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The role of reading specialists: A descriptive study

Dorothy L Kulesza
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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THE ROLE OF READING SPECIALISTS:

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

by

Dorothy L. Kulesza

Bachelor of Science
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
1991

Master of Science
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
1994

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Examination Committee Member

Graduate College Faculty Representative

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ABSTRACT

**The Role of Reading Specialists:
A Descriptive Study**

by

Dorothy L. Kulesza

Dr. Maria Meyerson, Committee Chair
Professor of Literacy
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The purpose of this study was to explore and document the role of reading specialists. Four elements of educational theory and practice formed the framework: children's reading difficulties, instructional models used to correct reading difficulties, site-based management, and symbolic interactionism. The overall design for this research was a mixed method study. Survey research was used to collect quantitative data; interviews and observations were used to collect qualitative data.

Following the processing of survey data, it was displayed in graphs and tables. Qualitative data was analyzed through recursive rounds of considering and interpreting transcripts and field notes; global themes were identified and categories were established (Huberman & Miles, 1984). Use of domain and taxonomic analyses provided further data reduction (Spradley, 1980).

The data revealed the role of reading specialists was influenced by context that includes administration, school staff, and students. More than 90% of instructional time was spent with small groups of primary students in a pull-out model. The specialists developed rigid schedules meeting with one small reading group after another. The most commonly used lesson framework was from Project LIFE, a modified version of Reading Recovery. Depending on individual contexts, administrators directed the grade levels served, the format of the reading program, and the reading specialists' additional responsibilities. Regardless, of how their role was defined, the reading specialists perceived themselves to be very influential in the progress of struggling readers.

As a result of this study, it is recommended that other studies that specifically examine the impact of reading specialists on achievement be conducted. While findings of this study cannot be generalized, other school districts may benefit from learning the role of reading specialists in the sixth largest school district in the nation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The results of the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading showed that while test scores for children in grades 4, 8, and 12 have risen slightly since 1994, the results were below the levels set as goals by the National Governing Board of the NAEP (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Proficiency levels were achieved by only 31, 33, and 40 percent of fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders respectively. Politically, these results will help determine whether more or less federal funding for reading improvement is made available to the states. They may also be used by office seekers to either praise or condemn school districts' reading programs and to provide ammunition for another call for education reform. At local levels, principals and teachers feel the pressure from district-level administrators, school boards and parents to raise reading test scores overall and for individual children. Reading specialists are often viewed as the key personnel for raising reading scores.

National literacy organizations are quite clear in their recommendations for highly trained reading specialists at all grade levels (International Reading Association, 2000; Professional Standards and

Ethics Committee of the International Reading Association, 1998; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). Yet, a majority of schools do not have reading specialists. As some schools implement school-wide reading programs, early intervention models, and inclusion models, they have, at the same time, eliminated the position of reading specialist (Quatroche et al., in press). With the trend toward using non-professionals for push-in models and the implementation of more school-wide programs, reading specialists may become an endangered teaching entity. For example, the Connecticut Association for Reading Research (Klein, Monti, Mulcahy-Ernt, & Speck, 1997) reported the widespread use of volunteers, aides, and peer tutors to provide remedial instruction. This creates a situation in which the children, who need the best instruction possible, are being serviced by people with the least amount of reading education background. As Spiegel (1995) noted, "Children most at risk should be taught by the best teachers" (p. 94). This dichotomy between the recommendations of educational organizations, combined with recent research findings, and the actions of local school districts makes the investigation of the role of reading specialists timely and significant.

Rationale and Purpose of the Study

For the past three years I have been a reading specialist for the Clark County School District. From a personal standpoint, because interaction among schools in the district is very limited, I became curious

as to what my colleagues were doing in their particular school settings. When I attended training sessions or seminars with other reading specialists, I discovered that our roles were quite diverse. Some discussed conducting only pull-out instruction, while others were trying a push-in model. There were also Success for All (Slavin, 1991) schools where the specialists were involved with whole-group instruction and one-on-one tutoring. When I attended training sessions for school test coordinators, I met many other reading specialists serving in that position as well. As test coordinators, a quasi-administrative duty, many reading specialists had less time to instruct children. As I listened to reading specialists discuss their instructional programs and other duties, I began to wonder how the role of reading specialists, in the sixth largest school district in the nation, was being defined.

Historically, the role of the reading specialist has been a topic for discussion. For more than three decades, it has been predicted that the role of reading specialists would evolve into a reading resource teacher who would demonstrate methods, provide materials, design and implement curriculum and staff development, and work in a consulting capacity (Dietrich, 1967; Robinson, 1967; Stauffer, 1967; Tutolo, 1987). In spite of this prediction, the role of reading specialists is not clear. Several recent studies showed that reading specialists have a wide variety of duties, some that are related to reading improvement and some that are not (Barclay & Thistlethwaite, 1992; Bean, Grumet, Cassidy,

Shelton, & Wallis, 1999; Wisconsin Reading Specialists Committee, 1998).

The principal purpose of my study was to explore and document the role of reading specialists in a large school district. Three questions guided the study: (a) How do reading specialists describe their role? (b) How are their roles influenced and modified by their individual contexts? and (c) What are the common instructional models and practices they use? My study sought to answer questions posed by other researchers. Jakubowski and Ogletree (1993) recommended continued research on the topic of pull-out vs. push-in instruction. Bean, Cooley, Eichelberger, and Zigmond (1991) recommended further research to study instructional practices in both push-in and pull-out settings. They suggested, "Specifically, researchers should move beyond the analysis of time allocated to various activities to an investigation of the nature of the instructional activities in a rich, qualitative manner" (p. 461). The present study sought to provide additional insight into pull-out and push-in models through the use of qualitative data that provided explanations of instructional models and practices.

Quatroche, Bean, and Hamilton (in press) discussed their findings on the differences in perceived roles and responsibilities of reading specialists. Reading specialists were inclined to view their role as being responsible for administering assessments, providing specialized instruction, and communicating with parents and classroom teachers.

Administrators and classroom teachers, however, were inclined to view the role of the reading specialist as one of support personnel. Classroom teachers often want to decide and define the role of the reading specialist to function in a way that meets their perceived needs. Quatroche et al. also reported the importance of context in the development of the role of reading specialists. They defined context as the setting or location of the work as well as the people with whom the specialists work. My study attempted to provide a description of the perceptions and rationales of the reading specialists as their roles developed within individual school settings.

Framework of the Study

Four elements of educational theory and practice form the framework for this study. The first to be discussed is the nature of children's reading difficulties. The second is the instructional practices and models used to correct reading difficulties. These two elements are important to the study because reading specialists have traditionally been expected to understand contributing factors for children's reading problems and then to employ appropriate instructional practices to remediate those problems. The third element, site-based management, is included because individual contexts influence the implementation of programs, models, and practices. Finally, symbolic interactionism provided the theory through which the interactions of the reading

specialists with administrators, teachers, and children may be interpreted. These four elements are discussed in detail below.

Children's Reading Difficulties

The expectation that all students acquire the ability to read did not exist until compulsory education began in the United States (Walmsley & Allington, 1995). In the early part of the twentieth century, failure to learn to read was not considered particularly notable. Snow et al. (1998) stated that it has been only recently that developing countries had the expectation that all children learn to read. They asserted that although 40 to 60 percent of the populations of other literate countries achieve literacy, the United States has the expectation that 100 percent of its population will be literate.

Throughout recent history, the education community has evolved its explanations of what causes reading difficulties into four perspectives: impaired intelligence, educational disadvantage and cultural deprivation, learning disabilities, and instructional influences. Between 1920 and 1950 impaired intelligence was referred to as the cause of reading difficulties (Walmsley & Allington, 1995). Allington (1998) claimed this belief about the sources of learning difficulties continues to influence instruction in schools at the present time. Snow et al. (1998) suggested that recent neuroscience research has lead to a greater understanding of the reading process. They suggested that reading ability occurs along a continuum in all populations of people. Since many children from

disadvantaged and other at-risk populations learn to read, Snow et al. suggested, "...biological factors are influenced by, and interact with, a reader's experiences" (p. 24). They added genetic factors as well as environmental ones have been implicated with brain function and behavior associated with reading difficulties.

As the 1960s approached, a second explanation for sources of reading difficulties emerged. Educational disadvantage and cultural deprivation among children of poverty and minority populations were considered to be contributing issues (Walmsley & Allington, 1995). Snow et al. (1998) further explained that there were two factors that can be attributed to minority children's reading difficulties: the use of nonstandard varieties of English or limited English proficiency and cultural differences. Snow et al. discussed the impact of low socioeconomic status (SES) and the difficulty in separating it, as a factor in learning difficulties, from those factors associated with minority populations. One fact that has continued to hold true for several decades is that students, who enter school with a low socioeconomic status, experience and maintain lower reading achievement than children from more affluent backgrounds (Snow et al.).

A third perspective that explained the source of reading difficulties was learning disabilities; this began to emerge as a factor in the 1970s (McGill-Franzen, 1987). Allington (1998) explained that learning disabilities were generally described in terms of neurological damage or

difference; these forms of disability made perceptual or verbal learning very difficult. Identifying children as having neurologically based disabilities, meaning that they could not learn to read, led to the result of providing little useful instruction for them (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989). Allington (1998) contended that this belief continued to influence instructional models for remediation of reading difficulties.

Finally, a fourth perspective, added by Snow et al. (1998), identified instructional influences as a source of reading difficulties in children. This happens when students, who have the potential to become able readers, do not do so because of inadequate or inappropriate instruction. When instruction is inaccurate or unclear, many students will demonstrate low achievement. If the substandard instruction is limited to one teacher, student progress may be stalled for only that year; successive years with adequate instruction may help students overcome the previous setback. In some cases the inadequate or inappropriate instruction may not be restricted to one teacher, but may be all-encompassing within one school. Some possible reasons for this condition are: inappropriate curriculum, teachers who are inadequately trained in effective methods for teaching beginning readers, scant resources and materials, and poorly managed classrooms.

These four perspectives of the causes of reading difficulties provide insight into how reading difficulties develop. Once reading difficulties have been identified, many different instructional practices and models

are used for remediation. Since most reading specialists have met certain requirements to attain their positions, they have a level of expertise and experience working with children who are experiencing reading difficulties. Discovering what practices and models reading specialists implement and believe to be successful may inform other educators' instructional practices. Describing and documenting the practices of highly trained reading teachers may inform the curricula of teacher educators and staff development planners as well.

Instructional Practices for Correcting Reading Difficulties

An examination of the instructional practices used to correct reading difficulties may be viewed in terms of time spent, programs used, and models implemented. Many studies of instructional models used in remediation have focused on the pull-out vs. push-in formats. Some studies have shown the pull-out model provides less instructional time for remedial students (Allington, 1994). Yet, other studies have shown no significant difference in time spent on instruction between the models (Gelzheiser, Meyers, & Pruzek, 1992); and some studies have shown more time is spent on instruction in the pull-out model than in the push-in model (Bean et al., 1991).

In relation to instructional practices, reading specialists, in response to a national survey, reported implementing a variety of innovative programs (Bean et al., 1999). Of the 41% of respondents who reported using the programs, the largest number (52%) identified

Reading Recovery. Other programs that were named by respondents included: Accelerated Reading; Early Success (Houghton Mifflin); Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS); Collaborative Literacy Intervention Program (CLIP); Success for All, Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC); Project Read; modifications of Reading Recovery; and a variety of other early intervention programs.

In most of the models for reading remediation, whether pull-out or push-in, the responsibility for implementation belonged to the reading specialist (Barclay & Thistlethwaite, 1992; Bean et al., 1999; Dietrich, 1967; Quatroche et al., in press; Robinson, 1967; Stauffer, 1967; Tutolo, 1987; Wisconsin Reading Specialists Committee, 1998). Bean, Trovato, and Hamilton (1995) conducted a study of Chapter 1 reading programs; the study summarized the views of reading specialists, classroom teachers, and principals. Four themes related to creating and maintaining effective programs emerged from their findings: staff development, planning, relationship between setting and effectiveness, and flexibility. All of the members of the focus groups who participated in the study agreed that decisions concerning the structure of the program and roles and responsibilities of all the teachers had to be made at the site level. Demographics unique to each site, for example, size of the school and teacher/student ratio were important factors to consider when designing a program. The diverse contexts, dependent upon site-specific circumstances, that lead to different roles for reading specialists

can be linked to the school governance model known as site-based management.

Site-Based Management

David (1996) reported that although site-based management may have been the most significant reform of the 1990s, there was no clear, agreed-upon definition. She noted that across states and districts, what each school referred to as site-based management could be quite different than what others had in place. However, Bauer (1998) reported that the definition most often found in the literature is the transferring of authority, over personnel, fiscal, and certain curriculum issues, from central office administration to each school site. In most cases, decision-making is done by a council that includes the principal, teachers, other staff members, and parents. Griffin and Griffin (1997) explained that this process is designed to situate decision-making as near as possible to the people affected by the outcomes. Smith (1998) explained that the basic tenet of site-based management is that the people who know best how to educate students at each school site are the people who know the students best.

It is useful to look at the impact of site-based management on the role of reading specialists. Investigating perceptions of the specialists of how their roles are impacted by administration, staff, students, and parents leads to an understanding of how and why instructional decisions are made and implemented. The responsibilities of the reading

specialist, along with the instructional models and practices used, are also determined by individual context. With central office administration leaving the definition of the role of reading specialist to individual sites, it will be informative to look at variation in programs across the sixth largest school district in the country. The results of this study may encourage other school districts to scrutinize the role of their reading specialists.

Symbolic Interactionism

A theory of how individuals interpret social interactions that is most appropriate for this study is symbolic interactionism because it seeks to understand and illustrate the process of meaning making (Schwandt, 1994). Extending the work of G. H. Mead, Blumer (1969) provided the three premises upon which symbolic interactionism rests. First, the actions that human beings take toward things and other people are based upon the meanings that these things hold for them. Second, these meanings evolve from the social interaction between and among individuals. Third, an interpretive process filters and transforms the meanings. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) delineated the following assumptions of symbolic interactionism:

> 1. Meaning is constructed through social interaction. 2. Individuals act on the basis of meanings they perceive. 3. Meanings change in the course of interaction because of different perceptions held by the actors. 4. Thus, reality is not a prior *given*; it is based upon interpretations and it is *constructed* during interaction between and among individual actors. 5. Reality is not *fixed*, but changes according to the actors and the context. (p. 128-129)

Schwandt (1994) further described the views held by symbolic interactionists; they view humans as having to interpret the world in order to act instead of acting in response to environmental stimuli. In relationship to this study, reading specialists interpreted the social interactions between and among the actors (administrators, teaching staff, and students), while defining and modifying the definition of their roles.

The manner in which reading specialists conduct their programs may be influenced by the interactions with their administrators, whether or not the interactions are interpreted correctly. For example, an administrator might be short of classroom space and move the RIP teacher to a converted storage closet. The reading specialist might interpret this action as a lack of respect for the reading program. This could impact the future performance of the RIP teacher. Thinking that the administrator does not value the program, the reading teacher may be hesitant to follow through with planned innovations for staff development, mentoring of new teachers, or instructional practices. The administrator, on the other hand, may have perceived the reading specialist as a professional who could conduct the program successfully in an alternative location and as a team player who would recognize the need to make space available.

Interactions with classroom teachers may also affect how the reading specialist's program is conducted. For example, a reading

teacher may approach a classroom teacher who agrees to have a push-in program. Every day when the reading teacher arrives in the classroom at the scheduled time, there is no cleared space in which to work and the classroom teacher is busy. The reading teacher interprets this as an unwelcoming environment, when, in fact, it could be the case that the classroom teacher is experiencing problems with classroom management and organizational skills and simply can't seem to be ready when the reading teacher arrives. In another setting, a reading teacher may be part of a staff that has many very experienced classroom teachers. Without any hesitation, they may tell the reading specialist they are not interested in a push-in program and they want the remedial students pulled-out for reading assistance. Both scenarios would certainly impact how the reading teacher conducts the program.

The role of the reading specialist is also influenced by interactions with students. For example, working with English Language Learners (ELL), the reading specialist may modify the program to meet their needs, which may differ from the needs of native English speakers. In low socio-economic schools, the reading specialists may modify their role to include finding take-home materials and books for children who do not have access to them where they live.

The theory of symbolic interactionism, thus provides a framework for discovering how reading teachers develop and modify their role based on their perceptions of interactions with other people at their site.

Significance of the Study

The study may contribute to several important areas in the field of literacy instruction. First, it contributes to the understanding of the services of reading specialists by providing insight into the common instructional practices these highly trained teachers select for reading instruction. With the sociopolitical pressure on educators to raise reading test scores, determining best practices of reading specialists may inform the practices of other educators. Discovering which programs, methods, and models are most frequently used by those with the most expertise may help other decision makers resolve reading instruction issues.

Second, this study alerts school districts to examine the roles of their reading specialists. With site-based management rapidly becoming the common school governance structure, the role of reading specialist may vary greatly from one site to another within the same school district. An examination of reading specialists' time spent on reading and on other responsibilities, not connected to reading, may demonstrate whether or not their expertise is being put to the best possible use. School districts may want to determine if their individual sites are working toward the overall district goal of improving reading achievement.

Third, it informs staff developers and university faculties of the program needs of reading specialists. Determining the common

instructional programs used by reading specialists in the sixth largest school district in the nation may assist staff developers in planning reading inservices for all teachers of reading. If the specialists have determined specific programs to be highly successful for correcting reading difficulties, staff developers may want to share those programs with other educators.

Documenting the role of reading specialists' responsibilities that are apart from reading instruction may assist university faculties in redesigning courses that prepare reading specialists for the field. If the specialists are serving in other roles at their sites, there may be additional content or other coursework needed to better prepare them for their role. For example, if reading teachers are very involved with planning staff development, mentoring of classroom teachers, chairing committees, administering standardized tests, screening for learning disabilities, or performing quasi-administrative duties, university faculties may need to change or add strands to curricula offered for the preparation of reading specialists.

Role of the Researcher

As I served in the role of researcher, I was also serving in the position of the role being studied. I was an elementary school reading specialist employed by the district where the study took place. It was important for me to acknowledge that I brought certain philosophical

beliefs to the study. I needed to be very conscious of those biases and very cautious when designing the survey questions and interviewing and observing the teachers. As a remedial reading teacher I held certain opinions about instructional practices for struggling readers, and I had to maintain objectivity during my interactions with reading specialists and during data analysis.

Being a member of the population being studied provided positive aspects to the role of researcher. Since I was also a reading specialist, I had a certain level of expertise and knowledge of the field. Since I was employed in the same district, I was familiar with district programs, schedules, training, and personnel.

Limitations of the Study

Clark County School District, the sixth largest school district in the United States, encompassed a large geographical area but also a very diverse selection of schools. The elementary schools in the district ranged from Title I (at-risk), to those situated in affluent neighborhoods, to rural schools located throughout sparsely populated areas of the state. With rare exceptions, each elementary school employed at least one reading specialist. The results of this study, therefore, may not be generalized to other populations. Since other school districts are composed of different configurations of reading specialist positions and school populations, reading specialists' roles and instructional practices may be different.

Operational Definitions

To clarify the use of the term reading specialist in this study, an explicit definition is provided. To clarify the reading endorsement levels available for licensure in the state in which this study took place, those terms are also defined below. Definitions of two lesson frameworks designed by CCSD personnel are provided. In reference to instructional models, the frequently used terms push-in and pull-out are defined below. Also provided is the definition of 504 Liaison, referred to as an additional responsibility assigned to some reading specialists at their sites.

Reading Specialist (Developed by the International Reading Association Commission on the Role of the Reading in Specialist)	- A specially prepared professional who has responsibility (providing instruction, serving as a resource to teachers, etc.) for the literacy performance of readers in general, or struggling readers, in particular. (Bean et al., 1999)
Reading Endorsement Nevada State Department of Education license endorsement	- Includes the following requirements: (a) a bachelor's degree; (b) a valid elementary

	or secondary license; AND (c) at least 16 hours of preparation in separate or integrated courses including: (1) foundations of reading; (2) elementary methods materials; (3) secondary methods and materials; (4) diagnosis of reading disabilities; AND (5) practical experience in reading remediation
Reading Specialist Endorsement Nevada State Department of Education license endorsement	- Includes the following requirements: (a) a master's (b) three years of verified teaching experience in a state approved school; (c) a valid elementary or secondary license; AND (d) a minimum of 16 graduate semester hours of courses in reading, including each of the following areas: (1) foundations of reading: (2) etiology and diagnosis of reading problems; (3) clinical practice in

remedying reading problems; AND research in reading.

Project LIFE	- An early literacy intervention lesson framework designed by CCSD staff. Based on the work of Clay (1993), the components of a small group lesson are: fluent writing and reading, running record, teaching point, new book, and sentence writing (CCSD, 1998).
Project STARS	- A literacy intervention lesson framework designed by CCSD staff for intermediate students. Components of a small group lesson are: rereading of familiar text, word study, guided reading, and running record. Student responsibility following the lesson includes independent reading and response (CCSD, 1999).

Push-in	- A model of remedial reading instruction in which the reading specialist works with identified students in their own classrooms.
Pull-out	- A model of remedial reading instruction in which the reading specialist works with identified students in a location, other the students' own classrooms.
504 Liaison	- The person who writes the individual education plans, which include modifications/adaptations, for children who have been diagnosed with medical conditions that do not impact their education. Section 504 is a component of PL (Public Law) 94-142 - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. An example of a 504 plan would be for a student who has

asthma and needs modifications for physical education classes.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Four elements of educational theory and practice form the framework for this study: the nature of children's reading difficulties, instructional practices and models used to correct reading difficulties, site-based management, and symbolic interactionism theory. Because the role of the reading specialist is integral to the research on reading difficulties and appropriate instructional practices, these two elements of the study's framework will be discussed in tandem. The next section in this review of the literature is focused on site-based management, since reading specialists work within the contexts of individual schools. Finally, the theory of symbolic interactionism as a methodological framework is discussed.

Children's Reading Difficulties and Instructional Practices

Remedial reading instruction had its infancy in the 1920s, and its programs and practices continue to evolve at the present time. Walmsley and Allington (1995) provided a brief history of instructional support programs. Between 1920 and 1950, students experiencing reading

difficulties were referred to as slow learners, having limited intellectual capacities. Reading teachers used instructional practices that moved in small steps, slowed instructional pace, and provided frequent repetition and practice. During those decades, remedial and special education services were not separate entities. In the 1950s, more reading teachers were needed as more remedial students were identified; this led to a research interest in instructional techniques and diagnostic tests. The primary explanation for reading difficulties was impaired intellectual functioning.

In the 1960s, the explanation for reading difficulties focused more on educational disadvantage among children of poverty and minority populations. As a result of this perceived cause of reading difficulties, in 1965 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed, and the era of compensatory education began. In Title I of ESEA, federal funds were made available for remedial services for children of poverty. However, in order to qualify for remedial services, children had to be reading two years below grade level. Throughout this time period, the role of the reading teacher began to become more specialized as more federal funding became available for these positions and more colleges and universities offered advanced coursework that specialized in remedial reading.

As the 1970s approached, disability began to replace educational disadvantage as a focus for reading difficulties. In 1975, the Education of

Handicapped Children Act (EHA) was passed; it provided for the rights of handicapped students and included the learning disabled (LD) population among them. This further separated remedial education from special education, a division that at times was artificial and detrimental to children, especially when a clear reason for reading difficulties could not be found (Walmsley & Allington, 1995). This trend continued through the 1980s.

In the early 1990s, researchers examined the history of remedial reading education. McGill-Franzen and Allington (1991) contended after 25 years of remedial services, provided for by billions of federal and state dollars, nine out of every ten children, who started in the bottom reading group in first grade, maintained that position throughout elementary school. In addition, Anderson and Pellicer (1990) stated not much progress had been made in the previous 25 years to "...provide appropriate educational experiences for culturally and educationally deprived children" (p. 15). The accepted norm for remedial reading teachers was to slow the instructional rate to such a point that the neediest students fell further and further behind.

As a result of the consequences of these practices, researchers began to suggest alternatives to existing remedial reading instruction. Anderson and Pellicer (1990) recommended that compensatory and remedial programs be more integrated into the total school program so that remedial and classroom teachers worked together. In addition,

McGill-Franzen and Allington (1991) stated that remediation was neither intensive enough nor did it start early enough to have effective results. They recommended instituting intensive, personalized acceleration of children's literacy, beginning early in the educational lives of students who were experiencing difficulties by providing one-on-one instruction.

Passow (1991) summarized the history of Chapter 1 services as consisting primarily of pull-out programs that focused on basic skills. He recommended that Chapter 1 reading teachers become part of the mainstream of education so that the cognitive and affective needs of disadvantaged students would be provided for equitably. The call for curricular congruence between classroom and remedial reading instruction went on for years (Allington & Shake, 1986; Johnston, Allington, & Afflerbach, 1985).

By the beginning of the 1990s, researchers had shifted their study from what caused reading difficulties to a greater focus on the best literacy practices. Findings from Juel's (1988) study demonstrated a high probability that a child who was a poor reader at the end of first grade would be a poor reader at the end of fourth grade. This was what Stanovich (1986) had referred to as the "Matthew effect," the concept of the literacy-rich getting richer, while the literacy-poor get poorer. Hodgkinson (1991) reported, "About one third of preschool children are destined for school failure because of poverty, neglect, sickness, handicapping conditions, and lack of adult protection and nurturance"

(p. 10). However, he recommended that educators should not waste any further time on blame, but move into action to better instruct children. Thus, instructional practices and research moved into the realm of early intervention of reading problems, rather than the wait-and-see approach that had been typical of remedial programs. Reading Recovery (Clay, 1993) and Success For All (Slavin, 1991) are two early intervention programs that address this need. The change in timing of when children would receive remedial instruction also altered the role of the reading specialist, whose focus shifted from intermediate to primary grades.

Another shift in remedial reading began to appear in the 1990s through the discussion and research of pull-out and push-in programs. Research into these types of programs, however, has been inconclusive. For example, Allington (1994) stated more reading and writing time was needed to improve the literacy of students experiencing reading difficulties. Yet, he noted, students in special reading programs often received less instructional time due to the fragmented nature of their pull-out remedial program. However, Bean et al. (1991), in a four-month long study of fourth and fifth graders found more time was spent on remedial reading in a pull-out model than in a push-in model.

As researchers continued to investigate remedial instruction models, more conflicting results were reported. Gelzheiser, et al. (1992) determined that there were no significant differences in time dedicated to reading instruction or in reading achievement gains between pull-out

and push-in models. Similar results were found by Jakubowski and Ogletree (1993) in a study conducted with fifth and sixth grade students. Their study showed that there was no significant difference in reading achievement between fifteen students who received Chapter 1 pull-out reading services for one year and fifteen students who did not. Because the pull-out model was not achieving desired successes and interfered with classroom routine, remedial reading teachers were beginning to teach children in a push-in model (Allington, 1993).

Recently some researchers have attempted to understand what remedial reading teachers do in their instruction. Results from a national survey conducted by the International Reading Association's Commission on the Role of the Reading Specialist (Bean et al., 1999) showed 43.9% of the respondents used both the pull-out and push-in formats. However, 37% reported using the pull-out model only, with emphasis on small group instruction that focused on strategies for learning to read.

While we have some understanding of what remedial reading teachers do when they work with children, their role seems to be ever evolving. For more than three decades it has been predicted that the role of reading specialists would change (Dietrich, 1967; Robinson, 1967; Stauffer, 1967; Tutolo, 1987). Robinson (1967) predicted the reading specialist would participate in inservice education, evaluation, methods and materials, research, public relations, curriculum development, and administration. Tutolo (1987) predicted the most important function for

the reading specialist would be staff development and that the role would evolve into that of a reading resource teacher, who would serve in an advisory, consulting capacity. Ten years after Tutolo's (1987) predictions, however, the National Reading Research Center (1997) reported the role of the reading specialist as primarily performing diagnostic testing and remedial reading instruction.

Most recently, several studies have used survey research to learn what reading specialists do, what they believe, and what they need. The Wisconsin Reading Specialists Committee (1998) investigated the role of reading specialists in Wisconsin, a state in which each school district is mandated by state statute to employ a reading specialist. Survey results indicated an average of 57% of a reading specialist's time was spent on the responsibilities described for that position, while their other duties included serving as reading coordinator, principal, and teacher.

In a separate study in Wisconsin, where state statute identifies five specific duties to be carried out by reading specialists, survey respondents identified 19 different aspects of their positions (Lambert & Ford, 1999). Following interviews and shadowings of eight participants, four conclusions were reached from the study: (a) the reading specialist position embodies a wide variety of duties; (b) it is a position of high expectations, particularly in relation to the number and variety of duties that are expected to be carried out; (c) the position encompasses two important areas of work, with children and with teachers; and (d) the

position of reading specialist includes some areas of expertise that could be learned on the job, for example, budgeting and grant writing.

On a larger scale, Bean et al. (1999) sent questionnaires to IRA members who had identified themselves as reading teachers on their membership renewal forms. From the 1,517 returned questionnaires, responding to what they do, 90.4% of the teachers reported that they instruct students on a daily basis. They also reported spending time on a variety of other tasks: assessment, planning, serving as a resource, curriculum development, parent involvement, working with allied professionals, serving as members of child study teams, and administration.

In an earlier study Barclay and Thistlethwaite (1992) had sent questionnaires to 1,000 members of the International Reading Association who had identified themselves as special reading teachers. The respondents designated instruction as a very important responsibility, while administrative duties, acting as resources to teachers, and conducting teacher inservices were rated as somewhat important responsibilities. The specialists indicated that they would like to serve more in the role of resource to teachers, but they found this to be an area of need for inservice education, so that they would be equipped to provide these services.

With the literature again indicating a shift in the role of reading specialists, Jaeger (1996) discussed qualities needed to serve as a

collaborative consultant. She determined reading specialists would need to be effective communicators who possessed a wealth of knowledge about all literacy aspects that could be shared with teachers and students. The reading specialist would be able to work productively with classroom teachers in areas of curriculum development, instructional problem solving, assessment, and parent liaison.

In keeping with the significance of reading teachers' expertise and communication abilities, Snow (1998) noted the importance of reading specialists' roles being designed to provide effective dialogue with regular classroom teachers. In her testimony to the 105th Congress, Snow stated schools that were no longer using reading specialists should reexamine the need for them. She pointed out that volunteer tutors could be helpful giving children practice reading for fluency, but they were not equipped to deal with students experiencing serious reading difficulties.

Addressing the importance of reading specialists, Snow et al. (1998) in the Report of the National Research Council stated the need for reading specialists "...who have specialized training related to addressing reading difficulties and who can give guidance to classroom teachers" (p. 333). The International Reading Association's (1999) policy recommendation for Title I Reauthorization stated, "Teachers entrusted with the literacy development of America's children should be highly qualified. In too many schools, nonqualified teachers (paraprofessionals) are being employed to provide instruction to the neediest children" (p. 1).

Also from the IRA (1999) was its position statement on the role of reading specialists: "Specifically, reading specialists must possess the appropriate graduate education credentials, certificates, or degrees required by their state education body and demonstrate the proficiencies listed in the Standards" (p. 2). The Commission also recommended that reading specialists have prior classroom experience "...as a means of developing a more thorough understanding of classroom instruction and a better sense of and appreciation for the classroom teacher's role..." (p. 2).

Site-Based Management

The literature on site-based management has been widely criticized for several reasons (Bauer, 1998). First, site-based management is not clearly defined, nor is there a specific process for implementing it. Second, instead of theory-driven investigations of the process of implementation, most of the literature consists of advocacy articles that provide descriptions of what's been successful in a district. Third, because there is not one clear definition, studies cannot be compared.

However, to provide a discussion of this school governance model, the defining characteristic most often found in the literature is: site-based management is the transferring over of budget, personnel, facilities, and some curriculum issues from central office administration to individual school sites (Bauer, 1998; DiBella & Krysiak, 1997). Other

terms frequently associated with site-based management are: shared governance, decentralization, and shared or collaborative decision-making (Noble, Deemer, & Davis, 1998).

For a structure with three levels of participation, the Accelerated Schools Program can be viewed as a model (Hopfenberg, Levin, and Associates, 1993). The three levels of this model are: cadres, the steering committee, and school as a whole (SAW). Cadres are formed to address specific areas of school improvement. They are small groups consisting of stakeholders from within or from outside the school site. The steering committee has a variety of functions, including serving as a clearinghouse of information and preserving a focus on the school vision. The steering committee is also formed from a variety of stakeholders and includes cadre representatives. The third level of participation is the school as a whole, which includes all stakeholders and is responsible for approving decisions that affect the entire school.

Similar to the Accelerated Schools model is a school governance structure with four levels of participation described by Glickman (1993). The four levels are: the school council, task force groups, liaison groups, and the body at large. The council is formed with a variety of stakeholders; it establishes priorities and assigns task forces to meet and make recommendations. The members of the task force are school community volunteers. Council members study task force recommendations and then discuss them with the liaison groups, which

are comprised of the entire school community structured into small groups. With reports from the liaison groups, the council receives feedback from the body at large.

As with the two models described, once the decision-making is transferred from central administration to each school site, generally a representative council takes on some decision-making responsibilities (David, 1995). Just as definitions of site-based management vary, so do the profiles of the school site councils. A council may be composed of a variety of members: principal, teachers, parents, classified staff, community members, students, or business representatives. It may be composed predominately of educators, or it may be mostly non-educators. Sometimes, a council has the power to hire and/or fire principals. Sometimes, the principal is the chair of the council; other times it may be specified that the principal cannot be the chair.

In one such case, not only did the principal not serve as chair, but was also not allowed to spend even a dollar of the school's funds without permission from the council (Smith, 1998). For councils to succeed in the school community, some common characteristics have been identified (David, 1995). First, a well-thought-out committee structure is of primary importance. The relationship between the committees and the council may be formal or informal; the committees may participate in approval processes, or they may serve in an advisory capacity. It is important that the members of each committee are a good match with the task of the

committee. Second, enabling leadership that encourages all parties to participate is crucial. Third, focus on student learning should be included with each decision that is made. Fourth, focus on adult learning is an important element for success. Members need the knowledge and skills to be active decision makers. Fifth, the council should maintain a school-wide perspective and stay focused on school goals.

In order for councils to focus on school goals, they first need to identify them. During the initiation phase of site-based management, the district's central administration should be of assistance to each site by helping councils to identify their goals and vision and to understand the parameters of their decision-making (Kentta, 1997). During the implementation phase, the role of central administration changes, as its staff fulfills the role of providing information, analyzing data, and training councils. Ultimately, when site-based management becomes institutionalized, district staff should help sites establish self-evaluation criteria.

Although one criterion for success of site-based management may be improved student academic achievement, David (1998) reported that to date, there is no certain evidence to link the governance structure to student performance. Although a tenet of site-based management is that schools will get better if the decisions are made closer to the serviced students, there is a lack of evidence that links increased achievement to

site-based management (Wohlstetter, Van Kirk, Robertson, & Mohrman, 1997).

In keeping with these findings are results of research by Summers and Johnson (1995). They reported that lack of evidence comes from the failure of studies to attempt to look at the effects of site-based management on academic outcomes. Following an examination of 20 different studies on site-based management, they reached three conclusions. First, there is little or no evidence to look at because few site-based management programs identify student achievement as an objective. Second, in the few studies that included student achievement as an outcome of site-based management, the data were inadequate and there were no statistical controls. Third, regardless of what other results may come from the implementation of site-based management, it cannot be called a success if it does not generate improved student performance.

Even though improved achievement may not be stated as a measurable goal of site-based management, it is generally thought of as an expected outcome, along with increased accountability and empowerment (Noble, Deemer, & Davis, 1998). The assumption that is fundamental to the belief that site-based management will affect increased student achievement is that change in a school's structure will lead to changes in teaching practices. From increased accountability at the site level, the expectation is that better decisions will be made, if those making them are also accountable for the outcomes. With

empowerment increased at each school site, the assumption is that there will be a more coherent culture in the school.

In spite of the outcomes generally expected from the implementation of site-based management, there are some conditions that may lead to its failure. First, if the governance model is adopted as an end in itself, school councils can get caught up in power issues; and very little energy and time will be spent on school improvement. Second, principals working from their own agendas leads to failure of site-based management and to power struggles between teachers and the principal. Third, if a single council holds all the power, failure of the structure will be the result. Instead, a wide variety of committees and participation from all stakeholders is needed. Fourth, when business proceeds as usual, site-based management won't work; there has to be a high level of stakeholder commitment (Wohlstetter, 1995).

Whether or not site-based management is successful, its implementation affects all stakeholders at the site; many roles within the school may change, once decisions are no longer imposed by central office administration. In the present study, the influence of site-based management upon the role of reading specialists was investigated.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism provided the theoretical framework for this research. The goal of this study was to go beyond the surface

definition of the role of reading specialists and to understand how interpretations of social actions with others influenced those roles.

Symbolic Interactionism is a theory that seeks to understand the process of meaning making and views humans as acting in response to interpretations of social interactions (Schwandt, 1994). Three premises of symbolic interactionism were explicated by Blumer (1969). First, people's actions toward physical objects and other beings in their environment are based on the meanings these things hold for them. Second, the meanings develop from the social interaction, which is communication, between and among human beings. Communication is symbolic because it is through the use of language and other symbols that it is achieved. Third, people continue to modify and transform the meanings, depending on the situation in which they are placed. Thus, the meanings are interpreted and used as a guide for future actions.

To further the understanding of symbolic interactionism, LeCompte and Preissle (1993) delineated assumptions of the theory. First, people's actions are based on their perceptions of the meanings of social interactions. Second, as interactions take place, perceptions of interpretations change, and new meanings are constructed. Thus, how people interpret social interactions between and among others is in a constant state of change. In concert with these tenets, symbolic interactionists view human beings as engaging in purposeful actions;

through self-reflection of social interactions, they form their own succeeding behaviors (Blumer, 1969).

In order to understand how participants interpret the social interactions in their environments, researchers must actively enter their world (Blumer, 1969). Observing what the participants take into account and how they interpret it provides a description for researchers, from which interpretations of the participant's actions can be formulated.

To apply this theory to research in the field, symbolic interactionists closely consider overt behaviors, behavior settings, and interactions of the people under study (Denzin, 1989). As Geertz (1983) explained, the researcher does not try to understand an event by getting inside the person's head, but rather by looking over the participant's shoulder. Adler & Adler (1994) noted symbolic interactionists prefer to interact with their participants, as they gather data from them.

As with other qualitative inquiries, researchers must accept the fact that there is no design that is bias-free (Janesick, 1994). Understanding this means identifying one's own biases early on in the formation of the study and maintaining an awareness throughout. As researchers interact with their participants, they must become accustomed to making decisions of an ethical nature throughout their data gathering.

For the purpose of implementing symbolic interactionism theory, phenomenology, a qualitative method of inquiry, can be used.

Phenomenology describes the meaning of people's experiences about a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). Researchers, using this methodology, seek out the essence, or underlying meaning, of the participants' experiences, but also go beyond that to understand how the experiences were internalized through memory, image, and meaning (Moustakas, 1994).

In order to put a phenomenological study into practice, there are three basic steps to follow (Patton, 1990). The first step is epoche, the period of time when the researcher must examine personal biases and either eliminate or gain clarity from them. It is not a singular period of time that the researcher spends on this; it is an ongoing process. The second step is phenomenological reduction, a time during which the researcher clusters data around identified themes. The final step is structural synthesis, when the researcher describes the phenomenon as revealed by the data.

As a method of inquiry for symbolic interactionism theory, phenomenology is an excellent complement as both of these seek to discover deep meanings of consciousness, as people interpret phenomenon and base their successive actions on those interpretations. Throughout the present study, participants related their interpretations of social interactions at their sites that led to the development of their role as reading specialists. Rich descriptions of the reading specialists' perceptions of their role were provided in interviews and observations.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore and document the role of reading specialists in a large school district. This study attempted to answer the following questions: (a) How do reading specialists describe their role? (b) How are reading specialists' roles influenced and modified by their individual contexts? (c) What are the common instructional models and practices they use? This chapter describes the methods for implementing the study. First I will present the overall design, followed by site description and participant selection. Next, I will describe the data collection methods. I conclude this chapter with the data analysis strategies.

Overall Design

The overall design for this research was a mixed method study. A survey instrument was used to collect quantitative data, and interviews and observations were used to collect qualitative data. The use of multiple data sources within my study accomplished triangulation (Tashakkori & Treddlie, 1998). Specifically, I used the sequential mixed

method design (Creswell, 1995), first conducting the quantitative phase and then following with the qualitative phase. Several other purposes were also accomplished by using a mixed method study. Combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection allowed me to examine overlapping and different aspects of an event and to discover inconsistencies and different viewpoints (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). I was also able to use the result of one method to inform the use of another; survey responses were used to develop appropriate interview questions. Using a mixed method design added breadth to my study, which could not have been accomplished with one method. The survey instrument supplied a wealth of statistical data, which could not possibly have been gleaned through interviews or observations. On the other hand, interviewing nearly one third of the survey respondents provided clarification of survey responses and extensive descriptions of the role of the reading specialist. The observations confirmed the other two data sources.

In addition, I applied a phenomenological design (Creswell, 1998) to the qualitative phase as a means of actualizing symbolic interactionism theory. Using this approach, I first addressed my understanding of the concept of epoche; I had to be able to identify and set aside my own preconceived ideas about how reading specialists might describe their role, since I am a reading specialist. Next, I designed questions that would evoke descriptions of the lived experiences of the

participants. Following that, I collected data, through interviews and observations, from individuals who had experienced the phenomenon, which was being a reading specialist. Next, I analyzed data by categorizing statements and transforming them into clusters of meaning. In the final phase of the phenomenological study, I brought the transformations together into descriptions of the experience.

Thus, the three data collection techniques of survey, interview, and observation provided a multi-layered aggregation of data.

Site Description

The Clark County School District (CCSD), located in Southern Nevada, is presently the sixth largest district in the country. The district covers 7,910 square miles. The northern-most schools are located in Mesquite near the Utah border, while the ones farthest south are 173 miles away in Laughlin near the Arizona border. The students served during 1999-2000 numbered 217,139; they were housed in 258 schools, 151 of which were elementary.

The teaching staff consisted of 14,908 licensed teachers (CCSD Technology Development Services, 2000). With the exception of a few rural schools, each of CCSD's 151 elementary schools employed a reading specialist, under the title of Reading Improvement Program (RIP) during the 1999-2000 school year. The RIP teachers were the target participants in this study.

Participant Selection

There were three groupings of participants. The first group was for the survey phase of this study, and it included all of the RIP teachers in CCSD (N=144). The second group of participants (N=22) was for the interview phase of the study, and it included survey respondents who volunteered for an interview. The third group of participants (N=3) was for the observation phase of the study and was drawn from the interview group.

For the observation phase of the study, the maximum variation strategy for purposeful sampling was used to select the three participants. The goal of this strategy was to summarize and describe the central themes or principal outcomes that crossed over participant or program variation. When common patterns emerge from variation it helps identify the core experiences and shared characteristics of a program (Patton, 1987).

Before distinguishing variation among participants, the principal outcome of schools performing well in reading that cut across them was identified. Two criteria were used to make this determination. One was the schools' achievement levels, relative to their established ability levels; the other was marked improvement in reading achievement over time. For the past several years, CCSD's fourth grade students had been administered standardized tests that provided proficiency levels and ability levels. This testing process provided an approach to evaluating

each school's status by comparing its ability score with its achievement scores (CCSD Testing and Evaluation Department, 2000). For example, achievement scores for a school, whose ability scores are at the 37th percentile, should not be compared to a school, whose ability scores are at the 60th percentile. Instead, each school should compare its achievement scores to its own ability scores.

The data were obtained by comparing the results of the fourth grade CTB/McGraw-Hill TerraNova Complete Battery Plus (Nevada Proficiency Examination Program, 1999-2000) with the results of the CTB/McGraw-Hill Test of Cognitive Skills (TCS/2), which determined ability levels. CCSD Testing and Evaluation Department (2000) provided the differences between actual and predicted achievement in terms of the mean normal curve equivalent (NCE). The normal curve equivalent uses an equal-interval scale. Therefore, the difference between any two successive scores on the scale is the same, regardless of their position on the scale. This makes it possible to calculate differences between actual and predicted scores. For example, if a school's predicted (ability) mean NCE is 39.8, and its actual (achievement) mean NCE is 42.4, then the positive difference is 2.6 NCE's. If the scores were reversed, a negative difference would be shown.

The next part of the purposeful sampling process was to identify variations that cut across the participants. Due to time constraints, only the year-round schools could be considered for the observation phase of

the study. A list was generated of fifteen year-round schools whose reading specialists had been interviewed, since the participants for the on-site observations would be selected from that group. Added to the list was each of the school's ability scores. Next, the calculated positive or negative differences between the ability scores and the reading composite achievement scores were added to the list. Three different clusters were formed based on ability scores: four schools that scored below the 50th percentile; eight that scored between the 50th and 59th percentiles; three that scored at or above the 60th percentile. One school from each of the clusters would be identified for the on-site observation.

In order to identify variation across participants, student population percentages were considered; specifically ethnicity and economic status were noted for each of the schools on the list (CCSD Testing and Evaluation Department, 2000). The transcripts of the interviews were reviewed, particularly noting variations in instructional practices and models, as described by the interviewees. Examining and comparing all of those points led to the selection of the three participants.

The three schools selected for participation in the on-site observation demonstrated achievement in reading but had variations in ability scores, ethnicity percentages, economic status, and instructional programs (Table1).

Table 1 Demographic profile of the three on-site observation schools

	Ability Score (Median Percentile Rank)	Difference Between Predicted And Actual Achievement	Achievement Over Time (Median Percentile Rank)	Ethnicity Percentages	Economic Status	Instructional Model
School #1	37	-1.0	+15 in three years	6% White 15% Black 77% Hisp. 2% Asian 0.3% Amer. Ind.	79% Low Income	100% Push-In Some Project LIFE Some Project STARS
School #2	54	+1.7	+4 for in the last year	49% White 12% Black 28% Hisp. 9% Asian 2% Amer. Ind.	44% Low Income	100% Pull-Out 100% Project LIFE
School #3	60	+1.5	+6 in the last year	76% White 7% Black 11% Hisp. 6% Asian 1% Amer. Ind.	8% Low Income	100% Pull-Out No Project LIFE or Project STARS

Data Collection

Survey

The first instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire (Appendix I), modeled after one used in a similar study conducted by the Wisconsin State Reading Association (WSRA) Reading Specialist Committee (1998). Modifications to the questionnaire were made to meet the needs of this study. Principles of survey question writing were closely followed (Neuman, 1997), specifically avoiding: slang, ambiguity, emotional language, leading questions, and double negatives.

The sequence of questions was presented to minimize the discomfort and confusion of the respondents (Neuman, 1997). The opening questions addressed personal data, for example, number of years teaching; these easy-to-answer questions helped the respondents feel comfortable about the questionnaire. The middle questions were organized into common topics: demographic data about their school, instructional practices, and responsibilities. The ending questions were non-threatening, open-ended, and provided an opportunity for additional commentary by the respondents.

Piloting the questionnaire was recommended in order to check for clarity of the questions and to receive feedback from respondents of a similar population (Newman & McNeil, 1998; Sanders & Pinhey, 1983). To accomplish this, three Title I reading teachers were asked to complete the questionnaire and provide feedback. Some modifications were made

to the questionnaire based on feedback from the pilot participants.

Since this was to be a mailed questionnaire, cosmetic aspects were considered. The mailed questionnaire had to function effectively on its own, because once it was mailed, there would be no opportunity to make modifications or corrections (Alreck and Settle, 1995). My primary responsibility, using survey methodology, was to ensure the questionnaires would be returned (Sanders and Pinhey, 1983). Many factors contribute to response rates: sponsorship of the questionnaire, attractiveness and clarity of the format, length, nature of the accompanying cover letter that requests cooperation, ease of filling out the questionnaire and mailing it back, and inducements offered to reply. All of these issues were considered in the preparation of the survey questionnaire; and they are addressed below.

An attempt was made to acquire sponsorship from CCSD; I requested a letter of support for the study from CCSD Academic Services. I was unable to obtain their backing, so there was no sponsorship to include with the questionnaire.

The attractiveness and clarity of format were considered in detail. The survey questions were grouped by category, and the categories were put into a boxed format that created clearly defined sections. It was important to divide the task of responding into a series of brief, straightforward subtasks (Alreck & Settle, 1995). The use of sections limited the length of the questionnaire; long questionnaires are less likely

to be returned (Newman and McNeil, 1998). The format of the questionnaire lent itself to ease of response; many of the questions could be answered with a simple check or circle to indicate a choice.

Once the questionnaire was prepared, the next consideration was the nature of the accompanying cover letter requesting cooperation from the respondent. The first thing to consider was whether or not the letter would be personalized. Using each respondent's name in the salutation of the cover letter can increase response rates (Alreck & Settle, 1995; Sanders & Pinhey, 1983). My cover letter could not be personalized because there was no current list of RIP teachers available from CCSD. Academic Services explained that when the district did a mailing to the reading specialists, labels addressed RIP Teacher and the name of each elementary school were used. Therefore, Dear RIP Teacher... became the salutation on my cover letter.

The personalization of the letter is not as important as the content. Respondents most likely accept or reject the task of responding to a questionnaire within the first few seconds of receiving it. To promote acceptance of the task, I followed Alreck and Settle's (1995) guidelines for providing specific information in the cover letter. The issue of anonymity was addressed in a brief note at the beginning of the questionnaire. The target date for return of the questionnaire was designated in the cover letter (Rea and Parker, 1997).

Cover letters that are written in more of a permissive style than a

firm one are more likely to obtain responses (Sanders and Pinhey, 1983), and they should not be too stiff or formal (Alreck and Settle, 1995). Since reading teachers often use poetry, rhythm, and rhyme, I decided to write the cover letter in verse (Appendix I). A self-addressed envelope was enclosed for ease of mailing the questionnaire back.

The survey instrument was designed as a self-administered questionnaire. All of the questionnaires were mailed on the same day and a log was kept of the dates responses were received; the last one was received one month later than the first. The researcher had ethical obligations to the respondents and respected and maintained the anonymity that they were promised (Alreck & Settle, 1995).

In order to accomplish the preservation of the respondents' anonymity, the researcher's assistant first processed the returned questionnaires. The respondents were asked to include their school identification number in the school demographics section of the questionnaire. In addition, they were asked to indicate if they were willing to volunteer to be interviewed at a later time. The research assistant checked each school number against a master list of schools and re-numbered the questionnaires with consecutive numbers, as they were received. The assistant kept a master list to which only she had access, during the data collection and analysis phase of the study. The research assistant removed the school number that had been filled in by the respondent. If the respondent had volunteered for an interview, the

assistant highlighted her handwritten number to identify the respondent as a volunteer. Throughout the analysis of the survey data, the researcher did not have access to the identities of the respondents, who had not volunteered to interview. Data management is addressed in Appendix III.

Interviews

The next phase of the study was qualitative and consisted of in-depth interviews consistent with phenomenological design. The interviews were conducted either in person or on the telephone. Four questions were given to the interviewees in advance: How would you describe a typical workday? What interactions with administration have influenced you in defining and modifying your role? What interactions with staff members have influenced you in defining and modifying your role? and What interactions with students have influenced you in defining and modifying your role? The remainder of the interview was open-ended.

Since the interview phase of the study combined two approaches, informal conversational and interview guide, an interview protocol (Appendix II) was easily designed. The protocol had a header to record pertinent data including time, date, place, interviewer, and interviewee, and also a reminder to discuss the purpose of the study with the interviewee (Creswell, 1998; Spradley, 1979). The four questions given to the interviewees in advance were listed on the protocol. To manage the

data collected in the interviews, the researcher prepared a written facsimile with key ideas and episodes within a few hours of the interviews (Stake, 1995).

To prepare for each interview, I began with the interview protocol described above. Along with the header for pertinent data, it included the four questions asked of each interviewee: How would you describe a typical workday? What interactions with administration have influenced you in defining and modifying your role? What interactions with staff members have influenced you in defining and modifying your role? and What interactions with students have influenced you in defining and modifying your role? As I prepared for an interview, I read and reread the interviewee's survey responses. When I discovered a response that was unclear, incomplete, or in need of further explanation, I developed a question and added it to the interview protocol. There were two questions that I added to each interview. The first asked for a description of the school population. The last question I asked each interviewee was why they returned the questionnaire. For the in-person interviews, I took notes by hand as quickly as possible. For some of the telephone interviews, I took notes by hand and for others I typed their responses on a computer keyboard, as they answered the questions. Most of the interviews took place either before or after school. In most cases, I went to the interviewee's school, but in a few cases they came to my school.

One interviewee suggested we meet half way between our schools, and that's what we did. Data management is addressed in Appendix III.

Observations

I spent one day observing each of three participants. As a participant observer, I stepped into the flow of the behavior, which was being studied (Sanders & Pinhey, 1983). Along the continuum of involvement in participant observation there are different degrees of involvement: nonparticipation, passive, moderate, active, and complete (Spradley, 1980). My on-site observations fell into the passive range; I found an observation post at each scene of action, but I did not interact with other people to any great extent. I aligned myself, as much as possible, with the lower degree of involvement on the continuum of participation. The purpose of my on-site observations was to triangulate data collected in the survey and interview phases of the study. I did, however, use the opportunity to obtain further explanation of the perceptions of their roles from the participants (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

For recording data during the on-site observations, the double-entry note-taking style was used (Creswell, 1998). A page was separated with a line down the middle. The left side was used for descriptive notes, and the right side was used for reflective notes. To focus each observation, I began by describing the program setting (Patton, 1987). I drew a diagram of each of the participants' work areas, along with a

narrative description. The central focus of the observation was the activities that took place and the participant behaviors. For documentation in my field notes, I listed units of activity and their chronological sequence. Since the reading specialists followed daily schedules, it was possible to structure the observations according to the chronological units of activity designated in them. Data management is addressed in Appendix III.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore and document the role of reading specialists. The three questions that guided the study were: (a) How do reading specialists describe their role? (b) How are reading specialists' roles influenced and modified by their individual contexts? and (c) What are the common instructional models and practices reading specialists use? Considering the purpose and the guiding questions, a discussion of data analysis and results follows. The survey results will be discussed first and will be followed by interview and observation results.

Survey Results

Of 144 questionnaires addressed to RIP (Reading Improvement Program) teachers and sent to elementary schools, 78 were returned. Four of the questionnaires were completed by staff members who noted they were in positions other than RIP. One of them, although officially assigned to her site as RIP, explained that she was the SFA (Success For All) Facilitator. Two described themselves as reading or learning strategists. The fourth identified herself as a classroom size reduction

teacher. Results from those four questionnaires were included with the others. One of the questionnaires was returned from a retiring teacher who did not respond to the questions. By omitting her incomplete questionnaire, the total number of responses was 77. One of the questionnaires was addressed to the researcher, also a RIP teacher, making the total number of possible questionnaire responses 143. The number of returned questionnaires equaled a response rate of 54%. Each respondent did not answer every question on the questionnaire. Therefore, summarized data totals do not always equal 77 responses. In all cases, percentages were rounded to whole numbers (see Appendix I for summarized data table).

School Demographics

Forty-eight percent of respondents indicated their assignments were at nine-month schools. Another 48% were assigned to year-round schools; 90% of those noted they were on an extended contract. This refers to the district's policy of using add-on days for specialists in year-round schools. The specialists are given an option to add a minimum of 25 days through a maximum of 45 days to the standard 184-day contract. Six respondents noted there was one other reading teacher at their school; four responded they had two additional reading teachers.

The remainder of the school demographic section of the questionnaire demonstrated which grade levels were serviced by the reading specialists (Figure 1). Second grade led the others with 86% of

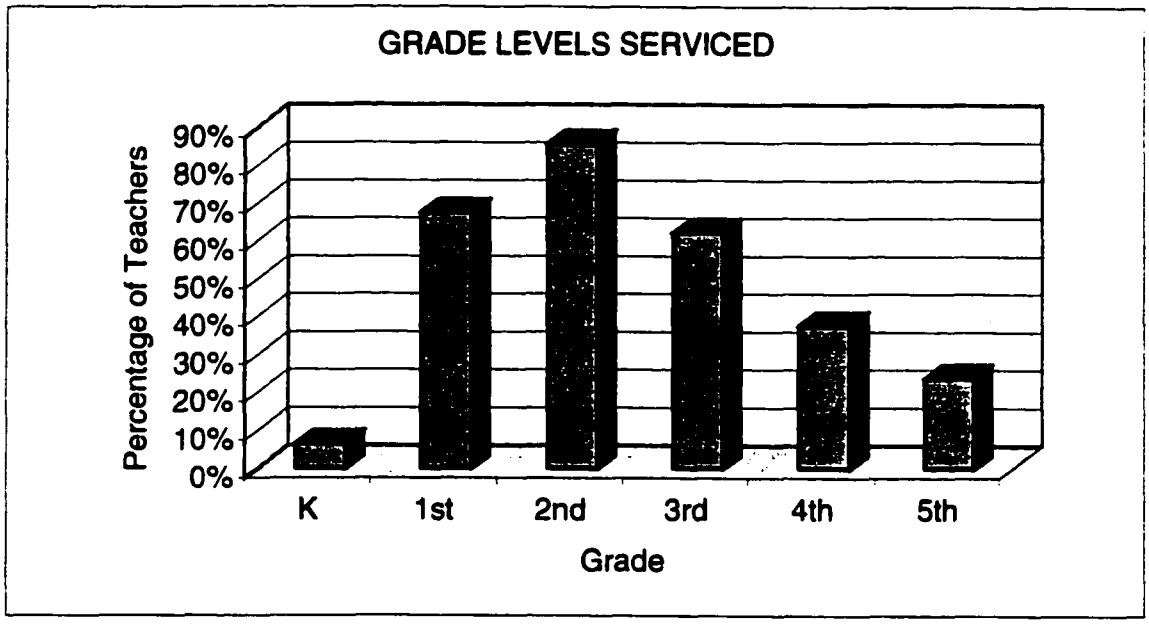

Figure 1. Frequency distribution of grade levels serviced by reading specialists.

respondents servicing that grade, at least part of the time. First grade followed with 68%, and next was third grade with 62%. Reading specialists reported working most often with either two (32%) or three (38%) different grade levels. Six percent of the teachers reported working with only one grade level; and four percent reported working with all grade levels, kindergarten through fifth grade (Figure 2).

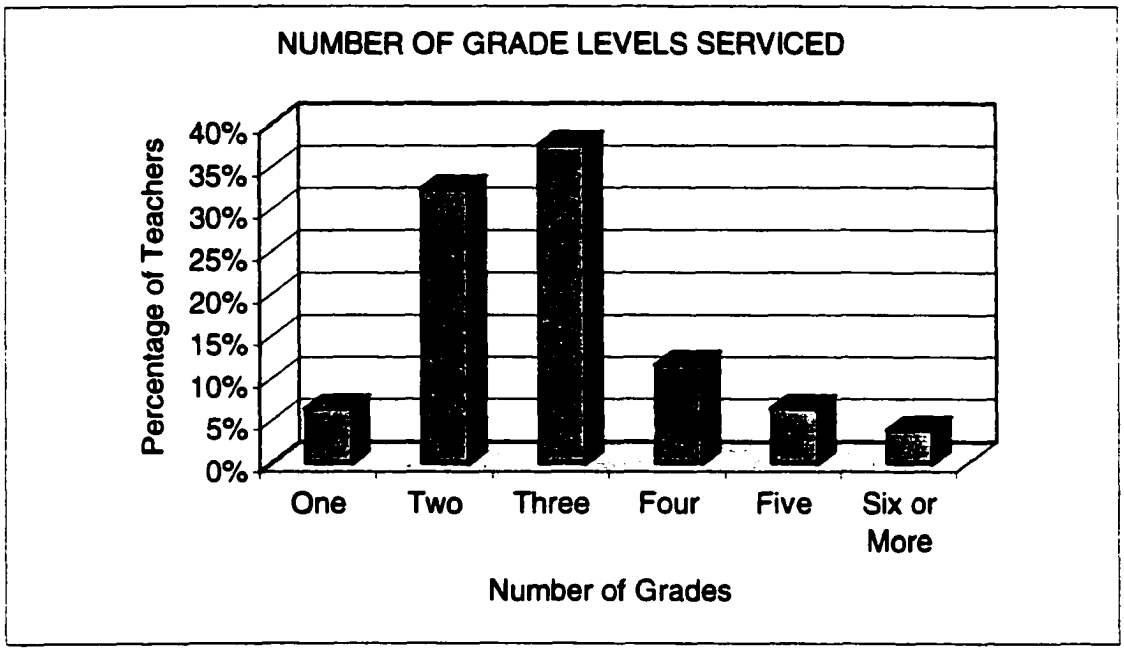

Figure 2. Number of grade levels serviced by reading specialists.

Personal Data

Part Two of the questionnaire requested personal data from the respondents. This section of the questionnaire provided a statistical description of the reading specialists. They were, for the most part, highly educated with many years of teaching experience. On the other hand, they were relatively new in their positions as reading specialists and relatively new to their current sites. Seventy-one percent of respondents indicated an educational level of a master's degree plus at least thirty-two credits. Many of the respondents indicated a level beyond that. Several of the respondents with a level below the master's degree plus thirty-two indicated they were currently working on that as a goal. Sixty-nine percent indicated having the highest possible reading endorsement

(Reading Specialist Endorsement #391-290) on their Nevada state teaching license.

The teaching experience of the respondents was extensive (Figure 3). Five percent of respondents indicating their teaching experience to be between one and four years. Another 15% indicated they had been teaching between five and nine years. The balance of the respondents, 80%, had been teaching ten or more years. The average for all

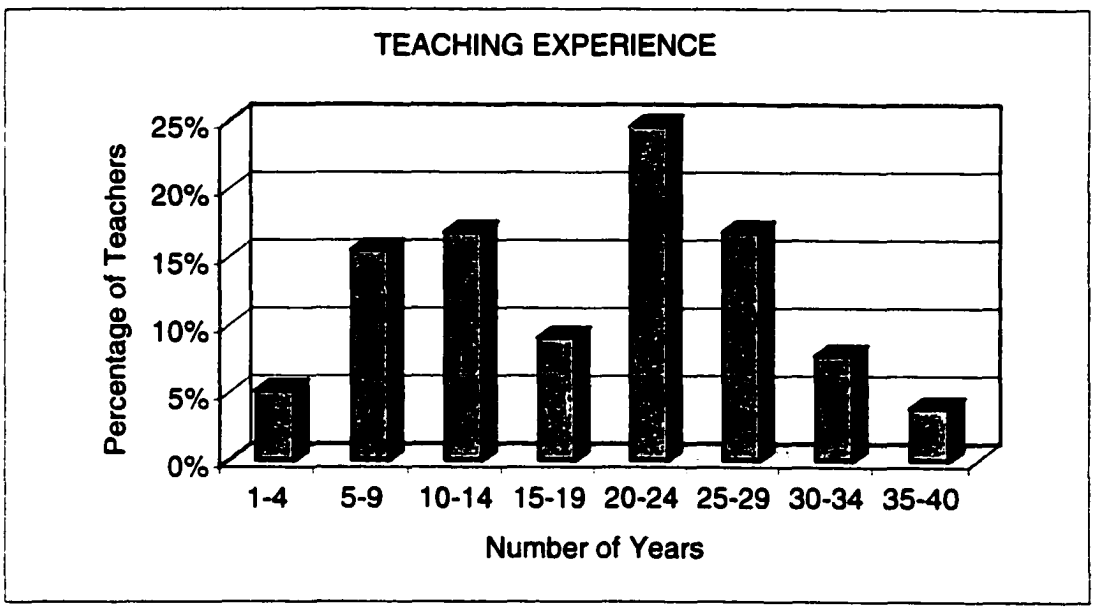

Figure 3. Reading specialists' years of teaching experience.

respondents was nineteen years. However, many of the teachers were relatively new to their positions as specialists, with the highest number in the 1-4 year range with 55%. Ten percent had been specialists for fifteen or more years (Figure 4).

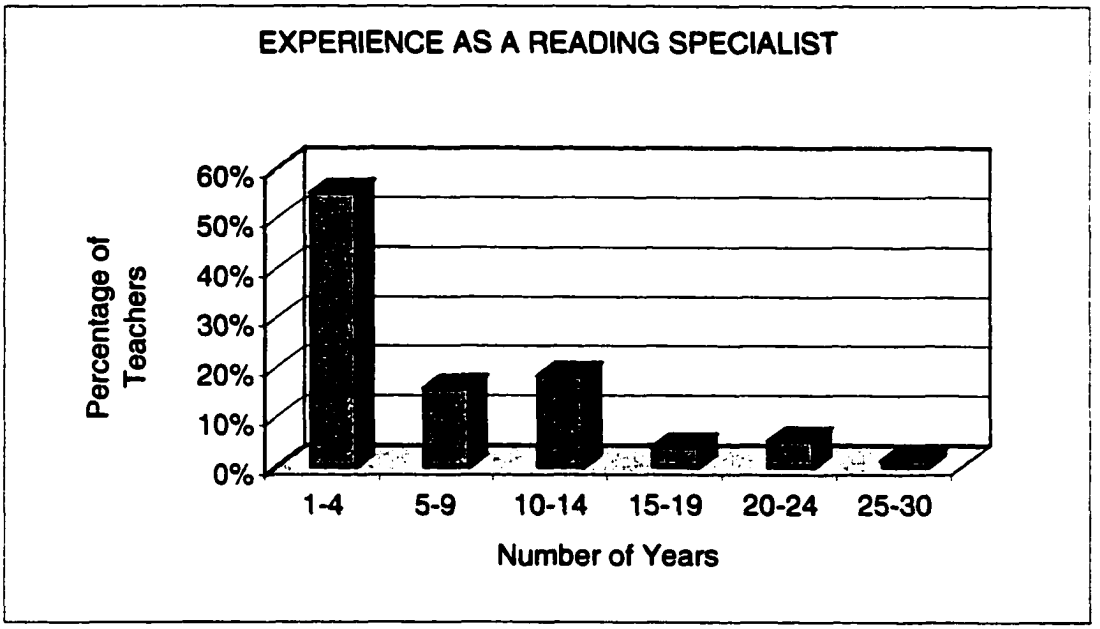

Figure 4. Number of years experience in a reading specialist position.

The specialists were relatively new to their sites, with 30% having been at their locations for 1-2 years and 23% for 3-4 years. Only nine percent of the respondents had been at their school for ten or more years (Figure 5).

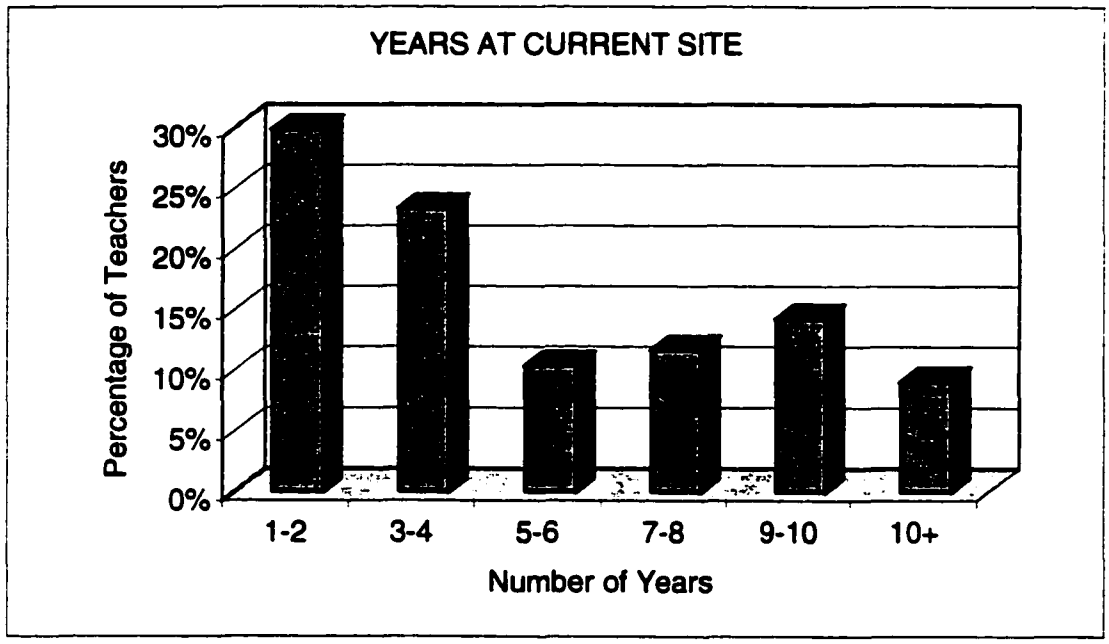

Figure 5. Number of years reading specialists were employed at current site.

The respondents indicated the year they graduated from college; the highest percentage for any single group of years was 1970-1974 with 23%. The second highest grouping (17%) fell twenty years later in the range of 1990-1994. Tied for third were 1975-1979 and 1980-1984, each with 14% (Figure 6). The ages of the teachers cannot be implied from this data, only the number of years since they graduated from college.

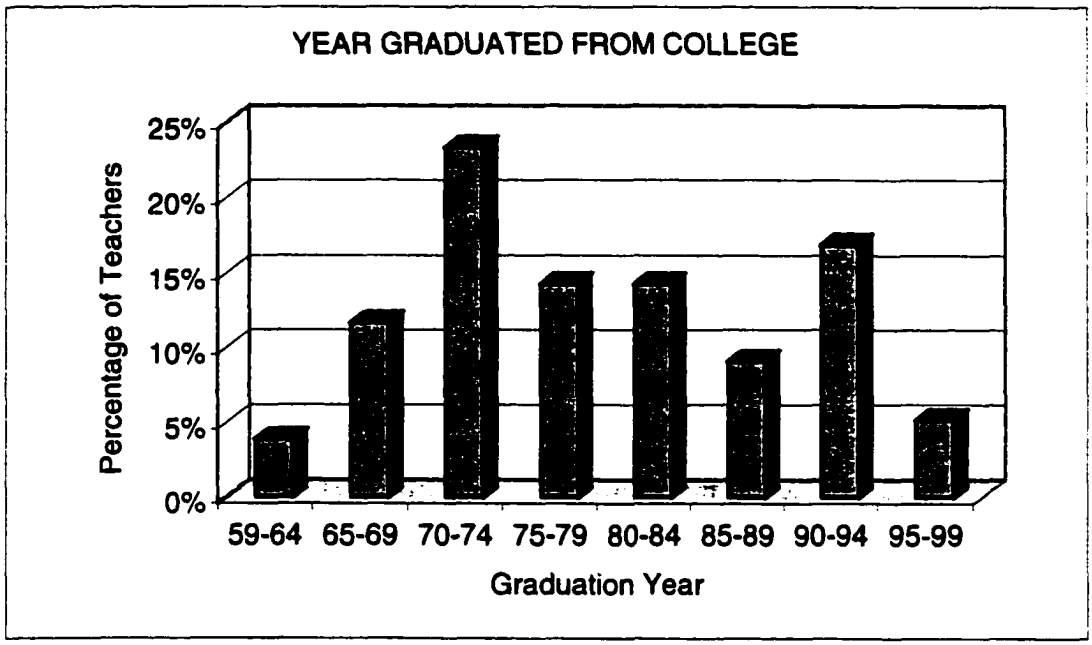

Figure 6. The year reading specialists graduated from college.

Many of the respondents indicated membership in professional organizations. Some were members of IRA-International Reading Association (40). Others were members of Silver State Reading Association (44), and some indicated membership in other organizations (11), for example, Southern Nevada Reading Council.

Instructional Models

In Part Three of the questionnaire, the specialists indicated, with percentages, the amount of time they spent teaching reading in either a pull-out or a push-in model. Results showed 94% of reading specialists' instructional time was in a pull-out model, while 6% was push-in.

Respondents indicated, with percentages, how much time they spent working with students in different groupings; results showed the

teachers provided instruction to small groups 86% of the time, individual students 8% of the time, and whole-group 6% of the time.

Respondents were asked to indicate the size of remedial groups they scheduled. The choices ranged from one to eleven-plus. Twenty-six percent of respondents indicated working with only one size group; those included groups of one, four, five, six, seven, eight and eleven-plus. Eighteen percent of respondents noted working with two different size groups; 17% circled three sizes, and 21% checked four sizes. Although the teachers indicated working with a wide variety of groups, the most frequently mentioned sizes were four (44%), five (65%) and six (56%) (Figure 7).

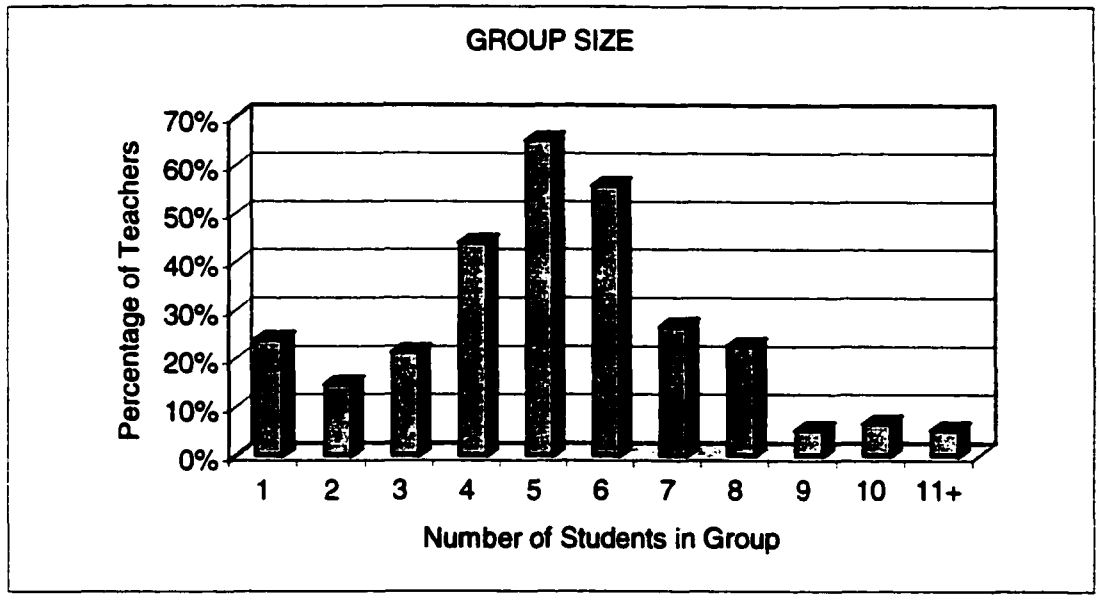

Figure 7. Reading specialists worked with a variety of group sizes.

Participants responded to a question concerning two models of reading instruction for which training is offered throughout the district. The first is Project LIFE, a primary intervention model based on Reading Recovery. The second is Project STARS, developed in the district, as an intermediate intervention model of guided reading. Results revealed Project LIFE was used by 90% of the specialists; 55% indicated always using it, 35% sometimes, and 10% never. Project STARS was reportedly used by 26% always, 42% sometimes, and 32% never.

Instructional Practices

Part Four of the questionnaire concerned instructional practices. Three issues were addressed: strategies, assessment, and documentation of assessment. The strategies section consisted of a checklist. The assessment portion was open-ended and asked for a list of the most frequently used assessment instruments. The documentation section was also open-ended and asked how student growth was documented and with whom the documentation was shared.

Strategies

An extensive list of strategies was provided in the questionnaire; respondents were asked to check the ones they used. The strategies most often checked by the reading teachers were choral reading (90%), retellings (87%), manipulatives (86%), repeated reading (78%) and Words Their Way word study activities (77%) (Table 2).

Table 2. Percentage of teachers using instructional practices, selected from a checklist.

Reading Strategy	%	Reading Strategy	%
Choral Reading	90%	Making Words	55%
Retellings	87%	Graphic Organizer	55%
Manipulatives	86%	Prediction Webs	53%
Repeated Reading	78%	LEA - Language Experience Approach	45%
Words Their Way	77%	Reader Response	42%
Book Walks	74%	Venn Diagrams	42%
DRA - Directed Reading Activity	69%	Concept Webs	35%
DRTA - Directed Reading Thinking Activity	61%	Readers' Theatre	32%
Echo Reading	57%	Phonics	32%
K-W-L	57%	Software	31%

The final choice on the checklist provided an opportunity for respondents to note other strategies that were not included in the list. Table 3 shows the variety of other strategies noted by the reading specialists. The respondent's identification number precedes the strategy.

Table 3. Respondents identified strategies not provided on the questionnaire's checklist.

Resp. #	Reading Strategy	Resp. #	Reading Strategy
#18	listening library	#43	Success For All
#19	McCracken - Spelling Through Phonics	#45	Teacher-made to meet needs
#23	Interactive writing, reciprocal teaching, word wall	#46	Project LIFE format
#25	ReQuest, summarization, GIST, Language/text Experiences	#47	Poetry, data disks, Gonzales Method, word families
#26	Writing process	#50	writing logs
#27	Steck Vaughn Sight Word Books	#61	Journals
#38	whatever meets the needs	#72	George Gonzales strategies
#39	Story Grammar	#73	Success For All - Skill Focused Writing
#42	Success For All		

Assessment

An assessment section of the questionnaire asked respondents to list the instruments they used most frequently. Project LIFE assessments were listed most often, with 59% of the reading teachers noting them. The Project LIFE assessment battery includes, among others, Marie Clay's (1993) Observation Survey. There is a letter identification test, writing vocabulary, sight word list, concepts of print, writing dictation,

and the Scott-Foresman testing booklets packet that determines the students' Reading Recovery levels.

Other assessments noted by teachers were: Flynt & Cooter Informal Reading Inventory (39%), Slosson SORT (33%), Qualitative Spelling Inventory from Words Their Way (26%), running records (26%), and the San Diego Quick graded word list assessment (20%). In addition, some assessments were mentioned by one or two respondents. These included the Ohio Word test, Sucher-Allred Placement Inventory, BASIS, Silvaroli Reading Inventory, S.T.A.R., HBJ Basal Assessment, a writing sample, CBAP (the district-wide criterion-referenced test), and a learning modalities test.

Documentation

A survey question asked respondents how they documented student growth. Sixty percent referred to periodic testing, on-going, pre and post, quarterly, or by semester or trimester. Thirty-one percent mentioned running records, while ten percent cited student portfolios. In the same section of the questionnaire, a question asked how the stated documentation was shared. The responses indicated that documentation was most often shared with classroom teachers (88%) and parents (74%). Additionally, respondents indicated sharing documentation with administrators (40%); students (17%); Success For All personnel (6%); and a variety of staff committees (13%), including Student Intervention Team, Student Intervention Program, and Learning Improvement Team.

Responsibilities

In part five of the survey questionnaire, the respondents defined their responsibilities. First, they were asked to indicate from a selected list, which of the responsibilities were part of their role at their site. Next, they ranked responsibilities by overall time spent on each.

Standardized Testing

The first section of the list referred to involvement with standardized testing. Three different levels of involvement were noted on the questionnaire; they were test coordinator, test administrator, and test proctor. The terminology was not defined in the questionnaire, and that may be a limitation for this section. However, across the school district, each elementary school had a designated test coordinator, who reported directly to the principal. Although, the extent of duties in this position may vary from site to site, one specific staff member was identified as the test coordinator to the CCSD Testing and Evaluations Department, for the purposes of communication and training. The term test administrator referred to the person who reads the scripted directions to the students and generally oversees the test-taking sessions. The term test proctor referred to the extra person in attendance during test-taking sessions, as directed by testing protocol that indicated an adult/student ratio requirement for the sessions. Sixty-one percent of respondents indicated involvement with standardized testing at their sites. Of those, 21% specified they served in all three testing roles -

coordinator, administrator, and proctor. The remaining 40% were involved in a variety of ways; 10% noted they were proctors only, while another 10% reported being both administrators and proctors.

Duty

A second category on the list of responsibilities was duty, which is commonly acknowledged as the supervision of students. Respondents could check the item and then indicate the amount of time spent in hours and minutes in one month. Although many of the teachers did not indicate having any duty, the average amount of time spent for all respondents (N = 77) was nine hours and fifty-six minutes per month.

Substitute Teaching

The third category of responsibilities was substitute teaching. Respondents were asked to indicate if they served as substitute teachers, and if so, to indicate the number of times in a year. There are occasions in a CCSD school when there is not an available substitute teacher to fill in for an absent classroom teacher. When this happens, one of the options for building administrators is to utilize a specialist who has a flexible schedule or, in other words, who is not assigned to a specific classroom for the school day. Since reading specialists fall into that category, they may be asked at times to serve as substitute teacher for part or all of a day. Sixty-nine percent of respondents indicated they served as substitute teachers in their schools; 31% did not indicate functioning in that role. The average number of times per year to serve as

substitute teacher for all respondents (N = 77) was four. However, for the respondents who indicated substitute teaching (N = 53), the average number of times per year was six. The number of times during a year that the reading specialists did substitute teaching ranged from one to twenty-five (Figure 8).

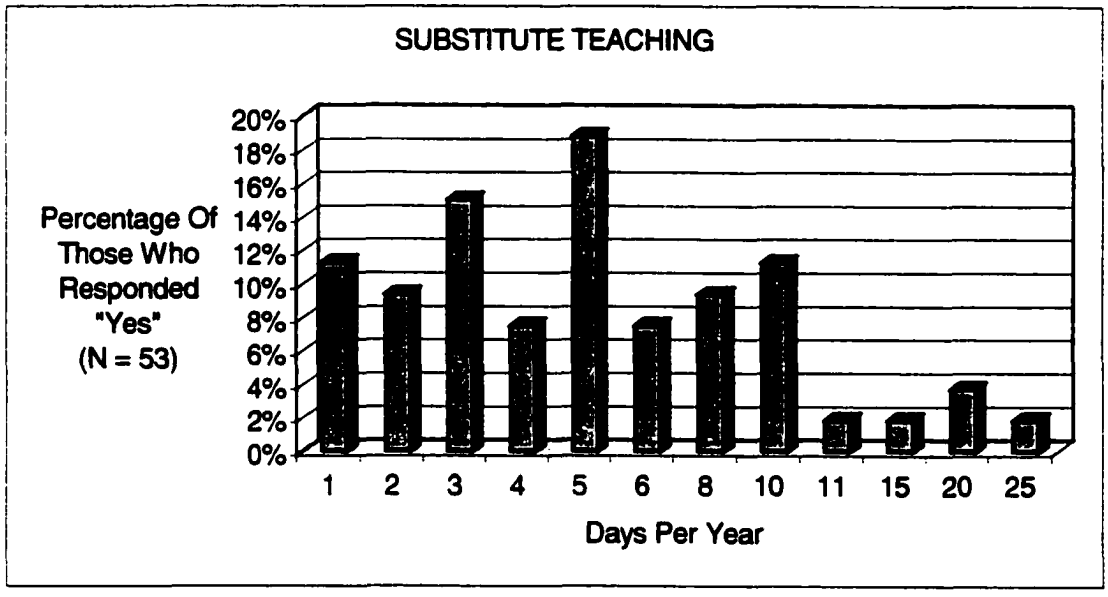

Figure 8. Reading specialists that substitute teach at their schools.

Staff Development

The next item on the list of responsibilities was staff development. Thirty-one percent did not check any involvement in staff development. Of the 69% who indicated involvement, most noted planning, implementing, or presenting throughout the year. Many indicated their

involvement was limited while some fifteen percent checked the item with no further explanation.

Quasi-Administrative Duties

Quasi-administrative duties (i.e. scheduling) was the next item under responsibilities. Respondents could check the item and then list the duties they considered to fall under this category. Thirty percent of respondents checked the item, and most of them provided an example. The two most often mentioned duties were SIT/SIP chairperson and 504 Liaison. Filling in for the principal and making the daily announcements were other duties mentioned by the teachers. One teacher responded, "Too many to list."

Support for Parents/Families

The next item in the responsibilities section was support for parents/families. There were four choices that could be checked under this category: parent institutes; parent conferences; newsletters; and other, with a space for listing examples. By far the largest involvement with parent support was in parent conferences (52%). Only 10% showed participation in parent institutes and 13% with newsletters. Of the 20% who noted other family support, several respondents listed family reading nights or other workshops for parents.

Support for Teachers

The last item on the list of responsibilities was support for teachers. This was a two-part question. The first listed four options to

check: 83% reported assessment of students; 71% reported giving one-on-one assistance; 52% provided support by maintaining a central reading room; and 47% gave demonstration lessons. The second part of the teacher support question referred to providing resource materials. Several options were given, and the following shows the results of materials provided by the respondents: strategies (71%), assessment instruments (65%), journal articles (40%), lessons (39%), and other (18%). Ordering leveled books and providing RIP TIPS of the Month were two examples of other resources.

Rank Order of Responsibilities

In the second part of the responsibilities section of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to rank order their responsibilities by overall time spent. A list was provided, and respondents were asked to rank only those items that comprised their roles as reading specialists. Pull-out remedial instruction was ranked first by 77% of the respondents, support for teachers was ranked second by 44%, and duties (playground, etc.) was ranked third by 22% of the respondents.

Perceptions

Part Six of the questionnaire addressed perceptions of the reading specialists. Each of the four open-ended questions will be discussed below.

Primary Reason for Reading Difficulties in Referred Students

Every respondent provided an answer to the question of what they perceived to be the primary reason for reading difficulties in the children referred to them. Their responses fell into several different domains: home/parents, learning disabilities, developmental delays, and teaching/instruction.

Home/Parents

The largest domain, noted by 48% of the respondents, was the home. All of the responses that named parents or home were combined in this domain, and a taxonomy was developed. Several subsets emerged, clarifying why the home/parents are believed to be the primary reason for reading difficulties. One subset was a general category of responses that stated there was a lack of parent involvement or support at home. Twenty-seven percent of respondents wrote similar comments. The specialists noted lack of: support from parents, support from home, parental support which should start with birth, parental support with homework and reading.

A second subset of this domain was lack of literacy experiences at home. In this category, specialists noted students did not spend time reading at home, nor were they read to at home. One respondent wrote, "They have not had the literacy experiences prior to entering school that are necessary prerequisites for learning to read." Another respondent wrote, "The lack of reading experiences the children come to school with.

They don't know any letters, or sounds, not even the ones in their names."

No books, literature, or exposure to print at home was another subset of the home/parents domain. As one respondent stated, "Students that I see come to me from homes that are literature deprived." Another respondent wrote, " The main reason students seem to have reading difficulties is a lack of exposure to books. Many of my students do not have any books at home."

A third subset of the home/parents domain was English Language Learners (ELL). Eighteen percent of respondents included this in their answers. One respondent wrote, "Students have limited English language proficiency or experience. Parents aren't fluent in English." Another wrote, "English as a second language (some have no strong primary language, but a mixture)." "Some students do not have parents who read English," and "Many are bilingual," were other comments.

A fourth subset of the home/parents domain was attendance and transiency. Fourteen percent of respondents noted this as a reason for referrals. One respondent wrote, "It's hard to say for sure, but I think transiency and absenteeism play a major role with my students." Another respondent wrote, " Lack of school attendance, student not attending kindergarten."

Learning Disabilities

A second domain of reasons for reading difficulties was learning

disabilities. Seventeen percent of respondents noted this as a reason for reading referrals. Many answers were general, simply noting, "Learning disabilities." Other responses were more detailed. Some of the disabilities itemized by the respondents were: auditory memory deficits, visual processing deficits, vision difficulties, emotionally handicapped, and ADHD.

Developmental Delays

A third domain of reasons for reading difficulties was developmental delays. Fourteen percent of respondents noted this as a reason for reading difficulties with their referred students. Some respondents replied with a general comment noting developmental delays, while others mentioned chronological age in this category. One respondent wrote, "Developmentally immature (often chronologically young for their grade level)." Another respondent wrote, "Some are not developmentally ready, late summer/September birthday." "Not mature enough to concentrate and absorb" and "Difference in rates of maturation" were also comments.

Teaching/Instruction

A fourth domain of reasons for reading difficulties in referred students was teaching/instruction. Eighteen percent of respondents noted it as one of the reasons for reading difficulties. A taxonomy of this domain showed several subsets within it: lack of consistency of instruction, not enough practice, not given text at instructional level, not

enough direct instruction of skills, and the need to provide different strategies. One respondent wrote, "Lack of teaching in zone of proximal development." Another wrote, "They need to be presented with new and other strategies. Most classrooms are using one approach; it takes many." After listing three other reasons for reading difficulties, a final comment from one respondent was, "You asked for only one reason, but I'm on my soapbox - conflicting methods of teaching within the school."

Impact on Children

A second open-ended question asked the respondents how they perceived their impact on children. Eighty-four percent of respondents answered they had a positive impact on students. Some of the words they used to describe their impact were: enormous, big, substantial, vital, significant, superior, strong, important, effective, super, and profound. Many of the specialists commented on bringing the struggling readers up to grade level, and several mentioned building self-esteem and confidence. A small number (5%) of respondents, who did not feel they made an impact, referred to other interfering duties that caused inconsistency in their schedules. They commented if they could meet with students regularly, they would make a positive impact.

Primary Responsibility

The third open-ended question asked what the teachers believed should be their primary responsibility. Eighty-four percent of respondents answered in terms of providing early intervention or small

group instruction to students. They described the students with the following terms: in need of remediation, in need of improvement, below grade level, struggling, and at-risk. Six percent of respondents indicated their primary responsibility was to provide support and modeling for classroom teachers. Three percent replied they should foster a love of reading and books, while another three percent perceived their principle responsibility as teaching word attack skills.

Present Role and Beliefs

The fourth open-ended question asked the respondents in what way their present role was not meeting their beliefs as they had stated them in the previous survey question. Thirteen percent of respondents left this question blank, and another 4% answered "N/A."

Role Matches Beliefs

Twenty-nine percent of respondents indicated their role matched their beliefs. Some respondents mentioned their administrator in their comment. For example, one wrote, "My administrator is totally supportive of my efforts to spend 100% of my time pulling students for Project LIFE instruction." Another respondent wrote, "I'm very lucky. My administrator supports my belief that my first job is to teach my RIP kids!!:)" Another positive comment about administration was, "I love what I do and how I do it. I feel that the administration and staff agree with my beliefs and support my program. My principal has the same philosophies as I do and is an excellent source of encouragement and

leadership."

Other Responsibilities

Twenty-five percent of respondents, including some who felt their role matched their beliefs, stated other responsibilities took time away from teaching reading. Some of the statements the specialists made are listed below:

- "...additional responsibilities as yearbook advisor and ATP (assigned technology person) sometimes conflict with planning time needed for RIP."
- "Being pulled-out for subbing!"
- "...I feel RIP programs suffer when the RIP teacher is pulled to sub at a moment's notice."
- "Beginning of the year - testing dominates (TerraNova)"
- "I am pulled away from my students often - to administer tests, substitute, write grants, etc."

Time

An additional fourteen percent of respondents indicated there wasn't enough time to work with students, but they cited reasons other than conflicting responsibilities. For example, one respondent said she was spread over too many grade levels; and scheduling around preparation periods was difficult. A respondent commented she was unable to service the amount of students needing assistance in an at-risk school; she said at-risk schools need two reading teachers. One

specialist noted she had very little time to be a resource for teachers or to give demonstration lessons. Another specialist summarized, "At the present time I only service about 45 students. I feel that the rest of the student body deserves these opportunities as well. I wish I could go in and teach strategies to students and or teachers to enable our entire student body to benefit from having a reading specialist."

ELL and Learning Disabilities

A small number of respondents (8%) commented that English language learners and students with disabilities have a great impact on their program. Below are some of their comments:

- "I often feel like a clearing house for resource referrals. I'm the formal intervention on a SIP form. I never work with the kids who are 'on the brink'. My criteria, per principal directive, is the bottom 10%."
- "We have so many Spanish speaking students that the teachers are over-whelmed. We have no ELL pull-out program, so they refer those students to me. In an effort to help, I take them. This changes my program immensely. I'd like to work with students who have readiness skills."
- "I feel frustrated at not being able to be of more assistance to the growing numbers of ELL students, particularly those who speak little or no English (AA coded students)."

- "There are children who have serious learning problems and need more extensive, long term remediation than I can offer."

Comments/Concerns

The final section of the survey questionnaire provided a space for respondents to add any comments or concerns. Forty-five percent of respondents provided comments. Many of the comments/concerns fell into the same domains, as did the answers to the previous question about present roles meeting beliefs.

Other Responsibilities

One domain was the amount of time taken away from reading by other responsibilities; 10% of respondents noted that as a concern. Five percent of respondents said one reading specialist per school was not enough, and four percent commented Project LIFE and Project STARS are not enough to meet the needs of all the students.

Administration

The domain of administration's impact on the specialist's role emerged from responses in the comments/concerns section; 10% of respondents mentioned administration. Below are some of their comments.

- "The site administrator is the key factor in program success. Trust in both directions is critical, more so than knowledge of programs, etc. the overly controlling or manipulative administrator will only reduce success. "

- "Our role as specialists should be supported by administration and teachers."
- "I feel the RIP position needs to be global within a school.. I am fortunate to work for an administrator who shares with my belief in early intervention and allows me to support teachers in a variety of ways."
- "Although I have a great administrator, I have seen RIP teachers pulled-out for substituting regularly, or testing, or computers. This greatly impairs their ability to reach students."
- "Many RIP teachers become overwhelmed by the other duties placed on them, especially during TerraNova and CBAPs. Why do I need all of the extra reading classes for certification when a good part of my job has nothing to do with reading?"
- "Often the reading position becomes a 'catch all' for several responsibilities"
- "I have talked to a variety of principals this spring about the RIP positions in their schools and have been appalled at how they are utilizing their RIP teachers! (Double dipping, lunchroom supervisors, etc.! This concerns me."

School District

A final domain that emerged from the comment/concerns section of the questionnaire concerned the school district. Following are some of those comments:

- "I think that the district should have some sort of 'guidelines' for the RIP program. All RIP teachers should be required to do the same assessments so that when students transfer to new schools, they can pick up where they left off in their RIP class."
- "I wish the district would change the title of R.I.P. - It really impacts students."
- "I would love to have a RIP class that was respected as a 'regular' class is. They do not close a first grade class and tell the students not to come. They need to value the RIP classroom. To me, the district is telling the RIP students they are not as important as others."
- "I think there should be a RIP coordinator - someone who we are accountable to and has opportunities to go to school sites to observe RIP teachers. If there are schools that have a RIP teacher who does not take teaching reading and writing seriously and their kids consistently do not make growth, then they should be forced to go back to the classroom. There are many RIP teachers who do not take their job seriously because they are not held accountable."
- "It would be nice if the CCSD Reading TOSAs (Teachers On Special Assignment) from Academic Services conducted orientation meetings in August/September each year, and at least one strategies, techniques, instruments, research, review

inservice each year for reading specialists. This has been left to reading teacher associations such as SNRC (Southern Nevada Reading Council) and RIP teachers groups in the past. CCSD should do more to guide and communicate with reading specialists."

Interview Results

A total of 27 RIP teachers volunteered to be interviewed. A variety of circumstances prevented five of the interviews from taking place; for example, one of the teachers was out on medical leave. Of the 22 interviews completed, thirteen were in person. I conducted ten interviews at the RIP teachers' own schools; two of the teachers came to my school, and one met me half way between our schools. The other nine interviews were conducted on the telephone. Although my preference would have been to do all of the interviews in person, it wasn't possible. Since CCSD schools are geographically located many miles from each other and travel times across snarled freeways can be long, it wasn't possible to visit some of the faraway schools. It was necessary for the interviews to take place either before or after the contracted school day, which is approximately 8:20-3:30. Although I was willing to go to their schools, some of the interviewees were not willing to meet me either early before school or to stay quite late afterward. In those cases, the interviews were done on the telephone.

The interviewees were given the four preplanned questions before the scheduled interview. Each will be discussed below.

How Would You Describe A Typical Workday?

Four topics emerged from the interviewees' responses to this question and are discussed below.

Daily Schedule

From the interviewees' descriptions of a typical workday, the first theme to emerge was the rigidity of the specialists' schedules. They booked themselves very tightly, meeting with small groups in both the morning and afternoon. Forty-five percent of interviewees noted working with seven different groups throughout the day. The amount of time allocated to each group varied; the times mentioned ranged from 35-45 minutes. However, sometimes a teacher would fit a single student into a 20-minute time slot for a one-on-one session. The sizes of the groups also varied; the range mentioned was from one to eleven. Twenty-three percent of interviewees worked with six groups throughout the day, and 27% worked with five. The teachers, who worked with five groups mentioned time allocations from 45-55 minutes per group. One interviewee (5%) was the RIP teacher at a Success For All school, so her schedule was different than the other participants. She referred to herself as the head tutorer. She said she conducted one 90-minute whole-group reading lesson, as did every other teacher in her school; and then she did one-on-one tutoring for the rest of the day.

Instructional Programs

A second theme that emerged from the data was the type of instructional program used by the reading specialists. There were four domains of instructional programs: use of Project LIFE, use of both Project LIFE and Project STARS, use of modified Project LIFE, and non-use of Project LIFE or Project STARS. A taxonomic analysis of this domain provided further insight to the instructional decisions made by the specialists.

Use of Project LIFE

In the group of seven (32%) interviewees who indicated using Project LIFE, six of them noted they used it exclusively. One of the teachers reported, "The teachers identify the kids for the program. I end up with the kids who are not ready for Project LIFE." The interviewee noted she used Total Reading Program, and then switched to Project LIFE, when the students became ready for it.

Of the seven teachers, all but one indicated working with only first and second graders. One teacher reported using Project LIFE with first, second, and third graders. However, a closer examination of her comments describing her lessons, demonstrated that she did not in fact use Project LIFE. Two of the tenets of Project LIFE are to group the students by the same Reading Recovery level and to administer running records every day. The interviewee reported having a group that included a Reading Recovery level one and a Reading Recovery level 20. She said,

in that case, she would use a level 12 book for instruction. She also reported doing all of her running records on Friday, instead of on a daily basis because, "You can't keep other kids doing what they're supposed to do while doing a running record on someone else."

Use of Project LIFE and Project STARS

Another domain of instructional programs was the use of Project LIFE and Project STARS; another seven (32%) interviewees reported using both programs. An analysis of their data showed they all worked with at least one intermediate grade level. Respondents reported working with the following varieties of grade levels: three worked with grades one through four; two with grades one through three; one with grades two and three; and one with grades two, three, and four.

Modified Project LIFE

Two (9%) of the interviewees said they used a modified Project LIFE lesson format. One said she didn't use the program, but she used the materials from it. The other interviewee was more detailed in her explanation of how she modified Project LIFE lessons. She said she used the leveled books designed for the program, but she couldn't do those spur of the moment kind of lessons. This reference was to the Project LIFE practice of getting the teaching point for the lesson from the day's running record. She said she had too much experience to leave the lesson to chance and that she knew what she wanted to cover in a lesson.

Non-Use of Project LIFE or Project STARS

The final domain of instructional programs was that of non-use of Project LIFE or Project STARS; five (22%) interviewees were in this category. One of the specialists was in a school that housed only third through fifth grades. Her program was quite different than others described in this study. She worked mostly with third graders, using chapter books and coordinating skills with the third grade teachers. She worked with groups of eleven students, because that was how many she could fit into her storage closet classroom. The other four teachers who indicated not using Project LIFE or Project STARS made the following comments:

- "I do a guided and fluency reading lesson, and I do a phonics lesson and some sort of comprehension lesson, cloze or read and answer."
- "I don't care for Project LIFE. It's too boring. I know what to do. I have huge files on everything, for example, diphthongs. I just pull out a file, and I have all kinds of activities for kids."
- "I use Project LIFE principles, but I don't feel that it is adequate. A lot of comprehension, a lot of writing is needed. Those little dinky sentences from Project LIFE are not enough."
- "I use some components of Project LIFE. I've been teaching for 24 years, and there's no one program that works."

Other Duties/Responsibilities

Other duties and responsibilities was a theme that emerged from the interview data. Three (14%) specialists served as test coordinators, and three (14%) were on call to help with computer services. Seven (32%) interviewees mentioned serving as 504 Liaison, and seven (32%) mentioned serving as substitute teachers in their building. One interviewee said in one week she had been pulled three days in a row to substitute for an absent teacher. On the fourth day, she was again asked, and she finally said, "No." Another interviewee said she was in the grocery store one day when a student from her school turned and said, "Mom, that's our sub." The specialist said she thought to herself, "No, I'm a teacher." She said she knew then that she would have to stand up for herself. She went to her administrator and asked to be released from some of her extra duties. Then, she said, the GATE teacher or a student teacher were sometimes called upon to substitute teach.

Student Intervention Team/Student Intervention Program

Nine (41%) interviewees listed Student Intervention Team or Student Intervention Program as additional duties. Some of the interviewees' comments were as follows:

- "Put a star next to SIP, because it is an overwhelming, tremendous responsibility. I am the one person who doesn't have an option to be on the committee."

- "My administrator assigned me to be SIT chair. I find it to be very time consuming. The teacher caseworkers do not pass on paper work and screenings, so I become the caseworker for many."
- "SIP chair is extremely time consuming. I run the screenings and put the folders in the lounge."

Workspace

The type of room or workspace available to the interviewees was a theme that emerged from the data. Of the 12 (55%) specialists who mentioned their workspace, six of them noted their space was adequate. The other six worked in very small areas, which had originally been designed as storage rooms.

What Interactions With Administration Have Influenced You In Defining And Modifying Your Role?

Two domains emerged from the interviewees' responses to the question about the influence of their administration. One was the administration's influence on program format, and the other was the administration's influence on which grade levels would receive services.

Program Format

Ten (45%) interviewees mentioned they were given direction from their administrator on the formatting of their program. Administrators were diverse in their directions to the RIP teachers. Three administrators said to conduct a pull-out program, while two said to do a push-in program. Three administrators said the focus should be on working with

teachers, while another said to work with student intervention, not teacher intervention. In a year-round school where the students track in and track out, one RIP teacher was told to fill the chairs. Her administrator said if there were six books, then there would be six kids.

Grade Levels Serviced

Seven (32%) interviewees commented their administrators directed which grade levels should be serviced. Two were told to work with first and second grade. One of those was given permission to pull the students during their special classes (music, art, library, or P.E.). One interviewee was told to work with second and third grade, while two others were told to service grades one through three. One interviewee, who was currently working with grades one through four, was told that she would move down in grade levels the next year. An interviewee, who was working with second and third grade, said her administrator attempted to direct her to work with third and fourth grades instead. She told him, "This is a big school, and we're shooting for early intervention, so he let it go."

What Interactions With Staff Members Have Influenced You In Defining And Modifying Your Role?

Planning and scheduling with classroom teachers was one of two domains that emerged from the interviewees' responses to the question about staff members; the other domain was assistance to classroom teachers.

Planning and Scheduling

Six (27%) interviewees mentioned planning or scheduling with the classroom teachers or grade level teachers. However, a closer examination of their comments demonstrated they were not necessarily planning together. One interviewee said it was her decision to pull by classroom, and teachers did not even refer students. She added, "Other than that, I discuss scheduling and input about their students." Another specialist described a program that didn't leave much room for planning. She said she took students whose Reading Recovery levels were seven or below. She would take them until she had 30 students, which filled her program. She would start with level six or seven and exit the students at level 14. One interviewee explained her scheduling procedures; she said to the teachers, "Here are the time slots. I can spend 'x' number of minutes. Take your pick."

The other three participants who mentioned planning and scheduling with the classroom teachers presented a different view of their interactions with staff members. One RIP teacher explained that in primary grades they worked together as a team. With all of the reading groups being flexible, students could easily be moved as needed. Another RIP teacher said she worked with second grade until Christmas and then worked with first grade for the rest of the year. One of the RIP teachers expressed frustration about scheduling. She explained she could not group by reading level because she had to work around all other

schedules. She pulled from only one classroom at a time. She commented, "I am low man on the totem pole for scheduling."

Assistance to Classroom Teachers

Assistance to classroom teachers was the second domain that surfaced from the interview question about interactions with staff members. Ten (45%) interviewees mentioned helping or supporting in reference to the classroom teachers. Eight of the ten made general comments about doing anything at all to help the classroom teachers. They helped with assessments, materials, suggestions, and advice. One interviewee said if a classroom teacher asked her, she would take one more student. Another said she always asked, "What can I do to help?"

Two of the interviewees who mentioned help or support explained their interactions differently from the other eight. One clarified, if the teachers were doing Project LIFE in their classrooms, then she would not do Project LIFE with the students because that would be redundant. She explained in those cases, she would support with phonics and sight words. One final comment in this domain was from an interviewee, who turned the notion of support around. She said the classroom teachers feel the RIP teacher has more expertise, so the teachers support her to help their kids.

What Interactions With Students Have Influenced You In Defining And Modifying Your Role?

Two themes became clear from the participants' responses to the

question about student influence; one was the ELL students in their programs, and the other was their attempts to meet the varying needs of their students.

English Language Learners (ELL)

Nine (41%) interviewees mentioned ELL students in their responses. Three interviewees said they spend time one-on-one with ELL students. Two interviewees mentioned the increasing ELL population in their schools. One said Project LIFE works for ELL students, as well as the other reading students. However, another interviewee said there was a need to be more concrete with ELL students. She commented, "If the story is about a raccoon, you have to bring in a picture of a raccoon. There's a lot of repetition and a lot more talking."

Varying Needs of Students

Eight (36%) interviewees commented on meeting the varying needs of their reading students. They discussed watching for strategies and weaknesses, looking at progress, and constantly reevaluating. They discussed providing different lessons for different groups, reinforcing the classroom teacher's instruction, and modifying lessons when necessary. As one interviewee commented, "Some need more remedial. Some need more writing. I modify for their needs."

Observation Results

The following sections describe the three on-site observations. Pseudonyms for the RIP teachers are used throughout the discussion.

Alice/School #1

School Demographics

The first on-site observation took place at School #1 (Table 1). The school was described as 79% low income with the following ethnicity percentages: 6% White, 15% Black, 77% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 0.3% American Indian. Results of the most recent fourth grade standardized testing had shown a difference of -1.0 normal curve equivalents between the actual reading composite achievement score and the predicted score. However, the reading composite score had shown steady increase from the three previous years from the median percentile rank of 16 to 31. Also, based on the same standardized testing, the median percentile rank for ability was 37. When the participant was asked to describe her school population, Alice said it was a complete bilingual, complete Title I school.

Survey Data from Participant

Survey data showed this participant to be a teacher with more than 20 years experience. Alice had been a reading specialist for four years and at her current site for eight years. She had well over 32 credits beyond a master's degree, and she had the reading specialist endorsement on her teaching license. Alice described her program as being 100% push-in, working with only first grade in a year-round

school. For time spent working with students, she identified 72% small group, 14% individual students, and 14% whole class. Alice noted sometimes using Project LIFE and sometimes using Project STARS, and she indicated Total Reading Program as another instructional practice she used. In the responsibilities section of the questionnaire, Alice ranked four items for overall time spent: first was push-in remedial instruction; second was support for teachers; third was staff development; and fourth was Accelerated Reader program.

Alice had answered that she believed her primary responsibility was, "To bring students up to the reading level of their classroom so they can participate in regular class work." She perceived she had a positive impact on children, noting that many of the students she worked with were now top readers in the next grade level. She responded that she believed the primary reason for reading difficulties in the children referred to her was lack of background experiences. She said the majority of the students she worked with did not know letter sounds.

Interview Data from Participant

Alice described her typical workday as beginning with work on the Accelerated Reader program, adding, deleting, or updating student data in the computer files. She also indicated checking and repairing books for the teacher library located in her room. She described the rest of her day as holding seven classes, all first grade, all push-in, and all 35-40 minutes long, four days a week. She said she used Total Reading

Program at the beginning of the year, until the students were ready for Project LIFE.

To the question about how her administrator influences her role, Alice had explained that her principal let her have Friday to not teach. This was so she could work on the school-wide Accelerated Reader program. Her administrator had directed her to do a push-in program.

In discussing how interactions with staff members influenced her role, Alice had replied that she took the lowest of the low students; but the classroom teachers still included them in reading groups, providing a double dose of reading. She said each teacher provided a place in their room for her to keep materials and work with the students.

In responding to the question about how the students influence her role, Alice replied they impacted the size of the group she worked with in each classroom. She said she interacted with many students, due to being in charge of all Accelerated Reader awards. She was also Student Intervention Team chair.

Since the participant had noted using Total Reading Program on her questionnaire, and I was not familiar with that program, I asked during her interview for clarification. She described it as a program from California that combines reading, writing, listening comprehension, and handwriting. She described it as a program that combined good parts from many other places and that it was similar to Saxon Phonics, which she also used.

Since Alice had indicated on her questionnaire that Accelerated Reader was ranked fourth on overall time spent in her role, I asked her for more information during the interview. In the Accelerated Reader program, she explained, students select a choice book that is at their independent reading level. The books are color coded with dots for levels. Next, the students write about the book. Then they go to a computer and take a comprehension test on the book. For kindergarten and first grade, someone reads the test to the students. The results of the comprehension test then become their record. One half of a student's grade is from Accelerated Reader; the other half is from classroom work. On Friday the principal gives out prizes; these were based on a list of criteria, for example, reading the right level book. A final question I asked during our interview was why she had returned the questionnaire. She responded, "I wanted to get the results. All day I'm busy with my seven classes. I wondered what others were doing."

Introduction to Alice's School

To get to Alice's school I drove north of the Las Vegas city limits. The neighborhood was familiar because I had come to Alice's school when I interviewed her. As I neared the school, the neighborhood seemed to become more and more run down. Turning off the main street and into the side streets surrounding the school, there were single-family homes, many of which were in disrepair; and there were old automobiles outside

the houses. Once I parked and approached the main entrance of the building, I saw the familiar sign, "All visitors must report to the office."

The school, which had opened in the early years of the 1960s decade, was built in the architectural model of that era. There were no indoor hallways connecting classrooms; each classroom opened to the outside. When I entered the main office, the staff were friendly and called Alice at once to announce my arrival.

Daily Routine

For the purpose of this study, Alice's daily routine has been separated into two sections as follows.

Morning

As we began the day at 7:50, walking through the office, Alice was asked questions by passing teachers about computers and the Accelerated Reader program. When she introduced me to the principal, we were invited to attend a third grade meeting, which would be starting in a few minutes. We went to Alice's room, which was a large room shared with two ELL teachers. She had ample space for her desk and materials. Since her instructional program was 100% push-in, she did not need an area to work with students. It was a large room, yet crowded with bookshelves, a table, the teacher's desk, boxes, and other materials. She had several bookshelves that she was using to create a teacher library with the books leveled for the Accelerated Reader program. We discussed plans for the day and went to the third grade meeting.

The meeting was facilitated by the principal, and the discussion was fourth grade TerraNova reading scores. The principal pointed out the areas of need and had the third grade teachers brainstorm ways to improve those areas. As a test coordinator for my own school, I found the meeting very interesting. The principal displayed a breakdown of the categories of reading questions that appear on the test. The results showed the students' area of need to be in word meaning and words in context. The principal explained that the word meaning questions addressed synonyms and antonyms and that the words in context addressed cloze skills. During the meeting, the only comment offered by Alice was that the best technique she had seen was acting out words, for example, staggered. The principal responded that was good for increasing vocabulary, but it did not help on the test and that something was missing from classroom instruction. It did not seem that the principal's response validated Alice's comment, but Alice showed no particular reaction, nor did she mention it later. It was decided, among other things, that they would add a cloze procedure to the daily oral language routine of the day and then tweak the rest of their instruction. Following the meeting, we returned to Alice's room to prepare for the day. When I commented about the principal having facilitated the brainstorming session with the teachers in order to make decisions about instruction, Alice responded that it was quite unusual for the principal to act in that

manner, that normally the teachers would have been told what to do to improve instruction.

As Alice prepared for the day, I asked her if there was an outside opening ceremony for the student body, but she said the students line up and go right to their rooms. Soon after the bell rang, the principal's voice came over the intercom with the morning announcements. She led the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by thirty seconds of silence and a patriotic song. The principal announced the price of yearbooks and said that today was track three picture day. Her concluding comment was, "Have an awesome, awesome day."

To begin her daily instruction, Alice and I went to a first grade classroom that was housed in a portable. The first push-in lesson began at 9:20 with a group of three students who were on a Reading Recovery level three. The students used white boards and markers to write familiar words. When one of the students wrote a letter backwards, Alice used a teachable moment to discuss the difference between the letter b and the letter d. She reminded the children to think about what their tongues do when they say the two different letters. She said with one letter the tongue makes a circle and with the other it makes a stick; and that's how you know how to write a b or a d. This was not something I'd ever heard of before, so it gave me cause for reflection. The reasoning behind this instruction was that if the stick sound is felt by the tongue, the student should write the stick for the b. However, if the circle was felt by the

tongue, the student should write the circle first, which would be part of the d. I thought when children were first learning to write letters, they were taught to write the stick first in either case, whether a b or a d, but it didn't seem appropriate to question Alice about this strategy.

Next the children were given stickers for returning their books. Then they choral read, using finger pointing with the text. The rest of the lesson proceeded with a new book. The teacher asked a question to draw out prior knowledge of the topic of the book, birthday parties. The students talked, predicted, and then whisper read to themselves, each turning around in their chairs, so that their backs were to the table. Following the whisper reading, the students turned back to the table and choral read the new book, touching the words. The teacher did not read aloud with them. They concluded the lesson by writing a sentence together.

At 9:55 in a different first grade classroom, Alice began a lesson with four students at Reading Recovery level two. They also began with white boards. The RIP teacher conducted a brief word study lesson with the ike family. Three of the students were sent away from the table to read alone, while the teacher did a running record on the remaining student. Next, the other students came back to the table, and they choral read the book, which had been used for the running record. The teacher then handed out letter cards, which the students used to manipulate the words some and come.

At 10:30 Alice went into a first grade combination class, which meant there were two classroom teachers and two classes of first graders all in the same room. In this classroom, she met with four students, who are in her reading group, but for this day, she was administering the district science test to them.

At 11:00 in a single first grade classroom, Alice worked one-on-one with a student. This was a modified Project LIFE lesson that included: writing a word family, reading a familiar book, writing a sentence, cutting up the sentence to be put back together, and introducing a new book.

In each of the classrooms that we went into, the RIP teacher had a specific area where she worked with the students. She had small plastic storage bins or trays in which to keep her supplies. She had the white boards, markers, books, sentence strips, and other necessary materials at her fingertips. In one of the classrooms she had referred the students to some letter cluster charts. I couldn't tell if they were part of her workstation or not, so I asked about them. She said they were part of a program, Saxon Phonics, and that all kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms used the charts.

Afternoon

At 11:30 Alice had her lunch break. She said for the next period, she didn't have a group because they were out on track break. Instead, she spent the time checking in books that had been returned to the

teacher library in her room. She also opened up boxes of new books that had arrived for the teacher library.

At 12:50 Alice began conducting the first of two Total Reading Program lessons with three students in another first grade combination class. She said that each of the two classroom teachers took two reading groups and that she also took two. The first group worked with vowel sounds that were on index cards in a sentence strip holder. Then they used flashcards to play a game, using two and three-letter words. If they said the word, they got the card and a sticker. Next they would make a sentence with the cards they had won. When the cards had all been used, they returned to their seats.

The next Total Reading Program lesson was in the same classroom as the previous one. The format was slightly different, but it included saying words, writing words under pictures, discovering a new word, and using the new word in a sentence. In this lesson the RIP teacher combined the signals and gestures from a program, Zoo Phonics, with the phonetic marks from Saxon Phonics.

When Alice returned to her room, two teachers brought her a cart loaded with old basal series books. They said they didn't want them, and they needed the space in their room. She helped them unload the books and said she would find a place to store them. Her next duty of the day was to install a printer in a special education classroom, in which the

students were out on track break. The remainder of the day was the RIP teacher's preparation period.

Summary

The day spent with this participant clearly triangulated data from her questionnaire and her interview. I observed her tight schedule of teaching seven different reading groups, the use of instructional programs she had indicated, and her involvement with the Accelerated Reader program and computers at her school. During the day spent with Alice, she explained her Accelerated Reader duties in more detail. She said that she enters every new student on the computer for the Accelerated Reader program; she enters the student name, a pass code, and the teacher's name. She said that next year she would reenter the entire school population. She also trains teachers in using Accelerated Reader and in using the STAR testing that accompanies the program. She noted that her principal had sent her to another school to do an inservice on Accelerated Reader.

Alice had many years experience as a special education teacher, and she was a classroom teacher at her site before moving into the RIP position. Four years earlier her principal had mentioned that they needed a RIP teacher. When Alice told her that she thought she had the necessary credits/hours to become the RIP teacher, her principal told her to check it out. Alice did, and that's how she became the RIP teacher.

As I observed Alice throughout the day, she had little interaction with classroom teachers. When she went into rooms, there was little time for discussion, because the classroom teachers were busy with their students. As for the students, they knew the routine of coming to Alice's table to work on reading. I did not notice any great joy in their coming to work with her; there did not seem to be any special rapport. The students came to the table, participated in the lesson as directed, and then returned to their seats. Alice's most proud moments seemed to be when she discussed her role as the coordinator of the Accelerated Reader program for the school. She was very excited about the teacher library she was creating and had been anxious to get back to a new box of books that had been delivered. She had mentioned that she interacted with many students in the building due to her role as the coordinator of the program. Alice exhibited self-confidence in her abilities to teach reading saying, "I am a firm believer that people in our position need to be highly trained and that they need to be eclectic."

Barbara/School #2

School Demographics

An on-site observation took place at School #2 (Table 1). This school was described as 44% low income with the following ethnicity percentages: 49% White, 12% Black, 28% Hispanic, 9% Asian, and 2% American Indian. Results of the most recent fourth grade standardized testing had shown a difference of +1.7 normal curve equivalents between

the actual reading composite achievement score and the predicted score. The reading composite score had shown an increase in the previous year from the median percentile rank of 49 to 53. Also based on the most recent standardized testing, the median percentile rank for ability was 54. When the participant was asked to describe her school population, she described it as lower middle class, lots of children living in apartments, some transiency, 35% ELL, with the ELL students being mostly Hispanic.

Survey Data from Participant

Survey data showed this participant to be a teacher with more than 20 years experience. Barbara had been a reading specialist for four years and at her current site for five. Her educational level was 32 credits beyond a master's degree, and she had the reading specialist endorsement on her teaching license. She described her program as being 100% pull-out, 100% small groups of five, and always using Project LIFE with first and second graders in a year-round school. She indicated using Developmental Reading Assessment by Joetta Beaver and Marie Clay's Observation Survey. She noted documenting student growth with pre and post testing, which she shared with classroom teachers and administrators. For overall time spent in her role, Barbara ranked the following responsibilities: first was reading instruction, not remedial; second was staff development; and third was support for teachers.

Barbara had answered that her primary responsibility was early intervention to prevent reading failure. To the question about her present role meeting her beliefs, she had responded that her administrator was totally supportive of her efforts to spend 100% of her time pulling students for Project LIFE instruction. She believed her impact on children to be substantial; she said each year she was able to accelerate 60-70 first and second graders so that they reached grade level in reading. To the question that asked what did she believe was the primary reason for reading difficulties in the children referred to her, Barbara wrote, "They have not had the literacy experiences prior to entering school that are necessary prerequisites for learning to read."

Interview Data from Participant

During the interview conducted with Barbara, she described her typical workday as Project LIFE all day, six 50-minute groups of first and second graders. She noted pulling groups by ability level, bringing students together from different classrooms. She said she worked with the prep schedule, having the students come to reading during their special classes, which are library, music, art, and physical education. She said she was supported by her administrator who trusted her knowledge to run the program and who approved the pulling of students from their special classes. She noted not taking a preparation period for herself.

When asked about her interactions with staff members, Barbara said she had trained all of the classroom teachers in Project LIFE. She said she takes students who are at Reading Recovery level seven and below and exits them from her program when they reach level 14. She said she had provided some classroom demonstrations on shared reading, but she commented that once a demonstration is done for one teacher, the others want it, too. Barbara said once that happens, kids aren't being pulled, and you have to ask yourself, "Am I doing demonstrations, or am I pulling kids?"

When asked about interactions with students, Barbara noted the increase in the ELL population from 8% four years ago to 35% at the present time. Again, Barbara described her program as very structured. My final interview question was why had she returned the questionnaire. Barbara responded, "RIP is important. Someone's finally acknowledging it. Kids would be falling through the cracks without RIP."

Introduction to Barbara's School

I had been to Barbara's school on the east side of Las Vegas twice before. I had conducted our interview there the first time I visited. The second time I went to the school was for our originally scheduled daylong observation. However, when I arrived that day, a week earlier, I was told that Barbara was spending the day at the new school at which she would be teaching the next school year. Today's appointment was a rescheduling of the daylong observation. The neighborhood surrounding

the school consisted of some single-family residences, mostly neatly kept outside, and some apartment complexes. The school, having opened in the early 1970s reflected the model popular during that era. The layout of the school was two large circular pods on each side of the building with the offices and school library located in the middle area of the building. The teachers' lounge was located on a loft overlooking the library. The office staff was cordial and gave me directions to Barbara's room when I arrived. I did not start the day with Barbara until 8:30; that was the time she indicated I should come, noting no reason to be there too much before the start of the students' day.

Daily Routine

For the purpose of this study, Barbara's daily routine has been separated into two sections as follows.

Morning

I met the RIP teacher in her room at 8:30. Barbara's room was small, but quite adequate. There had recently been some rearranging of rooms due to remodeling and painting of classrooms. She had been sharing a room with the ELL facilitator, whose work area was now only a few feet away. The classroom was set up with a kidney-shaped table, a bulletin board, and many bookshelves filled with leveled books. This classroom also served as a central reading room, where other teachers could check out leveled books. The ELL facilitator came by to thank the RIP teacher for a gift she had given her. A teacher came by to discuss a

student. The RIP teacher explained that she does straight Project LIFE lessons throughout the year, but now she would be doing end-of-year testing.

At 9:15 Barbara went to get a student from a classroom. She brought him back to her room, where she administered a series of assessments. She asked a few random letters on the letter identification assessment, administered the Ohio Word list, a sentence dictation task, and began the DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment). The teacher introduced a book and did a book walk through the book with the student. Next, she pointed to the text on the first page and read it. Then she told the student to do the same with the rest of the book. Barbara completed a running record, as the student read. Following that, she repeated the process with a different book; and the assessment came to an end.

I asked Barbara if the selected letters on the letter identification assessment had been random, or if those were ones the student hadn't know earlier. She replied that those were the ones the student did not know at the last assessment. She said she doesn't do a complete battery at this time. This process continued with one student after another. There was very little variation in the assessment process. With some of the students she added a concepts of print assessment. One student, who was on a level 18, was sent outside the room to read. The child asked if she should read in her head or out loud. The RIP teacher's reply

was that she could read however she wanted. The student returned in approximately 30 seconds. The RIP teacher sent her back out again. After a few minutes, the student returned, and the teacher completed a running record, as the student read aloud. There was only one interruption during the testing and that was from a classroom teacher who came in to discuss invalidating the standardized test of a student who couldn't read. The teacher concluded that she would go talk to the assistant principal about it.

Afternoon

The pulling of students for the end-of-year testing continued throughout the rest of the morning. The RIP teacher explained that Resource (Special Education) was on a push-in model throughout this school, which meant that the Resource teacher saw the students possibly two times a week. She said she does not get involved with SIT; perhaps it had something to do with teachers' egos, but she was not asked to attend meetings. She had a reading student she could not move beyond a Reading Recovery level six, and she had been talking to the classroom teacher all year about him. The RIP teacher said students are never tested (for disabilities) at her school. She said the classroom teacher had commented that even if the child qualified for special education services, due to the push-in model, he wouldn't get any help anyway. By lunchtime, it was clear that Barbara was through being observed. She

explained that the rest of the day would be more of the same and that there really wasn't anything else for me to see.

Summary

The day spent with this participant clearly triangulated data from her questionnaire and her interview. Barbara had reported in both of those that her program was 100% pull-out and 100% Project LIFE. Although she was not conducting lessons, she methodically used Project LIFE assessments during each pull-out. During her interview, she had noted her close work with the ELL facilitator; during the observation, the rapport between them was clear. Barbara's questionnaire had noted maintenance of a central reading room; that is where the observation took place. There had been an absence of mention of serving on a SIT or SIP committee, and the RIP teacher had made a reference to that during the conversation about the state of special education at her school.

There did not seem to be any special rapport with the students with whom Barbara worked. Perhaps because her program was so structured and quite rote, she had not developed any special connections with her students.

Throughout the observation at Barbara's school there was little interaction with staff members to be seen. Since Barbara was going to a different school for the upcoming year, many of her comments were directed at what she would be doing there. She wanted to start a DRA tracking folder for students, having it follow them through third grade.

She also discussed setting up the reading room at the new school, installing rain gutters on which to display books with the fronts facing out. She also mentioned that her role would probably change at the new school where there was not going to be an assistant principal. She said she'd already been asked to help with standardized testing.

Although some of Barbara's comments referred to the new school she would be going to, she seemed very self-assured in her role at her present school. She displayed her expertise about Project LIFE noting that they were taking the sound test out of Project LIFE, that it was not Marie Clay's anyway and that it had been put in to appease the district. She said she learned more about children's knowledge of sounds from the sentence dictation then she did from the sound identification task. From a personal perspective I found it interesting that Barbara did not ask students to do a retelling after reading a passage, nor did she ask any comprehension questions. I did ask her about this, and she said it was too long a process and maybe she would do it next year.

Carol/School #3

School Demographics

An on-site observation took place at School #3. This school was described as 8% low income with the following ethnicity percentages: 76% White, 7% Black, 11% Hispanic, 6% Asian, and 1% American Indian. Results of the most recent fourth grade standardized testing had shown a difference of +1.5 normal curve equivalents between the actual

reading composite achievement score and the predicted score. The reading composite score had shown an increase in the previous year from the median percentile rank of 54 to 60. Also based on the most recent fourth grade standardized testing, the median percentile rank for ability was 60. When the participant was asked to describe the population of her school, she responded that they were in a constant state of flux. They did not have many ELL or many minorities, but more lower class moved in, every time they were rezoned. At first their zone had reached out to an affluent population, but then a new school took those students; and rezoning took place again. She said her school had been open for ten years, so that now the starter homes were becoming the rentals. She explained that this meant lower economic ability children were moving in from other school areas; many of the children had been to two, three, four, or five different schools in one year.

Survey Data from Participant

Survey data showed this participant to be a teacher with well over 20 years experience. Carol had been a reading specialist for three years and at her current site for seven. Her educational level was 32 credits beyond a master's degree, and she had the reading specialist endorsement on her teaching license. She described her program as 100% pull-out, working 90% in small group and 10% with individual students. She served first through third grade in a year-round school, working with groups ranging in size from one to eight, using Project LIFE

sometimes and Project STARS never. Along with other instructional strategies, she named Steck-Vaughn, as a specific phonics program she used. Under responsibilities she added SIP co-chair, and ranked the following for overall time spent in her role: first was pull-out remedial instruction; second was support for teachers; and third was substitute teaching. Next to the question about substitute teaching, she had indicated substituting twice in the current year.

Carol's response to what she believed to be her primary responsibility was that she should work with small groups of students, who were not reading successfully at their grade level. As to whether her role met her beliefs, she said she was fortunate that it did. She indicated lack of support at home as the primary reason for reading difficulties in the children referred to her. To the question of her perception of her impact on children, she wrote, "I sincerely feel that I have a positive impact on the children that I deal with."

Interview Data from Participant

Carol described her typical workday as often beginning with meetings. She mentioned her role as SIP co-chair and 504 Liaison, and she added that there were faculty meetings and other meetings. She said she began meeting groups at 9:00-9:05 and was solid all morning except for ten minutes for a restroom break. She described working with all different size groups, because the level of need varied greatly. The rest of her day after lunch, she described as, "...booked all afternoon." She said

her emphasis was on second grade. She described her instructional program: "I do not do Project LIFE or Project STARS. I do a guided and fluency reading lesson and I do a phonics lesson and some sort of comprehension lesson, cloze or read and answer."

In response to the question concerning impact of administration, Carol noted there had been three different principals, since she became a reading specialist. She reported she had very little interaction with any of them; they left her alone. As for staff members influencing her role, the RIP teacher said it was her own decision to pull by classroom, that the teachers did not even refer students. Otherwise, she discussed scheduling and input about their students with them. To the question about the influence of students on her role, she responded, " I think that seeing their frustration and seeing when something clicks and an idea jelled or a phonetic rule makes sense." My final interview question was why had she returned the questionnaire. The participant responded, "I felt like it was like a census. If you took the trouble to find out the various and sundry RIP teachers, then we could fill it in and return it to you."

Introduction to Carol's School

It was quite a drive from the university campus where my school is located to Carol's school in the northwest area of Las Vegas. The school was in the middle of a neighborhood with well-kept homes and yards. Having opened in 1991 the school still had a reasonably new look. The

halls were bright, and bulletin boards were colorful. When I arrived, the office staff was friendly, and they directed me to the room where the RIP teacher was attending a SIP meeting, already in progress.

Daily Routine

For the purpose of this study, Carol's daily routine has been separated into two sections as follows.

Morning

The daylong observation began with a Student Intervention Team meeting in a regular classroom. Three different cases were discussed between 8:25 and 9:00, and the committee made a decision for each one. Carol went to her room, which had been converted from some other use. It had an odd shape, not square or rectangular. She had room for a teacher's desk, wardrobe, computer, and a table for working with students. There was a sink and cupboards in the room and space left over for bookshelves. There were books on the shelves, but the books were quite dated.

At 9:05 Carol's first student of the day, a second grader, came to her room for a one-on-one lesson. She gave him his weekly reading sheet. The teacher had explained in her interview that each of her students received a reading sheet for the week. She would give a ticket for a monthly drawing to any student who would bring back the reading sheet with a parent signature. They began the lesson with a story in a basal reader. She read the introduction, and then asked him to read aloud.

She asked him three times, "Did that make sense?" She stopped him after one paragraph. Next, she gave him a Steck-Vaughn phonics page. The teacher read the page, and then the student read it. She had him underline the rule, which was about the use of er and est endings. At 9:35, a call came from the office to send the student to the computer lab, and he left.

Two other second graders came in at that time. The students were each handed a small photocopied book with a laminated cover; they were Scholastic Phonics Readers. After reading that book, they worked on a phonics worksheet that had a crossword puzzle on it. Next, they took turns reading At the Pond, from a set of MCP Phonics Practice Readers. They discussed short vowel rules, and the teacher referred them to a blend chart several times. The students were dismissed at 10:05.

At 10:10 a group of five students came to the RIP room, and the teacher gave them their weekly reading sheets. Next, they were all given a copy of a dated basal reader. The teacher read the introduction, and then the students read in a round robin format. At one point, the teacher asked, "Did that make sense?" Then she asked, "Can you take that word apart?" The teacher reread a sentence and then had a student reread the same sentence. Next, she commented, "Did that sentence make sense? You need to learn to read to make sense." At 10:25 the teacher checked a phonics worksheet the students had completed the day before. She made them redo anything that was incorrect. The worksheet had contractions

on the top and plurals on the bottom. Next, the students were each given a photocopied sheet from Reading stories for comprehension success: 45 high interest lessons with reproducible selections and questions that make kids think, grades 1-3. Next they were given the comprehension question sheet from the same book. Carol told them they must answer in a complete sentence because that had been a rule, since the beginning of the year. At 10:35 the lesson was finished and the students left.

At 10:45 a first grade boy and a second grade boy came to the RIP room. They shared one book, and took turns talking about the pictures on every other page. Next, they worked with a photocopied book and the accompanying worksheet from Read and understand stories and activities: Grade K. For the last ten minutes of the lesson, they worked on the computer.

At 11:20 a first grade boy arrived for a one-on-one lesson. Carol used a book from Swirl books, part of an SRA set. Carol's SRA books were photocopied, laminated, and spiral bound. With a great deal of help from Carol, the student read a selection about a bat rat. They finished the lesson with a phonics worksheet that addressed the usage of ow. At 11:35 a teacher dropped by with some SIP paperwork. Five minutes later, the student left; and the RIP teacher went to lunch.

Afternoon

At 12:20 a group of four second graders arrived. The students were given their weekly reading sheets. They began with a phonics worksheet.

The skill lesson was on adding ing and ed. Carol read from the Teacher's Guide. The students were also told to circle words that had two syllables. She corrected the phonics sheets, insisting that everything on them be correct. Next, the students worked on another phonics sheet. Carol told them to let her see them, as they went along, and she checked everything on the sheets. When all had finished the phonics sheet, they were given a comprehension worksheet from a Frank Schaffer publication. There were five lines about rain on the sheet. The students were told to read and then answer the six comprehension questions in complete sentences. The teacher checked each sentence, and dismissed the students as they finished. Two left at 12:50, and one left at 12:53. The last student left at 12:55.

Meanwhile at 12:54 a group of four second graders arrived and received their weekly reading sheets. This group began with a story from a basal published in 1975. There were 33 words listed on the title page of the story. The RIP teacher read each word and had the students repeat them. Next, the students read in round robin format. They stopped midway through the story, and Carol said they would find out tomorrow what was going to happen. At 1:05 they started a phonics sheet, which covered compound words, antonyms, synonyms, and homonyms. They all worked on the sheets together with teacher direction. Then they did the back of the phonics sheet; and at 1:25 they left.

At 1:33 two first grade teachers came by to ask Carol if she would administer the district standardized test to one of their students, and she agreed. During the next few minutes, Carol counted out certificates for an upcoming parent appreciation tea.

At 1:48 a new group of six second graders arrived. They worked out of the same basal series as the previous group. The students read a selection in round robin format, with the teacher stepping in from time to time with comments, for example, "How many vowels in that word? Remember the rule about two vowels in a word?" As the students read round robin, the teacher was tearing phonics sheets out of booklets. At 2:00 the teacher started a phonics lesson. First, Carol read the rule, and then she had the students underline the rule. The phonics skill sheet was on adding s, ed, and ing. At 2:10 the students were given a comprehension sheet from a Frank Shaffer publication. There were five lines of text. The students were told to silent read and answer with a complete sentence. During this time she told one of the students to keep her eyes on her work. Then she told the same student that her writing would probably be better if she sat up straight. To the same student she said she couldn't read one of the answers and that there would need to be some erasing. At 2:13 the teacher said she would have to interrupt their stories, which she did, in order to give them directions for the backside of the phonics sheet. She took their stories, saying they would

finish them the next day. The students worked on the phonics sheets until they left at 2:20.

At 2:24 a group of four third graders arrived. They began reading round robin from a dated basal reader. Carol was tearing out phonics pages in preparation for the lesson. At 2:34 the teacher stopped the reading and asked the students to predict what was going to happen next. Then a phonics lesson began; the worksheets were on alphabetical order and dictionary guidewords. The teacher told them to let her see their alphabetized words before they decided on the guide words, so there would not be a lot of erasing. The phonics lesson continued with the backside of the sheet, covering synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms. The students left at 2:50.

As the third graders left, a group of first graders arrived. This lesson was very much like the one-on-one earlier in the day. They worked on a phonics sheet, very hands-on with Carol. They read an SRA selection, with which they needed a great deal of assistance from the teacher. At 3:15 the students returned to their classroom.

Summary

The on-site observation at School #3 clearly provided triangulation of the data from Carol's questionnaire and interview. During the interview, she had noted that she did a guided and fluency reading lesson, a phonics lesson, and some sort of comprehension lesson, cloze or read and answer. That was what I observed at her school. Carol had

also described her schedule as booked all day long, and that was also very clear from the day I spent with her.

There was only limited interaction with staff to observe throughout the day spent with Carol. At the SIP meeting she contributed as needed and agreed with conclusions drawn by the committee. Carol commented about the first grade teachers who asked her to administer a standardized test one-on-one with a student. She said she didn't mind because she was fortunate that her participation with standardized testing had been limited to administering make-ups. During lunch in the teachers' lounge, other staff members seemed friendly to Carol and discussed a clothing party that several of them had attended.

There was little special rapport to be observed between Carol and her students. As her schedule was tight, so were her lessons. There seemed to be no great joy in the students coming to work with her. Carol was very strict about everything being done just right so there was little time for lightheartedness. The students came for their lesson, followed directions, and went back to their classrooms.

Summary of On-Site Observations

The three on-site observations provided support for the questionnaires and the interviews. Overall, each of the participants spent her teaching day as she had described in the questionnaire and interviews. Each of the participants had established a unique instructional program that was site specific. While all three of the schools

had demonstrated reading achievement that matched or exceeded their ability levels, the instructional programs established by the reading teachers were quite different.

A commonality across the roles of the three reading specialists was their tight schedules of instruction. Another similarity among the three teachers was the level of rapport with their students. All three reading teachers were very formal in their interactions with their students. There were no personal comments made to the students; the lessons began formally, followed a format, and ended formally. None of the students exhibited any particular joy or other emotion coming to, participating in or, leaving their reading class.

All of the reading teachers had one aspect of their role, involving the materials/artifacts they used, which seemed to define them more than others. With Alice, it was the Accelerated Reader program, which included the following: the library collection she was building, the data entry she conducted, the awards for children that she prepared, the inservice she had conducted at another school, the one day a week her principal allowed her to work on the program and not conduct her regular reading instruction, and the positive impact on the entire student body for which she and her principal believed Accelerated Reader was responsible.

For Barbara, the outstanding aspect that defined her was her knowledge and use of Project LIFE, including the following: her belief

that Project LIFE instruction provided success for many students each year, her having served as a Project LIFE trainer at her school, and her knowledge of Project LIFE theory and practice.

The use of phonics instruction seemed to identify Carol's role more than any other aspect. Phonics instruction was the focus of each of her reading lessons. She had interrupted some of her groups' reading time, in order to give them further directions on completing phonics pages. She was very strict on how the pages were completed, checking and rechecking students' work, as they went along. During round robin reading, she sometimes stopped students and asked about or referred to a phonics rule.

Conclusions concerning a link between the three different reading specialists' instructional programs and reading achievement in their schools cannot be made because there are many other contributing variables. However, one conclusion that can be drawn from the three observations is that each of the reading specialists had a different instructional program and each seemed to define herself by a different strength.

It became clear from the different foci of their roles that the participants had interpreted meanings of social interactions in order to modify their roles to match those interpretations. Alice received positive feedback from teachers, students, and administration for her role as coordinator of Accelerated Reader. Barbara was known for her expertise

in Project LIFE as a trainer and a model teacher. Carol's beliefs were centered on the need of her students to receive explicit phonics instruction.

Site-based management was also instrumental in the roles of the three participants. Alice had been directed by her administrator to do a push-in program; and it was obvious she believed her principal respected her for the role she played in the Accelerated Reader program. Barbara felt trusted and respected by her administrator to run her program as she saw fit, which was 100% Project LIFE. She was also supported by her administrator in pulling students from their special classes in order to receive her reading instruction. Carol said three different administrators had left her alone to run her program. She said the principal who gave her the position never asked what she did, and the assistant principal observed her lessons during that time. Her second administrator had questioned her about materials she had asked to order, and he came to her room to observe for one session. Her current principal had observed her one time and had never come back. With little or no feedback from administrators, Carol continued to conduct her program, based on her beliefs about what struggling readers needed for instruction. Symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework and site-based management as an educational practice provided insight as to how three reading specialists developed and modified their roles based on their

interpretations of interactions with others and on their individual contexts at their sites.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore and document the role of reading specialists.

Research Questions

The main research questions addressed were:

1. How do reading specialists describe their role?
2. How are their roles influenced and modified by their individual contexts?
3. What are the common instructional models and practices they use?

The discussion below is presented as responses to the three research questions, which guided the study and the relationship of the findings to the four elements of educational theory, and practice that formed its framework. The chapter concludes with implications and recommendations.

How Do Reading Specialists Describe Their Role?

The largest percentage of reading specialists spent most of their time conducting pull-out instruction with small groups. They most often

worked with either two or three grade levels, with second grade being the most frequently serviced, followed by first and third. These findings are similar to those of Barclay and Thistlethwaite (1992) who found the role of reading specialists had not changed very much over the previous 25 years; they were still providing small group remedial instruction to the lowest of the low students. These findings also mirror the work of Bean et al. (in press), which showed that reading teachers worked predominately with primary grade children.

The majority of CCSD reading specialists developed rigid schedules. Their daily programs consisted of instruction for one small group after another, with very little turn-around in between groups. The specialists perceived their primary responsibility as providing small group instruction to students. Almost all felt they had a very positive impact on the students they instructed; however, many comments often demonstrated frustration over other duties that took time away from teaching reading.

Many reading specialists had a variety of additional responsibilities beyond teaching reading to small groups of children. Their expertise was put to good use when they engaged in staff development, support for parents and families, and support for classroom teachers. These additional leadership responsibilities parallel the IRA's position statement on reading specialists (International Reading Association, 2000) and results found in other studies (Bean, Knaub & Swan, 2000;

Bean et al., in press). However, the reading specialists reported having responsibilities that were not directly connected to reading instruction such as: coordinating, administering, and proctoring standardized tests; duty (supervision of students); substitute teaching; and quasi-administrative duties, for example, chairperson of the Student Intervention Team.

Whether or not reading specialists had extra responsibilities and to what degree these impacted their roles was found to be site specific. For example, in some CCSD schools reading specialists were kept busy with standardized testing for the first few months of school, while at other sites, they were not involved with testing at all. In other instances, some reading specialists never had to substitute teach in their schools, while one had substituted 25 times in one year. This variation in roles parallels Lambert and Ford's (2000) study; in spite of a state statute that defined the reading specialist position with five specific duties to be carried out, Wisconsin specialists described 19 different aspects in their role.

Of interest in the present study is the fact that many of the CCSD reading specialists expressed the need for more direction from their district; they wanted guidelines for their position, inservices on specific literacy strategies, a means of communication among schools, and a coordinator for the entire reading program.

How Are The Reading Specialists' Roles Influenced And Modified By Their Individual Contexts?

Three components of individual school context were found in this study: administrators, staff members, and students. A discussion of the impact of these elements of context on the role of reading specialists follows.

Influence of Administrators

The school site administrators influenced the role of the reading specialist in several ways. Building principals assigned their RIP teachers extra duties, some of which took time away from teaching reading. The role of reading specialists in CCSD appears to be developing into a jack-of-all-trades position. This finding is similar to what is happening nationally (Bean et al., 1998).

Administrators were also involved in the format and focus of the reading specialists' programs. Some reading teachers were directed to conduct their program in a specific model, either pull-out or push-in. In some cases, principals determined which grade levels would receive services. The reading teachers' workspace was also assigned by the site administrator; some RIP teachers were in spacious rooms, while others were in converted storage closets.

Variation is the theme of discussions of site-based management in the literature (Bauer, 1998; David, 1995; Summers & Johnson, 1995).

In this study, from site to site, the role of RIP teacher varied across programs and responsibilities. This outcome was anticipated, however, because by moving decision-making from CCSD's central administration to each school, there would likely be variations in the roles and programs across the district.

One factor that emerged from the study was a lack of any site-based council involved in decisions about reading specialists' roles. Considering councils are one of the main components of site-based management (David, 1995; Glickman, 1993; Kentta, 1997), it was surprising that there was no mention of them by the participants; any direction about the role of reading specialists came directly from administrators.

Each reading specialist was in a separate and individual context; thus, there were as many descriptions of role, as there were participants. Some reading teachers felt very confident in their relationship with their administrator. For example, one participant said, "My administrator is totally supportive of my efforts to spend 100% of my time pulling students for Project LIFE instruction." On the other hand, one of the reading specialists was told by her administrator to fill the chairs, "If there are six books, then you have six students."

An underlying assumption of symbolic interactionism is that people construct meaning through interactions with others, and then act based on their perceptions of the meanings (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

The symbolic interactionist researcher seeks to understand how participants make sense of their world, based on perceived meanings of interactions with others in their environment (Blumer, 1969). A look at the rich qualitative data collected in this study demonstrates how reading specialists develop and modify their roles based on their interpretations of the social interactions in their lives.

Influence of Staff Members

Many of the interviewees indicated other staff members had some influence on defining their role. From the descriptions of their programs, it was clear RIP teachers made schedules that accommodated the classroom teachers' daily programs. In some cases RIP teachers were able to form reading groups with students from different classrooms; other times they were unable to work through scheduling conflicts. As for interactions with other staff members, only a few participants mentioned scheduling and planning directly with classroom teachers. One specialist, when discussing the influence of staff members on her role, said she pulled students from only one classroom at a time because, "I am low man on the totem pole for scheduling."

Many of the interviewees commented that they frequently offered assistance and support to the classroom teachers. This was often done on the run because of the tight scheduling of classes. Classroom teachers notified the RIP teachers of new students in their classes and requested initial assessment information.

Influence of Students

Students' influence on the role of reading specialists came primarily from the influx of English language learners (ELL). That is, the instructional needs of these students required the RIP teachers to use more concrete activities and engage in more oral language use. Some RIP teachers provided one-on-one instruction for ELL students until these students were able to be successful in small group instructional settings.

As reported by Walmsley and Allington (1995), impaired intelligence was addressed as a cause of children's reading difficulties in the early decades of the twentieth century. Reading specialists in this study made no note of impaired intelligence as a cause of reading difficulties in the students referred to them. CCSD reading specialists' perceptions of the causes of reading difficulties in their students fell into four different categories that can be attributed to cultural deprivation and low socioeconomic status. The four domains identified in the findings were: lack of support from home, lack of literacy experiences at home, lack of English proficiency, and absenteeism and transiency. This parallels Snow et al. (1998) and Walmsley and Allington's (1995) assertion that it is difficult to separate factors attributed to minority children's reading difficulties from those attributed to socioeconomic status.

Learning disabilities, as a cause of reading difficulties, are generally described as interference with perceptual or verbal learning

(Allington, 1998). The reading specialists in the present study identified learning disabilities as a cause of reading difficulties in their students as well. They specifically noted: visual processing deficits, auditory memory deficits, vision difficulties, emotionally handicapped, and ADHD.

In relationship to instructional influences, Snow et al. (1998) identified them as a cause of children's reading difficulties. Inaccurate or inappropriate instruction can impede the reading progress of students who have the ability to be successful readers. A finding of this study was that reading specialists perceived inappropriate or inaccurate instruction as a cause of reading difficulties as well. They specifically mentioned: lack of consistency, practice, and direct instruction, along with inappropriate level text and inappropriate use of strategies as causes for children's reading difficulties.

In spite of the reasons they perceived for children's reading difficulties, the RIP teachers sought to find the best way to help them make progress in reading. Below are some of the RIP teachers' comments:

- My impact on children has been substantial.
- I am very successful in teaching children how to read.
- Children are excited to come to reading.
- I see tremendous growth in my second graders.
- I know I have an important and profound impact on children.

- I motivate them by constantly enforcing the positive and connecting real life situations to printed text.

What Are The Common Instructional Models And Practices The Reading Specialists Use?

The reading specialists overwhelmingly used a pull-out model of instruction with small groups. Servicing predominately primary grades, RIP teachers most often used the school district's program, Project LIFE. The other district-wide program, Project STARS, was also used by RIP teachers. However, since Project STARS is a program for intermediate grades, and the reading teachers worked mostly with primary grades, less use of Project STARS was an expected outcome. From a checklist of reading strategies, the six with the highest indicated percentage of use were from either Project LIFE (choral reading, retellings, manipulatives, bookwalks) or Project STARS (repeated reading, Words Their Way). The same was true of the teachers' use of assessments; the Project LIFE battery was the most often used. These findings are similar to those from a national survey (Bean et al., 1998) in which Reading Recovery was found to be used by more than 50% of respondents. The national trend toward using a lesson framework for remedial reading instruction is also apparent in CCSD (Allington, 1992; Pikulski, 1994).

The review of the literature demonstrated an ongoing disagreement about the success of push-in versus pull-out models of remedial instruction (Allington, 1994; Gelzheiser et al., 1992; Bean et al., 1991).

Therefore, the amount of instructional time RIP teachers spent using a pull-out model was an unanticipated outcome of the present study. It was surprising that the model used in this district was so one-sided. CCSD reading specialists reported 94% of their instructional time was spent in a pull-out model.

Summary of Findings

Reading specialists, in the sixth largest school district in the nation, spent more than 90% of their instructional time with small groups of primary students in pull-out programs. The specialists' workday consisted of rigid schedules meeting with one small group after another. For many reading teachers, principals directed the grade levels served and the format of their program. The most commonly used reading strategies and assessments were from Project LIFE, a modified version of Reading Recovery. Depending on their individual contexts, many RIP teachers were given a variety of additional responsibilities that took time away from the teaching of reading. The RIP teachers were concerned about the additional duties; they believed that they made a positive impact on the children for whom they provided reading instruction, and they did not want any of their instructional time with children reduced.

Implications and Recommendations of the Study

As more political and social pressure is placed upon schools to assure that "no child is left behind" (Paige, 2001), reading specialists will continue to play an important role in the success of elementary grade children. The findings of this study parallel the national trend; that is, reading specialists are often asked to perform duties that are outside of their own perceptions of their jobs. On one hand, this may be a sign that schools are administratively understaffed; on the other hand, it may be that principals recognize reading teachers as responsible staff members who are capable of taking on extra duties. Regardless of the reasons, when taken to the extreme, this trend is potentially detrimental to children when they are deprived of instructional time with reading specialists.

The highly educated and experienced reading teachers in the present study were often given additional duties, many of which not only interfered with teaching reading but were unrelated to the expertise of the reading specialist. One theme that resounded throughout the data was that the reading teachers believed their impact on children's progress should supersede any other function of their role.

Although a premise of site-based management is that stakeholders at each site know what is best for students, this may not always be the case with how reading specialists are used in the schools. It would be beneficial for CCSD to design guidelines for the role of RIP teachers, as

some of the participants requested. For example, the guidelines might include an exact description of responsibilities, outside of the direct teaching of reading to children that would be appropriate for reading specialists. These additional responsibilities might include the role of a school-based reading consultant who works with the many new classroom teachers hired each year.

If CCSD administrators decide to make changes in the role of reading specialists, however, some resistance from RIP teachers may result if appropriate inservice instruction is not provided for the reading teachers. For the most part, the reading specialists were happy with their present roles as pull-out teachers and the minimal amount of interactions they had with classroom teachers. Any changes in the interactions between reading and classroom teachers requires an acknowledgement of the changes in the social structure of the school context and will take time to be implemented.

While guidelines may be helpful to clarify how reading teachers are used in schools, there was no indication from the participants' interviews that they were seeking more structure to their instructional programs. Because these reading teachers are well educated and function somewhat autonomously in their schools, any form of mandated program would be met with great resistance. Even the widely used Project LIFE framework is often modified to meet the needs of the children in a particular school and to fit the beliefs of the reading teachers themselves.

Considering the wide use of Project Life throughout the district, a question that CCSD might inquire of its trainers is whether or not enough theory is included in the Project LIFE training course. Noting its wide use and the modifications that are made to the recommended lesson outline, a question that arises is if the reading teachers are using Project LIFE as a framework without understanding the theory behind its components.

This leads to another question that was unanswered by this study. It was true that a large percentage of the reading specialists had the highest reading endorsement on their Nevada teaching licenses. It was also true that the reading specialists had many years of teaching experience. This leads to the question of how long it has been since the reading specialists took a reading theory course.

A suggestion in regards to coursework for CCSD RIP teachers comes from the data that showed the reading specialists often mentioning the rising number of English Language Learners in their programs and the need to provide more oral language and different strategies for them. Perhaps, all CCSD reading specialists should have training in working with English Language Learners; and a requirement for the position should be to have a TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) endorsement on their Nevada teaching licenses.

Finally, the results of this study suggest further research into the role of the reading specialists and their instructional practices. Is there a

direct relationship between remedial reading instruction and reading achievement? How can reading specialists be best utilized in a school setting to maximize reading achievement? What are ways to enhance the relationships between the reading specialists and the classroom teachers?

APPENDIX I

COVER LETTER, QUESTIONNAIRE, AND READING SPECIALIST SURVEY RESULT

Dear RIP Teacher...Greetings to you,
My name is Dottie Kulesza, and I'm a RIP teacher, too.

My home school is Paradise on the campus of UNLV,
I teach second and third grade reading, which is my cup of tea.

I've recently been granted permission by CCSD
To request your answers to the survey, enclosed, as you will see.

Please look over the reading specialist questionnaire,
And fill it out when you have twenty minutes to spare.

The reason I'm asking for this information
Is that it is the topic of my dissertation.

The purpose of this research is crystal clear, not muddy.
It's entitled "The Role of the Reading Specialist: A Descriptive Study."

Without data from you, this project will not survive.
Please do it now, don't wait, return it by May five.

Enclosed you will find the return envelope;
I'll be awaiting yours with an abundance of hope.

Thank you, thank you, thank you so much,
If you want the results, leave your name, keep in touch.

Reading Specialist Questionnaire School #____

The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore the role of reading specialists. Your responses will be kept confidential. An assistant to the researcher will check your school number for the purpose of noting participation only. Once the number has been checked against a master list, the assistant will remove it. She will then assign a new number based on the consecutive order in which the surveys are processed. The researcher will not receive any questionnaires with the school number still in tact. The researcher will not know the identities of the respondents until the survey data collection and analysis phase of the study has been completed. A final report will be made at a future RIP teacher meeting. If you have any questions, please contact me. Dottie Kuleza. E-mail: kulezzd@nevada.edu

Part 1 - School Demographics

Position: ____RIP Teacher ____Title I Reading Teacher ____Other:_____
School: ____Year-round ____Nine Month
Extended contract: ____Yes ____No
Number of reading teachers at your site: ____
Grade levels you service: ____K ____1 ____2 ____3 ____4 ____5

Part 2 - Personal Data

Year graduated from college: _____
Total number of years teaching: _____
Number of years as a reading specialist: _____
Educational level (i.e. Masters plus 16): _____
Currently working on an additional degree or endorsement: _____
Membership in professional organizations: ___IRA ___Silver State Reading Assoc. ___Other:_____
Nevada State Department of Education reading endorsement on your license:
___#391-285 Reading Endorsement
(A bachelor's degree, a teaching license and 16 semester hours of literacy credits)
___#391-290 Reading Specialist Endorsement
(A master's degree, 3 years teaching experience, a teaching license, and 16 semester hours of literacy credits that include research in reading and clinical practice in remedying problems)
___No reading endorsement at this time.

Part 3 - Instructional Models

Time
Time spent teaching reading to students: (Total should equal 100%.) _____% pull-out _____% invite-in
Time spent working with students: (Total should equal 100%.)
_____% small group _____% individual students _____% whole class

Size of Groups
Circle any or all of the numbers below that indicate the size of remedial groups that you schedule.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+

Programs
Indicate the extent to which you use the following programs:

Project LIFE: _____sometimes _____always _____never
Project STARS: _____sometimes _____always _____never
Other:_____

Part 4 - Instructional Practices

Strategies
Please check the instructional practices that you use to teach reading to children.

____DRA (Directed Reading Activity)	____DRTA (Directed Reading Thinking Activity)
____prediction webs	____concept webs
____book walks	____echo reading
____choral reading	____repeated reading
____LEA (Language Experience Approach)	____Words Their Way word study activities
____Making Words or Making Big Words	____retellings
____Readers' Theatre	____graphic organizers
____reader response	____K-W-L
____Venn diagrams	____manipulatives (i.e. magnetic letters, etc.)

____A specific phonics program - Title:_____
____Computer software - Title(s):_____
____Other, please list._____

Assessment
Please list the assessment instruments you use most frequently.

_____ _____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____ _____

Documentation:
How do you document student growth?

With whom do you share this documentation?

Part 5 - Responsibilities

Please indicate which of the following responsibilities are part of your role at your site.
____school test coordinator____TerraNova ____CBAPs ____Other:_____
____test administrator ____TerraNova ____CBAPs ____Other:_____
____test proctor ____TerraNova ____CBAPs ____Other:_____
____duty (playground, lunchroom, bus, etc.) Indicate amount of time in one month: ____hours ____minutes
____substitute teacher - Indicate number of times this year: ____
____staff development - Extent of involvement: _____
____quasi-administrative duties (i.e. scheduling) Please list: _____
_____
Support for parents/families: ____parent institutes ____parent conferences ____newsletters
____other - Please list:_____
Support for teachers: ____demonstration lessons ____maintenance of a central reading room
____assessment of students ____one-on-one assistance
Resource materials: ____journal articles ____assessment instruments ____strategies
____lessons ____other (Please note): _____
Overall Time - Please rank order the following items by amount of time spent on each. Rank only those items that comprise your role as a reading specialist. Consider #1 the highest amount of time spent.

____support for teachers	____pull-out remedial instruction	____invite-in remedial instruction
____test coordinator duties	____quasi-administrative duties	____reading instruction, not remedial
____duties (playground, etc.)	____substitute teaching	____instruction, other than language arts
____other, please note	____other, please note	____other, please note

Part 6 - Perceptions

1. What do you perceive as the primary reason for reading difficulties in the children who are referred to you for services?

2. How do you perceive your impact on children?

3. What do you believe should be your primary responsibility?

4. In what way(s) is your present role not meeting your belief(s) as stated above?

Part 7 - Comments/Concerns

Please add any comments, concerns, etc.

Part 8 - Volunteer for Interview

If you would like to volunteer to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher, with the possibility of a follow-up on-site observation as you perform your duties, please sign below.

Name:_____

School:_____

READING SPECIALIST SURVEY RESULTS

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS:

POSITION/SCHOOL:	#	%
Reading Specialist	73	95%
Title I Reading Teacher	0	0%
Other	4	5%
Nine Month	37	48%
Year-Round	37	48%

EXTENDED CONTRACT:	#
Yes	34
No	38

GRADE LEVELS SERVICED:	#	%
Kindergarten	5	6%
First	52	68%
Second	66	86%
Third	48	62%
Fourth	29	38%
Fifth	17	22%

AMOUNT OF GRADE LEVELS SERVICED BY TEACHERS:		
Servicing...	#	%
One Grade	5	6%
Two Grades	25	32%
Three Grades	29	38%
Four Grades	9	12%
Five Grades	5	6%
Six Grades or More	3	4%

PERSONAL DATA:

YEAR GRADUATED:	#	%
1959-64	3	4%
1965-69	9	12%
1970-74	18	23%
1975-79	11	14%
1980-84	11	14%
1985-89	7	9%
1990-94	13	17%
1995-99	4	5%

YEARS TEACHING:	#	%
1-4	4	5%
5-9	12	16%
10-14	13	17%
15-19	7	9%
20-24	19	25%
25-29	13	17%
30-34	6	8%
35-40	3	4%

YEARS READING SPECIALIST	#	%
1-4	42	55%
5-9	12	16%
10-14	14	18%
15-19	3	4%
20-24	4	5%
25-30	1	1%

YRS AT CURRENT SITE:	#	%
1-2	23	30%
3-4	18	23%
5-6	8	10%
7-8	9	12%
9-10	11	14%
10+	7	9%

AVERAGE YEARS:	
Teaching	19
Reading Specialist	7
At Current School	6

EDUCATION LEVEL:	#	%
B.A /B.S.	8	10%
Masters	8	10%
Masters + 16	6	8%
Masters + 32	55	71%

MEMBERSHIPS	#
International Reading Assoc.	40
Silver State Reading Assoc.	44
Other	11

NEVADA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION READING ENDORSEMENT ON LICENSE:	#	%
Reading Endorsement #391-285	23	29%
Reading Specialist Endorsement #391-290	54	69%
None	1	1%

INSTRUCTIONAL MODELS:

TIME SPENT:

Pull-out	94%
Invite-in	6%
Small Group	88%
Individual Student	8%
Whole Class	6%

GROUP SIZE:

	#	%
1	18	24%
2	11	15%
3	16	21%
4	33	44%
5	49	65%
6	42	56%
7	20	27%
8	17	23%
9	4	5%
10	5	7%
11+	4	5%

PROGRAMS:

	#	%
Project LIFE		
Always	39	55%
Sometimes	25	35%
Never	7	10%
Project STARS		
Always	15	28%
Sometimes	24	42%
Never	18	32%

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES:

STRATEGIES:

	#	%		#	%		#	%
Choral Reading	69	90%	DRTA	47	61%	Reader Response	32	42%
Retellings	67	87%	Echo Reading	44	57%	Venn Diagrams	32	42%
Manipulatives	68	88%	K-W-L	44	57%	Concept Webs	27	35%
Repeated Reading	60	78%	Making Words	42	55%	Readers' Theatre	25	32%
Words Their Way	59	77%	Graphic Organizer	42	55%	Phonics	25	32%
Book Walks	57	74%	Prediction Webs	41	53%	Software	24	31%
Directed Reading Activity	53	69%	LEA	35	45%	Other Strategies	16	21%

ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

STANDARD TESTING:

	#	%
Participation In	47	61%

STAFF DEVELOPMENT:

	#	%
Participation In	53	69%

QUASI-ADMINISTRATION:

	#	%
Participation In	23	30%

DUTY:

	Hrs.	Mins.
Average Per Month	9	58

SUBSTITUTE TEACHING:

	#	%
Yes	53	69%
No	24	31%

NUMBER OF TIMES PER YR:

	#	%
One	6	11%
Two	5	9%
Three	8	15%
Four	4	8%
Five	10	19%
Six	4	8%
Eight	5	9%
Ten	6	11%
Eleven	1	2%
Fifteen	1	2%
Twenty	2	4%
Twenty Five	1	2%

PARENT SUPPORT:

	#	%
Parent Institutes	7	9%
Parent Conferences	40	52%
Newsletters	10	13%
Other	15	19%

TEACHER SUPPORT:

	#	%
Demonstration Lessons	36	47%
Central Reading Room	40	52%
Student Assessments	64	83%
One-on-one Assistance	55	71%

RESOURCE MATERIAL:

	#	%
Journal Articles	31	40%
Assessment Instruments	50	65%
Strategies	55	71%
Lessons	30	39%
Other	12	16%

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Date:_____ Time:_____

Interviewer:_____
Interviewee:_____

Reminder: The purpose of this interview is to explore the role of reading specialists.

Question One:
How would you describe a typical workday?

Question Two:
What interactions with administration have influenced you in defining and modifying your role?

Question Three:
What interactions with staff members have influenced you in defining and modifying your role?

Question Four:
What interactions with students have influenced you in defining and modifying your role?

Open-ended questions.

APPENDIX III

DATA MANAGEMENT

Data Management

Survey

The questionnaire was designed to describe the answers provided by all of the respondents (Newman & McNeil, 1998). The most common displays of survey data are frequency distribution tables, charts, or graphs (Rea & Parker, 1997). These presentations indicate the frequency of responses to the survey questions. The Wisconsin State Reading Association (WSRA) Reading Specialists Committee (1998) calculated averages from their survey results. Their report stated, "The 'average' can be used to derive conclusions about how the typical reading specialist spends her or his time" (p. 360). Some of the questions on my survey instrument lent themselves to calculation of averages as well.

To establish the initial database, for survey data that lent itself to numerical calculations, the Microsoft program Access was used. The Access program allowed for the survey questions to be displayed, as each questionnaire was entered. It also moved back to the first cell of the next line of entry, once each questionnaire was entered. When the data from the 77 returned questionnaires was entered in the Access database, the data was exported to a Microsoft Excel data worksheet. The data was then manipulated to show sums and percentages. This information was used to develop a third spreadsheet to further assist in analyzing the data. Some of the survey questions were not entered in the database;

these were questions to which there could be a variety of different answers. An example of this type of question was the one that asked the respondents to list assessment instruments.

Responses to the questions, that had a variety of different answers, were recorded in Microsoft Word. First, the number of each questionnaire was recorded, followed by the respondent's answer. The answers to each question were recorded in a separate word processing file. For some of the questions, for example, one that asked what assessment instruments were used (Appendix I), the answers could be listed and categorized by title and then tallied. Percentages could then be calculated by dividing the total for a particular answer by the total number of responses. From the tallied data, frequency distributions could then be used to display the results in graphs, tables, or charts.

For the open-ended questions on the instrument, for example, one that asked how the respondent perceived her impact on children, separate files were also created by word processor. Answers from each respondent were recorded and numbered with the respondent's assigned number.

Technicalities and procedures for organizing qualitative data vary for different people (Patton, 1987). Since qualitative data analysis is a creative process, and people manage their creativity in different ways, I developed my own individual process for managing the data. I read and reread the answers to the open-ended questions, and then color coded

terms that were reoccurring throughout the responses. From that point, a domain analysis was used to further interpret the data.

The domain analysis approach for analyzing qualitative data considers a cultural domain as a category of cultural meaning that includes other smaller categories (Spradley, 1980). There are three basic elements of domains as cultural categories: cover term, included terms, and semantic relationship. For example, for the survey question that asked about assessment instruments, assessment would be the cover term. Some included terms would be: graded word list, informal reading inventory, and running records. The third element of a domain analysis is the semantic relationship. For this domain, the semantic relationship was x is a kind of y, for example, running records is a kind of assessment. Domain analyses were used to establish categories and relationships throughout the responses to the open-ended questions on the questionnaire.

Interviews

To analyze the qualitative data from the interviews and observations, the first step was to organize the data and make sure that it was all there (Patton, 1987). The data was checked for completion and quality, for example, making sure that all field notes were finished and that there weren't any large gaps in the collected data. Next, two complete copies of the data were made. This provided a copy for safekeeping and a copy with which to work.

My process for analyzing the interview data began by recording the information as soon after the interview took place, as was possible. I used the notes taken during the interviews, along with additional comments and information that I remembered, to make as complete a report as possible. Each of the reports was word processed in the same format. The interviewee's assigned number and name were at the top of the page. Next, the four questions asked of each interviewee were labeled and stated, each in a different color font. A record of the interviewee's responses, recorded in black font, followed each question. The remainder of the interview report consisted of additional questions that had been garnered from each interviewee's questionnaire. These were stated in a fifth color font and labeled as Questions from the survey. The questions that arose from respondents' questionnaires were varied. Some questions came from incomplete information, discrepancies between responses, unclear responses, or unfamiliar terms. For example, an interviewee had noted on her questionnaire that she used a learning modalities test for assessment. When I interviewed her, I asked for more information including the publisher of the test and how she used the information she received from administering it. Another respondent indicated on her questionnaire that she provided demonstration lessons for teachers. When I interviewed her, I asked if she went into the teachers' classrooms for the demonstrations or if the teachers came to her room.

When all of the interviews were completed and recorded, I took the next step in my analysis of data. I created an individual report for each of the original four questions asked of each interviewee. I began the report by stating the question, for example, Question One: How would you describe a typical workday. Next, going in consecutive order by number, I typed an interviewee's number. Then I opened that interviewee's report, copied the response, and pasted it into the report for that interview question. I repeated this process for each interviewee, and I repeated it for each of the four preplanned questions.

My initial step in the qualitative analysis of the interview data was to read all of the data I had collected (Maxwell, 1996). There is no set formula for analyzing qualitative data, because it is a creative process with no one right way to go about it (Patton, 1987). To begin the phenomenological data analysis, I had to try to bracket any presuppositions that I had about the study (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Although I had to acknowledge my biases, I also had to set them aside as much as possible. During this phase, I divided the data into statements and clustered them into themes (Creswell, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In this initial stage I color coded using highlighting markers. As I read and reread the responses to the questions, I began highlighting similar terms or responses. Then I went back through each report grouping the color-coded responses into clusters. I continued data reduction through the use of recursive rounds of considering and

interpreting the transcripts (Huberman & Miles, 1984); I searched for global themes, identified categories that belonged to them, and then cited examples that supported the categories.

Using the themes and categories that had been I identified, I investigated the data further using domain analyses followed by taxonomic analyses. A taxonomy is a set of categories arranged on the basis of a single semantic relationship. The way in which it differs from a cultural domain is that it demonstrates more of the relationships among the things inside the domain (Spradley, 1980). For example, a cultural domain could be organized on the basis of what a reading specialist does on a typical day. Some of the possible categories would be: meetings before school, pull-out reading groups, student assessment, computer maintenance, and duty. A taxonomic analysis would search for similarities based on the same relationship. For the categories of a typical day, they could be grouped by those that are directly related to teaching reading and those that are not.

Observations

The data analysis strategies used with the on-site observation data were similar to those used with the interview data. First, a report was generated of the times, activities, materials, and interactions documented in the field notes. Next, data reduction was accomplished through recursive cycles of reading and interpreting data from the reports (Huberman & Miles, 1984). The data from the on-site observations was

used for triangulation purposes. The transcripts documenting the actions of the participants were compared to the responses the participants gave on their questionnaires and in their interviews

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VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Dorothy L. Kulesza

Home Address:
61 Huntfield Drive
Henderson, NV 89014

Degrees:
Bachelor of Science, Education, 1991
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Master of Science, Education, 1994

Dissertation Title: The Role of Reading Specialists: A Descriptive Study

Dissertation Examination Committee:
Chairperson, Dr. Maria J. Meyerson, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Dr. Marilyn McKinney, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Dr. Cyndi Giorgis, Ph.D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. LeAnn G. Putney, Ph.D.