific Measuring Devices	d
Projects/Assignments	c
Subjective Evaluations	f Are not always a reliable indicator of a student's abilities.
Oral Tests	c
Observations of Classroom Behaviour	e
Student's self-reports	f Students are not always able to accurately identify the problem.

### D. Availability and Utility of Assessment Information

#### QUESTION 10

What types of assessment information are typically available to you when a child is placed in your program?

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Standard achievement assessment				X
Intellectual assessment			X	
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment			X	
Criterion-referenced assessment				X
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information	X			
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Personality, self-concept data			X	
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements		X		

## Question 10 (cont.)

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Formal behaviour observation data (e.g. behaviour check-lists)	X			
Sociometric data		X		
Data from teacher-made objective tests		X		
Data from classroom assignments/projects			X	
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")			X	
N = Never Frequently      R = Rarely      O = Occasionally      F =				

QUESTION 11

Given the following choices--no importance, little importance, some importance, and essential/very important--how would you rate the usefulness of the following types of assessment information for instructional planning?

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Standard achievement assessment		X		
Intellectual assessment				X
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				X

## Question 11 (cont.)

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Criterion-referenced assessment	X			
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development			X	
Health history/family information				X
Behaviour ratings from school personnel			X	
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements				X
Formal behaviour observation data (eg. behaviour check-lists)				X
Sociometric data				X
Data from teacher-made objective tests				X
Data from classroom assignments/projects				X
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				X

**QUESTION 12**

Are there any other kinds of measurement data available to you that have not been listed? If so, what are they and how useful do you perceive them to be for instructional purposes?

A. No.

**QUESTION 13**

Do you think the quality and the usefulness of the types of assessment information available at the time of referral has improved over the years? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think that little change has occurred?

A. Yes, there has been improvement in that the data is easier to decipher and translate into instructional goals. Moreover, there seems to be an increased effort to describe the "whole child." That is, to outline his [her] specific strengths and needs by not only providing examples of his [her] academic work but also by discussing his [her] physical, psychological, and soci-emotional development. We are getting the entire picture. We are no longer receiving a couple of test scores and a few general comments.

**QUESTION 14**

What changes or improvements would you like to see happen in the field of assessment in the upcoming years?

A. I hope that we can continue to focus our assessments on the "whole child." I would like to see assessment remain child-driven rather than assessor-driven. I like the fact that we are no longer relying solely on test scores to evaluate student performance. I would like to see this trend and the trend toward a team approach (e.g., involvement of everyone involved with the student) to assessment continue.

**E. Final Remarks**

INTERVIEW FORMAT

## Interview #2

School	<u>Brentwood Elementary School</u>
Grade	<u>1 - 5</u>
Job Description	<u>Teaches LD class</u>
Years of Experience	<u>15</u>

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A. Introductory Remarks

B. "Assessment Philosophy"

QUESTION 1

What kinds of assessment instruments or strategies do you typically use to assess student performance?

A. I use two types of assessment procedures. I do standardized testing twice a year and I do daily evaluations. The former involves the use of the following tests: 1) KeyMath; 2) The Woodcock Reading Mastery; and 3) The Schonnel Spelling. Sometimes, I also use The Woodcock Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities and The Test of Written Language. This information gives me a starting point and helps me build a remedial program for the student. During the year, I rely heavily on teacher-made quizzes and exercises, observation of classroom behavior, consultation with other professionals working with student, progress on a

computer program entitled "Fact Master", and interviews with the students. The point of using these tools and strategies is to develop as complete a picture as possible of my student's capabilities. This cannot be achieved with a single test score or some isolate observations of a child's behavior. I believe that teachers need to be incorporating their assessment activities into their daily regime because this is the only way a student can be accurately evaluated. I also think it is important for teachers to be flexible in their assessments because, on any given day, a student may or may not choose to respond.

#### QUESTION 2

Given optimal circumstances or ideal conditions, what types of assessment activities would you like to conduct?

A. I would like to have more time to conduct assessment activities and to translate my findings into formal written records. For example, I find that while I do quite a lot of observation of my students, this data is often "lost" because I do not have the time to formally record it.

**QUESTION 3**

Once you have collected your assessment data, how do you interpret this information? (i.e., What types of strategies do you use to organize and/or make sense of it?)

A. In doing my daily assessments, I take the information I have and look for patterns of error or areas of difficulty which are common to the class or specific to one or two individuals. This tells me who, if anybody, requires further instruction. It also tells me what concepts or skills the class grasps and which need to be re-taught. With my formal assessments, I organize the data in such a way so as to allow me to develop a picture of the child's strengths and needs in reading, spelling, and math. I also make a notation of any information I find disturbing and discuss these results with other professionals. Finally, all my assessment data is formally recorded and distributed to the classroom teacher as well as to the board office at the end of each year.

**QUESTION 4**

How do you interpret measurement data obtained from the assessment activities of your colleagues?

A. I use the information I receive from my colleagues as a way to verify my own hypotheses about the student's

strengths and needs. Depending on the assessment, I may also use the data to modify the child's current remedial program. If I receive assessment data that is ambiguous, I will discuss it with a colleague or do some reading on how to interpret data derived from the instrument that was used.

#### QUESTION 5

Given optimal circumstances, would the methods you use to make sense of information derived from your own measurement practices or those of your colleagues change or be altered in any way?

A. I would like to have more time to consult with paraprofessionals, classroom teachers, and others who are involved with the student about the assessment findings. That is, I would like more time to discuss the results of our assessment activities as well as how this data can be transferred into a program which best suits the needs of the student.

### C. Assessment Tools Used In the Classroom

#### QUESTION 6

Which of these options--no use, little use, some use, or frequent use--most aptly describes your use of the following measurement tools in assessing student performance?  
(Interviewer will circle subject's response.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Anecdotal records (e.g. work habits, attitudes)	1	2	3	④
Teacher-made objective tests	1	2	3	④
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	①	2	3	4
Other Standardized Achievement Tests (e.g. Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Peabody Achievement Test, Wide Range Achievement Test)	1	②	3	4
Devices measuring specific subject areas (e.g. Test of Written Language, KeyMath, The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty)	1	2	③	4
Projects/Assignments	1	2	3	④
Subjective evaluations (i.e. how teachers think their students are progressing)	1	2	③	4
Oral tests	1	2	3	④
Observations of classroom behaviour	1	2	3	④
Student's self-reports (i.e. asking students about their progress)	1	2	③	4

QUESTION 7

Are there any other measurement devices, not mentioned here, that you use on a regular basis? If so, what are they?

A. No.

QUESTION 8

Which one assessment tool do you find most helpful for evaluating the performance of your students? (Subjects will be encouraged to list more than one choice if they feel that a set of instruments are equally useful.)

A. Observations of my students working on an assignment

Anecdotal records of my impressions of a student's abilities.

Feedback from my students regarding their evaluation of their performance.

QUESTION 9

Given the following six optional concerns, what is your primary concern about each of the measurement tools described above?

Options - Lack of Information = a  
 Competence = b  
 Time management = c  
 Adequacy of Instrument = d  
 No concern = e  
 Other, please specify = f

(please see next page)

## Question 9 (cont.)

Instrument	Major Concern
Anecdotal records	c
Teacher-made objective tests	e
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	d
Other Standardized Achievement Tests	d
Subject-specific Measuring Devices	c
Projects/Assignments	e
Subjective Evaluations	e
Oral Tests	e
Observations of Classroom Behaviour	c
Student's self-reports	f Are misleading because students often believe they are having more problems than they actually are.

#### D. Availability and Utility of Assessment Information

##### QUESTION 10

What types of assessment information are typically available to you when a child is placed in your program?

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Standard achievement assessment				X
Intellectual assessment				X
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment			X	
Criterion-referenced assessment			X	
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information		X		
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted		X		
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements		X		
Formal behaviour observation data (e.g. behaviour check-lists)		X		
Sociometric data	X			

## Question 10 (cont.)

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Data from teacher-made objective tests				X
Data from classroom assignments/projects			X	
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				X
N = Never Frequently      R = Rarely      O = Occasionally      F =				

QUESTION 11

Given the following choices--no importance, little importance, some importance, and essential/very important--how would you rate the usefulness of the following types of assessment information for instructional planning?

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Standard achievement assessment		X		
Intellectual assessment			X	
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment			X	
Criterion-referenced assessment				X
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information				X

## Question 11 (cont.)

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Personality, self-concept data			X	
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements				X
Formal behaviour observation data (eg. behaviour check-lists)				X
Sociometric data				X
Data from teacher-made objective tests			X	
Data from classroom assignments/projects			X	
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				X

QUESTION 12

Are there any other kinds of measurement data available to you that have not been listed? If so, what are they and how useful do you perceive them to be for instructional purposes?

A. No.

**QUESTION 13**

Do you think the quality and the usefulness of the types of assessment information available at the time of referral has improved over the years? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think that little change has occurred?

A. Yes, I think that there is more information available in the referral package and it is far more descriptive and detailed than it once was. I also think that it is easier to use this data in planning programs because it is more specific in that there is a more comprehensive discussion of what the child can and cannot do. In addition, it has become far easier to contact those involved in the referral process, particularly those on the psychological assessment team.

**QUESTION 14**

What changes or improvements would you like to see happen in the field of assessment in the upcoming years?

A. I would like to see teachers receive more time to assess our students. I would also like to see the movement toward the use of multiple assessment techniques continue.

However, I hope we can reach a balance between the "old ways" (i.e. standardized testing) and the "new" so that we have "hard data" to accompany our anecdotal records.

**E. Final Remarks**

INTERVIEW FORMAT

## Interview #3

School	<u>Mt. Newton Middle School</u>
Grade	<u>6 - 8</u>
Job Description	<u>LA</u>
Years of Experience	<u>25</u>

---

A. Introductory Remarks

B. "Assessment Philosophy"

QUESTION 1

What kinds of assessment instruments or strategies do you typically use to assess student performance?

A. I rely heavily on the student's completion of classroom assignments. I also depend heavily on my own observations of a student's classroom behavior as well as on how he [she] performs on a given task. In this vein, I look at how a student attacks the assignment, how long it takes him [her] to complete it, and so forth.

In terms of more formalized assessment devices, which I generally use at the start and end of the school year, I use:

- 1) Woodcock Johnson test of Cognitive Abilities
- 2) Schonnel Spelling Test
- 3) Woodcock Reading Mastery Test

- 4) Parts of The Test of Written Language
- 5) The Shaw-Hiehle Test to measure computation ability
- 6) KeyMath

In short, I guess I see assessment as a multi-faceted process. I use all of these tools because I believe the more information you have on a student the more likely you are to get an accurate idea of the student's abilities.

#### QUESTION 2

Given optimal circumstances or ideal conditions, what types of assessment activities would you like to conduct?

A. I would like to have more time to consult with teachers so that we could work together in developing assessment tools that are more useful for everyone. That is, assessment tools that are more curriculum-based. This would give us a more accurate picture of how the student is performing in any given subject area.

#### QUESTION 3

Once you have collected your assessment data, how do you interpret this information? (I.e., What types of strategies do you use to organize and/or make sense of it?)

A. Generally, I begin by making a lot of rough notes about the results of my assessment activities. From these, I start to identify the student's strengths and weaknesses. I

then speak with the student about my findings and together we determine what areas we need to work on. More formally, I collate my data in a written report. This report includes a summation of all my assessment activities as well as my recommendations for remediation.

#### QUESTION 4

How do you interpret measurement data obtained from the assessment activities of your colleagues?

A. I look for specific or recurring patterns in the assessment data which may verify my own findings. I also look for information about what types of teaching strategies have been attempted in the past and about the success of these strategies.

#### QUESTION 5

Given optimal circumstances, would the methods you use to make sense of information derived from your own measurement practices or those of your colleagues change or be altered in any way?

A. I would like to have more time to talk to another LA or a teacher of the learning disabled about the results of my assessment activities. I would also like to have more time to consult with others about the interpretation of information received from other teachers and/or the assessment team.

### C. Assessment Tools Used In the Classroom

#### QUESTION 6

Which of these options--no use, little use, some use, or frequent use--most aptly describes your use of the following measurement tools in assessing student performance?

(Interviewer will circle subject's response.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Anecdotal records (e.g. work habits, attitudes)	1	2	3	④
Teacher-made objective tests	1	2	3	④
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	①	2	3	4
Other Standardized Achievement Tests (e.g. Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Peabody Achievement Test, Wide Range Achievement Test)	①	2	3	4
Devices measuring specific subject areas (e.g. Test of Written Language, KeyMath, The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty)	1	2	③	4
Projects/Assignments	1	2	③	4
Subjective evaluations (i.e. how teachers think their students are progressing)	1	2	3	④
Oral tests	①	2	3	4
Observations of classroom behaviour	1	2	③	4

(table continued)

## Question 6 (cont.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Student's self-reports (i.e. asking students about their progress)	1	2	3	4

QUESTION 7

Are there any other measurement devices, not mentioned here, that you use on a regular basis? If so, what are they?

A. No.

QUESTION 8

Which one assessment tool do you find most helpful for evaluating the performance of your students? (Subjects will be encouraged to list more than one choice if they feel that a set of instruments are equally useful.)

A. Student self-reports.

Consultation with other professionals involved with the student.

Self-developed assignments and tests.

**QUESTION 9**

Given the following six optional concerns, what is your primary concern about each of the measurement tools described above?

Options - Lack of Information = a  
 Competence = b  
 Time management = c  
 Adequacy of Instrument = d  
 No concern = e  
 Other, please specify = f

Instrument	Major Concern
Anecdotal records	c
Teacher-made objective tests	b
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	d
Other Standardized Achievement Tests	d
Subject-specific Measuring Devices	d
Projects/Assignments	c
Subjective Evaluations	e
Oral Tests	c
Observations of Classroom Behaviour	c
Student's self-reports	f Can lack objectivity because they are based on opinion.

#### D. Availability and Utility of Assessment Information

##### QUESTION 10

What types of assessment information are typically available to you when a child is placed in your program?

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Standard achievement assessment				X
Intellectual assessment			X	
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment		X		
Criterion-referenced assessment			X	
Assessment data on vision hearing, speech development			X	
Health history/family information		X		
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted			X	
Personality, self-concept data			X	
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements	X			
Formal behaviour observations data (e.g. behaviour check-lists)	X			

## Question 10 (cont.)

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Sociometric data	X			
Data from teacher-made objective tests	X			
Data from classroom assignments/projects			X	
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")			X	

N = Never      R = Rarely      O = Occasionally  
F = Frequently

QUESTION 11

Given the following choices--no importance, little importance, some importance, and essential/very important--how would you rate the usefulness of the following types of assessment information for instructional planning?

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Standard achievement assessment		X		
Intellectual assessment			X	
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				X
Criterion-referenced assessment				X
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X

## Question 11 (cont.)

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Health history/family Information				X
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements				X
Formal behaviour observation data (eg. behaviour check-lists)				X
Sociometric data				X
Data from teacher-made objective tests			X	
Data from classroom assignments/projects			X	
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")			X	

QUESTION 12

Are there any other kinds of measurement data available to you that have not been listed? If so, what are they and how useful do you perceive them to be for instructional purposes?

A. No.

QUESTION 13

Do you think the quality and the usefulness of the types of assessment information available at the time of referral has improved over the years? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think that little change has occurred?

A. Yes, there has been improvement. Teachers appear to be more willing to become involved in the problem-solving process. Consequently, they spend more time filling in the referral form and thus, they provide more in-depth and descriptive data on the student. Everybody is also more willing to discuss the information included in the referral package which makes it easier to develop an appropriate remedial program for the student.

**QUESTION 14**

What changes or improvements would you like to see happen in the field of assessment in the upcoming years?

A. I think that we are moving in a very positive direction and I would like to see the team approach to assessment and the use of multiple "child centered" assessment techniques continue. However, I think that because of these changes, more attention needs to be devoted to providing in-services to LA teachers on assessment. We need to learn how to move away from conducting "textbook assessments", and learn how to accurately describe the student's performance in the classroom.

**E. Final Remarks**

INTERVIEW FORMAT

## Interview #4

School	<u>Mt. Newton Middle School</u>
Grade	<u>6 - 8</u>
Job Description	<u>Teaches LD class</u>
Years of Experience	<u>17</u>

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A. Introductory Remarks

B. "Assessment Philosophy"

QUESTION 1

What kinds of assessment instruments or strategies do you typically use to assess student performance?

A. I regularly use the following strategies:

1) Observation of a student working on a particular task

2) Teacher-made tests

3) Written records of how the student performs on a daily basis

4) Discussion with other teachers to determine areas of progress and need.

In terms of more formal assessments, which I do twice a year, I typically use:

1) Keymath

2) Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests and/or The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty

3) Schonnel Spelling

I've chosen to do my assessments this way because it allows me to collect data from a number of different sources. This gives me a better picture of not only the student's needs but also his [ her] strengths.

### QUESTION 2

Given optimal circumstances or ideal conditions, what types of assessment activities would you like to conduct?

A. I would like to have more time to assess my students. I would also like more time to consult with other individuals involved with student. For example, regular classroom teachers and paraprofessionals. This, I think, would allow us to develop a more complete picture of the student's needs.

### QUESTION 3

Once you have collected your assessment data, how do you interpret this information? (I.e., What types of strategies do you use to organize and/or make sense of it?)

A. I examine the data by looking for trends or patterns. In this vein, I look for areas where the student consistently excelled as well as areas where he [she] appears to be

having some difficulty. On the basis of these findings, I hypothesize reasons for the difficulty (e.g., has the curriculum been modified to meet the student's needs!). Additionally, I also look at the norm for a particular assignment or test and determine how my students have fared in comparison. From this, I can adjust the expectations I have for my students. One way I do this is by making assignments more manageable but at the same time requiring the same quality of work as has been completed by their peers in the regular classroom.

#### QUESTION 4

How do you interpret measurement data obtained from the assessment activities of your colleagues?

A. In terms of the information I receive from others, I ask myself such questions as: How meaningful is this data? How accurate is it? Does it reflect the abilities of this student? On the basis of these answers, I use the information to plan or modify my remedial activities. I also use the assessment data of others as a way to confirm my own evaluation of the student's areas of need.

**QUESTION 5**

Given optimal circumstances, would the methods you use to make sense of information derived from your own measurement practices or those of your colleagues change or be altered in any way?

A. I think the most valuable improvement would be to have more time to consult with my colleagues about my assessment activities. A more collaborative approach would perhaps give us a more objective and accurate interpretation of the assessment data.

### C. Assessment Tools Used in the Classroom

#### QUESTION 6

Which of these options--no use, little use, some use, or frequent use--most aptly describes your use of the following measurement tools in assessing student performance? (Interviewer will circle subject's response.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Anecdotal records (e.g. work habits, attitudes)	1	2	3	4
Teacher-made objective tests	1	2	3	4
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	1	2	3	4
Other Standardized Achievement Tests (e.g. Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Peabody Achievement Test, Wide Range Achievement Test)	1	2	3	4
Devices measuring specific subject areas (e.g. Test of Written Language, KeyMath, The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty)	1	2	3	4
Projects/Assignments	1	2	3	4
Subjective evaluations (i.e. how teachers think their students are progressing)	1	2	3	4
Oral tests	1	2	3	4
Observations of classroom behaviour	1	2	3	4
Student's self-reports (i.e. asking students about their progress)	1	2	3	4

**QUESTION 7**

Are there any other measurement devices, not mentioned here, that you use on a regular basis? If so, what are they?

A. No.

**QUESTION 8**

Which one assessment tool do you find most helpful for evaluating the performance of your students? (Subjects will be encouraged to list more than one choice if they feel that a set of instruments are equally useful.)

A. Classroom assignments and projects.

Discussions with the student about where he [she] is having problems.

**QUESTION 9**

Given the following six optional concerns, what is your primary concern about each of the measurement tools described above?

Options - Lack of Information = a  
Competence = b  
Time management = c  
Adequacy of Instrument = d  
No concern = e  
Other, please specify = f

(please see next page)

## Question 9 (cont.)

Instrument	Major Concern
Anecdotal records	c
Teacher-made objective tests	c
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	d
Other Standardized Achievement Tests	d
Subject-specific Measuring Devices	d
Projects/Assignments	c
Subjective Evaluations	e
Oral Tests	e
Observations of Classroom Behaviour	e
Student's self-reports	e

#### D. Availability and Utility of Assessment Information

##### QUESTION 10

What types of assessment information are typically available to you when a child is placed in your program?

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Standard achievement assessment				X
Intellectual assessment				X
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				X
Criterion-referenced assessment				X
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information			X	
Behaviour ratings from school personnel			X	
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted			X	
Personality, self-concept data			X	
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements		X		
Formal behaviour observation data (e.g. behaviour check-lists)		X		

Question 10 (cont.)

Information	N	R	O	F
Sociometric data		X		
Data from teacher-made objective tests			X	
Data from classroom assignments/projects			X	
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				X

N = Never      R = Rarely      O = Occasionally      F = Frequently

QUESTION 11

Given the following choices--no importance, little importance, some importance, and essential/very important--how would you rate the usefulness of the following types of assessment information for instructional planning?

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Standard achievement assessment		X		
Intellectual assessment				X
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				X
Criterion-referenced assessment			X	

## Question 11 (cont.)

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information				X
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements				X
Formal behaviour observation data (eg. behaviour check-lists)			X	
Sociometric data				X
Data from teacher-made objective tests				X
Data from classroom assignments/projects			X	
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				X

**QUESTION 12**

Are there any other kinds of measurement data available to you that have not been listed? If so, what are they and how useful do you perceive them to be for instructional purposes?

A. No.

**QUESTION 13**

Do you think the quality and the usefulness of the types of assessment information available at the time of referral has improved over the years? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think that little change has occurred?

A. Yes, I think there has been improvement in the following areas:

1) The assessment information is more personal. That is, it is more applicable to the individual child. There is a greater emphasis on describing the student and his [her] unique needs. We no longer receive a series of test scores.

2) The assessment information is more "user friendly" in that it's easier to use in instructional planning.

3) There's greater opportunity to discuss the data in the referral with all of the relevant parties involved.

**QUESTION 14**

What changes or improvements would you like to see happen in the field of assessment in the upcoming years?

A. It is my hope that the trend toward more comprehensive, "child-centered" assessments continue. I would like to see the emphasis on gathering as much information as possible on a student continue because this may increase the probability of developing academically sound remedial programs. I would also like to see us continue to use a team approach to assessment. However, I think that more involvement needs to come from the secondary assessment team as it is still difficult to access their services.

**E. Final Remarks**

INTERVIEW FORMAT

## Interview #5

School	<u>Stelly's Secondary</u>
Grade	<u>9 - 12</u>
Job Description	<u>LA</u>
Years of Experience	<u>13</u>

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A. Introductory Remarks

B. "Assessment Philosophy"

QUESTION 1

What kinds of assessment instruments or strategies do you typically use to assess student performance?

A. In terms of informal procedures, I use the following:

- 1) Self-developed tests and assignments
- 2) Interviews with the students to determine what the student sees as the problem
- 3) I look at the written records (e.g. PR Cards) of the student's past performance and compare them to my own records

4) Analysis of informal writing samples

I also use a number of standardized tests, usually at the beginning and end of the year. These include:

- 1) The Woodcock Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities
- 2) The Test of Written Language

3) Woodcock Reading Mastery Test

4) Portions of KeyMath

Because I use all of these strategies, I guess I believe that the purpose of assessment is to describe the student and his[her] abilities as fully as possible. I think that too often in the past we evaluated student performance on the basis of one or two test scores. I hope that we are now more aware of the need to choose our assessment tools according to the student's needs and not on the basis of convenience.

#### QUESTION 2

Given optimal circumstances or ideal conditions, what types of assessment activities would you like to conduct?

A. I would like to have more time to do observations in the regular classroom. For example, I would like to watch a student writing an examination. I would also like more time to consult with not only my colleagues but also the students because, at this age, the students are fully aware of their strengths and needs.

**QUESTION 3**

Once you have collected your assessment data, how do you interpret this information? (i.e., What types of strategies do you use to organize and/or make sense of it?)

A. I summarize the data and then I meet with all those involved with the student to discuss the results. During this meeting, we identify the student's strengths and needs and develop an "action" plan regarding how to best service the student. This plan is then communicated to the student and his [her] parents.

**QUESTION 4**

How do you interpret measurement data obtained from the assessment activities of your colleagues?

A. Generally, I use this information to confirm my own assessment results. This data helps me "stay on track" with my remedial programs.

**QUESTION 5**

Given optimal circumstances, would the methods you use to make sense of information derived from your own measurement practices or those of your colleagues change or be altered in any way?

A. I would like to have more time to discuss my assessment results with teachers in order to determine if they are an accurate reflection of the student's performance and if they are useful in planning instructional activities for that student. I would also like to become more test experienced so that I could become more comfortable with data interpretation. Additionally, more experience in testing would allow me to better judge the relevance of a particular test item and would help me determine whether the information obtained from the test would be useful for planning remedial activities.

### C. Assessment Tools Used In the Classroom

#### QUESTION 6

Which of these options--no use, little use, some use, or frequent use--most aptly describes your use of the following measurement tools in assessing student performance?

(Interviewer will circle subject's response.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Anecdotal records (e.g. work habits, attitudes)	1	2	3	4
Teacher-made objective tests	1	2	3	4
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	1	2	3	4
Other Standardized Achievement Tests (e.g. Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Peabody Achievement Test, Wide Range Achievement Test)	1	2	3	4
Devices measuring specific subject areas (e.g. Test of Written Language, KeyMath, The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty)	1	2	3	4
Projects/Assignments	1	2	3	4
Subjective evaluations (i.e. how teachers think their students are progressing)	1	2	3	4
Oral tests	1	2	3	4
Observations of classroom behaviour	1	2	3	4
Student's self-reports (i.e. asking students about their progress)	1	2	3	4

QUESTION 7

Are there any other measurement devices, not mentioned here, that you use on a regular basis? If so, what are they?

A. No.

QUESTION 8

Which one assessment tool do you find most helpful for evaluating the performance of your students? (Subjects will be encouraged to list more than one choice if they feel that a set of instruments are equally useful.)

A. Teacher-made examinations.

Interviews with the student.

QUESTION 9

Given the following six optional concerns, what is your primary concern about each of the measurement tools described above?

Options - Lack of Information = a  
 Competence = b  
 Time management = c  
 Adequacy of Instrument = d  
 No concern = e  
 Other, please specify = f

Instrument	Major Concern
Anecdotal records	e
Teacher-made objective tests	c
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	d
Other Standardized Achievement Tests	d

## Question 9 (cont.)

Instrument	Major Concern
Subject-specific Measuring Devices	d
Projects/Assignments	e
Subjective Evaluations	f Can often be misleading because of their subjectivity.
Oral Tests	c
Observations of Classroom Behaviour	e
Student's self-reports	e

## D. Availability and Utility of Assessment Information

QUESTION 10

What types of assessment information are typically available to you when a child is placed in your program?

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Standard achievement assessment			X	
Intellectual assessment				X
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment		X		

## Question 10 (cont.)

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Criterion-referenced assessment				X
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development			X	
Health history/family information		X		
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted			X	
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements		X		
Formal behaviour observation data (e.g. behaviour check-lists)			X	
Sociometric data	X			
Data from teacher-made objective tests		X		
Data from classroom assignments/projects				X
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				X

N = Never      R = Rarely      O = Occasionally  
F = Frequently

**QUESTION 11**

Given the following choices--no Importance, little Importance, some Importance, and essential/very Important--how would you rate the usefulness of the following types of assessment information for instructional planning?

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Standard achievement assessment	X			
Intellectual assessment				X
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				X
Criterion-referenced assessment				X
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information				X
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements				X
Formal behaviour observation data (eg. behaviour check-lists)			X	

## Question 11 (cont.)

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Sociometric data				X
Data from teacher-made objective tests				X
Data from classroom assignments/projects				X
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				X

QUESTION 12

Are there any other kinds of measurement data available to you that have not been listed? If so, what are they and how useful do you perceive them to be for instructional purposes?

A. No.

**QUESTION 13**

Do you think the quality and the usefulness of the types of assessment information available at the time of referral has improved over the years? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think that little change has occurred?

A. Yes, I think that there have been a number of improvements. First, more time is being devoted to assessment and this is being reflected in more comprehensive referral packages. Second, more informal assessment data is being included which means that a better picture of student's level of functioning is provided. Finally, teachers are more willing to meet and discuss the student's needs once they have made a referral.

**QUESTION 14**

What changes or improvements would you like to see happen in the field of assessment in the upcoming years?

A. I would like to see the allocation of more time to do assessments. Specifically, to develop and administer subject specific or curriculum based assessment. I would also like to see more in-services offered to LA teachers in assessment because I think that many of us are weak in this area. Lastly, it would be nice if the movement toward the use of more informal methods of assessment (e.g., observations, interviews) would continue.

**E. Final Remarks**

INTERVIEW FORMAT

## Interview #6

School Mt. Douglas Secondary  
Grade 11 - 12  
Job Description Teaches LD class  
Years of Experience 15

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A. Introductory Remarks

B. "Assessment Philosophy"

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QUESTION 1

What kinds of assessment instruments or strategies do you typically use to assess student performance?

A. I put little stock in the use of formal assessment instruments and only use them when I am required to do so or when I have exhausted every other possible alternative. In general, I assess student performance by interviewing my students, observing them perform assigned tasks, monitoring their performance on self-designed examinations and keeping track of their progress on classroom assignments.

Basically, I believe that assessment involves the use of multiple strategies because one test score or interview tells you nothing about the student's actual abilities.

**QUESTION 2**

Given optimal circumstances or ideal conditions, what types of assessment activities would you like to conduct?

A. I would like more people involved in assessing students. This would allow for more consultation and observation of the student thereby increasing the accuracy of our assessments. I would also like more time to do assessments. For example, it would be nice to have the time to talk to and further involve the student in the evaluation process. That is, perhaps through student self-evaluations.

**QUESTION 3**

Once you have collected your assessment data, how do you interpret this information? (i.e., What types of strategies do you use to organize and/or make sense of it?)

A. I look for trends or patterns in the data that will help me identify the student's strengths and weaknesses. I also share my findings with the classroom teacher so that we can develop an appropriate remedial program for the student.

**QUESTION 4**

How do you interpret measurement data obtained from the assessment activities of your colleagues?

A. Depending on the source, I use the data to help me determine what subject areas the student is having

difficulty with and what types of teaching strategies may be most effective.

QUESTION 5

Given optimal circumstances, would the methods you use to make sense of information derived from your own measurement practices or those of your colleagues change or be altered in any way?

A. I would like to have more time to discuss my assessment findings with other professionals involved with the student. By doing so, I think we would have a more accurate interpretation of the data and consequently a better understanding of the student's abilities.

### C. Assessment Tools Used In the Classroom

#### QUESTION 6

Which of these options--no use, little use, some use, or frequent use--most aptly describes your use of the following measurement tools in assessing student performance? (Interviewer will circle subject's response.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Anecdotal records (e.g. work habits, attitudes)	1	2	3	④
Teacher-made objective tests	1	2	3	④
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	①	2	3	4
Other Standardized Achievement Tests (e.g. Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Peabody Achievement Test, Wide Range Achievement Test)	①	2	3	4
Devices measuring specific subject areas (e.g. Test of Written Language, KeyMath, The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty)	1	2	③	4
Projects/Assignments	1	2	3	④
Subjective evaluations (i.e. how teachers think their students are progressing)	1	2	3	④
Oral tests	1	2	③	4
Observations of classroom behaviour	1	2	3	④
Student's self-reports (i.e. asking students about their progress)	1	2	3	④

**QUESTION 7**

Are there any other measurement devices, not mentioned here, that you use on a regular basis? If so, what are they?

A. No.

**QUESTION 8**

Which one assessment tool do you find most helpful for evaluating the performance of your students? (Subjects will be encouraged to list more than one choice if they feel that a set of instruments are equally useful.)

A. Teacher-developed tests and assignments.

Interviews with the student.

**QUESTION 9**

Given the following six optional concerns, what is your primary concern about each of the measurement tools described above?

Options - Lack of Information = a  
Competence = b  
Time management = c  
Adequacy of Instrument = d  
No concern = e  
Other, please specify = f

(please see next page)

## Question 9 (cont.)

Instrument	Major Concern
Anecdotal records	c
Teacher-made objective tests	d
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	d
Other Standardized Achievement Tests	d
Subject-specific Measuring Devices	e
Projects/Assignments	c
Subjective Evaluations	f May not be accurate because of their subjective nature.
Oral Tests	e
Observations of Classroom Behaviour	c
Student's self-reports	f There is a tendency for students to over- or underestimate their abilities.

#### D. Availability and Utility of Assessment Information

##### QUESTION 10

What types of assessment information are typically available to you when a child is placed in your program?

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Standard achievement assessment				X
Intellectual assessment				X
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				X
Criterion-referenced assessment				X
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information		X		
Behaviour ratings from school personnel			X	
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted		X		
Personality, self-concept data			X	
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements		X		
Formal behaviour observation data (e.g. behaviour check-lists)	X			

## Question 10 (cont.)

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Sociometric data		X		
Data from teacher-made objective tests				X
Data from classroom assignments/projects			X	
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")			X	
N = Never      R = Rarely      O = Occasionally      F = Frequently				

QUESTION 11

Given the following choices--no Importance, little Importance, some Importance, and essential/very Important--how would you rate the usefulness of the following types of assessment information for instructional planning?

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Standard achievement assessment		X		
Intellectual assessment			X	
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment			X	
Criterion-referenced assessment				X

## Question 11 (cont.)

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information				X
Behaviour ratings from school personnel			X	
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements				X
Formal behaviour observation data (eg. behaviour check-lists)			X	
Sociometric data				X
Data from teacher-made objective tests				X
Data from classroom assignments/projects				X
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")			X	

**QUESTION 12**

Are there any other kinds of measurement data available to you that have not been listed? If so, what are they and how useful do you perceive them to be for instructional purposes?

A. No.

**QUESTION 13**

Do you think the quality and the usefulness of the types of assessment information available at the time of referral has improved over the years? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think that little change has occurred?

A. Yes, I think its improved quite a bit in the last three or four years. The information in the referral package is more detailed and descriptive. That is, we are no longer receiving some meaningless test scores with little in the way of anecdotal data. There is also more opportunity to consult with those individuals who were involved in the referral process. That is, follow-up interviews with the relevant parties are more likely to occur.

**QUESTION 14**

What changes or Improvements would you like to see happen in the field of assessment in the upcoming years?

A. I would like to see the trend toward more "personalized" assessment practices continue. In fact, I still think that there is too much emphasis on results from standardized tests. I believe that there should be a heavier push away from this mode of assessment and we should focus on using techniques that help us to better understand the "whole child" (e.g., interviews with students). As a consequence of this belief, I also think that more time needs to be provided for our assessment activities. It is almost impossible to obtain an accurate and in-depth assessment within the parameters of our present timetable.

**E. Final Remarks**

INTERVIEW FORMAT

## Interview #7

School	<u>Fairburn Elementary</u>
Grade	<u>1-7</u>
Job Description	<u>LA</u>
Years of Experience	<u>10</u>

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A. Introductory Remarks

B. "Assessment Philosophy"

QUESTION 1

What kinds of assessment instruments or strategies do you typically use to assess student performance?

A. The types of assessment instruments I use vary as a function of the student's needs. However, I tend to rely on the following techniques:

1) Observation of classroom behavior.

2) Observation of the ways in which the child attacks a particular problem.

3) Teacher-made tests and assignments.

4) Tape recording of the student for the purposes of miscue analysis.

I also do some formal testing, usually when I first start working with the student and then at the end of the year. This gives me baseline information and helps me to measure

the student's progress after the intervention is completed. The instruments I use are: 1) The Monroe Sherman; 2) KeyMath; 3) The Woodcock Reading Mastery; 4) The Dulch Sight Words for Younger Children; and 5) The Barnell-Loft Spelling. For me, assessment involves more than the gathering of a couple of test numbers. I really try to get as much information about the student as possible because I feel that a complete picture of his [her] abilities translates into a sound remedial program.

#### QUESTION 2

Given optimal circumstances or ideal conditions, what types of assessment activities would you like to conduct?

A. I would like to have more time to observe my students in the regular classroom. This would give me a better understanding of their present level of functioning.

#### QUESTION 3

Once you have collected your assessment data, how do you interpret this information? (i.e., What types of strategies do you use to organize and/or make sense of it?)

A. I record the information, or, in the case of work samples, I place these in the student's personal file. I then look at this data in an effort to identify the student's strengths and needs. From this, I develop

programs designed to assist the student in those areas where he [she] is experiencing difficulty. Additionally, I share the results of my assessment activities with my colleagues so that we are all working toward the same goals.

#### QUESTION 4

How do you interpret measurement data obtained from the assessment activities of your colleagues?

A. I usually use information obtained from my colleagues to verify my own assessment findings. I also use this data to identify areas where assessment may be needed. For example, if a child scores low in a particular area, I may do further assessments in this area. Basically, I use my own experiences to determine the validity of assessment data from outside sources.

#### QUESTION 5

Given optimal circumstances, would the methods you use to make sense of information derived from your own measurement practices or those of your colleagues change or be altered in any way?

A. I would like to have more time to discuss my assessment findings with my colleagues. This would provide everyone with a more comprehensive interpretation of the results and would ultimately lead to the development of remedial programs which are better suited to the student's needs.

### C. Assessment Tools Used In the Classroom

#### QUESTION 6

Which of these options--no use, little use, some use, or frequent use--most aptly describes your use of the following measurement tools in assessing student performance?

(Interviewer will circle subject's response.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Anecdotal records (e.g. work habits, attitudes)	1	2	3	④
Teacher-made objective tests	1	2	③	4
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	①	2	3	4
Other Standardized Achievement Tests (e.g. Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Peabody Achievement Test, Wide Range Achievement Test)	①	2	3	4
Devices measuring specific subject areas (e.g. Test of Written Language, KeyMath, The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty)	1	2	③	4
Projects/Assignments	1	2	3	④
Subjective evaluations (I.e. how teachers think their students are progressing)	1	2	3	④
Oral tests	①	2	3	4
Observations of classroom behaviour	1	2	③	4
Student's self-reports (I.e. asking students about their progress)	1	2	3	④

**QUESTION 7**

Are there any other measurement devices, not mentioned here, that you use on a regular basis? If so, what are they?

A. No.

**QUESTION 8**

Which one assessment tool do you find most helpful for evaluating the performance of your students? (Subjects will be encouraged to list more than one choice if they feel that a set of instruments are equally useful.)

A. Observation of the student's performance in the regular classroom.

A written account of the students' daily progress.

Consultation with colleagues.

**QUESTION 9**

Given the following six optional concerns, what is your primary concern about each of the measurement tools described above?

Options - Lack of Information = a  
Competence = b  
Time management = c  
Adequacy of instrument = d  
No concern = e  
Other, please specify = f

(please see next page)

## Question 9 (cont.)

Instrument	Major Concern
Anecdotal records	c
Teacher-made objective tests	b
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	d
Other Standardized Achievement Tests	d
Subject-specific Measuring Devices	d
Projects/Assignments	c
Subjective Evaluations	e
Oral Tests	e
Observations of Classroom Behaviour	c
Student's self-reports	e

### D. Availability and Utility of Assessment Information

#### QUESTION 10

What types of assessment information are typically available to you when a child is placed in your program?

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Standard achievement assessment			X	
Intellectual assessment			X	
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment		X		
Criterion-referenced assessment		X		
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information		X		
Behaviour ratings from school personnel			X	
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted			X	
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements	X			
Formal behaviour observation data (e.g. behaviour check-lists)		X		
Sociometric data		X		

## Question 10 (cont.)

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Data from teacher-made objective tests		X		
Data from classroom assignments/projects				X
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				X
N = Never Frequently      R = Rarely      O = Occasionally      F =				

QUESTION 11

Given the following choices--no importance, little importance, some importance, and essential/very important--how would you rate the usefulness of the following types of assessment information for instructional planning?

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Standard achievement assessment		X		
Intellectual assessment			X	
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				X
Criterion-referenced assessment			X	

## Question 11 (cont.)

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information				X
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements				X
Formal behaviour observation data (eg. behaviour check-lists)			X	
Sociometric data				X
Data from teacher-made objective tests			X	
Data from classroom assignments/projects				X
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				X

**QUESTION 12**

Are there any other kinds of measurement data available to you that have not been listed? If so, what are they and how useful do you perceive them to be for instructional purposes?

A. No.

**QUESTION 13**

Do you think the quality and the usefulness of the types of assessment information available at the time of referral has improved over the years? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think that little change has occurred?

A. No, I do not think there has been an improvement in the information included in the referral package. The information included is often not reflective of the student's abilities primarily because teachers and psychologists continue to rely too heavily on standardized test scores to evaluate a student's progress. The data continues to amount to a few test scores and some generalized comments which are deficient of a thoughtful analysis of what a child can and cannot do.

**QUESTION 14**

What changes or improvements would you like to see happen in the field of assessment in the upcoming years?

A. I think that the only way there are going to be improvements is if LA teachers become more skilled in assessment and thereby less dependent on others for evaluation data. Thus, I would like to see more workshops and seminars on assessment so that the LA teacher is able to fine tune his [her] skills and consequently, become more capable in the areas of data collection and interpretation.

**E. Final Remarks**

INTERVIEW FORMAT

## Interview #8

School	<u>Oaklands Elementary</u>
Grade	<u>1-7</u>
Job Description	<u>Teaches a LD class</u>
Years of Experience	<u>21</u>

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A. Introductory Remarks

B. "Assessment Philosophy"

QUESTION 1

What kinds of assessment instruments or strategies do you typically use to assess student performance?

A. I assess reading, spelling, and math. To assess reading I use the Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory and the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test. To evaluate math, I give the KeyMath two to three times a year. This helps me to zero in on the student's basic understanding of math facts. To measure spelling, I use the Schonnel Spelling Test. I use these tests not so much for diagnostic purposes but rather as a way to monitor student progress. During the year, I use less formal tools. I rely heavily on classroom assignments and tests. I also use observation in that I will sit down with the student and watch him [her] complete a task. In addition to these, I keep daily records of the student's

performance as this allows me to track changes in the student's level of functioning. Using all of these techniques is in keeping with my belief that assessment is not a "one shot" thing. It is necessary to gather lots of information on a student on a number of different occasions because our remedial programs are only as sound as our profiles of assessment data.

### QUESTION 2

Given optimal circumstances or ideal conditions, what types of assessment activities would you like to conduct?

A. I would like more time to do assessments, particularly curriculum-based assessment. For example, I would like to expand the way I do reading assessments into the areas of handwriting, creative writing, and even math.

### QUESTION 3

Once you have collected your assessment data, how do you interpret this information? (i.e., What types of strategies do you use to organize and/or make sense of it?)

A. I look at the data and try to develop a picture of the student's strengths and weaknesses. More specifically, I use the data to identify what the student can do so as to ensure that he [she] is not having to handle assignments that are either too easy or too difficult.

**QUESTION 4**

How do you Interpret measurement data obtained from the assessment activities of your colleagues?

A. I use the data I receive from secondary sources to verify my own assessments. That is, I use it as a way in which to confirm my own Judgements of the student after he[she] has been in the class for a period of time and has completed my evaluative procedures.

**QUESTION 5**

Given optimal circumstances, would the methods you use to make sense of information derived from your own measurement practices or those of your colleagues change or be altered in any way?

A. No, I am pretty comfortable with the way I Interpret assessment data. However, I guess if we had more time to gather and examine our assessment data our remedial programs may be more individual specific and perhaps more reflective of the student's needs.

### C. Assessment Tools Used In the Classroom

#### QUESTION 6

Which of these options--no use, little use, some use, or frequent use--most aptly describes your use of the following measurement tools in assessing student performance?

(Interviewer will circle subject's response.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Anecdotal records (e.g. work habits, attitudes)	1	2	3	④
Teacher-made objective tests	1	2	3	④
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	1	②	3	4
Other Standardized Achievement Tests (e.g. Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Peabody Achievement Test, Wide Range Achievement Test)	1	②	3	4
Devices measuring specific subject areas (e.g. Test of Written Language, KeyMath, The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty)	1	2	3	④
Projects/Assignments	1	2	3	④
Subjective evaluations (i.e. how teachers think their students are progressing)	1	2	3	④
Oral tests	1	2	③	4
Observations of classroom behaviour	1	2	③	4

## Question 6 (cont.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Student's self-reports (i.e. asking students about their progress)	1	2	3	4

QUESTION 7

Are there any other measurement devices, not mentioned here, that you use on a regular basis? If so, what are they?

A. No.

QUESTION 8

Which one assessment tool do you find most helpful for evaluating the performance of your students? (Subjects will be encouraged to list more than one choice if they feel that a set of instruments are equally useful.)

A. Observation of the student completing an assigned task.

Teacher-developed quizzes.

Interviews with the student (student self-evaluations).

**QUESTION 9**

Given the following six optional concerns, what is your primary concern about each of the measurement tools described above?

Options - Lack of Information = a  
 Competence = b  
 Time management = c  
 Adequacy of Instrument = d  
 No concern = e  
 Other, please specify = f

Instrument	Major Concern
Anecdotal records	c
Teacher-made objective tests	e
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	d
Other Standardized Achievement Tests	d
Subject-specific Measuring Devices	e
Projects/Assignments	c
Subjective Evaluations	e
Oral Tests	e
Observations of Classroom Behaviour	c
Student's self-reports	f
	What students say they do is not necessarily what they do. Too subjective!

#### D. Availability and Utility of Assessment Information

##### QUESTION 10

What types of assessment information are typically available to you when a child is placed in your program?

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Standard achievement assessment				X
Intellectual assessment				X
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				X
Criterion-referenced assessment				X
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information		X		
Behaviour ratings from school personnel			X	
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted		X		
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements		X		
Formal behaviour observation data (e.g. behaviour check-lists)		X		
Sociometric data		X		

## Question 10 (cont.)

Available				
Information	N	R	O	F
Data from teacher-made objective tests				X
Data from classroom assignments/projects			X	
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")			X	
N = Never Frequently      R = Rarely      O = Occasionally      F =				

QUESTION 11

Given the following choices--no importance, little importance, some importance, and essential/very important--how would you rate the usefulness of the following types of assessment information for instructional planning?

Useful				
Information	No	Little	Some	Very
Standard achievement assessment		X		
Intellectual assessment			X	
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment			X	
Criterion-referenced assessment			X	
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information				X

## Question 11 (cont.)

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements				X
Formal behaviour observation data (eg. behaviour check-lists)			X	
Sociometric data			X	
Data from teacher-made objective tests				X
Data from classroom assignments/projects				X
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")			X	

**QUESTION 12**

Are there any other kinds of measurement data available to you that have not been listed? If so, what are they and how useful do you perceive them to be for instructional purposes?

A. No.

**QUESTION 13**

Do you think the quality and the usefulness of the types of assessment information available at the time of referral has improved over the years? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think that little change has occurred?

A. No, I think that the referral package has essentially remained the same. In the time I've been at this school (5 yrs.), the diagnostic system has not changed. Thus, the information I receive from the psychometrician and school-based personnel has remained constant. I believe that little change has occurred because the final package is quite comprehensive and does provide an adequate starting point.

**QUESTION 14**

What changes or improvements would you like to see happen in the field of assessment in the upcoming years?

A. I would like to see the LD teacher, the LA, and the paraprofessionals work together to develop some more appropriate types of curriculum-based assessment tools. However, I guess for this to happen we need more time in our schedules for the pursuit of "assessment driven" activities.

**E. Final Remarks**

INTERVIEW FORMAT

## Interview #9

School	<u>Cedar Hill Junior High</u>
Grade	<u>8-10</u>
Job Description	<u>LA</u>
Years of Experience	<u>5</u>

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A. Introductory Remarks

B. "Assessment Philosophy"

QUESTION 1

What kinds of assessment instruments or strategies do you typically use to assess student performance?

A. To determine a student's skill level, I use:

- 1) Monroe Sherman
- 2) Slosson Oral Reading Test to examine decoding skills
- 3) The Brigance Diagnostic Inventories
- 4) The Test of Written Language
- 5) The Wide Range Achievement Test
- 6) The Schonell Spelling Test
- 7) Steenbergen's Quick Math Screen to obtain a quick

check of the student's present skill level

I do these tests about twice a year. During the year, I rely on interviews with my students, observations of their behavior in the classroom, self-constructed examinations,

and written records of the student's daily performance. I think the important thing to remember about assessment is that you can't just depend on one tool. You have to adjust your assessment techniques in accordance with the child and the situation.

### QUESTION 2

Given optimal circumstances or ideal conditions, what types of assessment activities would you like to conduct?

A. I would like to have the opportunity to spend more time in the regular classroom observing my students. This would allow me to develop a picture of the "whole student" as opposed to the isolated one I often have now. Similarly, I would like more time to consult with my colleagues because I feel that valuable information is frequently "lost" because we don't have the time to communicate with one another.

### QUESTION 3

Once you have collected your assessment data, how do you interpret this information? (i.e., What types of strategies do you use to organize and/or make sense of it?)

A. I mark each test or assignment individually and then I record the results on a master sheet. This allows me to look for specific patterns of performance. It helps me to identify the student's strengths and weaknesses. I also share the assessment data with teachers and parents,

communicating to them the areas in which the student is having difficulties and suggesting possible remediation tactics.

#### QUESTION 4

How do you interpret measurement data obtained from the assessment activities of your colleagues?

A. I study the information given to me and try to form a picture of the student's abilities. If I receive the information at the beginning of the year, I use it to assist me in developing intervention strategies. If the information comes later in the year, I use it to help in the development of more immediate solutions intended to assist the student in compensating for the area of difficulty.

#### QUESTION 5

Given optimal circumstances, would the methods you use to make sense of information derived from your own measurement practices or those of your colleagues change or be altered in any way?

A. I would like to have more time to discuss my assessment data with my colleagues. This would ensure that I was accurately interpreting this information and would probably aid in the development of appropriate individual education programs.

### C. Assessment Tools Used In the Classroom

#### QUESTION 6

Which of these options--no use, little use, some use, or frequent use--most aptly describes your use of the following measurement tools in assessing student performance?

(Interviewer will circle subject's response.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Anecdotal records (e.g. work habits, attitudes)	1	2	3	4
Teacher-made objective tests	1	2	3	4
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	1	2	3	4
Other Standardized Achievement Tests (e.g. Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Peabody Achievement Test, Wide Range Achievement Test)	1	2	3	4
Devices measuring specific subject areas (e.g. Test of Written Language, KeyMath, The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty)	1	2	3	4
Projects/Assignments	1	2	3	4
Subjective evaluations (i.e. how teachers think their students are progressing)	1	2	3	4
Oral tests	1	2	3	4
Observations of classroom behaviour	1	2	3	4
Student's self-reports (i.e. asking students about their progress)	1	2	3	4

**QUESTION 7**

Are there any other measurement devices, not mentioned here, that you use on a regular basis? If so, what are they?

A. No.

**QUESTION 8**

Which one assessment tool do you find most helpful for evaluating the performance of your students? (Subjects will be encouraged to list more than one choice if they feel that a set of instruments are equally useful.)

A. Teacher-made examinations.  
Written notes detailing the student's daily progress.

**QUESTION 9**

Given the following six optional concerns, what is your primary concern about each of the measurement tools described above?

Options - Lack of Information = a  
Competence = b  
Time management = c  
Adequacy of Instrument = d  
No concern = e  
Other, please specify = f

(please see next page)

## Question 9 (cont.)

Instrument	Major Concern
Anecdotal records	c
Teacher-made objective tests	c
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	d
Other Standardized Achievement Tests	d
Subject-specific Measuring Devices	d
Projects/Assignments	c
Subjective Evaluations	f Are sometimes based on opinion rather than a student's actual behavior.
Oral Tests	e
Observations of Classroom Behaviour	c
Student's self-reports	f Can be too subjective as students sometimes do not judge their abilities fairly.

#### D. Availability and Utility of Assessment Information

##### QUESTION 10

What types of assessment information are typically available to you when a child is placed in your program?

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Standard achievement assessment				X
Intellectual assessment				X
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment	X			
Criterion-referenced assessment	X			
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information		X		
Behaviour ratings from school personnel			X	
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements		X		
Formal behaviour observation data (e.g. behaviour check-lists)	X			

## Question 10 (cont.)

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Sociometric data	X			
Data from teacher-made objective tests		X		
Data from classroom assignments/projects				X
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				X
N = Never      R = Rarely      O = Occasionally      F = Frequently				

QUESTION 11

Given the following choices--no importance, little importance, some importance, and essential/very important--how would you rate the usefulness of the following types of assessment information for instructional planning?

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Standard achievement assessment	X			
Intellectual assessment				X
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				X
Criterion-referenced assessment	X			

## Question 11 (cont.)

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family Information				X
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements				X
Formal behaviour observation data (eg. behaviour check-lists)				X
Sociometric data			X	
Data from teacher-made objective tests			X	
Data from classroom assignments/projects			X	
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")			X	

**QUESTION 12**

Are there any other kinds of measurement data available to you that have not been listed? If so, what are they and how useful do you perceive them to be for instructional purposes?

A. No.

**QUESTION 13**

Do you think the quality and the usefulness of the types of assessment information available at the time of referral has improved over the years? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think that little change has occurred?

A. No, in the five years I've been teaching I have seen little change in the assessment information included in the referral package. However, I don't view this as a bad thing because I am presently satisfied with the data I receive. In general, I find that the information included adequately describes the student and gives me a solid foundation to base my remedial programs on.

**QUESTION 14**

What changes or improvements would you like to see happen in the field of assessment in the upcoming years?

A. It would be nice if more time were allotted in the school day to conduct assessment activities. I would also like to see the number of inservices on assessment for LA teachers increase because I think that many LA teachers are not aware of the many assessment options available to them. I believe that some LA teachers may not be as skilled in assessment as they perhaps should be.

**E. Final Remarks**

INTERVIEW FORMAT

## Interview #10

School	<u>Cedar Hill Junior High</u>
Grade	<u>8 - 10</u>
Job Description	<u>Teaches LD class</u>
Years of Experience	<u>13</u>

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A. Introductory Remarks

B. "Assessment Philosophy"

QUESTION 1

What kinds of assessment instruments or strategies do you typically use to assess student performance?

A. Generally, I use the following strategies:

- 1) Teacher-made tests & assessments
- 2) Running records of a student's daily performance
- 3) Observation of classroom behavior

If I have the time, I also like to do some standardized testing once or twice a year. At that time I typically use 1) The Wide Range Achievement Test; 2) The Brigance Diagnostic Inventories; 3) portions of The Woodcock Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities and 4) The Monroe Sherman. By doing both standardized testing and "child-centered" evaluations, I think I get a more representative profile of the child's skill level.

**QUESTION 2**

Given optimal circumstances or ideal conditions, what types of assessment activities would you like to conduct?

A. I would like to have more time to conduct my assessments. I often feel that, because of time constraints, I don't devote enough time to evaluation. As a result, I think that sometimes I don't obtain a truly accurate picture of my student's abilities. I would also like to see more time allotted for consultation with my colleagues. This would allow for a more collaborative approach to education.

**QUESTION 3**

Once you have collected your assessment data, how do you interpret this information? (i.e., What types of strategies do you use to organize and/or make sense of it?)

A. I examine it in order to identify the student's areas of strength and need. That is, I look for patterns or trends that will tell me where the student is having problems. I then translate this information into a remedial program. Additionally, my daily assessment data is organized into an eight day report which is sent home to the student's parents.

**QUESTION 4**

How do you interpret measurement data obtained from the assessment activities of your colleagues?

A. I use the information I receive from my colleagues as a means by which to validate my own assessment results. This data assists me in determining whether my plans and goals for a student are best servicing his [her] needs.

Generally, I rely on my own experience to tell me how or if this assessment data should be incorporated into a student's remedial program.

**QUESTION 5**

Given optimal circumstances, would the methods you use to make sense of information derived from your own measurement practices or those of your colleagues change or be altered in any way?

A. I would like more time to consult with my colleagues about my assessment results so that there would be a better match between the student's abilities and I.E.P. goals.

### C. Assessment Tools Used In the Classroom

#### QUESTION 6

Which of these options--no use, little use, some use, or frequent use--most aptly describes your use of the following measurement tools in assessing student performance? (Interviewer will circle subject's response.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Anecdotal records (e.g. work habits, attitudes)	1	2	3	④
Teacher-made objective tests	1	2	3	④
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	①	2	3	4
Other Standardized Achievement Tests (e.g. Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Peabody Achievement Test, Wide Range Achievement Test)	①	2	3	4
Devices measuring specific subject areas (e.g. Test of Written Language, KeyMath, The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty)	1	②	3	4
Projects/Assignments	1	2	3	④
Subjective evaluations (i.e. how teachers think their students are progressing)	1	2	③	4
Oral tests	1	2	3	④
Observations of classroom behaviour	1	2	3	④
Student's self-reports (i.e. asking students about their progress)	1	2	③	4

**QUESTION 7**

Are there any other measurement devices, not mentioned here, that you use on a regular basis? If so, what are they?

A. No.

**QUESTION 8**

Which one assessment tool do you find most helpful for evaluating the performance of your students? (Subjects will be encouraged to list more than one choice if they feel that a set of instruments are equally useful.)

A. Students' written assignments.

Self-constructed quizzes.

Daily notations about student performance.

**QUESTION 9**

Given the following six optional concerns, what is your primary concern about each of the measurement tools described above?

Options - Lack of Information = a  
Competence = b  
Time management = c  
Adequacy of Instrument = d  
No concern = e  
Other, please specify = f

(please see next page)

## Question 9 (cont.)

Instrument	Major Concern
Anecdotal records	e
Teacher-made objective tests	d
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	d
Other Standardized Achievement Tests	d
Subject-specific Measuring Devices	d
Projects/Assignments	e
Subjective Evaluations	e
Oral Tests	e
Observations of Classroom Behaviour	c
Student's self-reports	f Students can sometimes provide bias self-evaluations.

#### D. Availability and Utility of Assessment Information

##### QUESTION 10

What types of assessment information are typically available to you when a child is placed in your program?

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Standard achievement assessment				X
Intellectual assessment				X
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				X
Criterion-referenced assessment				X
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information		X		
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted		X		
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements			X	

## Question 10 (cont.)

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Formal behaviour observation data (e.g. behaviour check-lists)		X		
Sociometric data		X		
Data from teacher-made objective tests				X
Data from classroom assignments/projects				X
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")			X	
N = Never Frequently      R = Rarely      O = Occasionally      F =				

QUESTION 11

Given the following choices--no importance, little importance, some importance, and essential/very important--how would you rate the usefulness of the following types of assessment information for instructional planning?

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Standard achievement assessment	X			
Intellectual assessment				X
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				X

## Question 11 (cont.)

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Criterion-referenced assessment				X
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information				X
Behaviour ratings from school personnel			X	
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements				X
Formal behaviour observation data (eg. behaviour check-lists)				X
Sociometric data			X	
Data from teacher-made objective tests			X	
Data from classroom assignments/projects				X
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				X

**QUESTION 12**

Are there any other kinds of measurement data available to you that have not been listed? If so, what are they and how useful do you perceive them to be for instructional purposes?

A. No.

**QUESTION 13**

Do you think the quality and the usefulness of the types of assessment information available at the time of referral has improved over the years? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think that little change has occurred?

A. Yes, I think there has been an improvement. The information in the referral is more precise and individual specific. I usually receive a descriptive account of the student's abilities which is a vast change from a list of meaningless test scores. I have also found my colleagues more willing to meet with me to answer any of my questions, even the secondary assessment team is more accessible. All of this makes it a lot easier to produce a relevant educational program for the student.

**QUESTION 14**

What changes or Improvements would you like to see happen in the field of assessment in the upcoming years?

A. I would like to see more time allotted for assessment activities. More specifically, I would like more time to incorporate the student in the assessment process. That is, I would like to see the student help us identify his [her] strengths and weaknesses as well as be involved in the generation of solutions to his [her] academic difficulties. Besides this, I would like to see the movement toward a collaborative approach to assessment continue. I think that everyone benefits when a student receives the expertise of a group of trained individuals as opposed to a single LD teacher.

**E. Final Remarks**

INTERVIEW FORMAT

## Interview #11

School	<u>Mt. Douglas Secondary</u>
Grade	<u>11 - 12</u>
Job Description	<u>LA</u>
Years of Experience	<u>18</u>

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A. Introductory Remarks

B. "Assessment Philosophy"

QUESTION 1

What kinds of assessment instruments or strategies do you typically use to assess student performance?

A. I use a number of standardized tests such as:

- 1) The Stanford Reading Comprehension Test
- 2) The Wide Range Achievement Test
- 3) The Monroe Sherman - timed & untimed
- 4) If appropriate, I also use the Schonnel Spelling and
- 5) The Woodcock Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities

Once I've gathered this information, I plan a program and use less formal measures to evaluate student progress in that program. These include teacher-made tests, interviews with students and self-developed assignments or projects. The reason I use all these devices is because I cannot make decisions about a student's academic standing solely on the

basis of his [her] score on a single assignment or examination. What I try to do is gather information from several different sources such as interviews with the student and other teachers, classroom observation, tests, and assignments.

### QUESTION 2

Given optimal circumstances or ideal conditions, what types of assessment activities would you like to conduct?

A. I would like more time for two types of activities:

1) To observe my students in their regular classroom, and

2) To do more curriculum based assessment. Presently, I feel that I don't have enough time to pursue either of these activities.

### QUESTION 3

Once you have collected your assessment data, how do you interpret this information? (i.e., What types of strategies do you use to organize and/or make sense of it?)

A. I look at the results from all the instruments I have administered and attempt to identify trends or commonalities in the data. That is, I try to develop a picture of the student's strengths and weaknesses. I also look at how the standardized test results correlate with information from

Interviews with students, PR cards, and so forth. If there are large discrepancies between these two, I look for explanations as to why. Additionally, I speak with classroom teachers about my assessment findings so they have the opportunity to concur or elaborate on them.

#### QUESTION 4

How do you interpret measurement data obtained from the assessment activities of your colleagues?

A. I use this data mainly to verify my own assessment findings. Basically, this information gives me a rough idea about how the student is doing and from it I can use my own assessment strategies to zero in on the specific areas of difficulty.

#### QUESTION 5

Given optimal circumstances, would the methods you use to make sense of information derived from your own measurement practices or those of your colleagues change or be altered in any way?

A. I would like to have more time to consult with teachers about the results of my assessment activities. I find that because I do not have the opportunity to regularly meet with all the teachers involved with my students, I am not certain that we are always working toward the same academic goals suggested by the results of the assessment process.

### C. Assessment Tools Used In the Classroom

#### QUESTION 6

Which of these options--no use, little use, some use, or frequent use--most aptly describes your use of the following measurement tools in assessing student performance? (Interviewer will circle subject's response.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Anecdotal records (e.g. work habits, attitudes)	1	2	3	④
Teacher-made objective tests	1	2	3	④
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	①	2	3	4
Other Standardized Achievement Tests (e.g. Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Peabody Achievement Test, Wide Range Achievement Test)	1	2	③	4
Devices measuring specific subject areas (e.g. Test of Written Language, KeyMath, The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty)	1	2	3	④
Projects/Assignments	1	2	3	④
Subjective evaluations (i.e. how teachers think their students are progressing)	1	2	③	4
Oral tests	1	2	3	④
Observations of classroom behaviour	1	2	3	④
Student's self-reports (i.e. asking students about their progress)	1	2	3	④

**QUESTION 7**

Are there any other measurement devices, not mentioned here, that you use on a regular basis? If so, what are they?

A. No.

**QUESTION 8**

Which one assessment tool do you find most helpful for evaluating the performance of your students? (Subjects will be encouraged to list more than one choice if they feel that a set of instruments are equally useful.)

A. Self-reports from my students.

In-class assignments.

Self-developed tests.

Observations of classroom behavior.

**QUESTION 9**

Given the following six optional concerns, what is your primary concern about each of the measurement tools described above?

Options - Lack of Information = a  
Competence = b  
Time management = c  
Adequacy of Instrument = d  
No concern = e  
Other, please specify = f

(please see next page)

## Question 9 (cont.)

Instrument	Major Concern
Anecdotal records	c
Teacher-made objective tests	e
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	d
Other Standardized Achievement Tests	d
Subject-specific Measuring Devices	d
Projects/Assignments	c
Subjective Evaluations	f May be too subjective and thus lacking in validity.
Oral Tests	e
Observations of Classroom Behaviour	c
Student's self-reports	f Students can sometimes misrepresent their abilities.

#### D. Availability and Utility of Assessment Information

##### QUESTION 10

What types of assessment information are typically available to you when a child is placed in your program?

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Standard achievement assessment				X
Intellectual assessment			X	
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment	X			
Criterion-referenced assessment	X			
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information	X			
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements		X		
Formal behaviour observation data (e.g. behaviour check-lists)		X		

## Question 10 (cont.)

Available				
Information	N	R	O	F
Sociometric data	X			
Data from teacher-made objective tests		X		
Data from classroom assignments/projects				X
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				X

N = Never      R = Rarely      O = Occasionally  
F = Frequently

QUESTION 11

Given the following choices--no importance, little importance, some importance, and essential/very important--how would you rate the usefulness of the following types of assessment information for instructional planning?

Useful				
Information	No	Little	Some	Very
Standard achievement assessment		X		
Intellectual assessment				X
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				X
Criterion-referenced assessment		X		

## Question 11 (cont.)

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information				X
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements				X
Formal behaviour observation data (eg. behaviour check-lists)				X
Sociometric data				X
Data from teacher-made objective tests				X
Data from classroom assignments/projects				X
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				X

**QUESTION 12**

Are there any other kinds of measurement data available to you that have not been listed? If so, what are they and how useful do you perceive them to be for instructional purposes?

A. No.

**QUESTION 13**

Do you think the quality and the usefulness of the types of assessment information available at the time of referral has improved over the years? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think that little change has occurred?

A. Yes, I think there has been some improvement. Teachers seem to be spending more time on their referrals thus the information I'm receiving is more descriptive and the specific problem area is better detailed. My colleagues are also more willing to meet with me to discuss the referral as well as assist in the development of a remedial program. Finally, I have found that, because the data in the referral is so concrete and thorough, it is far easier to use it as a basis or beginning point for my own assessment activities.

**QUESTION 14**

What changes or improvements would you like to see happen in the field of assessment in the upcoming years?

A. I would like to see LA teachers have the opportunity to develop a stronger foundation in assessment; one which includes a solid working knowledge of fundamental assessment techniques. Namely, how to develop a test, how to administer and interpret a standardized test, how to analyze work samples, how to collect accurate observational data, and so on. This, I think, can only be accomplished if more training in this area is made available. I would also like to see us continue to view assessment as a continuous process and remember that we should not judge a student's academic abilities on the basis of a few test scores.

**E. Final Remarks**

INTERVIEW FORMAT

## Interview #12

School	<u>Claremont Secondary</u>
Grade	<u>9 - 12</u>
Job Description	<u>Teaches LD class</u>
Years of Experience	<u>6.5</u>

---

A. Introductory Remarks

B. "Assessment Philosophy"

QUESTION 1

What kinds of assessment instruments or strategies do you typically use to assess student performance?

A. Twice a year I conduct standardized testing. At that time I assess spelling, reading, and math by using:

1) Portions of the KeyMath & the Wide Range Achievement Test to assess mathematical ability.

2) Woodcock Reading Mastery Test and segments of The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty.

3) Test of Written Language

4) Schonnel Spelling

5) Learning Style Inventory

6) The Picture Peabody Test which I use with severely disabled students.

On a day to day basis, I use teacher-made quizzes, observations of a student's behavior and his [her] ability to complete a task, tape recordings of reading samples, daily records of the student's progress, and informal questionnaires which require the student to assess his [her] own progress. My philosophy regarding assessment is that it is far better to do "too much" than it is to do "too little." I think that it is impossible to understand a student's needs without a daily evaluation of their performance. It is also important to recognize that just as students respond differently to different teaching styles they also respond differently to different assessment. Therefore, it is imperative that assessment be both continuous and multidimensional.

#### QUESTION 2

Given optimal circumstances or ideal conditions, what types of assessment activities would you like to conduct?

A. I would like more time to devote to my assessment activities. What I do now is conduct my formal assessments at the beginning and end of the school year and then I use informal strategies for the remainder of the year. It would be nice if I had more time to combine my formal and informal strategies so that I could administer a more comprehensive battery of evaluative techniques throughout the school year.

**QUESTION 3**

Once you have collected your assessment data, how do you interpret this information? (i.e., What types of strategies do you use to organize and/or make sense of it?)

A. I gather all of my assessment data together and try to organize it so that I can develop a picture of not only the student's strengths and weaknesses but also of his [her] learning style. From this process, I graph my findings as well as write notes about the student's performance. This allows me to identify the student's most immediate needs (those areas where he[she] is performing below the norm). I then put this data into an I.E.P. and I further translate this into concrete information which I can share with the classroom teachers.

**QUESTION 4**

How do you interpret measurement data obtained from the assessment activities of your colleagues?

A. I look at the data I receive to determine what sorts of activities have been tried before and how successful these were in helping the student. I also use this data to confirm my own evaluations of the student as well as my subsequent plans for remediation. Depending on the source, I may use this information to modify the student's current I.E.P.

**QUESTION 5**

Given optimal circumstances, would the methods you use to make sense of information derived from your own measurement practices or those of your colleagues change or be altered in any way?

A. I would like more time to discuss my assessment findings with my colleagues. I think this would allow for a more thorough examination of the data and would possibly improve "the fit" between assessment findings and subsequent treatment plans.

### C. Assessment Tools Used In the Classroom

#### QUESTION 6

Which of these options--no use, little use, some use, or frequent use--most aptly describes your use of the following measurement tools in assessing student performance? (Interviewer will circle subject's response.)

Instrument	No	Little	Some	Frequent
Anecdotal records (e.g. work habits, attitudes)	1	2	3	④
Teacher-made objective tests	1	2	3	④
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	①	2	3	4
Other Standardized Achievement Tests (e.g. Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Peabody Achievement Test, Wide Range Achievement Test)	1	②	3	4
Devices measuring specific subject areas (e.g. Test of Written Language, KeyMath, The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty)	1	2	3	④
Projects/Assignments	1	2	3	④
Subjective evaluations (i.e. how teachers think their students are progressing)	1	2	3	④
Oral tests	1	②	3	4
Observations of classroom behaviour	1	2	③	4
Student's self-reports (i.e. asking students about their progress)	1	2	3	④

QUESTION 7

Are there any other measurement devices, not mentioned here, that you use on a regular basis? If so, what are they?

A. No.

QUESTION 8

Which one assessment tool do you find most helpful for evaluating the performance of your students? (Subjects will be encouraged to list more than one choice if they feel that a set of instruments are equally useful.)

A. Students' self-reports where they have evaluated their own performance.

Teacher-made tests designed to evaluate the material being taught.

Anecdotal records noting the student's performance on a regular basis.

QUESTION 9

Given the following six optional concerns, what is your primary concern about each of the measurement tools described above?

Options - Lack of Information = a  
 Competence = b  
 Time management = c  
 Adequacy of Instrument = d  
 No concern = e  
 Other, please specify = f  
 (please see next page)

## Question 9 (cont.)

Instrument	Major Concern
Anecdotal records	e
Teacher-made objective tests	e
Ministry of Education Classroom Achievement Tests	d
Other Standardized Achievement Tests	d
Subject-specific Measuring Devices	c
Projects/Assignments	e
Subjective Evaluations	f Too subjective.
Oral Tests	e
Observations of Classroom Behaviour	e
Student's self-reports	f Often they are not an accurate reflection of a student's abilities.

#### D. Availability and Utility of Assessment Information

##### QUESTION 10

What types of assessment information are typically available to you when a child is placed in your program?

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Standard achievement assessment				X
Intellectual assessment				X
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment			X	
Criterion-referenced assessment			X	
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family information	X			
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted		X		
Personality, self-concept data				X
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements		X		
Formal behaviour observation data (e.g. behaviour check-lists)		X		

## Question 10 (cont.)

Information	Available			
	N	R	O	F
Sociometric data	X			
Data from teacher-made objective tests			X	
Data from classroom assignments/projects			X	
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")			X	

N = Never      R = Rarely      O = Occasionally  
F = Frequently

QUESTION 11

Given the following choices--no importance, little importance, some importance, and essential/very important--how would you rate the usefulness of the following types of assessment information for instructional planning?

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Standard achievement assessment		X		
Intellectual assessment			X	
Neurological and/or neuropsychological assessment				X
Criterion-referenced assessment				X

## Question 11 (cont.)

Information	Useful			
	No	Little	Some	Very
Assessment data on vision, hearing, speech development				X
Health history/family Information				X
Behaviour ratings from school personnel				X
Statements of teaching strategies already attempted				X
Personality, self-concept data			X	
Description of regular classroom expectations/requirements				X
Formal behaviour observation data (eg. behaviour check-lists)				X
Sociometric data Data from teacher-made objective tests			X	X
Data from classroom assignments/projects			X	
Subjective evaluations (e.g. "I think that it is necessary to . . .")				X

**QUESTION 12**

Are there any other kinds of measurement data available to you that have not been listed? If so, what are they and how useful do you perceive them to be for instructional purposes?

A. No.

**QUESTION 13**

Do you think the quality and the usefulness of the types of assessment information available at the time of referral has improved over the years? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think that little change has occurred?

A. Yes, there have definitely been some positive changes in the referral package. I think the primary one is that more valid informal assessment data (e.g., work samples, observational information) is being included in the referral. There is also an increased awareness of the need to include assessment information that is directly applicable to secondary students. Thus, the data is more relevant to their unique needs and as a result is easier to use for instructional planning.

**QUESTION 14**

What changes or improvements would you like to see happen in the field of assessment in the upcoming years?

A. I think the changes in the referral package have been very positive and I would like to see them continue. I would also like to continue to work as a team when we are assessing students because I think we are now obtaining more complete pictures of our students' needs. Lastly, I would like to see a continuance of the workshops that are now being conducted on assessment techniques and strategies.

**E. Final Remarks**

## VITA

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University of Calgary	1985 to 1987
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### Honours and Awards:

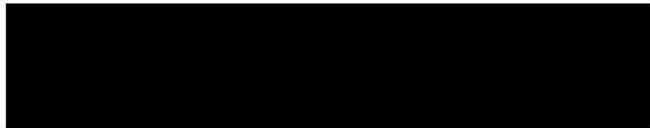
Drina Fraser Baxter Memorial Bursary	1990
Drina Fraxer Baxter Memorial Bursary	1989

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Title of Thesis/Dissertation: Teachers' Evaluation Practices  
and Their Perceptions of the  
Utility of Assessment  
Information

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April 29, 1991  
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