

**Seeing, Hearing, Moving, and Touching: Communicating with Dyslexic Learners
Through Multi-Sensory Methods for Learning Assistance Teachers in British
Columbia School Districts**

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Abstract

The British Columbia (B.C.) Ministry of Education has only been actively working to meet the needs of dyslexic learners since 1992. The question asked in this paper is: how can Learning Assistance Teachers in B.C. be more effective in their teaching of dyslexic learners? By assessing gaps in the B.C. educational system, it was found that Learning Assistance Teachers are not required to have training and experience in multi-sensory and phonological awareness methods of teaching. A review of the literature explores multi-sensory and phonological awareness instruction to support recommendations for Learning Assistant Teachers. The paper concludes by offering recommendations for the problem of Learning Assistance Teachers' lack of multi-sensory and phonological training and provides suggestions for further study in the areas of communication, Learning Disabilities, education, and teaching methods.

**Seeing, Hearing, Moving, and Touching: Communicating with Dyslexic Learners
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What would this world look like if all children were provided the chance to realize their fullest potential? Due to poverty, abuse, illness or other circumstances, many children do not have the chance to flourish. Yet, there are thousands more intelligent children in British Columbia (B.C.) being robbed of their potential because their needs as dyslexic learners are not being met. As an Orton-Gillingham tutor - a multi-sensory approach to teaching dyslexic learners the foundations of reading and writing - I have worked with students who have gone outside the B.C. Learning Assistance programs in schools to receive support in learning. In my professional experience, there are too many dyslexic students failing or not receiving the support they need. How can the B.C. Ministry of Education improve the effectiveness of Learning Assistance Teachers in their instruction of reading and writing to students with dyslexia?

Although there are several forms of dyslexia that can vary in level of severity, dyslexia is defined as a cognitive processing difficulty that appears in a student's ability to negotiate language through alphabet sounds, reading, and writing (Canadian Dyslexia Association, n.da, para 1). Often, a child's skills in speaking, reading, writing and math are affected (Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 2005). Those with dyslexia are intelligent people with normal to above normal IQs who often do not excel in standard educational environments (Canadian Dyslexia Association, n.da, para 1). Dyslexia is frequently categorized as a learning disability (LD), although it is often the learning

environment causing the disability and not the child's level of intelligence (Canadian Dyslexia Association, n.db, para 4). Because the B.C. Ministry of Education does not separate dyslexia from LD, I have provided a definition of LD as outlined by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) as: "a congenital neurological condition, which impacts the lives of children, youth and adults and affects all aspects of human functioning, including social functioning" (n.d., para 1). Of those tested within Canada, statistics show one in ten, or three million, Canadians have some form of LD (Learning Disabilities Association Vancouver, n.d., para. 2). For the purposes of this paper, the term dyslexia and LD will be used interchangeably.

The goal of this study is to utilize applied research techniques to assess the need for improved teaching communication methods used by Learning Assistance Teachers working with dyslexic students in B.C. school districts. Recommendations will be made for the use of the B.C. Ministry of Education and for further research on this and related topics. This will be done through a needs assessment and literature review of other research in the field of LD, education, communication, and teaching methods. The impact of this and further research stands to benefit thousands of dyslexic learners across B.C., providing them with an opportunity to achieve success and realize their fullest potentials.

Needs Assessment: Seeing the Need Through Professional Knowledge and Facts

Recently a landmark case was brought to the B.C. Supreme Court regarding the lack of effective education for dyslexic students. Jeffery Moore was a student in North Vancouver, a B.C public school district, in the 1990s when he was diagnosed with severe

dyslexia. Due to a lack of educational support, Jeffrey's parents elected to enroll him in a private school designed to meet his needs. In a school module designed for Jeffrey's learning style, he excelled. However, the cost of special education and school fees cost his parents \$100,000 over nine years (Rolfson, 2008, para 10). Mr. Moore, Jeffrey's father, commented, "It doesn't seem right to me that the only learning-disabled children who are given a chance to succeed are the ones whose parents can afford an expensive private school education" (Rolfson, 2008, para 4). Although the courts rejected the Moore family's appeal, the case still points to something missing in the B.C. school system: there is a gap in the teaching process of LD students. This section will review the Special Education Services Manual printed from the B.C. Ministry of Education, multi-sensory advocacy, Foundation Skills Assessment test scores of B.C. students, and the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada's research on the effects of dyslexia. These topics will be used to outline the current situation in B.C. schools and the current missing link between multi-sensory education. The body of literature used in this section comes from governmental policy, academic research from the field of dyslexia and education, and non-governmental research conducted to support the needs of dyslexics. The literature will inform on the needs of the current B.C. educational system as well as support findings and recommendations for multi-sensory educational techniques.

Special Education Services: A Manual of Policy, Procedures and Guidelines

In 2006, the B.C. Ministry of Education produced a manual, *Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines*, which outlines the government's position on special needs programs in B.C. Because this manual was

created by the B.C. government, it is the basis of my research. What has been presented in the manual is factual and the government's policy, which is directly what the subsequent research in my paper focuses on. Under this manual, dyslexia is categorized as a LD, which falls into the special needs area of education. The manual stands as the official policy and procedures for B.C. school districts to follow when working with a special needs child. The Special Education Policy states, "All students should have equitable access to learning, opportunities for achievement, and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006b, p. 1). The rationale for equal access is to provide students with special needs the same opportunities as other students to reach goals and achieve success within their own module (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006b). Although the ministry has created the sense of an inclusive module, the achievement levels of students based on test scores shows LD students are still failing and further change is needed.

For students with a LD, the procedure for school districts is to provide assistance to the child through the Learning Assistance Services. A Learning Assistance Teacher is an active member of the education community who works to identify LDs, evaluates needs, plans required needs, actively partakes in working with the child, and completes reports and evaluations (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006b). The instruction by the Learning Assistance Teacher includes:

- Teaching students to develop learning strategies for use in classroom settings or for independent learning;
- Skill development or remediation; and

- Development of compensatory skills to minimize the effect of a disabling condition on learning (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006b, p. 23-24).

Another role of the Learning Assistance Teacher is to complete an Individual Education Plan (IEP), which outlines the student's educational needs (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006b). Learning Assistance Teachers will instruct lessons in the student's classroom, learning assistance centre or in both environments depending upon the school's and child's needs (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006b).

Learning Assistance Teachers are required to have specific knowledge and skills for working with special needs children, including:

- Strong interpersonal, communication and collaboration skills;
- Expertise in a wide range of teaching and management strategies;
- Knowledge of methods for evaluating and selecting instructional materials suitable for students with a variety of special needs;
- Ability to carry out a variety of assessments, including classroom observation, curriculum-based assessment and diagnostic teaching methods (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006b, p. 25).

It is assumed that if Learning Assistance Teachers meet these requirements, they are prepared to meet the needs of LD students. There is no mention of multi-sensory teaching, which engages students in learning through seeing, hearing, movement, speech, or touch.

Multi-sensory Advocacy

The multi-sensory method of teaching is a key element to communicating with dyslexic and other LD children, and provides great benefit to their learning (Reid, 2008b). Dr. Gavin Reid is a credible academic in the field of dyslexia who has advocated on the importance of effective communication methods when teaching students with dyslexia. Dr. Reid (2008b) explains that different parts of the brain are used for different functions, such as “visual/auditory/memory/understanding/co-ordination” (p. 1). Many non-dyslexic learners are able to use these areas of the brain at the same time to learn; however, for a dyslexic learner that is often very difficult. Dr. Reid’s work compliments the argument for multi-sensory teaching methods to be used by Special Education Teachers in B.C. To support a dyslexic learner, it is important to communicate in a way that allows them to use their strongest areas to learn (Reid, 2008b). Often for dyslexic learners, this means communicating through visual and kinesthetic (touch and feeling) means to ensure the information is retained (Reid, 2008b). Teaching in a visual and kinesthetic way is a well-rounded approach to using the dyslexic learners' senses to communicate a sound, word, or concept. It is a multi-sensory approach to teaching, utilizing the students' eyes, ears, mouth, hands, and muscles.

As an Orton-Gillingham tutor I use multi-sensory communication techniques to teach dyslexic students the foundations of reading and writing. Having knowledge of specific teaching methods that utilize a multi-sensory approach can significantly support dyslexic students. Although the Ministry requires Learning Assistance Teachers to have experience in a wide range of teaching strategies, it does not specify any particular

teaching methods. The lack of required knowledge of a multi-sensory teaching approach shows a major gap in the B.C. Ministry of Education's approach to educating LD students. Multi-sensory teaching supports the learning styles of dyslexic students and is an important part of the education process (Brazeau-Ward, 2005a).

Foundation Skills Assessment

Test scores have been used to collect data on education and LD students, however the scores offer conflicting and confusing results. In April 2006, the B.C. Ministry of Education released a report on the accumulated findings of the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) test scores from 2000 to 2005 of special needs students in all school districts throughout B.C.¹ The FSA are a series of tests given to students whose scores are then tallied and presented to show the level of effective teaching and learning by B.C. school children. The FSA test scores are important to my research because they are the basis of the government's educational support of LD children. The test scores are compiled in a manner which simply presents the data tallied, but does not consider variable factors; such as which students were sick at the time of exams, which students are receiving remedial tutoring outside the school system, or which students did not take part. The FSA findings do not include an interpretation of the results and therefore, are subsequently subjective.

From the school years 2001/02 to 2004/05 the number of identified LD students increased by 13%, bringing the number of known LD students to 16,703 across B.C. The 13% increase was due in part to a more inclusive count of all LD students, not only those with a severe LD (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006a). Overall test scores on

reading comprehension performance and participation, and writing abilities mildly increased with levels mostly remaining consistent over the years (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006a). These findings show an increase of LD students in the education system and a greater need to meet the learning needs of students in order for them to have better reading performance and participation comprehension, and writing scores. The limited increase of test scores does not show enough improvement to believe the current Special Education system is effective in its work to fully support all LD students.

There has been an area of improvement for LD learners. From the school years 2000/01 to 2004/05 the rate of LD students graduating high school with the province's grade 12, six-year Dogwood Diploma has increased from 17% to 68% (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006a). This is a positive finding and still leaves evidence of 32% of LD students not completing high school. With 32% of LD students not receiving Dogwood Diplomas, there is a need for greater improvement of teaching for LD students.

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) has provided extensive research on the topic of LDs and provided a wide range of findings which go well beyond data. The LDAC is a non-governmental organization designed to support advocacy, research, and help for LD people living in Canada. The LDAC has conducted several research projects, two of which support the goal of this paper. A study done by The Roeher Institute, and another study called "Putting a Canadian Face on Learning Disabilities" (PACFOLD) have supporting evidence that more needs to be done to meet

the needs of LD students. The LDAC's findings have been used by the Canadian government to levy change in the treatment of LD students and adults. For the B.C. Ministry of Education the LDAC is a useful tool for understanding LD and what is needed to support students. The research provided through LDAC is valuable because it is target to LD citizens. LDAC has provided a wide range of research that not only presents the needs of LD students in schools, but their outside lives and post secondary and adult lives. When looking at students in the present school system LDAC has provided valuable research which presents where gaps in the education system are and the needs of students.

General findings by the LDAC are important to the support of children in the B.C. school system. LD students who do not complete high school experience long lasting and destructive effects. Statistics from across Canada and some studies completed in the United States have shown the struggles LD students and adults face when they have not been successful in school. As many as 50% of adolescent suicides are committed by those diagnosed with a LD (Learning Disabilities Association of BC, n.d., para. 16). Research has shown students with LD are twice as likely as non-LD students to drop out of school before grade 12 graduation. Of students with a LD, 35% will drop out before completion (Learning Disabilities Association of BC, n.d., para. 5). In addition to studies on high school drop out rates, 30% to 70% of young offenders, although not all diagnosed with a LD, have experienced failure in school (Learning Disabilities Association of BC, n.d., para. 17). Statistics have found 45.6% of adult inmates have a LD and were young offenders at one point (Learning Disabilities Association of BC, n.d., para. 8). Young offender and adolescent high school drop outs are mainly between the

ages of 13 and 18. The at-risk LD school-aged youth are in need, and based on statistics not receiving, the most effective support possible. Limited governmental support is often claimed to be due to funding shortages. Interestingly, however, research has found it costs the Canadian government \$100,000 a year to hold a young offender in detention (Learning Disabilities Association of BC, n.d., para. 18). On a broad scale evidence has shown a major need across Canada to provide more effective support to LD students. For B.C. school districts this becomes the task of the Learning Assistance Teacher.

In a study conducted for the LDAC by The Roeher Institute (2000), four areas of concern were highlighted and important for the academic research of this paper. They were: LD being diagnosed too late in a child's schooling years; high-risk behavior rates of school drop outs, substance abuse, and poor behavior; a concern with non-Learning Assistance Teachers' ability to teach LD students; and budgetary cutbacks on special needs funding (The Roeher Institute, 2000). These factors are current issues for the B.C. Ministry of Education. Because of this it is important for effective education methods to be established for Learning Assistance Teachers as they work with LD children.

A Canada-wide research project was done by the LDAC through funding received by the Office of Disability Issues (ODI) of Social Development Canada (SDC) in order to establish the effects of LD and compile data needed to establish policy and programming. LDAC's PACFOLD was a major study that collected never before researched data. A major finding in the research outlined the need for proper teacher training for those working with LD students (PACFOLD, 2007). PACFOLD produced evidence from across Canada that teaching methods are not meeting the needs of LD students. There is a

need to examine other teaching methods and communication theories regarding LD education.

Within the literature used in PACFOLD, the LDAC outlined several important issues. Because the provinces of Canada manage their own ministries of education, there is no consistent standard special education policy across Canada. B.C., along with Prince Edward Island and Alberta, were the final provinces to be identified as not providing special education services in 1992 (Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 2005). These provinces have had over fifteen years to adjust to the process of educating LD students through special education and there appears to be a further need to improve teaching methods. A missing element to the PACFOLD research is a historical presentation of LD support in schools across Canada. Historical research would be helpful in examining where to take current theory and compare with past programs and results.

Many LD students who are not taught effectively will experience continuous failure while going through school. PACFOLD found that for many students the feeling of failure resulted in feelings of low self-esteem and a lack of motivation in school (Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 2005). Many students who experience continual failure will not be able to achieve their fullest potential. Through effective methods of teaching the Learning Assistance Teachers in the B.C. school districts have the opportunities to support the educational and emotional development of LD children.

In spite of the B.C. Ministry of Education's policy to support all LD students and the creation of the Learning Assistance Services, there still appears to be a gap in test scores and overall impact of LD on children's lives. Although many factors contribute to the

issues, the responsibility rests with the B.C. Ministry of Education, and the policies and teaching requirements of the province. There is more the ministry can do. Just as the LDAC has worked to find gaps within the education system B.C. teachers put out a report. In a B.C. teachers' review of special education issues, ranging from a lack of time due to workload, to support special needs students, to a feeling many students with LD are going undiagnosed by the Ministry of Education (Naylor, 2002). This report supports further evidence of missing assistance for LD students in B.C. Given that B.C. teachers have raised concern for LD students' education, more needs to be done. A starting point is to utilize methods to increase the effectiveness of Learning Assistance Teachers who diagnose challenges and work with LD students on reading and writing abilities.

Seeing, Hearing, Moving, and Touching: Communicating to Dyslexic Learners

There have been mass amounts of research conducted on effective communication methods and dyslexic learners. Two topics that will be discussed are multi-sensory methods and phonological awareness teaching. The research comes from academic literature and research in the fields of dyslexia, communication, education, and intervention. The research from these fields of study supports the objective of this paper and provides a greater understanding of what dyslexic learners need from their Learning Assistance Teachers to succeed. The literature in this section has provided information on available support for B.C. teachers and how to direct the types of support to be created.

Special Education and Multi-Sensory Methods

There are several methods that have been proven to support LD students. Among the methods, which will be expanded on, are multi-sensory instruction and phonological awareness instruction. In this section there will be multiple methods and findings shared which could be used to enhance and support Learning Assistance Teachers' roles. In an article titled "What is Special About Special Education for Students with Learning Disabilities," the authors discuss the usefulness of special education and how it has developed over time (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003). Findings uncovered the difference between small-group and one-on-one instruction. Small-group instruction provided students with more attention from the teacher, which often supported a better level of focus by students on their work (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003). One-on-one instruction was found to be needed by some students who were more likely to have a LD (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003). Both forms of instruction were effective. However, one-on-one interaction with more communication between the teacher and student had an additionally positive effect on LD student's reading abilities. Evidence of effective communication techniques has been proven to support LD student's learning; this supports my conclusion for improvements by Learning Assistance Teachers in B.C. Since this study was conducted in the United States some of the information was not congruent with B.C.'s model of education, but overall the findings can still be used to support improvement recommendations.

There are several approaches to teaching LD students that utilize a multi-sensory method. Among the approaches are the Orton-Gillingham method, Sound Linkage, Hickey Multisensory Teaching System, and the Multisensory Teaching System for

Reading (Reid, 2008a). As a tutor I use the Orton-Gillingham method in a one-on-one setting with my students. I teach the foundation of the English language through systematic lesson planning tailored to meet each student's individual needs. The Dyslexia Association of Canada has created a method called Simultaneous Multisensory Teaching (SMT). The SMT method is based on the Orton-Gillingham method and supports the integration of multi-sensory teaching for school teachers (Brazeau-Ward, 2005a). SMT has several advantages when used in a school environment: it can be taught to any age group and level, allows teachers as early as grade one to begin working with dyslexic learners, can be used with young students experiencing early reading and writing difficulties, can save money if used in a classroom environment thus reducing the number of specialized teaching programs, and ensures all lesson plans are thorough and comprehensive to be used instantly in elementary classrooms (Brazeau-Ward, 2005b). The SMT method can be used with both dyslexic learners and learners who have not been diagnosed, but are struggling with reading and writing. The advantage to this is having a teaching method that can be used to help all struggling students. SMT is adaptive to a classroom or small group setting and appears to offer potential usefulness for the B.C. school system. SMT uses a multi-sensory communications approach and is adaptable to all learners while meeting the specific needs of dyslexic learners.

A major part of working with dyslexic learners and supporting them in school, as well as when they leave school, is effective communication (Reid, 2008b). By providing a student an effective means to learn the student will become more successful, learning the skills needed to be fruitful in their education. Dr. Reid (2008b) notes teachers are a key component to supporting students' success and providing them with positive motivation,

which strengthens self-esteem. Since a teacher is the main person a struggling student interacts with and relies upon to learn, it is important for that person to communicate in the most effective way possible for the student to learn and become confident in his/her own abilities. In assisting dyslexic students, Dr. Reid (2008a) noted the presence of assistance by trained teachers who are aware of the challenges of working with dyslexic learners are among the most important parts of producing successful students.

Phonological Awareness

Along with understanding effective communication, it is important to understand the type of communication that needs to be used. For B.C. Learning Assistance Teachers they must not only have the awareness of effective communication, but they must also have the tools to teach effectively. In the past several decades, the study of phonological awareness and the breakdown of language have been studied extensively. Phonological awareness is the breakdown of oral language into small manageable components, such as sounds and words into syllables (Chard & Dickson, 1999). Often early reading issues are due to a lack in phonological awareness (Chard & Dickson, 1999). Children have shown great improvement when taught by phonological awareness how to read and write (Chard & Dickson, 1999). David J. Chard and Shirley V. Dickson have conducted research on phonological teaching compiling a guideline for understanding the effectiveness of phonological instruction. The research on phonics has been useful for the academic study of teaching dyslexic learners. The research can be used to support new methods of instruction for Learning Assistance Teachers in B.C. Multi-sensory teaching methods in combination with phonological awareness theories are two important areas of

communication research to explore when establishing a teaching process for dyslexic learners.

When teaching phonological awareness, teachers can use multi-sensory techniques allowing them to engage and interact with the learner (Chard & Dickson, 1999). This form of teaching integrates well with the B.C. Ministry of Education's Learning Assistance Teacher mandate to use various teaching methods and supports the desire to increase reading and writing skills and support LD learners. Chard and Dickson have presented useful research in this area. However, their research is missing a discussion on the difference between teaching phonological awareness to a whole classroom and one-on-one instruction.

Phonological awareness was studied as a way to reduce the likelihood of students struggling with LD once they reach higher grade levels. Lovett, Lacerenza, and Borden (2000) discuss phonological awareness through remedial teaching. They designed the Phonological and Strategy Training (PHAST) method as a form of remedial reading education. PHAST was designed from research in academia, using phonological awareness as their basis (Lovett, Lacerenza, & Borden, 2000). PHAST is intended for young learners struggling with reading, who can benefit from a remedial program to support them in gaining a better grasp of the reading process. The research was gathered from findings on how to teach students with severe LD and has been tailored to meet the needs of non-LD children (Lovett, Lacerenza, & Borden, 2000). Even though the authors' research was done in the hopes of helping non-LD students, the nature of the PHAST program is still based in phonological awareness theories and can support LD students in the classroom or Learning Assistance programs.

In a meta-analysis conducted on phonological instruction, the findings were overwhelmingly positive for the use of systematic phonological teaching to help students read and write. Throughout the study, 38 experiments were conducted. Findings showed that students did better when they were taught through a phonological method, opposed to students who were not (Ehri & Simone, 2001). The meta-analysis data examined a 10-year period and found positive findings for the use of phonics programs in current teaching environments (Ehri & Simone, 2001). A notable point of the research found that phonological programs are best incorporated with other forms of instruction to balance the students' learning (Ehri & Simone, 2001). This research fits well with teaching methods for dyslexia and supports the usage of phonological programs in education systems. For the B.C. Ministry of Education, this is strong evidence to support the integration of phonological teaching for LD students by Learning Assistance Teachers. Although the research was quite substantial, it is lacking in its explanation of the types of instruction to balance the teaching of phonological awareness and other learning skills.

Through the examination of research it is evident that methods have been created, tested and proven effective for teaching dyslexic children. One-on-one or small group instruction provides children the opportunity to learn more closely with teacher aided support, which allows for better communication between teacher and student. Providing teachers with multi-sensory approaches to communicate with dyslexic learners will offer students the ability to learn using their strengths. Through the combination of multi-sensory teaching and instruction of phonological awareness, dyslexic learners have proven to achieve in learning environments. Based on research of education, communication, and teaching theories, there are several effective options the B.C.

Ministry of Education can implement for their Learning Assistance Teachers. Options include conferences hosted by the Canadian Academy of Therapeutic Tutors (CATT) or multiple other professional development days for LD instructors.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The B.C. Ministry of Education can improve the effectiveness of Learning Assistance Teachers in their instruction of reading and writing to dyslexic learners. A major recommendation would be to provide current Learning Assistance Teachers with opportunities to learn multi-sensory and phonological awareness methods of teaching and require future teachers to have knowledge of phonological and multi-sensory training for one-on-one and small group settings. Phonological awareness will support the reading and writing abilities of students as they gain a better foundation for language, while specific training in multi-sensory methods supports the learning styles and improves the effectiveness of teaching. There are several approaches to communicating multi-sensory teaching including the Orton-Gillingham method, which can be used to teach reading, reading comprehension, writing, and math.

A second recommendation is an increase in teacher awareness of dyslexia. With a greater awareness, teachers will have more knowledge of how to work with students and relate with faculty and parents. Dr. Reid (2008b) outlined the importance of knowledgeable teachers being present in the schools for parents to communicate with regarding the needs of their children. A parent's ability to communicate with a teacher who understands his/her child's needs further helps the child receive the assistance

required for success because the parents then become educated as well (Reid, 2008b). With better awareness of dyslexia, Learning Assistance Teachers will be able to help support the earlier detection of learning challenges. When the teachers are educated, they become empowered by the knowledge and in turn help to support and empower their students who will benefit from a teacher prepared to help and communicate effectively with them.

There are still several issues which have not been addressed in this paper which could be supported with further research. Although I have suggested a multi-sensory approach to teaching for Learning Assistance Teachers I do recognize the difficulties in selecting which multi-sensory approach to use. This could be an area for further research, as well as looking at private school modules designed for dyslexic and LD students. A few multi-sensory approaches to be examined and researched are the Orton-Gillingham method, Sound Linkage, Hickey Multisensory Teaching System, and the Multisensory Teaching System for Reading (Reid, 2008a). Research should also examine the Dyslexia Association of Canada's Simultaneous Multisensory Teaching (SMT) approach (Brazeau-Ward, 2005a & 2005b).

Just as I recognize the difficulties in choosing a teaching method, I identify there is a challenge in implementing the teacher training for the hundreds of Learning Assistance Teachers across B.C. Further research in the field of communications and training could be done to effectively communicate a provincial-wide training program to Learning Assistance Teachers. As well, research could be done into the possibility of a communication network among Learning Assistance Teachers to allow for communication between teachers in different schools to discuss student needs.

An examination of the barriers to Learning Assistance Teachers gaining and being required to have multi-sensory and phonological instruction methods would support this research. The methods currently being used to teach dyslexic learners outside the B.C. school system are effective yet are not used by the B.C. education system. An examination into the barriers to this research and recommendations would help support the paper's goals and values.

Teacher stress can be a large issue when working with dyslexic children. A multi-sensory approach can be more physical than other approaches to teaching and demanding in different ways than classroom teaching. Research into the stress levels of Learning Assistance Teachers can be explored to help reduce or manage stress.

Along with further research on teaching methods and Learning Assistance Teachers, an examination of more effective early dyslexic diagnosis could support the education of students at a younger age who are showing symptoms of difficulty in school. Research could be done to explore the communication effectiveness and teaching methods of classroom teachers and the use of a multi-sensory approach. As well, more specific studies could be done to examine the multiple methods of teaching phonological awareness to large and small groups.

Ultimately the B.C. Ministry of Education has taken steps to improving education for dyslexic learners; however, there is more that can be done. Through the utilization of proven multi-sensory teaching methods and phonological awareness instruction Learning Assistance Teachers would be able to communicate lessons far more effectively. A more effective form of communication that meets the learning style of dyslexic students would

help benefit these intelligent people, and offer them the ability reach their fullest potentials.

End Notes

¹The Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) tests are conducted yearly in the spring throughout B.C. to determine the level of learning taking place in the province. The document “Student’s with Special Needs-How are we doing? Province public schools only” is based off of FSA scores from 2000/01 to 2004/05. The document can be retrieved at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/performance.pdf>. “Reporting on K-12 Education” provides five years worth of school district summary reports and general summary reports for all the students in all school districts in B.C. It can be retrieved at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/achieve/spec-ed.php>. “Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) Reports” provides five years worth of reports for public and private school districts FSA results. It can be retrieved at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/achieve/fsa-bas.php>.

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