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At-risk in Middle School: Definitions and Understandings of Support Practices for  
Students with Learning Disabilities In Two Integrated Grade 6  
Language Arts Classrooms

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B.A., Dalhousie University, 1979  
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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
in the Department of Communication and Social Foundations

We accept this dissertation as conforming  
to the required standard

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the definitions and understandings of literacy support revealed by three teachers and two teacher assistants in their interactions with five children identified with learning disabilities in two grade 6 integrated classrooms. The nature of this support was revealed through interactions among students and their teachers, teacher assistants and peers while engaged in language arts activities in a pull-in, co-teaching model of support over a three-month semester. The data consist of the transcriptions of 29 separate audio-tapes of 60 minute duration which were recorded on average of two times each week. Thirty classroom interactions (each 50-minutes long) and 13 interviews with participants were recorded. The classroom support interactions and the interviews have been examined using a qualitative software tool (QSR NUD\*IST) for the nature, understandings and perceptions regarding literacy support in language arts classes. Data were also analyzed for the text-accessing structures, strategies and technologies explicitly taught or made available to learners with LD in each classroom.

The findings from this study add to the existing literature by identifying three dynamics of support for learners with learning disabilities in language arts classrooms. First, it offers definitions and descriptions of specific helping practices and attitudes of staff and students which serve to either access or restrict involvement in the language arts lessons. Second, it identifies attitudes and practices which diminish effective support for learners of this profile, and finally it reveals the importance of three teachers' understanding and beliefs in three important areas that affected language arts instruction and student participation: a) adaptation and

modification of curricula to suit individual needs; b) ways for learners to represent knowledge; and c) views on school-related abilities.

Findings derived from the data regarding one teacher's practices in the language arts classroom showed an inadequate understanding of these three concepts which negatively impacted the literacy experiences for the at-risk students. A second teacher's practices showed an understanding of the concepts which resulted in satisfactory support for students with LD.

The study also suggests that some of the practices directed at students with LD may have beneficial implications for general population students including First Nations children.

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## DEDICATION

For my husband, John  
for whom helping is a way of life.  
Thank you for all the ways you  
supported me during this project,  
and especially for your compassion,  
kindness and good humor.

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

This dissertation targets the nature of literacy support provided for five students with identified learning disabilities (LD) during language arts classes in a middle school context. These five children were placed in two Grade 6 classrooms comprised of twenty-eight students each. The other participants in the study included the two classroom teachers, one integration support teacher, and two teacher assistants, all in their natural school setting. The nature of the support was revealed through study of the participants' interactions, the teaching and learning behaviors that were exhibited, and the literacy activities that took place within integrated co-teaching configurations.

#### Rationale

The British Columbia School Act identifies the following goals for all students: “removing barriers and providing appropriate services and programs to ensure that the school system is equitable, of high quality, relevant, accessible and accountable” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1995). The goals of the School Act apply to all Special Education programs that serve students who have any physical, emotional, and/or intellectual disability. Among these students, the number of those with learning disabilities (LD) and attention deficit disorders is expanding most rapidly (Stainback & Stainback, 1992).

The social construct of disability and its ensuing categorization determines funding for special education programs of support and also heavily determines macro-educational structures of support for students with intellectual disabilities within the British Columbia school system. Severe learning disabilities (Ministry of Education

classification number 326) is one category of disability within the provincially-funded special education programs. The equity, quality, relevancy, accessibility, and accountability of services and programs for learners with LD hinge heavily on the degree to which these students are afforded access to participate in literacy activities in their age-appropriate classrooms. Accordingly, literacy support for at-risk learners has been identified by researchers as one of the most critical issues facing students with LD and by those responsible for their education. Classroom literacy activities and interactions are impacted heavily by teachers' beliefs and understandings in three specific areas: (a) their roles; (b) the abilities of learners; and (c) literacy learning (Fang, 1996).

In recent years, the research on integrated support practices for students identified with learning disabilities has mainly directed attention toward the effectiveness of integrated support models, in contrast to other models of varying degrees of classroom integration along a continuum of support (see Mather, 1995; McLesky & Pugach, 1995; and Zigmond, 1995 for more on this debate). Both American and Canadian literature on support practices for learners with LD has also been dominated in recent years not by what to do with such learners, but by where to do it. The decision whether to integrate or not is largely a fait accompli in the Canadian context. A more fruitful and ultimately pragmatic debate has ensued over how best to structure collaborative teaching models of support between regular and special educators, how best to provide learning opportunities and how best to teach in classrooms with students of diverse abilities, interests and backgrounds so that all students experience and perceive effective support.

The significant body of research on what to do and how to do it is overshadowed only by the number of studies on why we [teachers] often don't do it. The debate is referred to by some as the desirability-versus-feasibility gap, the gap between known

"good practice" and "actual practice." Closing this gap needs to take serious account of what classroom teachers and support personnel say about why they cannot or perceive they cannot carry out effective practices for this at-risk population. In the literature it boils down to three things: "don't know how," "don't have time," and "not my job" (See Chapter 2). Some promising classroom-based research has recently shown that teachers with a respectful coaching model of support do know how and do have time. The third perception, "not my job" is a tougher challenge to address. This mentality is found more frequently with teachers at the upper grades; however, it too has been shown to be receptive to change with professional in-servicing, which focuses on a productive and positive environment for children across the ability and attitudinal spectrum (Cook & Friend, 1993; Friend, 1995; Wong 1992).

In the Canadian context, the provincial jurisdiction over education provides each province with the opportunity to come to its own conclusions about ideal support delivery systems. In British Columbia, New Brunswick, Alberta, Quebec and Ontario school systems, all students with LD are enrolled full-time in regular education classrooms with varying instructional models, intended to meet the needs of the students, while taking into account the particular constraints and resources of each school. The issue in British Columbia schools is no longer if students with LD should be included in regular education classes, but how these students are to be supported now that they are integrated. The general educator and special educator are challenged in the classroom context to engage at-risk children in literacy activities in mainstreamed classrooms; however, the inherent difficulties of this challenge have received relatively little attention from the perspective and context of those actually responsible for constructing, delivering and participating in such programs.

### The Significance of the Study

The accumulated body of research offers substantial evidence of ways to support learners with LD. In general terms, this literature acknowledges that when collaborative and cooperative models of support, and specific strategies best suited to learners with LD, are implemented within classroom contexts, students with LD do benefit (Wang, 1989; Vaughn, & Schumm 1994; Zigmond & Baker, 1996). The majority of this research was conducted in American elementary schools and did not focus exclusively on how teachers and teacher assistants engage in the dynamics of literacy support on behalf of students with LD in full inclusion models of support (see Chapter 2).

In addition to concerns about students with disabilities, school systems are also faced with the learning problems of a rapidly growing at-risk student population—the many students who face social, economic, environmental, and cultural challenges in their lives. Ellis (1993) estimated that 30 to 40 per cent of the general US student population may be at risk for school failure. ESL issues, behavioral problems and societal factors that negatively impact adolescents are everyday concerns for teachers, parents and school personnel. Some of the problems these students experience are similar to those of students with LD—challenges in accessing literacy and the curriculum embodied in literacy, as well as teacher insensitivity to the constellation of factors that may make school difficult for them. Ginsberg (1994) has identified effective school support systems, realistic goal setting, self-understanding, acceptance of their disability, and self-advocacy, as key factors that enable students identified with LD to overcome many of these risk factors. This body of research suggests that what teachers do to support such students has a long-term effect on their well-being and on their general ability to make contributions and function in our society.

In British Columbia, although the debate still rages over how to best support learners with LD, all but the most change-weary teachers have embraced the new

initiatives in special education to varying degrees. Teachers are asking important questions: How do we structure, or unstructure, the school experience in ways that enable students with this profile to better realize their potential, and to fully participate in literacy activities? How do we help them carve out a place in the school culture and to create and maintain a desire to attend school?

The number of semi-literate individuals has warranted much research, debate and generation of theories regarding how to determine the best support strategies and configurations for at-risk learners who have problems with literacy. Creating classrooms that respond, support and nurture literacy through several strategic instructional paths is central to meeting the needs of students with LD.

Technologies also hold some promise in facilitating access to literacy; however, current technological programs aimed at providing substantive practical support for at-risk students remain at the preliminary level. In order to address the needs of learners of this profile, we need more than the current offerings of colourful programs that attempt to deliver access to information through graphics that are sometimes more difficult to decipher than the text they intend to augment or replace.

Given the substantial social, emotional and life-long implications that may occur as a result of school failure for students identified with learning disabilities, it is important to explore educational endeavours, assumptions and specific classroom interactions and practices that comprise and/or impact literacy support from the perspective of the beneficiaries. Gaining an understanding of literacy support practices in the classroom from the perspectives of professionals, paraprofessionals, parents, and children with LD could prove valuable in marking the terrain for further research in literacy instructional practices in integrated contexts for at-risk learners.

## Definition of Terms

Literacy

Literacy Activities

Literacy Strategies

Strategy Teaching

Text-Accessing Strategies

Text-Accessing Story Structure

Literacy Support

Instructional Scaffolding

Support

Integration Support Personnel

Learning Disabilities

Satellite Peers

Curriculum

Curriculum Adaptation

Curriculum Modification

Mini-Lessons

Sidebars

Leg-up Measures/

Cogitare

Nag versus Nudge

### Literacy.

"Literacy (including reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing) is a meaning-making and meaning-using process. Meaning is constructed through the interaction between the learner (in all of his or her complexity), the text (in all

of its complexity), and instructional variables within the context of the learning situation. Meaning is used in direct relation to the level of interest in the learner and the level of functionality of the learning. The degree of interaction and use varies as a function of factors such as the learner's culture, prior knowledge, skills and strategies, motivation and interests, the type of text, the classroom environment, the instructional strategies, the meaningfulness of learning activities, and a host of other contextual factors" (Broco & Simpson, 1999, p. 7).

#### Literacy Activities.

In this document, the definition of literacy activities is restricted to the actual reading, writing, talking, listening and viewing activities that the students, teachers and teacher assistants participated in during their language arts lessons in the two Grade 6 classrooms under study. These included activities and strategies focussed almost exclusively on supporting learner understanding of story structure including the core elements of story (theme, plot, characters, setting, and point of view); and on helping learners make connections between themselves and text through written responses to stories and texts presented in class. This reflects the curricular focus of the two classroom teachers during the semester in which the study took place; the emphasis was on reading short stories and one novel and on written responses focussed on narrative, persuasive, and expository writing in connection to the current text selections. Writing was usually preceded by talking activities to support understanding, to clarify thinking and to create some social interaction involving text.

#### Literacy Strategies.

Literacy strategies are a generalized way of approaching, engaging with and sharing one's understanding of a text. A body of such strategies becomes a response repertoire intended to allow learners to engage in executive selection and should eventually lead toward independence and autonomy in selecting appropriate strategies and/or in generating their own strategy. The strategies are initially presented by the

teacher to the learners and emphasize ways in which to approach, explore and share the interpretation of text (Johnson, 1999).

#### Strategy Teaching.

Strategy teaching is designed to give the novices cognitive and linguistic tools for exploring and extending their world. They show the inexperienced learners ways in which older and/or more seasoned learners have faced, approached and sometimes solved the kinds of problems which beset the novices. For example: how to interpret a picture, what to notice in a short story, how to read a novel, how to write narrative fiction, how to write a report, or how to write a critical review (Johnson, 1999).

#### Text-accessing Strategies.

Such strategies involve scaffolded instruction (a way of supporting students as they engage in tasks that require reading and writing) that optimizes learners' abilities to be successful in handling the linguistic and conceptual demands inherent in texts than if left to their own devices. Key features of successful text-accessing strategy instruction include the demonstration and modeling of the strategy, and explicit instruction regarding our ability to think about and control our own learning (Vacca & Vacca, 1996).

#### Text-accessing of Story Structures.

Specifying the basic parts of a story and how those parts tie together to form a well-constructed tale. The assumption is that teachers who analyze a story's structure for setting, plot, and theme are in a better position to make decisions about instruction. This is dependent on students having developed a schema for how stories are put together (Vacca & Vacca, 1996).

#### Text-accessing via Technologies.

For the purposes of this study, the definition of text-accessing technologies is confined to specific technological tools and software explicitly presented or made

available to learners with LD to facilitate literacy learning in either of the research classrooms. The most frequently used tool was a laptop by generic name of Alphasmart Pro which was issued to every student with identified learning disability at the expense of the school district. This laptop was a word-processing unit with relatively minor computing capabilities but significant features as a writing support tool and an organizational tool for students in the study. This laptop had up-loading capacity to Macs in each of the study classrooms.

#### Literacy Support.

The ways in which teachers and teacher assistants helped and structured helping opportunities for children to facilitate their understanding and doing of the literacy activities and strategies described above.

#### Instructional Scaffolding.

In this study instructional scaffolding holds two meanings. First it includes modeling, guided practice and independent application as documented in a wide array of literature on effective instructional practices. It is based on the notion that as students acquire skills and strategies for constructing knowledge on their own, the support is slowly taken away (Eanes, 1995). Secondly in the specific classrooms of the study it is also used to designate the need for more explicitness in explanations, prompting, modeling and guided practice when faced with confused or stalled learners in the language arts lessons.

#### Support.

For the purposes of this study the definition of support will be informed by criteria discussed by York and Vandercook (1992), according to whom support is evaluated within an educational context and occurs when (a) the recipient of support perceives that he or she has been helped; (b) the responsibility for achieving desired student outcomes is shared among team members; (c) the goal of meeting diverse

educational needs of students is better accomplished; (d) the outcome is worth the effort required for collaboration; and (e) priority outcomes for students are achieved at school. Not included in this definition is York and Vandercook's criterion regarding the achievement of priority outcomes for students in the community.

#### Integration Support Personnel.

Such personnel include special education teachers (also called Integration Support Teachers), who are required in the BC school system to have five courses beyond regular teacher education in the area of special education, usually in the form of Special Education fifth year diploma or equivalent education and background. Integration support personnel also encompasses para-professional (teacher assistants) hired to work with children with identified learning disabilities in integrated settings. There are no standardized training requirements for teacher assistants beyond Grade 12 diploma.

#### Learning Disabilities.

Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are thought to be intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Problems in self-regulatory behaviours, social perception and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur with other handicapping conditions (e.g. sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (e.g., cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences.

In the BC Ministry of Education policies handbook, learning disability also includes conditions described as dyslexia, dyscalculia or dysgraphia, and may include

students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD). BC Ministry of Education (Special Education Services), 1993.

In the classroom, these disabilities are evident. Instructions are not readily understood, students are disorganized to the point of impeding productivity, students have a diminished ability to understand what is read, and spelling has often not developed beyond the phonetic (Wong, 1992).

#### Satellite Peers.

The children who received literacy support often in a sidebar format as a result of being in the same classroom as identified children and their paid support personnel. As the study unfolded the satellite peers were divided according to their in-vivo categories (names derived directly from the data) according to the profile of the learner likely to access the literacy support. These in-vivo categories are: (a) reluctants (the properties of the in-vivo code included low-initiation, capable of doing the work with appropriate nudging); (b) absentees (students who had missed a lesson or more and volunteered or were invited by support personnel to participate in a sidebar lesson); (c) tell-me-again (the central three properties of this in-vivo code were: presenting as cognitively slow, requiring more careful scaffolding or presenting as inattentive to initial instruction).

#### Curriculum.

In a rapidly changing, complex, and dynamic society, no single, discrete, stagnant body of information can be provided to students that will result in a successful adult life. Curriculum theorists suggest a more productive approach is to teach students a learning process that involves how to learn or how to become adept at discerning: (a) what is needed to adapt to and become proficient in a new situation; (b) how and where to locate and access any needed information; and (c) how to manipulate and evaluate that information. Standardized curriculum and delivery approaches have proven to be frequently uninteresting and lacking in meaning or purposefulness for many students,

whether classified as having disabilities or not; therefore, support practices must relate to what is currently happening in students' lives and the world in which they function (Stainback & Stainback, 1990a).

#### Curriculum Adaptation (routine and specialized)

An adaptation is any change in how curriculum concepts are taught. Two types of adaptations for students at risk have been identified: routine adaptations, in which teachers establish initial routines to facilitate on-going adaptation; and specialized adaptations, in which teachers adapt instructional plans in light of specific student difficulty (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Bishop, 1992). In this study, routine adaptations were established in planning meetings with teachers and took the shape of adapted materials and time frame and quantity concessions. Several routine adaptations were embodied in leg-up measures. Specialized adaptations in this study were tended to during sidebar formats. An adaptation does not pre-empt attainment of the prescribed learning outcomes identified in the British Columbia Ministry of Education curriculum; it facilitates it. Simply, the means to achieve this outcome differs.

#### Curriculum Modification.

This is a change or deletion of a prescribed learning outcome identified in the Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines, agreed upon in a collaborative process between parents and the identified student's school-based team. Modification is reserved for students who have not been able to reach the prescribed learning outcomes through the use of curriculum adaptations (BC Ministry of Education, 1995).

#### Mini-lessons.

A brief meeting (generally five to ten minutes) of the whole class before or during an instructional activity for the purpose of clarifying or teaching specific concepts essential to the effectiveness of the overall activity. In the writing context where mini-lessons were popularized, they were meant to provide opportunities for the teacher to

share with the whole class (or sections of the class according to need) hints about writing that were learned from working with individual students. The point of mini-lessons in writing is to share personal knowledge of writing, then as much as possible to use the actual writing of the children as a starting point (Atwell 1989).

#### Sidebars.

Sidebars is a term derived from the data to represent a specific type of mini-lesson that support personnel or classroom teachers engaged in with students in this study. While it shared many of the features of Atwell's mini-lessons, it differed in two distinct ways. First, it usually had a dialogue structure that featured validation of the learner who initiated the sidebar, followed by questioning of the student(s) by the support personnel or classroom teacher, in order to clarify understanding, followed by prompting and nudging toward the next logical step of the writing at hand. Second, sidebars usually involved one to four students and were fluid in terms of student composition. In other words, while a student with an identified learning disability often was the initial focus of the sidebar, other students joined in according to their learning needs. The duration of the sidebar enjoyed a wider continuum than mini-lessons, but usually lasted four to fifteen minutes.

#### Leg-up measures.

Leg-up measures identifies routine adaptations or small changes or additions in both the procedures and comments to students with learning disabilities and many of their at-risk satellite peers, which assisted in leveling the playing field through validation and ease of access in routine matters in their integrated classrooms and their schools. An example of a procedural leg-up measure: the selection of a combination lock with single digits for an at-risk student. An example of a validating leg-up measure: a specific request made by the integration support personnel to a school administrator (known for

his knowledge about technology) to notice and inquire about a new laptop computer that an at-risk student had received as a gift.

#### Cogitare.

"Cogitare is the language we use to influence and encourage intelligent behaviors.... intelligent behaviors [include] persistence, decreased impulsivity, empathic listening, cooperative thinking, flexible thinking, metacognition, checking for accuracy, drawing on past knowledge, and applying it to new situations, question and problem posing, risk taking, a sense of humor, precision of language, use of all senses, ingenuity, and a sense of efficacy as a thinker.... It simply means that we consciously use our language to evoke thinking in others" (Costa, 1991, p. ix.).

#### Nudging and Nagging.

In this study a nudge and a nag seemed to be driven by the same adult goal: to have students complete their work. Nudges were characterized by indirect suggestions and queries about the students' work. Some attributes of nudges were subtlety, open-ended questioning, a respectful and even tone of voice. Inherent in nudges were mindful face-saving comments and demonstrated sensitivity to the perspective of the student. Nudges frequently resulted in the desired outcome-students carried on with their work.

In contrast, 'nags' were characterized by direct suggestions of what to do and queries about the students' behaviors (i.e. "Why didn't you do what you were supposed to?"). Some characteristics of nagging were directness of comments, rhetorical questions, tone of voice that conveyed frustration and was often repetitive. Nags focused on direct naming of the undesirable behavior or unacceptable work product. Nags resulted frequently in immediate compliance or appearance of compliance very shortly followed by a return to off-task behaviors and low engagement in the learning activity.

### Purposes of the Study

The main purposes of this exploratory investigation were:

1. To examine the understandings, definitions and perceptions of support of teachers and teacher assistants in the language arts classroom.
2. To examine the ways in which students with LD are supported in their Grade 6 language arts classrooms at one middle school.
3. To generate an interest in further research on these topics at the middle school level.

### Research Questions

The research questions below guided this investigation of literacy support practices for learners with LD in language arts classes. As indicated by observations of, and interviews with, the participants:

1. In what ways do professional and para-professional staff define and provide literacy support to students with LD?
2. What text-accessing structures, strategies and technologies are explicitly presented and/or made available to these learners?
3. Which aspects of support are considered effective, according to students, parents and teachers?

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

#### The Problem in Context: Supporting Learners with Learning Disability

Over the last two decades, researchers have called for sufficient and appropriate instruction for all learners in the classroom setting, irrespective of labels. Allington, in particular, has rejected funding frameworks which, he posits, serve as streamed placement incentives for school administrators and teachers, in that money is allocated based on the number of students with special designations. This practice often resulted in a "second system of schooling" which mostly failed to improve literacy learning for children at-risk (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1991). Although the funding and LD designation conundrum continues to fuel debate over the larger philosophical issues of social justice and constructs of disability, children with LD have mostly stopped being pulled out for help. Approximately 70% of students with LD now spend 90% of their time in mainstream classrooms. American and, on a more limited basis, Canadian research suggests that many of these students also experience difficulties in these environments as well. Attrition of students with LD has attracted much attention. Various investigations have shown that between 37% and 50% of students with LD leave school without earning high school diplomas (Edgar, 1987; Zigmond & Thornton, 1985). Improving the retention of students of this profile is not simply an issue of where the instruction takes place, but also one of quality, design, duration, and focus of instruction. Academic progress depends on what and how teachers teach and whether instruction is tailored to individual needs for pacing, concept representation, corrective feedback, and reinforcement (Lyon & Moats, 1988).

Classroom teachers are frequently unable to instruct children with LD effectively because they do not have or perceive that they do not have adequate time, resources, collaborative working conditions, expertise, or energy to attend to the range of students in their classes. For these reasons, full-inclusion models have been criticized. In the view of several prominent researchers (Baker & Zigmond, 1993; Houck & Rogers, 1994) who conducted five large-scale investigations into inclusion practices in the United States, students in general education classes may be able to pass courses because their assignments are modified or because someone reads or writes for them and may not actually be learning how to read, write, calculate, solve problems, or study.

It is notable that in the accounts of these five large studies, frequently cited in criticisms of pull-in models of support, a narrow range of teaching instructional models was described. Absent in the reports of the five studies are any descriptions of substantive collaborative or co-operative models, documented repeatedly to offer significant benefits for learners with LD (Vandercook, Fleetham, Sinclair, & Tetlie, 1994). More surprisingly, teacher-as-dispenser-of-knowledge still appeared to be the dominant perspective of the teachers in the studies, yet in the interpretation of the researchers' findings, this flagrant shortcoming (in light of current understandings of how learning occurs) was not clearly addressed as a factor in the failure of inclusion programs. In the data highlighted in their findings, it is difficult to find evidence of a constructivist view of learning, which may have lent a better understanding of some of the valid and pointed criticisms of inclusion models. In their work, Baker and Zigmond (1993) offered little theorizing as to how the teachers viewed their roles, responsibilities or curricula undertakings, or what professionals believed about teaching, learning, and the role of instructional and curricular adaptation for learners with at-risk profiles--all

factors that may forge practice, and subsequent outcomes, for pull-in models of support.

Teacher beliefs about their roles, responsibilities and instructional practices have an important impact on instructional practice and classroom interaction, and have also been shown to impact not only inclusion practices, but perceptions of student abilities (Fang, 1996) and resulting student perceptions of literacy. Prevalent cultural attitudes regarding LD, figures of authority in the school environment, the child and his or her family, and the family socioeconomic situation also affect the relationship between teacher and instructional practice, and hence, the resulting literacy of the student.

In a broad review of research on the relationship of teacher belief to practice, Fang (1996) focuses on how teachers' personal beliefs about teaching and learning affect their decision-making and behaviours in the teaching of literacy skills. Many studies, he reports, support the notion that teachers possess theoretical beliefs about literacy and these beliefs impact all learners. His review highlights the influence of teacher beliefs on interactions in writing instruction between teachers and students. Fang concludes that "every teacher operates with at least an implicit model of literacy... [that] helps shape their pedagogy.... [T]eachers' theoretical beliefs not only shape the nature of classroom interactions, but have critical impact on students' perceptions of literacy processes as well" (p. 53). These beliefs do, in fact, shape the nature of teachers' instructional practices.

Teachers' perceptions of their roles are related to their attribution of responsibility for learning problems and their choice of methods of education for students with LD. It has been shown that more than teachers' beliefs are involved in the referral of children to readiness-transitional programs. According to Mantzicopoulos and Neuharth-Pritchett (1998), the process is shaped by school system philosophy and structure, the family-school connection, and children's characteristics, as well as

teacher beliefs. Solomon, Battistich, and Hom (1996) report connections between teacher beliefs and student socioeconomic levels. Teachers in schools serving students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds put greater emphasis on teacher authority and control than teachers in other schools. These teachers were also less trusting of students, more skeptical about their abilities, and in turn, their beliefs were consistent with their practices.

### Inclusion Support Practices: Teaching At-Risk Learners in an Integrated Setting

Those seeking to advance the quality of inclusive programs and practices for learners with LD generally advance their ideas for improvement under one of three umbrellas: (a) teacher education programs; (b) instructional models of support; (c) or instructional recommendations. A later section of this chapter presents a review of the relevant literature on recommended literacy support practices in an integrated setting.

A grassroots approach to enacting beneficial change for learners with LD focuses on college and university teacher education programs. A highly comprehensive model for training teachers to work in the integrated classroom has been described by Ellis, Rountree, Casareno, Gregg, and Schlichter (1995). They outline the Multiple Abilities Program, which prepares teachers to teach all students regardless of labels of "normal," "low functioning," "gifted," or "disabled." The intent of the program is to prepare teachers to be knowledgeable and skilled enough to meet the needs of a wide range of students, whether in a full inclusion classroom or other setting. The task of the program is to merge special education instruction with general education instruction in teacher education and practice. Some of the major features of the program are: (a) a design that enables teachers to meet the needs of students without regard for designated labels; (b) the use of semester-long apprenticeships, working with mentor teachers in special education settings; (c) a constructivist approach to preparing teachers; (d) the

collection of teacher competencies into themes, rather than courses; (e) teachers are "team taught"; (f) parents of children with LD are used as "parent mentors"; and (g) the use of technology is emphasized.

To date, there has been limited cross-over between regular and special education programs in Canadian education faculties as a coordinated endeavor. Of some encouragement in this direction are recent textbooks intended for pre-service teachers including commentary on the curricula needs of students with at-risk profiles. When the fabric of teacher education programs becomes more tightly woven, so that it includes both special education and general education perspectives and knowledge frameworks, the opportunities for coordinated optimal support for diverse learners will likely reach new horizons. In the interim, success of integrated models depends heavily on the abilities, beliefs, and dispositions of professional staff to apply their education, experience and understanding to make the necessary changes for newly integrated learners.

While awaiting change in teacher education programs, researchers make recommendations on a number of appropriate programming considerations for learners with LD. Canning (1996) reviews the literature and advocates for the following common features of effective teaching interventions for students with LD regardless of setting: (a) initially highly structured, requiring direction from the teacher, but leading to increased self-direction; (b) goal-directed; (c) practice-loaded, providing repetition of actions to ensure acquisition and maintenance of skills; (d) strategy-laden, teaching methods for solutions of academic problems; (e) independence-oriented, teaching students methods for solving problems on their own; (f) detailed and comprehensive. It was an absence of items (c), (d), and (f) above that prompted criticism from researchers Baker, Zigmond, and others, in reviewing the five large American studies.

In the one area closely related to this study, researchers offer guidance on specific roles for integration support personnel. Working in integrated settings, York, Vandercook, Heise-Neff, and Caughey (1988) point out a number of ways in which a classroom integration facilitator is helpful to students with LD. Support is primarily felt in aiding identified students to participate in routine class activities and to interact with classmates and teachers. The integration facilitator helps recruit the "natural supports" of the environment and then fades away. The researchers identify some specific advantages to the use of an integration facilitator. The facilitator (a) supports the student with LD in a regular class; (b) acquires first-hand knowledge of classroom demands and opportunities, enabling immediate problem-solving and intervention; (c) models and facilitates classmate and teacher interaction with the student; (d) supports the classroom teacher; (e) enables shared teaching and support for all children in the classroom; and (f) becomes familiar with student life in the school.

In addition to more clearly defining the roles of integration support personnel, the literature also provides considerable information about collaborative and cooperative teaching models that enable coordinated support. These coalesce into six categories: cooperative teaching, complementary teaching, alternative teaching, station teaching, parallel teaching, and troubleshoot teaching. Simply stated, these instructional models of support provide the role and structure for the general educator and special educator to work together in the classroom with the goal of providing a worthwhile program that supports students with LD while continuing to address the needs of regular education students.

Co-operative teaching involves students in structured, accountable groups of approximately four to six students. Classes receive training in a series of cooperative strategies which meet the criteria of simultaneity (everyone on task at the same time), positive interdependence (goal cannot be accomplished without every team member's

contribution), accountability (clearly defined assignments must be handed in at a specified time), and group processing (a metacognitive stage whereby small groups merge to debrief on the process and their performance as a team).

Complementary instruction incorporates a general education teacher in the role of content teacher, while a special educator provides instruction on specific strategies and skill development.

Alternative teaching, also known as "class within a class," uses teaching strategies which are different from those used in whole group instruction. Teaching occurs within a small group in order to accommodate at-risk learners; however, purpose and composition change frequently.

Station teaching involves division of students and content into three groups so that teachers are responsible for a segment of the material in two of the stations and students do independent work in the third. In this study, the third station was sometimes reinforcement work in the computer galleys located between classrooms.

Parallel teaching reduces the student-teacher ratio by dividing the class in two. With this format, the same content is taught using different strategies and/or materials, according to group composition or needs. Sometimes a competitive dimension is added and groups compete to compare their knowledge at the end of a parallel teaching session.

In troubleshoot teaching, the general educator and special educator take turns providing direct whole group instruction, while the other teacher may be responsible for observational assessments, one-on-one re-teaching and troubleshooting among struggling learners or off-task students (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1991; Cook & Friend, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 1980; Slavin, 1983). All of these instructional formats figure in the research discussed in this document, but three are of particular relevance

due to their prominence and/or frequency of use in the findings: troubleshoot teaching, station teaching, and complementary teaching.

Of additional pertinence (although not used directly in this study) is a review of eight models of collaborative "pull-in" classroom reading instruction, in which reading specialists come into the classroom to provide necessary remedial reading instruction (Gelzheiser & Meyers, 1990). Gelzheiser and Meyers claim that all eight methods provide better integration of students, better coordination of the curriculum and an increased use of individualized instruction in the regular classroom. For the most part, these models are examples of the complementary, alternative, or parallel teaching methods described above focused on specific reading intervention programs. The models described include (a) conducting two independent reading programs in the classroom, taught side by side; (b) part-time pull-in instruction on basal material; and (c) daily pull-in and pull-out services on basal or non-basal materials.

In reference to co-teaching in a classroom where students with LD are integrated with mainstream students, Redditt (1991) describes the process as both general and special educators working in the same classroom in a coordinated fashion to teach an integrated class of students. They both teach on a consistent, daily schedule, with planning, teaching, evaluating, and problem-solving responsibilities being shared as equally as possible. In spite of the advantages to both teachers and students of co-teaching, according to Redditt some points of frustration need to be addressed. This was certainly the case in the study documented here. Most co-teachers say they need more scheduled time to plan, to communicate with parents, and to get together to reflect on their own progress (Redditt, 1991).

Although co-teaching is not a new process in public education, and is not an easy model to implement in public schools, research indicates that it offers clear benefits to students with learning disabilities, to other students in integrated

classrooms, and to the professionals who teach them (Walther-Thomas, 1997). Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend (1989) describe co-teaching as "an educational approach in which general and special educators, or related service providers, jointly plan for and teach heterogeneous groups of students in integrated settings" (p.19); however, the simplicity of this definition belies the complexity of teaching models and methods, and planning considerations at the district, school and classroom levels.

A number of co-teaching models have been subject to research. Vaughn, Shumm, and Arguelles (1997) review five in some detail. They suggest that these five approaches to co-teaching can be part of a coordinated classroom effort in which all are used for specific purposes. In the first approach, two teachers teach one student group; one of them is the lead teacher and the other provides mini-lessons or short lessons to individuals or small groups of students, as required. Teachers may alternate roles as desired. In a second model, the classroom is divided into two groups and both teachers teach the same content. At the end of the class, the groups may again be combined for a review. Another co-teaching approach requires two groups, in one of which the teacher reteaches material and in the other the teacher presents alternative material. The student groups are flexibly grouped, depending on their skill level for the given topic. A fourth model utilizes multiple groups among which both teachers circulate to provide instruction and supervision. The content of instruction for each group may vary. Finally, both teachers may direct a whole class of students, cooperatively teaching the same lesson at the same time.

Welch, Richards, Okada, Richards, and Prescott (1995) present the results of a study which assesses an approach to co-teaching called the Consultation and Paraprofessional Pull-in System. This system is a synthesis of the use of (a) a resource/consulting teacher; (b) pull-in programming; and (c) utilization of paraprofessionals for service delivery. The resource/consulting teacher provides direct

service, such as assessment and instruction in a special classroom setting, for part of the day, and provides indirect service by assisting classroom teachers of special needs students the rest of the day. Pull-in programming is utilized for supplemental educational services, either remedial reading or resource room instruction.

Paraprofessionals provide drills and practice of skills and concepts taught by the classroom teacher, thus students eligible for special education receive most, if not all, of their supplementary assistance from paraprofessionals while remaining in a general classroom under the supervision of the resource/consulting teacher. Data suggest that teachers were satisfied with this model of collaborative teaching; however, results regarding content related testing were mixed and do not conclusively suggest that the model is superior to traditional service delivery models.

According to Dyck, Sundbye, and Pemberton (1997), co-teaching requires specific day-to-day lesson planning that addresses the needs of all the students in the classroom. Currently in the British Columbia context, very small planning blocks are provided to do such planning, usually 1 block of 50-minutes every two weeks. The challenge of co-teaching is to reconcile the individual and group planning process to benefit all students. Teachers require interactive lesson planning models in which activities, objectives, and assessments can be planned concurrently or in varying orders, depending on the classroom and student situation. The Dyck, Sundbye and Pemberton model recommends planning for objectives and activities sufficiently fine-tuned to suit the students in the classroom context. In reality, without sufficient dedicated planning time, "finely tuned" seems to remain an elusive ideal.

Another practice recommended for co-teachers takes advantage of student interests to provide motivation to students with LD, and encourages co-teachers to collaborate. Angle (1996) suggests a five-step reading remediation program for co-teachers in which student motivation and teacher and student communication are keys to

success. The first step is to assess students' reading for word recognition and comprehension strengths and weaknesses. The second step requires a presentation to the class of several content topics. Third, students select an area of study from the topics presented. Teachers and students establish learning objectives through discussion. Fourth, students begin to discuss the topic selected. Teachers encourage student listening, and oral and written language skills within the discussion of the topics, rather than through isolated language arts lessons. Finally, teachers showcase student work through a culminating activity for the study unit.

Co-teaching can have a positive effect on teachers as well as students. Brody (1994) points out that co-teaching enhances reflective practices of teachers who seek to create a learning community and maintain a commitment of collaboration to one another. They outline three phases of co-teaching: (a) building trust with one another and setting goals through initial structured interviews; (b) reflection on action through debriefing as soon as possible following a lesson; (c) reflection-in-action, or thinking about what one is doing while doing it. Thus, seasoned co-teachers learn to shift the direction of instruction or adjust an activity based on what each teacher is observing. However, effective co-teaching is not just a process that occurs among teachers in the classroom. Dieker and Barnett (1996) outline steps for teachers and administrators to consider as co-teaching relationships are developed within a school. They suggest that it is vital (a) to prepare a proposal that describes how co-teaching can be effective in a school; (b) to determine a potential co-teacher and propose the method to this individual; (c) to develop a plan of action to implement co-teaching; (d) to implement a detailed co-teaching plan; (e) to evaluate the plan while in progress; and (f) to share successful experiences.

Effective communication among all stakeholders is essential in each step. Walther-Thomas, Bryant, and Land (1996) further emphasize the fundamental planning

issues that need to be addressed by school systems to facilitate co-teaching models. They point out the district level, school level, and classroom level planning issues which must be considered. At the same time, they re-emphasize the importance of effective communication between co-teachers at the classroom level.

There is a growing body of evidence that the effort to co-teach pays off for learners with LD. Using a naturalistic inquiry method in a three-year study, Walther-Thomas (1997) investigated the benefits and persistent problems that 23 co-teaching teams encountered. They discovered four major benefits of co-teaching for students with disabilities: (a) positive feelings about themselves as learners; (b) enhanced academic performance; (c) improved social skills; and (d) stronger peer relationships. In addition, five major benefits were identified for general education students in the classes: (a) improved academic performance; (b) more time with, and attention from, the teacher; (c) better understanding of cognitive strategies and study skills; (d) increased emphasis on social skills; and (e) improved classroom communities.

In summary, co-teaching models used in the United States and Canada are foremost a classroom partnership between special educators and general educators, a process in which these specialists and generalists share responsibilities for heterogeneous groups of students assigned to mainstream classrooms. Three basic arrangements are described in the literature: (a) equal responsibility for certain aspects of classroom activity; (b) a general educator teaches content and a special educator teaches complementary skills; and (c) supportive teaching, in which a special education teacher provides a variety of support services. Supportive teacher was the general model used in this study.

Understanding the diverse options and complexities of co-teaching as a means of integrated support is critical to interpreting the findings from this investigation, which profiles five children with LD supported by two grade 6 classroom teachers,

their IST and two TAs using five of the co-teaching configurations described. The co-instructional model of support, in conjunction with the literacy support approaches described next, constitute core components by which the reader may contextualize the study's findings.

### Literacy Support for At-Risk Learners

At the foundation of comprehending text is the ability to adopt a complex view of literate activity, inclusive of both a critical literacy and a social imagination--the ability to imagine what it is like to be someone else (Johnston, 1993). The majority of children acquire literacy through assisted meaningful reading. Reason, Brown, Cole, and Gregory (1988) advocate an eclectic model of literacy teaching that stresses the centrality of meaningful language activities in natural contexts, but encompasses subskills and apprenticeship approaches. Agreement on literacy instruction merges at one pivotal point: becoming literate is complex and is best learned through assisted exposure to literature.

Other literature indicates that student interest in and comprehension of literature improves with an increase in contact among students who have LD with one another or with teachers, as well as by participating in literary activity with peers, or engagement in such activities between teachers and students. Englert, Tarrant, Mariage, and Oser (1994) report a study of two forms of dialogic interaction among teachers and students (n=78). The more effective method taught reading comprehension strategies through collaborative and interactive formats rather than through recitation. In these formats, reading strategies were made visible, teachers and students talked about comprehension strategies and problems, and student self-talk was made apparent. Using similar collaborative methods, Gerla (1996) sought to direct at-risk students' attention to specific reading strategies, to respond to difficulties, to create social interaction about

texts, and to allow student control over reading choices. As these methods were effective in creating significant change in reading behaviour, she concluded that "at-risk students must believe that their teachers care for them. They must feel they are important in the classroom, have something worthwhile to contribute to the whole, and are valued as individuals" (p. 167). This social interaction around text also revealed itself within the context of this study on integrated support for at-risk learners.

The role of interactive dialogue in literacy performance also features in recent literature. Wong et al. (1994) compared two methods of interactive dialogue in the teaching of writing revision skills to students with LD (n=31). One method involved interactive dialogue between student and teacher and the other among students. Both intervention groups improved the quality of written essays to the same degree and had greater improvement than a control group. The authors concluded that interactive dialogues between students and teachers appear to have a central role in enhancing students' reading comprehension, content learning, and writing. As well, the comparable efficacy of the two interventions suggests that the important factor for enhanced writing skills may be the interactive dialogues themselves. In a further study, Palincsar, Porecki, and McPhail (1995) describe the results of exploratory research involving thematic instruction for students with LD. The instruction included interactive readings, written responses, retellings supporting a performance of the reading, an actual performance, and journal writing. They conclude that these activities emphasize the emergence of theme as a salient feature in literature and a change in children's conception of the theme. Thematic instruction enables children to form more integrated knowledge bases. Finally, similar results are reported by Stevens and Slavin (1995) in a study of students with LD (n=72) who were active participants in cooperative learning team activities. After two years, students with LD in this study had significantly higher achievement in vocabulary,

comprehension, and language expression than other students with LD in more traditional settings.

One of the most widely accepted explanations for failure in reading among students with LD is the inability of students to become active learners and to use effective learning strategies during exposure to assisted literature (Torgesen, 1980). Some students have been taught specific strategies for processing information (Rose, Cundick, & Higbee, 1983). Such strategies include drawing on prior knowledge (Sachs, 1984); visual imagery (Clark, et al., 1984); paragraph summarization (Jenkins, Heliotis, Stein, & Haynes, 1987); specific mnemonic procedures (Mastropieri, Scruggs, & Levin, 1987); and story mapping (Idol-Maestas, 1985). Other researchers have implemented “packages” of strategies, in which a wide range of steps and procedures have been taught to students with LD (Schumaker, et al., 1982; Wong & Jones, 1982).

Text accessing approaches encompass any processes, strategies, and structures which have as their primary purpose the facilitation and amplification of text understanding. Some strategic models for supporting text-access for at-risk children include a study by Mathes, Fuchs, Fuchs, Henley, and Sanders (1994) who claim that Peabody Classwide Peer Tutoring (CWPT) is an effective strategy in teaching reading to learners with LD. Peabody CWPT includes partner reading, paragraph shrinking and prediction relay, and more specifically consists of (a) cumulative review of information read; (b) sequencing of information; (c) summarization of paragraphs and pages; (d) stating main ideas in few words; and (e) predicting and checking outcomes. Also, researchers at the University of Toronto investigated a collaborative strategy instruction involving reading-delayed adolescents (n=84) in grades 6 to 10. Significant gains were measured for the experimental group of students, whereby their teachers attended

sessions with more experienced colleagues to troubleshoot and conference regarding the teaching of reading for at-risk learners (Anderson & Roit, 1993).

Swanson and De La Paz (1998) describe several strategies which, they assert, have empirical support for being effective in improving reading comprehension for students with LD.

1. An important strategy is teaching students how to summarize expository text after reading. A number of summarization strategies are available, such as gist summaries, rule-governed summaries, and hierarchical summaries.

2. In comprehending story structure, students are taught to recognize story structure. This is an aid in their retelling of the story and in their making inferences, judgments and predictions about the events of the story. An effective means by which to teach this is through story maps. This emphasis on recognizing story structure with the aid of key visuals figures prominently in this study.

3. Through questioning and self-questioning, students learn to focus on important information from readings and to improve reading comprehension. Teaching student-generated questioning and self-monitoring results in more improvement than methods not including these strategies.

4. Learning improves when students are frequently asked to locate specific information or to answer questions about text points in exposition. "Lookbacks" and question-answer relationships are two strategies that assist students in finding and remembering information in expository forms; however, researchers on aesthetic literacy, while acknowledging the role of efferent literacy, emphasize the importance of strategies and guided practices that highlight connections between the reader and the themes, events and characters of the story (Gerla, 1996). Findings from this preliminary investigation are consistent with this supposition.

The research body on content area literacy (the ability to use reading and writing to learn subject matter) has also been rich in understanding how best to teach learners to access text, especially for learners past fourth grade. For example, Tindal, Rebar, Nolet, and McCollum (1995) set out to understand the range of learning outcomes for students with LD within content classrooms. Specifically, they suggested ways to assess those students' key concepts in a curriculum in various formats by linking concepts to specific intellectual operations (prediction, evaluation, and application).

Ellis (1993) asserts that the instruction of adolescents with LD is more successful through cognitive strategy training in conjunction with content learning. Ellis outlines an intervention model integrating content instruction with the teaching of strategies for information processing and problem-solving, called Integrative Strategy Instruction (ISI). It is designed for use in content area classes in which some students will need in-depth, intensive instruction in order to succeed. The model involves both teaching content areas strategically and teaching learning strategies to promote student self-direction.

Many studies have demonstrated mild gains for the specific strategies taught, compared with no-treatment control conditions (Clark et al., 1984). Palinscar and Brown's (1984) reciprocal teaching study has been widely cited as being relevant to the field of LD; however, students with LD were not involved in that investigation. In an Ontario study (patterned after Palinscar and Brown, and this time involving students with LD), researchers examined the efficacy of three expository text comprehension training programs. Results confirmed the effectiveness of reciprocal teaching techniques. Also, techniques for accessing and building prior knowledge was shown to have a significant impact on rehearsed and novel passages. Of no significance was the "new technique program" introduced by the researchers which taught students organizational and study skills in the reading area (Canning, 1996).

In his review of the literature on effective reading comprehension strategies for students with LD, Fuchs (1992) highlighted two significant studies that appear to have contributed significantly to the design and implementation of reading comprehension instruction for learners with disabilities. First, Graves (1986) described a tightly controlled study in which she delivered "main idea" instruction to elementary level students, using: (a) a direct instruction format; (b) a direct instruction format, combined with a self-monitoring component; or (c) a traditional approach (defined as: introduce vocabulary, read the section, and answer the questions). Her results argue strongly in favor of the direct instruction format, in combination with the self-monitoring component.

The second study highlighted by Fuchs was conducted by Jenkins (1987). A group of elementary-level students with LD were taught to use a paragraph restatement strategy while others received no instruction at all. Students who were trained to use the strategy outperformed the no-treatment control students on all measures, including immediate transfer measures to novel tasks. Jenkins did not make use of the self-monitoring component with the strategy instruction. Fuchs (1992) devised a study to determine whether self-monitoring, combined with summarization strategy, would impact reading comprehension for students with LD. Results indicated that students who had summarization training, as well as those who received summarization training with a self-monitoring component condition, statistically outperformed students in the traditional condition (no strategic intervention, students were simply instructed to read the text) in strategic knowledge and reading comprehension between pre-training and post-training conditions.

A review of studies indicate that metacognitive support, such as planning and check-off systems, can lead to improved narrative composition by students with LD. Optimal reading comprehension is dependent not only on reader knowledge of many

specific strategies, but also on their knowledge of when to use each strategy in their repertoire (Pressley, et al., 1992). Martin and Manno (1995) designed a study to address whether a self-management procedure would improve the completeness and quality of composition among students with learning disabilities who would plan stories composed of essential elements, and then have the completeness of these stories monitored through use of a check-off system. Their results indicated that the logical flow of ideas or events throughout a story, or coherence, did not significantly improve under the measures used. The integration of setting, character, action, and ending on an overall quality rating did improve. The researchers inferred that this occurred as a result of the explicit metacognitive support.

#### Writing Instruction and Students with Learning Disability.

In recent years, a substantial number of reports have described models or methods of helping students with LD to experience progress as narrative writers. Other research has focused on the effectiveness of reported methods of teaching writing to those students. In a review of the rationales for various methods, Graham (1992) summarizes three principles important in helping students with LD to improve their writing skills. First, students must undertake frequent and meaningful writing, which needs to be aimed at an authentic audience, and has to be interesting or important to the author, as well as serving a real purpose. Second, to progress as writers, students need to pursue challenging tasks that are slightly beyond their current capabilities, which vary according to the sophistication of the processes and strategies that those students bring to their compositions. They must learn to develop, embellish, and refine their writing. Third, since writing is hard work, teachers need to create a supportive environment for its learning, and to be accepting and encouraging. They need to try to develop a sense of classroom community by promoting collaboration and sharing. It is

important that the teachers themselves are active members of this writing community, contributing and sharing their own writing with the class.

Much of this is supported by a different approach to intervention with writing difficulties taken by Berninger and Stage (1996). They describe measures for the assessment of composition and provide recommendations for the teaching of writing to students with LD based on these measures, along with effective remedial efforts. They recommend the use of successive approximation methods, in which initial expectations should be realistic for the student and the goal only gradually increased as the child becomes more proficient. They also support the idea of guided assistance in every lesson. Teachers should be available to model, teach and provide help for every aspect of the process expected of the student. Finally, they recommend that the topic and nature of writing assignments vary from day to day.

MacArthur, Graham, and Schwartz (1993) bring Graham's (1992) principles to bear in a specific process approach to writing instruction. They recommend a Computers and Writing Instruction Project (CWIP), in which students develop basic writing skills, cognitive strategies for planning, writing, and revising, and the motivation to use writing in practical ways in their lives. Their curriculum has three components: (a) a process approach to writing; (b) strategy instruction, and (c) word processing. The process approach provides a framework for authentic writing in a cooperative social context; strategy instruction is integrated into this context to support cognitive processes; and, finally, use of computers in word processing supports the physical, social, and cognitive processes involved in writing.

Shannon and Polloway (1993) describe a specific cognitive support for writing, the COPS strategy, and provide a brief evaluation of a program teaching its use. The COPS strategy is an error monitoring method aiding in the detection and correction of writing mistakes, in such areas as capitalization, overall appearance, punctuation, and

spelling. After appropriate teaching in the use of the method, COPS helped students in their study to focus on important potential errors in their writing. Much like the COPS strategy, although with greater scope in aiding writing, a "grid model" has been developed by Crealock (1993) for teaching narrative writing skills. In this model, the teacher uses a series of prompting strategies in both structure and content areas to improve the narrative writing skills of students with LD. For example, in the first stage, the teacher assesses the level of difficulty for each student, which then determines the level of subsequent prompts. Then a grid of plot, hero, locale, and other story elements are developed with the student, from which the student writes the story. The author claims this assistance has been found to improve the fluency in narrative writing of students with LD.

Another method used in the teaching of writing skills is the mini-lesson. Mini-lessons are short, teacher-directed sessions that use modelling as a technique to help students learn the correct use of a specific skill. They can be focused on specific skills needed by students and examples where the skill is useful can be drawn from specific student work. Mini-lessons allow students who have a learning disability to receive instruction within the classroom, encouraging mainstream participation. In their study of the impact of mini-lessons on writing skills, Dowis and Schloss (1992) conclude that mini-lessons used in whole group instruction of written expression have a positive effect on the use of the skill in writing for students with LD. The mini-lessons also benefit other "neighbour" students who may be deficient in those same skills.

A number of studies have assessed the effectiveness of general strategy instruction in writing. For example, "web-making" is a method much like the grid method mentioned above; web-making is a pre-writing technique used to organize ideas before writing. A study by Zipprich (1995) verifies that through the use of webs, student performance in narrative writing generally improves. Specifically, students

show an increase in planning time and in the use of story components after being taught to use web-making.

Other, similar strategy instruction has been shown to be effective. For example, Danoff, Harris, and Graham (1993) report that teaching skills in generating, framing, and planning of text through in-class mini-lessons resulted in substantial improvement in story grammar elements. Montague and Leavell (1994) investigated the effects of both procedural and substantive writing facilitation on the quality and length of narratives written by junior high school students with LD. Their results suggest that either type of facilitation substantially increases story length and enables mild to moderate increases in story quality and number of internal responses and plans of characters. De La Paz (1997) conducted a study in which LD junior high students received instruction in various styles of writing planning. As in other studies, her results indicate that students produce more content in their compositions, and that their ideas are better organized after strategy instruction.

To evaluate the principles described above, Graham, (1992) (MacArthur, Graham, & Schwartz, 1993; MacArthur, Graham, Schwartz, & Schafer, 1995) evaluated the effectiveness of writing instruction integrating word processing, strategy instruction, and a process approach. In the program, teachers established a social context where students worked on tasks which were meaningful for them, shared writing with classroom peers, and published the work for real audiences. Classroom teachers supported extended cycles of planning, drafting, and revising in order to teach and maintain cognitive skills. The use of computers for word processing supported production of text, revision, and publishing. The students with LD in the experimental classes made greater gains in the quality of their narrative writing and informative writing than the students with LD in control classes. This conclusion is supported by a case study published by MacArthur, et al (1996) in which the authors conclude that

strategy instruction and whole language learning are mutually supportive. Strategy instruction can be carried out as a collaborative process, in which teachers assist students in completion of meaningful tasks, gradually decreasing support as students develop competence.

A clear body of knowledge exists on what to do in the teaching of students with LD and good information on why teachers say they don't do it. What is missing is an explanatory framework for literacy development in an integrated setting, which would assist in bridging the chasm between recommended practice and actual practice. This framework can only be constructed through investigation of the actual doing and thinking of teachers, TAs and children in their everyday literacy work.

#### Talking As An Integral Aspect of Literacy Learning.

The role of talk as an integral aspect of literacy dynamics has received much broad attention in the literature. Research focused on the following three particular aspects of talking in classrooms is of significance for this study:

1. The quality of instructional conversations as an important "stand-alone" aspect of learning including literacy learning (Chang & Wells, 1987).
2. Talk as a bridge and engagement tool to the "formal" literacy of reading and writing (Echevarria, 1992).
3. Oral language as the vital connective tissue that reveals the thoughts of students and teachers and may used to positively influence thinking behaviours (Costa, 1991).

Chang and Wells (1987) define collaborative talk as adult-child dialogue whereby the adult seeks to build on the intended message of the child by:

1. Waiting for the intention to become clear.
2. Clarifying the message.
3. Using the information as a basis for formulating an appropriate response.

Their extensive work explains more fully the role of talk in active learning and how it facilitates cognitive development and independent learning. Collaborative talk further serves to enable and empower children's learning and exhorts teachers to help students without overpowering their efforts. To accomplish collaborative talk, Chang and Wells (1987) emphasize the importance of achieving a shared understanding of a task and offering opinions and alternatives by clarifying the conversation without dominating it. They also focus on the attainment of literate thinking through talk and note the connections between literate talk and literate reading and writing.

Echevarria's (1992) work on a similar topic focused on instructional conversations in an elementary special education class (where data were collected via naturalistic observation, videotape, teacher self-report, and interviews over a year). Her work showed the importance of instructional conversation as provision of a holistic context for learning. In language arts classes the use of a theme to guide the discussion about a story lead to a more cohesive focus during the literacy lessons and seemed to facilitate the attention of students identified with LD. Interactions in this study were focused on promoting analysis, reflection, and critical thinking. Her work suggested that successful instructional conversations depended on identification of a significant text-specific theme tied to student experience. Echevarria's results indicated higher levels of discourse and greater participation with the use of instructional conversations with this at-risk population than in the control group. The control group did not use instructional conversation as an important tool to focus on literacy themes but rather used a basal approach focusing on responding to specific questions from the stories under study. Analysis of videotapes and of post-lesson narratives constructed by each child found that instructional conversations resulted in more complex academic discourse, greater student engagement and greater understanding of target concepts than in the basal group.

The literacy project of her study is described as an example of social constructivism wherein the role of social and dialogic interactions of teachers and students in literacy communities focuses on the production, rather than the reproduction, of knowledge.

According to Echevarria, the teacher's role is one of facilitating genuine dialogue between the student and teacher, as well as student-to-student collaborative talk. The teacher presents provocative ideas or experiences, then questions, prods, coaxes, or keeps quiet, clarifying or instructing only when necessary. A study implemented instructional conversations in a special education class of 10 to 12 students (ages 6-10) with learning handicaps. Results indicated that instructional conversations provide a holistic context for learning, particularly when a theme is used to guide discussion, and they also promote oral participation and student-to-student interaction during literacy lessons. Echevarria found that interactions between both students and students and student and teacher during literacy lessons were of significantly better quality than in the control group.

In a related area, Costa addresses the significance of classroom talk from the perspective of oral language as the vital connective tissue that reveals the thoughts of students and teachers (Costa, 1991). He emphasizes a language that promotes intelligent behaviours that he terms "cogitare." Intelligent behaviours that he encourages teachers to elicit through their use of language include: persistence, decreased impulsivity, empathic listening, cooperative thinking, flexible thinking, metacognition, checking for accuracy, drawing on past knowledge and applying it to new situations, question and problem posing, risk taking, a sense of humor, precision of language, use of all senses, ingenuity, and a sense of efficacy as a thinker. Costa's work has focused on teaching teachers instructional strategies for using specific language to mediate metacognition in regard to these behaviours. His work has particular interest for

teachers of students with LD because many of these desirable behaviours are of particular importance to students of this profile in achieving school success. Encouraging teachers to use cogitare and to recognize oral language expression as evidence of curricular understandings and therefore worthy of acknowledgment and credit bears directly on some of the central issues in this study.

### Technology and Students with LD

The focus of this investigation was not primarily on technological access (students in this study spent comparatively little time with any substantial technological tools despite their availability). The tools and access that were afforded, however, showed promise as tools to support literacy learning. As we enter a new millennium, educational stakeholders will expect their teachers to apply the tools of the new era in ways that will embrace all learners of multiple abilities. In recent years, this new literacy, or technotext, has garnered much attention for its potential implications for learners with LD. Social scientists have begun to ask whether technology promotes or detracts from the social and psychological welfare of persons with LD. Several researchers have concluded that technology can increase self-confidence, promote independence, decrease learned helplessness, and empower students with LD (Ellis & Sabornie, 1988; Raskind, 1994). Raskind (1995), for example, asserted that assistive technology may serve to "facilitate the move toward independence by reducing reliance on others," as well as to "reduce the psychological stress and possible social ramifications of having to continually rely on others" (p. 160).

Substantial negative attention has been directed toward the ethical principle of justice in the new literacy. According to Beauchamp and Walters (1989), justice requires equal access to goods, services, or information to which a person has a right or entitlement. To deny access is to fail to act in accordance with the principle of justice.

Many of the goods and services, and much of the information available in our society, are technology-based and promise to be even more so in years to come.

Raskind (1995) claims that persons with LD are at risk for unjust treatment in regard to technology access and the benefits such access may bring. He identifies two components of technology access for students with LD, the availability of technologies and operational access. The former requires that the technology needed to reap the full range of benefits afforded others in society is available to persons with disabilities. Operational access requires that once a technology is physically present, it is effectively and easily operated by the individual. For example, due to difficulties with visual-motor operations, the keyboard or mouse may be difficult for a student with LD to operate. Memory difficulties may affect individual ability to carry out a series of operational commands on the keyboard. Reading difficulties may inhibit access to the Help and Tutorial portions, as well as the actual content of programs.

Only brief encounters with children engaged in internet searches or participating in the Knowledge Forum (see Appendix P) is needed to intuitively recognize that the challenges inherent in ensuring equitable access are well worth our collective efforts to overcome. In many instances, only minor modifications (e.g., a more intuitive command sequence, larger font, more hyperlinks to amplified or simplified text) are necessary to make a technology accessible to an individual with LD. The responsibility for ensuring that technologies are operationally accessible to students with LD is a shared one. A few companies (e.g., IBM, Apple, and especially the recent Apple acquisition, NEXT) have taken steps to solicit information from users with LD with the intention of incorporating some of these suggestions into the design of their mass-market computer technologies.

Educators also bear a significant portion of the responsibility for ensuring that at-risk students are not further disenfranchised by the fluid, new media. Until recently,

the majority of instructional technologies used with children with LD tended to be highly programmatic, sequential, and tightly controlled. These technologies often left little room for the individual to pursue learning experiences that were self-regulated, or of relevance. Proponents of the holistic/constructivist teaching/learning process (Heshusius, 1991; Poplin, 1988) assert that LD children need the opportunity to self-regulate their learning, be active in their own learning, and pursue learning experiences in which they are passionately interested and that have relevance to their own lives. The proponents would find this main concern addressed with the recent addition of CSILE (Computer-Supported Intentional Learning Environments), a program which promises to reframe classroom discourse to support knowledge building. Its developers at OISE, Scardamalia and Bereiter (1996), view the role of educational technology as a means of reframing classroom discourse to support knowledge building. The presence of this program in one of the two classrooms in the study provided an interesting and promising dimension to the students' writing opportunities.

To date, much of this technology, while highly suitable to regular education students with proper guidance, is difficult for students with LD to decipher and navigate. Educators need to take an active interest in educational technology, which has rapidly become the ideal second language.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology, Design And Procedures

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research design in terms of methodology, approach, procedure, and analytic tools. A qualitative design was chosen because of the nature of the study--an exploratory investigation of the quality, nature, and perceptions of literacy practices in two classrooms.

#### The Data

The data are recorded on 29 separate audio-tapes. Thirty classroom interactions each of 50 minutes duration (21 hours) and 13 interviews of approximately one hour duration (13 hours) with participants were recorded. The recordings of interactions took place in two grade 6 classrooms while participants were engaged in language arts activities in a pull-in model of support over a three-month semester. The researcher was also employed as the Integration Support Teacher (IST) in the two classrooms. Eight of the 30 recordings occurred when the classroom teacher and the TA assigned to each class were responsible for support and the IST served as researcher only. The purpose of the additional eight recordings made in each classroom was to capture the interactions of the children with the TA personnel and teacher. One visit was paid to each class without recording to discuss with students why the researcher would not be helping them during the blocks when their TA was present. They were told that the TA and IST were learning from each other and that the researcher needed more information about how to best help in grade 6. Tape recording took place between September and December of the 1997 school year. The five student subjects were entering the sixth

grade from three elementary schools and had been identified in their grade 3 or grade 4 school year with Severe Learning Disabilities (Ministry of Education Classification #326) (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1995).

Although the instructional blocks were 50 minutes, the tape recordings of participant observations (IST and classroom teacher) varied in length from 40 to 65 minutes. Variation was due to the occasional late arrival by the IST from another class (the IST supported three additional classes that did not figure in the study) or because of debriefing with the classroom teacher at the end of a co-taught language arts block.

An Olympus Pearlcorde (S950) microcassette recorder with a small tie-clip microphone was worn all day by the researcher in a small pouch-like purse. It was turned on before entering the two classrooms and turned off in the hallway after each participant observation. Wearing the tape-recorder and microphone all day served to make it part of the standard attire, much like the headsets that two of the teachers in the school wore to teach classes enrolling students with hearing loss. The tape recorder and microphone were worn the first ten days of school, even though it was not turned on. Its use did not elicit questions or comments after the first week from either staff or students.

As the researcher was engaged in co-teaching during the recording sessions, simultaneous note-taking of non-verbal behaviour was not possible. The option to video-record was carefully considered and rejected as intrusive to students with LD and to their teachers. The “accuracy” in recording was regarded as being diminished by the effect this would have on the classroom setting.

Because contextual support data is often essential to ensure accurate and adequate interpretation of the behaviour recorded the following procedures were followed:

1. A taped record was made of attendance of the subjects, seating arrangements, co-teaching instructional configuration used during each participant-observation,

circulation patterns or tendencies in movement of the helping staff and presence of other adults in the room. Notes also commented on the general ambiance of the classroom. This recording was done in the hallway immediately following the tape recording of each session except for the attendance which was recorded at the beginning of each class.

2. In all but four of the sessions, the tapes were listened to on the same evening of the recording to retrieve maximum recall of the participants' actions. The remaining four sessions were reviewed within two days.

### Interviews

Interviews of 45 to 60 minutes were conducted with students, parents, TAs, and teachers during the month of December directly following participant observations.

Interviews were conducted at the end of the participant observation phase of data collection for two reasons:

1. The on-going data analysis of the participant observations helped inform the questions and themes.

2. All participants had experienced support practices for a full academic semester and were thus in a position to provide more substantive answers.

The interview was designed to access information and perceptions concerning six specific topics using an approach to interviewing which strives to facilitate maximum interviewee involvement. The six topics were:

1. Support for individuals with a LD.
2. Definitions of literacy support.
3. Language-based curriculum adaptations.
4. Roles.
5. Strategies, structures and technologies to access text.

## 6. Teaching configurations.

Validation of teacher interviews occurred by presenting the teacher and TAs with a complete transcript of the interviews. Parents and students received a summary derived from the tape with invitations to add, delete or comment. The teachers were asked to add further information, clarify ideas and verify the accuracy of the interview data (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). This opportunity for teacher input, as outlined in the proposed research, furthers attainment of internal validity (LeCompte, 1993). One of the teachers (Tina) and one TA (Thelma) availed themselves of the opportunity to give specific confirmation of accuracy but made no additions. The idea to solicit information on the specific topics was derived from an interviewee guided approach (IGA) made popular in part by researchers from a feminist paradigm (Oakley, 1978).

### Understanding the Interviewee Guided Approach

A complex and highly-interactive support phenomenon requires careful selection of methodological tools and approaches to honour the diversity and number of voices in the supportive arena. For this reason, an IGA to gathering information from participants was chosen and participants were given opportunities to add to the findings throughout the study.

Reinharz (1992) suggests that in an IGA, interviews are ways of exploring people's views of reality while permitting the researcher to generate theory. Charmaz (1989) describes skills of IGA interviewers as passive, receptive, open, understanding, recognizing and responding to the other's feelings and being able to talk about sensitive issues without threatening the participant. She also comments on the powerful benefits of the open or semi-structured interview, allowing the interviewer to incorporate questions as new topics arise and as unanticipated patterns emerge.

The IGA evolved out of concerns regarding traditional interviewing as an unnecessarily opaque tool, assuming both control and uniformity as inherent characteristics of the interviewing process. Traditional interviewing seeks patterns and commonality while striving to eliminate interviewer bias with a focus on eliminating predispositions through careful planning and by matching interviewers and interviewees on the basis of class, gender and race. Interviewee-guided proponents, however, do not believe that eliminating predisposition is either possible or desirable. Trusting the interviewee to lead the interviewer in fruitful directions, looking for differences among individuals, and putting each participant at ease through the use of an ice-breaker is critical in establishing a comfort zone. Traditional interviewing proponents think these goals are best accomplished through small talk (Borg & Gall, 1987). In an IGA, however, researchers are encouraged to begin the discussion with questions to which the interviewee already knows the answer. For example, in these interviews students were asked about their birthdates and birthday celebrations.

Due to illness, the principal researcher conducted the interviews with TAs but not with teachers, parents and children during the approved time frame. In consultation with the doctoral advisor, a graduate research assistant in counseling and special education was hired to conduct the interviews. The graduate assistant was suitable for this role because he had completed his counseling internship at the research site and therefore was familiar with the school culture and protocol; his background in special education and counseling was pertinent to the research topic and afforded him sufficient understanding of the participants in the study. In addition, while the assistant was familiar with the middle school culture and staff he was not involved in long-standing professional relationships with the staff.

The principal researcher spent three hours in training the assistant in the IGA. After the first student interview, the research assistant remitted the tape for transcription

which afforded some on-the spot-troubleshooting and clarification. In an analysis of the interviews for quality and quantity of response the researcher concluded that the quality of the interviews with teachers and children may have been affected by the assistant's unfamiliarity with participants. The teacher interviews may have been enhanced by the outside interviewer. Their interviews were rich in information and insights into their views on teaching children with LD in an integrated setting. In the case of student interviews, the interviewer may have had a negative impact on student willingness to talk. Analysis of the transcripts revealed that students were more subdued and reluctant to elaborate on answers, perhaps because of their lack of familiarity with the interviewer. Analysis of the parent interviews gave no indications of influence due to unfamiliarity with the research assistant.

### Transcription

Each tape was transcribed using a transcription machine and headset. Of the 30 tapes, 20 were transcribed by the researcher and 10 by an assistant. Due to the number of replays necessary to capture an accurate transcription of the classroom interactions each 50-minute tape recording took an average of four and half hours to transcribe. The tapes of interviews with participants had far less background noise and few overlaps in conversations; these averaged two and half hours. In order to facilitate accuracy checks by classroom teachers and TAs, the tapes were not erased. This also permitted the researcher to clarify unclear passages of the transcripts and permit more accurate interpretation of the data.

Much is lost in taping, especially in terms of facial expression and other prosodic features of language, as well as the classroom ambiance. Taping field notes and listening to recordings within six hours of recording helped to fill this gap.

### Preliminary Activities

This section outlines preliminary activities underlying this study. Consent was obtained from participants, guarantees of confidentiality were offered, and the purpose of the study was explained.

1. Informed consent from all subjects, including the teachers, TAs, administrators, students and their parents, as well as the University of Victoria Ethics Committee was obtained.

2. The identities of the subjects were protected by changing names, places and other identifying features in both field notes and in the final report. Audio-tapes will be kept in a secured location for one year after completion of dissertation and then destroyed. Codes for subject names were kept in a secured location separate from the field notes.

3. Data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously, in that during participant observation and interviewing, the researcher kept track of emerging themes, read through field notes or listened to tapes, and developed concepts and propositions from analysis of the data.

4. Information was collected on students in late May and June of 1997 through three methods: a) in-take protocols that involved interviewing ISTs from the elementary schools; b) In-take procedures in which students and parents received a tour of the middle school conducted by an IST, and c) Files in which students' school history since kindergarten, including psychometric assessments, identification and interventions up to the end of the fifth grade were examined. A profile was compiled from this information for discussion with future teachers and for initial planning and writing of an IEP.

5. Three co-teaching workshops each of two hour duration were conducted by the researcher and the co-ordinator responsible for programs for students with

identified learning disabilities. These were attended by thirty teachers in the district many of whom work collaboratively. Both classroom teachers in this study Tina and Jesse attended the three workshops.

6. Seven grade six teachers at the study middle schools were invited to enroll the identified children with learning disabilities and to participate in a co-teaching model of support. Only two of the seven grade six teachers expressed an interest in this partnership and in enrolling the children with learning disabilities.

### Assumptions

1. The five children in the study met the Ministry of Education criteria for designation as Learners with Severe Learning Disabilities (Ministry classification number 326).

2. Students with learning disabilities are intelligent students with specific difficulties in traditional academic endeavors (often reading, writing and organizational skills). These difficulties do not preclude meaningful learning experiences in school settings including interactions around text.

3. Literacy support occurs best in a context rich in meaningful shared book experiences.

4. Co-teaching is one of several viable options for support service delivery for learners identified with learning disabilities.

5. Co-teaching configurations facilitate more student conversations and learning initiatives than traditional teacher-led instruction. More student conversations and learning initiatives result in increased opportunities for intellectual and social growth.

6. Co-teachers experience challenges and rewards as a result of the co-teaching endeavours.

7. Learners identified with learning disabilities require sensitivity and understanding about their unique learning needs from their teachers and teacher assistants.

8. Adaptations to learners' programs should maximize common classroom themes and activities to minimize social marginalization. Such adaptations enhance literacy learning for students with learning disabilities.

8. Adaptations to literacy programs need to be sufficiently differentiated on a routine basis to accommodate differences in reading, writing, thinking and talking.

9. Talking is a viable and worthy aspect of literacy for showing understandings of content.

10. Transition to a large middle school from small elementary schools requires additional support to assist children in orientation and acclimatization to the school culture.

11. All other things being equal, the IST should attend to the needs of classroom children identified with learning disabilities first.

## Participants

### Students.

Student subjects were chosen using two criteria: (1) designation under the British Columbia Ministry of Education guidelines (BC Ministry of Education, 1995) as students with severe LD (#326 students); and (2) impending transition to middle school. All ten students classified as LD entering grade 6 had an opportunity to participate in the study. Six opted to participate and one withdrew in the first two weeks because he "didn't want to talk to people." The children; two girls (Amy and Nina) and three boys (Sam, Noah and Roy) were all eleven years of age and diagnosed with severe LD in either grade 3 or 4 of the elementary school years. All the children had

very specific and easily recognizable talents and strengths. From an organizational perspective, Noah and Nina were sufficiently organized to function in the block/content specialty middle school with minimum support of their educational team. Sam, Roy, and Amy needed daily support to maintain minimal levels of organization to function in the school setting. Their academic measures indicated a two to three year delay in the language arts area. All except Nina were at an appropriate grade level in mathematics. All the children came from two parent homes where they appeared to be valued by their parents. All of the children spelled phonetically; they had not adopted the conventions of spelling. All except Roy liked to read in a specific area and enjoyed the library at the school despite their difficulties.

In addition to his learning difficulties, Noah was diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder. His academic records placed him three years below his peers in reading measures and three and a half years in writing. Noah had a long history of what teachers described as complacency and low initiative in school. His fifth grade teacher suggested he had not done more than a paragraph or two of written work during the grade five year. On two separate visits by the researcher to Noah's classroom in grade 5, his apathy for school work in that particular context was confirmed. This was in marked contrast to his grade 6 year where he completed specific aspects of language arts activities most days. His well-developed oral skills in expressing complex ideas and his sense of humor which teachers and peers affectionately described as "warped" were evident in almost every conversation. He presented as introverted, had a passion for comic books and computer games and demonstrated some difficulties in making friends. He was slow moving, methodical in placement of classroom belongings and better organized than all of his co-participants. Noah was known for his pencil drawings of comic book characters and mythical legends. He was obviously very talented in this area and received recognition for this at home and school.

Amy's reading tests (BC Quiet) and curriculum inventories indicated about a two year delay; her writing about 18 months on standard measures and very similar on classroom samples using the Writing Reference Sets. Her speaking was characterized by creative and humorous anecdotes told in delightfully engaging tones. She was disorganized to the point of being non-functional without the interventions of her TA and IST and classroom teacher. She started work in several notebooks and lost them promptly; the TA had a back-up set of notes and books in every subject and the IST worked with her on strategies during part of Amy's lunch hour to help her stay organized enough to function in her six classes per day. Socially she was adept and mixed with students from a range of abilities and backgrounds. She was passionate about storytelling and was excited by Internet access.

Sam resembled Amy in his extroverted and adept social skills. He differed in his unusually strong abilities to reason and in his fluency and divergence of ideas. He had a wicked sense of humor: his comments were always quickly constructed and voiced and since they were never at the expense of his peers, he drew only positive attention. James' reading inventories placed him at an approximate two year delay and standardized measures at three years. His writing, if surface features were ignored, was on par with his peers. He loved to write stories on his laptop but not with his pen and he was by far the best researcher of the group of participants.

Nina had a very well-developed work ethic and a noticeable determination to get her questions answered and get on with her work. She was adopted at five years of age from a Mauri tribe and started to learn English at five. Nina struggled socially. Her peers seemed to resent her frequent lies and she was caught stealing on three occasions during the study. She was the only participant who spent time with the behavioural support counselor. She did not act out in class but often created difficulties for herself

and others because of these ethical issues. Her reading and writing were delayed on all measures by three to three and a half years and her math concepts were very weak.

Roy was a quiet First Nations student with a playful and gentle disposition. In many respects, he presented as disinterested in the mainstream curriculum but responded noticeably to novelty. He liked to hear about concepts and places and animals he knew little or nothing about. His attendance and punctuality were spotty and he identified strongly with his peers from his community. His reading tests placed him at the most delayed (four years) and he required modified reading materials in his classroom.

#### Teachers.

The two female teachers had taught grade six for approximately eight years and volunteered to accept all the new enrolling children with LD through a collaborative process involving administrators, student services staff and five other grade six teachers. Administrators provided co-teaching support through the IST, smaller class size by 2-3 and release time to plan and attend in-servicing opportunities on teaching children with disabilities. Clustering of students with LD with attending support was a common practice to ensure sufficient coverage of identified children by the Student Services departmental staff consisting of five integration support teachers and three teacher assistants. Both teachers had reputations as hard workers and both attended multiple professional development opportunities outside of school hours. Tina was known in the school for her no-nonsense teaching approach and as a gifted artist and athlete. Jesse had won collegial recognition for environmental and social issues which she brought to her teaching.

### Teaching Assistants.

Two female teacher assistants had worked in their positions for more than ten years. They both had high school diplomas and had participated in paraprofessional inservicing twice per year as structured through the school district. They were known by reputation in the school as among the strongest of teacher assistants for their attributes of discretion and commitment to children. Paraprofessionals have filtered into the regular classroom as a result of the mainstream movement. While their supportive role was once peripheral it has become a legitimate and integral part of the Canadian public school system (Lam & McQuarrie, 1989). In British Columbia there are twice the number of assistants as special education teachers in the programs.

### Integration Support Teacher.

The female integration support teacher (also the researcher) had worked part-time at the Middle School research site for one year in a collaborative co-teaching capacity prior to data collection although not with either of the teachers. She had worked closely with both of the teacher assistants involved in this study. She had worked in Learning Assistance and Integration Support Roles for six years and classroom teaching roles for seven prior to this assignment. Her work at this school involved co-teaching collaborative support in three grade six classrooms (one French immersion in addition to the two classrooms involved in this study) and two grade seven classrooms.

### Integration Support Roles.

The shift from pull-out support to integrated or pull-in support for learners with LD has required professionals working in various capacities with at-risk learners to develop a new set of skills that are general (in terms of curriculum knowledge); specialized (in strategies and approaches for at-risk learners); collaborative; and

technologically literate. These professionals require skills different from those needed even a decade ago when support service was synonymous with a pull-out program composed largely of discrete skill-building built around norm-referenced testing. The role involves facilitating meetings with school-based teams usually comprised of classroom teacher, content-area teacher, school administrator, TA, parents and, if appropriate, counselors, speech and language pathologists.

Another function of the IST is to defuse the formation of tacit agreements whereby students are permitted to sit and do little as long as they are not interfering in the work of others, and finding appropriate and tactful ways to enlist the support of already overworked teachers. Appropriate reminders to parents, teachers and TAs, and to oneself, that everyone is working on one team designed to support the student is also a significant part of the job.

#### Research Site and Administrative Team

The research site was a large, modern facility housing approximately 830 students between grades 6 and 8. The architectural design was aesthetically appealing, maximizing light and central access to exceptional library resources. The school drew its school population from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and offered three distinct programs--a regular English program, a French Immersion program and a program for First Nations students.

The administrative team (principal and two vice-principals) were held in high regard by their staff, in part because of their proactive approach to school discipline and because of the consistent daily contact they had with students. Frequently, an administrator's desk was positioned in the central foyer, from where he could troubleshoot, interact, and positively influence the tone of the school. In addition to the

administrative team, the school also employed a child and youth care worker, a counselor, a behavioural support teacher, and a First Nations teacher.

### Ensuring Internal Validity

The researcher strived to achieve internal validity in several ways. Authentic depictions of support practices were sought by repeated comparison of data and utilization of multiple perspectives (TAs, teachers, parents and students and independent research assistant). Second, classroom teachers sampled the transcriptions and were invited to add comments of their own, lending to the authentic voice of the findings, as it emerges from the raw data. One classroom teacher and one TA listened to the tapes three times during the study.

Third, because the stream of interaction was too complex and too subtle for the participant-observer, or even a team of observers, to record everything that happened (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982), the researcher attended to the most salient phenomena under observation, the literacy support practices of the teachers and para-professionals and the interactions among the teachers or TAs and participants.

As a means of corraling the stream of activity in the classroom situations, the researcher was also cognizant of three frameworks from the literature helpful in answering questions regarding the nature of literacy support and how participants both define and perceive support. These three frameworks were:

1. British Columbia Ministry of Education goals that encompass notions of equity, relevancy, access, quality and accountability.
2. Aspects of York and Vandercook's (1992) criteria of support, which include the perception of help, shared responsibility, outcome-worth-the-effort and better-results-with-help-than-without.

3. Three "vehicles" of literacy support, namely, inclusion support practices, text-accessing strategies, structures and, to a lesser extent, technological support.

#### Dual Roles of IST/Researcher: Maintaining Objectivity

Ample evidence suggests that teacher-researcher collaborations can produce some desirable changes in classrooms and, through collaboration, valid research results (Florio-Ruane, 1990; Sirotnik & Goodlad, 1988). Sirotnik (1988) suggests that in order for research to be useful, it must focus on problems or concerns of the research consumer, teacher and student. This was perhaps one of the strongest aspects of the study--relevance for classroom practice. The problems under investigation are those that both classroom teachers and ISTs face every day--how to provide optimum learning opportunities to the greatest number of students.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) contend that it is difficult to say which is the more problematic--maintaining objectivity or developing sensitivity. In the study design, it was clearly not difficult to discern which of the two would be more potentially dangerous. Sensitivity to the milieu was much less of a potentially difficult issue in this study than maintaining objectivity. Appropriate sensitivity was almost ensured by the role of classroom support teacher. The researcher was undoubtedly situated in a paradigm, one that included schooling in inclusive practices and literacy learning. She also had opted for co-teaching and literature selections as main staples in service-delivery diet. It was therefore critical to examine researcher identity and issues of objectivity with a view to taking appropriate measures to minimize their impact on analysis. Sandelowski (1993) highlights the complexity of researcher identity in analysis of data. It is one's knowledge and experience (in my case, experience as a special, regular, second language and university teacher of literacy practices, female-gendered, bilingual Canadian raised in poverty) that shapes and enables researchers to

recognize incidents as being conceptually similar or dissimilar and to give them names. It is by using what one brings to the data in a systematic and aware way that one becomes sensitive to meaning without forcing explanations on data.

Maintaining objectivity is a critical challenge in all data analysis and mainly involves openness, a willingness to listen and to give voice to respondents. It means hearing what others have to say, seeing what others do and representing these as accurately as possible (Dey, 1993). In addition to procedures to ensure internal validity, the researcher in consultation with the doctoral advisor also hired an outside researcher to conduct an analysis of six of the transcriptions of co-teaching participant observations. These were selected at random by the doctoral advisor (see Appendix K) and examined by the external researcher for the role of the IST in the study. The complete report from the outside researcher may be viewed in Appendix J. He provided a second opinion on the tangible aspects of what the IST did and said; his report was descriptive and informative. Due to the specific slice and task that was asked of him, it was not interpretive.

Analyzing and writing about the researcher's own role in the study as IST entailed a certain awkwardness and trepidation that did not present as problematic during the study itself. During the study, the insider's view seemed to add to the validity because of the established rapport with staff and the researcher's knowledge about the culture of the school and some of the participants. Since the researcher had worked for only one year in this school, three days per week, prior to data collection, she was not so entwined in relationships and school culture that she was engulfed by it.

Corbin and Strauss (1998) also stress the importance of skepticism as a tool for maintaining objectivity. The researcher keeps the concepts provisional, based on subsequent data from other sources. Skepticism involves challenging researcher assumptions about the data: "Maybe the teacher is right and students are simply not

cognitively capable of learning; maybe it is pathological; maybe she knows something about traumatic head injuries that these learners experienced not noted in their files.” Despite the contrived nature of some of this skeptical questioning, it served sometimes to pre-empt tunnel vision and unsatisfactory theories that did not adequately explain the range and variability of the data.

Corbin and Strauss (1998) suggest regulating the tension between objectivity and sensitivity in five ways:

1. Checking assumptions with incoming data.
2. Following research procedures, not through rigid adherence, but through a rather fluid and skillful application.
3. Obtaining multiple viewpoints.
4. Adopting a skeptic’s attitude.
5. Thinking comparatively.

Obtaining multiple viewpoints (in this study obtained from TAs, teachers, parents, students, and IST) represented an attempt to determine how the various actors in a situation viewed it. Another way to garner multiple viewpoints was to gather data on the same event or phenomenon in different ways (interviews, participant observations, written samples). Gathering of varied meanings and interpretations of events, actions/interactions is recommended for quality theory building (Corbin & Strauss, 1998) For example, in this study, while one classroom teacher found the IST’s early intervention to help learners disruptive, the IST thought it proactive and preemptive, and the learners expressed both points of view. Sandelowski (1996) emphasizes the importance of identifying how situations are negotiated and how consensus or disensus of meanings are arrived at and maintained. Here they are inextricably linked, contributing to both the richness of the data collected and to the limitations of the study.

### About Grounded Theory

A grounded theory approach was used in the study as a method for discovering theories, concepts, hypotheses, and propositions directly from data, rather than from a priori assumptions, other research, or existing theoretical frameworks.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) propose two major strategies for developing grounded theory. The first is the constant comparative method, in which the researcher simultaneously codes and analyzes data in order to develop concepts. By continually comparing specific incidents in the data, the researcher refines concepts, identifies their properties, explores their relationships to one another, and integrates them into a coherent theory.

The second strategy proposed by Glaser and Strauss is theoretical sampling, in which the researcher selects new cases to study according to their potential to expand on, or refine, concepts and theories that have already been developed. Theoretical sampling begins during the data collection phase of the study and involves searching transcripts for emerging categories that characterize the study and seem significant. As constructs are derived from the data, repeated theoretical sampling can increase the depth of focus and ensure consistency; that is, ensure that data are gathered in a systematic way for each category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Accordingly, theoretical sampling is used as a way of checking on the emerging conceptual framework rather than as verification of preconceived hypotheses (Glaser, 1978). Saturation is achieved when the data fit into the established categories and no new categories emerge from the data.

Positivistic notions of validity, reliability and generalizability may not be applied in the same way to qualitative research. Instead, criteria by which the quality of grounded theory research can be evaluated involves examination of emerging data in categories such as degree of fit, relevance, modifiability, density and integration.

The degree of fit results in codes and categories derived from the data and not forced. A theory "fits" if the categories readily (not forcibly) apply to, and are indicated by, the data under study. This lends credibility to the study in that appropriateness of fit can be easily seen by others not directly involved in the study. Variation in the data and the interrelationships among the constructs produce a predictive element to the theory. As discussed in more detail below, the use of a software program to code, collate, construct and manipulate emerging categories provides an additional criterion--auditability. The audit trail provided by NUD\*IST (see sample in Appendix G) provides evidence for the way in which processes were carried out and decisions were made, thus making the process both visible and verifiable to others who might wish to closely scrutinize the theory.

There are three levels of coding in grounded theory method: Level 1, or open coding which involves naming of each incident; Level 2 coding typically represent categories that describe Level 1 codes; and Level 3 coding elevates the data to a higher plateau of abstraction. In order to develop as many codes as possible and to ensure full theoretical coverage, preventing the researcher from imposing any preconceived impressions on the data, Glaser (1967) uses three questions to guide the open-coding process:

1. What is the study about?
2. What category does this incident indicate?
3. What is actually happening in the data (what is the basic social-psychological problem faced by the participants in the scene)?

In this study, all incidents, activities, instructional formats, interactions with teacher and TAs that constitute support practices were coded separately to gain a wide view of the topography in each classroom. For example, one teacher speaks to the difficulties that learners with LD are having at one of her learning stations. She says:

“World Community is too hard for them. These kids are way too low.” The coding for this statement may be represented this way:

- Level 1:            too low
- Level 2:            ascribes lack of success to student abilities.
- Level 3:            beliefs about school-related abilities.
- Level 3 memos:    no consideration of other variables (i.e., instructional components/scaffolding; etiology is pathological)

In NUD\*IST format, this statement was coded as a node entitled too low and subsequently this node or category held other comments where messages about students being too low were held. Eventually the too low node is merged with the "can't even," "not enough skills" nodes and is collapsed into an overarching category of beliefs about school-related abilities. Memos are attached to this node about my emerging thoughts, such as: teachers' lack of consideration of other variables that may be affecting student achievement at the World Community learning station; the possibility that teacher views etiology of non-performance as pathological; the particular density of this node and a reminder to send a search message for like-words to other documents and, finally, questions about why precisely the World Community station is not a place of learning for at-risk children.

Glaser (1967) emphasizes that sample codes generated at each of the three levels are compared repeatedly, within and among one another, until the basic properties of a category or construct are defined. In so doing, the opportunities for constructing quality theory emerge.

Sherman and Webb (1988) refer to a quality theory as one that possesses relevance related to the identified core variable or basic social-psychological process. Examples of core variables in this study are: teachers' perceptions of school-related abilities, teachers' understandings of curricula adaptations and the function of teacher language

in interactive dialogues. Relevance to these core variables evolves as a result of the researcher's theoretical sensitivity to the milieu. This sensitivity was heightened in this study due to the role of the researcher as IST since the core variables were part of her daily professional experience.

Dey (1993) stresses the importance of researchers' looking for social perspectives and symbolic interactionism by asking questions during coding and analysis. Certain questions proved particularly appropriate and effective in analysis of my data because teachers' perspectives impacted significantly on the quality of support.

How do people define themselves, others, their settings, and their activities?

How do people's definitions and perspectives develop and change?

What is the fit between people's perspectives and their activities?

How do people deal with the discrepancy between their perspectives and their activities?

#### QSR NUD\*IST: Software to Support Grounded Theorizing

Software for qualitative data analysis (QDA) is receiving copious attention from researchers seeking managerial assistance for routine aspects of data collection, storage and retrieval without losing sight of the context and authenticity of their data. Wall (1995), in particular, has promoted thoughtful and stimulating discussion around the dangers of excessive rationalism in translating feeling and experiences into language, and language into a textual representation that can be coded, retrieved and analyzed. Most of the rebuttals to Wall's concerns take issue with her cynicism regarding the possibility of finding a moment of "Eureka!" while using QDA software. If "Eureka!" is simply made up of flashes of insight when researchers identify a new relationship between previously unconnected phenomena, then certainly QDA software not only does not interfere with the process but may actually stimulate it. In my use of the QDA

program NUD\*IST (Non-numerical, Unstructured, Data Indexing, Synthesizing and Theorizing), I found intellectual support in the design of the program leading to such moments.

In an independent review of NUD\*IST, Cuneo (1996) divides the 23 programs available to qualitative researchers into two camps: those that allow deductive searches only and those that permit deductive and inductive searches. In the latter case, he identifies only three: NUD\*IST, ATLAS/ti and to a limited extent, FOLIO VIEW.

In NUD\*IST, induction is carried out by a procedure that some have argued is similar to grounded theory. One constructs theory (logical relations among concepts) out of the data with or without preconceived notions. NUD\*IST enables this by the construction of a hierarchical tree of nodes (memo codes or concepts at a higher level of abstraction) attached to text units (phrases; sentences; several sentences; paragraphs; sections of documents; or entire documents). In this study, sentences were identified as the unit of analysis. In hindsight, I would have selected larger units such as paragraphs. It became necessary in analysis to manually embrace (an extra stroke) the text surrounding my sentences to support understanding of many text units. NUD\*IST can search for text units defined by particular nodes (or combination of nodes), or nodes can be ignored and a straight deductive string or pattern keyword search can be conducted. NUD\*IST eliminates much of the labor-intensive aspects of working with qualitative data. The acronym is an accurate indication of what NUD\*IST can do, with the exception of theorizing.

While this program has garnered positive attention, one critic of the software program attracted much attention by his claim that NUD\*IST is incompatible with grounded theory (Vanclay, 1995). Vanclay's methodological assertion is advanced on the grounds that NUD\*IST's unit of analysis is each interview and that the analysis procedure assumes that each interview covers the same topic. However, Vanclay

appears to have been negligently unfamiliar with the software program he was evaluating and did not have a critical piece of information, namely, that grounded theory expert Ansell Strauss contributed significantly to the design of NUD\*IST. Vanclay's published criticism and active posting on the world-wide web drew swift and lethal response. Lyn Richards at La Trobe University, co-developer of the program, posted this response.

“As I am cited in authority to this statement I'd appreciate space to comment. Neither I nor Strauss (who was actively involved in program design) nor the researchers in 33 countries now using NUDIST often for grounded theory work, would agree with [your statement]. More importantly it raises an intriguing confusion between what computer analysis can do for the qualitative data and what it requires of the data. None of the facilities for automating, indexing or complex retrieval in NUDIST requires homogeneity of data or similarity of topic. In fact to do so would violate the basic rule of the design team at La Trobe...QSR is seriously setting out to offer a tool kit which researchers can use as the research question and the data demand.” (Wall, 1999)

My experience with it was intimately linked with grounded theory since I found the two compatible and often found myself using terms such as open coding and node coding interchangeably.

While cautionary notes are well-taken regarding the mindless coding and retrieval of data and the temptation to do only “quick and dirty” fishing expeditions, such practices would appear to have more to do with the research design and the integrity of researcher than the QDA software. Further research evaluating the implications and impact of thought processes of researchers while using QDA would be intriguing. From my neophyte perspective, I cannot imagine using anything other than QDA software because both the results and process have been stimulating, rewarding and practical. I encountered few tedious stages of the research other than some transcription of the tapes and data retrieval. And, while fluency in NUD\*IST is not an overnight affair, the hours invested in learning the program pay off in time for analysis and in satisfaction with the product.

NUD\*IST offers control and ease of manipulation through its design, instructional manual, tutorial, on-line help and prompts. The manual is particularly well-written; it reviews central tenets of good qualitative research as it explains the features of the program. This is a particularly helpful reminder to junior researchers of the rationale for conducting each step. The construction of the prompts and defaults facilitates sustained thinking about comparisons between nodes (categories). With NUD\*IST, time and energy can be focussed where it belongs--on thinking about the phenomenon under study.

## CHAPTER 4

### Analysis, Results, and Discussion

In a study involving young adolescents with LDs, their teachers and TAs, it is critical to situate the participants within their educational institution and its culture. The integrated classroom environment is the rich contextual base for the study, and requires an understanding of the social context of the participants. The following three vignettes on students, teachers and TAs and the two composite teaching episodes are intended to set the stage for the findings of this study and give the reader a flavour for the participants, their roles, responsibilities and teaching orientations at the research site.

The material for the vignettes and episodes are derived from the actual events, interactions, instructional materials and conversations from eight separate transcripts (three transcripts from each classroom and two transcripts from taped field notes about the early days of the study). These occurrences have been used to reconstruct the early days and to meld a composite portrait of each research classroom. They are intended to assist the reader in understanding the teaching practices, interactions and discourse in the two classrooms and to capture the nuances of the co-teaching language arts environment in each setting. The sample transcripts were chosen based on interactions, literacy events and activities which most accurately reflected the dynamics revealed in the data in each classroom over the three months of the study. In keeping with recommendations of grounded theory, the representative samples were chosen after constant comparison of the central categories of the data (See Chapter 3).

## Capturing the Integrated Settings: Vignettes and Composite Teaching Episodes

### First Day: Introducing Noah, Sam, Amy, Nina, and Roy.

Middle schools were promoted as safe zones, and evolved as places where being six feet tall with a squeaky voice, or pushing out of an AA cup while sporting braces and braids would hardly make you stand out. Such contradictions, it was thought, were only the outward manifestations of the turmoil, delight and uncertainty many pubescent adolescents experienced. The middle school context is meant to embrace these in-between people in ways that may not be possible in the elementary setting of scraped knees and rambling stories, nor in secondary settings where open displays of affection and well-entrenched cliques often leave little attention for the early-teen crowd. Nowhere could the apprehension of this transition time be more blatantly obvious than at 8:05 am on the first day of the first term outside a large middle school of 850 students.

The researcher's eyes scanned for five students entering grade 6 with a special flag on their intake folders identifying them with Severe LDs. Three visits to their elementary classrooms last June and interviews with their parents and their former teachers made their faces and profiles easy to recall, even among 220 new sixth graders.

As the new arrivals clamored off the buses, instinct said: "Look for Noah first." He was easy to spot, even for the uninitiated casual observer. Standing alone, frail even by Ally McBeal standards, dressed in black from head to toe, emphasizing his blanched face, nails bitten to the quick, he looked quite utterly fragile. I approached and asked whether he had seen his friend Tom yet. He shook his head with a credible display of nonchalance. His best friend, Tom (Noah's designation, not Tom's), had been placed in his grade 6 division (one of seven grade 6 divisions that year). I introduced Noah to a couple of new students from other school districts, since all of his former classmates were clustered in small groups. He nodded, but did not speak. Sam too was easy to spot, but not because of isolation, fragility or quietness. Quite the contrary; his chipmunk cheeks moved rapidly to

keep up with his animated conversations with his three male friends and as I approached him he joked with me about his being so short. The three boys put their arms around one another frequently and said how nervous they were, while at the same time stamping on one another's toes and emitting yelps of excitement that were laced with nervous laughter. Since Sam's parents expressed worry about him getting lost in such a big school and never finding his locker, I had arranged for his TA to take him on a tour of the locker bay (which was in a different section of the school) with his three friends and to identify some of the shapes of the various entranceways in the school, so that Sam might recognize and navigate his way back to his classroom. Later that same day, Thelma, the TA, reported that Sam was among the quickest to recognize the different shapes of each entranceway leading to each pod (wing) of the school and relayed Sam's recommendation--to use a different colour on each portal instead of just a shape. "It'd be way easier to find stuff."

When Amy spotted me on the front lawn of the school that first day, she ran over and hugged me (I was to discover later the non-preferential intent of her hugs--Amy hugged everybody). Her enthusiasm and smile were infectious. Only a slight frown crossed her brow as she glanced at her friends' bulging knapsacks and expressed concern that she didn't have her supplies yet. I already suspected from visits to her elementary classroom the previous June that Amy may rarely have all of her supplies, at least not in the correct location at the correct time. I reassured her that she wouldn't need them today and that her teacher would have everything she needed. I asked her about her two friends and she introduced me with confidence, giggling as she said: "Mrs. Tobin is like Mrs. Parks (her former Learning Assistance teacher) at our old school." En route to the gymnasium to hear the principal's welcoming speech, I encountered Amy's TA, Louise, and asked her to supply Amy with whatever she needed for the morning, as she had no supplies with her and was feeling slightly embarrassed about it.

If Amy was under-supplied, then Nina, who was also engaged in lively conversation on the front lawn, was at the other end of the continuum. Her knapsack bulged with notebooks, art supplies and several small toys. Her olive skin, brown eyes and wide jaw reminded me of her parents' comments that she was often mistaken for a First Nations child. Of the Mauri tribe, Nina came to Canada in kindergarten from a remote tribal village in Australia. As she smacked on candy, she waved a twenty dollar bill that she had brought to school that first day. She seemed to be using the money to entice some girls to have lunch with her in the cafeteria. I tape-recorded a reminder to myself to mention to her mother that sending this amount of money may lead to some difficulties. As I continued to scan for my last student, Roy, I was struck by the relative calm and restraint of all the children, considering the mixed emotions that many of them were obviously experiencing as they prepared to enter a new school with new teachers, new classmates, and new challenges.

Roy was difficult to locate. He had lodged himself along the wall of the school with four of his friends from his First Nations community. When he saw me approach, all of his body signals said: "Don't come over to me." His stature looked particularly small beside his best friend Jimmy, a student who was identified with chronic health issues stemming from obesity. I redirected my footsteps to some new arrivals in the school district, conspicuous thanks to their anxious parents hovering within view. As I visited with them and welcomed them to the school, I wondered how I would find a way to connect with Roy and his friend Jimmy. I recalled Roy's comments about loving basketball and made a note on the tape recorder hidden in my small purse to show his picture to the noon-time supervisor and ask her to ensure he got to sign out a basketball at recess time.

Twenty minutes had elapsed since they had clamored off their buses, visited with friends, and eventually connected with their support teacher. The bell rang and students filed into the school. Noah, by apparent design, was the 220th.

Third Day Staff Meeting: Introducing Teachers Jesse, Tina, and Ruthanne.

In large middle schools, the agenda of early September staff meetings is notoriously jammed with issues of contractual compliance (How many students in each class? How many students identified with LDs or with behavioural problems are enrolled in each division? What extra compensation of personnel or release time over the contractual limit is needed for each teacher?). Re-shuffling of classroom divisions also features on the agenda—an item always sure to elicit ample controversy and anxiety among teachers. Configurations need to be stabilized before any substantive instruction begins. As the discussion unfolded in the room of three school administrators, 75 professional staff members and three school administrators, two of the seven grade 6 teachers, Jesse and Tina, were both very vocal regarding the composition of their classes. Each was lobbying the administrators openly to re-shuffle and provide more support personnel. Lance, my Integration Support colleague, and I were seated near the back of the staff room peering at our latest print-out of possible support scenarios for the 11 divisions (grades 6-8), in which the students with identified disabilities were enrolled. He leaned over to me as the two grade 6 teachers continued their discussion of their class profiles and said: “Look out, I think the ball is coming your way.” Just then the school principal turned to me and said: “I’m sure Ruthanne will be connecting with you to address some of these issues.” “Yes, we’re working on it,” I said. “We’re meeting with grade 6 teachers today.” “Didn’t we do all this in June?” Lance added. He knew very well that we had done “all this” in June but that didn’t change the reality that once the doors opened, the numbers changed, and teachers’ recollections of what they agreed to last June became muddled in view of the reality of their class compositions, as opposed to numbers and profiles on a page. Tina’s face was determined, her language focussed and her demeanor serious. She was not mincing any words: she wanted certain students out, preferably by the next day. She had already filed a grievance with the teachers’ union. Some of the teachers focussed on the

papers in front of them to avoid overt eye contact with the parties at odds. Tina was not backing down easily, especially on issues of class composition and contract compliance.

Jesse's face conveyed worry and stress as she talked about her "terrible" class. She described the problem at some length by listing the number of students with their respective labels (ESL, LD, Behavioural). Several teachers appeared to cringe slightly when she included her First Nations children under the umbrella of "problem profile kids". The vice-principal skillfully delegated the problem to me and moved the discussion onto the next agenda item. I met with Tina and Jesse after school to discuss how they were feeling about their classes, knowing that their concerns and anxieties were valid, even if (in my opinion) somewhat exaggerated. I tried to steer the discussion toward problem-solving a little sooner than either of them would have liked. They had not finished their grievances. I backed up and acknowledged their challenges more explicitly. The stop sign was up. They did not wish to proceed with any planning until the administrators at least addressed the class size issue which was agreed upon in their contracts along with other guidelines for support of learners with LD (See appendix O). I agreed to talk to the principal on their behalf. Seven days later the issues of class size and composition were resolved to everyone's satisfaction and I met twice with each teacher to plan co-teaching sessions, in which they identified the focus in language arts (novel study and short stories). We discussed the profiles of the five children with LD and several other children of concern (ESL learners, children who act out, low-incidence students with hearing impairment and health issues, etc.). I shared the co-teaching instructional model options with them (they had attended several district workshops on these models). They opted for a trouble-shooting approach (see Chapter 2) and weekly alternate leadership of direct instruction. Schedules were set to three 50-minute blocks per week and one planning block, materials were selected and all three teachers set off to do our respective jobs.

In the Halls: Introducing Teacher Assistants Thelma and Louise.

Some of the best work in Special Education is done in the hallways. Follow-up on students' commitments to complete work or engaging them in brief conversations about their interests tend to happen here. "Mattering" is conveyed in the halls by staff who resist the urge to rush by kids but inquire about them instead, engage them in playful commentary, or follow up on promises that one has made to the other. TAs Thelma and Louise, like all TAs at this school, spend lots of time in the hallways, corded pens around their necks and zippered binders in their clutches, containing the important papers that help them do their jobs. Their binders are sectioned according to each class they support, and filled with detailed notes about each of their students and information from the individual planning meetings. They are full-time staff with as many as seven classes to support across every subject area. Their schedules are fixed and when they are away, despite a consistent substitute support system, they are sorely missed by the teachers and children. In many ways, they are the cohesive glue of integration support. With few exceptions, TAs spend five blocks, five days per week, in each classroom division that they support.

Thelma is one of the five TAs at this middle school. She is known for her intelligence, discretion, and unwavering commitment to children. Teachers request her as their assistant by name, leaving the ISTs in a delicate situation concerning scheduling and deployment of assistants. The ISTs are influenced by the dynamics of how to honour some of these requests without favoring one classroom context over another and without clouding the central question of: "What is best for the at-risk children who these paraprofessional support staff are hired to help?". Thelma showed an incredible ability to see things that the teachers did not. She frequently notified the ISTs and classroom teachers when a particular student was not following any more, or that another student looked unhappy; or that a third student had stopped doing homework, or that the seating arrangement wasn't working for him. Thelma was routinely recruited by the administrative

staff to help in training new TAs, and her infrequent requests for any flexibility in scheduling for personal reasons were met with the immediate positive action reserved for those who rarely make such requests, and who go beyond the requirements of their job on a routine basis. In short, she is a highly valued member of this staff and recognized as a significant person in the continuity of classroom support. On the first day of school, Thelma stopped Roy in the hallway to ask him about his cousin, who she had known from previous years. Roy looked relaxed as he chatted easily, and Thelma, in her predictably subtle style, wove a request for a small job into the conversation. "Would this be a good time to do your weekly locker clean-out, or would tomorrow at lunch be better?" she asked. Roy said he could do it right away and showed her some treat he had purchased from the canteen; Thelma sported an expression of interest that gave no indication she'd seen this treat a thousand times over the past few years.

The second TA, Louise, was appreciated for her compassion, steadiness and exceptional ability to remember details about every child's family situation. She was everyone's favorite recorder at Individual Educational Planning meetings because she considers it important to note the facial expressions and tone of the speaker in her notes. Attention to detail is something in which she takes pride. Louise fulfills the stereotypical notions of the warm, motherly type. She literally provides hot soup and facial tissues for children under her charge, hugs middle school kids without inhibition or fear of reprisal and can get difficult children to settle down to work with minimal confrontation. Her hallway interactions were interesting to watch because she would subtly approach a child who she had determined was in need of help, and would then get directly to what needed to be done. Children sometimes responded to her requests with reluctance, but generally she kept them on her team and the children knew she liked them.

Both of these women have worked for over ten years in the role of TA at the middle school level. They started their careers in their mid-thirties, once their own children had reached adolescence.

Composite Teaching Episode: Tina and Ruthanne Co-Teaching.

Approaching Tina's classroom at my usual rollerblading speed, I was conscious of the bell having rung two minutes earlier, yet something caused me to slow my pace as I approached the classroom. Silence. There was complete silence in this room of twenty-eight 11-year-olds. The teacher was at the back of the room, calm, smiling and very quiet. As I entered, I noticed that every face was perfectly motionless--fixed much like favorite family photos that capture that split second of surprise, euphoria, tenderness, or unadulterated delight; but these faces were contorted. The gape of their mouths, the exaggerated view of their teeth, the puffed cheeks, these mimes of concentrated mugs imploring me to guess the theme of their tableau before our "real" lesson would begin. I took the bait and proceeded with my think-aloud, knowing no verbal cues would be forthcoming in the silent game.

"Okay, so some of you look surprised, perhaps even in pain. You're exposing your teeth for some reason. You've just come from the dentist? I see some mouths twisted slightly to one side. What is that about? The puffy cheeks, the tilted heads...hmm...this is a hard one, you guys."

Teacher Tina at the back of the room (barred from helping me guess the tableau by student rules) pointed to the calendar and the display of orange and black on the art table and suddenly my brain began to serve its intended function:

"Okay, I get it. You're all pumpkins with these delightfully interesting faces, right?"

The students' faces relaxed, they grinned, nodded, and spontaneously clapped that I finally got it. Sam, in his usual matter-of-fact good humor, said: "You're getting better Mrs. Tobin." "Thanks Sam," I respond. Some students took a swig from the water bottles perched on their desks. Tina signaled for the class monitor to plug in the overhead projector

for my colour transparencies, plucked from one of our favorite books, The Gift of the Magi. The children focussed on the endearing tale of the poor young couple who sell their most precious possessions to buy a gift for one another, only to find that what would have been the most appropriate gift the day before can no longer be used. As I showed a picture of the crude haircut of a young woman who sold her beautiful long locks so she could buy her husband a chain for his gold watch, his only valuable possession, my partner Tina, almost as if speaking to herself, said: "I wonder what she [the central character] is feeling." The next transparency showed the young husband, who had just sold his gold watch, gazing wistfully at expensive hair combs, imagining the delight of his wife when he would arrive that evening with such an extravagant and perfectly chosen gift. I scanned the faces before me, fixed once again, not this time in mock pumpkin formation, but entranced in true anticipation, a glimpse of regret crossing Nina's face as she realized the ramifications of the characters' impending disappointment.

Tina lead a discussion focussed on giving and receiving, and elicited stories from her students of times when they received special gifts that meant a great deal to them. She introduced them to story substitution, whereby they were asked to re-write the story, changing three to five aspects of the tale: the relationship of the two people exchanging gifts, the actual gifts, the nature of the sacrifice made to obtain the gifts, etc. The students were well-educated in the writing process approach. They took out their language arts draft notebooks and started to brainstorm ideas for replacing the elements of the story. In teams of two, they discussed the situation for a few minutes and then began to write. Tina and I fanned out and circulated in order to encourage students to get started. Within a few minutes I moved to the identified students and offered them a Getting Started sheet. We made seven copies this time, anticipating that about that many students might have difficulty and would need the extra guidance. Only four were actually needed; Noah and Nina each took one, as did two of the First Nations children. The Getting Started sheet had

two key quotes from the story that students could choose to integrate into their stories or to re-read; it listed the substitution elements (the comb and the watch chain); and it offered one sample suggestion for substitution for each element. Noah, as we had come to expect, made use of the quotations, but not quietly enough told his friend that the examples “suck”—he invariably had more original ideas than either of his teachers. Without looking in Noah’s direction, Tina reminded the class that the examples were just for getting started and didn’t actually need to be used. I topped up this directive with: “I’m sure lots of you have better ideas.” Nina used our examples verbatim and needed encouragement before considering some of her own.

As Tina and I circulated, we exchanged comments about the quality of the adaptation sheet, what would have worked better, etc. Passing by Noah’s desk, Tina asked just loud enough for his neighbors to hear: “Did you show Mrs. Tobin your art project? Don’t forget to do that before she goes. And maybe, if you want, leave it out for others to see.” This also became typical—flagging achievements and validating the work of children who normally do not perform well in traditional ways of representing knowledge and understanding. Tina reminded the monitor to make sure that I brought my coffee mug with me when I left. As I moved toward the door, Tina asked me if we were doing feedback on this piece of writing. We decided to do what we labeled as random feedback, which actually is selective feedback. Children could choose to have their writing conferenced and assessed to count toward their report grade or opt to do this on a later assignment. Students would select just one piece of writing each week for feedback and assessment, except for the identified children, who received feedback twice per week and could choose one of their pieces for evaluation purposes. I smiled at the message the class monitor (of his own initiative) wrote on the board under Reminders: “Don’t forget your blank tape to record your favorite part of your Red Cedar book Ms. Tate is running out of blank tapes. Is it your turn to bring one? Signed Jill.”

Tina was working with two of the First Nations girls who wanted to know if they could substitute something fun for hair combs because “nobody wants hair combs.” Tina assured them that anything they liked could be substituted. Noah didn’t like the idea of substituting anything because it “ruins the story.” I reminded him that he could simply change the setting to modern day if he wanted. He looked pleased at this idea and began to draw. Tina engaged me in a conversation on the side:

Tina: “Did you remind him that he does have to actually write a story to go with his picture?”

IST: “I haven’t, but I will once he gets some of his ideas down.”

Tina: “Good, because I don’t have enough in his writing portfolio to write a report on him.”

IST: “Sure.”

I moved toward the door, conscious of the clock, only to be stopped by Estie, a First Nations student who slid her notebook to the edge of her desk just as I approached. I took a minute to comment on her substitution of relationship from husband and wife to best friends: “Looks good. Makes sense too.” I headed for the hallway, aware that Estie could have used more feedback, but even more aware that if I didn’t make it to the east pod of the school my French Immersion grade 6 class that I was slated to teach within three minutes would invariably send out the posse looking for me.

#### Composite Teaching Episode: Jesse and Ruthanne Co-Teaching.

The novel Space Trap held much allure for most of the children in Jesse’s class, in part because of the universally appealing themes of (a) triumph over adversity (b) home is best; and (c) imaginary world as host to infinite possibilities. As I scurried along the corridor to her classroom, I wondered if Roy had actually listened to the assigned section of Space Trap on his tape or used his adapted novel. His reading materials and those of three of his satellite peers have been provided through the Integration Support Helpline and Resource Services which provide almost immediate access over the internet to popular novels adapted for learners with reading delays. Amy, the other student identified with a

LD, could hold her own with non-adapted reading materials, but didn't like to make use of the tapes when she fell behind her peers. Jesse and I had agreed to have the children discuss the central dilemma of the novel and offer some solutions. In our planning we agreed that I would lead the discussion and she would scribe and nudge reluctant students and troubleshoot. I opened the classroom door and was greeted by the usual barrage of noise and movement during this natural transition time. Two students were feeding the fish, two students were arguing over the ownership of a virtual palmtop pet. Several students greeted me with: "I forgot my novel," "I left my language arts notebook in my locker," or "I forgot my pen." Earlier classes in this setting had enticed me to pack extra novels and pens to discourage returns to lockers. On this morning, Jesse was sitting at her computer terminal, backdropped by a beautiful bulletin board with pictures of Ireland and inscriptions asking questions about women in leadership in countries around the world. She announced as I entered the room: "Listen up for morning announcements," which she proceeded to read from the computer screen, injecting reminders along the way: "Yeah, that's right, don't forget to pick up your own garbage from your snacks outside. If you are in Study Club tonight, don't forget to call your parents at lunch hour." About twelve minutes into the language arts co-teaching block, I injected:

IST: "So shall we get started?"

Jesse to the class: "Yeah, you guys get organized while I talk to Mrs. Tobin for a minute."

Jesse to IST: "I have to tell you this is not really working, having all these kids who can't even read. Just look at Greg right now. He's doing nothing. He's just fooling around. He does nothing all day long."

IST (moving out of range of student listeners and motioning to Jesse to do the same): "Yeah, he struggles with getting started on his work. Do you want to talk about it at lunch, or after school today?"

Jesse: "I don't know what I'm going to do. There's just not enough help. He shouldn't even be here."

IST: "I'll pull his red file and we could talk about it after school if you want."

These "can't even" conversations, as they became labeled in the data, had become uncomfortable markers of dialogues with Jesse which I strived to avoid during our teaching

time (with limited success) and attempted to address during debriefing and lunch time conversations. (Greg was later assessed by the school's Learning Assistance teacher as reading at a grade 5 level. This was documented on standardized measures and on curriculum-based inventories in his red file). Jesse moved toward her desk :

IST: "You're scribing the Space Trap discussion, right Jesse, or do you want to lead?"

Jesse: "Yeah I'll scribe."

IST to the Class: "Good to see you again. Who can turn to their desk partner and tell them the main problem or dilemma that the Space Trap kids are facing?"

(Most of the students raise a hand, except for Roy, his best friend Jimmy, and Trent [only student with noticeable attention-seeking behaviours in the class], who is making comical faces at his desk partner).

IST: "So Trent, those faces you're making. Is that showing Peter how the Space Trap kids are feeling about their dilemma?"

Trent: "Yeah [sure they are], they're feeling scared and they don't know what to do."

IST: "It sounds like you and Peter know something about what the dilemma is, so your hands could be up too. Good. Just waiting for a few more to figure out the main problem happening in Space Trap. Good [all hands are up]. Okay, listen to one another and see if you can come up with an agreement about what the big problem is."

Jesse is troubleshooting with a late arrival who forgot his late slip. She sends him back down the hallway to the office to get a late slip. I am wishing she would just let him stay and blink her eyes once in a while at no late slip so he could participate in the lesson. I know I won't see the tardy student for the rest of the block (too many displays in the hallway to catch his interest and too many other tardy students with whom he can visit). The student-teacher from the School of Social Work arrives and even though Jesse and I have discussed her role of observer during the next week, Jesse greets the teaching student and engages her in conversation about one of the First Nations students who "never" arrives with his belongings. I glance at this uncertain twenty-two year old, who has spent a total of one week in her social work practicum setting, as she searches for an appropriate response. The students are ready to share their ideas about the dilemma, so I move toward the chalkboard saying: "So, let's hear your ideas. Ms. McDonald. [Jesse] is going to write

some of these down for you so you can refer to them when you start your writing today. Ready to go Ms. McDonald?”

The children have moved on to writing about the dilemma and predicting some solutions. Roy and Jimmy sit quietly, with little intention of picking up their pencils. Trent is attaching his velcro runners to a girl’s hair.

Jesse: “They [Roy and Jimmy] are doing nothing”,  
IST: “Yeah, well they just need one of us to get them started maybe. Do you want to get Trent back on track while I get these two started?”

Roy and Jimmy rarely start their written work without a nudge, but they are willing to share their ideas about their writing and start, if someone nudges and makes the next step explicit. As the children start to write, I circulate and glance over at Jesse, who has returned to her desk to do some marking of a French quiz. I wonder how I could get her to commit to co-teaching. What went wrong in the planning and communication that she doesn’t see the need to teach when I am here? Or is this her definition of support teacher—someone who provides a reprieve? She looks remarkably energetic and fit—I wish I could tap some of that energy in this direction.

### Introduction to the Findings

#### Data Emphasis.

The data disclosed their richest vein of findings in revealing how teachers define and provide literacy support, which is the topic of Question One. Although the study provided insight into addressing Question Two, regarding the strategies, structures and technologies that teachers make available in order to help learners with LD in their attempt to access text; and Question Three, which addresses teachers’ perceptions about literacy support, the data were substantially more valuable in revealing how support is defined and delivered, and on how the interactions among staff members influence that delivery of service to the at-risk children.

These definitions and provisions of support were uncovered in three specific areas: (a) by the ways in which teachers and TAs talked; (b) by the ways in which they gave help, and in turn, the ways in which the students elicited help; and (c) by the ways in which the teachers and TAs sought to level the playing field for the five children. Ways of talking also revealed understandings and misunderstandings about three critical concepts: adaptation and modification of curricula, ways for learners to represent knowledge, and views on school-related abilities.

The data on the second question, regarding the text-accessing structures, strategies and technologies explicitly presented or made available to learners with LD, were less dense, which in one regard was surprising, given that the context is the language arts classroom. On the other hand, the significance of this particular finding (an absence of data on specific strategies and structures to help make literacy more accessible for these learners) will become more understandable as the response to Question One (How does staff define and provide support?) becomes more evident. In other words, according to the teachers and TAs in this three-month study, support does not significantly target the text-accessing structures, strategies or technologies; it is more concerned with talking, giving and getting help, and about leveling the playing field where children are engaged in reading, writing, talking, listening and viewing activities in language arts classes. This does not diminish the significance of the findings in the data concerning text access. Of particular interest in the data is the importance of creating explicit connections between the lives of the learners and various elements and characters of the story, which resulted in sustained engagement in literacy practice in one class. The low level of engagement in literacy activities within the second class appeared to be linked directly to the absence of such connections.

Question Three addresses the aspects of support that are considered effective according to students, parents and teachers. Although this is answered below as a discrete area, there is much overlap between the perception of support and the definition and

provision of support. More specifically, participants showed what they considered to be effective support by the ways in which it was provided; nonetheless, it was necessary to respond to issues regarding perceptions of support as a distinct question in order to clarify what the participants said they found effective. Data derived from their interviews were taped in order to address this question.

#### Early Identification of Players.

In compliance with recommended practices in grounded theory methods, this report on findings makes use, where appropriate, of in-vivo code names (codes derived directly from the data) as organizing concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Each in-vivo code that is not self-explanatory is explained briefly at its first mention, and where appropriate, is more fully defined in Definition of Terms in Chapter 1 (pp. 6-11).

To assist in early identification of the players and their code names, note that two grade 6 classroom teachers (Tina and Jesse), one IST (Ruthanne, who is also the researcher), and two TAs (Thelma and Louise) were involved in this study. Three student participants with identified LD (Sam, Nina and Noah) were enrolled in Tina's class, and two participant children with LD (Amy and Roy) were enrolled in Jesse's class. Also of note, the school has a significant First Nations population and a program to address the particular needs of this group. Each teacher also had enrolled two or three ESL students, while one had a student identified with a low incidence disability of hearing impairment, and the other had a student with a chronic health concern (obesity).

#### An Overview Of the Findings

This section is organized to give an overview of the general findings, followed by specific details of each category to support that overview. According to the data, the professionals defined and provided support in the following ways:

1. Learners were addressed in specific ways which validated them, and which communicated the teacher's expectations and availability to provide support.

2. Teachers initiated dialogue with students that featured validating, questioning, prompting, and nudging, and which made the doing of classroom literacy activities explicit.

3. Parameters were set for getting help, and were explicitly structured by one teacher and implicitly structured by the students in both classes.

4. Leg-up measures (intended to level the playing field for at-risk students) were enacted which required consideration and anticipation of specific difficulties likely to be encountered by the learner.

5. The needs of belonging and recognition were addressed, which included a validation of the intellectual abilities of learners with LD, as well as the needs for positive attention, met through face-saving actions and words, referred to later in these findings as off-the-hook language.

6. Learners were held accountable for their school work, and were skillfully kept on-the-hook with respectful nudging, instead of nagging.

7. Instructional configurations were used that featured co-teaching, class-within-a-class, co-operative learning and troubleshoot teaching, all identified in the literature as good practice; and using sidebar lessons, a new category not featured in the literature. Sidebars were mini-lessons that featured a sequenced instructional conversation that included validation, questioning, prompting and nudging.

Support was diminished by professionals in the following ways:

1. Learners were sometimes addressed in ways that increased their anxiety and appeared to reinforce marginal performance.

2. Staff members commonly failed to explain to each student with LD the specific nature of their difficulties. This lack of information may have caused some of the students confusion regarding the rationale for curriculum adaptations and modifications.

3. There was a lack of strategic instruction on precisely how to get on with the work, which should have been supported by scaffolding language designed to provide sufficient prompting and questioning to get the students started.

4. Passive or superficial motions of learning were allowed to pass as real learning, which served to reinforce marginal performance.

5. There was insufficient communication and planning among the three teachers prior to co-teaching arrangements. They failed to ensure maximum learning time, which sometimes resulted in working at cross-purposes.

6. Students' self-esteem was diminished in front of their peers due to the use of nagging and occasional dismissive comments, which appeared to contribute to a reluctance by students to complete their work.

7. During IEP conferences, there were some demonstrations of a lack of empathy for the parents of at-risk students, which may have resulted in parental loss of confidence in teachers' abilities to optimize learning for their children.

8. There were some hierarchical views of school-related abilities which were not informed by background data on the child, observation, or other evidence of school-related performance, but on preconceived notions of what children with LD could do, and then implicitly communicating these views to children and colleagues.

9. Ways of representing knowledge were often confined to written forms, in flagrant non-compliance with terms agreed upon in the student IEP.

10. There was insufficient focus on direct metacognitive instruction that would have elevated the structures, strategies and technologies for accessing literacy to a more readily transferable level. As a result, adult support was required for a longer period than necessary and with greater frequency than it would have been had metacognitive instruction been a more explicit aspect of the language arts lessons.

### The Specifics of Defining and Providing Support

Question 1: In what ways do professional and para-professional staff define and provide literacy support to students with LDs?

Literacy support, as defined and delivered by the professionals and paraprofessionals in this study of two grade 6 classrooms, had three distinct aspects: (a) ways of talking, which exposed and expressed their beliefs, expectations and dispositions; (b) ways of giving and getting classroom help; and (c) ways of leveling the playing field.

The ways in which teachers and TAs talked to the students served to: (a) give the students either a sense of the availability or unavailability of help from the speaker; (b) encourage or discourage learners to think independently, based on how the speaker intentionally used language (referred to in the literature as *cogitare*); (c) let learners off-the-hook for specific aspects of their school work while keeping them on-the-hook by recognizing and acknowledging the need for more help in the form of scaffolding (d) validate or marginalize students' perceptions of their school-related abilities and their parents' confidence in the classroom curriculum; (e) reveal the speaker's attitudes and understandings about fairness, adaptation, and representation of knowledge.

The ways that the teachers and TAs offered help, and the ways that students acquired that help, varied depending on several conditions: (a) the types of structured parameters that were set by the adults; (b) the specific conditions that defined how students should solicit help; (c) the ways in which staff expressed either their availability or lack of such; and (d) whether the staff members were able to work collaboratively, or at cross purposes to one another, within the classroom.

The ways in which the teachers and the TAs attempted to level the playing field for students with LDs involved discretion, consideration, attention to detail, anticipating

roadblocks, and planning accordingly. These phenomena are referred to in the study as leg-up measures.

### Ways of Talking.

As the data below reveals, there were sharp contrasts in the ways that the two teachers in this study talked and taught, which may cast Tina in a more favorable light. All commentary on teacher practice is made in reference to the degree of compliance with the definition of best support practices as outlined in Chapter 1. For any researcher, it is difficult to make informed judgments about practices revealed in the data without risking the appearance of being judgmental; however, there is a distinction between making judgments (an integral part of valid research) and being judgmental (characterizing individuals unfairly). Every effort has been taken to allow the data to speak for itself and to avoid unfair characterizations.

Staff talk revealed the beliefs, expectations, and dispositions of the adults and played a significant role in the quality of support that the students received. The patterns of the instructional conversations were most evident in the sidebar lessons.

The nature of the language used by the helping staff also affected students' perception of access to the helping personnel as being blocked or available. Professionals' and para-professionals' ways of talking also attempted either to have learners feel more accountable for their learning, or let them "off-the-hook" with gracious scaffolding or with face-saving comments. Particular aspects of teacher-talk either validated or marginalized the students' perception of their school-related abilities, and influenced parental confidence in the classroom curricula. The adult speakers' language revealed their critical understandings or misunderstandings about notions of fairness (equality versus equity), about adaptation and modification of curricula, about ways of representing knowledge, and about their views on school-related abilities. Each of these dimensions of support are explicated and discussed in the following section.

Teacher Assistants: Blocked from Helping.

The paraprofessionals defined support in very different ways than did the teachers. The housekeeping component (checking agendas, tidying lockers, finding missing books, providing supplies, etc.) was a definite marker of the TA definition of support. Some of these differences, such as the frequency with which they would scribe or organize binders, were to be expected by the nature of their role and training; however, other differences were surprising. The data strongly suggested that the presence of paraprofessionals in the classroom resulted in improved learning conditions for identified students, as much for what they said and how they said it as for what they did. They focussed much of their energies on keeping the celebrated Home-School Agenda up-to-date with the relatively organized at-risk students, and with the less organized the TAs spent time tracking down the agenda and writing daily notes to parents concerning their child's work ethic or behaviour, or informing them of assignments that needed to be done. They spoke often of working around teachers as if they were a bit of an obstacle. Their frustration was evident by the comments below and seemed to focus on a lack of congruence between the roles of teachers and TAs. Inability to "get in there to do the job" was a frequent complaint. By this they did not mean physically getting in to do the job, but being able to wade into the sea of teacher talk:

"...but [when] the teacher is talking all the time, it doesn't give you any avenue to get in there without interrupting her to see if they [students with difficulties] are actually getting it."

TA Louise's interview; Text Units 110-116

They found it difficult when teachers had a teaching style that did not allow sufficient openings or pauses for them to go over to a student to do a mini-lesson.

"They will teach the lesson, do examples on the board. They're not just talking, but they're doing examples--holding up things, showing things. There is a portion of the class when they're not up there speaking, so you're not interrupting or interfering with what they are doing. The minute you start talking, you're missing

what the teacher is saying, even though you do it very quietly, so the student is trying to listen to you and not getting what the teacher is saying. The other kids around are taken off-task, so it's extremely difficult to do anything with them except fill in blanks or something, but basically you have to keep quiet."

TA Thelma's interview; Text Units 205-215

A second bone of contention for the TAs involved the teachers' tendency to shift the TAs' focus from academically needy children assigned to their caseloads to the children with behavioural issues. Whereas the IST did not find this particularly difficult and accepted this as a part of the integrated support role (simply directing the support toward the identified children as best she could), the TAs found it very difficult to speak up and say that they could not help the academically needy because they had to tend to behaviour problems.

"The teachers will indicate to you that they want you to take care of the student that is disturbing the whole class, which means maybe sitting near them. They are very capable of doing the work, but they don't want to do the work. So you may be over here with this fellow, who is more than capable, and there are four over here who do need your help. Often with those kids I try to get a little incentive program going. 'Doing great today.' It's really quiet more often toward the end of the week. I'll say, when I come back, 'If I haven't heard your voice while I'm over here, I have some great stickers coming your way,' sort-of-thing."

TA Thelma's interview, part 2; Text Units 10-20

#### On-the-hook: Holding Learners Accountable.

One of the many fine balancing acts in teaching is knowing when to hold learners accountable and when to let them off-the-hook. The patterns in the ways that this dilemma was handled surfaced early in the study. One aspect of accountability had to do with nudging versus nagging--a revealing contrast in the two classrooms. While Tina often got students to produce something they were proud of by step-by-step nudging, Jesse used outright nagging. Unfortunately, even when Jesse's words were of a positive nature, such as a peptalk on cooperation, it came across as a lecture rather than coaching. Both classroom teachers defined support as speaking to learners in particular ways, with the intent of holding student participants accountable. Tina strived to do this by prompting, nudging and keeping students on-the-hook for their learning. Jesse's idea of holding

students accountable was to use nagging, direct naming of off-task behaviours, and by doing written work for them. Tina used on-the-hook language to delay answering to student queries, providing immediate solutions that would invalidate student excuses, and nudging and prompting about the next piece of work. The professional judgment that the three teachers exercised in keeping learners on-the-hook for their school work or letting them off-the-hook, and the ways in which this was done, seemed to have an impact on students' willingness to persist. In Jesse's class, this resulted in some students frequently finding ways or excuses to get out of work. Jesse would draw overt attention to the non-working, non-writing student and proceed with some old-fashioned nagging. Her comments often began with, "It's been five minutes and you still don't have the date down. Get busy or you'll have to stay for Study Club" (Jesse; Tape 1B; Text Unit 44); and ended with acts of resignation, whereby she would say "I'll help you" and proceed to do their work for them without any of the needed sideline coaching, validating or interactive dialogues that became routine in Tina's classroom. Jesse's intentions may have been simply to help in a practical and overt way; however, the method of helping often resulted in fewer opportunities for students to practice their own writing. Tina's language, with its absence of exasperation or veiled threats, contrasted sharply with Jesse's, who sighed in exasperation routinely and tried to hold learners accountable by commenting directly on their off-task behaviours. Side-stepping or re-directing student misbehaviours to something of interest in the learning context was not a skill that Jesse demonstrated during the study.

Tina handled lack of compliance or non-working students, demonstrating a respectful attitude toward students' efforts in completing their work, even when it did not measure up to minimal standards. She left the responsibility with the child and spoke and acted in ways that often allowed natural consequences to work in favor of her goals. When faced with students who did not complete their work, even though it was clear they could have done so, she commented:

“Oh, so did you make arrangements with your parents to stay for Study Club?”  
 In response to “No,” she said: “You need to do that then. I’ll send a note off to Ms. Parry [Thelma, the TA] and let her know you’ll be coming. If I have time, I’ll stop by to see how you’re doing.” [italics added]

Tina’s class; Tape 9b; Text Units 44-50

Tina communicated an expectation of compliance more often through a serious tone than her actual words. She rarely smiled, but conveyed her approval or disapproval through a few precise words very specifically focussed on the work at hand, with little recourse to the work history. She conveyed the message that a fresh start each day was a real option. Her furrowed brow or cocked eyebrows also communicated on-the-hook and off-the-hook sentiments. Her inanimate teaching persona was effective in supporting at-risk learners most of the time. In contrast, Jesse’s efforts to provide support were generally less than successful. Getting some product down on the paper in a conventional format appeared paramount, even if most of the ideas and writing were hers. Doing it for them did not involve a starter phrase or idea, but doing the entire process for them, with little or no instruction. During her interview, she suggested several times that she saw this as her way of helping them:

“Is there another way? What else could you do? They can’t read, they don’t want to work, they don’t get a thing done. I don’t know what to do.”

Jesse’s interview; Text Units 210-214

When asked how she made the decision about when to scribe for them and when to do other things, she replied in a slightly mocking tone:

"How do I decide when I write? Well, when I see that most of the class has finished and they are just sitting there waiting for me to write for them, I get up and write for them."

Jesse’s interview; Text Units 217-219

“Well, these low kids, I end up having to write for them all the time...for the lesson to go on, the other kids are waiting and they haven’t even got the first line done, I have to write it out.”

Jesse’s interview; Text Units 220-222

For the IST, holding learners accountable without making unnecessary discouraging remarks was a daily challenge. Attempts were made to quickly dismiss students' routine excuses without dismissing the students themselves.

Nina: "I don't have my tape for my thing but could I bring it on Monday?"

IST: "Oh, that's a bit late. It looks like you'll have to make your notes and do your tape on the weekend because it's due on Monday."

Nina: "Okay, but can I still do it (the tape)? "

IST: "Yes, if you do all your notes today you'll be ready to go."

Nina: "Yeah, okay."

IST: "Okay? Do you have a question about that? No? Okay. You can take that to remind you of what needs to be in it."

IST in Tina's class; Tape 6a; Text Units 49-52

Tina also sent the message that forgetting the right papers or other maneuvers would rarely get one out of work, but she always used a reasonable tone and no questioning of whether the students were telling the truth. Unlike Jesse, Tina saw the futility in this line of inquiry and focussed on getting the work done.

Tina: "All you have to make sure is that you follow the guidelines on here."

Sam: "I wrote the rest down on paper and I forgot to bring it to school."

Tina: "That's okay, you can still work on this."

Tina's class; Tape 6a; Text Units 192-197

#### Off-the-Hook: Recognizing and Acknowledging Needs for Scaffolding.

Teachers and TAs displayed discretion in letting learners off the hook in the large group context and during sidebars. Off-the-hook language in the large group served two important functions. Firstly, learners saved face in front of their peers, which subsequently seemed to make them willing to risk responding again to teacher-led questioning in the same lesson. Secondly, the language that teachers used to put learners on hold simultaneously resulted in more fluency and divergence in responses from the general population in both classes. For example, the IST used phrases to elicit responses from particular children without using their names, as she found this sometimes made them feel uncomfortable to be put in the spotlight:

“You almost have something. I’ll come back to you. I’d like to hear from some students over here...or...someone who was away last time.”

IST in Tina’s class; Tapes 11a, 13b

Teachers’ language in the large group was often characterized by solicitation for both convergent and divergent responses, depending on the lessons. This resulted in a noticeable increase in hand raising and in on-task time of students, including a greater response from some of the “on-hold” students:

IST: “Back to Amy then.”

Amy: “They’re all wearing a necklace or something around their necks?”

IST: “Good. Tell me how you figure that Amy?”

Amy: “It’s the only thing they all have the same, except jeans.”

IST: “Good. Some others who think the same as Amy? Yes? Okay, who has a different explanation of how the characters are grouped?”

IST in Jesse’s class; Tape 1A Text Units 32-36

Tina seemed to pick up on the effectiveness of this questioning style quite readily, and integrated it easily into her own instructional practice. She then improved upon it by adding a novel component (pre-determined categories arranged as a graphic organizer on the chalkboard; the children then had to deduce what those categories were), and continued the questioning until all areas of her graphic organizer were fleshed out.

“Something different this time. Let’s fill out this area [referring to a section of the chalkboard with a partial heading with few entries]. You’ve named all real places where she could have gone. What about some imaginary places?”

Tina; Tape 14a; Text Units 312-314

In the next language arts class, the IST incorporated Tina’s visual cue into the questioning technique. This piggyback teaching between the teachers was a common and striking feature in this classroom, and the frequency of such practices (one teacher imitating the other, then improving upon it) was a central feature of achieving seamless support.

It certainly was evident from later transcripts that the teachers influenced one another’s practice in pursuit of reaching more learners with the whole group lessons. Tina became more explicit about soliciting input from a wider range of learners in a variety of

ways. The IST adopted more of Tina's classroom protocols that made the classroom management and routines more effective and efficient.

The IST was far less effective in achieving this co-teaching dynamic in Jesse's class. She found it difficult to make a contribution of significance while working alongside Jesse. Jesse continued to keep learners on-the-hook by calling on inattentive students as a way of signaling that they were not paying attention, perhaps not appreciating that what they needed was engagement and particular ways for them to make contributions, instead of not so subtle reprimands for not listening. During one debriefing, the IST asked Jesse whether she thought it was best to name the specific person who was not listening, or whether it might be better to draw attention to another way that they could contribute.

Jesse: "Well, you can't just let them get away with it or they won't listen at all."  
 IST: "Getting them to listen is hard. Yeah...what about trying...or giving them a little bit of time when they don't respond and then telling them they may just need some thinking time and coming back to them. Might that work?"  
 Jesse: "I don't know. Maybe."

Debriefing after Jesse's class; Tape 7a; Text Units: 220-224

Both TAs showed considerable skill in recognizing when students needed to be let off-the-hook. Thelma's favorite phrases in response to confused learners, or to her unanswered requests for clarification, included:

"I probably didn't explain it too well. Let me try it again, okay?"  
 Thelma; Tape 14; Text Unit 46

This owning of mistakes or misunderstandings by the adults was documented a total of 14 times in the data between the two classes, although Thelma was by far more skilled than the teachers and the other TA in this area. The IST began to use some of Thelma's best on-the-hook phrases with similar positive results, that is, having cooperative students who continued to carry on with their work. Included in the off-the-hook category were side-stepping comments that avoided the word "No," such as:

“We could look into that later maybe.”

“That’s an interesting option.”

“Gee, I’m not sure about that.”

Louise; Tape 16; Text Unit 22

Another one of Thelma’s endeavours that cast learners in a more positive role was the assumption of best intentions, even in light of contradictory evidence:

“You didn’t get to it [homework] last night either? Well, you probably had some other stuff happening. Some weeks are like that. I’m supervising Study Club this week. So I guess I’ll see you there.”

Thelma; Tape 15; Text Unit 2

Tactfulness was an additional way to let learners off-the-hook:

“You probably forgot because Friday was a Pro-D day and it’s been a while since Thursday.”

Thelma, Tape 16b; Text Unit 86

The IST tended to use playful language, which frequently served to lighten dialogue that may have otherwise been strained:

“I bet that’s one of your favorite things, homework checks. Am I right?” (grin)

IST, Tape 8a; Text Unit 40

Although the intentions of the IST’s playful comments were generally appreciated, Tina occasionally found them to be counter-productive in achieving the desired results. For example, during a debriefing, she suggested that such lighthearted comments might undermine how seriously the students viewed homework responsibilities. This delicate interplay between the teachers resulted in subtle shifts in classroom interactions that ultimately produced a productive and balanced learning environment.

#### Validating and Marginalizing: Perceptions of School-Related Abilities.

Perhaps the most unanticipated finding of this study was the degree to which teachers’ understandings or misunderstandings about school-related abilities influenced their attitudes and practices in serving students with LD. As may be anticipated from earlier evidence, the two teachers of these grade 6 classes differed fundamentally in their views of school-related abilities. While Jesse’s views tended to diminish students’ perceptions of

their academic abilities, Tina's tended to enhance them. Jesse espoused a confined and hierarchical view of ability, sometimes dismissive of the complexities of cognition and the role of motivation in learning. In her teaching practice, and during her interview about students' school-related abilities, she appeared to view these as finished products: "Can't even" (as in, "He can't even do...") featured repeatedly in her talk about student performance in school. It was sometimes unclear how Jesse knew what the at-risk students could do, as there was little evidence in the findings of observational assessments, and she was openly unapologetic about not having read the at-risk student's files which profiled their academic history, diagnosis, strengths, weaknesses, and the previous year's IEP. While Tina did not attach remarkable importance to these files, it was evident from the debriefing sessions that she had at least read the IEPs from the previous year, the Psychological Education Assessment summary, and the profile sheets.

The lack of understanding and knowledge about the children in Jesse's class served to further marginalize student performance. The types of group incentives, or perhaps disincentives, that she provided, only allowed one winner, and while the data leaves little doubt of good intentions and favorable results for that one student, there was no place in this scheme of reinforcement for others to get recognition for their growth, efforts or achievement.

"I added up and kept track of who was doing really well and guess who came out on top? Kelsey did. He was really good, so she gets this [certificate] this time."  
Jesse's class; Tape 2a; Text Units 5-7

The validation and recognition of individual achievement was sometimes at the expense of the larger group.

Jesse's counterpart, Tina, tended to look to daily performance of school work and what she called "levels of trying" to shape her understanding of what her students with difficulties could do. Her classroom practices and attitudes reinforced the notion that school-related abilities, or demonstration of these abilities (which she viewed as

synonymous), not only could change, but most likely would change. Much of this was conveyed in a matter-of-fact, problem-solving manner, and in the ways in which she talked to children about their work. Clear evidence of her interest was obvious in her eye contact, projecting confidence in their abilities and careful attention to their work. By focusing her attention on the learners work, she gave the impression that she took the work and the students seriously. Literacy activities in her classroom included having the students write articles for the school newspaper; getting them to create a detailed brochure highlighting their school, which was presented to a grade 5 student from one of the local elementary schools; making tape recordings of mock news reports; working on papier-mâché projects that depicted the neighbourhood described in a novel; and giving presentations in mime that conveyed the feelings of the central characters in the novel (See Appendix U for examples of student work). This diversity in the ways of representing literacy understanding did appear to influence students' perceptions of their school-related abilities, especially for Nina, who seemed to love the sound of her own voice, and who would re-work her mock interviews until they were structured in a way that would convey the story in a clear and engaging manner.

Nina: "I'm going to do it again because they [members of the audience] don't really know that much about the fire yet."

IST: "So you're going to give them a bit more information then?"

Nina: "Yeah, then they'll ask me good questions. I'm pretty good at answering questions."

Nina in Tina's class; Tape 8a; Text Units 48-52

Sam also showed confidence and pride in his performance in language arts when he acted out his mime of the characters' feelings. Every one of his mimicked gestures were recognizable to his peers (video recordings of such events are definitely recommended for future research).

IST: "Your mime went over pretty well with the class, didn't it?"

Sam: "Yeah, nobody got stuck even once."

IST: "No wonder. Your facial expressions were awesome. Have you ever done any acting?"

Sam: “No, not really.”

IST: “Good thing to think about Sam.”

Sam in Tina’s class; Tape 3b; Text Units: 119-123

For his part, Noah found the spotlight by building papier-mâché models of buildings from the neighbourhood described in the book Me and the Terrible Two. Within minutes after construction was completed, he was directing his appointed team on the layout, and clarifying design ideas. The confident tone of his voice was remarkable, as he worked beyond the prescribed time and even offered to clean up (not a popular notion among middle school students). His teacher suggested that he write invitations on his AlphaSmart word processor to as many as six special people of his choosing, inviting them to come to view his newly constructed neighbourhood. From its inception, this idea fueled his ambition to pay great attention to every detail, right down to the creation of labels for every building. Noah showed great resourcefulness and an ability to delegate duties by soliciting assistance from other team members to take care that all of the labels were spelled correctly (not one of Noah’s strong suits). This was the first time that he had demonstrated this kind of leadership ability, asserting his desires quite readily in a cooperative setting.

Noah: “Bend them [the signposts] just a bit. They shouldn’t be straight up and down with the landscape. Here, like this.”

James: “Like this?”

Noah: “Yeah, that’s good.”

This attitude and expectation was also transmitted through the diversity of literacy activities Tina asked students to do; she was cognizant of both their relative strengths and their areas of weakness, but tended to highlight the former. Her reinforcement of desired attitudes toward work and achievement were often descriptive and inclusive.

“Division 2, what I’m seeing here when I go around is kids who’ve pulled together the two characters and made a sentence or two about them from their Venn diagram. That’s exactly what we need to be doing right now.”

Tina, Tape 1b; Text Units 43-45

When Tina talked about what it meant to support students with at-risk profiles, she referred frequently to the need to teach multiple levels at the same time.

“The way I teach now is so much more inclusive, so I know they are going to get something in the lesson I teach and they are going to be able to do quite a bit. They might be doing more of the brainstorming part, getting some ideas down, whereas someone else might have the brainstorm, the ideas, and be on to writing two pages about it. I guess I have a variety of things in their lesson and small steps. You have questioning to start with, you have some sort of mystery or inquiry about what you're teaching...you get the kids thinking kind of divergently and then you go into the one topic. Then you might get the kids to think, pair, share, then they share an idea, then you get them onto doing something and you check back. Are they all on the right track?”

Tina's interview; Text Units 11-12

When asked what it meant to support students with at-risk profiles, Jesse stated:

"I don't have very much training in special needs kids, but I've had them being read to, I've read to them, and I spend extra time with them at lunch and after school. I have them work in cooperative groups so they can help each other, and right now we have divided the kids into two groups so they get more one-on-one. One group is a bit lower than the other."

Jesse's interview; Text Units 54-59

Jesse presented one of the three classic rationales, which are broadly documented in the literature, for not using recommended inclusion practices: “don't know how”. Although she used cooperative grouping to help many of the students with their learning, seldom were the groups structured in ways consistent with recommended co-operative learning practices (Kagan, 1986). The emphasis that was placed on training in cooperative learning strategies was insufficient for the at-risk students to benefit.

Jesse's perceptions of classroom life made for interesting meetings, especially early in the study and school year, when parents were anxious about their children making a successful transition to middle school. Jesse told one parent in an IEP conference that she didn't think she could do anything for his daughter this year because her class was like a war zone and “You can't do anything with this class.” Similar comments about her classroom and less than tactful comments about another student, Nina, led to a successful lobby by Nina's parents to transfer her to Tina's classroom within the first week of school. The transfer was handled like all such requests, through the counselor's office, and was

never discussed with Jesse. She was told that the parents felt Nina needed a move because of peer issues, which saved face for Jesse, but kept her seemingly unaware of the power of her statements to parents. While Amy's father looked askance at the war zone analogy, Jesse continued to rattle off the number of ESL children, "slow" children, or "learning disabled kids" that she had in her class, sporting each category much like a badge of courage.

When the researcher asked her about her war zone comment after the meeting: "I wonder if the Dad was a little upset about your description of the class as a war zone. What do you think?", she said: "I just told it like it is". She did not appear to understand the delicate interplay of telling it like it is (from her perspective) and maintaining parental confidence.

Jesse sought out other professionals not for proactive problem solving, but usually to lobby for more support hours. Among many of the 85 staff members in this middle school, Jesse was known for having, in her words, "the worst class ever" every year. She did not see herself as an agent of change, either on her own behalf or on behalf of students with difficulties enrolled in her classes. Her students, by default, were those without labels. This represented about 17 of the 28 students in her class if the following were excluded: three ESL students, two students with LD, one low incidence student with chronic health issues due to obesity, and several First Nations children. Aside from differences in teaching practices or teaching philosophy that existed in this class, many of the difficulties and challenges came from the general student population, not the identified at-risk group. Even for the trained professional, some of the identified students were difficult to differentiate from the mainstream in either academic performance or behaviour, especially some of the competent ESL learners. Several observations documented tacit agreements that were in place in Jesse's classroom. "I won't bother you if you don't bother

me,” or “I’ll move my pen and open my book when you are in the vicinity” (culled from 7 of the 10 participant observations and 4 of the 4 observations of TA support). These were not “out-there” behaviours, so they received minimal proactive, although some reactive, attention.

Jesse’s statement to Amy’s parent about her class as a war zone was a contradiction to what the researcher observed. The composition of the class represented the usual range of abilities. No serious behavioural problems were seen and many adults were on-hand to help (for several teaching blocks per day as many as three trained professionals and one student teacher provided help). Unfortunately for all stakeholders, the support was uncoordinated. No one took the managerial role of coordinating support. Overtures from the IST and the school counselor to coordinate the helping staff were ignored or dismissed by the teacher with comments such as: “It’s fine. What can you do? Is there another way?” These were largely rhetorical questions.

#### Fairness, Adaptation, and Ways of Representing Knowledge.

Getting at-risk students to produce (with definitive parameters around what producing consisted of) appeared to drive many of the teaching practices in both classrooms. In Jesse’s class, students got recognized for what they had written. Acceptable ways of representing knowledge or learning were more diverse in Tina’s class. A tape, drawing, or oral contribution could earn a student not only validation, but also a much-coveted grade of B or better. At the same time, while students with difficulties were encouraged to choose different ways of showing what they were learning, at-risk adolescents also were required to complete written work within their ability. This was part of a clever interaction that kept kids on the hook for a certain amount and quality of written work, while letting them off the hook when it was obvious that what was called for was not accountability or more practice, but further gracious prompting. Tina would ask

questions about her students' work, often commenting that she thought they were "on to something" and suggesting they show others what they were on to by preparing a talk on tape or a picture that would represent their idea. This belief that learners could be on to something, without having yet completed writing a full paragraph, seemed to generate excitement among many of the at-risk children. The classroom data also showed some evidence of a willingness of these children to persevere when they were nudged, and to quit when they were nagged.

Notions of fairness percolated to the top of the data in the realm of teachers' definitions of support. Jesse's actions and words conveyed that everyone should get a definite amount of written work completed by a certain time or date. Her ownership of getting students to this point seemed well intentioned but misplaced and ineffective. Her actions in the classroom and her words in the interview showed clearly that she felt it was her job to see that this minimal amount of work got done even if it meant that she did it herself. Differentiating between responsibility for student work and responsibility for student learning was a difficult distinction for Jesse to make and this lack of clarity about her roles and responsibilities and priorities often generated more work for her with less than effective results. For example, she spent considerable time and energy on preparing bulletin boards and caring for or decorating a fish tank. Both of these additions were engaging and added warmth and interest to the classroom ambiance. In particular the children appreciated her care and interest in the fish habitat. What was unfortunate was that her teaching was not clearly linked to the fish tank (through a science unit, for example) or integrated into a combined language and science unit. The bulletin boards were more specifically linked to Social studies with engaging questions about current world affairs that supported some of her teaching stations. In the three months of study the bulletin boards changed five times and each time they were of high visual appeal and focussed broadly on

the Social studies topics of political and environmental concerns; however, they were not once student-generated or even used to display student work. The energy she committed to these endeavours was admirable but once again seemed misplaced when her core areas of teaching and learning continued to be overwrought with classroom management issues. The language arts lessons and activities were either of the fill-in-the-blanks format focussed on one word answers, or completely unrelated to literacy learning (learning styles inventory, research from encyclopedias with no scaffolding of instruction, or housekeeping matters, such as reading the e-mail aloud).

Tina defined “fair” in both the observations and the interview as giving students what they needed when one could, and letting them and the teacher off the hook when she was not able to help. This attitude resulted in a tone of voice that was calm, even when students had not completed work that was well within their ability. For Tina, fairness had everything to do with trying and what she called “levels of trying.” She reinforced this with such comments as, “Trying is something that every person can do.” Tina also viewed all stakeholders as having specific responsibilities.

“I try to see the help they need as a professional, but if I’m not giving enough help and they don’t say, ‘I need more help’ and the parents don’t say something...well, like if I need more help with that student’s learning program, I’ll ask. Sometimes I don’t realize they need more help...that they’re feeling a lot of frustration and they take it out on the parents at home. So it’s the parents’ job to let me know that they are stressed and ask if there’s anything I can do about it. So I think it’s everyone in the picture’s responsibility, but the student not as much most of the time, but they are still responsible for most of their learning.”

Tina’s interview; Text Units: 185-189

## Ways of Giving and Getting Help

### Setting of Structured Parameters.

Asking for help often started with apparent contradictions:

"I don't need help but you can stay anyway if you want to." (Sam)

"I don't need help but I want to tell you something." (Amy)

"I don't need help but he does." (Roy)

"I don't need help but I don't get this one." (Noah)

Whoever said you can ignore all words in a sentence that precede the word "but" and retain full or even clearer meaning, must have taught middle school students who never needed any help.

Communicating availability and interpreting availability proved to be interesting phenomena in the data. Learners got the message that it was okay to ask for help under specific conditions. Some kind of special classroom radar, invisible to even the most well-intentioned teacher, but of neon clarity to the at-risk learner, signaled when it was all right to ask for help. The radar had a numerical value and quality indicator. Conditions under which one asked for help varied in the two classrooms, but one condition was common to 13 of the 20 participant observations and all eight of the TA observations—the verbal and prosodic language of the adult offering or enlisted to help.

In Tina's classroom, students operated according to inferred rules such as: "I'll ask for help when I think other people need help", or "I'll ask for help if one other person who doesn't usually need help asks first"; however, neither of these single conditions appeared to clinch the decision as easily as when the right combination of conditions existed at once: "I'll ask for help when I think other people need help, especially if one of these is a student who doesn't usually need help and if the adult communicates availability."

With the exception of one of the participant students (Nina), who would explicitly ask for help regardless of conditions and adult players, all other participants asked for help

under the fairly stringent conditions of this rule. This was documented in every single participant observation in Tina's classroom and in all four of the observations of the TAs over the three-month study. It suggested further investigation beyond this exploratory work. Asking for help when the adult communicated availability was most blatant in Tina's classroom where parameters for getting help were very structured. When the IST's name and the TAs name appeared on the chalkboard, six names (consisting almost exclusively of the barely-this-side-of-coping crowd) might be listed under one of them and sometimes just one under the other name. Had the message of who should help particular students been conveyed in such a way that the students thought that only at-risk students could ask the IST or a TA for help? The data showed that TAs and the IST (by virtue of training, disposition, role, or perceptions about their role—this was not clear) communicated help availability in ways described below.

1. They conveyed in words or gesture that they were glad to be asked for help. Even before the question was asked, the countenance documented in the researcher's notes and the tone evinced in the participant observation tapes said: "Consider it done." Conveyance of availability seemed to have everything to do with this phenomenon. The professional and two paraprofessionals who sported this expression, prosodically demonstrating their availability, were intentional in tone, movement, and circulation pattern. Interviews with the TAs revealed an overt understanding of the importance of demeanor in gaining the trust of the at-risk learners and their subsequent willingness to ask for and accept help.

2. They used sidebars to present concepts differently, as opposed to presenting concepts twice.

3. They invited learners to tell what they knew or articulate the problem. Teachers tended to say such things as, “Did you listen to the instructions?” whereas support staff favored “Can you tell me one of the steps or instructions?”

4. They invited eavesdroppers to participate in mini-lessons, which seemed to result in collaborative and effective mini-lessons, apparently due to the contribution of satellite peers. The eavesdroppers contributed to participants' learning in terms of the fluency of ideas offered, if not in terms of process;

5. Crouched instead of speaking from above.

‘I’ll take a chair and sit down next to them instead of taking them to another spot and get down low and sit near them and quietly see if they are going to respond to that. Sometimes they don’t want me right there.’

Thelma’s interview; Text Units: 109-111

And finally, in the case of the IST:

6. Encouraged divergent thinking by validating off-the-wall, not-quite-on-the-money-but-well-worth-considering sorts of responses. These comments by the IST (intended to validate divergent thinking) were documented 21 times in the transcript.

Much like the classroom teacher Tina, who reaped fine rewards from her comment, “I think you’re on to something,” the IST’s favorite comments included: “I hadn’t thought of it that way” and “You really have good ideas. People probably tell you that all the time.” These were not terribly original, yet worked well with the students in the study. Learners elaborated on their ideas and several times a talking momentum built that spilled over onto their pages.

IST: “Okay, go ahead.”

Sam: (continues to tell story but microphone is muffled)

IST: “Okay, where should we go from here?”

Sam: “And then the principal came in and then everybody stopped, and started throwing food at him.”

IST: “What did his suit look like after they finished throwing food on his suit?”

Sam: “What did it look like? Well, after the food fight was over he said ‘This is my favorite food.’ Except, he mumbled it to himself.”

IST: "That would be more like what he would do, wouldn't it? You have to put that in when you go to do your good copy. Perfect! Do you want to re-read it for ideas?"

Sam: "I think I got one" he yelled at the class, "I'll have to make some sort of penalty, some sort of after-school program for everybody that was throwing food."

IST: "Now, did you understand about what Ms. Tate said about quotation marks when you're having a conversation?"

IST in Tina's class; Tape 3b; Text Units 243-260

The IST had a sense that people probably didn't tell Noah that he had good ideas, certainly not all the time; however, that did not make her comment any less useful. Noah and Sam usually had engaging ideas (6 of 10 participant observations) and they were in a classroom where they got credit for it. In the case of Noah, according to interviews with his parents, this was the first time in two school years that he was in a classroom where credit was given for having ideas and sharing them, even if the ideas did not make it to print.

TAs also provided validation for at-risk learners, and recognized the significance of tactfulness in effective help. They consistently exercised discretion in their helping practices. For example, they scanned the room for certain students without being obvious, quietly discovering the interests of the children assigned to them, and sometimes slipping out to photocopy another student's notes to avoid tedious copying from the board for students with writing difficulties. "I just do that sort of quietly," was a frequent phrase from the TAs.

"One isn't paying attention, hasn't opened their binder, hasn't got started. I drift over there rather quietly and just lift the binder or give them a little eyeball about 'Let's get writing', something like that. So I watch to pick up if they know what's going on during that block in class."

Louise interview, part 1; Text Units 95-98

There was a high congruence between how the TAs described in interviews the kinds of support and assistance they provided and what they actually did in the classroom interactions with children. Both Thelma and Louise had a heightened awareness of the importance of validation and the significance of tactfulness and discretion.

It was evident in the interviews and observations that the TAs were more aware than were the teachers of the specific classroom demands particular to students with a LD. Most likely, this was due to their work being focussed so much on the well-being of at-risk children, whereas teachers were dealing with a wider array of students for whom they felt responsible. The TAs were more familiar with the IEP of each student, which outlined special considerations for their schooling. It was not uncommon for the TAs to use educational terms from the IEP incorrectly, yet quickly follow up with an uncannily accurate description of the problem each adolescent had. They were very aware of the teachers' lack of familiarity with the details of the IEPs and sometimes expressed frustration about this.

“Teachers aren’t as familiar [with the IEPs]. I take notes on all the IEPs, so if I get adrift and start wondering about his reading ability, I can check the back of my binder. I find quite often that teachers don’t remember that at all. But being able to have time where we can go over that at prep time, where we could make the best world, or as best as we can following the IEP outline, instead of modifying by the seat of our pants or simply not modifying at all. I am the modification. I help them with the test, direct them, give them the answer. They end up with a modified mark not because of their work, but because I was there to stand with them while they wrote the test, which isn’t right for them at all.”

Thelma, Tape 18a; Text Units 190-201

#### Expressions of Helpfulness.

Sometimes contrary understandings of support separated the IST from classroom teachers. Tina sometimes found it disconcerting that the IST did not readily understand the classroom rules, especially the ones she found obvious. For example, one rule was that students could not ask for help at just any time. The rule was, "You must try it first, ask three before me, and only then can you ask for help by writing your name on the board in one of two columns, one designated for editing help and one for help with instructions and ideas."

“Please DO NOT follow me and Mrs. Tobin around the classroom. Put your name on the board and we will come and help you at your seat. We can’t help anyone if we have people following us around. So you put your name up here under whatever you need. After we’ve helped you, you erase or cross out your name, but if you come up to us then we can’t help those people who are in line on the board, so don’t even come up to us. Put your name up and sit down! If it’s a small little question, you might be able to ask a neighbour.”

Tina, Tape 20; Text Units 163-164

Tina’s rules for having students access help were highly effective much of the time; however, they were not intuitive for the IST, who tended to move into the help mode a little more readily than the classroom teacher liked or than what was perhaps ideal for learners. The IST functioned from a pre-emptive early strike model, in which she communicated availability before it was needed and stayed within earshot, without hovering. The specialized teacher’s definition of support (that she defined through her actions as proactive, anticipatory, and early intervention) was interpreted by the classroom teacher as interrupting the workers and robbing them of their chance to first do it for themselves, thus contributing to their sense of learned helplessness. Classroom teacher Tina’s rules for getting help were derived from her observation that many of her learners were not concentrating on the task at hand sufficiently long enough to know what help they needed. So she rarely gave help in the first five minutes of independent work time. Also buried in this perspective was a genuine concern (which surfaced during debriefing meetings) that all students needed to be trained to get help in a functional way that would work when support personnel were not present. The IST’s period of adjustment around how students obtained help lasted about two weeks, until she picked up on Tina’s facial expressions of disapproval or occasional comment. A discussion ensued that enabled a compromise, whereby the IST delayed intervention somewhat for the at-risk students in the classroom and funneled their requests according to classroom protocol.

“Here’s the way it works. You have to come up with an answer to these questions and the questions are right here. See the W5 sheet? And I can help you get started if you want. Or if you want, you can try it on your own at first and then I’ll come and help you.”

IST in Tina’s class; Tape 3a; Text Units 105-109

Tina acknowledged that anticipating challenges with the work and instructions, and moving in so that time was not wasted, also had merit. As the literacy lessons improved in scope to encompass the full range of learners, and as both teachers came to know the children better, idle time for the at-risk children decreased. Of equal importance to special educator and classroom teacher was their ability to resolve this problem that stemmed from conflicting understandings of when best to offer help and the very real consequences of waiting too long or intervening too early. In analysis of several such interactions in Tina’s class prior to the open discussion, the researcher determined that both too-early and too-late orientations to help were problematic. While the IST’ was overly ambitious, and her interventionist style of assistance did not always allow students sufficient time to figure things out for themselves, Tina’s approach was slightly too rigid to allow for reluctant or quietly frustrated learners like Noah, who avoided open solicitations of help at any cost.

The implicit ground rules were finally made explicit within two to three weeks of co-teaching. The researcher was reminded of the critical message of general education teachers synthesized by Oakes (1995), and by Vaughn and Schumm (1994): “If you wish us to use your work, it must help us become more successful with the range of children in our charge.” Also clear was the necessity of explicitly acknowledging the classroom teacher’s turf. It quickly became readily apparent that integration support for these students would happen only when the IST clearly communicated the belief that she respected the classroom teacher’s priorities and sought change in instructional practice that not only showed respect for the routines and protocols established by the classroom teacher, but

also showed an understanding of how this perspective had developed—directly from analyzing the functional practices embodied in teachers' own experiences.

Many of these issues around classroom parameters and roles of each teacher should have been worked out in co-teaching planning meetings prior to start-up of the partnership; however, the IST was not successful in the pre-teaching meetings in getting the issues of philosophy or classroom practice out on the table in any substantial way, despite her use of best practice protocol to direct the meeting (Friend, 1992). Interpreting the lack of richness in these meetings led the IST to conclude that insufficient trust had developed because of their lack of co-teaching experience. It is in doing the partnership that the issues arose. Possibly, despite Tina's competence, evinced in practice and known by reputation, she was initially subdued, if not somewhat intimidated, by the IST's dual status of staff member and researcher. This may have occurred despite all efforts to accommodate and acquiesce to preferences about meeting times and instructional units, and to focus on the needs of the children and not on the status of the adult players. It was only after the IST and the classroom teacher had taught together and the teacher observed that the IST encountered many of the same challenges in dealing with general population children that she had encountered, that their issues were addressed. Tina commented later that she thought the IST had terrific ideas and that it was good to see that even a specialist had trouble sometimes getting to everyone.

If one could clone a positive and productive teaching environment, Tina's classroom would have been the site to set up a lab. It was, foremost, a work environment where there was no need of an efficiency expert with a stopwatch to know that on-task time was extremely high. Behaviours that were not conducive to a good work ethic or on-topic inquiry were nipped in the bud by the classroom teacher with a firm but respectful, "Not now," or "Good comment, would you like to park that comment?" The Parking Lot was a

large sheet of paper where comments could be written, to be addressed during closing log at the end of the day. It was structures such as the Parking Lot that facilitated on-task time. Students had a forum for addressing topics of interest and inquiry and, therefore, were willing to focus on the current task.

#### Seamless or Fragmented Support.

The two grade 6 support programs for at-risk children lay at opposite ends of the continuum: cohesive or fragmented, coordinated or serendipitous, effective or impotent, fluid or disjointed, compatible or incongruent. Regardless of the terms, the contrast was striking. The noise level in Jesse's class was always higher than in Tina's during the participant observations, partly because of a lack of structures and routines to support her teaching, and also because of the number of helping staff present. No parameters were established for getting help or participating in mini-lessons, except when the IST was direct teaching; even then much more time needed to be spent on establishing routines prior to, and during, instruction. The lack of symmetry between the classroom teacher and the IST pre-empted coherence in delivery of curriculum. From the perspective of the IST, it was difficult to fulfill one of the mandates of the role—to influence instructional practices in ways that were likely to include more learners from a wide range of abilities. Jesse's classroom was a place in which students could easily hide out and do nothing because of the lack of follow-through routines for students with identified learning disabilities. The teacher sat at her desk much of the time during the participant observations and the observations of the TA classroom interactions, and would get up only to write for students. Sitting at her desk when she was out of the direct teaching role was a bone of contention between the IST and Jesse. Unlike the situation in Tina's class, this was not resolved in the three months of the study through discussion, problem-solving or structured debriefing.

### Anecdotes and Rapport-Building.

The IST engaged both classroom teachers in conversations about their interests, hobbies, or special skills and encouraged them to share some of these with the children. This was part of an effort to build rapport with the teachers and to make some connective ties with the students. At first, encouragement to share brief anecdotes from her life caused Tina visible embarrassment. As she saw the interest and feedback of the children concerning her specific personal difficulties (for example, in overcoming obstacles to make the National Masters Swim Team), she appeared more relaxed and even pleased about doing so. Thus began a long-standing verbal rally that went on between Tina and the IST over the three months of the study which coloured the classroom discourse in two crucial ways. Talk between the two teachers regarding aspects of their lives outside the classroom seemed to bring the sixth graders closer to both teachers and reminded them that these teachers had lives beyond the middle school, lives where they encountered challenges not entirely unlike those of their students. Also, a professional relationship of mutual respect and appropriate openness developed between the two teachers, which contributed to more overt acknowledgment of slip-ups and subsequent quick fixes.

The nature of these anecdotes shared in the classroom focussed on Tina's stories about her athletic endeavours as a national swimmer. She related her challenges to increase endurance and flexibility and how her coach only cared about effort, commitment, and one of her favorite themes—trying. The IST shared stories about her children and challenges in a statistics classes that she had taken. In hearing these stories being shared, the children witnessed teacher exchanges that conveyed struggles and celebrations in areas of relative strength and weakness, to which the students could relate. Efforts to encourage Jesse to talk about her special skills and interests, which included volunteer community work with youth, French language skills, and diverse interests in other cultures, were met with some

suspicion. The IST suggested that they might weave some brief personal stories into their teaching in relation to the texts under study, Space Trap.

IST: "Maybe if we included the occasional story about us as a way of modelling the connections with the story."

Jesse: "They don't care about that."

IST: "Yeah, but they care about you, right? Don't you think most kids like to know some things about their teachers? (pause) It's just an idea to model the connections we're asking them to make in Space Trap and maybe build up some rapport as well. What do you think?"

Jesse: "Maybe." (distinctly doubtful tone)

IST: "Well, it's not essential. You have other ways of getting them making the connections [between their lives and the characters]. I'll give it a try in the next lesson and we can see how it goes, okay?"

IST and Jesse debriefing session; Tape 8a; Text Units 216-220

Jesse did not opt to use the suggestion about building anecdotes into the literacy lessons. She was generally not open to the overtures made by the IST in an effort to build the kind of rapport that could improve the co-teaching approach and increase gratification for the teachers and effectiveness for their students. In contrast, the rapport established with Tina grew stronger in her classroom and eventually led to the children relating to their two teachers as a team. Sam's comments summarized their feelings exactly:

Sam: "You guys can't figure out who's supposed to do what can you?"

Tina: "What are you talking about Sam?"

Sam: "It's like we have two teachers now, you and Mrs. Tobin. You both do the same things."

The strong communication which developed was invaluable in addressing the inevitable points of frustration involved in co-teaching. For example, one frustrating practice for the IST in the co-teaching format was Tina's early tendency to move to her desk when the IST was doing the direct teaching portion (the leadership rotated bi-weekly). The IST expected (an expectation that was not explicitly addressed in the pre-co-teaching meetings) that when she was performing direct teaching, the classroom teacher would circulate among the students, starting with the identified LD students, getting them off the mark, doing mini-lessons, bolstering morale, running a check on the Home-School books,

or adapting the assignment, much as the IST did when the classroom teacher was in the non-leading role. Instead, in the beginning, Tina would sit at her desk for brief periods of time and do some marking or planning, scanning the class for problems. A delicate and somewhat awkward discussion about this issue resolved the problem by clarifying expectations of one another regarding the direct teaching or support teaching role.

As for Jesse, assuming leadership for her class that encompassed all students was difficult. The fragmentation and sheer number of people involved in the supporting role in her class would have been mind-boggling even for teachers with the willingness and prerequisite skills to coordinate the efforts. Consider the players: a student-teacher for six weeks, a social worker intern for a different three weeks, an IST for three of five language arts blocks per week, a TA for two of five language arts blocks and two math blocks, a First Nations teacher in a consulting and occasional pull-out role, and the occasional University of Victoria CISL project personnel (see Appendix K: CISL: Overview of Program).

Poet Shel Silverstein's words would have appropriately described the scene as the parade of helping staff practically tripped over one another:

“Some kinds of help are the kinds of help that helping is all about. And some kinds of help are the kinds of help that we can all do without.” (Silverstein, 1974)

Jesse needed help in coordinating the support, but it never really happened. Both the IST and the counselor who discreetly intervened at the IST's request were unsuccessful in influencing Jesse to change her ad hoc approach to support. She wanted very much to keep all the helping staff (this was a large part of her definition of meeting the IEP goals and adaptation). It appeared that this was her proof that she was tending to the at-risk students. She felt unable to coordinate her teaching content or schedule to make more effective use of the staff or handle housekeeping matters at times which were not intrusive,

such as at natural transitions. For example, during one of three language arts teaching blocks which were “co-taught” (more on this euphemism later), Jesse silently read the newsletter from the principal from her computer screen, interjecting her own reminders as she went along. On three occasions this took more than 20 minutes of the 50-minute teaching block. Children were restless and one student even asked the IST why she was there, “Didn’t they send you a newsletter?” It took much discussion and several alternate suggestions for the IST to convince the teacher that this was perhaps not the best use of language arts co-teaching time.

As recorded in the data, Jesse’s student teachers from the University of Victoria Professional Schools of Education and Social Work received no direction from her, other than “Do you want to teach a lesson tomorrow?” to the Education student; and “Help him!” to the Social Worker intern. This classroom might be described as uncoordinated on the best of days, and chaotic at more trying times. In her interview, Jesse said she did not have time (second classic rationale for not making use of best practices for inclusion) to plan for TAs. In contrast, Tina reflected on her own growth in learning how to make best use of TAs:

When I first started with them [TAs], they weren’t always listening to me because I was younger than them...gaining their respect and doing enough planning for them so they have something to do so they’re not just watching you. And what I started out doing after a few years teaching is fighting for prep time with my TA, or using my prep time, or getting someone to come in to cover the class, and showing them the kinds of things you need done, like sending them to the library: ‘This is the kind of book. This is what you like them to do, being specific enough, working with that particular student, what that student needs. He may not want you to sit there and scribe, but that’s what I need you to do. So you can sit behind him three seats and hand him up the sheets. You can go photocopy someone else’s notes, but it needs to get to him or her.’ It’s just being clear. I like writing things on lists and I like being clear and I think the TA likes that too. So if they are bored of listening to you they can go and listen to the list. ‘There’s this student’s book to organize. There is their binder to organize.’ Then everything is organized and clear for them.

Tina’s interview; Text Units 29-31

To her credit, Jesse, who often made little of her skills and knowledge, was able to engage most students (although not many of the at-risk group) in substantive and meaningful work about current world affairs, introducing them to environmental and political issues rarely handled at this grade level. Many students were following the news for the first time and finding it interesting, largely as a result of the pictures and questions she displayed and carefully followed up. She also had a specific interest and empathy for underdeveloped nations and her enthusiasm spilled over into the classroom, resulting in some small humanitarian efforts to a needy country at Christmas time. Every student in her class was involved in this project, which entailed filling a shoebox with several small items and composing a note on the computer to include in the package. For students with LD profiles she supplied the box and items at her own expense, which the children genuinely appeared to appreciate. This was the only time that all of the children identified as having a learning disability made it to the computer, revising their notes to this audience in some far-off place. The issue of whether or not the children receiving the message could actually read it did not come up.

Making these political and social issues accessible to students with difficulties was not evident at any other time. The teacher did not initiate the adaptation of materials or instructional approaches, and responded to suggestions for change with messages about "not knowing how." Jesse depended heavily on peer tutors helping the at-risk students, even though they had no training. This was met with reluctance on the part of students requiring help and sometimes the peer tutors really did not want to serve in this capacity, at least when only one answer could be found to the WIIFM (What's in it for me?) question: nothing—no validation, no discussion, no perks. The win/win structures suggested to Jesse by the IST were difficult for her to grasp. Her other way of providing support during Social Studies (which was integrated with language arts during three of ten blocks of the

participant observations) entailed sending identified students out for help with the First Nations Teacher. The students quite literally breathed a sigh of relief when this happened, as they encountered more success in the pull-out program than in this instructional context. The difficulty arose when they came back to class, often mid-stream, and had “nothing to do” because they had missed the instructions or skills and concepts covered earlier in class. This resulted in their programs in language arts becoming fragmented. Their absence contributed to their marginalized status and often prevented them from participating in computer-based activities, particularly the CISL program.

#### Ways of Levelling the Playing Field: Giving Learners a Leg-up

In an effort to increase the likelihood of success for learners with LD, teachers and TAs engaged in a variety of “leg-up” measures. These often consisted of small changes in handling ordinary matters. These slight alterations in routines and procedures, along with small acts of validation, showed respect for some of the intellectual and social constraints of the children in the study. Other professional staff outside the classroom also participated in setting up some of these efforts (See Other Findings: Communiqués As Leg-Up Measures). However modest these changes, attention to such details and routines made it easier for learners to be part of a class and to overcome difficulties. For example, combination locks were assigned at random, but one TA, taking into account the difficulties Roy had with recall, saw to it in a quiet and tactful manner that he got a lock whose combination had two single digits. The IST then showed Roy a mnemonic tip to help him remember the numerical sequence. These small details were of high importance in giving Roy a leg-up in getting his locker open quickly between classes. Likewise, when a student offered to help Roy in learning to use the combination lock, the IST was sensitive to Roy’s possible discomfort with having someone else know his combination number:

IST: "I'm going to work with you on remembering the combination, Roy. Have a look for a few minutes at the numbers and see if there's a clever way to remember 9-25-3, if any of these numbers are special to you in any way, and I'll be right back."

Student: "I can help him, I know how to use a combination lock."

IST: "Thank you, Steven, (then quietly to Roy): Are you a little nervous about someone else knowing the combination?" Roy nodded in the affirmative. "Okay, then maybe Steven could practice with you a few times. I'll be right back."

IST in Jesse's class; Tape 3a; Text Units 290-292

Roy frequently arrived late in the morning. In a private conversation, the IST explored the possibility of him using an alarm clock.

IST: "It's hard to get up at the right time, isn't it? Especially on Mondays."

Roy: "Yeah, I don't like getting up."

IST: "Do you have an alarm clock you might be able to use, Roy?"

Roy: "I did, but it doesn't work."

IST: "So it's time maybe to get a different one. Should I look into getting you an alarm clock? I'm pretty sure there are some extra ones around. What we can do is put your name on the bottom and it can be just for you."

Roy: "Okay."

IST: "Okay, how about we try that then."

IST in Jesse's class; Tape 11a; Text Units 11-24

The usual response to students arriving chronically late was to reprimand them and have them stay for Study Club to make up the missed work. This was effective with many students; however, for Roy, who had spent some time in Study Club, it mostly involved sitting and doing a minimal amount of work and it did not serve as a deterrent. He needed to be in class as much as possible. According to teachers familiar with the family profile, it was very difficult for Roy to get up at 7:30 am and do what needed to be done to arrive at school on time, especially since everyone else in his household was still sleeping. Buying him an alarm clock was a good use of the petty cash fund. Based on his awkwardness in learning how to set the wake-up time, it was obvious he had never used one before. Roy's tardiness did not stop, but it decreased significantly, so this measure served as a useful leg-up tactic for him.

Other leg-up measures sometimes occurred in direct response to a difficulty. Jesse complained that one of her identified students "could make noise with a sponge" and was

constantly using items on his desk to make noise while Jesse was talking. The IST suggested she allow him to fidget with adhesive gum (noiseless and easy to find in any classroom). Jesse expressed concern that all the students would want to use it and then none of them would pay attention, and she would have to give all of them adhesive gum. When she was encouraged to give it a try and send learners who asked to use it to the IST, she agreed. The IST, estimating Jesse's strengths as lying outside the realm of tactfulness (see p.) added: "Please don't mention it to the class at all. Just wait and see if it comes up after I quietly give it to Roy." Only two students came looking for the adhesive gum out of a class of 28. When the IST explained that its purpose was to help students become better listeners and to decrease noise in the classroom, one student decided she didn't need it and the other took a small amount back to class. In the interim, Roy got something to manipulate quietly. Whether his listening improved or not was certainly not clear, but the teacher could proceed with her lesson more easily and Roy received fewer reproaches for making noise.

Other leg-up measures were less overt. Tina would draw names from a bag for an opportunity to hear a storyteller at the library (a highly desirable thing to do, mostly because the selected individual did not have to go to class). Students thought that every name was in the bag. In fact, only the names of six children were in the draw, including two of the four identified children in her class. Tina explained discretely to the IST that only a few children could go and she wanted to make sure students who "hardly ever get picked for anything and who would really benefit" had the opportunity. She did this three times during the study with favorable results. This preferential practice was not confined to learners with difficulties. In the case of a 60-minute writing workshop with Tim Wynn-Jones, she entered only the four names of students whom she perceived as keen writers who would be likely to benefit most from exposure to a published author. Her definition of

fairness as giving everyone what they needed, as opposed to giving everyone the same thing, was most apparent in this controversial practice.

In the case of Noah, one of the more useful and tactful leg-up measures involved arrangements for him to get his medication for obsessive compulsive disorder at the proper time without undue attention. The teacher set up a practice useful for everyone but designed as a result of Noah's need to go to the counseling area to pick up his medication--a regimen to which his parents drew attention at the first IEP meeting. At five minutes before lunch-time she wrote the time in large chalk letters to signal to all students that it was time to tidy up. Noah was told privately that this also was his cue to leave for his medication. Because of tidying up, minimal attention was focussed on Noah's departure. After the first few days, the IST met with Noah for a routine briefing of his week.

IST: "Noah, how did you make out at lunch time today? Did you run out yourself to get your meds? Or did you need a little reminding?"

Noah: "Yeah. My teacher reminded me."

IST: "And is that okay with you, your teacher reminding you?"

Noah: "Yeah, that's fine."

Notes on Noah, free node; Text Units 14-17

Within a week, Noah's teacher no longer had to remind him verbally, only to look in his direction, and within two weeks he regulated his own departure for his medications.

### The Specifics of Literacy Access

#### The Dynamics of Language Arts Activities.

Question 2: What Text-Accessing Structures, Strategies, and Technologies are Explicitly Presented and/or Made Available to Learners with LD

Writing was inextricably linked to reading in Tina's classroom, and both were frequently used to augment understanding. Text-access through analysis of the structures of text, strategies to facilitate and amplify the understanding of text, as well as technologies to facilitate fluency and invite elaboration, were merely the vehicles of access to the stories

introduced in class. Teachers depended heavily on oral and written communication to enhance understanding of the readings under examination or to express a response. The data from Tina's classroom, revealing the underlying approach that infused these tools with cohesive substance, unfolded much like a creed: "Everything is about me, except if it's about you and why shouldn't it be about one of us?" In other words, emphasis on relevancy and reader response had center stage. Students were encouraged to actively construct meaning by seeking connections with their personal experiences.

"Basically what you're going to do for the pre-writing is you are going to choose either an amusing, exciting, or frightening experience that you've had, but you're going to exaggerate. If you're totally stuck and you don't have anything you can remember, then...the reason why I said choose something that happened to you is because you can remember it well and you can brainstorm lots of ideas. So you are going to choose an experience that you've had and I'd like you to narrow it down to something really specific, because you're going to work on description. Now here are some ideas...there could be a conflict..."

Tina, Tape 11a; Text Unit 89

To further increase this connection between reader and text and in keeping with the literature that supports teacher influence on how students view reading (Gerla, 1996; Houck & Rogers, 1994), the three teachers modeled the connections between their personal experiences and the text.

IST: "What is the big criteria that you need to include in the letter to the character?"

Nina: "You have to say what you have in common with the character."

IST: "Yes, you have to say what you have in common with the character. There are lots of different things you could look at. For example: age, appearance, and number of people in your family, but even more interesting are when you find characteristics that are similar or events in the story that remind you of events in your life."

Nina: "So if you're both courageous?"

IST: "Yes, for sure, if you're both courageous you might say why. So what is the same between me and Ms. Hines? (intern from School of Social Work) Maybe there's something in the text we can find about us?"

Sam: "You both care about kids."

IST: "Yes, definitely. So is there any part of Space Trap where someone shows they care about kids?"

Teacher modelling was followed by student input on associations with text. The degree of engagement with literacy activities seemed to be heavily influenced by the degree

to which teachers respected learners' commonalities with texts. While readers were encouraged to take an aesthetic stance that clearly focussed on looking for parts of themselves in texts, they were also motivated to take an efferent stance, focusing on information about the elements of story and expository structures, as opposed to specific information about the reading.

In Tina's classroom, the language arts program revolved around how the students' experiences related to the characters, themes and events in their readings or with the expository structures of text. More than any other literacy practice, this intentional focus on connecting the learners' relationship with the topic or text was credited for the success of the literacy support. This was largely achieved through the use of popular literacy strategies and emphasis on the elements of story and expository structures (see Appendix M). A shortcoming of the endeavours to make text accessible and the writing of stories explicit was an insufficient emphasis on metacognitive awareness. The students had difficulty articulating the strategies that they had learned to comprehend text or to construct story.

Tina had elected to focus the language arts program on the study of the novel and short story; while the writing process approach focussed on the theme of the story. She chose the novel Me and the Terrible Two to commence the semester. The IST and Tina achieved seamless support for learners in all but two of the participant observations documented, with considerable overlap in their roles and in the emphasis of their literacy presentations. They also read and responded to several short stories and expository pieces in the classroom during this time.

Tina's approach to the writing process developed a classroom community of readers and writers who could assist one another. During ten participant observation sessions, the at-risk children were never excluded from these community-building activities. The class was marked by comments acknowledging the value of peer input.

“May I just add one thing? If your editing partner says to you: ‘I don’t get it, what do you mean?’ that’s a real clear sign that you need to rework that sentence or that idea so it’s simpler or that it gives more detail. Usually that’s the problem in grade 6, is that you forget to give enough details.”

Tina, Tape 6a; Text Units 152-153

An ad hoc approach to literacy learning was much more frequent (12 of 14 observations) in Jesse’s class, characterized by an unintentional stream of poorly coordinated instruction. This disjointed approach, combined with a number of interruptions from the “helping” staff (some of whom needed considerable direction in order to do their jobs), and Jesse’s changing activities in mid-stream, often proceeding as if no other plans to co-teach existed, made for poor service delivery for children with at-risk profiles, particularly for students with LD in the language arts classes.

Learners spent the first two sessions doing a Learning Preferences inventory which seemed to have little relevance to literacy. The students answered many questions on how they preferred to study, what they liked to read, the lighting that was preferred, etc. They did not receive feedback on this inventory and the audio-tape of the session revealed that the majority of the students gave the same answers to the learning inventory questions. After the initial lessons on learning styles and classroom rules (1.5 sessions were devoted to establishing the rules, even though school had been in full session for three weeks) the IST introduced the novel Space Trap, selected by the classroom teacher, and students each received their own copy. The novel presentation was disjointed, in part because of the non-sequential teaching that occurred. Although strategies, structures and technologies were presented and used to access text, the framework of instructional processes was not sufficiently strong. Literacy lessons were seriously compromised in terms of their effectiveness.

Class-within-a-class was a common teaching configuration in Jesse’s class, largely as a result of the lack of cohesion between the teacher and the IST. Jesse did not appear to catch on to what she was supposed to do when the IST was direct teaching, despite

discussion prior to the co-teaching arrangement. In five of the ten literacy lessons, she proceeded with her own “plans” as if nothing had been agreed upon. She spent two of the blocks devoted to reading the school newsletter aloud (20 of the 50 minutes), much of which had little relevance for the grade 6 students. Weeding for relevancy was not something that seemed to occur to her. Two lessons were spent on the learning styles inventory and three on an integrated Social Studies unit, World Community, which was quite successful with about two-thirds of her class; however, it held almost no merit for the at-risk group. The instructional configuration during her integrated units on World Community was a mix of station teaching and class-within-a-class. During station teaching, she took a group of “experts” to train as leaders in one global station. During these three blocks, the remainder of the students worked with the IST on literacy activities, which were based mostly on the novel *Space Trap*, until it was their turn to go to the global station.

Jesse’s preparation for station teaching was truly impressive. She exhibited detailed maps of parts of the world, highlighting environmental concerns, and she asked some prodding questions at each center to get students started. Unfortunately, she offered little instructional scaffolding to unpack the dense reading material and only the more self-sufficient students appeared to maximize their learning at the stations. She used a cooperative learning model in training students to work in each center, but the pace was so rapid that eventually all of the identified children gave up on participating, except on the occasion at Christmas time when they sent a package to a needy country. Toward the end of the semester, without consultation with student case managers or the IST, Jesse asked the First Nations teacher to take out one of the identified children (Roy) and three of his First Nations classmates, saying they were just “too low” for World Community. In response to the IST’s question about her pull-out rationale, she explained:

Jesse: "It depends on what we're doing in here. If what we're doing in here is too hard and they don't like it, then they'll think of it as 'Oh, I'm getting out of it.' If it's something that we're doing that's fun, then I'll let them stay. I don't want them to go; it's going to be totally her discretion whether we send them to her."

IST: "Oh, so it doesn't have to be every time."

Jesse: "No. So like if we're doing a Science lesson, an experiment, then it would be better for them to stay."

Jesse's interview; Text Units 158-167

Because the pull-out was inconsistent, the students never really got to participate in World Community again, nor did they have as much access as the rest of the class to the University of Victoria UVIC Project pilot project. This contributed to their marginalized status because these two opportunities were significant markers of that classroom's culture. Children were heard boasting, especially about the UVIC Project research project; it was evident that a certain prestige was attached to being enrolled in one of the classes with sophisticated hardware (three classrooms were involved in the UVIC Project pilot project in the school). During the pull-out sessions, Roy and his friends worked on the Successmaker literacy program, a highly prescriptive software package that held the interest of these learners. The demeanor of the students, upon leaving the room during World Community, clearly conveyed that they viewed Successmaker as a better option than World Community, where students were engaged in looking up encyclopedic information on issues of global concern. Except for the part about sending a child a shoebox full of goodies and a kind note at Christmas, they did not "get it", so Successmaker, prescriptive and non-constructivist as it could be, got their vote. This pull-out situation was enhanced by the First Nations teacher herself, who trained them at an appropriate pace and then left them to work independently while she taught her other 20 or so students from grades 6 to 8 who wandered in and out of her classroom during every 55-minute block, regardless of the subject area being covered.

The IST offered to adapt some of the materials from the World Community to allow easier access for the eight children struggling with the largely encyclopedic format. Jesse declined, saying that it was just too hard for certain students and that they really did not

want to do it. In the ensuing discussion, when the IST suggested their attitude may change as a result of more successes and ease of participation, Jesse replied: “Well, it’s [prep for the centers] all done now.” Miscommunication, or an absence of communication, had thwarted a coordinated effort at a point when the teacher may have been more open to collaboration.

During the thirty 50-minute observations in the grade 6 language arts classes, the following explicit presentation of text-accessing tools was documented:

1. Story Structures and Story Elements: Specifying the basic parts of a story and how those parts tied together to form a well-constructed story. Teachers led students in analyzing a story’s structure and elements. Students responded to new knowledge and identified the structures and themes by using a literacy strategy (see below).

2. Literacy Strategies to Access Story (a list of the strategies presented may be viewed in Appendix M): These strategies provided tangible ways to make connections between the students and the characters, themes, and events of the plot. Students kept track of each new strategy in a notebook and toward the middle of the study chose their strategy from the list presented, or invented one of their own.

3. Literacy Strategies to Access Expository Text: Five structures of expository text (problem/solution, cause/effect, sequence, description, and comparison) were presented and practiced in a short paragraph context before expository writing began. Participant students were able to recognize the five structures and use three of them in their writing by the end of the study.

4. Layering of Metacognitive Instruction: While evidence of the importance of developing metacognition was found in the instructional language of the teachers, metacognitive instruction that dealt explicitly with heightening at-risk students’ awareness of when and why to use each strategy in reading, writing, speaking and viewing was not

explicit. In the final analysis, the failure to make students aware of the process that takes place when they use such strategies may have contributed to their inability to articulate answers in the student interviews about how to use various strategies. In fact, the interviews showed very little evidence of metacognitive understanding. During the interactive dialogues of sidebar lessons documented in participant observations (see earlier section), students did show some awareness of metacognition.

5. Adapting and/or Modifying Instructional Activities: Teachers and parents were confused about adaptation and modification of classroom work and the reporting of grades for at-risk students. Everyone concerned was unclear regarding the difference between adaptation and modification of work, as outlined by the Ministry of Education. Adaptation effects the strategy or activity, so as to arrive at the same prescribed learning outcome; modification changes or eliminates the prescribed learning outcome as agreed upon in an IEP. The IST did not place sufficient emphasis on these concepts early in the term to clarify teacher and parental understandings of these concepts (see Chapter 4, section entitled: “Teacher Perceptions Of Support”).

“Adapting...well, I guess changing the amount of criteria, but I adapt everything. I guess having the children...I don’t like to modify. I like to adapt, so they can do what the other kids are doing. So decreasing the amount...but you said other than that...um...well, I help them write the notes down. They read it and they tell me what to put down...and helping them write their summaries...the TA working with the kids. Those are adaptations, but if you do too much more than that then it becomes modifying...they’re doing a different assignment. So, yeah, otherwise it’s modification and I don’t like that, although you have to do that sometimes.”

Jesse’s interview; Text Units 238-255

Two obvious adaptations were routine practices in both classrooms: (a) to give the students less work in a given time frame, or (b) to increase the amount of time for a particular task. In addition to these volume and time adaptations, Jesse also had a need to increase instructional scaffolding and to learn to adapt her programs to other acceptable ways of representing knowledge about literacy to at-risk learners.

In Tina's class, open-ended activities, choice regarding literacy activities, and troubleshoot instructional scaffolding often tended to the needs of all learners and required far fewer adaptations than in Jesse's class, where instructional activities for showing knowledge of literacy were either too constrained or too open-ended. If teachers were using commercially available materials, they were encouraged by the IST to use a concise adaptation guide to make the appropriate changes for learners with LD (see appendices for sample guide). The IST developed the guide and provided classroom teachers with guiding questions to assist in adaptations of curriculum materials and lessons. The most central questions outlined in this guide are: "What will my identified and at-risk learners likely have difficulty with in this lesson, unit or project?" and "What changes are feasible for me to make in my lessons and materials to encompass a broad range of learners and decrease the potential difficulty?" and finally "Can this change be made in a ten-minute time frame?"

Teachers were supported by the Student Services Staff (four ISTs, five TAs) in making adaptations in seven ways.

6. Teachers were encouraged to use mindful instructional approaches that would decrease the need for specific adaptations. The most useful and efficient approach to encompass the wide range of learners was to plan attentively from the outset by including oral contributions, artistic demonstrations, collaborative and relay responses, and other appropriate ways of representing knowledge.

7. Adaptation of materials was available by the integration support staff with an approximate 48-hour turn-around time. This service was popular among Social Science and Science teachers who often had worksheets and laboratory routines that were not LD friendly. The four ISTs at this middle school made the concepts more accessible and the TAs reformatted the worksheets or prepared supplementary material. Other simple, yet highly effective, material changes that could be prepared in advance involved simply

providing highlighted texts in the content areas or teacher notes from the curriculum guides, which tended to be explicitly formatted.

8. Rule-of-thumb time frames were identified for making adaptations to materials and lessons. Generally, teachers were encouraged to devote ten additional minutes of thinking and planning time to make adaptations if they were using commercial materials or former "non-mindful" lessons. One sample lesson was provided to show some of the most straightforward and useful adaptations. In addition, the IST gave teachers a list of possible adaptations from published sources.

9. Integration support staff accessed the Integration Support Helpline, a service provided by the Ministry of Education, which sent out adapted units for many novels popular in English language arts.

10. ISTs arranged internal coverage of classes with enrolled special needs children to provide co-planning time for teachers and the IST.

11. The teacher-librarian colour-coded all the easier books in the library to make these more easily accessible for delayed readers.

12. When modification agreements were part of an individual's IEP, support staff also identified the prescribed learning outcomes and made suggestions for parallel work in content areas.

The same teachers repeatedly made use of the services provided by the support staff. Jesse did not request or accept help in this area even once during the three-month study. She seemed attached to her eclectic procedures for planning and did not recognize the opportunity to decrease her workload by making use of the support staff services. Tina planned mindfully from the outset, honouring any number of ways of representing literacy learning. She made use of the support staff to order materials from the Helpline, to highlight novels she wanted to use, and to run interference with parents. She generally dismissed offers for help with adapting materials as unnecessary in light of mindful

planning for the whole class that occurred in co-planning sessions. The IST generally constructed the adaptation materials according to the specific purposes of the co-teaching literacy lessons. The names of the adaptation sheets included, Getting Started, Top This, In a Nutshell, Guiding Questions, My Job is, Quotes to Note, and Imagine This. The message the IST tried to convey by using specific names was that adaptation sheets, like sidebars, are for specific purposes, not necessarily specific people. Both Tina and Ruthanne encouraged students to suggest their own adaptations. This happened twice in the first half of the study, but nine times in the second half. Sam and Noah, in Tina's class, and Amy, in Jesse's class, suggested the adaptations to the language arts assignments.

#### Technological Access for At-risk Learners.

A variety of technologies to promote text-access was available to participants in varying degrees. Standard provisions in each class included six computer stations, student laptop computers (AlphaSmarts), two word-processing programs (ClarisWorks and Word) and two prescriptive literacy programs, Successmaker and Co-writer. In Jesse's classroom, students also had access to the UVIC Project program that was available to students in selected pilot schools in the district. Her class was participating in a study by the University of Victoria, entitled UVIC Project. The pilot project came with extensive in-service education for the teachers and considerable hardware for the classrooms. In addition, students had high speed ISDN internet access in the library and participated in computer classes for one semester of the school year in the computer lab.

The data on text-accessing via technologies revealed some unsatisfactory practices:

1. Differential access for learners with at-risk profiles was a reality. Students with LD were denied access when paper and pencil activities were not completed in prescribed time frames.

2. Appropriate technologies were not used to maximize the potential benefits for at-risk learners. Often computers were idle when children were available with appropriate

work to do, but staff did not stagger instruction to allow students to use the computers more often than the designated UVIC Project time;

3. There was insufficient training of children on applications and hardware that could help them untap the potentials of the technologies.

4. Many of the instructions for using the technologies were counterintuitive.

The instances where learners did receive intuitive instructions and training on the applications suggested very promising outcomes for their literacy skills and their perceptions of themselves as learners. The most promising finding was student willingness to simply write more when they had easy access to their laptops. They did not misplace these laptops even once in this three-month study. Students perceived that the word-processed format favored the presentation of their work and that adults were more willing to read it, to respond more positively, and to give more feedback. Three of the five students in the study had difficulties with fine motor control; their handwriting was dismal. The appearance of their hand-written work seemed to keep the reader focussed on the surface features and it diminished any positive feedback regarding the content of what they had written. Amy was particularly aware of the different response she received and said she also thought people did not notice her poor spelling as much. The students had Key Pals to whom they wrote via the internet; Key Pals served as a highly authentic audience for the children. A certain waste of technological potential occurred. Students were not instructed to take out their laptops for note-taking during many of the content area blocks. The Co-writer program was tried with only two students, yet it was available on 15 stations. Internet surfing was reserved for the highly motivated. Jesse's belief was that some technological access was too difficult for learners weak in literacy skills. She used technological access as both a carrot and a stick. Regardless of motivation, Roy and his First Nations friends often missed out on opportunities to practice their computer skills because they had not completed sufficient work. Inadequate amounts of time were allocated

for training these children on computer programs, resulting in confusion and some negative initial experiences with the medium. The adults themselves had not received sufficient training on the simplest technologies (AlphaSmart) and did not seem to be fully aware of, or recognize, the internet for its dynamic capabilities as a teaching tool or as a source of inspiration. AlphaSmart laptop computers were assigned to every student with an identified disability. This simple word-processing unit has many features including uploading capabilities to MAC or PC with variant transfer speeds; a lightweight, easy-to-carry size; seven files which serve to organize students by subject areas or provide a seven-part structure for researching a topic; customizing options for strike keys in Dvorak rather than QWERTY system; and privacy through access codes. It is an excellent tool for students and certainly a leg-up for those students who struggle with organizational skills and orderly presentation of work.

### Perceptions of Effective Support

Question 3: Which aspects of support are considered effective according to teachers, students, and parents?

#### Teacher Responses.

Teacher perceptions of support have largely been documented throughout the findings, particularly in the analysis and reporting of teacher definitions and provisions of support. The following is intended as a supplement to the earlier findings (see How Teachers Define and Provide Support).

The teachers differed greatly in their perceptions of support effectiveness, based largely on their dispositions and beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning. Limited understandings about the possibilities of adaptations in literacy practice and undeveloped

skills in managing co-professionals and paraprofessionals led to mostly ineffective support in Jesse's classroom. Inherent in her perceptions of effective support was the belief that professionals and paraprofessionals, in and of themselves, constitute the support, not the collaboration and actions of these parties with the classroom teacher to meet the individual needs of children in an integrated setting.

Jesse appeared to have high needs for curriculum novelty, which served children well in one regard. This desire for novelty may have contributed to her keen interest in other cultures, social issues and up-to-date teaching resources, such as the University of Victoria UVIC PROJECT and her own World Community teaching stations, which were obviously of curricular merit and of high interest to her students. The necessary corralling of new curriculum, so that instructional configurations and processes allowed otherwise marginal students to participate, did not occur. When Jesse was asked how she figured out what to do with children with LD in her class, she had difficulty addressing the question specifically. She had great difficulty going beyond describing the problem to avenues of redress:

Jesse: "Well, it depends...well, this year it's been hard because mostly with LD kids, the kids are able to learn orally. They can work in cooperative groups, but this year they don't seem to be able to do that. Their skills are really low and they are not able to work with other kids very well. So they don't have very good social skills, cooperative learning skills this year and that holds them back a little. But in the past it's been fine. LD kids are normal, or above, in intelligence but not able to produce. This year they are not able to produce and they are low."

Interviewer: "So how do you figure out what to do with students with LD in terms of adaptation and their learning?"

Jesse: "Well, the problem is there are too many, and not being able to get around to them all, so they just sit there and fool around. There's just too many so that means the lesson needs to be really simple, then the higher up don't get challenged enough. So you're working for the lower level of the class, not the middle or the high, because there's too many low to work for the middle or whatever. And it takes them twice as long to do anything. Even cooking, it took them a really long time to get through a lesson that the other classes got through faster."

Interviewer: "So it's a difficult situation. How do you manage? What kinds of things do you do to provide support for kids with LD in your class?"

Jesse: "I don't have very much training in special needs kids but I've had them being read to, I've read to them, and I spend extra time with them at lunch and after school. I have them work in cooperative groups so they can help each other and right now we have divided the kids into two groups so they get more one-on-one. One group is a bit lower than the other."

Jesse's interview

Tina took charge of support provisions and addressed the needs of all of her students in a no-nonsense, proactive fashion. Support was only effective if it fit into her scheme for a functional place of learning. When asked how she figured out what to do with children with LD she said:

"Well, what works for one student one year is not going to work for another student the next year, even though they have similar background. It's kind of being creative and resourceful and if you listen to the students, listening and watching, you'll find out what they like to do and you can focus in on that and you can push them a little bit. Just like your gifted student who never participates, you push them to participate. Well, your special needs student who has difficulty writing, you push them to write just a bit and then they feel better about themselves because they accept the challenge or the risk but for the (the most part? tape unclear) you tap your resources, like your parents, your Learning Assistance teacher, your case managers...give over some of the control to someone else for a while or bring in someone, or go to a workshop on it and find out what to do."

Tina's interview

Although Tina did not consult the individual IEP agreements, her teaching and support of the children met the terms of the agreement in every way except in the reporting of grades. Tina's understanding of the learning and teaching process was substantial. This understanding seemed to fuel her adaptation practices, which focussed on choices in ways of representing learning and growth, interactive dialogues that prompted and nudged students toward achievement, structured routines for accessing help and promoting inquiry, as well as effective delegation of duties to paraprofessionals and effective collaboration with support teachers.

While it is beyond the scope of this study to present the profiles of every at-risk child in these two classrooms, it is necessary to understand the overall composition of each class to interpret the findings for the study. Teacher perceptions of support are more clearly

understood within the context of the classroom of children each teacher enrolled, not just the five or six with identified difficulties. Sam, Nina and Noah were in Tina's class; Amy and Roy in Jesse's class. Of course, there were 50-plus other children in these two grade 6 classes; whether designated LD or not, many of these other children had very specific needs. Jesse's recitation of ESL students, "red" file students and "low students" enrolled in her class (as she reported to Amy's father in support of her characterization of her classroom as a war zone) was not completely off the mark; it was just woefully presented. Some of the demands came from students from the regular population who have gone unmentioned thus far. First Nations student Shawn, for example, euphemistically described as an emergent reader, had enrolled in eight schools in six years (his only parent was quite transient). He arrived at around 9:30 most days and every adult who worked with Shawn (last count, five) ignored his late arrival (an off-the-hook decision that was sensible in light of his other needs). Knowing his background, applause for the fact he came at all was perhaps more appropriate. It was too small a problem compared to other difficulties, the most pressing of which were getting him to communicate and ensuring he had some food. Shawn never spoke during any of the researcher's observations, and rarely did he engage in class other than during teacher read-aloud, to which he attended with delightful interest. He entrenched himself in the margins of the classroom and rarely made it to the mainstream where most of the learning occurred.

Then there was Tommy, kind, sensitive, quiet, cognitively slow and severely obese. He had difficulty sitting on the carpet with any comfort and was encouraged to sit wherever he liked, no matter what other children were asked to do. Tommy usually appreciated Jesse's kindness toward him, but occasionally the explicitness with which she called attention to his special physical needs were embarrassing for him. Tommy also was comfortable in the margins passivity kept him out of trouble, and empathetic girls usually delivered whatever Tommy needed before he could initiate movement. Child care workers

helped him with nutritional education and tried to encourage him to replace the cola and chocolate bars found in his lunch with healthier alternatives. They also provided a stationary bike for Tommy's private use since he did not participate in any school PE activities.

High profile parents could also absorb much teacher time. For example, Faith's mother spent considerable after-school time talking to Faith's teachers about her daughter's problems with learning. Even though the staff could not find any problems of significance (Faith was a regular, well-adjusted learner), this parent absorbed ample time assuring the staff that Faith was disabled. Jesse possessed limited interpersonal skills to deal with awkward parents. She was often blunt and dismissive of parents before they had received adequate reassurances about their children. The IST suggested she give the parent some evidence of Faith's competence by displaying her work and then showing typical samples of other learners' work in the Writing Reference Sets (see Appendix Y). When Jesse complained that Faith's mother was taking up too much time, the IST also suggested some closing phrases and body language that would respectfully signal to the parent that the meeting was over (such things as standing, smiling, extending your hand, thanking her for coming in, assuring the parent that she would keep an eye on Faith, etc.). Jesse had difficulty asserting herself in this capacity and generally continued to have circular discussions with the mother, which appeared to drain Jesse of much-needed energy for her demanding job.

In Tina's class, the First Nations children occupied much of her time, especially since they liked to hang out after school. Tina enrolled two First Nations girls who were inseparable. Even during dyad activities or cooperative learning sessions where group compositions were assigned, these girls were let off the hook and allowed to work with one another. They did not integrate with other children at all. They presented as cognitively slow and delightfully willing, and received help in ways unique to this cultural group (see

Chapter 5, How First Nations Children Get Help in the Classroom). Also of concern was Gary, a student with good cognitive capacity but significant hearing difficulty, even with a special FM system, preferential seating, and other leg-up measures. He needed more help than the students with LD, especially with instructions. Tina also enrolled two intellectually gifted students in her classroom. They solicited help frequently, usually to explore alternate angles on assignmentsæa practice endorsed explicitly in this classroom with comments such as:

“I can’t think of a better way or different way to do this, but I’m sure someone can.”

Tina, Tape 2; Text Unit 34

“Talk to me about your ideas. Does this work for you?”

Tina, Tape 7; Text Unit 184

“Now that you’re on to the strategies, start coming up with your own if you want.”

Tina, Tape 11a; Text Unit 142

#### Student Responses.

When students were explicitly asked the first time in the interview whether they got the help they needed in class, the response in four of the five cases was distinctly qualified and suggested a certain defensiveness. The response left little doubt that students wanted to convey that they didn’t need that much help. This was consistent with earlier classroom data documenting their initial statements prior to accessing help and observations of their apparent gauging of the risk factor. That they did not want to be seen as needing help was evident in both the observations of the TA support and the participant observations (see parameters for getting help).

Interviewer: “So do you get help sometimes in the classroom?”

Roy: “Yeah. If I ask she helps me.”

Sam: “There’s nothing really that I need help with in lots of situations. I got all the help I need and that’s it.”

Noah: “Yeah, everyone helps me. It’s no big deal.”

Amy: “If I really need help, yeah.”

As the question became more specific around when they requested assistance, answers revealed far more reflection about asking for help than they had initially acknowledged. This was congruent with classroom observations (see Parameters for Getting Help). The data strongly suggests that students participated in what may be described as a risk assessment, comprised of the following factors: (a) perceptions of the level of difficulty of the work for the general population; (b) the perceived cognitive status of others asking for help; (c) the availability of an equally confused classmate as an asking partner; (d) students preference for particular staff members; (e) student perceptions about whether they had been listening; and (f) the proximity of the helping staff (observed, not noted in interviews).

Interviewer: "When you need help do you find it difficult or easy to ask for help?"  
 Noah: "It's depending on my surroundings actually (30 second pause). If the work is hard enough for the rest of the class then I'm okay to put up my hand but if the work is quite easy and I feel I'm getting a little stuck, it's sort of embarrassing."  
 Sam: "Easy. I probably ask a neighbour for help first if no one else is asking, if he wasn't busy, or I would just skip until some other person asked, someone who's not asking all the time."  
 Amy: "Easy. They're just there to help so I usually tell them I need help unless I wasn't really listening and then I ask my friend and if my friend doesn't know then we both ask at the same time."

On the third round of questioning about accessing help, specifically on soliciting help from their classroom teachers, students revealed some of their experiences:

Interviewer: "How do you let your classroom teacher know that you need help?"  
 Amy: "I find it difficult when there's a lot of people who are fighting or something in the class and stuff. I kinda have to wait to go up to my teacher and say: 'I really, really need help.' But that's okay. You just have to wait."  
 Roy: "I don't."  
 Interviewer: "You don't?"  
 Roy: "No, I wait for Mrs. Perry (TA)."  
 Interviewer: "You wait for Mrs. Perry?"  
 Roy: "Yeah."  
 Interviewer: "Is Mrs. Perry there all the time?"  
 Roy: "No, but I just wait for her. She always comes later and she helps me."  
 Interviewer: "Why don't you ask the teacher who is there for help?"  
 Roy: "I don't know."  
 Interviewer: "You don't know?"  
 Roy: "No."

Nina: "Like, if there's another teacher you could ask her or you could just put your name on the board, because they usually have this thing that says HELP, and you just put your name on the board and the teacher comes and helps you."

Interviewer: "So you have a little system where the teacher comes?"

Nina: "Yeah, it works like that."

Noah: "If you want you can put your name up on the board under HELP Ms. Tobin or HELP Ms. Tate and then you wait for them to come. But usually I don't get stuck and if I do they just come around anyway after about five minutes and then you don't have to ask or put your name on the board. It's better that way anyway."

#### Student Interviews

It was evident that a multiple approach to offering help was important to these learners who were very aware and protective of their status in the class. Whereas Nina found that going to the board and logging her request worked, Noah liked help when staff just happened to be in the neighbourhood. Amy found she had to wait, in part because of the lack of structures or parameters for accessing help in her classroom.

Also of note is the children's graciousness or discretion conveyed in their comments about getting help.

Amy: "You just have to wait. But that's okay."

Roy: "I don't know," when asked why he didn't ask the teacher for help instead of waiting for the TA.

Noah: "Sometimes I get stuck and I put my hand up and the teacher can help me sort things out, but there's other kids who need help, so she can't do everything."

Interviewer: "Do you find the kind of help you get is the kind of help you want?"

Sam: "Yeah, mostly. I usually explain it to them. Sometimes they know what I'm talking about and if they can't figure it out I do it by myself. That's it."

Nina: "Sometimes they're not helpful. Sometimes they give you more details than you want. But sometimes you need more help than usual, so it's okay."

Questioning students about what they did to help themselves with reading, writing and problem-solving in the language arts classroom yielded shallow results. The lack of depth suggested unsatisfactory emphasis on metacognitive instruction by the three teachers. Learners could not bring to a conscious, articulate level the strategies for accessing text.

Intersected with the findings from the participant observations, it was feasible to recognize some of the strategies they used to help themselves learn without assistance from outside sources. Of glaring absence was an ability to articulate reading strategies to

support emerging comprehension. Although techniques such as strategic summarizing, activation of prior knowledge, self-talk and a number of other strategies (see Appendix G) were explicitly taught, little evidence of assimilation appeared in their interview responses. When asked how they dealt with challenging text, most students said they would skip and infer from context or sound it out. These are useful strategies, but limited and inadequate for their needs. The proactive, intentional and systematic strategies that had been presented in class did not appear to have been integrated. With the exception of Noah, who conveyed an understanding of the role of continual questioning of what one knows and what is important in text, strategic literacy strategies were not mentioned.

Interviewer: "Before you start to read or while you're reading, what sorts of ways do you have of remembering or of keeping track of what's going on in the story?"

Noah: "Well, I know it's a fact that I read twice as fast when I'm reading in my mind than when I'm reading out loud. It's just a taaad slower [sarcastic tone]. So I either try to sound it out or go to the next sentence and see if it makes sense, like try to figure out if there's any important information in that sentence that I need to know about. Otherwise I just go on to the next one."

Noah interview

Students were asked to bring their language arts notebooks to the interview and share something they had been working on in class. Teachers were not told that students would be bringing any work to the interview, simply that a piece of their work may be used to launch a conversation. The contrast between the work that children from each classroom chose as a sample of their reading and writing in language arts was notable. Tina's students brought the book they had selected from The Red Cedar Award list, as well as a selection of writing activities from which they could shape their next assignment. The choice displayed in this assignment was indicative of what was found in the data on participant observations. Their classroom assignments usually gave them choices in responding to literature. They also brought an expository assignment in which they were required to write a set of instructions on anything of interest to them. The classroom data indicated that choice and variety were staples of the language arts program in Tina's class. This emphasis

on choice appeared to generate authentic and creative responses from the students. Noah, noted for his divergent thinking, shared his instructions with the interviewer:

“How to Catch The Energizer Bunny in Ten Easy Steps

For years people have tried to catch the pink rabbit. Now you can. I’m Noah S. Kelly, master of the art of ‘anti-pink’. Now, in ten easy steps, you can too. The utensils you will need to capture your very own Energizer Bunny, bear trap cage, a great big stick, rope and a Richter scale. Find an empty field with maybe a few trees. Tie a rope to the top of the cage. Throw the cage over the tree (stops reading). That’s as far I got.”

Noah’s interview

In contrast, Jesse’s student Amy brought the following to share:

Interviewer: “Would you like to share something that you brought from your language arts notebook?”

Amy: “Okay. [she reads] I will write down all of my homework. I will do all of my homework. I will check my homework book. I will write news in my homework. I will take my time to write down my homework (she stops reading to explain). It’s because I was writing too fast in my homework so it got a little messy.”

Amy’s interview

Amy’s teacher, Jesse, had her do this as a way of reminding her and/or reproaching her for her forgetfulness. This type of assignment, with limited relevance in the context of the British Columbia language arts curriculum, was representative of what was observed during the TA observations. Valuable early morning language arts time was often devoted to housekeeping and reprimands instead of literature and literacy activities. The redeeming aspect of Jesse’s language arts program, in terms of student relevance, was the teacher’s involvement in the University of Victoria UVIC PROJECT which gave learners like Amy a purpose for writing (see Literacy-accessing Technologies).

When Amy was encouraged to tell about things in language arts that she really liked, she hit on a topic that she obviously felt passionate about. Her voice was animated and she spoke rapidly.

Interviewer: “And what else are you working on in language arts—something you like?”

Amy: “Waterloo McJanet (internet) and Key Pals. We write to our Key Pals. I have three Key Pals in California, all in the same school, or two of them go to the same school. We have this new thing called UVIC Project...everyone uses

it...where you can go into a subject and write what we learned and then we can also go into ClarisWorks and do drafts of stories and stuff we need to do, then we can print it out in the other room four times a week. There's only one day you can't go."

Amy's parents conveyed in their interview that writing took on a new importance for their daughter when she started using UVIC Project and writing to her Key Pals. Her difficulties with spelling were secondary, they reported, and she had so much to tell about herself, her learning, and her school, and finally "nobody seemed to care about her spelling" (also see earlier section: Literacy-accessing Technologies).

#### Parent Responses.

Parents of four of the five students agreed to participate in audio-taped 45-minute interviews. Roy's parents were elusive in responding to requests to be interviewed but eventually sent a message through the First Nations teacher that there was no problem and that they didn't have anything to say. The First Nations teacher offered to conduct the interview (without taping) since she had a positive long-standing relationship with the community and suspected the audio-tape would be intimidating in this cultural context. This offer was declined as well.

The five parents (four mothers and one father) were eager to talk about their children and the support they received. All of the parents interviewed except Nina's Mom had a university education and valued formal education for their children. For example, every family mentioned library visits and purchase of computer and internet services as ways to help their children. They had all hired tutors at various points, one child was enrolled at Sylvan Learning Center, and Noah's parents had sent their child to a Montessori school for a few years. All the parents described homework routines established to help their child stay on top of their school work. Transcripts of their interviews indicated a very specific knowledge about the work in which their children were currently involved in each subject area that had a homework component. This specific knowledge of their schoolwork

suggested that homework routines that had been reported actually occurred. All the families had three or four other children but none of those who were school-aged had specific academic difficulties. All of the parents spoke of the importance of talking to their children with LD about their valued position in the family irrespective of academic performance. While it is certainly outside the scope or intent of this study to determine the nature of the home life of these students, it does appear that they came from homes where they were valued and accepted and where education was a priority.

Parents had limited information about the specific nature of the support their children received at school and this in itself was of concern to them. As is typical in middle schools, they had spent time in the school but not in their child's classroom during instructional blocks; therefore, they had only two tangible frames of reference from which to make judgments and recommendations about the support their children received: homework performance and school progress reports. Less tangible, but of seemingly more importance to them in determining the adequacy of the support, were their observations and conversations with their children about their contentment, sense of belonging, stress level, and general well-being and competence in the classroom. None of the parents underestimated the value their children placed on the social aspect of their school lives.

Parents' opinions on school support for their children converged on these points:

1. Children had made the transition from the elementary pull-out model of support to the integrated support model with much more ease than they had anticipated.
2. Children were performing at an acceptable academic level of success with the support personnel and parent help.
3. Children needed more support around clarity of homework assignments.
4. Children and parents needed clarification regarding assessment and evaluation measures, especially regarding IEP grades.

5. Parents wanted more feedback on their children, outside of formal reports and IEP meetings.

6. Based on the difficulties that the children had with homework, parents inferred that their children were not forthcoming about asking for help in the classrooms.

7. Children had friends at school with a range of abilities and parents viewed this as a positive indicator of integration.

8. Middle school classes were demanding both in terms of academic content and expectations to manage your own workload.

9. All parents referred to children's episodes of frustration regarding school workload that manifested themselves in tears, anger and/or irritability. All parents remarked on the decrease in these behaviours as the term advanced.

10. All parents reported insufficient support for their children in the areas of fine arts and applied skills. Parents diverged in their expressions of concern regarding support on three issues.

11. Nina's mother expressed disappointment that Nina did not receive remedial reading support in a one-on-one context as she had for the past four years in elementary school, whereas Noah's parents were pleased that he was getting literacy support without pull-out.

12. Nina's mom felt that classroom teacher Tina's expectation that Nina initiate help was too high and that this was the reason for homework problems. Amy's mother saw this same difficulty—lack of clarity regarding homework—as her daughter's responsibility and continued to nudge Amy to ask more questions.

13. Amy's mother felt strongly that her daughter's program not be modified, only adapted, whereas Noah's parents expressed relief that Noah did not have to meet all of the prescribed learning outcomes for the grade 6 year.

Parents' confusion and annoyance around grading issues were pronounced.

Comments by Nina's mother were representative of the four families.

"The one thing that puzzled us was when the first interim report came home after being told that her grades would be bracketed IEP. That wasn't on there anywhere and so we were like 'Does this mean she's doing better than her IEP?' So we were quite puzzled about that until we had the interview and she [the teacher] told us, 'Oh, I don't like to put that on because then the other kids see it. We were like, well, you know, thrilled to think that she got a C+, a real C+, in English. So that was confusing. It's a little hard to know what that means in terms of the rest of the class. I mean, if she's got an A in Infotech, which she did, which is wonderful, you know, she's done really well and then, you know, you've got these IEP grades and you're like, 'Does that mean she would have failed completely everything else?' It's a little hard to know. What does a C+ in IEP mean compared to a C+ in regular grades and what could she have done within her goals of the IEP to get a B?"

Interview with Nina's mother

The confusion arose in large part because teachers were unclear as to when to use IEP designation in grading, often making up their own functional rules that were intuitive to them. According to the school district policy (based on Ministry directives), IEP grade designations are intended for use when teachers and parents have collectively decided that adaptations (changes in workloads, time frames, ways of representing knowledge) have been attempted and have not succeeded in achieving the prescribed learning outcomes. Modifications to the Prescribed Learning Outcomes were then made to shape the students' program in ways to increase likelihood of success.

The IST encouraged full exploration of adaptations for the students and generally found it unnecessary and often counter-productive (except in Noah's case) to bypass curriculum learning outcomes (see Role of the IST). Based on the use of the IEP grade designation by the teachers, and the comments of frustration by the parents, it was evident that communication had broken down. The IST had not made the intention of the IEP grades sufficiently clear for the other stakeholders at the beginning of the year during IEP meetings.

Classroom teachers made final decisions about grades and frequently Tina would exclude all of her students, including Noah, from an IEP grade designation as a face-saving attempt; however, like many of her colleagues, she was unclear about the use of IEP grades and generally considered all students with an IEP to be on modified programs, and therefore on IEP grades. In reality (in accordance with IEP agreements), with the exception of Noah, they were not; they were on adapted programs. Jesse, for her part, considered all her students to be on adapted programs. This was incorrect. According to the collaborative IEP agreement, only Noah had modifications to his program (not in language arts, but in Socials and Science). Both Sam and Nina were following the regular program with adaptations. As is standard procedure, all teachers involved with the identified students attended the meetings and received a copy of the IEP agreement; however, this did not suffice in assuring clear communication (see Chapter 5: Recommendations for IEP meetings).

Jesse thought that Amy and Roy were on adapted programs. As evidenced in her interview, she had a tenuous grasp on the concept of adaptation and modification. Roy's Prescribed Learning Outcome (PLO) for grade 6 had been modified in every subject area based on recommendations and consultations with other professionals who had worked with Roy in the elementary setting. Communication around IEP agreements and reporting had obviously broken down and parents were left feeling uncertain about the meaning and significance of grades. This was the most common and explicitly stated concern.

### Other Findings

#### Satellite Peers: Coattails and Eavesdropping.

Helping personnel and helping practices acquired importance for general population students with distinct needs. Students identified in the study as most likely to eavesdrop on sidebars (mini-lessons featuring validation, questioning, prompting and nudging, usually in that order) had three profiles: reluctants, absentees and tell-me-agains. A reluctant

(defined by properties of the in-vivo code) was a low-initiating student, capable of doing the work if only: if only someone would get them started, if only someone would tell them where to start, if only they got one more example. Absentees were students who missed one or more lessons and volunteered, or were invited by support personnel, to ride on the coattails of instruction for LD learners until they caught up. Participation for this purpose was high and seemed to maintain desirable connotations regarding sidebar instruction. In other words, students perceived sidebars as interactions to address specific student needs as opposed to interactions for specific students. This connotation developed in large part because of the use of sidebars by the general population. Tell-me-again students presented as cognitively slow and appeared to benefit from sidebars as a second chance to grasp the concept. They were distinct in their learning profile, particularly in contrast to the students with a learning disability who grasped concepts quickly but had difficulties in reading efficiently and writing conventionally. In fact, students with a LD rarely benefited (as far as being able to carry on with their assignments) from the tell-again sidebars that were popular with the teachers. They functioned much better in the tell-differently sidebars that were constructed by support staff. Counter to intuitive beliefs about the desirability of one-on-one instruction, participation in the sidebars by reluctants, absentees and tell-me-agains appeared to positively affect the outcomes for all learners. Positive outcomes were marked by fluency and/or divergence of ideas, encouraging comments in support of one another, and light bulb comments such as, "Oh, I get it," "That's how it works," and "I knew that" (interpreted as "I knew that I knew that as soon as someone else said it").

#### How First Nations Students Got Help.

The ten First Nations students in the two classes elicited help in ways distinct from those described above. No First Nations children participated voluntarily in sidebar instruction, yet they did elicit and receive help. Two features marked the helping scenarios: timing and props.

Help was elicited almost always at the very end of class when departure of the helping staff was imminent, or after school when many of the general population and identified students were anxious to leave. The First Nations students were rarely anxious to leave and often initiated discussions and help in what became a critical window of opportunity for rapport-building and instructional scaffolding. They either approached helping personnel alone or with a First Nations friend, and never in the presence of a non-First Nations student.

The First Nation students did not appear to have a preference among the four adults who routinely worked in their classroom, but they did show preferences in helping conditions. Nothing enhanced the helping conditions more for the First Nations students than time alone with a helper. Dawdling was a perfected art and classroom teachers accepted and smiled easily about these students' desires to stay after school or during breaks when suddenly help was important. Second in apparent importance to these students was the quietness of the sidebar environment which they created. They spoke more quietly than the other students (a marker of the disenfranchised, a cultural preference, or an individual phenomenon in 8 of 10 children?), and in so doing affected the loudness and tone of their helpers' voices. A relaxed and unhurried demeanor seemed to elicit better feedback from this group. The use of props to initiate help was also intentional and subtle. For example, Terri and Estie would place a binder at the very upper left corner of their desks, timed to arrive at the tumbling point just as a helper neared (with a frequency of 8 out of 12 participant observations in Tina's class). This meant, "I want you to look at something." When the helper recognized the bait and said, "May I look at something here?" the sidebar would begin. Other props for activating attention included a ruler extended three-quarters off the desk or their current project held behind their backs while they remained face forward. More than the typical at-risk population, First Nations students would ask for help in pairs; it was evident from their first comments that they had

discussed the difficulty with one another before approaching. A typical opening approach was: "We think that..." They seldom asked a question, but paused to see whether their thoughts were on track. Their commentaries were distinctly characterized by a playfulness and teasing, displaying humor rarely evident in the large group context.

First Nations students used the help board with less frequency than either the general population or students with LD. When they did use the help board they did not make a special trip, but sauntered over to the board en route to sharpening a pencil, going to the washroom, or depositing their papers in the In baskets. When they went to the help board they signed for one another, even though there did not seem to be any verbal exchange or request from their friend to do so. The general population and identified students did not sign for one another even once in the three-month study period; First Nations students in one class did it all of six times that they signed up.

As it became evident that the First Nations students asked for help in subtle but intentional ways, the IST introduced the use of polished stones to two of the First Nations girls. She told them that she noticed they liked to put their books and rulers in the corner of their desks to let her know it was a good time to look at their work; she suggested they might like to use a polished stone for that purpose instead. It was presented as if it were a regular way of getting help with a clear suggestion that the IST used stones on a regular basis for this purpose. The method was introduced to decrease the number of times that students moved their books up and down the desk (interrupting their written work). The girls said nothing, but giggled and accepted the polished stones, using them routinely in the last month of the study to solicit feedback and help. The TAs were notified of this small protocol and found the First Nations students involved themselves more often in sidebars after the stones were introduced. The IST had anticipated that the stones would go missing and that other students would ask to use stones to signal for help. She was wrong on both counts. Despite the aesthetic appeal of the stones, not to mention the potential for fiddling

and noise-making, students did not ask for them (although a few commented that they liked them). Papers went missing, books disappeared, writing tools were lost, but not the stones.

The One Minute Mentor: Communiqués as Leg-up Measures.

Three school administrators and two school counsellors were requested frequently by the IST to intervene on behalf of the at-risk students. Even though it was not part of the original study design, the researcher tracked their support within three weeks of the beginning of the study. In sixteen specific occasions over the three-month period, their response in every instance was positive, prompt and visibly effective. This effectiveness was evident from information that the at-risk children conveyed to the IST or by noting results.

An analysis of others' willingness, promptness and effectiveness in responding to requests for help pointed to four factors that may warrant further investigation, given the change in roles and responsibilities from individual to shared. The idea of shared responsibilities is not used here in any euphemistic sense or with any suggestion that shared responsibility means no one takes responsibility.

1. What they were asked to do was specific, confined to a specific time frame, often not requiring more than two to three minutes, but always requiring intentionality.

2. From the time of tracking (three weeks after start-up), the request for help was made 9 out of 16 times in writing; this appeared to effect the promptness of response.

3. The request was phrased in language that communicated a comment about why that person may be in the best position to intervene or validate a student's availability: "I noticed you are in there at lunch"; likeability: "He said he liked your math class and I thought this might encourage him"; Expertise: "I saw you with him in the hallway; you seem to be able to get him to talk. I know he'd like to show it (new laptop) to someone who knows about computers."

4. In eight of the requests, a small nugget of information was provided ("His Dad just bought him a new laptop" or "He made it to school every day this week").

5. Communiqués were careful not to convey assumptions about administrative and counseling availability to perform these small leg-up measures. Administrative and counseling roles in large schools are notoriously demanding and complex. Only the individual professional could decide whether this request would fit a schedule. Having at least a preliminary understanding of the scope of their responsibilities, it surprised the researcher that every one of her requests of five different people were carried out so promptly.

This incidental data supports the literature on the importance of vertical mentoring often used as a support framework in schools to identify and connect at-risk children with adults (Foster & Anderson, 1990). Although this was not a structured help tool for LD learners or general population students, it may warrant further investigation. When professional staff engaged in these small leg-up measures, at risk students took notice.

### Summary of Findings

This study identifies three dynamics: on-the-hook and off-the-hook language; leg-up measures; and conveying availability for help. On and off-the-hook language suggests that accountability and face-saving in teacher language plays an important role in participant students' involvement in literacy activities. Leg-up measures refer to small changes in the routines and classroom practices that help in leveling the playing field for learners with LD—scaffolding components for learners of this profile. The study also pointed to the communication of availability as an important condition under which learners seemed more likely to initiate contact with help personnel in the classroom.

In addition, the role of the TA surfaced in the data as a very important source of practical support and advocacy, despite the differences in perception of professionals and paraprofessionals about service delivery. It was clear from the data that professionals and paraprofessionals defined literacy support in markedly distinct ways, largely dictated by both the constraints of their roles and/or their perceptions of constraints. Specific ways in which the classroom teacher and the IST defined and provided support resulted, in one classroom, in their working at cross-purposes for much of the three-month study. In the second classroom, concepts and attitudes surrounding support triggered a cascade of collaborative skills, which diminished any differing priorities or perspectives, resulting largely in coordinated and effective support.

Except for one grade 6 teacher, all adult participants exhibited attributes of flexibility, empathy and discretion, which played a critical role in conveying to the students the availability of support. Teacher and TA communication of such availability seemed to activate a set of conditions whereby at-risk learners would more readily approach help personnel in the classroom. This occurred much less frequently (3 out of 10 participant observations) in Jesse's classroom than in Tina's, where eleven of the twelve participant observations could be described as coordinated and effective support (see definition of effective support in Chapter 1)

1. Insufficient planning and lack of communication among the three teachers regarding their respective roles and responsibilities sometimes negatively impacted the support the children received. One type of mini-lesson, sidebar teaching (described earlier in this study), appeared to positively impact the quality of literacy lessons in both classrooms. Sidebars focussed on scaffolding and constructing a dialogue with four distinct features: validation, questions, prompts, and nudges.

## CHAPTER 5

### Summary, Implications, and Conclusions

#### Summary

The research reported here was a preliminary, exploratory investigation of integrated support practices for five students with learning disabilities (LD) in two grade 6 classrooms in a middle school setting. The findings from this study add to the existing literature by identifying three dynamics of literacy integration support.

1. The findings present definitions and descriptions of specific helping practices and attitudes of staff and students, which served to either provide access to literacy activities or to restrict that access.

2. The findings identify attitudes and practices which can diminish effective literacy support for learners of this profile.

3. The findings reveal that how classroom teachers understand and interpret literacy instructional practices, and what they believe about learning and teaching, can have a major effect in three specific areas: a) adaptation and modification of curricula to suit individual needs; b) ways for learners to represent knowledge; and c) views on their learners' school-related abilities. Without explicit understanding of these three concepts, the two teachers were often like map-readers without a legend.

The research specifically suggests that the ways in which teachers, support professionals, and teacher assistants convey their willingness to help is critical in determining whether students of this profile avail themselves of that help. Learners in this study, however unwittingly, were granted or denied literacy access by those employed to “remove barriers and provide appropriate services to ensure [their] schooling is equitable, of high quality, relevant, accessible and accountable” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1995, p. 1). Learners were enticed to solicit help through adult

department, language use, prosodic features of language, and structured help parameters. When learners chose to access help, they gained an opportunity to participate in literacy quite likely the most significant gate-opening opportunity in our culture. Teacher dispositions and understandings in regard to multiple ways of producing, knowing and displaying that knowledge figured prominently in the findings.

Learners with LD appeared cognizant of their borderline status in the classroom and sought ways to maintain their dignity in cognitive endeavors by carefully choosing if, when, how, and to whom they would communicate their needs for help. Adults in helping roles exercised critical judgments to decide when learners needed to be accountable for their work and when they required increased gracious scaffolding. Such critical judgments are born from subtle understandings, explicit or otherwise, of the complexities of teaching, learning, and the degree of empathy required in the teaching role.

A willingness to persevere in the light of difficulties was generated through respectful nudging, prompting, engaging, and validating of learners. This willingness to persevere faded when learners were faced with activities of marginal aptness and when nagging and confrontation were the main tools used by the classroom teacher to promote accountability and compliance.

Teachers used literacy practices that put learners at the center of a text. In these practices students could reach out and make connections between themselves and the literary or expository figures, events and themes of their readings. This allowed at-risk learners in one class to participate fully in a literate community where ideas voiced were as important as ideas written. In a second class, learners scurried to the sidelines, in part because the literacy activities offered little relevance to them. On the margins, they encountered like-minded reluctants and proceeded to occupy themselves generating

ways to look busy, to avoid eye contact, and, to avoid much-needed practice in the ways of words.

When the glitter of technology drew students in from the sidelines, some were discouraged from participation in electronic literacy because of their problems with traditional literacy. They needed welcoming invitations to participate in learning by sensitive adults who fully appreciated their roles and the significant impact of missing out on literacy opportunities. Instead of receiving invitations, in one class the at-risk children made their home in the margins, occasionally emerging to run a cost-benefit assessment of getting the help they needed. When the cost was perceived as too high, they retreated and hoped they would be left alone. This was especially true for First Nations children. It raises some concerns and requires further research to determine whether this population has equal access to literacy practice.

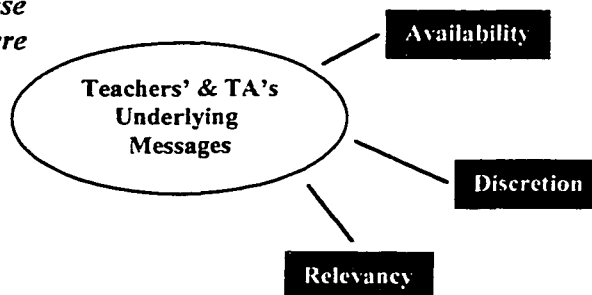
The ways in which helping personnel relate to at-risk learners appear to be an important component in whether learners with LD do well or poorly. Making classrooms places where our least literate want to remain long enough to experience aesthetic literacy, which by its very nature encompasses and surpasses functional literacy, is paramount. Given the explicit connections between literacy levels, school completion and quality of life, it is crucial to study those classroom practices that lead to literacy scaffolding that is effective for both learners identified with LD and their First Nation peers who appear to also be at-risk.

#### Highlighting Important Aspects of the Study: Visual Displays

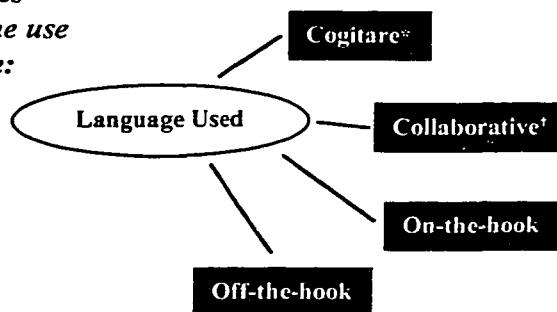
The summary of findings below makes use of simple, visual displays of information to highlight important aspects of the study. These iconic displays are generally followed by brief discussions of the implications of the highlighted findings for both classroom practice and future research.

## Figure 1 - Sidebar Lessons: Ways of Talking

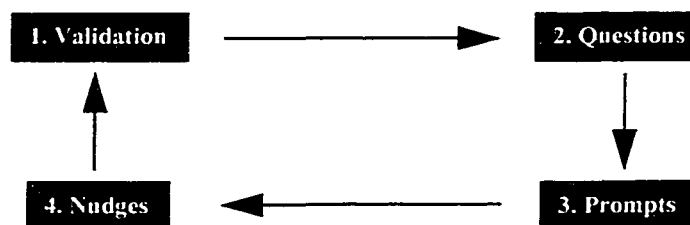
*Participation in literacy activities for students with LD was facilitated when these underlying messages were conveyed:*



*These underlying messages were conveyed through the use of these types of language:*



*Students were more likely to participate in meaningful literacy activities when teachers and TAs used the following sequence of instructional conversation:*



\* Costa, 1991.

†Chang & Wells, 1987.

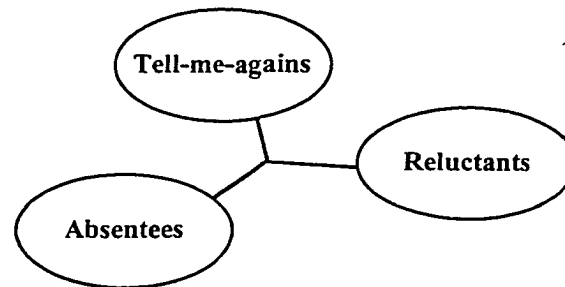
**Figure 1**

As suggested by Figure 1, the nature of instructional conversations take on added significance when dealing with at-risk students who are sensitive to both our silence and our language, in all its complexity. At-risk students require collaborative talk that builds on the intended meaning of the learner, as opposed to focussing on the actual words (Wells, 1987). Holding learners accountable for their learning or letting them off-the-hook when professionals deemed this to be in the best interest of their overall development may be a critical call when we consider the significance of keeping at-risk learners on our team. The quality of such interactions appears to influence how children choose to work with us and/or engage with their literacy materials. Future researchers may wish to focussed on the type of language used in helping children with at-risk profiles for the underlying messages and sequence of dialogues as outlined above to determine their significance.

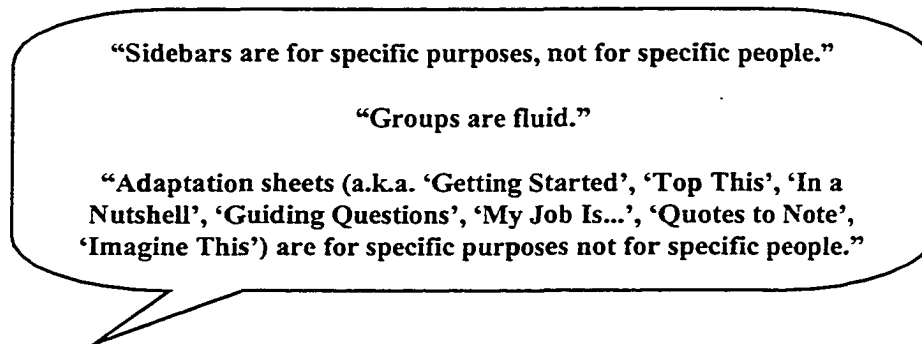
## Figure 2 - Sidebar Lessons: Satellite Peers

Satellite Peers rode on the coattails of instruction for students with LD by eavesdropping and using adaptation sheets.

*General population students coalesced into three categories:*



*General population students participated in sidebar lessons when they got the following messages:*



*Satellite Peers enhanced the sidebar interaction in two ways:*

- ✓ Provided affective support for peers with LD
- ✓ Generated more ideas

*Satellite Peers also enhanced instructional dynamics by providing specific feedback about the usefulness of adaptation sheets.*

Figure 2

Children with LD and the people who love them are increasingly reluctant to segregate them from their neighbourhood friends, classmates, and siblings in order to give them an education. Many find segregation reprehensible. This study suggests that other children may benefit from pull-in support that is initially targeted and financed by funds for children with LD designations. In the exploratory data of this study, the potential for a win/win situation was evident in both what the satellite peers received (more explicit, on-target opportunities to participate in meaningful literacy activities) and what they gave (affective support, terrific ideas, and specific feedback about the quality of adaptations). Toward the end of the study, their feedback began to influence the instructional adaptations in positive ways. When teachers focus on mini-lessons for specific purposes, instead of for specific people, then we teachers avoid trapping learners into prescribed notions of what they can and cannot do.

The fluid option of the sidebar was a feature that children appreciated and fully used in Tina's class mainly because of the underlying respect the children had for one another, their teachers, and their learning opportunities. Movement in and out of sidebars was done with discretion by the children, with only minimal prompts and reminders to do so quietly and to make entries and exits at the end of a comment instead of in the middle of a peer's sentence or question. These respectful behaviours most likely were established by how the classroom teacher spoke to the children, and by her genuine openness to working collaboratively with another professional.

### Figure 3 - Sidebar Lessons: First Nations

**First Nations students constructed sidebars in distinctly different ways than the students with learning disabilities or the satellite peers.**

*The data suggests these questions guided students' decision-making regarding initiating help:*

#### Students with LD

Do I think other students are having difficulty with this assignment?

Has a student asked for help who does not usually ask for help?

Are the Integration Support Personnel within close proximity to get eye contact?

How many names are on the Help Board?

#### First Nations Students

Is the teacher or TA alone?

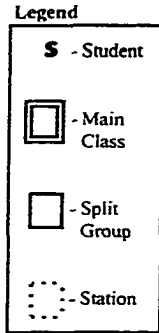
Is it near the end of the teaching block or natural transitions?

Does my First Nations friend need help too?

Will the teacher or TA notice my signals for help?  
(signals included: placing book at upper corner of the desk and placing work behind their back)

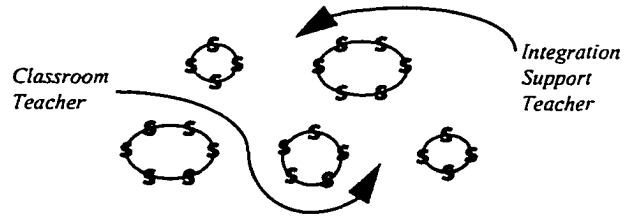
Is the classroom quiet enough for me to get help without speaking loudly?

**Figure 4 - Co-Teaching Configurations**

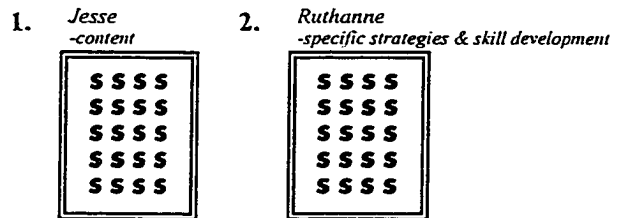


*Sidebar instruction permeated all configurations.*

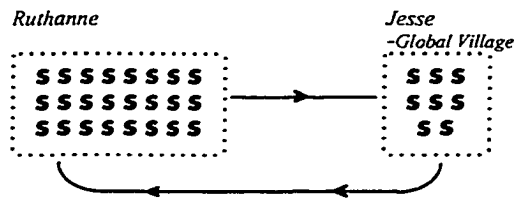
**Co-operative Teaching**



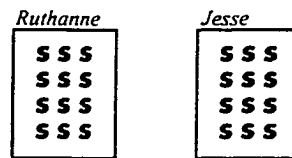
**Complementary Instruction**



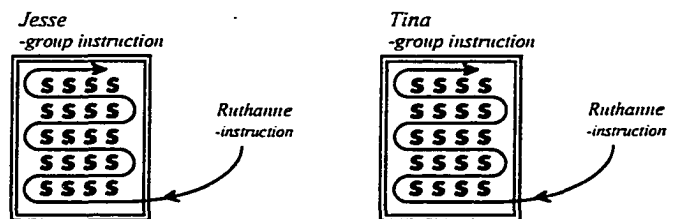
**Station Teaching**



**Parallel Teaching**



**Troubleshoot Teaching**



#### Figure 4

Sidebar instruction occurred in all of the co-teaching configurations featured above. While the cooperative, and troubleshooting approach were used frequently in Tina's class, station and parallel configurations were found more frequently in Jesse's class, due to her focus on the Global Village inquiry station. The complementary approach was used three times in Jesse's class as a means of providing at-risk students with some content area literacy instruction. The teachers and the IST developed marginal glosses for the Social Studies unit that the students were working on in the inquiry station and reviewed some paraphrasing strategies for succinct readings of text materials. The gloss and paraphrasing were inadequate compared to what students needed to function at this station, but they did provide a bridge to the initial topic. The workshops that the teachers had attended the previous year (which I had co-presented with the District Co-ordinator for High and Low Incidence Students) facilitated work together and gave the classroom teachers and the IST a common working vocabulary about the structures.

The choices that the teachers were afforded in the beginning, regarding the configuration of preference, also contributed to ease in the co-teaching scenario, even if it was difficult to overcome some of the other challenges inherent in co-teaching with several partners. The merits of these models in providing meaningful teacher-directed and student-directed learning cannot be overemphasized. Data suggest that as teachers stepped out of the traditional one-person-up-front dispensing model, interactions among students and between students and their teachers increased substantially. Sufficient research is available on only the cooperative teaching approach, which has shown significant positive results for learners of diverse backgrounds. Future research needs to look at other configurations, as well as the components that influence the quality of teaching and learning that occurs in each. For example, the parallel teaching model (see Chapter 2 for a full explanation) worked best in Jesse's and Tina's classes when it culminated in a team game with a competitive component. Parallel teaching was excellent for motivating students to review a portion of their work with a Jeopardy type of game at the end. Tina, acting on her perceived need for students to revisit their literacy response repertoire, organized a parallel session with benefits that lasted for weeks. Students made use of a wider and often more appropriate (in terms of their purpose for writing) literacy strategy to show and expand the comprehension of their readings.

Circulation patterns of teachers engaged in co-teaching are a significant part of what makes the configurations workable and worthwhile. The difficulties which occurred when teachers returned to their desks once children became engaged in their work made the IST realize the necessity of emphasizing that circulation is a significant part of the teaching role. It was very encouraging to see how much this changed toward the end of the study. The student teacher in Jesse's class participated in much of the station teaching work and the co-operative groupings. Her skills in directing and guiding students' inquiries were markedly improved by the end of the study. Tina and I both found the power of two teachers significant in each of the three configurations that Tina opted for, and both of us agreed it would be difficult to return to a more traditional format. Jesse did not verbally express a preference for a teacher configuration, but made most use of station teaching.

Figure 5 - List of Literacy Strategies

<u>Presenters:</u>	<u>Ruthanne</u>	<u>Tina</u>	<u>Jesse*</u>
Literacy Strategy	Venn diagrams	Guess the Category	Webs
	Double-entry journals	S.C.A.M.P.E.R. (substitute, combine, amplify, modify, eliminate, reduce)	
	Reading inventories	Substitute the descriptive word (adjective)	
	Artifact collections based on story	Flow charts	
	Promotional brochures (persuasive writing)	Line charts	
	Hamburger strategy (how to plan a paragraph that tastes good)	Maps of neighborhoods from the novel	
	Paraphrasing	Papier mache	
	Writing like an expert	Wanted posters	
	Sociogram	Quilts & mandelas	
	Timelines	Cloze procedures	
	Marginal gloss	Plot profiles	
		Comic strips	
		Story exaggeration	
		Decision-making table	
		Character report card	

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\* Jesse did not initiate literacy strategy instruction during this semester study. Her instructional approach centered on an inquiry station called World Community where her emphasis was on integrating social studies and language arts.

### Figure 5

Literacy strategy instruction was a central component of Language arts lessons in Tina's classroom, whether the IST was present or not. It was a significant aspect of her teaching repertoire which, as she stated, was enhanced by the IST's contributions, but well-established prior to her arrival. In Jesse's class, students used literacy strategies at the initiation of the IST, but during the three months of the study the data showed no evidence of this approach as part of Jesse's teaching. Jesse made use of a discovery-inquiry approach, World Community, which she said emphasized integration of Social Studies and Language arts. It was difficult to find instances of language arts instruction or engagement outside of the lessons lead by the IST. The four observations of Jesse working with the TA, and the observations when Jesse was "leading" the teaching, focused almost exclusively on housekeeping matters. The Social Studies unit, while of interest to all of her students, appeared accessible only to the self-directed learners in her class.

It was clearly evident from the earliest days that the literacy strategies and the building of a response repertoire in Tina's class were appealing, engaging and worthwhile for the children in this study, in terms of their literacy involvement. The analysis of why the literacy strategies worked as reported in Chapter 4, boiled down to three central attributes:

1. They were clearly connected to the lived experiences of the children in relation to the text.
2. They had high visual appeal and aesthetic appeal.
3. The explanations of when, how, and why a student might use them to talk about, engage or approach text was teacher-directed, with fading of teacher involvement throughout the school term as the children developed a repertoire and exercised their choices about how to interact or respond to a text.

### Individual Educational Plans: More than Lip Service

Findings from this study suggest a need to shift the focus from Individual Educational Plans as fixed documents to individual educational planning as an on-going process, if educators hope to accomplish more than the contractual requirements of funding sources. Throughout the study it was clear that teachers did not use the lengthy IEPs as working frameworks in planning. The lack of relevance of the IEP suggests:

1. Students may be better served by individual education planning which occurs in regular increments, along with the monthly or unit planning currently viewed by teachers as useful and pragmatic. Pulling forward brief specific and tangible recommendations for adaptations to each identified child's learning folder at each planning session may decrease the futility of creating unused documents.

2. Students, as primary stakeholders, need to be included in the planning process, at least for the parts that focus on recommended adaptations, so that this is made explicit for the students.

3. Individual education planning needs to take into account the teacher's unit plans and teaching style to prevent the document from becoming so vague as to be meaningless.

4. Support practitioners need to have scheduled meetings with teachers in between IEP meetings to ensure that they are aware of each team member's role in seeing that identified changes in materials, practices and learning outcomes actually occur.

5. Accountability measures which honour the way teachers plan (around theme, topic, or concepts) need to be implemented on a routine basis to assure that adaptations for identified children occur. Standard forms currently used for long-term plans need to include a section alongside unit plans and Prescribed Learning Outcomes that focus teachers on adaptations and modifications.

6. Simultaneously with practicum planning, teacher education programs could integrate the teaching of planning for diverse learners in explicit ways (see Appendix Q).

7. Teacher assistants, due to their critical role in supporting children-at-risk, need to be included in I.E. planning.

### Block Scheduling and Meeting the Needs of Learners

In Jesse's class, the IST was struck by how often the bell worked against the teachers. Some of the organizational issues of block scheduling in large middle schools run contrary to good practice. Sometimes in Jesse's class the "glitches" would barely have been resolved when the bell would signal that it was time for the IST to go to the next class and Jesse to move on to the next subject area. Jesse made efforts to bypass the bell by integrating some of her core subject areas of Language arts and Social Studies; however, because she taught core French to grade 7 students back-to-back with her Language arts block every day, carrying on with what had been started in Language arts was not an option. The vice-principal, who taught Math in this classroom, was waiting at the door at the beginning of Block Two to start his lesson so that Jesse could move to grade 8 to teach French. This organizational component was less problematic in Tina's class, partly because of the predictability of some of her routines, and as a consequence of her considerable organizational abilities to make best use of support personnel. Tina managed to constantly push the teaching agenda to the top and keep the organizational glitches and administrivia to a minimum. In addition to her grade 6 classroom responsibilities, she also taught art to grade 8 students. She structured the schedule that she did have control over so that the humanities subjects (language arts, socials, career and personal planning) did not occur at times when she

had to leave to teach art. She also opted for math blocks (which she found more easily contained within the 50-minute structure).

Many of the at-risk children in both classrooms had difficulty with the demands of block schedules. Having the right supplies and arriving at the right time was difficult for many of them, especially in the early weeks of the study. By the same token, students also seemed to enjoy the diversity of content offered in each of their specialty classes.

Unlike in their K-5 elementary system, the teachers teaching art, technology, photography, graphic design, applied skills, and french were specialists who conveyed an enthusiasm and expertise for their domain they often had not encountered in their small feeder elementary schools. (See Appendix U, for brochure about the school, written by Sam).

Larger issues of school reform likely need to be addressed in order for teachers and children to have the kind of flexibility in scheduling required to engage in learning for which they are passionate and still have the access to teachers with a love of their subject that the block timetabling affords.

Reflections on the Co-teaching Experience: Don't Have Time, Don't Know How, Not My Job Revisited.

From the earliest days of the study, both classroom teachers were having significant influences on my understandings of what it means to co-teach, to support, to adapt, to work alongside another professional, and what they actually meant by "don't have time," "don't know how," "not my job." My respect for the demanding role of classroom teacher and the complexity of the skill set required was augmented by Tina's professional work on behalf of all her students and her willingness to discuss openly with me her differing priorities. A couple of times in the study she said that she found my practices with children with difficulties conveyed favouritism toward them and may

have diminished the needs of other children with legitimate "unidentified" needs. As a result of her feedback I reflected on the delicacies of the advocacy aspect of the role and the distinct sense of responsibility that many support staff have for the children "on their caseloads." Advocacy for students with LD may have resulted in a lack of empathy for their peers in the integrated setting despite my efforts to intercede in favourable ways on behalf of children with LD. Toward the end of our co-teaching time I had adopted several of Tina's inclusioary practices especially in regard to questioning and stacking the odds in favour of whoever would most benefit from the learning opportunities, whether identified with special needs or not. Nonetheless, a note of caution is required: Those of us in roles of integration support still need to avoid spreading our efforts and energies too thinly, resulting in insignificant contributions for learners including the children for whom we are contracted to look out for.

In Jesse's classroom, to the shame of all involved, the children did not receive the support they deserved because the adults simply could not pull the important strands of support together. The dangling strands included: philosophical cohesion around teaching roles and responsibilities, mindful planning that is actually carried out, and some executive decision-making about who needs to do what, when, and how. Given the difficult context of support for the IST, many things that before the study the IST would have taken for granted were counted as a success:

1. Jesse was still was still talking to the IST openly about her concerns and children under our charge even if these conversaions were circular.
2. The identified children got some support from co-teaching segments that were not overridden with interruptions and poor planning.
3. The IST developed a tremendous respect for the need to do more groundwork in the area of building common understandings of the role and responsibilities prior to co-teaching partner arrangements.

4. The IST accepted (albeit with some difficulty) that the classroom teacher by virtue of her role has most of the power over whether instructional, routine and material adaptations actually occur. Support personnel may influence, encourage, support, and advocate but if one is in that particular classroom for only four hours per week instead of twenty hours per week then one's efforts and influence have limitations that correlate with that time commitment.

5. Co-teaching partners need time and structured opportunities to unpack their assumptions about the roles and responsibilities, and to have opportunities to call into question one another's practices.

The three refrains from the literature for not using recommended practices, "Don't know how," "Don't have time," "Not my job," figured prominently in this study. Co-teaching may be an effective option for closing the gap between desired and feasible practices. Special educators and regular educators working alongside one another come to appreciate the complexity and demands of one another's roles. In such roles, the hierarchy is flattened and working conditions are similar. It is unlikely that special educators will make recommendations for practice that are not pragmatic; just as unlikely are teachers' cries of "don't know how" when someone is on hand all year long in the same classroom who is at least willing to suggest how. Teachers working collaboratively can profit from one another's areas of expertise and make effective changes in the best interests of all learners.

In the school culture, anyone who does not enroll a class is suspect as a source of advice, let alone for modelling. I believe credibility of special educators escalates in proportion to their time spent actually making adaptations for learners in the integrated context, as opposed to talking about how to do it in the integrated context despite the inherent difficulties of shared responsibilities. Tina's and my collaboration provided some evidence that it is possible to support a range of learners in a classroom setting

when teachers have cultivated dispositions of mind that are receptive to the perspectives and unique skills of colleagues and students. Even in Jesse's class, where support was fragmented, the results of co-teaching were influential in ensuring that children received some meaningful support. Had the duration of the study been long-term (even one full school year), it is possible that Jesse and I would have resolved their differing priorities. In the context of this three-month study, conflicting philosophies and priorities often kept participants estranged from the kind of cohesive support students so badly need. It was also clear that teachers such as Jesse (not entirely unlike students requiring special support) need sensitivity, leg-up measures and ample time to make changes in practice that optimize learning for children of diverse backgrounds. The structures in place in this study obviously did not meet Jesse's needs for support.

### The Privilege of Helping

Showing up, it has been said, is half the job. But showing up may count for little or nothing if those who one is employed to assist do not perceive one's presence as helpful. Showing up may make little difference if a wall of teacher talk blocks the avenues of assistance, if power differentials between teachers and TAs prohibit efforts to be helpful. Showing up may not be half the job if children scurry to metaphorical safe zones upon arrival of the helper.

If children are glad to see their helpers because of an increase in the odds of experiencing that hard-to-match feeling when work is done well and someone notices, when something about one's ideas is noteworthy--where justice and kindness are daily experiences--then showing up is more than half the job. The two composites below were constructed to suggest student participant sentiment on this topic.

My helpers clear the obstacles so I can participate in literacy learning. Because my helpers structure fair access and nurture desirable notions of justice and equity, I too get to partake in literacy activities including the 'new literacy.' My

teachers and administrators lobby the developers of teaching materials to get them to think of me when they construct hyperlinks and design literacy activities. Faculties of Education educate my teachers with students like me in mind so my teachers say: "I know how, I have time, this is my job".

Success in any context often revolves around two pivotal notions: relevancy and discretion. Certainly in this study, adults' art of conveying both of these notions, and participants' lived understandings of relevancy and discretion meant success for learners with at-risk profiles.

Show me discretion when you help and how you help, and keep your help relevant. Let me exercise some discretion in when and how I ask for help, discretion in shaping the help environment. Offer me considerate text for my consideration. Talk to me in cogitare and wait long enough for me to answer. Vertically and horizontally, spread good news about me and let me eavesdrop and ride on your coattails for a while. Remind me again why I want to read. Let me glimpse the beauty in written words while you seek value in my spoken ones. Only then may you call yourself my helper.

As is so aptly presented in The Way We Are (Visser, 1994) ordinary things, humble and routine demeanors reveal much about the philosophies, contradictions, and absurdities inherent in them. Only as we look for indications of both merit and redress in the daily details of the 'help' setting are we likely to change the quality of literacy support for vulnerable students.

"I have found that specificities reveal principles by focussing on small, humble, taken-for-granted objects and demeanors. You can tease out of them philosophies, choices, prejudices, causes, contradictions, tragedies, absurdities. I refuse to accept the ordinary as dull: common things--it stands to reason--are the most important things, the ones with history and politics and meaning, the ones with clout.... (p. xix)

For ordinary things are what we all know, in common. They express consensual order, what we, as a society, accept and demand and think. They can also reveal to us what we believe but never say: they can show us something of the underlying structure of social reality. If we don't take care to look at the things we take 'for granted' or as 'given,' and try to understand them, their very ordinariness will blinker us, will start to order us around." (p. xx)

The Way We Are. Visser, 1994

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Appendix A: Teacher Consent Form

From: Ruthanne Tobin (Integration Support Teacher)

I would like to conduct a study from September to December, 1997 regarding the students with identified learning disabilities that are enrolled in your class.

The purpose of this research is find out how to best serve children with such difficulties in the classroom setting. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time for any reason. It includes two steps.

- 1) During each of two weekly visits to your class, I would be recording notes about these students on tape. You would be invited to listen to the tapes a few times during the semester or as often as you would like. After listening to my notes, you may choose to add clarifying comments, questions or further information that I may have missed during my visits.
- 2) If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed on tape regarding the children in your class. After the interview you will be presented with a transcript at which time you may decide to add or delete any comments.

All information collected while I am in your classroom; and during the interviews, is held in strict confidence. No one, including school administrators, parents, or colleagues will have access to this information. Only my advisor at UVic (Dr. Preece) will see the raw data (names will be deleted). Tapes and notes will be kept in a locked drawer and destroyed one year after the project is completed.

All data collected will be coded so that your identity, the identity of the children and of the school is protected.

Please feel free to ask me further questions regarding this study at any time. Your help with this project is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Ruthanne Tobin

I have read the information above and I am willing to participate in this study.

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_ Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B: Teacher Assistant Consent Form

From: Ruthanne Tobin  
Integration Support Teacher, \_\_\_\_\_Middle School

Dear Teacher Assistants:

You are invited to participate in a study I am proposing to do at \_\_\_\_\_ Middle School between September and December of this school year. The purpose of the study is to find the best ways to support students with learning disabilities in the reading and writing areas.

If you choose to participate in this study I would be observing the identified students in divisions 6-1 and 6-4 during the times that you provide support. This would involve only three or four observation blocks during mutually convenient times in semester one. In addition, I would be asking to interview you about your work with these students. During the observations and interview I will be wearing a small microphone to tape record the sessions. Your privacy will be protected in several ways:

- 1) tapes will be kept in a locked drawer at the university and destroyed one year after data collection;
- 2) your name will be changed in my notes;
- 3) access to your tapes will only be available to you and my university supervisor, Dr. Alison Preece who oversees my study;
- 4) the data collected is not available to anyone who supervises your work including teachers and administrators;
- 5) you will be given a written transcript of the interview tape, at which time you may choose to add or delete any comments.

You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. Your tapes and notes would be destroyed and any data will not be used in my final report.

The study is part of a requirement for my doctoral degree at the University of Victoria. It has been approved by the School District's ethics committee.

Thank you for helping me with this project.

Sincerely yours,  
supervisor

Dissertation

Ruthanne Tobin  
721-7884

Dr. Alison Preece  
721-7759

I have listen to, read and understood the purpose of the study described here. I understand that my privacy will be protected and that I can quit the study at any time.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C: Parent Consent Form

From: Ruthanne Tobin  
 Integration Support Teacher, \_\_\_\_\_ Middle School  
 June 24, 1997

Dear Parents:

I would like to invite your child to participate in a study I'll be doing next fall. The purpose of the study is to find the best ways to support students with learning disabilities at the middle school level.

The study will take place at \_\_\_\_\_ Middle School from September to December, 1997. During two blocks of time when I am in the classroom, I would be observing your child in ways that would not interfere with school work or embarrass anyone. The purpose of the observation is to see which strategies and ways of helping work best.

You and your child would also be invited to participate separately in a tape-recorded interview at Bayside concerning your school experiences. Information shared during the interviews will be completely confidential. Tapes and notes will be stored in a locked drawer and destroyed one year after the study is complete. You will be presented with a written record of your interview to give you an opportunity to add or remove any comments.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. Whether you give permission for your child to participate in this study will not effect the quantity or quality of support that your child receives.

The general findings from this study will be shared with parents, teachers and students at the end of the next school year. Your child's identity will not be revealed. The study will be part of a requirement for my graduate degree at the University of Victoria.

If you would like more information about this study, please contact me at home at 658-4871. If you have no objection to your child participating in this study, please sign and return the attached form at your earliest convenience. After receipt of parent permission, I will explain the study to each student individually, and invite each of them to participate. Thank you in advance for helping me with this project.

Sincerely yours,

Ruthanne Tobin

I have read the information above and give permission for (child's name)

\_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this study. In giving permission, I understand that my child will be asked to participate, and will be given a clear explanation of the study.

Signature of Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Signed:  
 Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix D: Student Consent Form

Dear Student:

You are invited to participate in a study on how students get help with their language arts school work in grade six at \_\_\_\_\_ Middle School.

Participating in the study is a choice and not a requirement. Your decision will not make any difference in your regular school work or your grades. You will simply be helping me learn more about sixth grade students and their learning.

If you choose to participate, I will be tape recording some of our language arts classes so that I can later study how your teachers, and your teacher assistant are helping students complete their school work. Since I am in your classroom a few times per week to help your teacher and all the students, none of your classmates will know who is participating and who is not.

Also, if you participate, I will be asking you a few questions about how you learn best and your answers will be tape recorded to help me remember what you said. No one will listen to the tapes except my professor at the university. Everything you say will be kept private. When I write my notes about this study your name will be changed to protect your privacy and these notes and tapes will be stored in a locked drawer so no one else will get this information.

You may choose to stop participating at any time for any reason. To stop participating all you have to do is tell your parents, teacher or other adult that you trust. You do not have to tell your reason. If you do stop participating all the information that you gave me in our interview and during class time will be cut up. Your grades will not be affected by whether you are participating or not.

If you would like to participate in this study please sign the form at the bottom and return it to me this week.

Thank you for helping me with this project.

Sincerely yours,

Dissertation  
Supervisor

Mrs. Tobin  
721-7884

Dr. Alison Preece  
721-7759

I have listened to, read and understood the purpose of the study described here. I understand that my privacy will be protected and that I can quit the study at any time.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix E: Courtesy Letter to Administrators

From: Ruthanne Tobin  
Integration Support Teacher, \_\_\_Middle School

Dear Admin.Team:

In consultation with \_\_\_staff, school district \_\_\_ educational directive committee and UVIC ethics committee; I have been granted permission to conduct a small study at \_\_\_from September to December of this school year.

The purpose of the study is to examine literacy support practices for students with learning disabilities at the middle school level. This research involves audio-taped observations and interviews in two Grade six classrooms.

Letters of informed consent has been solicited from eight students and their parents and teachers.A sample is attached for your information.

In the design of this study, I have taken measures to ensure that this will not interfere or detract from the quality of integration support that I provide at \_\_\_\_Interviews, field notes and analysis will take place on my own time. In a preliminary process to prepare for this research, I have (during my own time) conducted interviews with parents, integration support teachers from the incoming elementary schools and the eight children. This has culminated in detailed profile sheets of each student for use by their classroom teacher which include suggestions for learning strategies, interpretation of WISC-R results into practical classroom suggestions and groundwork for eventual writing of Individual Educational Plans.

I would sincerely appreciate your support and fully expect that the study will benefit the school.

Please let me know if you would like further information.

Sincerely yours,

Ruthanne Tobin  
Integration Support Teacher.

Appendix F: Guiding Questions for Teacher Interview

How long have you been teaching? Have you had students with learning disabilities enrolled in your classroom before this year?

Can you describe the profile of your class (general comments about this group of students, the academic spread, special student considerations, behavioral problems etc)?

What is challenging about teaching students with learning disabilities?

What do you do to provide support for students with LD in your class? In particular, how do you manage to support their reading and writing development if it varies considerably from the rest of your class?

How can you tell if and when an identified student needs help during your class?

Is it the student's responsibility to request help from you or a peer? Have you told the student when and how to ask for help? Please describe.

Do you approach the identified students routinely or systematically at the beginning of independent work times to determine his or her understanding? If so what types of questions do you ask to ascertain whether he or she knows what to do and is able to do it?

Do you acknowledge to students with LD that they learn differently?

How do you communicate this acknowledgement?

Is this student having a successful year in your class. Why? Why not?

What are some thoughts or questions you have about these students when planning for this class?

How would you describe your teaching style?

Do you use co-operative models of instruction in your class? If yes, what has been your experience with the approach in regards to students with difficulties?

Do you sometimes adapt materials for students with LD other than decreasing the amount of work? If so, could you describe an adaptation that you have done in language arts or social studies?

Do your students sometimes make use of computer software programs other than word processing programs? If so please describe.

What personnel support do you and your students currently receive? Could you comment on the adequacy of this support?

If you were trying to improve service and support to children with learning disabilities what types of changes would you suggest?

Other than the changes that require more resources, what would you suggest personnel at \_\_\_\_\_ could do to improve support for identified children?

What benefits (if any) do you and your class derive from having inclass support personnel?

What are the drawbacks or challenges for you and your students with having in-class support personnel?

What resources have you drawn on in the school and school district to make your classroom workable for students of all abilities?

Appendix G: Guiding Questions for Interview

How long have you been a teaching assistant? Have you worked with students with learning disabilities before this school year?

What is involved in helping students with learning disabilities?

If there were such a thing as a typical block of support in your grade six classes how would you describe it?

How can you tell if and when an identified student needs help?

Is it the student's responsibility when and how to ask for help?

Please describe.

Do you approach the identified students routinely or systematically at the beginning of independent work times to determine his or her understanding?

If so what types of questions do you ask to figure out whether he or she knows what to do and is able to do it?

In your opinion, is this student having a successful year? Why? Why not?

How would you describe your job to someone who has never worked in this position?

Do you feel that you get sufficient direction and information to help and do your work?

Has anyone ever explained to you the specific nature of difficulties that your students with learning disabilities encounter in the classroom?

In your work with students, do you sometimes use adapted materials for students with LD, that is materials that are different from the rest of the class?

Do the students sometimes make use of computer software programs other than word processing programs? If so please describe.

If you were trying to improve service and support to children with learning disabilities what types of changes would you suggest?

Other than the changes that require more resources, what would you suggest personnel at \_\_\_\_\_ could do to improve support for identified children?

Appendix H: Guiding Questions for Parent Interview

How many children do you have? What are the ages of the children?

How long have you been aware that of your child's difficulty with respect to certain aspects of school work?

How did you learn about your child's disability?

How does your child shine at school and at home?

What are some of the challenges you face as a parent supporting \_\_\_\_\_ with this disability?

How was the transition from elementary school to middle school? Have there been any particular problems or challenges? What are they?

What are the positive aspects of this transition?

Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed on how your child is doing in school this year?

How does your child describe her progress?

What kind of help has your child received at school? How was this help delivered?

Try to think of a way the school would be able to improve helping your child. Are there any areas you feel are lacking?

In your opinion has your child received enough help at school or the kind of help that your child needs to be successful?

How would you say you provide support for your child at home? Specifically supporting your child in reading and writing development at home?

If your child needs help with her homework, are you able to tell?

Would you say you have taught your child when and how to ask for help?

Do you approach your child routinely or systematically before independent and co-work time to determine understanding?

Do you acknowledge to your child that she learns differently? How do you communicate that acknowledgment?

What else would like to say about your child?

Appendix I: Guiding Questions for Students

What is your full name and when is your birthday?

What kinds of things do you really like to get for your birthday?

Do you remember getting any books or comic books for a gift? What kind of books?

What types of things do you like to do? What are your interests?

What kind of reading do you do in Language Arts?

Are you reading a book right now? What is it about?

Do you like to read? Write?

Imagine you are reading or writing in class and your teacher is really busy but you are stuck, what would you do to get help?

Do you have any other ways to get help if those would not work?

What are two ways that someone has helped you in your Language Arts class?

How do you let your classroom teachers know when you need help? Do you find this easy or difficult?

When another person is in the class to help, either a support teacher, an integration teacher or a teacher assistant, how do you let them know you need help? Do you find the kind of help they give you is the kind of help you need?

Is there ever a situation when you are looking for a certain kind of help and you don't get what you need? Explain and give examples.

Do you ever feel that you get too much help?

What are some things that you can think of that you would like to change with the kind of help that you get?

Do you use a laptop? How often? What types of things do you use it for? Why is it easier to use?

What classes do you use your laptop in?

Are there computers in your classrooms? How many? Do you use them? How often? What for?

What did you bring to read? Please read it for me. When did you write it?

When you write something what are some strategies you use to help you write a good story? Do you have a plan when you start to write? What are some ways/strategies you use to help you read better? What are some ways you can figure out difficult words?

### Appendix J: Analysis of the Role of the IST by Outside Source

The Integration Support Worker provides a variety of general classroom supports for the students and the classroom teacher, and support for learning. He/She also provides specific literacy support.

#### GENERAL CLASSROOM SUPPORT AND SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

1. The integration support worker is encouraging. Comments are positive, focusing on what students have done correctly. FOR EXAMPLE: "You are the highlight of my day, and you are a wonderful class. [Tina6a/p. 1]. This attitude and activity occurs in each document toward the class as a whole, the classroom teacher, and the students.

The Integration Support Worker also

2. Provides simple, direct explanations of activities. This occurs

3. Provides simple, direct explanations/reviews of assignments

EXAMPLE: [Jesse 13a/bottom p. 5] [Jesse7a/Review of "letter to character"]

This occurs in almost all the documents.

4. Verifies capabilities of students to do something

EXAMPLE: "Do you know how to do it, James? [Tina13a/p. 1]

This occurs only once.

5. Lets child have responsibility

- EXAMPLE: "Just say ... and write ... two paragraphs. And I'll come by and help you ... you go ahead. [Tina 6a/p. 2]  
This occurs in almost every document.
6. Clarifies instructions with classroom teacher and with children  
This occurs in every document
  7. Advocates for child  
This occurs in one document [Tina 13a/p. 1]
  8. Assists in problem-solving with classroom teacher and child  
EXAMPLE: problem-solving re alarm clock to prevent lateness [Jesse]  
This occurs in almost every document.
  9. Clarifies and coordinates with classroom teacher regarding plans  
This occurs in several documents.
  10. Helps in classroom work  
This occurs in several documents.
  11. Offers incentives for whole class achievement [Jesse 7a/p.1]  
This occurs in one document.
  12. Involves whole class in activity [Jesse 7a/pp. 2-6]  
This occurs in one document.

13. Builds rapport  
 --by getting names and greeting children with names  
 --by discussing with child how he/she is doing  
 --by asking child's permission in using his/her work or aski  
 --by joking with children \  
 --by friendliness to late child  
 --by noticing a child's previous absence  
 --by asking children if they need help before offering  
 --by positive reception and feedback re children's  
 expressions  
 --by telling personal story  
 --by thanking children

These occur in varied amounts in each document.

14. Rephrases and clarifies

This occurs frequently in several documents

15. Keeps classroom focussed on task

EXAMPLE: moving on to "newspaper article" from "letter" [Jesse  
 7a/pp. 3-4]

This occurs in several documents.

16. Offers strategies for getting work done or for learning.

EXAMPLE: Getting something done without worrying about  
 details: "I don't think it really matters . . . it's just a detail  
 The GLP strategy. [Tina lb, p. 2]

This occurs in two documents.

17. Calling on students who hang back.

EXAMPLE: "I want to see some different hands up .... [Jesse  
 7a/ p. 5]

This occurs in one document.

18. Consultations with parents.

This occurs in one document. [Tina lb/p. 5]

19. Encouragement of creative additions to assignments.

EXAMPLE: Student: "I was wondering if I could play background music." ST: "Play background music? Sure." [Tina 6a/p. 5]

This occurs in two documents.

#### SPECIFIC LITERACY SUPPORT

The integration support worker

1. Helps with spelling

This occurs in two documents.

2. Provides work strategies.

EXAMPLE: "Do what you think best in writing and then ask for a check up" [Tina 13a/ p. 3]

This occurs in several documents.

3. Provides clear instructions regarding writing-relevant activities.

EXAMPLE: formatting writing on computer [Tina 13a/ p. 3]

This occurs in several documents.

4. Provides definitions [Jesse 7a/ p. 1] [Tina 6a/ pp. 4-6]

This occurs in two documents.

5. Explains/clarifies specific writing assignments

This occurs in two documents.

6. Encourages children to explain something in their own words EXAMPLE

This occurs in one document.

7. Rephrases and clarifies children's statements  
This occurs often in one document.
8. Asking for explanation of 5W's and 1H.  
This occurs in two documents.
9. Teaches/Reviews explicit writing strategies:
  - The PLUQ strategy [Tina 1b/p. 1]
  - The "appointment strategy" to get editing help [Tina 1b/p. 1 boThese occur in one document.
10. By telling personal story [Tina 6a/pp. 1-2]  
This occurs in one document.
11. Sharing part of student work as example [Tina 6a/p. 3]  
This occurs in one document.



## Appendix L: NUD\*IST Samples

Macintosh HD:aarut...List Nodes Report2

Mon, Feb 22, 1999 8:19:32 PM

Page 1

Q.S.R. NUD\*IST Power version, revision 4.0.  
Licensee: University of Victoria.

PROJECT: Feb.17/99, User Ruthanne Tobin, 8:19 pm, Feb 22, 1999.

```

(1) /Teach-talk
(1 1) /Teach-talk/marginalize
(1 2) /Teach-talk/validating
(1 3) /Teach-talk/off the hook
(1 4) /Teach-talk/on the hook
(1 6) /Teach-talk/housekeeping
(1 7) /Teach-talk/reprimanding
(2) /Instructions
(2 1) /Instructions/again or differently
(3) /pull-out problems
(4) /frustration
(5) /Nudging
(6) /social needs
(6 1) /social needs/belonging
(7) /cross-purposes
(8) /behavior
(10) /organizing
(11) /satellite kids
(11 1) /satellite kids/Non-id reluctants
(11 1 1) /satellite kids/Non-id reluctants/eavesdropping
(11 2) /satellite kids/1st nation
(11 2 1) /satellite kids/1st nation/dallying
(11 2 2) /satellite kids/1st nation/repeat mini-lesson
(11 4) /satellite kids/MRS (middle of roaders)
(13) /IEP's
(14) /solutions
(14 1) /solutions/feasible
(14 2) /solutions/not feasible
(14 3) /solutions/communication
(15) /leg-up measures
(16) /descriptors of class composition
(20) /signals to get help
(21) /technology
(21 1) /technology/tech as carrot
(21 2) /technology/tech too hard
(22) /t style
(22 1) /t style/self-descrip versus ob.
(22 2) /t style/disclosures
(23) /instruc.config
(23 1) /instruc.config/co-op groups
(23 2) /instruc.config/class within class
(23 3) /instruc.config/station teaching
(24) /adapt v. modify
(24 1) /adapt v. modify/reduce time
(24 2) /adapt v. modify/decrease work
(24 3) /adapt v. modify/help more
(24 4) /adapt v. modify/ta as adaptation
(24 5) /adapt v. modify/do it for them
(24 6) /adapt v. modify/buddy will help
(24 7) /adapt v. modify/different can opener
(25) /facesaving
(26) /literacy access strat
(26 1) /literacy access strat/confusion
(26 2) /literacy access strat/name of strats
(26 3) /literacy access strat/front-loading
(26 4) /literacy access strat/affective
(26 5) /literacy access strat/connecting with self

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(26 6) /literacy access strat/mechanics
(26 7) /literacy access strat/questioning
(26 8) /literacy access strat/character development
(26 9) /literacy access strat/summarizing technique
(26 10) /literacy access strat/clarity
(26 11) /literacy access strat/Writing cohesive sentences
(26 12) /literacy access strat/amplifying story events
(26 13) /literacy access strat/substituting story features
(26 14) /literacy access strat/elements of story
(26 14 1) /literacy access strat/elements of story/plot
(26 14 2) /literacy access strat/elements of story/character
(26 14 3) /literacy access strat/elements of story/theme
(26 14 4) /literacy access strat/elements of story/setting
(26 15) /literacy access strat/graphic organizers
(26 16) /literacy access strat/repeat reading
(26 17) /literacy access strat/choice & variety
(27) /collegial exchanges
(27 1) /collegial exchanges/clarifying statements
(27 2) /collegial exchanges/support for partner
(28) /reflection strategies
(29) /modeling
(30) /rapport building
(32) /hierarchial view of school related abilities
(33) /direct instruction
(34) /marks
(35) /levels of trying
(36) /ideological tensions
(36 1) /ideological tensions/make them feel different
(37) /dispositions
(37 2) /dispositions/t beliefs about sld k's
(38) /ways of representing knowledge
(40) /on-task
(41) /evaluation
(42) /questioning
(50) /NINA
(51) /Getting help
(52) /computers
(53) /subject writing samples
(54) /strategy awareness
(D) //Document Annotations
(F) //Free Nodes
(F 2) //Free Nodes/t2/describes class
(F 5) //Free Nodes/Nina
(F 6) //Free Nodes/Sam
(F 7) //Free Nodes/Noah
(F 9) //Free Nodes/Is there another way
(F 10) //Free Nodes/Amy
(F 13) //Free Nodes/pragmatic
(T) //Text Searches
(I) //Index Searches
(C) //Node Clipboard - 'hierarchial view of school related abilities'

```

Appendix M - List of Literacy Strategies

Presenters:	Ruthanne	Tina	Jesse*
Literacy Strategy	Venn diagrams	Guess the Category	Webs
	Double-entry journals	S.C.A.M.P.E.R. (substitute, combine, amplify, modify, eliminate, reduce)	
	Reading inventories	Substitute the descriptive word (adjective)	
	Artifact collections based on story	Flow charts	
	Promotional brochures (persuasive writing)	Line charts	
	Hamburger strategy (how to plan a paragraph that tastes good)	Maps of neighborhoods from the novel	
	Paraphrasing	Papier mache	
	Writing like an expert	Wanted posters	
	Sociogram	Quilts & mandelas	
	Timelines	Cloze procedures	
	Marginal gloss	Plot profiles	
		Comic strips	
		Story exaggeration	
		Decision-making table	
		Character report card	

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\* Jesse did not initiate literacy strategy instruction during this semester study. Her instructional approach centred on an inquiry station called World Community where her emphasis was on integrating social studies and language arts.

## Appendix N: AlphaSmart Pro Laptop Information

### ■ INTRODUCTION

The AlphaSmart® Pro keyboard is a unique and valuable tool for improving your students' thinking and writing skills. This Teacher's Guide for the AlphaSmart Pro contains ideas for student projects, writing activities, and a "master copy" for a student handout.

**Note:** It's assumed that both you and your students understand the AlphaSmart Pro's basic operation, including how to switch between files, how to upload files to your word processor, and what the special keys do (like HOME and CLEAR).

#### **More Than You Bargained For**

The AlphaSmart Pro is exceptionally well suited for helping students improve the quantity and quality of their "prewriting"—the raw material that will be refined at later stages in the composing process (more about this, below). Making notes, false starts, and early drafts (all part of prewriting) doesn't apply just to assignments done for English classes. They are the starting points for thinking, problem-solving, and writing *across* the curriculum.

One of the major goals of prewriting activities is to build fluency. Attention to format and correctness are appropriate to later stages in the composing process.

With this in mind, the activities, tips, and tricks provided in this Teacher's Guide are meant to accomplish two related goals.

First, they provide activities that students might use for different kinds of assignments in a variety of classes or subject matter areas—any setting in which the AlphaSmart Pro can support teaching and learning.

Second, many of the suggestions are designed to help you and your students break the Technology 80/20 Rule: Eighty percent of the people who use a given piece of hardware or software make use of only 20% of its power.

As simple as it is to use, the AlphaSmart Pro keyboard has features that are just *waiting* to be exploited in creative ways, to add even more value to its use. You don't have to use it for long before you begin to see how you've gotten even more than you bargained for.

### Appendix O: School District Structures of Support

The school district involved in this study facilitated support for learners with LD in the ways described below.

1. Provision of an additional special education teacher during approximately three to four hours per week. The support was intended to target adaptations and modifications of curricula and to co-teach in core curriculum areas.
2. Provision of a teacher assistant approximately five hours per week to carry out routine adaptations and support the learner with learning disability.
3. Provision of several release days to attend workshops on issues affecting the teaching of students with learning disabilities and to develop co-teaching and collaborative skills.
4. Reduction by one student of enrollment in classes with students with identified disabilities.

## Appendix P: Guiding Questions for Student Teachers in Planning Language Arts Lessons

<b>Lesson Plan Guiding Questions</b>	<b>Instructor: Ruthanne Tobin</b>
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**1. Topic/Focus/Theme/Concept:** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Prescribed Learning Outcomes:**  
(use SWBAT {student will be able to}+ PLO {prescribed learning outcome} from your IRP {integrated resource package})

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Strategy/Activity:** = small group     $\Pi$ =pairs    ; = individual    W = whole class  
(include symbol in each box below to show class configuration)

**a) Direct Teaching** (key idea: to engage & activate prior knowledge)

How will I get learners interested?

What do learners need to know about this concept?

How will I draw on what they already know about this or similar/related topics?

**b) Guided Practice** (key idea: to model and "do" alongside the learner until learner can do on their own.

What kind of scaffolding will I provide to increase their understanding?

What steps are involved that need to be identified and broken down for learners?

What modeling of the activity needs to be done? (see Ways of Representing Knowledge)

What criteria will I set to communicate my expectations and check on their expectations?

**c) Independent Work** (key idea: choice & variety in showing what the learner knows)

What way will I use to have them prove that they know something about the topic?

Is the activity broad enough to appeal to a wide range of learners, including reluctant students, at-risk learners, ESL students, outstanding learners etc.?

**4. Assessment/Evaluation** (key idea: *observation & evidence*)

What evidence will I look for? What evidence will I collect?

How will I know they reached the prescribed learning outcome?

What criteria did I set that I may now look for in their work?

**5. Adaptations** (key idea: *to increase likelihood of success*)

Who is likely to have difficulty with the independent work as described above?

What will my at-risk students likely be unable to do that most of my class can do?

What additional scaffolding or support or extension can I provide for these learners?

**6. Materials Required for Adaptations**

(key idea: *to make the task more tangible & explicit*)

Are the materials closely linked to the regular materials that most learners are using?

Are they somewhat self-explanatory taking into account my availability during class time?

Is the focus on providing additional scaffolding, in order that the at-risk student can reach the same content objective as other learners?

**Guiding Principle:** What is best for each learner?

**Feasibility Principle:** Are my plans possible & practical for my purposes?

Who has the best chance to experience success in my classes?  
Students like me? Students who don't really even need a teacher? Students who are 'prepared' for my course/grade? Compliant, motivated learners with supportive parents?  
Anyone willing to partake?

## Appendix Q: A Teacher's Guide to Adaptation and Modification

### A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO ADAPTATION AND MODIFICATION Last Revised: 6/15/95

**Adaptation** means the learning outcomes of the prescribed curriculum are retained. Adaptations are provided so the student can participate in the program. Adaptations can include alternate formats (e.g., Braille, books-on-tape), instructional strategies (e.g., use of interpreters, visual cues and aids) and assessment procedures (e.g., oral exams, additional time). Students for whom adaptations are made, are assessed using the standards for the course/program and can receive full credit for their work. School personnel should document significant adaptations as deemed appropriate.

**Modification** means learning outcomes are substantially different from the prescribed curriculum, and specifically selected to meet the student's special needs. For example, a Grade 9 student in modified math program could be focusing on functional computational skills in the context of handling money and personal budgeting. Or, language arts, a Grade 5 student could be working on recognizing common signs and using the phone. In these examples the learning outcomes are substantially different from those of the curriculum for most other students. A student's program may include some courses that are modified and others that are adapted.

#### SOME INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES and ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

ADAPTATIONS	MODIFICATIONS
Students can meet the expected learning outcomes of the prescribed provincial curriculum.	Students work toward learning outcomes that are significantly changed from those of the prescribed provincial curriculum.
Strategies and Procedures	Strategies and Procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- taped texts, videos</li> <li>- typewritten notes</li> <li>- assistant of a scribe</li> <li>- advanced organizers</li> <li>- highlighted texts</li> <li>* - extended or compacted time</li> <li>- separate setting</li> <li>- pre-testing and re-testing</li> <li>- oral/scribed/open-book tests</li> <li>- changing the test format, not the outcome</li> <li>- providing outline prior/during test</li> <li>- cueing to facilitate access to prior knowledge</li> <li>* - no penalty for spelling errors</li> <li>- word processors/*spell checkers/calculator</li> <li>- optional formats for presenting knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- less/more complex assignments</li> <li>- less/more difficult text</li> <li>- volume (reduced amount required)</li> <li>- lower/higher grade level materials</li> <li>- lower/higher cognitive level concept/skills</li> <li>- fewer learning outcomes are addressed</li> <li>- lower/higher grade-level tests</li> <li>- over-teaching to the test (reciting answers)</li> <li>- reduced number of questions tested</li> <li>- changing test format and learning outcomes</li> </ul>

\* adaptation which can be accessed for adjudicated provincial exams as well as a reader, a scribe and/or the opportunity to write the exam in a separate setting.

Appendix R: Letter to Teachers Regarding IEP Start-up Process

To: Teachers enrolling students with LD  
 From: Ruthanne (IST)  
 Re: planning times/ student profiles/IEP meetings

Note: If you are kind enough to read this whole dreadfully long memo; I promise not to send another one of this length for a very, very long time. Thanks!

As you are aware you have three or four students with identified learning disabilities in your classroom. You will receive in your boxes on Tuesday (if you have not already), profile sheets of these children and this information will be shared this week with other teachers working with your identified students. Parents will be contacted by me as soon as the class compositions have stabilized to schedule IEP meetings. You will be freed up by either an AO or a TOC to attend the IEP meeting. As there are so many to schedule, I apologize that I can not consult with each of you in advance.

However, if the block that is scheduled is impossible for you (as opposed to inconvenient) I will ofcourse reschedule.

In the interests of time and coverage of all important areas, the IEP format is structured as follows:

1. 3-5 minutes of non-school chit-chat.with you. (I have met with most of these parents privately prior to school commencement)
2. A structured IEP form will be on the overhead. We will have had at least one planning session (thanks to AO coverage) and a copy of the IEP form in advance to facilitate the discussion and allow you sufficient time to think about adaptations. However, you are not expected to have thought through the specific adaptations, only about your attitude/approach to teaching. This will be clearer when you read the IEP format.
3. With luck, a TA who works in your class will be available to meet the parents and give her input as well.
4. The goals of this meeting are largely to:
  - \* exchange information about the student,
  - \* communicate and document our commitment to supporting this student and,
  - \* come up with a general plan of how we are going to accomplish this in the upcoming year.

To meet these goals in the allotted time frame, we need to tactfully steer the discussion away from last year's woes and toward what may be done this year. I would really appreciate your help in this area.

5. There are two of the fifteen families that this format does not accomodate well for a variety of reasons. I will be contacting you about these families if this concerns you and sharing an alternate format.
6. If possible, please bring to the IEP meeting one work sample that the student has successfully completed in the first week (a drawing, summer vacation paragraph etc.).

I am also working on a support schedule that is equitable for children and teachers and has a reasonable chance of making a measure of difference in your classroom. Please bear with me in the next few days while I work on this administrivia. With fifteen children in five divisions this is a tad challenging but workable. I have all of your (do I dare say 'fixed') schedules and I should have a support plan worked out in the next couple of days. In the interim, I will be stopping by your classrooms for short visits with your class. At the grade six level I will be doing a mini-lesson on reading strategies one day this week. This is mostly to get a feel for your class (and them for me) as well as to get a sense of how the 'at-risk' kids are integrating.

Please feel free to re-direct parent enquiries to me in the next few weeks while you get to know the children. I have read their red files and observed most of them several times last year. As you are probably well aware; at this stage all parents want from you is acknowledgement and reassurance that you know 'about' their child's special needs.

I am really looking forward to working with each of you this year. I consider your classrooms confidential zones and as such everything that transpires will be handled discreetly in all dealings with parents and other teachers. Please let me know in our early days of support any practices that are particularly problematic or annoying for you. This is your turf and although I will be striving to lighten your load in ways that are respectful of your routines and structures, I sometimes goof. Tell me please. One year in Middle school has already produced a thicker skin.

Cheers,  
Ruthanne

## Appendix S: Criteria for Funding:BC Ministry of Education

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

A MANUAL OF POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL PLANNING

### Students with Learning Disabilities

#### Definition

The following definition of learning disabilities is used by the Ministry of Education:

"Learning disabilities" is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviours, social perception and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (e.g., cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences."

National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1988

\* for the purposes of this document the term "learning disability" includes conditions described as dyslexia, dyscalculia or dysgraphia, and may include students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD).

Learning disabilities vary considerably in their severity and impact on learning. Students with mild to moderate learning disabilities can be successful when provided with adapted classroom instruction combined with appropriate support by a learning assistance or school-based resource teacher. Students with severe learning disabilities will generally require more intensive intervention.

Students whose learning disabilities have not been identified and addressed early frequently exhibit secondary emotional and behavioural difficulties.

To be eligible for supplemental funding for Severe Learning Disabilities, a student must meet the definition given above and the following criteria must be met:

- severe difficulties in the acquisition of basic academic skills and/or school performance persist after classroom-based remedial interventions, curricular adaptations and learning assistance support.

The severity of these academic difficulties must be such that students demonstrate:

- ✓ persistent difficulties in the acquisition of pre-academic skills such as recognition of letters and numbers in the early primary years; and/or

- ✓ persistent difficulties in the acquisition of reading, writing and/or arithmetic skills in the later primary years; and/or
- ✓ a discrepancy of 2 standard deviations between estimated learning potential and academic achievement as measured by norm-referenced instruments in Grades 3-12;

and

- there is a significant weakness in one or more cognitive process (e.g., perception, memory, attention, receptive or expressive language abilities, visual-spatial abilities) relative to overall intellectual functioning, as measured by norm-referenced assessment instruments, which directly impacts learning and school performance;

and

- the criteria listed above are not the result of other disabling conditions or external influences described in the definition above;

and

- the student is receiving specific additional services directed at addressing the learning disability (reduction in class size is not by itself a sufficient service to meet this definition);

and

- a current IEP is in place.

### *Students with Severe Learning Disabilities*

The ministry estimates that students with severe learning disabilities comprise 1-2% of the school population and will require more intensive support.

A psychoeducational assessment must be undertaken to determine the presence, nature, severity and educational implications of a severe learning disability. Prior to referral for psychoeducational assessment, the classroom teacher will have attempted alternate strategies, consulted with the parent and colleagues, and requested the involvement of the learning assistance/resource teacher for additional assessment, consultation or pre-referral interventions.

### *Identification and Assessment*

Most students included in the Severe Learning Disabilities category will be identified by the school system through the progressive assessment process described in Section C. In some cases, students will have been identified prior to school entry through assessments in clinical settings.

If these measures prove insufficient, the school-based team will refer the student for assessment. The assessment is often multidisciplinary, supplementing the psychoeducational assessment with information from the speech-language pathologist or the occupational therapist.

## Appendix T: Evaluation and Reporting Practices:BC Ministry of Education

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

A MANUAL OF POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL PLANNING

The assessment of a student with a learning disability should:

- Integrate information from a number of sources (eg., the family, health, social-emotional adjustment, developmental history);
- assess overall intellectual functioning, specific cognitive abilities, pre-academic or academic skills and socio-emotional status;
- assess the learning strengths and weaknesses, and their implications for learning; and
- contribute to the process of planning and evaluating the education program.

### *Planning and Implementation*

Students with severe learning disabilities require an educational plan which builds on their strengths while remediating or compensating for their area of disability. Their IEP should reflect these.

Students with severe learning disabilities should be supported on a regular basis by a specialist teacher. Typically, the program for a student with a severe learning disability includes, but is not limited to, one or more of the following:

- direct remedial, corrective, tutorial or skill-building instruction;
- adapted, modified or supplementary curriculum and materials;
- alternate instructional and/or evaluation strategies, including adjudicated provincial examinations;
- use of equipment, including computer and audiovisual technology;
- social skills training; and
- learning strategies.

### *Evaluation and Reporting*

#### *Evaluating student progress*

In most cases students will take part in the regular program with the necessary adaptations (e.g., alternate evaluation methods). Evaluation will be based on the regular standards (i.e., extent to which learning outcomes were attained). The method of evaluation will be consistent with the IEP and with ministry reporting policies in respect to the use of comments and/or letter grades.

Some students may require extensive modifications to parts of their program so that some of their learning outcomes will be substantially different from the regular curriculum. In these cases, evaluation will be based on the degree to which the individualized outcomes are achieved.

### Reporting

Reports to parents should be provided in the same format and on the same schedule used for all students. Progress should be reported with respect to all components of the program, and with reference to progress in relation to IEP goals. Reports should indicate the adaptations and modifications made to the student's educational program, as well as performance relative to widely-held expectations. All personnel directly involved in the ongoing educational program (e.g., classroom teacher, specialist teacher, speech-language pathologist) should report on student progress (see Section H57: Appendix F).

### Personnel

The ministry expects that with sufficient training and experience, classroom teachers will be capable of including most students with learning disabilities and providing a program in which they can be successful, provided that specialized support is available when needed. Inservice training opportunities and a collaborative team approach are recommended to support and encourage the development of the necessary skills and understandings which the classroom teacher may require.

Teachers with responsibilities for supporting students with severe learning disabilities should fulfill the qualifications described for Learning Assistance teacher (see Section D1: Learning Assistance Services). In addition, their qualifications should include advanced coursework in:

- characteristics and needs of students with learning disabilities; and
- specialized instructional and remedial strategies, technologies, materials and curricular adaptations.

As well, they should have training and demonstrated skills in:

- social skills development and behaviour management;
- co-operative planning and collaborative consultation; and
- assessment, classroom management and motivation.

### Teacher assistants

Teacher assistants working with students with learning disabilities should have sufficient skills and training for the duties they are assigned, including:

- an understanding of learning disabilities;
- collaborative and communication skills;
- strategies for motivating students; and
- behaviour management skills.

It should be noted that teacher assistants work under the general supervision of a teacher or administrative officer. Inservice training should include opportunities to further develop opportunities in these and related areas.

## Appendix U: Student Writing Samples

Same	vs.	different
educational		
French class		
Homework (lots)		

Welcome to the island of

SHARKS, This is the ultimate school.

known throughout the western part of  
 Canada. It probably is the biggest school  
 you have ever seen. Big gym, big

library and big computer lab. Big everything.

Bayside has top of the line equipment.

Bayside has many activities

such as basketball, swimming,

cross country, <sup>volleyball</sup> and ~~and~~ others.

Welcome to  
school. This is the ultimate place in  
the western half of Canada, "Why?"  
Well the teachers have E-mail  
on the computer. Our facilities are  
great the building is earthquake  
proof, our computers are

Sam's writing sample

The Boy  
and His  
Cat.

Mar 4

One day I had to check up Ms. Bees dog, she left and then a small blond dark-eyed boy walked in the clinic with his cat. The cat looked so colorful with those markings on her. and he talked about how the cat had been vomiting and not eating her food. Also the delicate cat had lost a pound and only weighed 10.

I examined the cat's eyes, nose, and stomach. The boy was patiently waiting for the results as I watched him I thought the cat had a tumour problem and she had to be put to sleep. There were 2 other options, one was a operation, and two was she could die on her own. Very gently I told the boy what the choices were.

Then he said he had to talk to his

dad about it, so he told the number to his dad's work. The conversation was like two sorrow people talking. The dad came and the small boy told how the cat can have the tumour surgically removed, but it was very expensive.

As the boy lovingly stroked the cat's elegant fur he decided that he would have the cat put to sleep, so the cat wouldn't suffer pain. All of us were emotionally crying with tears streaming down our eyes.

I gave the injection to the cat who slowly died in horror from leaving his master and friends, I gave the boy a big hug and he needed it.

The End

Nina's writing sample

Appendix V: IEP Samples: BC Ministry of Education

**INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN - Tyson Magnus**

Student: Tyson Magnus Date of Birth: Sept. 12, 1982  
 School: Hillside Middle School Age: 12  
 Grade: 6

**Planning Team:**

M. Cook - classroom teacher Date of Plan: September 1996  
M. Samson - learning assistance teacher Review Date: October 15, 1996  
S. Magnus - mother

**1. Present levels of functioning:**

Math/Science at grade level  
Reading - 15 percentile (WRMT-R total reading)  
Writing - 8 percentile (TOWL-R)

**Strengths**

- understands concepts and ideas  
- expresses self well orally

**Areas of Concern**

- reads very slowly  
- written work difficult to understand, spelling poor, messy  
- notes copied from board illegible  
- often doesn't complete written assignments  
- poor organizational skills loses information  
- required to study for tests, etc.

**2. In class goals:**

a. complete assignments  
b. improve organizational skills  
- organize notes and handouts in binder  
- keep a homework log

**3. Learning Assistance goals**

(half hour, 3 times per week, small group)

a. improve independent word processing skills  
- increase typing speed  
- use spell check function correctly

**Adaptations to the regular program**

a. photocopied notes to be given to Tyson if notes to be copied exceed half a page  
b. audio tapes of required readings will be made available to Tyson  
c. when computer time allows, Tyson will word process written work  
d. Tyson will be given the option of audio or video taping some assignments, rather than writing them  
e. Tyson will check with his "buddy" to ensure his binder and homework log are up to date at the end of each class  
f. Time extensions and/or oral administration of tests/exams as appropriate.

Evaluation: Curriculum goals intact X  
 Curriculum goals modified \_\_\_\_\_

## Individual Educational Plan - Brian Levie

Rock Hill Elementary School

Student name: Brian Levie

Date of birth: July 25, 1983

Grade: Seven

Date of IEP: Nov. 23, 1995 Meeting

IEP developed by: Theresa Villeneuve, Grade 7 teacher,  
and Jack Evers, learning assistance teacher

**Background information (i.e. assessment, achievement, etc.)**

Brian's academic functioning on assessment instruments is at or near grade level, consistent with cognitive test scores which show average potential. His performance in class is below grade expectations and difficult to assess because of lack of completion or work refusal.

Brian's frequently uncooperative or defiant behaviours interfere with his academic progress and are disruptive to his learning and that of his classmates.

**Strengths**

- Artistic talents
- Average academic potential
- Leadership qualities
- Strong peer relationships

**Needs**

- To develop on task and work completion skills
- To increase appropriate responses to teacher direction
- To develop intrinsic motivation
- To develop positive self-talk

**Goals for the year (term)**

November 1995 to March 1996

Brian will increase task completion to 50% of tasks assigned to class. (June goal, 80%)

Brian will increase his motivation to complete work by exercising choices between formats for major assignments.

- Brian will decrease disruption of class.
- Brian will improve the organization of written assignments. Criteria will be established to guide Brian in this development.
- Brian will further develop his artistic talents by integrating them into his work in other subjects.

**Adaptations/Resources/Assessment**

- Reduce visual and auditory distractions by selective seating
- Reduce volume of assignments and emphasize completion rather than amount
- Give choice of assignment format which offers artistic flavour (posters, cartoons, charts, murals, etc.)
- Provide instruction on computer and have Brian construct attractive planner and method for reinforcing its use
- Set up consequences for uncooperative or disruptive behaviour
- Provide weekly counselling sessions with the School Counsellor
- Make available a study carrel and walkman with head set. Brian will choose to use as compensatory strategies to help himself stay on task as needed.

Self charting and positive social reinforce by attention from art teacher when assignments are handed in complete.

Learning Assistance computer lab /Brian will independently use his planner to record assignments and their completion

Brian will leave his group and sit in the quiet area until he completes the assignment and records his own inappropriate behaviour in his daily log.

Brian will work with the school counsellor on acquiring positive self-talk strategies.

Brian will practice using anger management strategies when confronted with frustration in class, in the hallway and on the playing field.

**Year (term) end review summary, transition plans, and goals for next year:**

After the March reports, the School-based team will meet to discuss Brian's progress and make plans for his move to secondary school. The March-June term will need to focus on behaviours appropriate to these transition issues.

**Date of review meeting** March 10, 1996

**IEP Team** Sarah Spell, principal; Theresa Villeneuve, Grade 7 teacher, Jack Evers, learning assistance teacher, Mr. Jake and Mrs. Rachel Levie; and Susan Cook, school counsellor

## Appendix W: Samples of Literacy Strategies

# 6

## Book Boxes

- |                            |       |               |
|----------------------------|-------|---------------|
| ● literature focus units   | ○ K-2 | ● individual  |
| ○ reading-writing workshop | ● 3-5 | ○ small group |
| ● thematic units           | ● 6-8 | ○ whole class |

Students decorate the outside of a box or other container and collect 3 to 5 objects or pictures related to a story, informational book, or poem and put them in a box along with a copy of the book or other reading material (Tompkins, 1997). For example, a book box for *Sarah, Plain and Tall* (MacLachlan, 1983) might include some of these objects: seashells, a train ticket, a yellow bonnet, colored pencils, a map of Sarah's trip from Maine to the prairie, and letters. Or, a book box for *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993) might include an apple, a toy bicycle, a card with the number 19, a toy sled, and a hypodermic syringe from a child's toy doctor kit. Students often make book boxes as a project after reading a book as part of a literature focus unit.

Teachers can also make book boxes to use with books they share with students. For example, a book box for *The Mitten* (Brett, 1989) might include yarn and knitting needles, a pair of white gloves, and small stuffed animals or pictures of animals (including a mole, a snowshoe rabbit, a hedgehog, an owl, a badger, a fox, a brown bear, and a mouse). Teacher-made book boxes are especially useful for primary-grade students, students learning English as a second language, and nonverbal students who have small vocabularies and difficulty developing sentences to express ideas. By sharing a variety of objects related to the book with students before reading, teachers can build students' background knowledge and introduce vocabulary.



### STEP BY STEP

The steps in preparing a book box are:

1. Read the book and make a list of important objects mentioned in the book.
2. Select a box, basket, plastic tub, empty coffee can, bag, or other container to hold the objects, and decorate it with the name of the book and related pictures and words.
3. Place 3 to 5 (or more) objects and pictures in the box along with a copy of the book. When students are making book boxes, they may place an inventory sheet in the boxes with all the items listed and an explanation of why the items were selected.
4. Share the completed box with students. When teachers make book boxes, they use them to introduce the book and provide background information before reading. In contrast, students often make book boxes as a project after reading, and share their book boxes with classmates.



### APPLICATIONS AND EXAMPLES

Students can also make book boxes after reading informational books and biographies. A second-grade class, after reading *Bread, Bread, Bread* (Morris, 1989), for instance, brought in sliced white bread, bagels, tortillas, pita bread, pretzels, French baguettes, cinnamon rolls, a pizza, and other kinds of bread. Students took photos of each kind of bread for their book box and marked the bread's country of origin on a world map. Then they ate the bread and wrote about their favorite kinds of bread. The teacher collected the writings, bound them into a book, and added the book to the book box, too. A fifth grader, after reading Jean Fritz's *And Then What Happened, Paul Revere!* (1973), for example, covered a box with aluminum foil to make it look like silver and added a portrait of Paul Revere he had drawn, a strip of paper with the patriot's lifeline, a fork to symbolize the silver he made, a tea bag for the Boston Tea Party he participated in, and postcards of the Boston area that his aunt sent to him. And, when students are studying favorite authors, they can make a box with collections of the author's books, biographical information about the author, a letter the student wrote to the author, and, with luck, a response from the author.

From: *50 Literacy Strategies*, Tompkins, 1998.

Note: This is a similar strategy to that used in study classes. Teachers could not identify a specific source for their version.

Note; This is a similiar strategy to that used by teachers referred to in the study as mandelas and quilts.

# 32

## Quilts

- |                            |       |               |
|----------------------------|-------|---------------|
| ● literature focus units   | ● K-2 | ○ individual  |
| ● reading-writing workshop | ● 3-5 | ● small group |
| ● thematic units           | ● 6-8 | ● whole class |

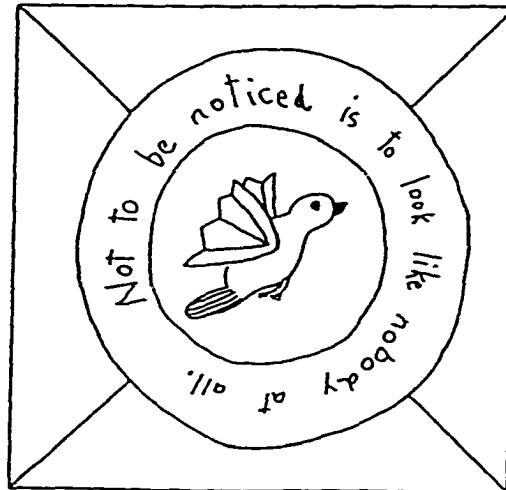
Students make construction paper squares and arrange them to make a quilt. These quilts are designed to highlight the theme and to celebrate a story that students have read during a literature focus unit (Tompkins, 1998). A square from a quilt about *Fly Away Home* (Bunting, 1991), a story about a homeless boy and his dad who live at the airport, is shown in Figure 32-1. The third graders created a modified "wedding ring" pattern for this quilt.

### STEP BY STEP

The steps in making a quilt are:

1. Choose a design for the quilt square that is appropriate for the story—its theme, characters, or setting. Students can choose a quilt design or create their own design that captures an important dimension of the story. They also choose symbolic colors for each shape in the quilt square.
2. Have each student make a square and add a favorite sentence from the story or a comment about the story around the outside of the quilt square or in a designated section of the square.
3. Tape the squares together and back the quilt with butcher paper or staple the squares side by side on a large bulletin board. The finished quilt for *Fly Away Home* is shown in Figure 32-2. Students also added small pictures of birds and homes around the edge of the quilt.

FIGURE 32-1 A Quilt Square About *Fly Away Home*



### Literacy

From: 50 Strategies

Tompkins, 1998.

### Appendix X - Decision Making Table for Red Cedar Books

*How to Choose a Red Cedar Book*

	Title & Topic	Cover Picture	5 Finger Rule	Inside Sleeve
<b>Fiction</b>				
The Dream Carvers				
Tails of Flame				
Amy's Promise				
Out of the Dark				
There Goes the Neighbourhood				
The Night They Stole the Stanley Cup				
<b>Non-Fiction</b>				
How to Make Holiday Pop-up Cards				
A People Apart				
Pay Dirt!				
The Group of Seven and Tom Tomson				
The Last Quest of Gilgamesh				
The Children of China				
<b>My Decision &amp; Reason</b>				

**Reference Sets  
Contain:**

*A Set of Concise  
Descriptions*

*Representative  
Samples of  
Student  
Performance*

*A Chart to Illustrate  
Ranges of  
Performance of  
Students in  
British Columbia*

*Examples of  
Assessment  
Strategies*

**What are the Components of a Reference Set?**

**The Descriptions**

Each reference set contains a set of descriptions that represent phases of growth or development. In each case, although the appearance of the descriptions suggests that the learning is linear and sequential with students progressing evenly in all aspects of the learning, this is a limitation imposed by format rather than a reflection of belief.

**The Samples**

Each reference set contains samples of students' work collected from actual classroom experiences. The samples are coded at least twice by teachers using the descriptions. In most cases, the samples require additional information in order to be useful. Teachers' observations and students' reflections on their work are included to enhance the information provided by the sample.

**The Provincial Picture**

The reference sets will be used to evaluate students' performance in future provincial assessments. This information will be presented in graphical form to provide a provincial picture of what British Columbia students can do. In turn, this information will help educators, students, and parents to interpret the development of individuals and groups of students in light of the performance of B.C. students.

**Assessment Strategies**

Each reference set includes a set of assessment strategies offered by the teachers involved in the development of the reference set. The strategies suggest a number of ways that teachers might use and adapt the materials to enhance learning in the classroom.