

PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF THE LEARNING ASSISTANCE  
TEACHER

by

Janet Iris Cullis

B.Ed., The University of Alberta, 1967

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Educational Psychology and Special  
Education)

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 1990

© Janet Iris Cullis, 1990

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Educational Psychology and Special  
The University of British Columbia Education  
Vancouver, Canada

Date April 22, 1990

## ABSTRACT

A relationship between the perceptions of the Learning Assistance Teacher (LAT), the Classroom Teacher, the School Principal and the District Staff of the role of the LAT is examined through the use of a questionnaire employing a Likert-type scale. The study explored, described and attempted to compare the perceptions of these key observers in one school district in British Columbia.

This study involved a comparative study method. Questionnaires were sent to key observers to obtain their perceptions of the role of the LAT within their school. The individuals represented two levels of district organizational structure - within school personnel and district personnel. The within school personnel could be further sub-divided into administrative and teaching personnel.

The data were analyzed descriptively, a comparative analysis between the key observers was taken, the inter-group correlation for the key observers was examined, and the relative ranking of responses for the four groups was examined.

It is argued that these findings can be attributed, in part, to the speculative conclusions in the following areas:

1. The consultation area of the LAT role is still a significant problem.
2. The out-of-school and within-school groups have differing perceptions.
3. The within-school personnel have highly correlated perceptions which may be due to the level of inservice training and/or written district policy and school objectives and goals for the LAT.
4. The increased level of education for the classroom teacher and LAT may have led to an increasing commonality of perception of the LAT role.
5. This district rates consultation and cooperative planning much higher than Dugoff, Ives and Shotel's (1985) research. This may be due to the increasing trend to service children with mild handicaps within the regular classroom. This district is moving toward total integration.

Further research is needed to see to what extent the perceived role matches the actual role, what the desired or preferred role of the LAT is for these key

observers, and what value the role has on learner outcomes. Possible pilot studies of other ways to meet students needs are suggested.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
ABSTRACT	ii
LIST OF TABLES	vii
Chapter	
1: PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND	
Introduction	1
Historical Perspective of LAT's in British Columbia	1
Personal Background Experience	6
Summary	12
II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	
Focus of Education Policy	14
Resource Room Programs	15
Roles of the Learning Assistance Teacher	16
The Role of the Learning Assistance Teachers in B.C.	18
I. Direct Instruction	22
II. Assessment	24
III. Co-operative Planning	25
Initial Problems with the LAT Role	27
Restructuring Regular and Special Education	31
Role Analysis	34
Summary	36
III: THE PROBLEM	
Statement of the Problem	38
Research Questions	38
Research Hypotheses	39
Major Benefits	40
Basic Assumptions	41
Limitations of the Study	41
Definition of Terms	42
Summary	44
IV: METHODOLOGY	

Introduction	46
Site and Participants	47
Instrumentation	49
Data Collection Procedures	51
Data Analysis	53
Demographic Data	53
Hypothesis 1	54
Hypothesis 2	55
Hypothesis 3	55
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)	56
Supplementary Analysis	
Intergroup Correlations	57
Ranking of Four Groups	57
Summary of Methods and Procedures	57

## V: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction	59
Sample	59
i. LAT's	60
ii. Classroom Teachers	61
iii. Principals	61
iv. District Staff	61
v. Demographic Data	62
Measures	63
Hypotheses Findings	66
H1	66
H2	71
Supplementary Findings	
i. Inter-group Correlation	72
ii. Rank Order Analysis	77
Integration of Results	84
Summary of Results	89

## VI: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction	92
The Role of the LAT	93
Principal, Classroom Teacher, LAT and District Staff Congruence on the Role of the LAT	95
LAT, Principal, Classroom Teacher and District Staff Congruence on the Assessment, Instruction and Consultation Roles of the LAT	101
Supplementary Findings	104
i). Sample	104
ii). Relationship Between Principals, classroom Teachers, District Staff and	

LAT's Perception of the Role the LAT	106	of
iii). Rank Order Analysis	108	
LAT Program	111	
Limitations	112	
Implications and Recommendations	113	
Further Research	117	
Summary	119	
REFERENCES	121-126	
APPENDIX A	127	
APPENDIX B	130	
APPENDIX C	131	
APPENDIX D	132	
APPENDIX E	133	
APPENDIX F	134	

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1:	Response rate and means on three measures across respondent groups	63
TABLE 2:	Experience and education for four respondent groups	63
TABLE 3:	Internal consistency index across four respondent groups on eighteen items, for two studies	65
TABLE 4:	Item Rating of Means and (Standard Deviations) For Four Response Groups	69
TABLE 5:	Summary of LAT Role Function and Category for Eighteen Items	70
TABLE 6:	Means, (Standard Deviations) and Analysis of Variance Results Across Groups and Sub-areas	72
TABLE 7:	Mean Item Rating For Four Response Groups	74
TABLE 8:	Matrix of Inter-group Correlation Coefficients (Pearson r) for the Means of Eighteen Items.	75
TABLE 9:	Graph: Mean Response by Respondent Groups	79
TABLE 10:	Respondent Groups Ranking of the Items According to Importance Placed by Each Group	80
TABLE 11:	Items Ranked According to Importance by Each Group	81
TABLE 12:	Summary of Average Ranking of LAT Role Functions From Most Important to Least Important and Overall Means for Three Respondent Groups (Classroom Teachers, Principals and LAT's)	86-87
TABLE 13:	Combined Respondent Group (Classroom Teachers, Principals and LAT's) Compared to District Staff for Ranking of Items and Categories.	88



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must thank especially Dr. David Kendall for his guidance and support in the preparation of this thesis, Dr. Harold Ratzlaff for his expertise and help with the methodology which was absolutely crucial as was his encouragement which was always generously given; and Dr. Randy Cranston whose inspiration gave me the initial impetus for this thesis.

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated:

To my husband, Frank, who encouraged me to be a risk taker, who tried to provide me with the time needed to write and study and who gave me loving support,

To my children, Trisha, Ian, and Jessica, who never flagged in their faith that I could complete my task but who wondered how much longer it would take,

To my parents, Harry and Francis, whose motto "what did you learn from that" encouraged me to become a life long learner.

## CHAPTER I

### PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

#### Introduction

This is a study of the perception of the role of the Elementary Learning Assistance Teachers in a school district of British Columbia. It will focus on the perceptions of the Learning Assistance teachers (LAT), the classroom teachers, the principals, and the district staff of the role of the LAT.

#### Historical Perspective of LATs in British Columbia

In British Columbia, learning assistance centres (LACs) were instituted in some school districts in 1971 and earlier, and gained increasing support and implementation. In the early 1970's, the LAT role had just emerged from the field of Special Education. It was at that time defined as providing "remedial instruction to students, on a withdrawal basis, as any proportion of their teaching assignment, but did not carry full-time responsibility for anything which might be considered a special class" (Schwartz, 1979, p5). It fell under the Special Education rubric and emerged in 1972/3 as part of a re-organization of the Special Education grant structure at the provincial level when

two programs were combined for grant approval purposes (Schwartz). Prior to this time the emphasis had been on the grouping of children according to "rigidly defined categories of handicaps, and their segregation from the regular stream of educational programming into 'special' classes with 'special' teachers, sometimes in 'special' schools" (Schwartz p.6). Provincial funding was provided on the basis of those categorical programs. Little provision was made for those children who were able to remain within the ordinary educational system but needed additional help. When the "Continuum of Services" model which was published by the Council for Exceptional Children in 1971 became the desirable state of affairs in Special Education then the Learning Assistance teacher or resource teacher as s/he is known outside of British Columbia became the preferred method of dealing with the lower level of children on the continuum of services model. In British Columbia, the tendency was to keep "slow learning children more in the mainstream of education, with special educators serving as diagnostic, clinical, remedial, resource room, itinerant and/or team teachers, consultants, and developers of instructional materials and prescriptions for effective teaching" (Schwartz, p.7). Schwartz

concluded that "Learning Assistance is a service without a curriculum in the form of a centrally mandated set of procedures, content or method" (p.1) as there were no formal policy statements or directives in place from either the Ministry or most school districts. Since that time, the Ministry has published guidelines (1985), as have many local school districts and Armitage (1984) has published an article on how to evaluate the Resource Room programs; but the question remains as to whether there is consensus among the key observers of their perception of the role of the learning assistance teacher. As stated by Schwartz "teachers might find themselves in the uncomfortable situation of trying to meet conflicting expectations held for them at school and district levels" (p.18).

The LAC model has been a visible, popular trend in B.C.. It has been at the core of mainstreaming efforts and is the most commonly utilized delivery system for mildly handicapped learners. The role of the learning assistance teacher includes both direct services to children and indirect services in the form of consultation. Education of exceptional students no longer falls within the exclusive domain of special educators; the learning assistance concept accepts a

partnership between regular and special educators. As stated by Schwartz (1979) the overall objective of the present Special Education program is integration rather than segregation for the more severely affected as well as those children with relatively mild learning difficulties. Most classroom teachers and principals have or will have contact with students receiving services from a learning assistance teacher (LAT) as LAC students spend most of their day in the regular classroom, attending the LAC for a maximum of one hour per day (Ministry of Education 1985). Thus, the role of the LAT is dependent upon his/her successful working relationship with fellow teachers, principals, parents, students, and district consultative staff. D'Alonzo and Weisman (1978) stated, however, that "the inadequate relationship between regular and special education staff appeared to be a constantly recurring theme." The LAT is viewed as a supporting colleague who can assist in providing for the growth of each student. It is imperative, therefore, because of the pervasiveness of the LAC approach to service delivery throughout B.C., to evaluate the variables that influence its effectiveness.

Schwartz (1979) found that "the term 'Learning Assistance' was not in common usage outside British Columbia education," and that there are few published articles dealing with Learning Assistance within B.C. When Armitage (1984), a B.C. researcher, published a paper on Learning Assistance programs, it was referred to as a resource room program.

Armitage (1979) stated that at first, due to the relatively rapid influx of these centres, several problems surfaced with regard to the training or expertise of the LAT's, their role or duties as understood by the staff and administration, (of the LAT,) the setting and resources available to the LAT, the clientele of the LAT, and how and when the clientele should be serviced. As a result, a set of guidelines was established and these were further revised in 1985. Meetings are still being held with regard to the role of the LAT and the LAT clientele. In May 1987 Richmond School District held an inservice meeting for LATs regarding consultation and their clientele. It was stressed that the LATs clientele are regular classroom teachers. Teachers have usually perceived their clientele as being the children with which they work. This shift for LATs appeared to

address the issue of mainstreaming students and perceiving their learning problems as being a conflict between their learning styles and the learning styles existent in the classroom.

### Personal Background Experience

Having taught for a number of years in the intermediate grades in both Alberta and British Columbia, this researcher became a Learning Assistance Teacher (LAT) in 1976. The basis for the assignment was classroom experience and a remedial reading course. At that time, most schools in the district selected children for learning assistance on criteria established at the school level (Schwartz 1979) with most students reported to have difficulties with reading and mathematics. Schwartz (p.2) also found that "students with language difficulties, behavioural difficulties, emotional difficulties and physical difficulties were also reported to be receiving Learning Assistance." A typical LAT might thus have a wide range of demands. Teaching spares were not prevalent so consultative planning was done outside of regular school hours or tended to be ignored. Schwartz reported that LATs felt their greatest need for



additional training and upgrading was in the area of Learning Disabilities. Due to the need for further training in this field, this researcher began further courses in Special Education in 1978.

Gradually the ministry and school district developed a policy for LATs and the role changed from helping all slow learners to helping those students who were perceived to be functioning below their expected level. The students still came to the Learning Assistance Centre (LAC) and were put on reading programs such as Distar. A few came for Mathematics and were put on programs such as Simple Lattice Approach to Mathematics (S.L.A.M.). Seldom were students seen for difficulties in Social Studies or Science and concern was not placed on strategies and transfer of skills back to the classroom. Little emphasis was placed on observing the child in his/her classroom environment to accurately assess what the child's problems were. Individual learning styles were just beginning to be talked about in schools.

By the eighties, individual teaching and learning styles (Lawrence, 1982), teaching for transfer, teaching and learning strategies (Joyce & Weil, 1986), cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1987),

one-to-one interaction between the LAT and the regular teacher (Bravi, 1986 and Jenkins & Mayhall, 1976), one-to-one interaction with a student (Jenkins & Mayhall, 1976), and the LAT observing and working within the regular classroom (Huefner, 1988) were topics of concern in the educational literature.

After the Ministry published its 1985 guidelines, the LATs role officially involved assessment, direct teaching and consultation. The assessment was to involve observation in the regular class setting as well as criterion referenced testing. Direct instruction was encouraged within the regular educational setting whenever possible although, as stated by Speece and Mandell (1980), this for some teachers was very stressful and threatening. As well, the LAT was encouraged to set aside time for teacher consultation. Aloia (1983, cited in Idol-Maestas & Ritter [1985]) found that teacher confidence fluctuates depending upon the demands of the task and thus Idol-Maestas and Ritter stated that teacher educators must consider whether some teachers avoid consultation because of lack of preparation.

Many LATs and classroom teachers saw consultation as very valuable but ran into difficulty scheduling it

at a time when the classroom teacher was also free. The use of the teacher's spare for consultation with LATs and others is a contentious issue with the B.C. Teachers Union at this time. Time seemed to be a critical factor as well as the number of role expectations and the amount of time allotted for a LAT within each school.

These were among the concerns in the mid-eighties. Having completed an undergraduate year in Special Education in 1984, this researcher began a master's degree in Special Education. Through course work a qualitative paper for SPED 526 on "Concerns of the LAT" was prepared in 1987.

The LATs interviewed for the SPED 526 paper stated that they had found themselves taking on more responsibility as their job description was not tightly defined and that the variable of time was an integral part of all their concerns. Lack of adequate time affected all of the following: communication among all involved teachers receiving information regarding the program, providing support in basic skills and cooperative planning needed by the intermediate students, sharing and consulting among teachers, coordinating activities and helping parents. The LATs

also felt that they carried a heavy burden when it came to consulting with parents and yet they did not feel that this should be part of their role. They felt the universities were not doing a good job in teacher training and that this was further eroded by the districts placing individuals in LAC positions who had not been properly trained and did not meet the guidelines as outlined by the Ministry.

This researcher also found that sufficient time was not given to the LAT to work as a consultant. In the United States, Idol-Maestas and Ritter (1985) and Speece and Mandell (1980) came to similar conclusions as well. The implications Idol-Maestas and Ritter highlighted were that school districts needed to ensure that the special education teachers be given sufficient time to work as consultants, that direction and advice be sought from higher education personnel and that administrators become aware of the barriers to consultation such as the negative reaction of those who are not informed about the consultation models, that new graduates were uncomfortable doing consultation while lacking in experience, that consultants need work on some interaction skills, that special education teachers may fail to promote their program and that

there may be a lack of administrative support and time to consult. Speece and Mandell (1980) stated that there was the need for teachers to be cognizant of each other's roles and needs, the need to evaluate preservice and inservice programs, the need for higher education to look at program priorities and program scope in order to develop consultation skills and the need for administrators in schools to establish and maintain an atmosphere which encourages interaction among teachers. Dugoff, Ives and Shotel (1985) found that common views of the resource room function were not achieved through an incidental approach, and thus they recommended that all regular educators be required to have a course in special education and related legislation.

In view of the statements by the LATs in the SPED 526 qualitative study, there was also a need for everyone to be informed as to the time constraints of the LAT role, and the number of functions a LAT has time for in a day, week or year. Perhaps it was not that the role was not understood by those most involved with the LAT but that everyone, including the LAT, expected all functions of the role to be performed at

all times and there just was not adequate time or LAT personnel to meet this expectation of service delivery.

### Summary

Little substantive research has been done on the perceptions of both special and regular educators with regard to the learning assistance teacher role. Research is needed on not only the perception of how the role is being performed but also on how the key observers feel the role should be performed, and on the effectiveness of academic, personal, and social adjustment of the students. As long ago as 1979, Armitage stated that there was a great need for longitudinal studies on the effectiveness of all aspects of resource room/learning assistance program variables. These studies must isolate and look at specific variables that influence the success of the program. As yet these studies have not been done in B.C..

Dugoff, Ives and Shotel (1985) stated that a role has many different aspects, such as the position of the role in relation to other roles, the main activities associated with the role and the factors which

enhance the position of the LAT, the role must be understood as a composite of the role as expected, as perceived, as actually performed and as accepted or liked. Role analysis requires information from individuals whose perceptions of the role directly affect how the role is described. Experts in the field of special education, resource room teachers, regular classroom teachers, principals, students, parents and others have their own concepts of the role.

This is a study of the perception of the role of the Learning Assistance Teacher in an urban school district of British Columbia. Learning Assistance Teachers were found in all of the elementary schools in this district. The perceptions of the Learning Assistance Teachers (LAT), the classroom teachers, the principals, and the district staff of the role of the LAT are the focus of this study. Other studies may wish to include the perceptions of the students receiving learning assistance and those not receiving assistance plus the perceptions of the parents.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Focus of Education Policy

Fleming (1980) stated that the greatest and most challenging act that can be carried on by a teacher is to take charge of a class of learners. All other services must respond to the perceived needs of that teacher as defined by that professional, and must be designated support. In general, the focus of Special Education policy has shifted from a medical model of learning disabilities (L.D.) where the focus was on the handicaps, disadvantages, and weaknesses of the individuals to a collaborative, coordinated delivery system, to enable all students to receive appropriate education (Winzer, 1989). School failure according to Gelzheizer (1987) is "transferred from disability to a social process" and "the focus of remediation is shifted from a child alone to a child in context" (p.149). According to Winzer, at the root of the transformation from segregated to integrated educational placement were empirical data on the effectiveness of special classes and knowledge and experience related to children with learning and



behavioural problems. In order to properly assist teachers, principals, and students, we must understand how they perceive the role of the professional charged with assisting in the intervention of mild to moderate learning handicaps.

### Resource Room Programs

Resource room programs are the most widely used Special Educational service, but there is considerable variation in the way in which the resource room model is operated (Friend & McNutt, 1984). The model under study here is generally called the resource room (Friend & McNutt), but in British Columbia (B.C.) it is referred to as the learning assistance centre (LAC) (Ministry of Education, 1985). Armitage (1979) stated that even though the name "Resource Room" would more adequately indicate the variety of service needs available through the LAC, it was not being used as it was in most of North America. There are subtle differences between the terms, but in this paper the terms will be used interchangeably.

Resource rooms serve the interest of mainstreaming as they are an excellent alternative to permanent, isolated and stigmatizing special class placement

(McLoughlin & Kass, 1978). Bak, Cooper, Dobroth and Siperstein (1987) state that children saw resource room targets as significantly more capable than special class targets. They further indicate that the absence of formal labels did not prevent regular classroom children from forming negative expectations based on experiences. Thus educational placements alone can act as de facto labels. In B.C., the LAC is used to serve students with mild learning problems, (Ministry Guidelines 1985) but, as Friend and McNutt (1984) noted, LACs can be used to serve students with mild-to-moderate handicaps. These authors further state that most descriptions fail to delineate the resource room services or the resource room teacher responsibilities. They suggest that there is a need to discover how local school districts interpret and use the policies and guidelines furnished by the State Department of Education.

#### Roles of the Learning Assistance Teacher (LAT)

The consultant role of a LAT as outlined by Bravi (1986) can be of three types. There is the expert, the extra-pair-of-hands and the collaborative role. He stated that the collaborative role was more difficult

to assume so that often the resource teacher chooses to be an expert or an extra-pair-of-hands. These latter two roles have severe limitations whereas the consultant/collaborative role was what Bravi indicated was needed. D'Alonzo and Wiseman (1978) found that resource teachers were not performing the roles that were most needed. They stated that resource teachers see cooperative planning and interface with regular education personnel as a problem, and yet the foundation of mainstreaming was based on the premise of cooperative effort (D'Alonzo & Wiseman, 1978; McLoughlin & Kelly, 1982). Issues must be reanalyzed and resolved so as not to jeopardize mainstreaming and for the good of all. Perceptions of the role of the LAT as an expert have been fostered at the expense of the regular class teacher (Armitage, 1979). Often the classroom teachers feel they do not have the skills to deal with the student who has been labeled handicapped. These views have to be understood in order to plan inservice and foster role expectations which will best meet the needs of the classroom teacher and student. Discussions of role perceptions may foster a greater degree of mutual understanding and actualization of the teacher-partner concept (Dugoff, Ives & Shotel, 1985).

McLoughlin and Kass (1978) stated that the role of the resource room teacher requires clarification and that there was a need to substantiate the teacher competencies necessary to serve in this capacity.

#### The Role of the Learning Assistance Teachers in B.C.

Who is the learning assistance teacher? In B.C. "The Ministry encourages but does not require school districts to hire or appoint learning assistance teachers who have the following qualifications:

- a. A Bachelor of Education Degree
- b. University training in five or more of the following areas:
  - 1. introduction to exceptional children
  - 2. diagnosis and remediation of learning disabilities
  - 3. teaching the slower learner
  - 4. child development/psychology of adolescence
  - 5. behavioral management/precision teaching
  - 6. remedial mathematics
  - 7. remedial reading
  - 8. language development
  - 9. counselling and/or educational psychology
  - 10. assessment - testing
  - 11. psychology of learning/mastery learning
- c. Two successful years of regular classroom teaching.

Districts should provide appropriate inservice opportunities to facilitate the upgrading of learning assistance teachers' competencies". (Ministry of Education 1985 p.13.5-13.6). Schwartz (1979) stated that "a typical Learning Assistance teacher in November

1978 was a woman in her late thirties with a B.Ed. degree and thirteen years of teaching experience. She had a slightly higher level of professional education than the typical regular classroom teacher, and just over three years more experience. More of her Learning Assistance colleagues had Master's degrees and fewer had no degrees than regular classroom teachers" (p.43).

Evans (1980) stated that few resource teachers received specialized training. In Dugoff, Ives and Shotel's (1985) study the resource room teacher had fewer years experience in teaching than regular classroom teachers. In Evans (1980) study the resource room teacher was the least experienced and 85% held standard teaching credentials. If resource teachers had a master's degree or higher, they were more likely to serve as consultants to classroom teachers (Evans, 1980). Possibly a graduate degree was necessary to give resource personnel credibility to function as a consultant (Evans). In the United States, the most frequent type of resource teacher certification was by category of exceptionality (Friend & McNutt, 1984) and yet Marston (1987) noted that a significant interaction did not exist between the certification and the student type when dealing with learning disabled (LD) and

educable mentally retarded (EMR). Armitage (1979) noted that in B.C. the LACs are noncategorical and thus at that time research on the LACs in B.C. and the resource rooms in the United States were noncomparable.

In B.C., according to Schwartz (1979), there are no widely accepted specific minimal training and experience criteria for LATs, and in fact the Ministry Guidelines (1985) state qualifications that should, but not must, be sought. Schwartz's data also indicated that the larger urban and metropolitan districts tended to be more demanding in terms of specific subject areas and higher levels of teacher education than smaller areas which are in a less favourable position for obtaining qualified personnel. "Historically, teachers with specialist qualifications have been in short supply in many parts of British Columbia and it is not only in Learning Assistance that one finds teachers without relevant specialist training" (Schwartz, p.36).

The Richmond Learning Assistance Handbook (1984) stated that "the ultimate responsibility for the student remains with the Classroom Teacher" (p.5). Therefore, the School Based Team must support the Classroom Teacher and its members should plan for the referred student cooperatively. It is of vital

importance that the program established for the student be designed jointly by the Classroom Teacher and Learning Assistance Teacher with guidance from other members of the School Based Team where appropriate"(p.5). They acknowledge though that

"this ideal has not yet been realized in Richmond. While each school must have a School Based Team meeting to refer a student to a special placement within the district, there is at present, no unity among schools in their use of a School Based Team model to monitor students referred to the Learning Assistance Program" (p.5).

The Richmond Handbook also stated that the LAT "should establish a service delivery model which reflects the particular needs of the school, the staff, and the students" (p.5) keeping the Ministry Guidelines in mind and that direct instruction may be just as effective in the regular classroom or in co-teaching.

Schwartz (1979) found in that some educators viewed the concept of learning assistance as excellent but that it was not fully provided due to the restrictions of time and staffing. He also found that the job was inevitably seen as greater than the time allocated and paid for. This was not a criticism of the teacher but the time element. This researcher found the same problem regarding time in a qualitative study (Cullis, 1987).

Vicente (1977) stated that "each teacher, principal, coordinator, superintendent and parent sees the LAT in a separate light" (p.20). She cites Perkins' (1977) studies in Terrace, Smithers and Kitimat which found that there were situations in a single school where the LAT and principal did not have the same perceptions of the LA Program. McLoughlin and Kelly (1982) describe how unclear role descriptions, and lack of adequate time for certain functions (individual planning, consulting and observing) can result in role conflicts.

Schwartz (1979) stated that principals, when asked to rank the major tasks of LATs in their district, assigned first rank to direct service. The Ministry Guidelines (1985) encouraged the establishment of screening committees and school based teams to monitor referrals and stated that the "Learning assistance program should consist of three components" (p.13.2) namely, assessment, direct instruction, and cooperative planning.

#### I. Direct Instruction

The guidelines for direct instruction do not state whether they want categorical or noncategorical grouping, daily or less-than-daily instruction, 1-to-1



vs. small group instruction, resident or itinerant teachers. Jenkins and Mayhall (1976) stated that there was conflicting evidence on whether resource teacher programs were any more effective than the alternative of regular or special class placement. They discussed the idea that the inconsistent results might stem from a variety of experimental programs being evaluated. Findings indicated that children benefited most from 1-to-1 instruction, a tutorial approach, direct service and daily instruction. Noncategorical programs have been recommended by Marston (1987) as he found there was no data to support the notion that specific teaching methods are differentially effective for educable mentally retarded (EMR), emotionally disturbed (ED), and learning disabled (LD) students.

If daily instruction is superior, one may wish to maximize the delivery of daily service and thus reconsider itinerant services or, if using itinerants, consider a block system or a system of aides (Mayhall & Jenkins, 1977). There has been a shift away from the learning characteristics of specific types of students to learning how best to assess and instruct those who experience difficulties (Otto, 1986). It is therefore

important to know what teachers are doing and what concerns they have.

## II. Assessment

Vicente (1977) stated that the first LAT training programs emphasized testing skills as many LATs attending in-service had no formal training in assessment procedures. Gradually assessment became a large portion of the program. LATs were expected to have evolved a system for observing students and collecting observations from teachers and parents and recording these findings.

The B.C. Ministry Guidelines (1985) carefully outlined the general categories of what to test for and set the diagnostic teaching model as inherent in the assessment component. Algozzine and Ysseldyke (1986) recommended that the emphasis should be on the continuous monitoring of pupil performance and the use of standardized tests should be de-emphasized. They further recommended that students should be evaluated on instructionally relevant tasks that can be administered repeatedly. Richmond's LAT Handbook (1984) stressed that testing is only one part of the total assessment program. It is conducted to support

on-going diagnosis and teaching and must be accompanied by observation.

### III. Co-operative Planning

Consultation should be used to make regular classrooms more constructive environments for all students (Algozzine & Ysseldyke, 1986). Mechanics are needed to ensure that communication occurs between the resource teacher and referring teacher (Brown, Kiraly & McKinnon, 1979). D'Alonzo and Wiseman (1978) found that resource teachers felt that co-operative planning and dialogue with regular education personnel were most needed but they were a problem to implement. Issues must be reanalyzed and resolved for the good of all (D'Alonzo & Wiseman). The consultative activity does not have parity with the resource teacher's other roles (Evans, 1980). Classroom teachers, principals and resource teachers agreed that more time should be allotted to consultation, but that does not mean equal time (Evans).

In B.C. co-operative planning is a component of the learning assistance teacher's (LAT) role. The Ministry Guidelines (1985) explained its importance for the transfer of skills and the ultimate success of the program. How much time should be spent on this

function and its significance for mainstreaming is no longer delineated. It is up to the individual teacher to designate the time to spend on this. How significant others perceive this, and the amount of experience the resource teacher has (Evans, 1981) will therefore partly determine how much importance is placed on co-operative planning. Vicente (1977) stated that the consultative area created problems for the LATs as they had less training in this area and, because they often did not have formal training, the LATs lacked confidence in their own experiences and ability. Vicente further stated that teachers are becoming more sophisticated in identifying problems and thus more students are being indicated for service and yet the LAT does not have sufficient time to provide direct service for all students in need. Co-operative planning would be an alternate way to service students.

Time is a crucial issue in co-operative planning (Gickling, Murphy & Mallory, 1979). How to make time for the regular and resource teacher to plan together when teachers do not like using before or after school time is a concern (Gickling, Murphy, Mallory). Both regular teachers and resource teachers were found to have a predisposition for direct services on a 1-to-1

basis with the resource teacher providing limited consultation (Gickling, Murphy, Mallory). Teacher educators must consider whether some teachers avoid consultation because they have not been prepared in this area (Idol-Maestas & Ritter, 1985). A lack of interpersonal skills, or the ability to develop and execute individual educational plans (I.E.P.'s) in co-operation may be major problems faced by the resource teacher (McLoughlin & Kass, 1978). Unclear role descriptions or lack of adequate time for certain vital functions such as individual planning, consulting and observing are indicative of role conflict according to McLoughlin & Kelly (1982).

#### Initial Problems with the LAT Role

In the United States, there were role conflicts, inaccurate expectations, power struggles, interpersonal roadblocks and competency crises with the advent of this new delivery system (McLoughlin & Kelly, 1982). Gradually, service delivery expectations were established. In B.C. the Ministry of Education (1985) guidelines outlined the learning assistance program as being designed to provide services to a school and its students through the three areas of assessment, direct instruction and cooperative planning. The Ministry

Guidelines stressed that individualized educational programs should be developed for direct instruction; that school districts should try to evaluate the effectiveness of their learning assistance programs; that the program should consist of the three components of assessment, direct instruction and consultation; that a space should be established in each school for a Learning Assistance Center and that the school districts should hire Learning Assistance Teachers with a certain set of qualifications. It is noted that the use of the word 'should' leaves the actual programs open to each school district's interpretation and needs.

McLoughlin and Kelly (1982) described how unclear role descriptions, and lack of adequate time for certain functions (individual planning, consulting and observing) resulted in role conflicts. One of the most common failings in resource room programs was staffing them with teachers who knew little more about teaching, materials or anything else than those they served to advise (McLoughlin & Kass, 1978). These authors further suggested that the lack of interpersonal skills, and the ability to develop and execute individual educational plans (I.E.P.) in cooperation

were major problems faced by resource teachers. Schwartz (1979) found that in British Columbia "LATs tended to be slightly better educated than their regular classroom colleagues, in that more of them had Master's degrees and fewer had no degree" (p.25). The Ministry Guidelines emphasized that the role of the LAT is to serve in a consultative and advisory role to regular classroom teachers. Schwartz stated that "experienced teachers are more credible in a consultative role than are those whose qualifications are limited to advanced university course work, no matter how relevant the subject areas of those courses" (p.26).

If the regular teachers' needs were not being met by the resource room teacher, it is not unreasonable to conclude that a feeling of frustration and sense of professional ineptness would be evoked by the concept of mainstreaming (Speece & Mandell, 1980). In addition Speece & Mandell stated that direct classroom teacher intervention strategies were not provided to over 85% of regular teachers. This suggested that resource teachers might not view intervention in regular classrooms as part of their duties or skills (Speece & Mandell) or, if they do, they are reluctant to be

actively involved in this. Without a concomitant change in the child's original failure situation - the regular classroom, resource room programs hold little success for mainstreaming students (Speece & Mandell, 1980; Ministry of Education, 1985). It is important to know the perceptions of the key observers in cooperative planning so that problems can be alleviated in this area. Resource room teachers, classroom teachers and administrators need to be cognizant of each other's roles, needs and responsibilities and they must establish and maintain an atmosphere which facilitates interaction (Speece & Mandell, 1980). Schwartz speculated that the differences he found in the rank order of skill areas in terms of perceived needs for additional LA teacher training might be the result of different perceptions of what Learning Assistance is and should be, and of the areas which should be emphasized in the provision of Learning Assistance services.

Reynolds, Wang, and Walberg (1987) stated that unless major structural changes were made in special and regular education, the field of special education was destined to become more of a problem and less of a solution in providing education for mildly handicapped



children who have special needs. They further noted that children were not carved by nature into various categories now used in schools, and that problems center on partitioning mildly and moderately handicapped students into categories which lack evidence of validity.

#### Restructuring Regular and Special Education

Keogh (1988) cited that there was a growing dissatisfaction with regular and special education and that it was time for a change in the process of education. She noted that in order for change to be successful there must be a) a stable, reasonable and coherent federal policy of support for research and evaluation, b) a need for multiple designs and models, c) a study of programs and organization and individuals and d) an adoption of an attitude that questions. Further implications for successful implementation as cited by Huefner (1988) were 1.policy choices, 2.administrative incentives and 3.teacher training.

The regular education initiative was triggered by a speech by Madeleine Will (1986, cited in Reynolds, Wang & Walberg [1987]). It was based on the premise that current special education had several flaws such

as a) many children with problems were not eligible for special education services, b) students in special programs were stigmatized, c) stress for identification was on serious deficiencies rather than prevention and d) special education did not lead to cooperative school-parent relationships (Lerner 1988). The initiative suggested remedies for these flaws. Lerner raised some questions about how the new system would affect learning disabled students. Due to these questions and the fact that regular educators were absent in the regular education initiative discussions, Lerner stated that it was too early to abandon the special education system and services. She further stated that change should not occur until there was a significant improvement in regular education training and professional practice in meeting the needs of individuals with special learning needs within the public schools. Martin (1987) suggested that change must be cautious and evolutionary. He further noted that there needed to be more research on the question, "To what extent do treatments work, for which children and under what conditions" (p.15). He indicated that what was most needed was massive funding by the federal government into research and the study of conditions

that bring desired changes in children's behavior. Algozzine and Ysseldyke (1986) described the necessity to rethink our systems of classification and to make all education more special. They further stated that in order to keep prevention in the proper perspective we must, through consultation, make regular classrooms more constructive environments for all students.

Researchers such as Lilly (1987) and Wang, Vaughan, and Dytman (1985) stated a need for the restructuring of classroom environments to accommodate diverse needs. If headway is to be made in this restructuring then the roles and functions of specialized school personnel and the regular classroom teacher must be redefined (Wang, Vaughan & Dytman 1985). They also noted the systematic provision of staff development as a key ingredient of successful change. Lilly stated that special educators must increasingly see themselves as members of the general education community. Thus, knowledge is needed about how Learning Assistance Teachers (LAT), classroom teachers and other key observers perceive the role of the LAT. Schwartz (1979) found that principals and classroom teachers (second hand reporting) predominately saw Learning Assistance as a

reinforcement and supplement to the programs otherwise being offered in classrooms. Through a greater understanding of the social factors on the practice of special education in general and upon experience at the school level in particular, teachers will be enabled to exert greater control over events and be less controlled by them (White & Calhoun, 1987).

### Role Analysis

Speece and Mandell (1980) stated that when determining the effectiveness of an integrated program, it was imperative that the perspectives of the regular and resource teachers be given equal consideration since the resource room concept implied a triangular communication process among regular teachers, resource room teachers and the handicapped children. There are significant others that contribute to the effectiveness of the resource room program. The perceptions of the principal and district staff were mentioned in the literature by McLoughlin and Kass (1978), D'Alonzo and Wiseman (1978), Dugoff, Ives and Shotel (1985), and Evans (1981), but there seemed to be little written about the perceptions of the parents and the children.

McLoughlin and Kass (1978) stated that role analysis of a resource teacher must be investigated as an integral element of a sociocultural setting, the school. The role, they felt, defined itself by virtue of its interrelationship with other roles, its position in the total context of special and regular education and the perceptions held by people. One of the ways they suggested for examining the role of the resource teacher was under the construct of role analysis and the various kinds of role perceptions. The resource teacher may be considered a combination of the perceptions of:

1. administrators who expect certain acts to be performed
2. the resource teacher who has his/her own idea of the role
3. the role as it is accepted by the resource teacher
4. the classroom teachers who request certain acts to be performed

An aspect of role analysis is to measure what people think the role actually is and what they think it should be. The role can then be considered from the perspectives of the key observers such as the students,

the parents, the classroom teachers, the principals, district staff and the resource room teachers. This should help identify potential problems in the role of the resource teacher. Successful resource room programs require clear and public delineation of roles (Harris & Mahar, 1975). Differences existed between different kinds of resource teachers and thus there was a need to know the functional aspects of a resource teacher's role (Harris & Mahar). Most literature on resource room programs refer to programs outside British Columbia. "Learning Assistance is the British Columbia manifestation of what the Standards for Educators of Exceptional Children in Canada model refers to as the 'Resource Room' concept," (Schwartz, 1979, p.7).

### Summary

Whether or not we believe that education requires a drastic reorganization, there is a need for clarity in the definition of the resource room program and resource room teachers (D'Alonzo & Wiseman, 1978; Dugoff, Ives, Shotel, 1985; Evans 1981; Friend & McNutt, 1984; Harris & Mahar 1975; Jenkins & Mayhall 1976; McLoughlin & Kelly 1982), for increased communication between resource teachers and referring

teachers (Brown, Kiraly & McKinnon, 1979; D'Alonzo & Wiseman, 1978; Dugoff, Ives & Shotel, 1985; Evans, 1980, 1981; Speece & Mandell 1980), and for public relations to inform parents, teachers and administrators about the goals and functions of resource programs (Harris & Mahar, 1975; Speece & Mandell 1980).

As Armitage (1984) stated

"the Resource Room (RR) teacher's role is defined as a combination of the perceptions of the principal, the staff, and the RR teacher personally. Although these perceptions may overlap to some extent, a close examination of them will usually disclose some totally different assumptions on everyone's part. Support for the RR program is weakened by misunderstandings" (p.19).

LATs, regular teachers, principals and district staff need to be cognizant of each others' roles and needs. The purpose of this study was to investigate the LATs, classroom teacher's, principal's and district staff's perception of the role of the LAT.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PROBLEM

#### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the present study was to explore within the local district setting the role of the Learning Assistance teacher as perceived by some of the key observers. In this study, these are the Learning Assistance Teacher (LAT), the classroom teacher, the principal, and the district staff person. The LAT is a supplier of services and therefore accountable to students, parents and staff members. In order to maintain an effective and continuing interaction, understanding of the key observers' perceptions of the role is essential for a harmonious working relationship based on understanding.

#### Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of the Learning Assistance Teachers, Classroom Teachers, Principals and District Staff of the role of the LAT as rated on the "LAT Role Function Survey" designed by Dugoff, Ives and Shotel (1985) - (Appendix A)?



2. How do the LATs, teachers and principals rate the degree of emphasis they place upon certain role functions in performing their job (as determined by the "LAT Role Function Survey?"
3. To what extent do the ratings by the key observers and the LATs agree?

#### Research Hypotheses

With regard to the research questions stated above, the following research hypotheses are formulated.

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant mean difference between the ratings of the district staff, the LATs, the classroom teachers and the principals on various role functions at the .05 level as measured by the "role function survey".

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant mean difference between the ratings of the district staff, the LATs, the classroom teachers and the principals on the three categories of assessment, instruction, and consultation for the LAT role at the .05 level as measured by the "role function survey".

Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant differences between the Pearson product-moment coefficients of

correlation obtained for the inter-group correlations of the means.

### Major Benefits

The resource room program, the resource room teacher, the handicapped student, the classroom teacher, the principal and the district staff might all benefit from this research. It may provide guides to alter the existing program as needed and it should enable the key observers:

- A. to discover if principals, resource teachers and others consciously disagree about what the role responsibilities are as well as which activities are considered most important. Misunderstandings and differences in opinion can result in lack of support to perform the role activities.
- B. to understand the different role perceptions which will facilitate an understanding of the role of the resource teacher and the resource room program.
- C. to assist the resource room teachers and regular teachers to be cognizant of each others roles and expectations.

- D. to be aware of the various perceptions of the resource room teacher's role.
- E. to permit staff development activities to address discrepant perceptions (Dugoff, Ives, Shotel, 1985).

#### Basic Assumptions

The following assumptions underlie the study:

1. It is assumed that the role of the elementary learning assistance teacher can be effectively characterized in terms of a discrete set of behavioral variables that relate primarily to the interaction between LAT and classroom teachers.
2. It is assumed that LATs perform consultative, assessment and instructional functions.

#### Limitations of the Study

1. The study is limited to elementary schools willing to participate in this study within one urban school system.
2. It is limited to the self-report methodology of all attitude studies.
3. It is limited to all LATs, principals, classroom teachers of kindergarten (K) through grade 7 who

enroll or share a class and district staff willing to participate in this study.

4. It may only be generalized to other similar school districts.

Definition of Terms:

For the purpose of this study the terms listed below have been defined in the following manner:

- (i) degree of emphasis: the relative weight according to each of the LAT role functions: 1 supplementary, 2 helpful, 3 important, 4 indispensable.
- (ii) district staff: support service staff who are itinerant to the school and are involved with the LAT program. The psychologists, counsellors and speech and language clinicians are district staff. It does not include teachers of Special Classes such as the Diagnostic Prescriptive Centre, Learning Disability teachers and Special Class teachers.
- (iii) classroom teachers: all elementary teachers who enrolled or shared a class and all vice principals.

- (iv) key observers: in this study they are the learning assistance teachers, the classroom teachers, the principals and the district staff.
- (v) "The Learning Assistance Teacher (LAT) Role Function Survey": the instrument used for rating Learning Assistance teacher role functions as developed by Dugoff, Ives and Shotel (1985). (See Appendix A.)
- (vi) "plug-in" model: The primary function of the LAT is to teach students within the regular classroom (Dugoff, Ives & Shotel).
- (vii) position: the term used to indicate the assignment of key observers.
- (viii) principals: administrators within each school.
- (ix) "pull-out" model: the primary function of the LAT is to teach students within the setting for the LAC (Dugoff, Ives & Shotel).
- (x) resource room or learning assistance centre (LAC): an administrative arrangement that is the bridge between the students assigned to the special needs self-contained classroom and the regular classroom.
- (xi) role: an organized pattern of behavior in accordance with the expectations of others (Thompson, 1960).

(xii) role function: "a discrete set of behavioral variables that relate primarily to the interactions" (Dugoff, 1984 p.11) between learning assistance teachers and classroom teachers.

(xiii) team teaching model: the learning assistance teacher and classroom teacher share the responsibility of planning and implementing instructional strategies and ongoing assessment.

#### Summary

The LATs role depends on successful interrelationships with principals, teachers and district staff. Graham, Hudson, Burdick & Carpenter (1980, cited in Evans [1981]) who stated that "the success of any mainstreaming effort is subject to the cooperation and attitudes of the individuals involved (p.600)." McLoughlin and Kass (1978) found the LAT relationships to involve a high-contact role and thus differences of professional perspective and opinion can develop. This study is meant to assist school districts to improve the effectiveness of the role of learning assistance teachers through a knowledge of the different role perceptions.

Through fostering a greater degree of understanding of the perceived role of the LAT, a

mutual understanding will be achieved. Role clarification clears the way for strong staff relations.

The behavior of LATs will be determined by the role expectations as perceived by classroom teachers, principals and district staff as well as the expectations of parents and students. With knowledge of this perceived role, the LAT may be more effective in ranking problems and considering alternative solutions to problems (D'Alonzo & Wiseman, 1978). Role clarification is imperative. Whether there is consensus regarding the perceived role of the LAT needs to be known.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to see if perception of the role of the LAT was different across positions. Position was the term used to indicate the assignment of key observers' (LAT, classroom teachers, principal and district staff) roles and thus position was the independent variable and perception the dependent variable. This research sought to make comparisons among the perceptions of the LAT, the regular teachers, the principals, and the district staff, regarding the role of the LAT in a suburban school district in the province of British Columbia. It examined the extent to which the descriptions of emphasis by the LAT agreed with (1) the descriptions of his/her behavior by the classroom teachers and principal working in the same school district, and (2) the descriptions of the relative importance of the LATs various role functions as defined by district staff. The purpose of this study was to find out "what is" (Borg & Gall,



1983,p.354). Therefore, the type of research design was best described as descriptive.

A statistical analysis was made of the perceptions of the key observers of the role of the LAT. Local surveys have often been used for the purpose of internal evaluation and improvement and to study relationships and comparisons between groups (Borg & Gall, 1983).

This chapter focuses on the methodological and procedural steps in the data collection process.

#### Site and Participants

The site for the study was the elementary schools in a suburban British Columbian school district. The initial, defined population of subjects involved all elementary teachers who enrolled or shared a class, all LATs and principals and also all district staff involved with the learning assistance program. Research subject subgroups explored were gender, age, experience, formal education and school size. The role of the LAT is affected by the myriad of people with whom the LAT interacts (Dugoff, Ives, Shotel, 1985) and also the perceptions of the key observers who can form attitudes not on the basis of categorization but on the

basis of placement (Bak, Cooper, Dobroth & Siperstein, 1987).

In this school district, there were 29 elementary schools and 4 annexes. There were 35 LATs, 29 principals, and 412 classroom teachers who enrolled or shared a class. Of the district staff 27 were involved with the LAT program.

A letter was sent to the Supervisor of Curriculum requesting permission to conduct research in the school district (Appendix B). Following a formal review and approval of the research proposal by the School District (Appendix C) and the University of British Columbia (U.B.C.) Behavioural Sciences Screening Committee for Research and Other Studies Involving Human Subjects, a letter (Appendix D) was sent to the principal of each of the elementary schools by the School District's Director of Special Programs requesting their participation in completing the questionnaire. The researcher further sent a letter to educators (district staff, classroom teachers and LATs) outlining the purpose of the study and soliciting their assistance (Appendix E), and a follow-up thank you letter (Appendix F). According to the school system policy, participation by each school and individual in

research is voluntary. In order to encourage participation, the investigator contacted each principal by telephone and asked for the school's cooperation. Following this telephone contact, 27 out of the 29 schools and all of the annexes agreed to participate in the study. Of the two schools who did not participate, one stated that there had been too much stress on the staff due to a recent staff death and the other principal stated that they did not wish to be involved in the study. Also one of the annexes sent their results to the school board, but these could not be located. The sample for the study were 29 LATs, 23 principals, 155 classroom teachers, and 10 district staff. Many teachers expressed to the researcher that they were tired of questionnaires as this had been their third in less than three weeks. The researcher was unaware of this when the survey was distributed.

### Instrumentation

From a search of the literature, the instrument used by Dugoff, Ives and Shotel (1985), The LAT Role Function Survey was found to be suitable for the purpose of this study. They had improved their survey instrument through feedback and discussion with

resource room and regular classroom teachers, principals and experts in the field of special education and it was further modified by them after pilot testing. The items were randomly placed throughout the survey instrument and related to the three categories of assessment, instruction and consultation. Dugoff (1984) stated that the items related to the three categories were not clustered but randomly placed and less emphasis was placed on assessment because of the desire to stress items related to LAT and classroom teacher interaction. Permission to use their instrument, which had been field tested and refined to a list of 18 behavioral statements, was obtained. This researcher, administered the same instrument to all subjects in the sample in order to obtain standardized information as did Dugoff, Ives and Shotel,. Borg and Gall (1983) suggested searching the literature, developing your own scale or using a Likert scale when measuring attitudes. The instrument chosen had 18 behavioral statements which were rated on a 4-point scale specifying the degree of emphasis (1-supplementary, 2-helpful, 3-important, 4-indispensable). Glass & Hopkins (1984) would consider this an interval scale as the numbers

describe the magnitude of the differences among the points. The assigning of the numbers was done so that equal differences in the numbers corresponded to equal differences in the emphasis. This is a Likert-type scale.

For the LAT Role Function Survey, Dugoff (1984) calculated an internal consistency index using the Kuder-Richardson formula (KR-20) on the 18 item scale for the 3 respondent groups in the schools: resource room teachers, classroom teachers and principals. The results indicated that the total score on the scale had an adequate reliability for that study. The values for KR-20 for the 18 items were as follows: resource room teachers 0.783, classroom teachers 0.876, and principals 0.829.

#### Data Collection Procedures

A method of systematic data collection to survey the subjects through the use of a questionnaire was used. All schools and district staff were sent a letter by the Director of Special Programs from the school district, stating that a research proposal had been approved and requesting them to complete the questionnaire.

In April 1988, the questionnaire along with a letter of transmittal was sent to all LATs, all elementary teachers who enrolled or shared a class, all principals and all district staff involved with the LAT program. So as to be non-threatening to the LAT program as it exists in each school, the questionnaire was anonymous. The questionnaire was hand delivered in April and collected in a similar manner in May. A time was established in the letter of transmittal for collecting the form. In this way, "time-bound association" (Borg & Gall 1983,p.408) information was collected which is a feature of a cross-sectional survey (Borg & Gall). All subjects were administered the survey instrument in as similar a way as possible. All schools were sent the questionnaire and the principals were requested to distribute them to all classroom teachers and LATs. District staff received theirs from the Director of Special Services. Dugoff, Ives and Shotel (1985) only included classroom teachers who were receiving reading support from the resource room teachers. This study surveyed all classroom teachers as the students in the LAT change from year to year and during the year; therefore, all teachers' perceptions contributed to define the LATs role.

A follow-up letter along with further copies of the questionnaire were sent to all schools one week after the return of the questionnaire had been requested, appealing to their desire to help a colleague.

#### Data Analysis

This survey research, while it cannot establish causal relationships with any degree of certainty, was used to explore a variety of relationships (Borg & Gall, 1983). All the n's were not equal; therefore, it was not a balanced design. The data were subjected to several analyses according to the hypotheses being tested.

#### Demographic Data

Demographic information was requested at the beginning of the survey form and it was quantifiable. The researcher met with the Deputy Superintendent - Personnel of the school district in February 1989 to obtain demographic data regarding the mean age, experience and educational background for the population of the LATs, classroom teachers, principals and district staff. This would be used to determine

whether the sample was representative of the population.

#### Hypothesis 1

The null hypothesis is that mean perceptions of the LAT role, as measured by The LAT Role Function Survey, are the same for all 4 groups (principal, classroom teacher, LAT and district staff).

The first analysis was conducted to measure the relationship among the LATs, the classroom teachers', the principals' and the district staffs' ratings of role functions. The group differences across eighteen items were analyzed with one way analyses of variance (ANOVA). The degree of risk of a Type 1 error was set at .05.

Repeated analyses using the same subjects or using the same data, subdivided in different ways has implications for alpha equal to .05. Lack of independence results in a shifting alpha. The 18 items on the LAT Role Function Survey were given all together and thus they are not totally independent which results in a shifting alpha. One can compensate for this trend by using techniques such as those suggested by Bonferroni (as cited in Glass & Hopkins, 1984).



### Hypothesis 2

The null hypothesis is that mean perceptions of the three categories (assessment, instruction and consultation) of the LAT role, as measured by The LAT Role Function Survey, are the same for all 4 positions (principal, classroom teacher, LAT and district staff).

The second analysis was conducted to measure the relationship among the LATs, the classroom teachers', the principals' and the district staff's ratings of role functions for the combined item categories of instruction (#1,3,5,10,11,13,17), consultation (#2,4,7,14,15,16,18) and assessment (#6,8,9,12). The 4 group differences across the 3 categories were analyzed with one way analyses of variance (ANOVA). The degree of risk of a type 1 error was set at .05.

### Hypothesis 3

The null hypothesis is that there will be no significant differences between the Pearson product-moment coefficients of correlations obtained for the inter-group correlations of the means.

The third analysis was conducted to measure the relationship among the LATs', the classroom teachers', the principals' and the district staff's mean scores. A Pearson  $r$  was obtained for the inter-group

correlations. A comparison was made between all correlation coefficients using chi-square to determine whether all samples came from the same population.

#### Analysis of Variance (ANOVA):

The question to be answered by ANOVA was whether the samples all came from the same population with the same mean or if at least one of the samples came from a population with a different mean.

If the null hypothesis was rejected, then there was a significant variation among the means. If the null hypothesis was rejected at least 1 significant contrast among means was indicated. This contrast was explored through the multiple comparison (MC) technique involving the Tukey test.

Thus if the null hypothesis was rejected, a search for which difference(s) in means was significant was in order through multiple comparison (MC) techniques. The Scheffe is a very flexible post hoc MC method but also very conservative. According to Glass and Hopkins (1984) "For all possible pairwise contrasts the Tukey or Newman-Keuls methods are more sensitive" (p.383). The Tukey is the test favored by this researcher. MC tests reveal which means are significantly different and thus which groups have

different perceptions of certain role functions for the LAT.

### Supplementary Analyses

#### Inter-group Correlation

The third analysis was conducted to examine the inter-group correlation for the key observers on the eighteen items. Pearson product-moment correlations were obtained based on group averages for each of the eighteen items.

#### Ranking for Four Groups

The fourth analysis was conducted to examine the ranking of the four groups (principals, classroom teachers, LATs and district staff) on the 18 items. For each group the means of the eighteen items were used in the ranking.

### Summary of Methods and Procedures

This study was developed during the spring of 1988. During this time a search of the literature was conducted, a survey instrument was located and permission obtained for its use, procedures were established for obtaining data and analyzing the data.

The letters and questionnaires were distributed and collected in April and May of 1988.

All data were coded, and readied for computer programming and analysis in February of 1989. All analyses of the data were performed using the computer programs for SPSS-X Release (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

## CHAPTER V

### ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to see if perception of the role of the learning assistance teacher is different across positions held by key observers. To examine the perceptions of elementary learning assistance teachers, classroom teachers, principals and district staff working in the same school district as to the degree of emphasis placed on various role functions by the LAT as s/he performs on the job, a Likert-type scale for an 18 item questionnaire was used. The study investigated the extent to which the sample position means represented populations with the same means. The study also examined the relative importance of the various LAT role functions as seen by the key observers. This chapter reports the findings derived from the statistical analyses of the data.

#### Sample:

Questionnaires were sent to 29 principals, 35 LATs and 412 classroom teachers in 29 schools and 4 annexes. They were also distributed at the school board office to 27 district staff personnel. From the 29 elementary

school and 4 annexes in the school district, 27 schools and 3 annexes participated. As the annexes shared the principal and LAT of the larger school, data has been grouped for each annex within the context of the larger school. Of the 35 LATs 29 responded, for a response rate of 82.86%. Of the 29 principals, 23 responded for a response rate of 79.31%. Of the 412 teachers, 155 responded for a response rate of 37.62%. Of the 27 district staff 10 responded for a response rate of 37.04% (Table 1).

(i) LATs:

In the LAT sample of 29 teachers, 1 (3.4%) had no regular classroom experience, while 28 (96.5%) had taught in the regular classroom. Ten (34.48%) of the LATs worked part-time in the schools while 19 (65.52%) worked full-time. They had taught a mean of 14.2 years and they had an average age of 37. 93.1% had a minimum of an undergraduate degree. The majority, 72.41%, had a bachelors degree while 20.69% had a masters and 6.9% did not have a degree. The age, teaching experience and educational background is summarized in Tables 1 & 2.

(ii) Classroom teachers:

The regular classroom teacher sample consisted of 155 teachers who had taught a mean of 12.4 years and had a mean age of 35. The majority (94.19%) of the teachers had a minimum of an undergraduate degree. Twenty-seven (17.42%) had a masters degree. Of these 27 with a masters degree, 10 (37.04%) were Vice Principals (VP) and 17 (62.96%) were regular classroom teachers. Thirteen VP's who enrolled or shared a class responded to the survey and they were grouped with the classroom teachers. This school district considered VP's to be administrators in training with a part-time teaching responsibility.

(iii) Principals:

The principal's sample consisted of 23 principals who had taught or who had been in a school setting a mean of 22.7 years and were an average age of 43. The majority, 18 (78.26%), had a masters degree while 4 (17.39%) had a bachelors degree. One principal (4.35%) failed to supply data for the educational information.

(iv) District Staff:

The district staff sample consisted of 10 individuals who had taught an average of 8.3 years and

had a mean age of 38. The data on teaching experience for district staff has to be regarded cautiously as 8 out of the 10 only filled in the last blank or total number of years teaching experience which may indicate that they are paid at this level but have never taught in a regular classroom. The district staff does not include teachers of Special Classes such as the Diagnostic Prescriptive Centre, Learning Disability (LD) teachers and Special Class teachers. The district staff position includes the psychologists, counsellors and speech and language clinicians all of whom have contact with the LAT and provide support services.

(v) Demographic Data

The researcher met with the Deputy Superintendent - Personnel, of the school district, in February 1989 to obtain demographic data regarding the mean age, experience and educational background of the LATs, classroom teachers, principals and district staff. The school district was involved in their first union teacher negotiations at the time so the reporting was deferred on this for a month. In April, the researcher was told to contact the school district's Comptroller, as a contact person for the data. Upon contact, it was stated that the computers were not set up to obtain



this information and thus it would take too long and be too expensive an undertaking. The researcher thus does not have data to compare the respondents with the total sample.

Table 1: Response rate and means across respondent groups

Group	Response Rate(%)	Age(Yrs)	Experience(Yrs)
Principals	79.3	43	23
Classroom Teachers	37.6	35	12
LATs	82.9	37	14
District Staff	37.0	37	8

Table 2: Education for four respondent groups:

Group	BA Level (%)	MA Level (%)	No Response (%) or Below BA
Principals	17.4	78.3	4.4
Classroom Teachers	76.8	17.4	5.8
LATs	72.4	20.7	6.9
District Staff	20.0	80.0	0

### Measures

Dugoff, Ives and Shotel (1985) calculated an internal consistency index using the Kuder-Richardson

formula (KR-20) on the 18 item scale for the 3 respondent groups in the schools: resource room teachers, classroom teachers and principals. The results indicated that the total score on the scale had an adequate reliability for that study. The values for KR-20 for the 18 items were as follows: resource room teachers 0.783, classroom teachers 0.876, and principals 0.829.

This researcher used Lertaps Interpretation of Control Cards to calculate an internal consistency index (Hoyt's). This is a method to provide an estimate of internal consistency through the analysis of the individual test items. Borg and Gall (1983) stated that Hoyt's analysis of variance procedure produced the same results as KR-20. The values for the Hoyt estimate of reliability for the 18 items were as follows: learning assistance teachers 0.65, classroom teachers 0.86, principals 0.69 and district staff 0.74. See table 3.

Borg and Gall (1983) stated that reliability "may be defined as the level of internal consistency or stability of the measuring device over time (p.281)." Kuder-Richardson and Hoyt's Analysis of Variance Procedure were used to determine the coefficient of

internal consistency which can be determined from a single administration of a survey. According to Borg and Gall lower test reliabilities are acceptable for group research and the level of reliability is determined largely by the nature of the research, the size of the samples and the expected differences among the groups. For Objective Personality Measures (n=35) low reliability would be .46, median reliability would be .85 and high reliability would be .97.

Table 3: Internal consistency index across four respondent groups on eighteen items, for two studies (Dugoff: KR-20 and present research: Hoyt's).

Groups	Dugoff		Present Research	
	n	KR-20	n	Hoyt's
LATs	22	0.78	29	0.65
Classroom Teachers	34	0.88	155	0.86
Principals	22	0.83	23	0.69
District Staff	--	--	10	0.74

Using Hoyt's Analysis of Variance Procedure, this researcher obtained lower coefficients of consistency for all respondent groups than did Dugoff. Classroom

teachers coefficients of .88 for KR-20 and .86 for Hoyt's were very close. Dugoff's results are very close to the median range (.85) of reliability for Objective Personality (Borg & Gall, 1983) while the results obtained using Hoyt fall between the median of .85 and the low range of .46 and are closer to the median than the low range.

#### Hypotheses Findings:

H1: Mean scores for perceptions of the LAT role, as measured by the LAT Role Function Survey, are the same for all 4 groups (principal, classroom teacher, LAT and district staff).

A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the means of each item. Table 4 summarizes these results. Table 5 summarizes the LAT role function for each item as well as listing the item's category. Significance at alpha .05 was found for items 1, 2, 4, 6, and 14. Multiple comparison techniques revealed that for:

#1 develop objectives jointly, a statistically significant difference exists between group 2

(classroom teachers) and group 4 (district staff).

#2 formal inservice presentations, a statistically significant difference exists between group 4 (district staff) and all other groups (principals, LATs and classroom teachers).

#4 provide classroom teachers with strategies and materials, a statistically significant difference exists between group 2 (classroom teachers) and group 4 (district staff).

#6 observe students in the regular classroom, no statistically significant difference exists among groups. Thus the ANOVA must show a combination of groups effect of which this paper was not concerned.

#14 cooperative relationship with classroom teachers, no statistically significant difference exists among groups. Therefore, it must be a combination of groups effect as well.

The Bonferroni technique (Glass & Hopkins, 1984) suggests that repeated analysis using the same subjects or using the same data, subdivided in different ways has implications for  $\alpha=.05$ . Alpha, in fact, changes because the various analyses are not independent.  $\alpha=.05$  divided by the 18 items becomes

.003. Using this technique significance was found for items 2 and 4.

When n's are not equal, the homogeneity of variance assumption is more critical for the F-test (Glass & Hopkins, 1984). The Bartlett-Box F found homogeneity of variance had been violated for items 1, 2, 4, and 14. Thus the results for these questions must be considered cautiously. Item #6 did not violate homogeneity of variance.

Using the Bonferroni technique, statistically significant differences were found between group 4 (district staff) and all other respondent groups (principals, LATs and classroom teachers) for item #2, and between group 4 (district staff) and group 2 (classroom teachers) for item #4. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. Because item 2 and 4 violated the homogeneity of variance, this result must be considered cautiously.

Table 4: Means, (Standard Deviations) and Analysis of  
Variance Results For Four Response Groups.

Item	Principals	Class-teacher	LATs	District Staff	F-Ratio	F-Prob.
1.	3.39 (.66)	3.23 (.77)	3.45 (.57)	3.90 (.32)	3.39	.0190
2.	1.67 (.58)	1.75 (.87)	1.43 (.57)	2.60 (.52)	5.41	.0013
3.	2.55 (.86)	2.27 (1.03)	2.03 (.87)	2.40 (.97)	1.17	.3222
4.	3.04 (.71)	2.71 (1.03)	3.14 (.52)	3.67 (.71)	4.69	.0034
5.	2.05 (.79)	1.69 (.88)	1.79 (.98)	2.10 (.74)	1.62	.1866
6.	2.83 (.94)	2.55 (1.01)	2.93 (.92)	3.30 (.82)	3.04	.0301
7.	3.70 (.56)	3.30 (.68)	3.38 (.56)	3.30 (.67)	2.46	.0641
8.	3.22 (.80)	3.16 (.89)	3.14 (.89)	2.90 (.57)	.33	.8069
9.	3.39 (.72)	3.23 (.89)	3.45 (.63)	3.20 (1.03)	.75	.5261
10.	1.91 (.81)	1.85 (.91)	1.89 (.83)	2.30 (.67)	.84	.4710
11.	2.91 (.79)	2.69 (.87)	2.97 (1.09)	2.70 (.82)	1.10	.3494
12.	1.62 (.67)	1.56 (.76)	1.39 (.63)	1.20 (.42)	1.25	.2941
13.	3.32 (.89)	3.19 (.84)	3.34 (.90)	3.10 (.57)	.45	.7162
14.	3.57 (.59)	3.20 (.86)	3.59 (.50)	3.40 (.70)	3.00	.0317
15.	2.87 (.97)	2.53 (.95)	2.58 (.81)	3.10 (.99)	1.88	.1337
16.	2.96 (.88)	2.89 (.99)	3.03 (.91)	3.50 (.71)	1.34	.2626
17.	2.50 (1.01)	2.29 (1.00)	2.54 (.96)	2.50 (.53)	.78	.5040
18.	1.91 (.73)	1.90 (.93)	1.82 (.77)	2.20 (.92)	.45	.7175

Table 5: Summary of LAT Role Function and Category for eighteen items.

Item #	LAT Role Function	Category
1.	Develop objectives jointly	Instruction
3.	Small group instruction in regular classroom	Instruction
5.	Team teach in regular classroom	Instruction
10.	Peer tutoring	Instruction
11.	Coordinate materials	Instruction
13.	Small group instruction in the LAC	Instruction
17.	Supplementary pre-post testing	Instruction
2.	Formal inservice presentation	Consultation
4.	Provide classroom teachers with strategies and materials	Consultation
7.	Consult with parents	Consultation
14.	Cooperative relationship with classroom teachers	Consultation
15.	Aid classroom teachers in identifying handicapped students	Consultation
16.	Help classroom teachers foster positive student attitude	Consultation
18.	Provide classroom teachers with professional books and information	Consultation
6.	Observe student in regular classroom	Assessment
8.	Administer standardized tests	Assessment
9.	Profile student's abilities	Assessment
12.	Instruct teachers to administer and use standardized tests	Assessment



H2: Mean scores for perceptions of the three categories (assessment, instruction and consultation) of the LAT role, as measured by the LAT Role Function Survey, are the same for all 4 positions (principal, classroom teacher, LAT, and district staff).

A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the means of each category. Table 6 summarizes these results. Significance (.05) was found for instruction and consultation. A multiple comparison (MC) test (Tukey) revealed no two groups were significantly different on instruction; therefore, it must be the result of a combination groups effect. On consultation the MC test (Tukey) revealed a significant difference between classroom teachers and district staff. Thus the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 6: Means, (Standard Deviations) and Analysis of Variance Results Across Groups and Sub-areas.

Sub-area	Princ- pals	Class Teachers	LATs	District Staff	F- Prob.
Assessment	10.9130 (2.0430)	10.1355 (2.5331)	10.7586 (1.8450)	10.6000 (1.8376)	.3253
Instruction	18.0870 (3.2462)	16.6258 (3.7488)	17.8621 (2.6689)	19.0000 (2.4495)	.0341
Consultation	19.5652 (2.8417)	17.7032 (4.7045)	18.5862 (2.8600)	21.4000 (3.0623)	.0182

As can be seen from Table 6, district staff ranked consultation much higher than all other groups. In descending order by rank were the principals then the LATs and finally the classroom teachers. Instruction was also rated highest by district staff and then principals, LATs and classroom teachers. Assessment, on the other hand, was rated highest by principals then LATs, district staff and classroom teachers.

#### Supplementary Findings

##### (i) Inter-group Correlation

Using a statistical method to determine the closeness of agreement between all respondent groups, Pearson product-moment correlations were obtained for

group means (Table 7 and 8). The Pearson product-moment coefficient of correlation ( $r$ ) is a measure of the degree of relationship. It summarizes the magnitude and direction of the relationship of two variables, and the strength and direction of the association. It is used to obtain knowledge about a larger class of persons from a relatively small number of the same element(s). It can be hypothesized that all differences in  $r$ 's are due to sampling error. In order to determine if the Pearson  $r$ 's are significantly different from each other Fisher's  $Z$ -transformations are employed.

As can be seen from Table 8 a positive relationship was obtained among the classroom teachers and the principals ( $r=0.9797$ ). The next highest relationships were between the LATs and the principals ( $r=0.9737$ ) and the LATs and the classroom teachers ( $r=0.9704$ ). The smallest relationships were found among the district staff and the other three respondent groups. The values for the Pearson Product-moment correlation between the district staff and the other three respondent groups were as follows: the principals  $r=0.6383$ , the LATs  $r=0.7824$  and the classroom teachers  $r=0.7585$ .

Table 7: Mean Item Rating For Four Response Groups.

Item	Principals	Classroom Teacher	LATs	District Staff
1.	3.39	3.23	3.45	3.90
2.	1.67	1.75	1.43	2.60
3.	2.55	2.27	2.03	2.40
4.	3.04	2.71	3.14	3.67
5.	2.05	1.69	1.79	2.10
6.	2.83	2.55	2.93	3.30
7.	3.70	3.30	3.38	3.30
8.	3.22	3.16	3.14	2.90
9.	3.39	3.23	3.45	3.20
10.	1.91	1.85	1.89	2.30
11.	2.91	2.69	2.97	2.70
12.	1.62	1.56	1.39	1.20
13.	3.32	3.19	3.34	3.10
14.	3.57	3.20	3.59	3.40
15.	2.87	2.53	2.58	3.10
16.	2.96	2.89	3.03	3.50
17.	2.50	2.29	2.54	2.50
18.	1.91	1.90	1.82	2.20

Table 8: Matrix of Inter-group Correlation  
Coefficients (Pearson r) for the Means of  
Eighteen Items

Group	Principals	Classroom Teachers	LATs	District Staff
Principals	1.0000	0.9797	0.9737	0.6383
Classroom Teachers	0.9797	1.000	0.9704	0.7585
LATs	0.9737	0.9704	1.0000	0.7824
District Staff	0.6383	0.7585	0.7824	1.0000

Fisher's Z-transformations were used to obtain the 95% confidence interval for each Pearson r. The transformations of the lower and upper Z-limits were then changed back to correlation coefficients. The 95% confidence intervals for the populations of district staff, classroom teachers, learning assistance teachers and principals were as follows:

- for classroom teachers and district staff ( $r=.759$ ) between .905 and .453,
- for LATs and district staff ( $r=.7824$ ) between .914 and .492,
- for district staff and principals ( $r=.6383$ ) between .852 and .246,
- for classroom teachers and LATs ( $r=.9704$ ) between .989 and .92,

-for principals and classroom teachers ( $r=.98$ ) between .99 and .945,

-for principals and LATs ( $r=.973$ ) between .975 and .932.

As can be seen from the 95% confidence intervals, the intervals involving the district staff extends from approximately:

.905 to .453

.914 to .492

.852 to .246.

These do not overlap with the following confidence intervals which do not involve district staff:

.989 to .92

.99 to .945

.975 to .932.

In fact, these intervals are quite different; therefore, the district staff can be said to come from a different population.

A comparison was made between all correlation coefficients to test the null hypothesis that all differences in  $r$ 's are due to sampling error. Using the equation  $\chi^2 = \sum w_j z_j^2 - w \cdot \bar{z}^2$  (Glass & Hopkins 1984, p.309), it was found that with a chi-square distribution of  $v=J-1$  (5) degrees of freedom

the observed chi-square was 36.76 and the actual chi-square was 11.07. It is evident that the null hypothesis can be rejected at the .05 level.

All confidence intervals were totally positive. Hence, all are positively (direction) related, some more so than others (magnitude). As can be observed from table 8 the correlation coefficient between the principals, classroom teachers and the LATs are all close whereas the r's between the district staff and all other groups are much lower. It can be concluded that the difference lies between the district staff and all other groups.

#### (ii) Rank Order Analysis

The results previously discussed relate to various statistical analyses of the degree and nature of differences among the perceptions of key observers concerning the emphasis placed by LATs upon various role functions.

The quantitative basis for the broader gauged assessment is the rank ordering of role functions implicit in the ratings assigned by each surveyed party. The results derived by graphing the mean response by groups are presented in Table 9 with the

ranked mean item ratings of each sample presented in Tables 10 and 11. The graph of Table 9 illustrates the positive relationship among the respondent groups. Item 12 is clearly the lowest valued item rated below 1.75 by all respondents.



Table 9: Graph: Mean Responses by Four Respondent Groups.

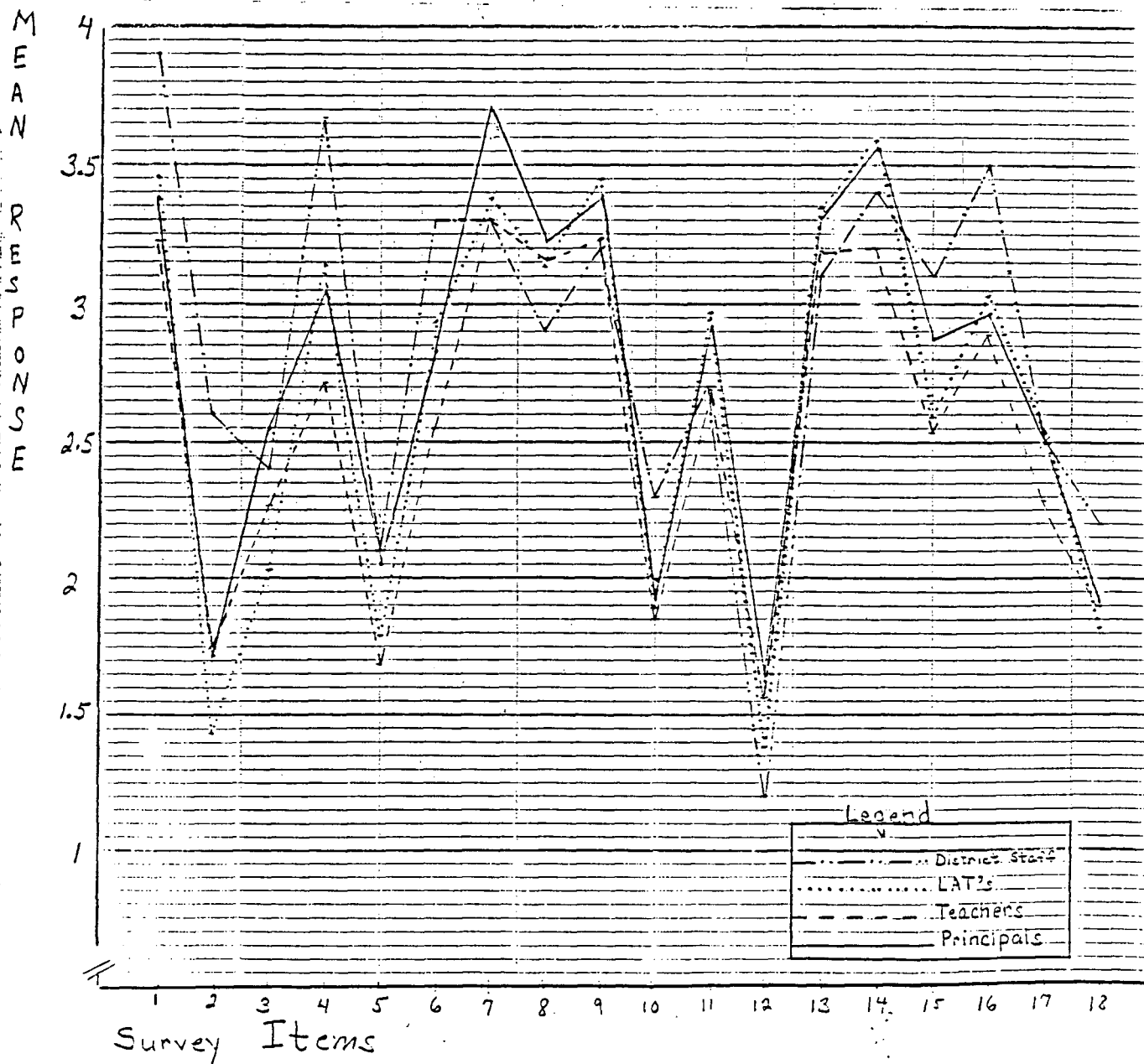


Table 10: Respondent Groups' Ranking of the Eighteen  
Items According to Importance

Rank	Principals	Classroom Teachers	LATs	District Staff
First	7	7	14	1
Second	14	1	1, 9	4
Third	1, 9	9		16
Fourth		14	7	14
Fifth	13	13	13	6, 7
Sixth	8	8	8	
Seventh	4	16	4	9
Eighth	16	4	16	13, 15
Ninth	11	11	11	
Tenth	15	6	6	8
Eleventh	6	15	15	11
Twelfth	3	17	17	2
Thirteenth	17	3	3	17
Fourteenth	5	18	10	3
Fifteenth	18	10	18	10
Sixteenth	10	2	5	18
Seventeenth	2	5	2	5
Eighteenth	12	12	12	12

Table 11: Items Ranked According to Importance by Each

Item	Group Principals	Classroom Teachers	LATs	District Staff
1.	3rd^	2nd^	2nd^	1st^
2.	17th	16th	17th	12th*
3.	12th	13th	13th	14th
4.	7th	8th	7th	2nd*^
5.	14th	17th	16th	17th
6.	11th	10th	10th	5th*^
7.	1st*^	1st*^	4th^	5th^
8.	6th	6th	6th	10th*
9.	3rd^	3rd^	2nd^	7th*
10.	16th	15th	14th	15th
11.	9th	9th	9th	11th
12.	18th	18th	18th	18th
13.	5th^	5th^	5th^	8th
14.	2nd^	4th^	1st^	4th^
15.	10th	11th	11th	8th
16.	8th	7th	8th	3rd*^
17.	13th	12th	12th	13th
18.	15th	14th	15th	16th

\* indicates ranking that is 'different' than the others for that row. Again this singles out the district staff.

^ represents the first five items (rank order).

As can be seen from Tables 10 and 11, there is remarkable agreement among LATs, principals, classroom teachers and district staff in respect to relative emphasis placed by LATs on various role functions.

Principals, classroom teachers and LATs ranked the same 13 items in a similar way although not in identical order. The top 5 ranked items are as follows:

- #7 consult with parents (consultation)
- #1 develop objectives jointly (instruction)
- #9 profile students' abilities (assessment)
- #14 cooperative relationship with classroom teachers (consultation).
- #13 small group instruction in the resource room (instruction)

The highest ranked item was in the consultation category. Principals and classroom teachers ranked #7 consult with parents highest while LATs ranked it fourth and district staff ranked it fifth. The LATs ranked #14 cooperative relationship with classroom teachers highest. Both #7 and #14 are consultation items. Out of the top 4 items selected by the other groups, district staff ranked 2 in their top 4. Their highest item was not one of consultation but one of

instruction (#1: develop objectives jointly). They also included #14 cooperative relationship with classroom teachers in the top four but they included two other consultation items as second and third highest - #4 provide teachers with strategies and materials and #16 help classroom teachers foster positive student attitudes. Principals, LATs and classroom teachers ranked #16 in the seventh or eighth range.

There is a striking agreement between all groups for the functions least emphasized. All groups placed #12 instruct teachers to administer and use standardized tests - assessment as the lowest item. In the lowest group of 5 items, principals, classroom teachers and LATs included the same items although not in identical order:

- #2 formal in-service presentations  
(consultation)
- #5 team teach in the regular classroom  
(instruction)
- #10 peer tutoring (instruction)
- #12 instruct teachers to administer and use  
standardized tests (assessment).

#18 provide classroom teachers with  
professional books and information  
(consultation)

District staff ranked four (#5,10,12,18) out of the 5 designated by the other three groups lowest. They ranked #2 twelfth. Dugoff, Ives and Shotel (1985) also found four of these items (#5, 10, 12 and 18) to be ranked lowest.

#### Integration of Results

The analysis of variance, the Pearson r's, and the rankings collectively suggest great similarities between the respondent groups on how they perceive the role of the LAT. Vicente (1977) stated that "each teacher, principal coordinator, superintendent and parent sees the LAT in a separate light" (p.20). She also sighted Perkins studies in British Columbia in which he found situations in a single school where the LAT and the principal did not have the same perceptions of the LA program. In this study, it would appear that the LATs, the principals, the classroom teachers and the district staff hold similar perceptions. The district staff appear to be the most different from the

other respondent groups as indicated on the analysis of variance, the Pearson r's, and the rankings.

Table 12 displays the items from most important to least important for the average means or ranks of the principals, classroom teachers and LATs. The district staff have not been added to the average as they are the most disparate of the groups. Table 13 compares the average rank for the three respondent groups of principals, classroom teachers and LATs to that of the district staff.

Table 12: Summary of Average Ranking of LAT Role Functions from Most Important to Least Important and Overall Means for Three Respondent Groups (Classroom teachers, Principals, and LATs)

Rank (Av.)	Overall Mean	Item #	LAT Role Function
First	3.36	7.	Consult with parents
Second	3.30	14.	Cooperative relationship with classroom teachers
Third	3.28	1.	Develop objectives jointly
Fourth	3.28	9.	Profile student's abilities
Fifth	3.23	13.	Small group instruction in the LAC
Sixth	3.16	8.	Administer standardized tests
Seventh	2.92	16.	Help classroom teachers foster positive student attitude
Eighth	2.81	4.	Provide classroom teachers with strategies and materials
Ninth	2.75	11.	Coordinate materials
Tenth	2.63	6.	Observe student in regular classroom



Eleventh	2.57	15.	Aid classroom teachers in identifying handicapped students
Twelfth	2.35	17.	Supplementary pre-post testing
Thirteenth	2.27	3.	Small group instruction in regular classroom
Fourteenth	1.89	18.	Provide classroom teachers with professional books and information
Fifteenth	1.86	10.	Peer tutoring
Sixteenth	1.74	5.	Team teach in regular classroom
Seventeenth	1.70	2.	Formal inservice presentation
Eighteenth	1.54	12.	Instruct teachers to administer and use standardized tests

Table 13: Combined Respondent Group (Classroom Teachers, Principals and LATs) Compared to District Staff for Ranking of Items and Categories.

Rank	Item # Combined Respondents	Category	Item # District Staff	Category
First	7	Consultation	1	Instruction
Second	14	Consultation	4	Consultation
Third	1	Instruction	16	Consultation
Fourth	9	Assessment	14	Consultation
Fifth	13	Instruction		Assessment/ 6,7
Sixth	8	Assessment		Consultation
Seventh	16	Consultation	9	Assessment
Eighth	4	Consultation		Instruction/ 13,15
Ninth	11	Instruction		Consultation
Tenth	6	Assessment	8	Assessment
Eleventh	15	Consultation	11	Instruction
Twelfth	17	Instruction	2	Consultation
Thirteenth	3	Instruction	17	Instruction
Fourteenth	18	Consultation	3	Instruction
Fifteenth	10	Instruction	10	Instruction
Sixteenth	5	Instruction	18	Consultation
Seventeenth	2	Consultation	5	Instruction
Eighteenth	12	Assessment	12	Assessment

### Summary of Results

The focus of this study was to indirectly explore within the local district setting the implementation of the learning assistance centre program through an analysis of the learning assistance teacher's role behavior as perceived by key observers. Perception of how a role is being performed is a variable that influences the success of the program.

Analysis of the data revealed that there were some statistically significant discrepancies between the ratings of the role emphasis by the LAT and the ratings of the key observers. Statistically significant differences at the .05 level were found between classroom teachers and district staff and between district staff and the other three respondent groups on responses to items. For two items, 'develop objectives jointly' and 'provide classroom teachers with strategies and materials', the district staff perceived a significantly higher emphasis than the classroom teachers. For another item, 'formal inservice presentations', district staff perceived a significantly higher emphasis than the other three respondent groups. Statistically significant differences at alpha of .003 were found only for

'formal inservice presentations' (#2) and 'provide classroom teachers with strategies and materials' (#4). The difference for #2 was between district staff and all other groups and for #4 it was between district staff and classroom teachers. Statistically significant differences were also found between classroom teachers and district staff on the consultation category.

A positive relationship was obtained between all groups. In general, there was more agreement between the classroom teachers and the principals and also between the principals and the LATs. The lowest relationships were found between the district staff and the classroom teachers, the district staff and the LATs, and the district staff and the principals.

Rank ordering of role functions implicit in the mean ratings assigned by each surveyed group revealed striking agreements among LATs, classroom teachers and principals concerning the role functions most emphasized by LATs. The same four items were ranked highest by each group: 'consult with parents', 'cooperative relationship with classroom teachers', 'develop objectives jointly' and 'profile students' abilities'. District staff included in their top four

'develop objectives jointly', 'provide teachers with strategies and materials' (ranked seventh or eighth by the other respondents), 'help classroom teachers foster positive student attitudes' (ranked seventh or eighth by the other respondents) and 'cooperative relationship with classroom teachers'.

The same five items were ranked lowest by each group: instruct teachers to administer and use standardized tests, formal in-service presentations, team teach in regular classroom, peer tutoring and provide classroom teachers with professional books and information. All respondent groups ranked instruct teachers to administer and use standardized tests lowest. District staff did not include in their lowest five 'formal in-service presentations' instead they felt small group instruction in the regular classroom was of lower priority.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### Introduction

This study was initiated to identify the perceptions of the key observers concerning the perceived role of the learning assistance teacher (LAT). It was assumed that all LATs were performing their job according to the B.C. Ministry of Education guidelines and that the emphasis the LATs each placed on various role functions was determined by the LATs perception of his/her own school situation and the school district's guidelines. Within the Ministry Guidelines there is room for interpretation. The question was, do the LATs, the principals, the classroom teachers and the district staff have the same perceptions of the role? Without the same perceptions, unrealistic expectations and disappointments may result.

As stated by McLoughlin and Kass (1978), resource room teachers, or LATs as they are called in B.C., assume a major responsibility for special education services; therefore, the role must be studied to understand successful and unsuccessful procedures.

There were many citings in journal articles stating a need for clarity in definition of resource room programs and the resource room teacher role, for increased communication between resource room teachers and referring teachers and for better public relations to inform people about the goals and functions of the resource room program. With Elementary schools establishing their own LAT goals and objectives, the district staff must be involved in this process or, as Schwartz (1979) stated, the LATs "might find themselves in the uncomfortable situation of trying to meet conflicting expectations at school and district levels"(p.18).

The constructs of role analysis assist in identifying potential problem areas. Researchers such as McLoughlin and Kelly (1982) stated that the resource room teacher role was unclear and lacked adequate time for certain very important functions (individual planning, consulting, and observing of students). Systematic evaluation of the resource room model was suggested by Brown, Kiraly and McKinnon (1979) as being timely and crucial. Schwartz (1979) found that the issue of LAT or LAC effectiveness had not been adequately investigated; there still does not appear to

be research in this area. Because the LAT role includes assessment, instruction and consultation, these roles as well may need better role definition and refinement (Lloyd, Crowley, Kohler & Strain, 1988). According to Friend and McNutt (1984) expectations for consulting teachers included such a tremendous range of tasks that they cannot be managed by one professional.

Now that B.C. has Ministry of Education guidelines which Schwartz (1979) recommended, is there consensus within a district as to the role of the LAT or is there a dichotomy between the two levels in a district (board office and school)? This study examined the extent to which principals, classroom teachers, LATs and district staff's perceptions of the LAT role agree with each other.

This chapter discusses the findings of the study, particularly the discrepancies between role perception. These will be discussed as they relate to the literature reviewed in Chapter II.

### The Role of the LAT

McLoughlin and Kass (1978) stated that we need to examine the role of the resource teacher under the construct of role analysis and the kinds of role perceptions. According to these researchers the role



of the LAT defined itself through the interrelationship with other roles, the position in the total context and the perceptions held by people. We then must decide if the perceptions are the same or different (Evans 1981). Role theory is the role analysis of what others think the role is and what they think it should be.

#### Principal, Classroom Teacher, LAT and District Staff Congruence on the Role of the LAT

This study examined the principals', classroom teachers', LATs, and district staff's perceptions of the role of the LAT. .

One way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used to determine if there were significant differences among the group ratings of the degree of emphasis placed on various role functions by the LAT.

Significance was found for two items using the Bonferroni technique (alpha of .003) but homogeneity of variance was violated on these 'consultation' items.

The district staff rated item #2 formal inservice presentations higher than any other respondent group.

The ratings ranged in descending order from the classroom teacher to the principal and then to the LATs. Statistically significant differences were found between the district staff and all other respondent

groups. The district staff also rated #4 provide classroom teachers with strategies and materials higher than any other respondent group. The ratings for this item ranged in descending order from the LATs to the principal and then to the classroom teacher. Statistically significant differences were found between the district staff and classroom teachers for item #4.

Using an alpha of .05, significant differences were found on 5 items, and homogeneity of variance was violated on 4 of these items. While caution has to be used in interpreting these findings, they are worth looking at. On 4 of the five significant items district staff ratings were higher than all other respondent groups. Homogeneity of variance was violated for all 3 statistically significant 'consultation' items:

#2 formal in-service presentations

#4 provide classroom teachers with  
strategies and materials

#14 cooperative relationship with classroom  
teachers

District staff were significantly different from all other groups for #2 formal inservice presentations.

They felt formal inservice presentations would be helpful whereas all other groups felt this would be supplemental. District staff also felt that it was important and close to indispensable to provide classroom teachers with strategies and materials, whereas classroom teachers felt it would be no more than helpful. This may be the result of the lack of specialized training of learning assistance teachers, or the lack of provision of adequate time and administrative support. Evans (1980) found that if resource teachers have a master's degree or greater they are more likely to serve as consultants. Only 20.69% of the LATs surveyed had a masters degree, while 17.42% of the classroom teachers surveyed had a masters degree. McLoughlin and Kass (1978) found that often schools were staffed with resource teachers who knew little more than those they wished to advise.

For #4 provide classroom teachers with strategies and materials district staff's higher rating of this item was statistically significant when compared to classroom teachers. District staff were itinerant and thus did not enroll a class and might not realize the problems in a school of providing adequate time for meeting this cooperative function. Time is needed for

both the LAT and the classroom teacher. Classroom teachers rated this very helpful, LATs rated it important and district staff rated this 'high important'.

For the other consultative item, #14 cooperative relationship with classroom teachers multiple comparison techniques found no 2 groups as significantly different. A cooperative relationship between LATs and classroom teachers has often been cited in the literature as very important but also very difficult to obtain due to many restraints such as time. LATs rated this as occurring at a higher rate than classroom teachers. This would agree with the literature, especially the Friend and McNutt (1984) study which found significant differences among resource teachers, principals and classroom teachers on including regular classroom teachers in planning and implementation of programs.

The literature cites that during cooperative planning an intense problem develops in communication between resource room teachers and classroom teachers (Dugoff, Ives & Shotel, 1985). D'Alonzo and Wiseman (1978) stated the importance of a cooperative relationship for mainstreaming and yet acknowledge that

it is a significant problem area. This problem may be attributed to lack of adequate time (McLoughlin & Kelly, 1982) or to a lack of necessary skills and knowledge (McLoughlin & Kass, 1978).

It could also be a communication problem. The LAT may consult with many classroom teachers for a large portion of his/her allotted time. The individual classroom teacher may only perceive the assistance s/he gets and thus may fail to fully appreciate or realize the additional time the LAT spent consulting with other teachers.

The only function involving instruction for which significance was found was #1 develop objectives jointly. On multiple comparison techniques significance was found for district staff and classroom teachers. District staff rated #1, developing objectives jointly, much higher than the other three respondent groups. This again would concur with the literature as this is an ideal goal but there may be a lack of adequate time (McLoughlin & Kelly 1982) which would affect classroom teachers, LATs and principals more than district staff. The classroom teachers rated this of low importance, but district staff had it bordering on indispensable. Dugoff, Ives and Shotel

(1985) state that experts' ratings of the priorities of the ideal resource room teacher differed significantly from the resource room teachers' ratings of the emphasis they put on these functions. Schwartz (1979) did not find in his study that the LAT might be in the situation of trying to meet conflicting expectations between school and district and yet in this study most of the differences appear to be between district staff and in-school personnel.

The assessment item #6 observe students in the regular class is significant but the multiple comparison techniques failed to indicate two groups that are significantly different. This function was rated highest by district staff, then LATs, followed by principals and classroom teachers. Lloyd, Crowley, Kohler and Strain (1988) stated that "further work is needed to establish the acceptability of interventions recommended in consultation (p.47)".

According to Vicente (1977) the first LAT programs emphasized testing skills and then direct services to students. She found that the newer service consultation created more problems. While the schools and teachers were becoming more sophisticated in identifying problems and thus referring more students,

the LATs, Vicente found, had less training and less confidence in this area. This put the LATs in the position of not having enough time to provide direct services for all the students in need. The LATs thus needed to provide consultation services for which they did not feel competent. Vicente felt that the LATs needed to inform all people involved about the LA program to obtain support and involvement for a positive role for the elementary LAT. It would appear from this study that the principals, classroom teachers and district staff generally agree upon the role of the LAT with regard to instruction and assessment. The problem area appears to be in consultation where the out-of-school group or District Staff differ with all other in-school respondent groups.

LAT, Principal, Classroom Teacher and District Staff  
Congruence on the Assessment, Instruction and  
Consultation Roles of the LAT

This study examined the principals', classroom teachers', LATs' and district staff's perception of the role of the LAT for the categories of Assessment, Instruction, and Consultation. A one way ANOVA was employed to determine if there was significance at the

.05 level between each groups ratings of these functions.

Significance was found for instruction and consultation. A multiple comparison (MC) test (Tukey) did not indicate significance between any two groups for Instruction. Thus it must be a combined group effect which this study did not investigate.

For consultation, MC technique (Tukey) indicated significant difference between classroom teachers and district staff. District staff had the highest rating for these items while classroom teachers had the lowest. The order is interesting. District staff were highest, then principals, then LATs and finally classroom teachers. The district staff are more in an advisory role and thus more like the experts in Dugoff, Ives and Shotel's (1985) study who have more of an idealized view than can realistically be expected to be performed. They suggested that these experts believed the LAT should place more emphasis on actually working closely with classroom teachers, on instructional items that lead to a cohesive unified program implemented within the regular classroom. D'Alonzo and Wiseman (1978) found that cooperative planning and interface with educational personnel is basic for mainstreaming



but that it was a problem and not performed. Lloyd, Crowley, Kohler and Strain (1988) stated that there is a need to "establish the particular organizational variables that enhance the teacher consultation services" (p.47).

The classroom teacher and district staff are like two levels of reality within the district setting. One is reflected by the district staff, who perceive a high level of LAT functioning, whereas the classroom teacher perceives the functions especially of consultation occurring at a lower level. At times this may cause the LAT to feel caught in a role conflict. This is also true for Instruction. Whereas for assessment, principals' perceptions are highest, then LATs, district staff and classroom teachers. Classroom teachers perceptions were lowest for all three categories which concurs with Friend and McNutt's (1984) findings.

Crucial questions here are:

1. To what extent does the perceived role match the actual role?
2. What is the desired role or the preferences of classroom teachers in serving the needs of exceptional children?

3. To what extent does the perceived role match the desired role?

Idol and West (1987) found 5 major factors that facilitate or inhibit consultation:

1. time to consult
2. administrative support
3. teacher attitudinal resistance
4. promotion of consultation
5. consultant skills

More information is needed to find out which of these may be factors here.

#### Supplementary Findings

##### i). Sample

The descriptive data on LATs and classroom teachers indicated a great similarity between the groups. From the data of those who responded to the survey, classroom teachers had a mean age of 35 while LATs had a mean age of 37. Classroom teachers had taught an average of 12 years while LATs had taught an average of 14 years. Ninety-four point one nine percent of classroom teachers had a minimum of an undergraduate degree compared to 93.1% of LATs. Seventeen point four two percent of classroom teachers

and 20.69% of LATs had a masters degree. All teachers in this school district have experienced good in-servicing and are thus well versed in the latest trends and strategies. They are also in the classrooms and in the schools and thus experiencing all the frustration and difficulties with the implementation of programs that require a lot of consultation between staff members.

It is safe to conclude that the level of education of LATs and classroom teachers in this school district has increased since Schwartz's study of 1979. At that time 21% of the LATs and 28% of the classroom teachers had no degree while only 6.9% of LATs and 5.81% of classroom teachers in this study have no degree. Also the number of LATs in 1979 having a masters degree was only 14% as compared to 20.69% in this study. 17.42% of classroom teachers in this study have a master's degree compared to 6% in Schwartz's study.

The LATs educational standing and experience for this study also differ from Dugoff, Ives and Shotel's (1985) and Evan's (1980). Their resource room teachers had fewer years of experience in teaching than the classroom teacher and in Evans' study 85% held only standard teaching credentials. In this study, the LATs

were more experienced and had a higher educational standing and rated consultation higher than the resource teachers in Evans' study. This would concur with Evans' research in which she found that, with a masters degree, the LAT was found to do more consultative work.

ii). Relationship Between Principals, Classroom Teachers, District Staff and LATs Perception of the Role of the Learning Assistance Teacher.

Pearson Product-moment correlation was used to observe the relationship between the respondent groups. The highest correlation was between principals, classroom teachers and LATs. Principals had a positive relationship of 0.9797 with classroom teachers and a positive relationship of 0.9737 with LATs. Classroom teachers and LATs had a positive relationship of 0.9704.

Principals are in an ideal position in the school to accurately perceive the role of the LAT and to help establish the role as it is performed there. Evans (1981) found principals' perceptions were in agreement with the resource teacher for planning, diagnosis and instruction. What is interesting is the high correlation between the principal and the classroom

teacher and the LAT and the classroom teacher. As indicated by mimeographs such as the 1988 paper setting out the role of the Learning Assistance at Manoa Steves School, schools are now setting goals and objectives for programs that they have in the school. This may be assisting in a greater internal understanding of the role of the LAT. Vicente (1977) advocated public relations to keep all people involved informed about the LA program. She felt that it would result in greater support and involvement of a positive role for LATs within an elementary school. This would appear to be true for this school district.

Through the Pearson Product-moment correlation, it was found that the inter-group correlation coefficient was lowest and statistically significant between the district staff and all other respondent groups. The relationship was as follows: for Principals 0.6383, for classroom teachers 0.7585 and for LATs 0.7824. District staff who might be considered more like experts and who are itinerant to the school may not see the problems with time constraints, the expertise of the LAT vs the Classroom teacher, the administrative support or the problem of one individual trying to supply all of these services.

iii). Rank Order Analysis

When we look at the overall picture of the role function implicit in the rank ordering there is strong agreement especially among the LATs, classroom teachers and principals. They ranked the same four functions highest (not in identical order):

- #1 develop objectives jointly (instruction)
- #7 consult with parents (consultation)
- #9 profile students' abilities (assessment)
- #14 cooperative relationship with classroom teachers (consultation).

Dugoff, Ives and Shotel (1985) found striking agreement also among resource room teachers, classroom teachers and principals concerning the role functions most emphasized, but in their top three items only one was the same as the findings here. Their top three were:

- #8 Administer standardized tests
- #3 Small group instruction in the resource room
- #7 Consult with parents

It is interesting that in this surveyed school district #8 administer standardized tests was ranked sixth by principals, classroom teachers and LATs while #3 small group instruction in the resource room was ranked twelfth or thirteenth. This is a long way from being

in the top three of Dugoff, Ives and Shotel's study. Is this a sign that these children are being serviced more in the regular classroom and the need for consultation and a joint plan of students' abilities and needs is of more significance than the need for LATs to work in the resource room with these children? Once again, this may be a direct result of this school district's move towards total integration and also the result of the research which stresses the need for the transfer of skills and learning which has been the emphasis in the 1980's.

The degree of agreement on the administered survey instrument as to the functions least emphasized is also impressive. Five functions were ranked lowest (not identical order):

- #2 formal in-service presentations  
(consultation)
- #5 team teach in the regular classroom  
(instruction)
- #10 peer tutoring (instruction)
- #12 instruct teachers to administer and use  
standardized tests (assessment).
- #18 provide classroom teachers with professional  
books and information (consultation)

These concur with the findings of Dugoff, Ives and Shotel who found their lowest 4 were in the above 5 least emphasized group (#12,5,10,18). Many of these items involve the LAT in an expert role which Bravi (1986) stated has the negative outcomes of the creation of dependence and the elimination of client responsibility. As Evans (1981) found this is not a role that LATs took unless they had a masters degree. Most LATs would have to feel that the classroom teacher wanted this assistance and that they had more expertise in this area than the regular teacher. As there has been a move toward using criterion referenced tests, there will not be a great need on the part of the classroom teacher to seek knowledge about administering and using standardized tests. There is also a reluctance on the part of the classroom teacher and the LAT to get involved in team teaching. Time to plan for this is generally a major concern. The LAT may have 10 or more teachers to plan with and yet still have his/her regular work to carry out such as organizing the school based meetings, testing, I.E.P.'s, consulting with parents and consultation with classroom teachers.



### LAT Program

The guidelines for the learning assistance centre allow flexibility in choosing how to implement the program. The three areas specified are assessment, direct instruction and consultation. On the questionnaire the LATs were given choices for the type of program they employ in their school. The choices were pull-out, plug-in, team teach and consultation. The LATs responded as follows:

2 or 6.9% did not respond

15 or 51.72% checked only pull-out

1 or 3.45% checked only plug-in

0 or 0% checked only team teach

1 or 3.45% checked only consultation

10 or 34.48% checked a combination of the choices

Out of the 10 people who checked a combination of approaches, the breakdown was as follows: 9 checked pull-out, 4 checked plug-in, 6 checked team teach and 7 checked consultation.

These findings differ greatly from Dugoff, Ives and Shotel's (1985) study in which they found that 100% indicated a pull-out model. The literature indicates the importance of maximizing the transfer of skills to the regular teacher. This can only be successful if

the LAT knows the program being implemented within the regular classroom. It would appear that the emphasis this district has placed on the LAT performing part of his/her role within the regular classroom is being fulfilled. Research is needed to see if those regular classroom teachers involved have experienced a transfer of skills, what their perceptions are of the consultative model and what they desire the LAT role to be. Research is also needed to see what beneficial results this team teaching or consultative approach has for the students, and to see if they have gained the necessary skills to enable them to function within the regular classroom.

#### Limitations

Care must be taken in generalizing these findings. This study was done in one urban school district and as such is not generalizable to all districts. Other areas may wish to assess the perceived role of their learning assistance teachers and also the desired role. As homogeneity of variance has been violated for several functions in the ANOVAs, care must also be taken by similar school districts when reading these results.

### Implications and Recommendations

As stated by Dugoff, Ives and Shotel (1985) the key for the learning assistance teachers to managing their multifaceted interactive role is communication and collaboration. When professionals working together realize they hold different views, such knowledge provides a basis for resolving any real conflicts.

This study revealed that the district staff's concepts of the Learning Assistance Teacher's role differed significantly from the other key observer samples. They visualized the LAT working very closely with the classroom teachers to develop objectives jointly, and to provide classroom teachers with strategies and materials. District staff perceived consultation occurring to a greater extent than school personnel.

This school district is moving towards a model of total integration and a collaborative role for their staff. This has important implications for the role of the LATs and the classroom teachers. Certainly the findings on the questionnaire show that 34.48% of the LATs are involved in a combined approach of plug-in, pull-out, team teaching and consultation. This is a definite trend change from the findings reported in

Dugoff, Ives and Shotel's (1985) study. Research indicates that team teaching and consultation are necessary if mainstreaming is to succeed, and more of a move in these areas is needed. In order for this to succeed, it is necessary for the teachers to see success from this approach and for their needs to be met. District Staff need to be cognizant of how the LATs and classroom teachers perceive the role and they need to do further research to discover the problems in implementing further change.

This study indicated there was a difference between the perceived role of the key observers of this study and those of the Dugoff, Ives and Shotel (1985) study.

Further research is necessary to find out the desired role of the LAT as seen by the key observers. The desired role is going to reflect changes in educational philosophy and practices. If for example, a school system is moving towards a less strictly 'graded' model, one in which teachers are encouraged to permit greater individualization of programs, this will influence the perceptions of all the players in the field, even those who resist or disagree with the direction in which the system is moving. Certainly if

this school district is also moving in their collaborative model to having the teachers as the LATs clientele, it is important to find out what the needs of their clientele are. It has to be recognized that both the consultant and the client have expertise, though it might be in different areas. It cannot be assumed by the district staff that they understand the needs of the in-school personnel as the district staff and this group have the greatest discrepancies. If we ignore the teacher expertise expect them to say, "You teach it!" (Bravi, 1986, p.6)

Inservice needs to focus on giving LATs specific skills and strategies for working within the regular classroom. It also is necessary for the LATs to move into the team teaching role and to offer to teach more classes for classroom teachers. In this way the classroom teachers could observe their own students. This might be an interesting thing to do at the beginning of the year and several times throughout the year. Certainly if teachers have been trained to observe students accurately and record their observations systematically, these records could provide the teacher with a useful basis for working with the LAT to set up modified individual programs

within the regular classroom. Such a procedure may be seen by the classroom teacher as a highly valuable experience. This approach would take the pressure off the classroom teachers and would also reassure them that they were not being evaluated when classroom observations were being performed. In this way the classroom teachers' position and responsibility are enhanced and the specific skills of the LAT are used efficiently in a collegial and consultant role. Inservice in observational practices, pre-referral techniques and LAT-classroom teacher communication are necessary here. Administrators will need to provide time for these activities to occur and thus to be successful.

Certainly recent added role responsibilities and changes to the LAT role emphasis may lead to role overload. Conflicting priorities and perceptions may also lead to tension and stress. This has to be recognized and evaluated to see if the role has too many demands to be reasonably performed.

This school district is working towards total integration and thus it is crucial that role conflict be reduced. The LATs role is affected by the key observers with whom s/he interacts. Because of this,

the principal, classroom teachers, LATs and district staff need to discuss their discrepant perceptions of each others roles. It is most important that district staff also be involved in this as they have significant differences and they need to be cognizant of others perceptions.

#### Further Research

It is interesting to speculate on possible pilot studies in this area. Part of the problem with the LAT program is that only children with obvious learning difficulties go to the LAC. This has an influence on how these children perceive themselves. If the very nature of attending a special setting for part of the day or being taught by a "special" teacher is stigmatizing, it would be interesting to evaluate the effects of having different types of school settings.

In this school district the classroom teacher is more experienced and has a higher educational standing than Schwartz (1979) found in his study. There has also been a shift to mainstreaming students, to more emphasis being placed on assessment using criterion referenced tests and classroom observations and to a

less strictly graded model to permit greater individualization of programs. In order to maximize this trend, a cadre of teachers would be assembled who would be involved in a pilot study where the actual class size was reduced to 12 to 15 students. There would not be an LAT in the school, but all teachers would participate in weekly team meetings. These meetings would be held during school hours (alternate school hours) and the focus would be on brainstorming problem situations, effective teaching strategies and the ways children learn. The focus of the professional development would also be on these topics, and pre-referral. In each classroom there would be several computers and many programs for all levels of individual instruction.

Another pilot study would involve an entire school. The LAT would work with all levels of children's abilities (enriched, gifted, average and mild learning disabilities) and prepared computer programs, taught learning strategies and modified existing programs. Along with the teacher librarian, the LAT would gather material for the students to use within the classroom or the library resource centre. The LAT would become part of the resource centre and



hopefully have an area or room with access into this area. This resource area would then house materials for computer assisted instruction and would be accessed by all students. At the same time the LAT would work with a class or a group of students to teach them a learning strategy, give one-to-one instruction where needed and also be available, as would the librarian, to team teach within the regular classroom. In this way the LAT would maintain a cooperative relationship with the classroom teacher, would be able to meet the needs of students with a variety of abilities and be able to meet on a one-to-one basis with those students who require this. This would be a non-categorical approach and certainly would be an attempt to make all education more special as suggested by Algozzine and Ysseldyke (1986).

The students would not be those with severe learning, emotional or behavior problems. These students may need a specialized setting, specific strategies and much more one-to-one instruction to meet their needs to be enabled to properly function within the regular class setting.

The pilot programs would need to be evaluated on learning gains, social skill development,

self-perceptions and independent learning skills. There would need to be qualitative as well as quantitative research. The quantitative research would give an overall understanding for the pilot studies and the qualitative research would give the underlying reasons for occurrences, thoughts and feelings.

### Summary

Much research needs to be done to understand what is most effective for students and what works in the school environment. Certainly this study shows that in this lower mainland district the communication lines are open with regard to the role of the learning assistance teacher. Now, there is a need to understand what the desired role is for the LAT, what variables influence program effectiveness and how best to meet the needs of the students and the teachers in our changing educational environment. The systematic evaluation called for by Brown, Kiraly and McKinnon (1979) is still lacking. We need locally relevant research rather than basing our policies on current belief (Reynolds, Wang & Walberg, 1987; Schwartz 1979).

## REFERENCES

- Algozzine, B. & Ysseldyke, J.E. (1986). The future of the LD field: screening and diagnosis. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 19 (7), 394-398.
- Armitage, D. (1984). Evaluating resource room programs and teachers. The Canadian School Executive, 4(6), 19-21.
- Armitage, D. (1979). Toward the development of guidelines for learning assistance centres in British Columbia. B.C. Journal of Special Education, 3 (2), 91-131.
- Bak, J.J., Cooper, E.M., Dobroth, K.M. & Siperstein, G.N. (1987). Special class placements as labels: effects on children's attitudes toward learning handicapped peers. Exceptional Children, 54 (2), 151-155.
- Borg, W.R. & Gall, M.C. (1983). Educational Research - An Introduction. New York: Longman.
- Bravi, G. (1986). Support Personnel as Consultants. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Manitoba, April.
- Bravi, G. & Freeze, R. Consultative/Collaborative Resource Teacher Model. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Manitoba.
- Brown, L.F., Kiraly, J. & McKinnon, A. (1979). Resource rooms: some aspects for special educators to ponder. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 12 (8), 56-58.
- Council for Exceptional Children. (1971). Standards for education of exceptional children in Canada (SEEC) report. Toronto: Canadian Committee and the National Institute for Mental Retardation

- Cullis, J. (1987). Concerns of the LA teacher. Unpublished major paper. Department of Special Education SPED 526, University of British Columbia.
- D'Alonzo, B.J. & Wiseman, D.E. (1978). Actual and desired roles of the high school learning disability resource teacher. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 11 (6), 63-70.
- Dugoff, S.K. (1984). Staff Perceptions of the role of the resource room teacher. Doctoral dissertation, The George Washington University.
- Dugoff, S.K., Ives, R.K. & Shotel, J.R. (1985). Public school and university staff perceptions of the role of the resource teacher. Teacher Education & Special Education, 8 (2), 75-82.
- Evans, S. (1981). Perceptions of classroom teachers, principals and resource room teachers of the actual and desired roles of the resource teacher. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 14 (10), 600-603.
- Evans, S. (1980). The consultant role of the resource teacher. Exceptional Children, 46 (5), 402-403.
- Fleming, F. (1980). The LAT limbo in the public schools of British Columbia. B.C. Journal of Special Education, 4 (2), 123-126.
- Friend, M. & McNutt, G. (1984). Resource room programs: Where are we now? Exceptional Children, 51 (2), 150-155.
- Gelzheiser, L.M. (1987). Reducing the number of students identified as learning disabled: a question of practice, philosophy or policy. Exceptional Children, 54 (2), 145-150.
- Genishi, L.C. (1982). Observational research methods for early childhood education. In B. Spodek (Ed.) Handbook of Research in Early Childhood Education. New York: Free Press.
- Gickling, E.E., Murphy, L.C. & Mallory, D.W. (1979). Teachers' preferences for resource services. Exceptional Children, 45, 442-449.

- Glass, G.V. & Hopkins, K.D. (1984). Statistical methods in education and psychology. Englewood Cliff, New Jersey. Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Harris, W.J. & Mahar, C. (1975). Problems in implementing resource programs in rural schools. Exceptional Children, 42, 95-99.
- Huefner, D.S. (1988). The consulting teacher model: risks and opportunities. Exceptional Children, 54(5), 403-414.
- Idol-Maestas, L. & Ritter, S. (1985). A follow-up study of resource/consulting teachers. Teacher Education and Special Education, 8(3), 121-131.
- Idol, L. & West, J.F. (1987). Consultation in special education (Part 11): training and practice. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 20(8), p.474-494.
- Jenkins, J.R. & Mayhall, W.F. (1976). Development and evaluation of a resource teacher program. Exceptional Children, 43, 21-29.
- Johnson, D.W. & Johnson, R.T. (1986). Mainstreaming and cooperative learning strategies. Exceptional Children, 52(6), 553-561.
- Johnson, R.T., Johnson, D.W. & Holubec, E.J. (1987). Structuring Cooperative Learning: Lesson Plans for Teachers. Interaction Book Co., Edina, MN.
- Joyce, G. & Weil, M. (1986). Models of Teaching. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Keogh, B.K. (1988). Improving services for problem learners: rethinking and restructuring. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 21(1), 19-22.
- Kirk, R.E. (1978). Introductory statistics. Monterey, California. Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.
- Lawrence, G. (1982). People Types and Tiger Stripes: A Practical Guide to Learning Styles. Gainesville, FA: C.A.P.T.

- Lerner, J. (1987). The regular education initiative: some unanswered questions. Learning Disabilities Focus, 3(1), 3-7.
- Lilly, M. S. (1987). Lack of focus on special education in literature on educational reform. Exceptional Children, 53 (4), 325-326.
- Lloyd, J.W., Crowley, E.P., Kohler, F.W. & Strain, P.S. (1988). Redefining the applied research agenda: cooporative learning, prereferral, teacher consultation and peer-mediated intervention. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 21(1), 43-52.
- McLoughlin, J.A. & Kass, C. (1978). Resource teachers: their role. Learning Disability Quarterly, 1, 56-61.
- McLoughlin, J.A. & Kelly, D. (1982). Issues facing the resource teacher. Learning Disability Quarterly, 5, 58-64.
- Marston, J.D. (1987). Does categorical teacher certification benefit the mildly handicapped child? Exceptional Children, 53 (5), 423-431.
- Martin, E.W. (1987). Developing public policy concerning "regular" or "special" education for children with learning disabilities. Learning Disabilities Focus, 3(1), 11-16.
- Mayhall, W.F. & Jenkins, J.R. (1977). Scheduling daily or less-than-daily instruction: implications for resource programs. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 10(3) 38-42.
- Ministry of Education. (1985). Special Programs - A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines. Victoria: Division of Special Education.
- Otto, W. (1986). Ysseldyke & Algozzine - Those two guys are friends of mine. Journal of Reading, 29(6), 1-4.
- Reynolds, M.C. & Birch, J.W. (1982). Teaching exceptional children in all America's schools, revised. Reston, Virginia: The Council for Exceptional Children.

- Reynolds, M.C., Wang, M.C. & Walberg, H.J. (1987).  
The necessary restructuring of special and regular  
education. Exceptional Children, 53 (5), 391-398.
- School District No.22 (Vernon) (1980). The learning  
assistant in School District No.22. Policy and  
Procedures Book, British Columbia School District  
No.22 (Vernon), 3.1.0-3.1.3.
- School District No.38 (Richmond). (1984). Learning  
Assistance Teachers' Handbook. British Columbia  
School District No. 38 (Richmond), May, 1-45.
- Schwartz, A.M. (Principal Researcher) (1979).  
Learning Assistance In British Columbia: Its  
Forms, Its Functions. Educational Research  
Institute of British Columbia
- Speece, D.L. & Mandell, C.M. (1980). Resource room  
support services for regular teachers. Learning  
Disability Quarterly, 3, 49-53.
- Thompson, Victor, A. (1961). Modern organization: A  
general theory. New York: Knopf
- Vicente, A. (1977). The role of elementary learning  
assistance teacher and public relations. B.C.  
Journal of Special Education, 1
- Wang, M.C., Vaughan, E.D. & Dytman, J.A. (1985).  
Staff Development: A key ingredient of effective  
mainstreaming. Teaching Exceptional Children,  
Winter, 112-121.
- West, J.F. & Idol, L. (1987). School consultation  
(Part 1): an interdisciplinary perspective on  
theory, models, and research. Journal of Learning  
Disabilities, 20(7), p.388-408.
- White, R. & Calhoun, M.L. (1987). From referral to  
placement: teachers' perceptions of their  
responsibilities. Exceptional Children, 53 (5),  
460-468.
- Winzer, M. (1989). Closing the gap. Toronto: Copp  
Clark Pitman.

Winzer, M., Rogow, S. & David, C. (1987). Exceptional children in Canada. Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc..



# APPENDIX A

## Questionnaire

### "Perceptions of the Role of the Learning Assistance Teacher"

Please complete the following:

Size of School: 100-200 200-300 300-400 400-500 500+  
 Age: 20-30 30-40 40-50 50-65 M, F  
 Current Position: Learning Assistance Teacher Classroom teacher Principal  
 Vice Principal District Staff Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of years teaching a regular class \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of Years teaching in a LAC \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of years teaching in present school \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total number of years teaching experience \_\_\_\_\_ (include this year)  
 Full time \_\_\_\_\_ Part time \_\_\_\_\_ (this year)  
 Educational Degree: B.Ed. B.A. M.Ed. M.A. Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of Special Education courses taken at University \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of Richmond In-service courses related to teaching children with Special  
 needs \_\_\_\_\_  
 List courses most helpful \_\_\_\_\_  
 List inservice courses you would like to see offered \_\_\_\_\_

If Learning Assistance Teacher: Primary Service Delivery Model (Check one)  
 Pull out \_\_\_\_\_ Plug in \_\_\_\_\_ Team teaching \_\_\_\_\_ Consultative \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total number of students in caseload \_\_\_\_\_ = Primary + \_\_\_\_\_ Intermediate

### Learning Assistance Teacher Role Function Survey

Elementary school Learning Assistance Teachers (LAT) develop and execute individual educational programs for children with mild to moderate learning problems in cooperation with regular classroom teachers. The following is a list of LAT role functions compiled from a review of the literature and interviews and discussions with special education personnel. This questionnaire asks you to describe your perceptions of the LAT's activities with respect to these functions.

There are no "correct" answers for these items. Some items could be "right" for some situations and "wrong" for others. Thus, this survey does not evaluate effectiveness but only seeks to obtain a description of LAT activities.

Directions: Please describe the degree of emphasis placed on each of the following role functions by the LAT by assigning a numerical rating from 1-4 on the line next to each item. Use the following scale:

- | 1<br>SUPPLEMENTARY<br>and is done only after other<br>activities are accomplished.   | 2<br>NEUTRAL<br>and is done if resources permit. | 3<br>IMPORTANT<br>and is done as much as<br>possible.  | 4<br>INDISPENSABLE<br>and is done before<br>all other activities |
|--|--|--|--|
| • Develop objectives for each child jointly with classroom teachers, working together to implement these objectives.   | _____  | • Set up a peer tutoring and/or volunteer program that can be used in the regular classroom.   | _____  |
| • Make formal in-service presentations concerning the needs of handicapped students, demonstrating techniques to individualize instruction and improve behavior management.                                      | _____  | • Coordinate instructional materials used in the resource program with the materials used by the regular classroom teacher.  | _____  |
| • Direct small group and individual instruction with a remedial/academic emphasis in the regular classroom.  | _____  | • Teach classroom teacher how to administer and use individual diagnostic tests.   | _____  |
| • Inform teachers of materials and strategies necessary to meet individual needs in reading, math, spelling, handwriting and written expression, supplying follow-up materials to the classroom teachers.        | _____  | • Direct small group and individual instruction with a remedial/academic emphasis in the resource room.  | _____  |
| • Team teach in the regular classroom as an alternative to direct resource services.   | _____  | • Develop a cooperative relationship with classroom teachers through routinely scheduled sessions related to student progress and program planning, providing input into parent conferences, grades on report cards and retention decisions. | _____  |
| • Observe student in the regular classroom and gather additional information from classroom teacher regarding student's performance to plan a referred student's individual educational program.                 | _____  | • Share a checklist or other referral data to aid classroom teachers in identifying students who qualify for special education services.   | _____  |
| • Consult with parents of students served to report the results of assessment, programming, and on-going progress to develop communication about the needs of the child.   | _____  | • Work with classroom teachers to help each child understand his strengths and needs and develop a positive attitude towards learning.   | _____  |
| • Administer standardized tests, compile information regarding student's present and past performance to determine if student is handicapped and to plan a handicapped student's individual educational program. | _____  | • Provide supplementary instruction to students by preteaching lessons prior to classroom instruction and/or post-teaching lessons to students after the student has received instruction in the classroom.                                  | _____  |
| • Develop a profile of the student's abilities, needs and learning style as a basis for programming, informing the classroom teacher of student's strengths and needs.   | _____  | • Provide regular education staff with professional books and information about the characteristics and learning needs of handicapped students as well as information on trends, legislation and litigation.                                 | _____  |

DIRECTIONS FOR FOUR GROUPS OF RESPONDENTS

Learning Assistance Teachers

Elementary School Learning Assistance Teachers develop and execute individual educational programs for children with mild to moderate learning handicaps in cooperation with regular classroom teachers. The following is a list of Learning Assistance Teachers' role functions compiled from a review of the literature and interviews and discussions with special education personnel. This questionnaire asks you to describe your activities with respect to these functions.

There are no "correct" answers for these items. Some items could be "right" for some situations and "wrong" for others. Thus, this survey does not evaluate your effectiveness but only seeks to obtain a description of your activities.

Directions: Please describe the degree of emphasis you place on each of the following role functions in performing your job by assigning a numerical rating from 1 to 4 on the line next to each item.

Classroom Teachers and Principals

Elementary school Learning Assistance Teachers develop and execute individual educational programs for children with mild to moderate learning handicaps in cooperation with regular classroom teachers. The following is a list of Learning Assistance Teachers' role functions compiled from a review of the literature and interviews and discussions with special education personnel. This questionnaire asks you to describe the activities of the Learning Assistance Teacher in your school with respect to these functions.

There are no "correct" answers for these items. Some items could be "right" for some situations and "wrong" for others. Thus, this survey does not evaluate the effectiveness of the Learning Assistance teacher in your building but only seeks to obtain a description of his/her activities.

Directions: Please describe the degree of emphasis the resource room teacher in your school places on each of the following role functions in performing his/her job by assigning a numerical rating from 1 to 4 on the line next to each item.

District Staff

Elementary school Learning Assistance Teachers develop and execute individual educational programs for children with mild to moderate learning handicaps in cooperation with regular classroom teachers. The following is a list of Learning Assistance Teachers' role functions compiled from a review of the literature and interviews and discussions with special education personnel. This questionnaire asks you as an expert in the field of special education to describe your conceptual view of the role of the elementary Learning Assistance teacher.

Directions: Please describe the degree of emphasis the "ideal" resource room or Learning Assistance teacher should place on each of the following role functions in performing his/her job by assigning a numerical rating from 1 to 4 on the line next to each item.

APPENDIX D

MEMORANDUM

To .....Support Services Staff.....

Date .....1988-04-25.....

From.....~~XXXXXXXXXX~~.....  
Director of Special Programs

Subject.....

Re: Questionnaire - Perceptions of the Role of the Learning  
Assistance Teacher

---

The District Management Committee recently approved a research proposal presented by Janet Cullis, a U.B.C. graduate student, with regards to the role of Learning Assistance teachers.

Your assistance is requested to complete the questionnaire and return it to me on or before May 2, 1988. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Director of Special Programs

RC:vb  
Att.

c.c. Janet Cullis