



A naturalistic inquiry into a special education delivery system for learning disabled students
by William Michael Feusahrens

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Montana State University

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Abstract:

This naturalistic inquiry provided an insightful and in-depth look into an in-class service delivery model for students with learning disabilities. The general purpose of this study was to determine if selected elementary students with an identified learning disability would improve their self-image and reading achievement if special education services were delivered via an in-class model.

Using a qualitative case study design (Merriam, 1988), a total of 84 interviews with 34 respondents were conducted during the 1990-91 school year. Six sixth grade students with an identified learning disability were the primary respondents. They were participants in a pilot program to receive special education reading services in the general education classroom instead of the conventional pull-out program. Co-teaching and cooperative learning were integral components in the in-class service delivery model.

The in-class service delivery model received widespread support from those who participated or had some connection with it, i.e., parents of the selected students with learning disabilities, the students themselves, and the staff at the pilot school. The students felt better about themselves now that they were able to attain success in the regular reading curriculum. Also, the students' feelings of differentness were much less pronounced since they no longer were pulled out of their classrooms to receive special education services. Furthermore, it was observed by the respondents that there was a demonstrable improvement in the selected students' reading skills.

The study found that the selected students obtained a social and educational benefit and that this placement was preferable to the traditional pull-out program. Further research should be conducted for other subject areas besides reading and at the secondary level to determine if students with learning disabilities would accrue similar benefits.

**A NATURALISTIC INQUIRY INTO A SPECIAL EDUCATION
DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS**

by

William Michael Feusahrens

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of the requirements for the degree**

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APPROVAL

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This thesis has been read by each member of the graduate committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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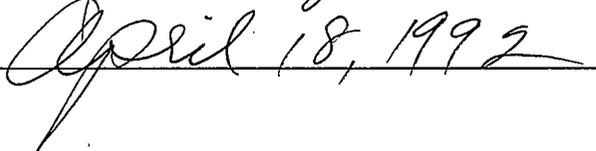
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ABSTRACT

This naturalistic inquiry provided an insightful and in-depth look into an in-class service delivery model for students with learning disabilities. The general purpose of this study was to determine if selected elementary students with an identified learning disability would improve their self-image and reading achievement if special education services were delivered via an in-class model.

Using a qualitative case study design (Merriam, 1988), a total of 84 interviews with 34 respondents were conducted during the 1990-91 school year. Six sixth grade students with an identified learning disability were the primary respondents. They were participants in a pilot program to receive special education reading services in the general education classroom instead of the conventional pull-out program. Co-teaching and cooperative learning were integral components in the in-class service delivery model.

The in-class service delivery model received widespread support from those who participated or had some connection with it, i.e., parents of the selected students with learning disabilities, the students themselves, and the staff at the pilot school. The students felt better about themselves now that they were able to attain success in the regular reading curriculum. Also, the students' feelings of differentness were much less pronounced since they no longer were pulled out of their classrooms to receive special education services. Furthermore, it was observed by the respondents that there was a demonstrable improvement in the selected students' reading skills.

The study found that the selected students obtained a social and educational benefit and that this placement was preferable to the traditional pull-out program. Further research should be conducted for other subject areas besides reading and at the secondary level to determine if students with learning disabilities would accrue similar benefits.

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The history of specific learning disabilities goes back to as early as 1868 and is usually presented as resulting from medical research, especially in the fields of neurology and ophthalmology (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1976; Kirk, 1972; Sleeter, 1986). Continuing pressure over the years from parents, teachers, psychologists, and physicians has brought the field of learning disabilities into the prominent position it holds in education today. Numerous terms have been employed in defining specific learning disabilities, e.g., "minimal brain dysfunction," "central processing dysfunction," "perceptually handicapped," and "dyslexia." The term "learning disability" officially was coined with the formation of the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (ACLD) in 1963 (Sleeter, 1986). Learning disabled (LD) students are characterized by underachievement, despite average intelligence, demonstrating a severe discrepancy between their expected achievement and their actual performance in school (Lewis, 1988).

The instruction of students with learning disabilities became a vital component in public school education with the passage of The Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Public Law 94-142. Within the provisions of Public Law 94-142, the category of specific learning disability is defined as follows:

'Specific learning disability' means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia, but does not include learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps; of mental retardation; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. (34 C.F.R. § 300.5)

The Learning Disabilities Association of America's definition of specific learning disability which follows also is included as it adds a richer description to the terminology found in federal regulations:

[Specific learning disability is] a chronic condition of presumed neurological origin which selectively interferes with the development, integration, and/or demonstration of verbal and/or non-verbal activities. Specific learning disabilities exist as a distinct handicapping condition in the presence of average to superior intelligence, adequate sensory and motor systems, and adequate learning opportunities. The condition varies in its manifestations and in degree of severity. Throughout life, the condition can affect self-esteem, education, vocation, socialization, and daily living activities. (Cordoni, 1990, pp. 1-2)

Billier (1985) listed five behavior characteristics exhibited by students in the classroom that are the major sources of referrals of students by parents and teachers for evaluation of a possible learning disability:

- (1) Impulsivity, often speaking out of turn, and attention-getting behavior.
- (2) Lack of organization, not only with school work, but also with appearance.
- (3) Extremely short attention span, assignments which are frequently incomplete, and oral directions that often are not followed.
- (4) Poor retention of what has been heard or seen.
- (5) A negative sense of self-worth.

Siegal and Gold (1982) provided further insight as to why many students are referred for evaluation of a potential learning disability. "Although the emotional factors are secondary to the neurological, they are frequently considered to be of graver consequence [by parents and teachers]" (p. 42).

The number of students served under the category of specific learning disability has increased dramatically since its passage. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1991, Table 46, p. 63) reported that the total number of learning disabled students in the United States was 796,000 in 1976-77, and in 1988-89, rose to 1,987,000, or almost a 150% increase.

Of the 11 handicapping conditions (LD, speech impaired, mentally retarded, seriously emotionally disturbed, hard of hearing and deaf, orthopedically handicapped, other health impaired, visually handicapped,

multi-handicapped, deaf-blind, and preschool handicapped), the percentage of students in the United States with LD increased from 21.6% in 1976-77 to 43.6% in 1988-89 (National Center for Education Statistics, Table 46, p. 63). The percentage of total students enrolled in the school population served under the category of learning disability rose from 1.80% in 1976-77 to 4.94% in 1988-89 (Table 46, p. 63). In the last reported school year, 1987-88, the largest percentage (59.0%) of students were served in a resource room, followed by a separate class (21.8%), and then regular class (17.6%) (Table 47, p. 64). In this context, "separate class" refers to LD students who are taught in a self-contained special education classroom for the entire school day, not mainstreamed into a general education classroom.

One reason given for the tremendous increase of LD students may be that some parents believe it is a way to provide for additional academic assistance for their child which cannot or will not be provided by general educators. "Parents don't equate LD with neurological dysfunction. They equate it with 'he needs help'" (Lieberman, 1985, p. 515). Sleeter (1986) noted that the term "'learning disabilities' has been used increasingly as a more palatable substitute for other (handicapping) categories to 'explain' the failure of lower class children and children of color" (p. 52). Other authorities have noted that the LD label was infinitely more acceptable to parents than the alternatives (Foster, Schmidt, & Sabatino, 1976) and parents "leapt to support it" (Carrier, 1986, p. 98). Not too surprisingly, Tollison, Palmer, and

Stowe (1987) found that once students were identified as having a learning disability, their mothers had lower expectations for them than did mothers of nondisabled children.

The following article was written by the parent of a learning disabled student. The author paints a vivid and emotionally powerful portrait of the struggles an LD child and his parents encounter in attempting to compensate for this inscrutable disorder. The narrative is a touching, moving portrait of the dilemma confronted by many parents of learning disabled children. It is reprinted in its entirety so the reader may obtain a better understanding and empathy for this disability.

My son came home from school in tears today. It wasn't because a classmate tried to pick a fight or because he had been forgotten in a holiday gift exchange. He cried because his grades weren't good enough for the honor roll. Most 7th graders are delighted with 3 B's, 1 B+, and 2 A's, but not Josh — he wanted to make the honor roll.

Two years after having a home-made son, we were delighted with the adoption of our perfect 2-month-old son, Josh. He was bright and verbal, always curious about words. Books were a favorite diversion; when he was cranky he would say, 'Mom, let's just read a book.' Though he occasionally said words inside out, such as melon for lemon, we considered such mistakes simply a rather cute quirk and assumed he would do well in school.

Instead, the verbal problem translated into a true learning problem when he began school. Josh would read the middle of a word first — reading patting for tapping. In spite of advanced degrees in reading, I was baffled by his apparent disability. Like most middle-class parents, we did everything possible, including extensive testing, special glasses, and private schools. Tests only confirmed what we knew: He had an above-average intelligence and below-average achievement in reading and spelling. There was no prescription.

At the end of 3rd grade we requested that Josh be retained. He had a late-summer birthday so although our timing was unusual, he had many peers of the same age after the retention. The trauma was minimized because he was in a very small private school where everyone had individual programs and grade levels were rarely mentioned. He learned to compensate for his reading and spelling problems by using a variety of coping mechanisms, such as careful listening, rehearsing text at home, and charming teachers with his smile, good humor, and perseverance. He spent grades 5 and 6 in public school, and when standardized-test scores came in we rejoiced at the average bands. Josh was closing the gap, moving into the top reading group by 6th grade.

We knew that 7th grade would be challenging. For the first time he would earn letter grades, and he would have to cope with six different teachers who would not necessarily be sensitive to the struggles faced by a disabled reader and speller. We faced the new school year with dread.

The first nine weeks were arduous for all of us. We coached him through two to three hours of homework Monday through Thursday nights and occasionally on weekends. Science, with its unfamiliar vocabulary and tedious assignments, was particularly difficult. At the first conferences we used our five minutes per teacher to explain how far he had come and how hard he had to work on routine lessons. The response was always one of surprise — after all, he seemed bright, articulate, and likable. Furthermore, he had 2 A's and 4 B's on his mid-semester report—a quite acceptable achievement.

But, although not one teacher mentioned it, Josh also had the not atypical second-child challenge: following a brother three years older who had received all A's.

The second half of the semester Josh redoubled his efforts. In addition to practicing the piano each night (winning an honorable mention in a piano competition), doing his laundry, and walking the dog, Josh struggled with his schoolwork.

Three nights before the semester's end, Josh quietly wept through dinner because his older brother was going on an outing and Josh had to study for a 50-word spelling test — a grueling task. He didn't complain, but silent tears tracked down his face. It was that night that he told us how desperately he wanted to make the honor roll.

We had been slowly withdrawing our nightly assistance so that he would assume more responsibility for his work, but his father spent many hours coaching him during that last week, hoping that one of those B's would become an A. But it wasn't enough, even though his grades were certainly beyond our expectations.

As a parent of Josh and as a former teacher of 15 years, I wonder how many kids in my classrooms had spent many unrecognized and under appreciated hours on their school work. I wonder how in my busy teaching days with too many students and too little time I could have modified expectations or assignments without patronizing the children who struggled. Certainly teachers must maintain appropriate expectations, but could I somehow have found a way to discover and reward those kids whose efforts went beyond reasonable expectations?

We try to help Josh realize that the honor roll isn't that important, but all around him there is evidence to the contrary. His brother continues to make A's; his parents have advanced degrees; and his friends are honor students who earn their A's with little effort. We tell him that in the adult world, there are few tests such as those he takes now, but that the real tests require all the traits he demonstrates daily: dedication, a great personality, determination, and perseverance. As we walk the dog together, we talk about how I cried over math when I studied for the Graduate Record Exams — and he says he appreciates our support.

One teacher wrote 'great person' in the comments section of his report card. We agree. He is a great person.

But it doesn't matter to him. He didn't make the honor roll. (Barchers, 1991, p. 26)

Statement of the Problem

The problem of the study was to determine if the self-image and reading achievement of selected sixth-grade students with identified learning disabilities improved when special education services were received via an

in-class service delivery model as compared to the pull-out model where the students previously had received support services.

As someone who has been affiliated with special education either in the role of a teacher or administrator for the past 14 years, it has been my experience that a number of students in special education pull-out programs did not and do not like leaving their classrooms for instruction in a resource class. Typical comments heard from these students, in referring to the resource class, were: "retard room," "a room for zeros," or "only dummies go to resource."

A number of parents also have questioned or refused placement of their children in a resource class because of the fear that their offspring might suffer some form of social ostracism. Regular classroom teachers, too, often are reluctant to refer legitimate candidates for evaluation because of their belief that these students will somehow be tainted socially, or endure permanent psychological scarring from bearing the label "handicapped."

As chair of innumerable Child Study Team (CST) meetings, I can attest to the great reluctance and anguish many parents feel about placing their child in a resource class. Parents continually must be assured that placement in a resource room will not damage their child's self-image. Generally parents do not quarrel about the need of special services, only about pulling their child from the classroom in order to receive them.

A question routinely raised by parents at CST meetings is whether their child will miss something in the classroom when pulled out for resource room services. This is yet another discomfiting aspect for parents regarding their child's placement in a resource room. Often we are able to reassure parents that if the student is to receive instruction in reading while in the resource room, he/she will be pulled out when his/her regular reading class meets. Frequently, however, the resource teacher's schedule does not match the classroom teacher's schedule, so the student will miss a curricular area other than the one for which he/she was pulled out. The upshot is an increase in homework if the LD student is not to miss out on the subject altogether.

The dual problems of self-image and supplanting of curriculum have always troubled me professionally. These, coupled with the increasing concerns from the field as expressed in the literature, were the motivating factors that led me to this inquiry. The piloting of an in-class model in my district presented an opportunity to ascertain if some of the distressing facets of the pull-out program could be ameliorated by an in-class service delivery system.

Need for the Study

Public Law 94-142 directs that to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children are educated with children who are not handicapped

(34 C.F.R. § 300.550). This provision is commonly known as Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

This stipulation of the Act has been controversial and difficult to implement in local schools. Problems and issues include: (a) the shared responsibilities by general and special educators, (b) the relationship with the regular classroom teacher, (c) the question of a merger into a single system. . . . (Jordan & Erickson, 1986, p. 7)

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) has recently formulated a new policy which urges the abolition of the parallel systems of special and general education. This position would in effect eliminate LRE as an issue since all students would be placed in the regular classroom. NASBE contends that:

- (1) The education needs of students are not defined by an assigned category of disability.
- (2) The education needs of students are not defined by the severity of their disability.
- (3) Many student needs can be met by regular teachers with support, who have broad training in instructional strategies that meet diverse student needs. (Lawton, 1991, p. 4)

In 1986, an article was written by the then Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Madeline Will, which brought the issue of LRE, or mainstreaming, into new focus by postulating what has since become known as the regular education initiative (REI). The regular education initiative has been defined by Davis (1989, p. 440) as follows:

The movement advocating that the general education system assume unequivocal, primary responsibility for all students in our

public schools — including identified handicapped students, as well as those students who have special needs of some type.

It was the contention of Will that regular classroom teachers in collaboration with special education teachers should take much more of the responsibility for educating students with disabilities. Will's article, although not the first regarding full-time mainstreaming, helped catapult the issue into national prominence because of Will's status in the field. The widespread debate between REI and the advocates of continuing at least some aspects of a separate special education system became increasingly intense (Byrnes, 1990; Davis, 1989; Davis, 1990; Edgar, 1987; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1988; Wang & Walberg, 1988).

Numerous authorities in the field of special education also are concerned with various problems inherent in a dual educational system. As noted earlier, Jordan and Erickson (1986) remarked upon the dilemma in trying to interface special education and general education services, in what to date basically have been parallel systems. The validity of a separate special education system has been questioned by a number of professionals in the field (Algozzine & Korinek, 1985; Allington, Boxer, & Broikou, 1987; Gerber & Hall, 1987; Graden, Casey, & Christenson, 1985; Stainback & Stainback, 1984). Others have called for the abolishment of special programs for mildly or "judgementally" handicapped children (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Dunn, 1968).

The evaluation procedures used to classify students as LD may well be suspect. Indeed, many of the students who are identified as learning disabled may, in fact, be only learning different (Carbo, 1987). The unreliable, inconsistent methods used to classify and place students in special programs, as well as the racial and cultural bias intrinsic in many tests, are a major concern of numerous experts (Messick, 1984; Reschly, 1984; Ysseldyke, 1983; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Epps, 1983).

The self-esteem ["the individual's concept of his or her own identity, worth, capabilities, and limitations" (Blackham & Silberman, 1975, p. 315)] of students is a leading factor in the continuing debate over REI. The decrease in students' self-concepts as a result of possible stigmatizing effects of having a handicapped label has been documented by many authors (Dunn, 1968; Hobbs, 1975; Blatt, 1972).

If, indeed, mildly handicapped students are to be placed full-time in the regular classroom, then teacher attitudes will play a significant role in this mainstreaming process. Evidence exists that low-achieving students can experience success when teachers adapt instruction to meet their needs (Algozzine & Maheady, 1986; Bickel & Bickel, 1986). Teachers' responses and expectations can have a significant impact on a child's development and acceptance in a group (Quintal, 1986). Discontinuity and interruption of instruction have been common complaints of teachers regarding pull-out programs (Zvolensky & Speake, 1987).

All of these concerns have led to the increasingly strident demand for alternative service delivery models for mildly handicapped students (Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Yau, 1988; Zvolensky & Speake, 1987; and numerous others).

This study was begun as a result of the many questions regarding the efficacy of pull-out programs. Key concerns include the identification process, self-esteem issues, instructional techniques, role of classroom teachers, and students missing out on parts of the curriculum. This study attempts to analyze the preceding issues in relation to an in-class service delivery model in which LD students, with the support of the resource teacher, remained in their classroom for reading instruction.

Questions to Be Answered

This study is designed to answer the following questions:

- (1) Do the students feel that their status and person is diminished in any way, either by going to the resource room (the placement of students with mild disabilities in a non-classroom setting for part of the school day), or by having the resource teacher in their regular classroom?
- (2) Do the self-images of the student subjects in the study improve as a result of receiving reading instruction through an in-class service delivery system? [The term "in-class service delivery system" defines an integrated program model where the special education teacher, or

resource teacher, provides services to students with mild disabilities (i.e., specific learning disabilities, emotionally disturbed, mild mental retardation, and language difficulties) in the child's regular classroom (McDonald, 1987).]

- (3) Does the in-class model of reading instruction increase reading achievement scores compared to previous years when students were in the pull-out program?
- (4) Does the amount of homework decrease as a result of students not having to make up work missed when in the resource room?
- (5) What are the parents' and teachers' perceptions about the in-class model and its effects on students' performances and attitudes toward school?
- (6) What are the differences between reading instruction in the in-class model compared to the resource room model?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Criticisms of Pull-Out Programs

. . . regular educators have given away their responsibility for educating these children [mildly handicapped]. In essence, the more special educators try to solve regular educators' problems, the less likely and less capable are regular educators to assume these responsibilities. . . . There is no disagreement that all children who are experiencing difficulty in school should receive prompt and appropriate services. The critical question is who should be classified as handicapped and served by special education, and who should be served by regular education. (Edgar & Hayden, 1985, p. 535)

It is the argument of many that the above question posed by Edgar and Hayden (1985) is moot: All mildly handicapped students should be served by their regular education teacher with the active support of the special education teacher. Many reasons are posited for eliminating special education programs. Special education pull-out programs increasingly have come under criticism for the practice of segregating special education students from their peers (Biklen & Zollers, 1986; Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Roddy, 1984; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Will, 1986). Studies suggest that children with disabilities are socially stigmatized, which lowers those students' perceptions of

self-worth (Avazian, 1987; Burbach, 1981; Dunn, 1968). Self-concepts of students with mild disabilities tend to be higher when they are mainstreamed into regular classrooms (Madden & Slavin, 1982; Strang, Smith, & Rogers, 1978).

Regular class placement with some form of support (either within the regular class or in a resource program) is superior to special class placement for improving the self-concepts and adaptive behaviors of mildly academic handicapped students. (Madden & Slavin, 1982, p. 26)

Missing out on special projects and content material from the classroom is a major concern of teachers for their students who are pulled out (Conroy, 1988). Greenburg (1986) stressed that missed assignments and the responsibility of making them up falls to the handicapped child. Zvolensky & Speake (1987) noted the "discontinuity and interruption of instruction" for teachers when their resource students are pulled out, as well as the fostering of "categorical attitudes and instruction" among staff members (p. 2). They asserted that to surmount the "disjointedness" of instruction common to classroom teachers and special educators and the stereotypical attitudes many teachers have towards special education, general and special education programs should be combined. Taylor (1985) argued that if pull-out programs were drastically reduced, the money saved could be used to hire additional classroom teachers to reduce class size, and thus create a more effective instructional climate. It is the contention of many experts (Pugach, 1987; Reynolds et al.,

1987; Sapon-Shevin, 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Will, 1986) that the dual system of education (general and special) is a continuing roadblock in providing for the best interests of children with diverse and challenging needs. These authorities assert that the present system discriminates, excludes, reduces opportunities, categorizes, and labels students with mild disabilities. To remedy these affronts to students, it is their recommendation that mildly handicapped students should be served by regular education teachers with the active support of the special education teacher. Many parents also feel that integration of their handicapped child into a regular classroom is in their child's best social interests (Ayres, 1988; Robison & Robison, 1991).

Bickel and Bickel (1986) suggested that rather than having a pull-out program for students deemed to require special education services, there should be a "reconceptualization" of special education. Instead of having a program separate from regular education, the focus should be on providing instructional support to students in their classrooms. Effective school practices should be promoted, which, according to the authors, would benefit special education students as well as their "normal" classmates. A number of other professionals would agree, confirming that pull-out programs for the mildly handicapped do not work and are woefully lacking in effective instructional strategies (Allington, Boxer, & Broikou, 1987; Gerber & Hall, 1987). In their review of efficacy studies from the

1930s to the mid-1980s, Biklen and Zollers (1986) suggested that special programs are either ineffective or do not have any advantages over regular classes.

Affleck, Madge, Adams, and Lowenbraun (1988) argued for the full integration of mildly handicapped children into the regular classroom to eliminate the stigma of a child having to be pulled out, to preclude the use of different curricula, and to avert the invariable scheduling conflicts that arise. They found that students with mild disabilities in their study performed at least as effectively academically as those in a resource room. Other authors concur, insisting that there are proven instructional strategies which will benefit all students who fail to profit from traditional programs; that these instructional techniques are not unique to special education teachers; that children who are identified with the same handicapping condition are not necessarily a homogeneous group with the same strengths and weaknesses, and cannot be educationally successful if treated as such; and that if regular classroom teachers accepted the responsibility for the successful performance of all students, learner outcomes would not face an artificial restriction because of a handicapping label (Algozzine & Maheady, 1986; Finn & Resnick, 1984; Snow, 1984).

Diebold (1986) found that special education teachers underestimate the willingness of regular classroom teachers to teach students with

disabilities. This misperception most likely results in students being served in special education settings rather than in the least restrictive environment.

A study of an in-class model was conducted in an elementary school in Minneapolis that used Chapter I teachers, special education teachers, and speech/language clinicians. (Chapter I is a federally funded program of compensatory education used to supplement regular education in the areas of reading and math. Unlike special education, which can supplant a subject area, Chapter I can only supplement for one.) These support personnel were engaged in helping pupils identified as at greatest risk for school failure. Some results of the study were that students at risk showed significant academic gains after placement in the "in-class" program, and that the number of children referred for special education was drastically reduced (Self, Benning, Marston, & Magnusson, 1991). Tindal and his colleagues discovered that when resource room teachers at the secondary level supported mildly handicapped students in regular classrooms, the students performed at the same level as they did in a pull-out program (Tindal, Shinn, Walz, & Germann, 1987). The results of these studies would appear to document the principles found in REI by confirming that mildly handicapped students can be successful in a general education classroom with the support of ancillary personnel.

Support of Pull-Out Programs

Fuchs and Fuchs (1988) countered many of the claims of Wang and Walberg (1988) and others who advocate the elimination of special education programs for the mildly handicapped. Fuchs and Fuchs argued that their opponents have extremely slim data on which to back their claims that pull-out programs are ineffective. "Wang and Walberg's absolutist statement reflects their belief in the moral, if not scientific, superiority of their view; and it is value, not empirically driven" (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1988, p. 141). Other authors have supported the Fuchs' statement, contending that students in the higher prevalence categories of special education require a diverse system of service delivery models (self-contained, resource rooms, and mainstreaming) in order to meet their multitude of needs (Hallahan, Keller, McKinney, Lloyd, & Bryan, 1988). Many professionals, although sympathetic to the goals embodied in REI (partnerships with general educators and more effective programming to serve disabled students in regular classrooms) are emphatic that the eradication of pull-out programs for the mildly handicapped would deal a severe injustice to those students (Braaten, Kauffman, Braaten, Polsgrove, & Nelson, 1988; Lieberman, 1985; Mesinger, 1985; Schumaker & Deshler, 1988). In a 1988 study, Marston found that mildly handicapped students served in a pull-out resource program for reading had higher

achievement scores than those mildly handicapped students served in regular education classrooms. ". . . the more frequent use of drill and instruction in special education instruction approached significance compared to regular reading instruction" (Marston, 1988, pp. 22-23).

There is the contention that the REI initiative is misnamed. No rallying cry is heard from general educators to eliminate pull-out programs for mildly handicapped students; it is solely a special education initiative (Braaten, et al., 1988; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1988; Gabriel & Rasp, 1986; Hayes, 1983). In a research study to determine teachers' attitudes toward a pull-out program versus an in-class compensatory reading program, a large percentage of teachers surveyed displayed a negative attitude toward the in-class program. A significant number requested that the pull-out program be reinstated (Hayes, 1983). Gabriel and Rasp (1986) also found that almost three-fourths of the regular classroom teachers who responded to a survey (N = 542) perceived pull-out services to be satisfactory or highly satisfactory. In an even more recent study of 311 general educators and 70 special educators representing 22 public schools in California and Illinois, it was found that these teachers clearly preferred a pull-out model for special education services rather than an in-class or consultant model (Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991).

Ribner's (1978) research of minimally brain damaged (LD) students in regular classes found the students had significantly lower self-concepts

when no special supports were provided. It has been suggested that the lower self-concept in elementary age students is more likely to occur when children perceive their abilities as inferior to their primary reference group rather than in reaction to an abstract handicapped label (Coleman, 1983). Another scientific inquiry discovered that sudden, full-time mainstreaming with no reference to others with similar disabilities proved to be detrimental to disabled students' self-regard (Strang et al., 1978). In a review of the literature, Quintal (1986) noted that successful integration benefits both exceptional and non-exceptional students. However, the reality of integration is that non-disabled students do not always accept their disabled peers in social situations.

Baker and Zigmond (1990) stressed that if the regular education initiative is to work, teachers in the regular classrooms must make "fundamental changes" in their teaching methods. Horn and Fuchs (1987) asserted that if REI is to be successful, it must overcome the barrier of academic skills taught in special education settings which frequently fail to transfer to the regular classroom. The majority of parents of LD students would be willing to support full-time mainstreaming for their children only if certain conditions were met, including reduced class size, paraprofessional availability, consultation between the regular teacher and other professionals, and the availability of support personnel (Myles & Simpson, 1990).

In a study of 10 Washington school districts during the 1984-85 school year representing a total of 277 LD and BD (behavior disabled) students, Edgar (1987) found a tremendously high dropout rate for this population of 42% from high school, and the incredibly high "unengaged" rate (not employed, or enrolled in some type of educational program) of 61% for this same group. Edgar emphasized that these students certainly are not profiting from the high levels of academic mainstreaming at the secondary levels — even the ones who do graduate and are employed earn anemic salaries at entry-level positions. Edgar argued for a radical shift away from these nonproductive, mainstream, secondary programs for special education students to a curriculum with a focus on "functional, independent living tasks."

Discrepancies in Identification of LD Students

No area in special education has generated more concern than the procedures for the referral and assessment of students. Together, they raise issues about the professional judgment used in identifying students labeled as Learning Disabled. (Gartner & Lipsky, 1989, p. 8)

The following authorities make a strong case in opposing the current methods for identifying students as learning disabled. If what they say is true, then the in-class model — the focus of this study — would seem to be a more appropriate vehicle for the delivery of additional services to academically at-risk students. Indeed, if many so-called LD students have

the same attributes as other low-achieving students, as some experts purport, then would it not be reasonable for a special education teacher to collaborate with the general classroom teacher in helping all students become more successful? A full and equal partnership could be formed with the general education teacher which would eliminate the dichotomy and bias allegedly present in attempting to identify LD students.

A body of research asserts that the identification of students for the category of specific learning disabilities has been fraught with abuse, misuse, and total misunderstanding (Algozzine & Ysseldyke, 1981; Edgar & Hayden, 1985; Warner, Schumaker, Alley, & Deshler, 1980; Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1983; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, Shinn, & McGue, 1982). It is the contention of these authors that only a very small percentage of students have quantifiable handicapping conditions; that many students with mild disabilities are indistinguishable from low-achieving students; and that students who perform poorly in school are referred for special education evaluation and then, in the majority of cases, identified as LD using arbitrary and subjective rationale. Shepard (1987) declared that at least half of the students diagnosed as LD could be described more accurately as disciplinary problems, slow learners, transients, children with higher rates of absenteeism, students from second-language families, and average learners in above-average schools. In the now classic study by Ysseldyke, Algozzine, and Epps (1983), in an investigation of the eligibility

criteria used in classifying students as learning disabled, it was found that over 85% of 248 third, fifth, and twelfth grade students who were identified as normal could have been classified as LD under current definitions. When the same eligibility criteria were applied to students identified as LD, 22% did not meet any of the criteria for classification in the LD category. Reschly (1984) reported on the National Academy Panel's analysis of minority overrepresentation in the mildly retarded category. The report called for changes in the special education classification system, asserting that classification systems varied so widely from state to state that a child considered handicapped in one state was low-average in another.

In a study cited in an article by Carbo (1987), LaShell's 1986 research of 40 LD students over a school year, discovered that 37 students achieved reading scores at the end of the year that enabled them to be totally mainstreamed when their reading program was restructured to meet their particular reading style. These data led LaShell to the conclusion that the children in the study categorized as LD were misidentified in the first place. Carbo (1987), from her own studies of learning styles, noted, "Many students are incorrectly taught and unfairly tested. When they fail, they undergo countless years of remediation—often being mistaught again and again" (p. 60). Ysseldyke (1983) stated that there was no defensible system for declaring students eligible as LD. He maintained

that the general education system was failing to meet these students' needs and that regular classroom teachers should be inserviced to broaden their instructional skills and techniques in order to teach *all* students.

Closely Related Research

Carlson's (1984) research of an alternative service delivery model incorporating teams of regular and special educators found that students attained significantly higher achievement scores in the experimental group of 21 LD and 24 low-achieving elementary and secondary students, compared to the control group of students taught in the traditional model (pull-out). Students with learning disabilities also expressed satisfaction about being a part of the group interaction within the class. In a study by Jenkins and Heinen (1989), researchers interviewed 686 special, remedial, and regular education students in grades two, four, and five, from classrooms that used either a pull-out, an in-class, or an integrated model for specialized instruction. Of the 686 students, 101 were special education recipients, 236 remedial students, and 349 regular education students. Interviewers asked the students two questions relating to preference for service model along with the reason for their choice. Results of the study definitely were mixed, with children's preferences affected by the service delivery model used in their classroom and their grade level.

The present study differed from that of Jenkins and Heinen (1989) in these ways:

- (1) It concentrated on six students receiving services via an in-class delivery system.
- (2) The students were followed over the course of an entire semester, not just a one-time interview.
- (3) Interviews, field notes, artifacts, and participant observations were used to help understand the students' thoughts and perceptions of the in-class model, to discern how the self-images of the students were affected, and to determine if there was evidence of greater academic progress demonstrated by these six students within the in-class model.
- (4) Viewpoints of parents and teachers also were solicited to help obtain their understanding of how these children functioned in the two service delivery models.

Human Subjects Approval

An overview of this proposed study was sent to the Montana State University Human Subjects Committee for its approval. Because of the young age of many of the respondents, and the fact that they had been identified as having a learning disability, the approval of the Human

Subjects Committee was obtained before any interviews were conducted with the minor subjects in the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The term for the research design utilized in this study is "qualitative case study," taken from Merriam (1988), who defined qualitative case study as "an intensive holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 21).

Bogdan and Biklen (1982, pp. 27-29) presented five key components to qualitative research:

- (1) Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data, and the researcher is the key instrument.
- (2) Qualitative research is descriptive—rather than data collected in the form of numbers, it is in words. (Note: Qualitative researchers sometimes count, tally, calculate frequencies, etc.)
- (3) Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products.
- (4) Qualitative researchers do not search out data, or evidence to prove or disprove hypotheses; rather, the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together.
- (5) Researchers are concerned with the ways different people make sense out of their lives.

Burgess (1985) would add to Bogdan and Biklen's list, asserting that qualitative research is further characterized by its flexibility and by the

proposition that studies can be designed and redesigned. Fetterman (1987) maintained that qualitative methods enable researchers to gain the "insiders" understanding of exactly what their role is in the educational process. Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p. 30) commented, "By learning the perspectives of the participants, qualitative research illuminates the inner dynamics of situations—dynamics that are often invisible to the outsider." Wolf and Tymitz (1977) concluded that the ethnographic paradigm, or naturalistic method of inquiry

. . . provides the framework for examining what the child knows and how the child processes information and responds to cues in the environment, but equally significant, it also provides the framework for examining how teachers process information concerning learner attributes, cognitive barriers, and emotional signals. (p. 9)

A qualitative case study design was selected to study the thoughts, perceptions, and feelings of the people involved. Merriam (1988, p. 10) noted that this design "is chosen precisely because researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing." Case studies are basically the intensive examination of a social unit (individual, group, community, institution), an event, or phenomenon that may utilize observation, (tape recorded) interviews, and the examination/collection of artifacts (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Burgess, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Minnis, 1985; Sellitz, Jahoda, Deutsch, & Cook, 1959). Lincoln and Guba (1985) declared that the case study mode is the method of choice for naturalistic inquiry, chiefly because it raises

understanding and maintains clarity. Case studies have been called "‘a snapshot of reality,’ ‘a slice of life,’ ‘a microcosm,’ ‘an episode,’ ‘an action unit,’ ‘a depth examination of an instance,’ and ‘the intensive examination of a unit’" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 371).

Perhaps the most extensive description of case study is the one composed by Guba and Lincoln (1981, pp. 375-376):

First, the case study provides the ‘thick description’ so important to the naturalistic evaluation. . . .

Second, the case study is grounded; it provides an experiential perspective. . . .

Third, the case study is holistic and lifelike. . . .

Fourth, the case study simplifies the range of data that one is asked to consider — it can be streamlined so as to best serve the purposes that the evaluation has in mind. . . .

Fifth, the case study focuses the reader’s attention and illuminates meanings.

Finally, and most importantly, the case study can communicate more than can be said in propositional language. The case study builds on the tacit knowledge of its readers. It is a reporting vehicle appropriate to the understanding and language of audiences.

This particular case study is identified as a bounded system. "The most straightforward examples of ‘bounded’ systems are those in which the boundaries have a common sense obviousness, e.g., an individual teacher, a single school, or perhaps an innovatory programme" (Adelman, Jenkins, & Kemmis, 1976, p. 141). Goetz and LeCompte (1984) discussed the distinctions between naturally bounded and artificially

bounded populations. This study falls under the category of naturally bounded, which Goetz and LeCompte (p. 85) defined as existing "independently of researcher interest, and are formed . . . and confirmed by their constituent participants." Devons and Gluckman (1982) referred to their bounded system as "circumscribing" research, wherein an analyst will cut off a manageable field of reality by placing boundaries around it. Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggested that the investigator can limit the study without compromising its integrity and still keep it within the naturalistic context.

Population Description

The investigation was conducted in the Four Rivers School District which is located in the town of Four Rivers, Idaho. (The town of Four Rivers and the names of the people and schools in this study are pseudonyms to afford the respondents privacy and confidentiality.) It is a community of approximately 27,500 people located in the northwestern region of the United States with a strong service economy connected to an agricultural base. The county of Four Rivers, of which the city is a part, has a total population of approximately 60,000. As would be expected in an agricultural-based economy, the remainder of the population is located in rural settings, with six small towns each under 4,000 population dotting the countryside. The four rivers from which the

town and county derived their names provide the irrigation for the many farms which use their water for a wide variety of crops generally comprised of sugar beets, corn, wheat, beans, and potatoes.

The Four Rivers School District had a student enrollment of 6,932 students, preschool through high school, as of September 1991. Three hundred twenty-four (324) regular classroom teachers, 30 special education teachers, and 42 special education instructional aides were employed in the Four Rivers School District at the time of this study, as well as a number of personnel in support positions including three school psychologists, 3.5 speech/language pathologists, 13 school counselors, one school social worker, two gifted and talented facilitators, one school audiologist, and a consulting teacher. The district is composed of six elementary schools, two junior high schools, and one senior high school. The school district also administers three regional juvenile programs: a juvenile detention center, an adolescent day treatment program, and an alternative high school.

Sunrise Elementary School served as the pilot site for the in-class service delivery model. Sunrise first opened its doors in 1956 and added seven classrooms and a library in 1979. Four portable classrooms were added in the fall of 1990 to accommodate increasing enrollment. In September of 1991, total enrollment at Sunrise stood at 743 students in grades kindergarten through six. The faculty consists of 36 teachers

including three resource teachers who are assisted by 3.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) resource aides, and two Chapter I teachers. There is also a .5 FTE assistant principal, as well as a full-time principal.

Sunrise draws many of its students from housing subdivisions that have been built in the last 15 years, as well as older single-family homes. Some of its population does come, however, from publicly subsidized housing that has been built within the last 10 years. Sunrise students are predominantly white, with a middle-class background.

In a nationally standardized achievement test (Iowa Tests of Basic Skills) administered in April of 1991 to students in grades two through six, Sunrise had percentile scores ranging from a low composite score of 44 in grade six, to a high composite score of 81 in grade two. Mr. Tomzak, the principal of Sunrise, accorded three primary reasons to the large discrepancy between the lowest and the highest composite percentile scores demonstrated by grades two and six: first, the significant influence that a strong home environment plays in exposing children to ideas and concepts, which tends to help students obtain higher scores on national achievement tests in the primary grades; second, the emphasis on an academic curriculum found in the district's kindergarten classes; and third, the sixth grade had a higher prevalence of lower achieving students than the other grades, which likewise may have contributed to the wider percentile spread. A fourth explanation offered

for the disparity in the scores at Sunrise was attributed, in the words of Mr. Tomzak, to "just kids" — not curriculum or differences in pedagogy.

The number of children assigned to Individual Education Programs (IEP's) as of December 1, 1990, stood at 56, or 7.2% of Sunrise's total population. Of these 56 students, 44 were listed under the category of specific learning disability.

All of the 23 resource teachers in the district were engaged in resource "pull-out" programs prior to the start of the 1990-91 school year. However, Sunrise Elementary School was designated to pilot a special education program in the Fall of 1990, with the imperative to serve students with learning disabilities in the regular classroom for the subject of reading. Sunrise, therefore, was the study site because of its status as a pilot school for the "in-class" model, and also for my convenience in collecting the data; since I worked in the district, I was familiar with the teachers and principals, and had easy access to the buildings and classes.

Gaining Entree

Gaining entree into Sunrise Elementary School was the least difficult aspect of my research. As the director of support services, I was an administrator in the district and had well-established personal and professional relationships with the principal and teachers. The superintendent, Dr. Kramer, although new to the district, was enthusiastic

about the study from the moment I described it to him. The fact that he had a Ph.D., and obviously had previous involvement in educational research, may certainly have played a part in his openness to the study. Dr. Kramer's initial comments were that he believed the findings of the research would be an essential factor in determining whether the in-class model eventually would be emulated at the other schools in the district.

Mr. Tomzak, the principal at Sunrise, also displayed excitement when I explained my proposed study, and was immediately supportive of the idea. Mr. Tomzak was the senior elementary principal in the district in terms of his 20 years of experience. He was also, in my estimation, the most progressive and insightful— a principal who was respected and admired by his colleagues. Mr. Tomzak had recently held top offices in the state's school administrators association, including president of the elementary principals association, and also president of the entire umbrella organization which comprised superintendents, elementary and secondary principals, and special education directors.

In the school district itself, Mr. Tomzak served as chairman of numerous curriculum policy and textbook committees. He also developed and chaired the Excellence in Education Fellowship Committee which awards grants of up to \$10,000 for teachers' winning proposals which, in the eyes of the committee, will benefit both their colleagues and Four Rivers students.

Mr. Tomzak's farsightedness enabled him to see that documentation from students, parents, and teachers on their perceptions of the in-class model would be just as crucial to the future of the project, if not more so, as the results of the reading achievement scores on the annual standardized test. Therefore, he very willingly sanctioned the proposed study on the in-class model.

When I approached the sixth grade classroom teachers and support personnel (resource room and Chapter I teachers) concerning the proposal, their reaction was tentative at first. After further explaining that this was to be part of a dissertation study and that the forthcoming data could prove valuable in helping to decide the effectiveness of the in-class model with LD students, the teachers not only became much more receptive but agreed unconditionally to assist in the study. I believe this extraordinary response was not so much because of the faculty's interest in assisting me with my research (although many had known me for years on a first-name basis), but mainly because they sincerely believed the accumulated data would help them in determining the overall effectiveness of the in-class model on their lower-achieving students.

Ms. Erickson and Ms. Schmidt, the two resource room teachers for the upper grades at Sunrise, were influential in choosing the parents and students for the study. The criteria I gave them were simple enough: a list of sixth grade students who they felt exhibited a true learning

disability in the area of reading, and who had been in the resource, pull-out program for at least two years before entering sixth grade. In a very short time they provided me a slate of 11 potential candidates who met the stated criteria.

One very important point worth noting was that Ms. Schmidt and Ms. Erickson took the liberty of excluding two potential student subjects from the study because of their parents. From previous experiences, Schmidt and Erickson felt these parents had displayed some degree of irresponsibility; e.g., they did not follow through with some agreed upon task, or failed to attend more than one scheduled meeting. This exclusion of two children and their parents from the possibility of participating in the study did not, in my opinion, affect the final results: First, if the resource teachers were correct and the parents could not be relied upon, I probably would not have retrieved much information from them anyway; secondly, there was already a diverse group of parents on the list representing a variety of backgrounds.

The six parents who were eventually selected all expressed an interest from the initial telephone call; in fact, the first six parents I called all agreed to participate in the study. Several of them wanted to speak to their spouse before giving an unequivocal yes, but upon discussing it responded favorably.

One of the original six students had to be replaced shortly before the study began as he was removed from special education services. This particular child was so opposed to being pulled out of his classroom to the resource room for written language and math (pull-out programs still existed for these particular subjects) that his teachers and mother eventually reached the conclusion that further special education services would be counterproductive to his success in school. He was, therefore, "staffed-out" (removed from the Individualized Education Program developed for him by agreement of the staff and parents at a child study team meeting) and placed in the regular classroom full-time. Another parent of an LD child was subsequently called who agreed to participate in the study to replace the parent of the student who was "staffed out."

After setting up appointments with the parents, I met with each of them describing the study in greater detail and answering any questions they had. Upon agreeing to participate in the study, each of the parents signed a release form granting me permission to use the information in my thesis. I then met with their children on a separate occasion, explaining the purpose of the study and making certain that each child had a distinct understanding of what was to be expected. It was made clear to each student that participation in the study was strictly voluntary, but, like their parents, all of the children unhesitatingly signed the release form.

During the course of the study, only two of the fathers participated in the interview process. A third father sat in on an interview, but did not contribute. The interviews were all tape recorded and conducted in the place of the parents' choosing. The majority of parents chose their homes for the interviews, but I also interviewed one parent at Sunrise School and two parents in my office.

Why more of the fathers did not participate, although invited, may have these possible explanations:

- (1) Two of the three who did not participate were stepfathers, not the natural fathers; thus, their interest level may not have been as high or they may have felt their strong involvement would have been inappropriate.
- (2) The third father owned a barber shop and did not get off work until 6:00 p.m. or later. His wife, who worked in the same shop, had a more flexible schedule and could leave if she did not have any appointments. She always scheduled the interview time when her husband was working.
- (3) Although I offered to meet with parents anytime, two of the three mothers wanted to meet with me during school hours when their husbands were unavailable.
- (4) Finally, in my own experience, many mothers seem to take more of an active part in their children's education than do the fathers.

The interviews with the students were likewise tape recorded and took place entirely at the school. I discussed with their teachers the best time of day for the interviews and then would come to the school at that prearranged time the week I was to interview. This plan worked well, although occasionally I would arrive at the school to find that the students were at an assembly, were listening to a guest speaker, or were ill. I then would try to come back later in the week or meet with the student early the following week.

The teachers, of course, were interviewed at prearranged times. Frequently it would be after school, but I also interviewed teachers during the school day when they had a break, e.g., during music, lunch, or P.E. Selected past resource and classroom teachers of the students in the study also were interviewed to fill in needed background information to obtain as complete an academic and social history of the students as possible.

The length of the interviews varied considerably. The students' interviews generally lasted 15 minutes. The parents' and teachers' interviews were of much longer duration, lasting from 20 minutes to over an hour, with an average of 40-45 minutes.

In-Class Model

The in-class service delivery model for special education students with mild disabilities had its beginnings in the Fall of 1989 when, as the director of support services, I described the rationale behind the in-class model at one of the school district's regular administrator meetings. In later discussions with individual principals, three of the more interested elementary principals and I (with the superintendent's blessing) decided a site visitation to a nearby school district currently employing the model would be enlightening.

The group making the trip was composed of the three elementary principals, a resource room teacher, and a Chapter I teacher from each school, as well as one primary and one intermediate teacher from each of the schools. The assistant superintendent in charge of curriculum and the Chapter I director also made the trip.

Mr. Tomzak and his representatives from Sunrise Elementary School expressed the most interest and enthusiasm for the in-class model upon returning home. Mr. Tomzak and the four staff members who made the trip spent the remainder of the school year (the site visit was made in October) learning more about the in-class model. They educated the faculty not only about the tenets of the in-class model, but also about cooperative learning and co-teaching, which, along with the in-class

model, were to play an integral role in the instructional methodology that finally was adopted.

In the late spring, Mr. Tomzak called a faculty meeting to discuss the possibility of introducing the in-class service delivery model as a pilot project for the reading curriculum in grades one through six at Sunrise. After a full-blown discussion on issues ranging from the block scheduling of classes to additional training for the staff, the matter was put to a vote. The teachers voted overwhelmingly in favor of implementing the innovation by a 26-3 margin. This tremendous affirmation of support should be credited to the job Mr. Tomzak and his facilitators did in the months preceding the vote. By their well-reasoned responses to the many questions raised by the faculty of Sunrise, they eventually sold the staff on the philosophy underpinning the in-class model.

Two consultants subsequently were brought in from Johns Hopkins University for the week immediately following the end of school, to train the faculty in the tenets of cooperative learning. Because of its reliance on group interaction and students assisting each other in the learning process, the principles behind cooperative learning appeared to mesh quite well with the expectations of the Sunrise staff for the in-class model. As a group, the teachers did not want to see the philosophy of the in-class model undermined by having the resource room and Chapter I students pulled to the back of the classroom, thus continuing the practice of

isolation that was a dominant characteristic of the conventional pull-out program. To combat this separateness, the teachers decided to institute cooperative learning and have the Chapter I or resource teacher come into the classrooms and co-teach reading.

A fortuitous circumstance also occurred in this time period that was to play an important part in the success of the innovation. Idaho's State Department of Education, in an effort to promote more collaboration between general and special educators, determined to sponsor five workshops on collaboration and co-teaching over the course of the coming school year (1990-91). Twelve schools from across the entire state were selected to participate in the workshops on the basis of a written proposal submitted by each. Quite fortunately, Sunrise was one of the 12 schools chosen. These workshops proved immensely valuable in providing practical suggestions for working out the inevitable problems (finding the time to collaborate with their fellow co-teachers was the big one) which arose that first year. One of the recommendations which proved successful was hiring two substitute teachers for one-half day a week. These substitute teachers would rotate from class to class every 30 minutes, giving the co-teachers a chance to collaborate. The money for the substitutes came from a creative source—the faculty's pop machine profits.

Sampling

The six students who were the primary respondents in the case study were selected (as described earlier) from a list of students submitted by one of the resource teachers with whom I had discussed the intent of my study. Carew and Lightfoot (1979) and Wolcott (1973) suggested that the investigator may choose the person, group, or setting if they matched the criteria established by the investigator.

This type of sampling is known as nonprobability sampling as opposed to "probability sampling of which random sampling is the most familiar example" (Merriam, 1988, p. 47). Honigmann (1982, p. 84) paraphrased Margaret Mead's definition of nonprobability sampling, or what she called anthropological methods of sampling, when he stated that these sampling methods

. . . are logical as long as the field worker expects mainly to use his data not to answer questions like 'how much' and 'how often,' but to solve qualitative problems such as discovering what occurs, the implications of what occurs, and the relationships linking occurrences.

Honigmann (1982) stated further that the simple reason nonprobability sampling continues to be used frequently in field work is that through this type of sampling research questions can be satisfactorily answered.

The most common form of non-probabilistic sampling is called "purposive" (Chein, 1981; Manheim, 1977), "purposeful" (Patton, 1980),

"selective" (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973), "judgement and opportunistic" (Honigmann, 1982), or "criterion-based" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Chein (1981), Manheim (1977), and Merriam (1988) maintained that purposive sampling is chosen by the researcher to learn the most from a particular population. This sample should not only be of interest to the researcher but also should be one with which the researcher is familiar. Furthermore, the population should be, in the judgement of the investigator, a typical sample of that population.

The following criteria were used to select the student population for the study:

- (1) Students were from the sixth grade.
- (2) Students had an identified learning disability.
- (3) Students had been involved in a pull-out program for at least two years.
- (4) Students currently were receiving reading support from the special education teachers via the in-class model.

The six students who were chosen as primary respondents of the study were involved in the pilot program for the in-class service delivery system. Three students were on IEPs solely for reading, while three had IEPs developed for reading and written language. Two of the students were females and four were males. All six students were living in

two-parent homes, although three of them had stepfathers in the home due to remarriage.

The resource teacher and her aide came into the sixth grade classroom and worked collaboratively with the classroom teacher. Students who normally would be pulled out into a resource program for reading remained in the classroom. Interviews were conducted with current teachers, both resource and regular, as well as former teachers and parents to obtain an overall profile including the attitudes, social skills, learning styles, and other characteristics of these students. Furthermore, two students who were enrolled in a pull-out program were interviewed along with their teachers and parents to gain an understanding of their views concerning the resource program.

The rationale for focusing on sixth grade students was based entirely on the assumption that sixth graders would be better able to articulate their thoughts than younger students. This also was the reasoning used in selecting students with specific learning disabilities rather than ones with mild or moderate retardation.

The requirement that the students be in special education for at least two years stemmed from a desire to obtain from the respondents a perspective based on a longer personal experience with the pull-out program.

Quite obviously, the last criterion, involvement in the in-class model, was a necessity if one was to discover how the respondents view the two instructional practices.

Data Collection

Data collection took place during the first year of the pilot study for the in-class model, encompassing 36 weeks of instructional time, covering the period from the first of September to the first week in June. I attempted to capture the initial reactions of staff, parents, and students to this new integration model of service delivery. Many authorities, when discussing the data collection process, describe it as one which can go on indefinitely, but, as a result of a finite amount of funds, energy, time, and patience, must come to a conclusion (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Merriam, 1988). Andrew (1985, p. 161) described it best:

There is however also a sense in which a kind of law of diminishing returns sets in, a time when the sources while still fascinating, provide supporting evidence rather than turning up new lines of thought and investigation.

The data were derived from a variety of methods: transcription of taped interviews, field notes, artifact collection, and participant observations. Some readers may not have familiarity with the last three terms. Therefore, these terms are defined below:

- (1) Field notes: "The written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 74).
- (2) Artifact collection: In the context of this study, the artifacts to be examined are the students' cumulative files and special education records, including the psycho-educational records.
- (3) Participant observation: Wolcott (1973) preferred Gold's term of "participant as observer" which he defined as
... a role in which the observer is known to all and is present in the system as a scientific observer participating by his presence but at the same time usually allowed to do what observers do rather than expected to perform as others perform. (p. 8)

Merriam (1988, p. 69) pointed out that "multiple methods of data collection is a major strength of case-study research. . . ." The use of multiple methods of data collection is one form of "triangulation" which assists the researcher in correcting biases that may occur and is the preferred methodology unless the information comes from an unimpeachable source (Denzin, 1970; Howe, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). "Methodological triangulation combines dissimilar methods such as interviews, observations, and physical evidence to study the same unit" (Merriam, 1988, p. 69).

Interviews

"The main purpose of an interview is to obtain a special kind of information" (Merriam, 1988, p. 72). Patton (1980, p. 196) stated, "We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe." Two of the six primary respondents (the sixth grade LD students) were interviewed over the course of the first semester during their participation in the in-class model. The other four students were interviewed over the course of the second semester. The parent and teacher interviews were conducted in either the first or second semester depending upon the time their child or student was involved in the interview process. Table 1 provides a summary of the number of interviews conducted and the semester of occurrence. A point of clarification regarding the number of interviews should be made. In the first semester, two of the LD students interviewed were in a pull-out program at another school. They were interviewed just once, as were their parents. Also, the number of interviews conducted of general classroom teachers and special education resource teachers varied depending on whether or not they were co-teaching reading within the In-Class model. Past teachers (special and general education) of the primary respondents and sixth grade teachers not involved directly with the innovation were interviewed only once. The co-teachers were

Table 1. Number of Interviews and Semester Conducted During the 1990-91 School Year.

Category	Number of Interviews	Semester Conducted
LD Students (N = 8)		
Grade 6	18	1
Grade 6	<u>18</u>	2
Total interviews conducted	36	
General Classroom Teachers (N = 11)		
Grade 6	5	1
Grade 6	4	2
Grade 5	2	1
Grade 5	2	2
Grade 4	<u>1</u>	1
Total interviews conducted	14	
Special Education Resource Teachers (N = 5)	7	1
	<u>7</u>	2
Total interviews conducted	14	
Chapter I Teachers (N = 1)	2	2
Resource Room Aide (N = 1)	1	2
Elementary School Principal (N = 1)	1	2
Parents of LD Children (N = 8)	8	1
	<u>8</u>	2
Total interviews conducted	16	

interviewed more than once. A total of 84 interviews were conducted with 35 respondents.

Denzin (1970), Goetz and LeCompte (1984), and Merriam (1988) described various types of interviews ranging from highly structured to very open-ended. The type of interview utilized in this study is characteristic of interviews known under various names, such as nonscheduled standardized (Denzin, 1970), the semi-structured interview (Merriam, 1988), or the qualitative structured interview (Howe, 1988). These interviews are guided by the same questions asked of all respondents, but depending on the reactions of the respondents, the order and specificity of the questions may be changed. The interviewer also can adjust to the informant's fluency, or lack thereof, by asking more probing questions in an attempt to encourage the informant's discourse. "This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging world view of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 1988, p. 74). Patton (1980), Schatzman and Strauss (1973), and Spradley (1979) presented a typology of questions for qualitative interviewing. These questions are classified under various headings ranging from devil's advocate questions, to descriptive questions, to hypothetical questions, to background and demographic questions. However, Goetz and LeCompte (1984) urged interviewers to exercise caution when examining question formats:

Researchers seeking guidance for interview construction find available an overwhelming array of instructions, suggestions, protocol forms, and prescriptions. Within this massive literature contradictions abound. For each proscription or format or question structure pronounced by one researcher, other investigators suggest alternative uses for the same techniques. (p. 124)

Patton (1980) stressed the importance of wording questions in language clear and meaningful to the respondent and reminded interviewers to use open-ended questions. Patton (1980) and Wolcott (1973) both warned about the excessive use of "why" questions. Lofland (1971) and Patton (1980) advised interviewers to eliminate leading questions from their interviews. Bogdan and Biklen (1982), Lofland (1971), and Stainback and Stainback (1988) emphasized latitude and flexibility on the part of the interviewer in order to offer the informant the opportunity to shape the direction of content of the interview. Patton (1980) also cautioned interviewers to talk less than their informants and to be aware of their (interviewers) stance. The interviewer "presupposes that the respondent has something to contribute, has had an experience worth talking about, and has an opinion of interest to the researcher" (Merriam, 1988, p. 79).

Participant Observations

Participant observations were conducted in the students' respective classrooms during the 1990-91 school year. Table 2 summarizes the number of reading lessons observed and the semester of occurrence.

Table 2. Number of In-Class Model Reading Lessons Observed During the 1990-91 School Year.

Grade Level	Number of In-Class Reading Lessons Observed	Semester
6	8	1
6	<u>4</u>	2
Total number of observations of in-class reading lessons	12	

Becker and Geer (1982) delineated the many forms that participant observations can take, and validated the one of strict observation which was chosen for this study. "Strict observation" in the context of this study means that no planned interaction occurred between the students, teachers, and me during the observation period. Occasionally a student and I would verbally communicate, an action always initiated by the student. Several times, a student approached me to show me his or her work or to ask why I was in the classroom. These were the only interactions that ever occurred.

When I observed in the reading classes, I attempted to be as unobtrusive as possible. Upon entering the classroom during the time when students were changing classes, I would take a seat in the back of the classroom. There, I would make a diagram of the class, noting the seating arrangements and layout of the room including bulletin boards, storage areas, water fountain, and so forth.

I would then make notes of how the students who were participating in the research interacted with other students and their teachers. I would be especially interested to see if these students appeared to be attending to the task at hand and actively participating in the assignment.

All of my observations were written down for later analysis. I basically wanted to confirm what the teachers and students were telling me in the interviews.

Field Notes

Field notes were written after each interview and observation. These were reflective in nature and were my "fresh" impressions of what was said and seen. Typically, I would write down how I felt the interviewee acted during the course of the interview, whether the subject appeared hesitant or open, and anything of relevance that the person might have said when the tape recorder was not running.

Analytical Techniques

The analysis of the data began as the data were collected. Goetz and LeCompte (1984), Merriam (1988), Stainback and Stainback (1988), and Strauss (1987) all stressed the importance of analyzing data as it comes in. The emphasis is that data analysis is ongoing:

As you are involved in data organization, you are also involved in data analysis. In fact, data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing activity that occurs throughout the investigative process

