

CONNECTING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY

By

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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This qualitative study provides an in-depth look at a multi modal service model developed by ASSETS School, an independent school for students with dyslexia and learning disabilities in Honolulu, Hawaii. The common denominator among students is that their capability is greater than their achievement. The Administrative Advisory Team (AAT) provides guidance, experience, and expertise to all teaching faculty. Through interviews with key personnel, this study was designed to investigate a set of research questions, which included exploring what makes the ASSETS model effective and unique. The purpose of the study was to gain understanding of the functions and responsibilities of the AAT at ASSETS School, and how the AAT supports and facilitates the ASSETS service model as well as sustains evidence-based practices. Participants included the eight members who comprised the AAT at ASSETS School in the summer of 2003. At ASSETS, the AAT is a group of administrators involved in virtually every aspect of how the school is run on a daily basis.

Qualitative methodology was used to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that foster a viable service model, effective teamwork and curriculum, as well as successful teacher learning and student outcomes. The multiple sources of evidence gathered over a 3 week period included interviews, document review, and personal experience. Data analysis included coding, finding patterns, labeling themes, and developing category systems.

Data analysis revealed three overarching themes that contributed to an understanding of the factors that impact the ASSETS service model. The three themes were: 1) roles and responsibilities of the AAT highlighted by *the Four Hat Model*; 2) integration of services, programs, and resources to meet the needs of all students; and 3) creation of a dynamic learning community. General ideas are discussed relating to the use and sustainability of evidence-based practices benefiting professionals involved in school improvement. In addition, suggestions for future research are provided.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The strength and extensiveness of the field of learning disabilities (LD) can be appreciated in view of its achievements in three areas (Torgesen, 1998). First, the number of students with learning disabilities being served in LD programs surpasses that of any other area of special education, and the field continues to grow. With more than 2.8 million students labeled learning disabled, the LD category makes up more than half of all students served in special education programs (Gresham, 2001; Lyon et al., 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Between 1976-77 and 2001-02, the number of school-aged children designated LD has literally tripled with a rise from 1.8 to 6.0% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The second area indicative of the LD field's current standing is found in the substantial number of associations created to advocate for children with learning disabilities (Torgesen, 1998). Associations such as the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA), the Division for Learning Disabilities (DLD) within the Council for Exceptional Children, and the Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD), involve hundreds of thousands of parents, teachers, and educators interested in advocating on behalf of children with learning disabilities, providing a forum for discussion of research, and supporting professional development.

Finally, the level of interest in special education and the field of learning disabilities among researchers is an important indicator of its strength and status

(Torgesen, 1998). Over the past ten years, millions of dollars of federal research funds have been targeted to develop a clear classification system in regard to LD definitions and diagnosis, as well as to identify effective educational practice and implementation (Lyon & Chhabra, 2004).

When looking at the LD field from an historical perspective, it may be helpful to distinguish between “LD as an applied field of special education, and LD as an area of research on individual differences in learning and performance” (Torgesen, 1998, pp. 6-7). As an applied field of special education, Torgesen (1998) observes the LD field shares many characteristics with other social and political movements. As an area of research, it is a loosely linked, interdisciplinary area of scientific inquiry. Torgesen notes that “confusion and occasional conflict between these two aspects of the field has created many problems over the course of its history, and continues to be a source of many difficulties for the field” (p. 7).

Currently, there are many issues deemed important to the field of LD. Examples include those of definition, identification, and service delivery. Looking at service delivery more closely, there are numerous alternatives to how schools and educational practitioners serve students with learning disabilities. The majority of schools today provide a continuum of services comprised of a wide range of service options and placement in an effort to meet the individual needs of students with learning disabilities (Heward, 2000). Often symbolically illustrated as a pyramid, the continuum of services range from the general education classroom at the bottom of the pyramid to residential programs and separate schools at the top. The pyramid shape is widest at the bottom indicating that the greatest numbers of students are served in general education

classrooms. Thus, traveling towards the tip of the pyramid indicates that intensive and specialized services increase as the corresponding number of students decreases (Heward, 2000).

One placement option for students with learning disabilities is a separate school, which includes specially trained staff, specific curriculum and resources, as well as a carefully selected faculty. This placement option is also generally characterized as having supportive environments, small enrollment, one-on-one interaction between students and teachers, an emphasis on student decision-making, flexibility in structure, and opportunities/curriculum relevant to student interests (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Examples of these separate kinds of schools include Landmark School, Wilson Academy, Winston School, Riverside School, and the Woodbridge Academy. There is no precise accounting of the number of students with learning disabilities served in these separate schools and/or alternative schools nationally (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Lehr & Lange, 2003). For the academic year 2001-02, the National Center for Education Statistics reported 612,000 students were enrolled in 10,900 public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students (Foley & Pang, 2006; Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002). Of this number, it was estimated that 12 percent of these students had learning disabilities (Lehr & Lange, 2003). What is clear is that the number of these kinds of schools is growing in many states, which sets the stage for research to address the “nature, scope, and practice” of these alternative placement options (Foley & Pang, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Lehr & Lange, 2003).

Despite all of the issues and ongoing debates in special education and the learning disabilities field, all those concerned with educating children across all school settings

must be accountable for the progress that still needs to be made. Heward (2000) states, “Ultimately, educators must realize that regardless of where services are delivered, the most crucial variable is the quality of instruction that children receive” (p. 75). An estimated 80 percent of children with learning disabilities have a principal difficulty with reading (Lyon et al., 2001). According to Torgesen et al. (2001), “One of the most daunting and clearly defined current challenges for both researchers and practicing educators is to develop, disseminate, and implement methods for teaching reading that will help all children acquire adequate reading skills” (p.33). Students who lack reading skills will have difficulty with academic content, and ultimately, struggle with success in life and fulfilling their potential (Lyon & Chhabra, 2004). Clearly, meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities is serious business with real, long-term consequences if we fail.

At the same time that issues continue to be debated, areas in the learning disabilities field have solidified (Hallahan & Mercer, 2001). In the past 2 decades, special education research has made significant strides in identifying effective instructional practices and services for students with learning disabilities (Boardman, Arguelles, Vaughn, Hughes, & Klingner, 2005; Lyon et al., 2001). Examples of areas that special education research has increased knowledge and understanding include service delivery models, assessment practices, instructional practices, administrative decision-making, positive behavioral support, inclusion, and effectively working with families, and technology. In addition, research on reading comprehension, curriculum-based assessment, cooperative learning, and instructional grouping procedures have informed practice in general education (Vaughn, Klingner, & Hughes, 2000).

Despite these positive developments and accomplishments, educational practice has not been revolutionized and there is growing concern over the perceived lack of connection between research and practice (Cook & Cook, 2004; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001; Lyon et al., 2001). Even when researchers have set up implementation of evidence-based practices in schools, substantial data indicates these practices are not sustained over time (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001). Why is there a problem implementing and sustaining research-based practices? What will it take to improve sustainability of research-based practices?

In an educational environment rife with competing claims about what works, moving to evidence-based practice in schools may be easier to advocate than to achieve (Fleischman, 2006). A substantial amount of existing research has not met educator's needs, and has been criticized for over-emphasizing an academic and theoretical orientation (Huang, Reiser, Parker, Muniec, & Slavucci, 2003). As a result, even rigorously researched and relevant studies are difficult to use when couched in unappealing formats and dense, undecipherable, scientific language (Rickinson, 2005, as cited in Fleischman, 2006). In addition, there is a need for studies that enable educators to draw their own implications for use in their schools (Kohlmoos & Joltus, 2005). There is a substantial need for relevant research in individual school contexts to provide deeper understanding of how we can improve research to practice connections. The purpose of this study is to address this research to practice gap in the literature, and to look at how the sustainability of evidence-based practices operates in an individual school for students with learning disabilities. The literature review will include looking at issues in maintaining research to practice connections, as well as factors found to enhance the sustained use of evidence-based practices.

Review of Related Literature

A failure to connect research to practice is critical in light of Torgesen's (2000) discussion of "treatment resisters" and "curriculum casualties." Torgesen examined five studies addressing specific methods to prevent reading difficulties, in light of the goal that every child should acquire adequate word reading skills during early elementary school. He estimates that even when applying our best current intervention methods broadly, 2% to 6% of children would still have inadequate reading skills in the first and second grades (Torgesen, 2000). Emphasis is also placed on the necessity for further research and knowledge that must be gained from looking in-depth at individual school sites that have been successful in establishing many of the research to practice connections.

Research to Practice

Bridging the gap between research and practice has become a focal point of both the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLBA) and the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004). While the majority of students may learn no matter what instructional or intervention approach is used, for the remaining students, effective practices are critical if they are to have a chance to succeed academically (Cook & Cook, 2004). According to Blackorby and Wagner (1996, as cited in Cook and Cook, 2004), "Without receiving instruction that has been shown to produce desired outcomes, students with LD will likely fail in school – which often results in their dropping out and facing future lives of decreased productivity and independence" (p. 240). Furthermore, despite a substantial amount of research and literature on the fields of special education, LD, and effective instructional practices, there is general consensus

among researchers and authors that research-based practices are not consistently implemented. According to Cook and Schirmer (2003), this situation “constitutes a critical shortcoming. Without being applied diffusely, systematically, and with integrity, the potential benefits associated with these effective practices remain latent for many students with disabilities” (p. 203).

The Failure of Research to Influence Teaching

Sashkin & Egermeier (1993) synthesized research literature in regard to educational change attempts in the past era. They found that these change attempts were primarily “rational-scientific” and based on the perspective that if a practice was scientifically proven to be effective, then practitioners would accept the information and utilize it. Several faulty assumptions arose from this perspective. The first was that educators and practitioners would acknowledge and accept the information presented on research-based practices. They would also understand the importance of implementing effective practices and proceed with this endeavor as soon as they were made aware of them (Boardman et al., 2005). The second is that educators and practitioners would automatically monitor the effects and outcomes of the newly presented practices to determine whether they should be maintained or not. Effective practices would be continued and ineffective practices would be discarded. The third faulty assumption was the view that teachers could implement effective practices with just a few adjustments (Boardman et al., 2005; Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller, 1997).

The recognition that these widespread assumptions were faulty led to more systematic study in regard to how research is disseminated and utilized. Kennedy (1997) grouped the vast catalogue of reasons, resulting from systematic study, for the apparent

failure of research to influence teaching into 4 general hypotheses. The 4 hypotheses are as follows: 1) research has not been sufficiently persuasive or authoritative to convince practitioners to implement them; 2) research has not been deemed relevant to practice; 3) teachers have had inadequate access to research and ideas; and 4) the education system's stability and/or instability has impacted the connection between research and practice.

The first hypothesis indicates that research lacks persuasiveness and authority. In other words, the quality of research has been insufficient to convey authoritative, unambiguous, and compelling results to practitioners (Boardman et al., 2005; Cook & Cook, 2004; Lyon & Chhabra, 2004). Historically, research between the 1940s and the 1960s emphasized research design. Kennedy (1997) states, "The goal was to isolate variables and define their relationships with other variables. Causal relationships were especially important, and researchers designed studies in the hope that they could control for all possible rival interpretations" (p. 4). Exercising control was one major reason for research being conducted in the laboratory.

Unfortunately, this kind of focus inhibited research on complex teaching approaches due to lack of control in regard to external influences on learning. Researchers conducted studies on educational phenomena in the field; however, they hardly ever managed to control for all variables. Throughout history, methodological debates flourished. Although such debates are an integral part of developing knowledge, there were also detrimental side effects. One side effect was that the debates became so esoteric; no one could follow them except the most sophisticated methodologists. Another effect resulted from the push for more careful designs that debaters hoped would

finally settle issues. Unfortunately, the predominant perception was that these matters were hopelessly complicated and there was no final resolution (Kennedy, 1997).

Cook & Schirmer (2003) agree with this assessment and state that serious concerns about educational research on the whole have eclipsed the many successes of research. According to Carnine (1997), the National Research Council of the National Academy of Science presented a “scathing report on the trustworthiness of educational research because of ‘methodologically weak research, trivial studies, an infatuation with jargon, and a tendency toward fads with a consequent fragmentation of effort’ (Atkinson & Jackson, 1992, p. 20, as cited in Carnine, 1997, p. 514).

Present-day discussions about design have taken a different direction. Kennedy (1997) holds up Ann Brown’s (1992) article on “Design Experiments” as an example of this change. Brown states that researchers will not be able to eradicate all possible rival hypotheses. Instead of trying to control these other variables, the goal should be to accommodate them. According to Kennedy (1997), Brown “argues that, if research is to produce important knowledge, it has to occur within the natural constraints of real classrooms and must accommodate as best it can the multiple confounding influences that are there” (p. 5).

A second hypothesis regarding the failure of research to influence teaching states that research has not been relevant to practice. Examples of issues include those of practicality, fully addressing teacher’s questions, and acknowledging their constraints (Boardman et al., 2005; Cook & Cook, 2004; Gersten, Chard, & Baker, 2000). Change is a process and researchers must keep in mind that research is often based on formal objectives or fairly abstract theories (Klingner, Arguelles, Hughes, & Vaughn, 2001).

Thus, teachers frequently do not understand how to integrate or implement research-based material (Boardman et al., 2005; Lyon & Chhabra, 2004).

Cook and Cook (2004; see also Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998) asserted that the influence of research on educational practice has been diminished because researchers do not understand teachers. One example pertains to how teachers conceptualize teaching. They tend to use “action frames” and think of teaching in very concrete ways. Teachers also tend to favor ongoing assessment of learning over curriculum-based assessment (CBA). CBA is an innovation that has been proven to be extremely effective, but is considered a more formalized system of measurement (Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller, 1997). According to Ball (1993), “Those who would try to change what goes on in schools must figure out how to communicate about change in a way that makes sense and respects where teachers are and yet makes them realize that they are being asked to rethink what they do” (pp. 257-258). Factors such as teacher knowledge and learning, teacher attitudes and beliefs, as well as contextual factors (e.g., multiple demands on teachers in regard to time, paperwork, curriculum, workshops, decision-making in the classroom, and administrative directives) should all be taken into consideration as these factors influence the connection between research and practice (Boardman et al., 2005; Vaughn, Klingner, & Hughes, 2000). Insights into classroom life help researchers to understand teachers’ situations far better than in the past. These glimpses also offer clues as to why research is not always perceived as being relevant to teachers (Boardman et al., 2005; Lyon & Chhabra, 2004). According to Kennedy (1997), “Whatever knowledge research may provide, it can rarely guide teachers toward concrete strategies or routines that can accommodate all of the constraints they are trying to manage” (p. 6). Rather than do

things differently, teachers continue to use the strategies they feel adequately address problems and satisfy many constraints (Boardman et al., 2005; Kennedy, 1997).

A third hypothesis focuses on teachers' inadequate access to research and ideas. Research findings have not been expressed in ways that are comprehensible to teachers, and opportunities for teachers to reflect and understand the concepts are critical for sustained practice (Cook & Cook, 2004; Gersten, Chard, & Baker, 2000). This hypothesis has led to endeavors such as the National Diffusion Network, Educational Resources Information Centers (ERIC) clearinghouses, and sponsorship of regional labs in an effort to disseminate research findings into the classrooms. At the same time, researchers focused on "what makes research accessible to teachers and how teachers use research that is accessible" (Kennedy, 1997, p. 7). One finding resulting from this research indicates that research was more often used conceptually rather than instrumentally. In other words, as Kennedy (1997) states:

Practitioners did not take research tools that could be directly applied in their classrooms, but instead took ideas; concepts that could, especially when combined with other ideas and with their own experiences, help them understand their situations or help them invent specific responses to local situations (Kennedy, 1983). Even when teachers were trying to implement specific classroom innovations, we discovered that they did not adopt innovations, but instead adapted them (Bernard & McLaughlin, 1975, 1978). (p. 7)

Another finding showed that teachers' prior beliefs and values substantially influenced their practice (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Vaughn, Klingner, & Hughes, 2000; Lyon & Chhabra, 2004). The influence could be direct in that it designated what was important to accomplish. This influence was also indirect in that it could affect a teacher's reception to ideas from research and/or their peers (Boardman et al., 2005; Kennedy, 1997). The presence and influence of prior beliefs and values suggests that

change in practice will not come about simply by informing teachers of effective practice. Beliefs most resistant to change include those formed in childhood, those most closely associated with a teacher's identity, and those that constitute an integral part of interlocking networks of beliefs. Examples of this network of beliefs include the appropriate role for teachers to play associated with beliefs about how students learn, the nature of school subjects and curriculum (Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1994).

This last finding indicates that the accessibility of research can be both physical and conceptual. According to Carnine (1997), physical accessibility "has to do with the ease and quickness with which practitioners can obtain research findings and extract the necessary information related to a certain goal" (p. 515). If this endeavor is difficult and time-consuming, practitioners are unlikely to make the effort. Placing research in conceptual reach of teachers may strengthen the connection between research and practice if research can influence teachers' thinking and persuade teachers to reconsider prior assumptions (Kennedy, 1997; Lyon & Chhabra, 2004).

A fourth hypothesis with regard to the research to teaching gap suggests that problems connecting research to practice may lie within the education system (Abbott, Walton, Tapia, & Greenwood, 1999; Boardman et al., 2005; Cook & Cook, 2004). The education system itself is intractable and unable to change, or it is conversely inherently unstable, overly susceptible to fads, and consequently unable to engage in systematic change. Either of these characteristics – excessive instability and excessive stability – renders it incapable of responding reliably to educational research. Decentralized governance is an important factor as there is no centralized curriculum, examination

system, textbooks, teacher education curriculum, or standards. Even when policies are defined, they are defined loosely and subject to some interpretation (Kennedy, 1997).

Other factors include a heterogeneous population that is racially and ethnically diverse, proposals for change driven by moral imperatives rather than proven effectiveness, persuasion through publicity instead of reasoned argument, and schools vulnerable to public pressure. There is a lack of coherent direction that is even evidenced in school textbooks. Several studies (McKnight et al., 1989; Schmidt et al., 1996, as cited in Kennedy, 1997) “found American textbooks to be more fragmented and superficial than texts in most other countries. They were longer, covered more topics, and devoted more space to review and repetition . . . but were treated with little depth” (p. 8). At the same time, with so many ambiguous goals that barrage educators, in conjunction with very little time to think through any newly presented ideas, educators resort to protecting themselves from extensive changes by implementing small adjustments at the margins to appease calls for reform (Boardman et al., 2005; Kennedy, 1997). Thus, education systems can teeter between stability and instability.

Factors Enhancing Sustained Use of Evidence-Based Instructional Practices

A body of knowledge has slowly emerged over the past 20 years that could contribute to understanding factors that facilitate the translation of research into practice. The research has been compiled from a multitude of disciplines including professional development research, policy research, research on teaching, as well as school reform. As a result, Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller (1997) present principles promoting sustained use of research including: 1) feasibility and fit – the reality principle; 2) scope and magnitude of intended change required by interventions; 3) addressing the technical

and conceptual aspects of change; 4) linking research to improvements in learning; and 5) substantive professional interactions with colleagues.

The first principle with regard to sustained use of research-based practices focuses on practicality, concreteness, and specificity. A consistent refrain in implementation research focuses on the provision of concrete, practical suggestions by consultants (Huberman & Miles, 1984; Deshler, & Schiller, 1997). Knowing what works and implementing what works is not the same thing. Unless interventions are adapted to match the realities of classrooms, teachers will not use them (Boardman et al., 2005; Cook & Cook, 2004; Gersten et al., 1997).

Researchers must also consider promoting instructional practices that “reflect and fit within the details of day-to-day classroom instruction” (Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller, 1997, p. 469). Gersten and Woodward (1990, as cited in Gersten et al., 1997) called this the “reality principle.” The combination of vague, cursory guidelines with the lack of concrete examples and procedures frequently results in erratic implementation of a new practice (Boardman et al., 2005). In addition, there is minimal growth in student achievement. One example of an intervention designed with the reality principle in mind is direct instruction, complete with clearly specified instructional procedures (Gersten et al., 1997)

Finally, a recent recurrent finding is that “interventions not only must be sufficiently powerful to improve the performance of students with disabilities but also must lend themselves to integration with current teaching practice and conceptions of teaching” (Schumm et al., 1995, as cited in Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller, 1997, p. 469). For the facilitation of sustained use, teachers must perceive instructional

practices as being effective for both typical students and students with disabilities (Boardman et al., 2005; Cook & Cook, 2004; Klingner, Arguelles, Hughes, & Vaughn, 2001).

The second principle to facilitate the sustained use of research-based practices has to do with the scope of an innovation. On one end of the spectrum, an intervention with an ambitiously broad scope may be ill defined and provide little guidance and relevance to teaching practices in the classroom. On the other end of the spectrum, an intervention with a narrow scope and overly detailed directives has not been proven to engage teachers' interest. As a result, researchers have found that aiming for the middle ground in regard to scope and specificity is best (Gersten, Chard, & Baker, 2000; Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller, 1997). Upon reflection of her earlier studies of implementation, McLaughlin (1990, p. 12, as cited in Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller, 1997) concludes, "Planned change efforts . . . need to be sufficient in scope to challenge teachers and kindle interest, but . . . not require too much too soon" (p. 469).

The third principle in the quest for research sustainability concerns addressing the technical and conceptual aspects of change (Cook & Cook, 2004; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001). Technically, research shows that providing access to effective practices via inservices or one-day workshops is not enough to evoke lasting change in teaching practices (Boardman et al., 2005; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001). According to Huberman and Miles (1984) "large-scale, change-bearing innovations lived or died by the amount and quality of assistance that their users received once the change process was under way" (p. 273). In other words, there should be ample opportunities to practice where follow up is immediate and consistent, and feedback is specific and focused. Research indicates that

teachers who have the opportunity to attain practice mastery on a particular intervention or set of interventions are likely to continue using the intervention for a sustained period of time (Huberman & Miles, 1984). In addition, this finding has been independently duplicated. Conceptual opportunities include building conceptual understanding of interventions and linking research ideas to classroom situations and problem-solving through discussion with colleagues, consultants, and other professionals (Englert & Rozendal, 2004).

The fourth principle contributing to sustained research practices entails linking research to improvements in student learning (Abbott, Walton, Tapia, & Greenwood, 1999; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001). According to Abbott, Walton, Tapia, & Greenwood (1999), “helping teachers learn to use a problem-solving method of inquiry that links change in practice directly to change in student performance is fundamentally important” (p. 349). Teachers’ attitude toward innovative approaches before implementation and staff development is not an accurate predictor of how successful the implementation might be. Instead, teachers became more motivated about an innovation as they observed actual changes in student outcomes and academic performance (Gersten et al., 1997).

According to Huberman (1993, p.13, as cited in Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller, 1997) it is important to continually link new innovative teaching practices to specific measures of student learning because “intensive collaboration – planning, exchanging materials, and regulating pupil performance – does not automatically translate into observable changes in classroom practice and may, if pushed too hard, actually eat into time for ongoing instructional work in class “ (p. 471). In other words,

establishing these links between research and changes in student performance is often easier said than done.

This raises another important issue with regard to documenting changes in performance and learning for students with learning disabilities. Initial changes in student learning may be slight and not easily observed or noticed. To complicate the situation, appropriate measures needed to document these subtle changes are not always available (Schumaker and Deshler, 1992, as cited in Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller, 1997).

Finally, a frequent mistake made by researchers and other change agents is their collection, organization and documentation of student outcome data without working with teachers to help them understand how to use this data to benefit students and their own teaching (Cochran-Smith & Lyle, 1999). If teachers are not taught how to use this data, they will continue to rely on observable student behavior instead of more effective assessment data. A good example of this is the fact that teachers rarely look at curriculum-based data unless it is made a focal point of discussions with consultants (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Phillips, & Bentz, 1994).

The fifth principle looks to substantive professional interactions with colleagues and developing a collaborative community of learners to support the sustainability of research (Boardman et al., 2005; Englert & Rozendal, 2004; Ross & Blanton, 2004). Many factors influence the quality of teachers' work, as well as their level of commitment. Examples include compensation, recognition, planning time, teacher input, the opportunity for professional development and engagement (Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller, 1997). These are just some of the factors that go in to creating a

school's culture, which in turn, can substantially influence what a teacher can do or chooses to do when it comes to adopting or implementing innovative practices in the classroom (Boardman et al., 2005).

Teaching and learning networks, teams, and partnerships flourish in school communities that view collaboration as the norm. Such communities understand the powerful potential of teamwork, and choose to harness this energy to accomplish goals (Englert & Rozendal, 2004). According to Walther-Thomas, Korinek, and McLaughlin (1999):

These schools believe that all individuals are valuable to the community. Formal and informal support structures are developed to ensure that all participants are successful. In addition, these schools provide opportunities for all members to contribute to the well-being of the community, because every person has skills, talents, knowledge, and experiences to offer that will make the school a better place. (p. 3)

Characteristics of collaborative communities include the delegation and distribution of professional responsibilities, established decision-making procedures, shared knowledge, experiences, and resources, and appropriate, well-developed, and well thought out accountability measures (Gersten, Chard, & Baker, 2000; Klingner, Arguelles, Hughes, & Vaughn, 2001). In addition, collaborative communities recognize the importance of dialogue to foster more effective problem solving and solution-finding through discussion with colleagues, consultants, and other professionals (Englert & Rozendal, 2004; Ross & Blanton, 2004). Collaborative schools tend to be less hierarchical and more democratic. Furthermore, Walther-Thomas et al. (1999) state, "Collaborative communities often reflect openness in discussions, teaching that is personal but not private, clear respect for others' opinions and beliefs, and a healthy sense of belonging to a group and working as a team" (p. 3).

The Nature of the Problem

Educational researchers have only recently begun to address the issue of sustainability (Gersten, Chard, & Baker, 2000). Several studies (Abbott, Walton, Tapia, & Greenwood, 1999; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller, 1997; Vaughn, Klingner, & Hughes, 2000) have addressed the issue in the form of self-reflective essays. There is still a need to delve deeper into factors that foster or inhibit sustainability in order to develop a deeper understanding of the connection between research and practice. It is particularly important due to recent advances in effective teaching approaches that can benefit not only students with learning disabilities, but also the population of students in general. Increasing effectiveness and sophistication of teacher professional development technologies must also be taken into consideration. According to Gersten, Chard, and Baker (2000), “Not only is the long-term sustainability of effective practices unknown, even research regarding how best to initiate change is still in a relatively formative stage” (p. 445).

What is still unknown about the research to practice connection and sustainability issues is reflected in Kennedy’s assessment of the state of our system today. Kennedy (1997) contends:

So we have a system that can be characterized by a lack of agreed-on goals, a lack of shared guiding principles, no central authority to settle disputes, decentralized decision-making, a continual stream of new fads and fancies, limited evidence to support or refute any particular idea, textbooks that manage the conflicts by including all possible ideas and giving no serious attention to any of them, and reforms that are running at cross-purposes to each other. (p. 8)

In spite of the fact that school districts, schools, and classrooms across the country share common features such as grade structures, curriculum structures, and student placement policies, schools are also fundamentally different due to all the factors that make up a

school's culture. As a result, "Top-down approaches to change are often unsuccessful because it is the culture of each school or district that needs to actively embrace research-based practices" (Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller, 1997, p. 473).

There is much to be learned from "working intensively in a few specific school sites, using that experience to help determine which factors are necessary to support sustained use, and to better understand the realities of serious implementation" (Greenwood et al., 1989; Kline et al., 1992, as cited in Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller, 1997, p. 473). The complexities present in a school setting or classroom must be intentionally accounted for when designing a research scheme if researchers want to assess the power of interventions in place. Studies that consider this larger context will require an alternating view between the micro and macro perspective (Gersten et al., 1997). This entails systems thinking (Senge, 1990), which provides a framework for focusing on patterns of change "by viewing behavior from a systems perspective, using collaborative planning and problem solving procedures, and pursuing strategies that are based in principles for organizational change" (Curtis & Stollar, 2002).

In order to investigate factors that may promote sustainability, a qualitative research study was conducted to provide an in-depth look at a multi modal service model developed by ASSETS School, an independent school for students with dyslexia and learning disabilities in Honolulu, Hawaii. It is important to consider schools that work to address the needs of students with learning disabilities because "students who do not learn to read will have difficulty mastering academic content, succeeding in school, and fulfilling their life potential" (Lyon & Chhabra, 2004). By virtue of the population they serve, ASSETS works to promote effective practices and a dynamic and collaborative

learning community. The students at ASSETS represent the “treatment resisters” and “curriculum casualties” that Torgesen (2000) has identified. These are the 2% to 6% of children who still have inadequate reading skills even if the best instructional and intervention methods were applied at their former schools.

Additionally, there are some foundational principles that have been found to contribute to knowledge of teaching practices, collaboration, and creating learning communities. These principles include: 1) knowledge of teaching practice is developed within communities; 2) all community members are co-inquirers as each has important expertise to contribute to the process; 3) community members collaboratively inquire about both craft knowledge and formal propositional knowledge to develop knowledge of teaching practice; 4) teacher education results from a progression of critical inquiry; and 5) teacher education strategies used provide opportunity for members to work collaboratively, share different perspectives, and examine knowledge (Ross & Blanton, 2004).

Thus, learning communities and collaboration are considered essential factors in meeting the needs of each student and achieving mutual goals. Everyone involved in this endeavor has an important role to play given that simply possessing student outcome data and increasing knowledge of effective practices is often not enough to adopt and sustain evidence-based practices. Teaching practices utilized with students with significant learning needs are critically important, thus the culture at ASSETS school must ensure that effective teaching practices are valued and widely practiced (Cook & Cook, 2004). This is done through various structures and processes at ASSETS, including the Administrative Advisory Team (AAT). Administrators have a key role in determining

school culture and climate, so AAT members have unique functions and responsibilities as they provide systematic supports, and endeavor to support and facilitate the ASSETS service model as well as sustainability of evidence-based practices. The following research questions guided the research design and procedures for this study:

1. What makes the ASSETS model an effective service model?
2. What are the functions and responsibilities of the Administrative Advisory Team?
3. How does the AAT Administrative Advisory Team support and facilitate the ASSETS service model and the sustainability of evidence-based practices?

CHAPTER 2 RESEARCH METHODS

As a teacher at ASSETS School in Honolulu, Hawaii for 6½ years, I served in various roles including project director of a grant, summer school science academy teacher, Orton-Gillingham training assistant, teacher representative, and member of an accreditation leadership committee. After teaching in Hawaii, I went on to be a principal at a school in Singapore for 2 years. Then, in the fall of 2001, I started the School Psychology graduate program at the University of Florida and I accumulated practicum experience at 6 schools in 4 Florida counties. Additionally, I served one year as a field supervisor to 16 graduate students doing their teaching pre-internships at 10 different schools.

I enjoyed working in such a wide variety of schools and had the opportunity to meet and learn from dedicated professionals. At the same time, I came across situations that puzzled me. Although I was learning about evidence-based practices in my university program, I noticed many instances where there appeared to be a gap between research and practice in the schools. For example, none of the schools had a school wide behavioral system in place and many of the schools utilized Exceptional Special Education (ESE) resource rooms with students ranging between second and fifth grade coming and going on an hourly basis. As a result, I saw students with behavior problems who seemed to get passed on from classroom to classroom each year. Clearly, these students were not learning how to problem-solve and to take responsibility for their

choices. I also found as McLeskey and Waldron (2004) noted in a recent article that, “students in these classrooms (resource) often do not receive high quality, differentiated instruction based on evidence based practices” (p. 3).

The present study and the specific research questions eventually developed from my observations and experiences across these various schools. It occurred to me that the school where I taught in Honolulu used many evidence-based practices in order to address the needs of students with disabilities. McLeskey and Waldron (2004) indicate that a substantial amount of research has been done in the area of special education to ascertain which practices are effective for students with disabilities. The authors go on to state:

These effective practices have addressed a broad range of topics, including direct instruction (Carnine, Silbert, & Kameenui, 1997); teacher collaborative teams (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Bahr, 1990); reading instruction (Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1996); classwide peer tutoring (Greenwood, Delquadri, & Hall, 1989); teaching strategies that accommodate diverse learners (Kameenui, Carnine, Dixon, Simmons, & Coyne, 2002); learning strategy interventions (Schumaker & Deshler, 1992); and cooperative learning strategies for teaching reading and mathematics (Slavin & Madden, 2001). (p.3)

Since I had taught at a school with a unique service model that utilized practices such as the ones mentioned above, there was an opportunity to investigate the service model at ASSETS school as an example of how research practices can be implemented and sustained. Examples of specific structures in place at ASSETS to support the needs of students with learning disabilities included reading instruction, direct instruction, a variety of teaching strategies utilized to accommodate diverse learners, and a school-wide behavioral and counseling system. Therefore, the primary goal of this inquiry was to further inform the research literature on factors enhancing sustained use of evidence-based practices.

The Nature of the Research Study

This chapter outlines the research procedures utilized in this study and includes sections addressing: the nature of the research study, site selection, participants, data collection, data analysis, methodological issues, and researcher qualifications and assumptions.

This qualitative research study provides an in-depth look at a multi modal service model developed by ASSETS School, an independent school for students with dyslexia and learning disabilities in Honolulu, Hawaii. The primary research questions that guided the design and data collection procedures for this study include the following:

1. What makes the ASSETS model an effective service model?
2. What are the functions and responsibilities of the Administrative Advisory Team?
3. How does the Administrative Advisory Team support and facilitate the ASSETS service model and the sustainability of evidence-based practices?

Qualitative methods (Patton, 2002) were appropriate for this study as my interest was in describing a multi modal service model in detail. As an aspiring school psychologist, I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that foster a viable service model, effective teamwork and curriculum, as well as successful teacher learning and student outcomes. This study exhibited the five features of qualitative research defined by Bogdan and Biklen (1998): (1) naturalistic; (2) descriptive data; (3) concern with process; (4) inductive; and (5) meaning. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), the researcher is the primary instrument in gathering data from real-world settings, and the collected data is rendered in words or pictures rather than numbers. In addition, qualitative researchers emphasize process rather than just outcomes or products, the theory is grounded in the data, and there is concern with participant perspectives. My purposes in this study were linked to qualitative research in the following ways:

clarifying and understanding phenomena and situations; understanding how participants perceive their roles or responsibilities in an organization; determining the history of a situation; finding original and innovative approaches to commonly known problems; and generating knowledge in an attempt to determine general principles of effective practice (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002).

A case study design was used to consider factors that contribute to a successful service model, how the AAT functions, and what the AAT does to contribute to an effective service model at ASSETS School. According to Yin (1998, 2003; see also Stake, 1995), a case study design is most relevant when a researcher wants to clarify how and why events occur. Yin (1998) also proposes that a “case study may have a main unit of analysis and also one or more subunits of analyses within the main unit” (p. 238). In this study, ASSETS School is the main unit of analysis. However, important questions required the collection of data from each AAT member (subunits) within the school. I chose this case study “because it is itself intrinsically interesting, and one would study it to achieve as full an understanding of the phenomenon as possible” (Merriam, 1998, p. 28). Thus, a case study design is “chosen precisely because researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing” (Merriam, 1998, pp. 28-29).

Site Selection

ASSETS is an independent school that serves 400 students with dyslexia and learning disabilities in grades K through 12 in Honolulu, Hawaii. I chose this site for the research study due to several reasons. First, this school uses many practices deemed effective by research for students with disabilities. Examples of these practices include

direct instruction, teacher collaborative teams, evidence-based reading instruction, teaching strategies that accommodate diverse learners, and learning strategy interventions. Second, I had extensive background knowledge of ASSETS School and the AAT as I had previously taught at the school for 6½ years. When I first came to ASSETS, my undergraduate degrees were in English and Biology, not education. I experienced first hand the extensive training and support (instructional and psychological) necessary to enable me to implement instructional practices effectively. Third, many of the AAT's functions and responsibilities are similar to what I do as an aspiring school psychologist. Examples include the following: instructional consultation with teachers; positive behavior support systems for disruptive students; and progress monitoring of students with academic difficulties.

On the surface, a day in the life of a typical student at ASSETS is similar to that of other students in public or private schools. One has to look beneath the surface to see how modifications have been implemented in order to meet the needs of individual students. Except on Wednesdays, the school day starts at 7:40am and ends at 3:00pm, so the average school day is more extensive at ASSETS than at many other public and private schools in Hawaii. A significant difference between ASSETS School and other schools is the teacher to student ratio. Each classroom has two teachers and between 15 to 18 students. Thus, subjects such as language arts and math generally have a minimum teacher/student ratio of 1:7 and a maximum of 1:10. In the High School, the teacher/student ratio is about 1:5. Language arts are scheduled between 105 and 180 minutes each day. In addition, enrichment, counseling, thinking skills, and thematic curriculum are an integral part of each classroom's schedule. An example of an

elementary student's typical schedule is provided in Table 2-1 on the next page. More extensive information regarding ASSETS will be provided later in Chapter Three.

Participants

The eight members who comprised the AAT at ASSETS School in the summer of 2003 were asked to participate in this study. After careful consideration of the research questions for this study, it was determined that collecting data from each AAT member would render rich information about their roles, and how they support and facilitate the service model at ASSETS School. The AAT is a group of administrators involved in virtually every aspect of how the school is run on a daily basis and includes the Head of School, the K-8 Principal, the High School Principal, the Head Diagnostician, the Counselor, and three Curriculum Specialists.

Table 2-1 Example Daily Elementary Schedule

Example Daily Schedule						
From	To	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:40	8:10	Morning Work - Thinking Skills				
8:10	8:55	Language Arts	Language Arts	Theme/Structures	Language Arts	
8:55	9:20		Art			
9:20	9:25	Bathroom Break				
9:25	10:00	Language Arts	Art	Library (9:10-9:40)	Language Arts	
10:00	10:15	Break				
10:20	11:05	Math		Theme	Math	
11:10	11:50	Lunch				
11:55	12:40	History	Science	PE	History	Music (11:55 - 12:45)
12:45	1:30	Computer	Reading/ Reading Comprehension	Class/Individual Counseling	PE (12:50 - 1:40)	Science (12:50 - 1:40)
1:30	1:40	Transition				
1:40	2:15	Enrichment			Enrichment	
2:15	2:50	Class/ Individual Counseling	Class/ Individual Counseling		Class/ Individual Counseling	Class Council/ Individual Counseling

Although each AAT member has specialized expertise, knowledge and specific roles, the requirements for each member also include 1) knowledge of curriculum and the ability to work with teachers on a consultative basis; 2) skill to counsel students, to support a school-wide behavioral system, and to help teachers to arrive at systems of intervention for students; 3) providing administrative support, managing programs, making decisions, and working collaboratively with parents, colleagues, and other school personnel; 4) knowledge of diagnostic testing, helping teachers to be able to assess students both formally and informally, and implementing a system that focuses on the individual needs of students (AAT interviews, 2003; Hishinuma, 1993). Basic demographics for the eight AAT members who participated in the study are provided in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2 Participant Demographics

Name	Age Range	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Position	Yrs. at ASSETS
Lee	51 - 55	Male	Caucasian	Head of School	7
Rick	51 - 55	Male	Asian/Pacific Islander	K – 8 Principal	15
Jen	46 - 50	Female	Caucasian	Curriculum Specialist Remedial - Intermediate	13
Rita	46 - 50	Female	Caucasian	Curriculum Specialist Gifted Programs	10
Page	46 - 50	Female	Asian/Pacific Islander	Counselor	8
Danielle	46 - 50	Female	Asian/Pacific Islander	Curriculum Specialist Remedial – Elem.	20
Stacy	46 - 50	Female	Asian/Pacific Islander	Head Diagnostician	> 20
Peggy	46 - 50	Female	Caucasian	High School Principal	6

Participant Selection

AAT members were recruited to participate in this study. An email request detailing the study was sent to the Head of ASSETS School seeking permission to

approach the rest of the AAT members. Permission was granted and an email request detailing the study was sent to all AAT members. As a former teacher, I still retained a teacher's perspective and I briefly considered adding to this perspective by collecting data from other teachers at ASSETS. However, I wanted a broader, more comprehensive view of the service model and decided that the AAT members could provide this. According to Patton (2002), "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of inquiry . . ." (p. 230).

Because participant selection is important in order for the researcher to gain insight and understanding, the AAT members were selected because they are involved in all aspects of administration. The AAT also presented a unique case, consistent with Merriam's (1998) recommendations for participant selection. For example, their role in problem-solving and school-based decisions was critical to bridging the research to practice gap. In addition, each AAT member had both specific and common roles/responsibilities within the school. All eight AAT members agreed to participate in the study, which was critical to gain insight into factors enhancing sustained use of evidence-based practices. Lincoln and Guba (1985), as cited in Merriam (1998), state, "In purposeful sampling the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations. If the purpose is to maximize information, the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from new sampled units, thus redundancy is the primary criterion" (p. 202). With all members of the AAT participating in the study, there was a higher likelihood that redundancy would be reached.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection, which focused primarily on interviews and document review, was completed within a three-week period from July 3 to July 23, 2003. An interview meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii was scheduled with each participant via email or through a telephone conversation. All components of the research study were clearly described for the AAT members (Appendix A, Letter of Informed Consent). The participants were also made aware of the data collection process and the purpose of the research study. The letter of informed consent, the interview protocol (Appendix B), as well as the demographic protocol (Appendix C) were sent to each AAT member by email in advance of each interview.

Interviews

In this study, an interview with each participant was the primary strategy for data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). An interview is a purposeful conversation, usually held between two people (Morgan, 1988, as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The interviewer directs the conversation in order to obtain information from the interviewee (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Interviews were utilized to collect descriptive data in the words of each AAT member which enabled the researcher to develop understanding and insights with regard to how participating subjects interpret some part of the world (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Schwandt, 1997). An interview protocol (see Appendix B) was employed to guide the content of each interview. Topics included in the interview protocol consisted of systems of support provided by the AAT, evidence-based components/services utilized at ASSETS, as well as how program effectiveness was evaluated. In addition, the participants were asked which components they thought could

be implemented somewhere else and how this might be done, what barriers the team encountered, how components/services were coordinated to benefit each student, and what specific roles and responsibilities each AAT member had.

This semi-structured approach had a standardized format detailing specific questions. At the same time, this approach allowed exploration of topics, which offered flexibility in probing, and at times, made it possible to ask questions about new areas of inquiry that were not anticipated when the original interview protocol was developed (Patton, 2002). A good example of this flexibility in probing occurred when Danielle, an AAT member, mentioned how things were so different when she first came to ASSETS school (20 years ago) and there was no such thing as an AAT team. Probing facilitated understanding in regard to how the AAT developed and why this development was necessary. According to Danielle, teachers were trained to compile and analyze information in order to develop an extensive student profile on each of their students. The student profile included diagnostic and testing information, academic functioning, progress, and supports, as well as counseling, behavioral, and social-emotional information. Although ASSETS was still a small school at the time with about 150 students, Danielle stated that this responsibility eventually took too much teacher time and energy and also affected lesson planning. This information garnered through flexible semi-structured interviews presented a richer understanding of how the service model at ASSETS school came into existence.

Each interview ranged from 30 to 120 minutes, with an average length of 60 minutes. Interviews were audiotaped to ensure that everything the interviewees said was preserved for analysis. In addition, listening to the initial interviews helped with

evaluating and improving subsequent interviewing techniques. Notes were also taken during each interview. The written notes often helped with pacing the interview, recording a reaction to something one of the interviewees might have said, or underscoring what was perceived to be important and should be noted (Merriam, 1998).

Data Analysis

Various data analysis activities occurred starting in the spring 2004 semester. According to Schwandt (1997), data analysis can be defined as, “working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others” (p. 157). The first stage of data analysis concerned systematically organizing all of the data, developing a notation system ensuring that data was properly labeled, making sure that the interview transcriptions were completed, and getting a sense of the whole (Patton, 2002). In order to break down the data into manageable units, Patton’s (2002) approach to data analysis was utilized, which involved a process of coding, finding patterns, developing category systems, and labeling themes.

In the initial stage of data analysis, all the interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure that the actual conversation between the interviewer and the AAT participant was accurately documented. This also provided an opportunity to get immersed in the data. After interview transcriptions were completed, each one was reviewed for accuracy by listening to the tapes while reading the transcripts (Patton, 2002).

In the next stage of the data analysis process, each interview transcription was reviewed and coded to facilitate the search for topics and patterns. In initial readings of each transcript, potentially meaningful units of data were highlighted. According to

Merriam (1998), “Units of data – bits of information – are literally sorted into groupings that have something in common” (p. 179). During this process, recurring regularities in the data emerged to reveal patterns that were sorted into categories. These patterns and categories were filled out by extending and building on information that was known, and bridging pieces of data by making connections between them (Guba, 1978, as cited in Patton, 2002).

The three themes emerged quite naturally out of the sorted categories. One theme that became apparent from a group of categories was *roles*, best illustrated by *The Four Hat Model*. Although each AAT member has additional areas of responsibility, they wore four hats, which included being involved with curriculum, counseling/behavior, testing/diagnostics, and administration. Another cluster of categories was comprised of evidence-based practices such as the school-wide counseling (affective curriculum) and behavior system, mentoring program, and thematically differentiated-integrated curriculum design. It was interesting to see how ASSETS had integrated and blended all of these promising practices to address the needs of their students. Since *integration* was such an important part of ASSETS, this theme was chosen to link these conceptual elements in a meaningful way (Merriam, 1998). The third theme highlighted creating a *dynamic learning community* as learning communities and collaboration were essential factors in meeting the needs of each student and achieving mutual goals. Everyone involved in this endeavor has an important role to play. ASSETS fosters an atmosphere of interdependence as all involved must learn and grow in order to improve the prospects for a child at school.

At this point, descriptions of the themes and categories were written, as well as outlining membership and non-membership rules for each group (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). With these rules in mind, each transcript was analyzed and categories were grouped thematically using color-coded post-it notes. After these categories were grouped and coded, the transcripts were reviewed again to cut and paste all data unit examples and put them into one document. According to Patton (2002), the process is basically complete when resources of information have been expended, “when sets of categories have been saturated so that new sources lead to redundancy, when clear regularities have emerged that feel integrated, and when analysis begins to ‘overextend’ beyond the boundaries of the issues and concerns guiding the analysis” (p. 466).

Methodological Issues

To enhance the credibility of this qualitative study, rigorous and systematic methods of data analysis were employed. Tellis (1997) states that case study is recognized as a triangulated research strategy. Snow and Anderson (as cited in Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991) support this perspective and emphasize that triangulation can happen with such things as investigators, theories, methodologies, and data. According to Denzin (1984), there are four types of triangulation. Investigator triangulation occurs when more than one investigator examines the same phenomenon. Theory triangulation arises when investigators with different perspectives interpret the same results. Methodological triangulation comes about by following up one approach with another to augment confidence in the interpretation. Finally, data source triangulation looks for the data to remain consistent and reliable in different contexts. Data source triangulation was chosen for this case study to provide assurance that the information collected was

credible and consistent. Interviews with each AAT member, document review, and my experience working at ASSETS provided data source triangulation (Denzin, 1984; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 2002).

My experience at ASSETS contributed to the reliability of the data. I had previously worked with the AAT, was the recipient of AAT support, was provided training, implemented evidence-based practices, and was involved with evaluation and developing individual educational profiles on each student that I taught. From my time spent at ASSETS, I still retained all the training materials, the professional portfolio and curriculum developed, as well as examples of the individual educational plans for students I worked with. Not only did I reach a point in data collection where I was learning nothing new, I was confident the information collected was not attributed to chance.

To further augment credibility in this study, I utilized member checks (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002) by submitting transcriptions and interpretations via email to the AAT members from whom they were derived for constructive feedback. Review by participants can provide researchers valuable information about completeness, fairness, accuracy, “and perceived validity of their data analysis by having the people described in that analysis react to what is described and concluded” (Patton, 2002, p. 560). Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that the use of member checks is one of the most necessary forms of validation in qualitative studies. After sending the transcriptions, I made several trips back to ASSETS and met with several AAT members each time. I communicated via email with the others that I was unable to follow up with in person. The member checks gave me the opportunity to confirm the accuracy of the information. I was also

able to share my impressions of what I had heard and get feedback from participants in regard to observations, categories, and themes. The on-going member checks of the information, categories, themes, and conclusions contributed to the trustworthiness of this study.

Additionally, I was a member of a biweekly writing group, and met with two peer doctoral students consistently for approximately a year. This experience highlighted the importance of peer examination and debriefing techniques as a means of enhancing credibility. I maintained contact with one of the members of this writing group throughout the study and data analysis. This person helped me develop the interview protocol and suggested that I put together a demographic form for my participants to fill out. The peer reviewer also provided feedback on multiple versions of the developing coding system and manuscript. Since my peer reviewer was pursuing her clinical psychology doctorate in Atlanta, Georgia, we communicated primarily through phone and email. We would get together whenever she was in town and this provided an opportunity to brainstorm, test hypotheses, and question my own assumptions about the data. Peer review provided an objective, independent assessment of the suitability of analytical concepts, the adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations, and sensitivity to the participants involved (Wolcott, 1990).

Researcher Qualifications and Assumptions

As a school psychology doctoral student and the primary instrument of data gathering, I brought unique experiences, training, characteristics, and perspectives to the study. Additional important demographic information about myself as the researcher is provided in Table 2-3.

Table 2-3 Researcher Demographics

Name	Tanya
Age	45
Gender	Female
Race/Ethnicity	Asian/Pacific Islander
Prior Teaching Experience – Special Education	6½ years – 1 st /2 nd grade, 3 rd /4 th grade, 4 th /5 th grade, and 7 th /8 th grade
Prior Administrative Experience - Principal	2 years

As previously mentioned, I had extensive background knowledge of ASSETS School and working with the AAT as I had previously taught there for 6½ years. Several of the AAT members recommended me for my next position as the principal of the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS). Two AAT members flew out to Singapore several times a year to train DAS teachers, as well as other professionals in multisensory methodologies.

Although 5 years had elapsed since I left ASSETS and submitted my research request, my former school was still supportive as every AAT member agreed to participate in the study. In addition to the perceptible positive reception to the study, the AAT frequently commented that the interview questions were good and/or interesting, which prompted them to reflect on their own practice. Many AAT members also indicated that I was an appropriate person to conduct the study because of my previous experience at the school. Towards the end of my meeting with Rick, the K-8 principal, we had the following conversation:

- **Tanya:** Well, is there anything you would like to add?
- **Rick:** Only that I think that this is a really good thing that you're doing Tanya. I think because we don't see this "explain the AAT" system to others. It's going to be an extremely difficult process because unless other people have actually seen it in operation, it's sort of like – doesn't quite jell. It's very difficult in accreditation when people come over and look at our system, to truly understand what we do here at ASSETS school – that we have a school with 28 different types of report cards, and they don't understand why we need 28 different types of report cards. Unless they see how the curriculum is

developed and what we're doing with it, it doesn't make sense. By the same token, understanding an AAT role is difficult because you don't have a typical AAT role. You generally have in most schools a head of school, a principal, followed by a vice principal, and I guess a counselor. You don't have this group of administrators who are expected to be able to counsel, teach, and the whole gamut, and work with teachers effectively. You have to know how to provide a good classroom environment for the kids. So I think explaining that is a big job. It's a very difficult one to tease out all the factors that make the system work for us, but may not work for others.

- **Tanya:** Yes, the ironic thing is that I think my school psychology program is trying to train me to be an AAT person (lots of laughter at this). I guess I might have waited here, but turnover is very low.
- **Rick:** Hardly ever. (R. Yamato, personal communication, July 14, 2003)

Throughout this chapter, I have provided several reasons as to why I thought ASSETS was a good site for this study. Aside from my extensive background knowledge of the school, ASSETS utilizes and integrates many evidence-based practices to serve the needs of students with learning disabilities. In addition, I was interested in many of the AAT's functions and responsibilities. As an aspiring school psychologist, I am preparing myself to provide similar supports to students, teachers, parents, and other professionals. I had a positive experience working at ASSETS School and believe that I was provided with training and support far beyond what the majority of teachers experience. For example, most teachers do not have their own consultant to provide curricular and behavioral support in response to student and teacher needs throughout the year. ASSETS was also an exciting and challenging place to teach. I believe my students and I exhibited substantial growth, both academically and personally. On the other hand, the work was demanding and required a considerable amount of time and energy.

I foresee growing momentum towards models which entail uniting educators, parents, policy members, and community members to work to meet the needs of all children. I was interested in analyzing the methods ASSETS utilizes, how the school

implemented these methods, and what supports are in place that contribute to the school's success in sustaining professional development for teachers. As most institutions are not based on a multi-modal model where services are coordinated with all other programs and resources, I was also interested in determining what components could be implemented in other schools.

CHAPTER 3 RESULTS

ASSETS is an independent school that serves over 400 students with dyslexia and learning disabilities in grades K through 12 in Honolulu, Hawaii. The common denominator among students is that their capability is greater than their achievement. Each classroom is assigned two teachers and contains between 15 and 18 students. The Administrative Advisory Team (AAT) provides guidance, experience, and expertise to all teaching faculty. Through interviews with key personnel, this study was designed to investigate a set of research questions, which included exploring what makes the ASSETS model effective and unique. The purpose of the study was to gain understanding of the functions and responsibilities of the AAT at ASSETS School, and how the AAT supports and facilitates the ASSETS service model as well as sustaining evidence-based practices.

As stated in the previous chapter, the eight members who comprised the AAT at ASSETS School in the summer of 2003 were asked to participate in this study. After careful consideration of the goals of this research study, it was determined that collecting data from each AAT member could render rich information about their roles and the use of evidence-based practices. At ASSETS, the AAT is a group of administrators involved in virtually every aspect of how the school is run on a daily basis. The AAT includes the Head of School, the K–8 Principal, the High School Principal, the Head Diagnostician, the Counselor, and three Curriculum Specialists. Although each AAT member has

specialized expertise, knowledge and specific roles, the requirements for each member also include the following: 1) knowledge of curriculum and the ability to work with teachers on a consultative basis; 2) the skill to counsel students, to support a school-wide behavioral system, and to help teachers to arrive at systems of intervention with students; 3) providing administrative support, managing programs, making decisions, and working collaboratively with parents, colleagues, and other school personnel; 4) knowledge of diagnostic testing, helping teachers to be able to assess students both formally and informally, and implementing a system that focuses on the individual needs of students (AAT interviews, 2003; Hishinuma, 1993).

Data analysis resulted in three overarching themes that contributed to my understanding of the factors that impact the ASSETS service model, how the AAT functions to support and assist the model, as well as evidence-based practices. The three themes were: (1) roles and responsibilities of the AAT highlighted by *the Four Hat Model*; (2) integration of services, programs, and resources to meet the needs of all students; and (3) creating a dynamic learning community. The following sections of this chapter provide a discussion of each of the themes.

Roles

In this section, six subcategories of roles, which emerged from the data, will be described: history and need for the AAT, curriculum, counseling/behavior, testing/diagnostic, administrative, and individual/additional roles, as in Figure 3-1.

The 4 Hat Model illustrates this theme. An AAT member wears four hats, which includes being involved with curriculum, counseling/behavior, testing/diagnostic, and administrative issues. Each member of the AAT (except for the Head of School and the

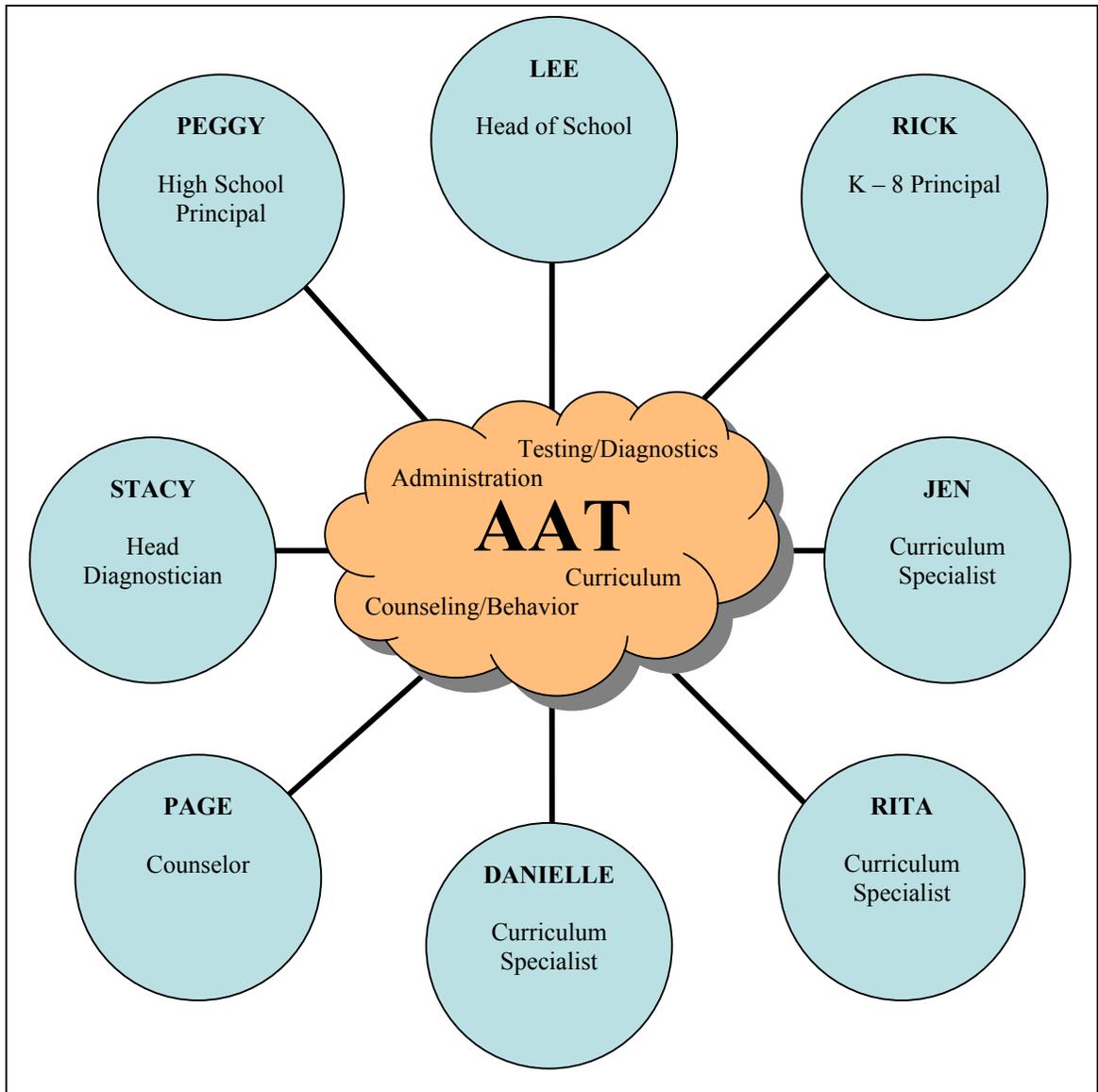


Figure 3-1 Roles and Responsibilities

school counselor) is assigned to designated classrooms, teachers, and students. The AAT provide teachers with guidance, consultation, support, and expertise. As a curriculum specialist/teacher at ASSETS school, the 4 hats can include support for curriculum questions, helping with curriculum development and integration, actual classroom teaching, providing strategies for hands-on science and how to conduct a parent conference. When the 4 Hat Model was originally conceived, ASSETS had no school

counselor. Consequently, the AAT's role in counseling was more intense as each AAT member counseled students from their designated classrooms. With a fulltime school counselor at ASSETS, the AAT member wears a counseling/behavior hat to provide support to the classroom teachers and the counselor. AAT must be able to talk with students, counsel with them, provide discipline, and to help teachers arrive at systems of intervention for their students. With the testing hat AAT members help teachers with informal and formal assessment, and train them to become effective evaluators of student performance. The administrative hat includes paperwork, consulting with parents, answering questions, providing information, and acting as a buffer in difficult situations. Each AAT member has additional areas of responsibility; roles that have distinct parts (J. Roberts, personal communication, July 9, 2003; R. Yamato, personal communication, July 14, 2003).

History and Need for the AAT

ASSETS stands for the Armed Services Special Education and Training Society. The school was established in 1955 "for military children that had handicaps because at that time, the federal government had not mandated that you must have free and appropriate education (FAPE) available. So if you had a child with a handicap, the schools did not have to service your child" (D. Robbins, personal communication, July 12, 2003). There were several changes implemented over the years. In 1969, ASSETS changed their charter and went from serving students with mental disabilities to serving students with learning disabilities. In 1973, the adoption of Section 504 included requirements for the state of Hawaii and all school districts to identify and serve individuals with learning disabilities, so ASSETS began to provide specialized

remediation and services for children identified with dyslexia (D. Robbins, personal communication, July 12, 2003).

D. Robbins provides an example of students who need this kind of specialized remediation. Her example refers to students at ASSETS who needed remediation in language and acceleration in math. A fifth grade student reading at a second grade level would not be able to take trigonometry at any public or private school in Hawaii. D. Robbins states, “At ASSETS, we had several 5th graders taking trigonometry. I think we all believe that there’s a fine line between gifted and LD because some of those dyslexic kids – the way they think and the way they look at things – they’re gifted” (D. Robbins, personal communication, July 12, 2003). By 1976, ASSETS opened their enrollment to all children with learning disabilities in the community, not just children from military families.

Although ASSETS started in 1955, the AAT did not always exist as evidenced in

D. Robbins’s following statement:

When I first came to ASSETS, there was no such thing as an AAT person. But it was a very small school at a 150 students. And so, what each teacher had to do is they had to write their own student profile. So, they had to get all their counseling information, all the diagnoses, they had to go through the folders themselves. For each area – for written expression, for decoding, for spelling, you not only had to list the test scores, but write an explanation – so and so is a visual learner . . . so they had to do everything. That required us to know how to analyze. They trained us to do it. So when I came on the team, I had years of doing this. I was a teacher for about 7 years or so at ASSETS before I joined the AAT. So, fortunately I had that background and it made it easier to do that particular part. The other part, which was difficult, having to transition from just being responsible for my own class, which I loved, to not having a class, but being responsible for what happens in the classes – that one took a little longer. What I had, I guess you would have called them mentors. I had Dr. Earl, and Ron – those two especially – to help in that area. (personal communication, July 12, 2003).

The AAT has been in existence for about 17 years. When asked how the AAT came to be, D. Robbins stated:

What happened was you know that piece I told you about where we really had to learn and do our own thing? What it did was it took a lot of teacher time and energy. And so it would impact curriculum because I'd be staying up until 3:00 in the morning having to write these statements and having to analyze all the data. That piece took a lot – we'd have to start in January. The first inservice was, okay, how would you analyze handwriting? It took so much time, and it was good in a way because you learned a lot, but the downside was how it impacted implementation of curriculum and teacher planning. So, that's when the model – how can we make sure that we maintain the level of services to the students, but still get this documentation out that's so important? That's where this model came from. First of all, we wanted it to be multidisciplinary, so people had to come from different areas. Then it just evolved into what it is today. Okay, that's another piece. The new people that come on [the AAT], like Robin and Avis. No, Avis came from the old school, so I would say just Robin. She had to learn about the tests, she had to try to learn how to connect all of those pieces together, and so it's a benevolent baptismal by fire. (personal communication, July 12, 2003)

B. McCandless, who came to ASSETS as a teacher, became the Head of School and developed the 4 Hat Model briefly described above.

The Curriculum Hat

One role or hat worn by AAT members is the “curriculum specialist/teacher” and according to J. Roberts, this could include the following:

Whether it's support for curriculum questions and looking at some things they [teachers] don't feel like its working. It can also be a teacher who doesn't feel confident in a certain aspect of their curriculum – they will come for assistance. It could be actual classroom teaching, you know how sometimes if we need to help teach like an OG [Orton-Gillingham] class - we may not have had an opportunity to hire someone, or if somebody needed to leave mid-year and suddenly we have a classroom and no trained teacher, then I would go teach in that classroom. Another example in regard to teaching frequently comes up when trying to set up departmental math classes for 7th and 8th graders, and the students are functioning in a range between 4th grade math and Algebra II. I might be needed to teach one of the small groups. (personal communication, July 9, 2003)

R. Yamato adds that developing and implementing curriculum at ASSETS is a very intense process. He acknowledges that it is difficult to be a teacher at ASSETS because with the exception of math, there are no textbooks to rely upon. In addition, “the curriculum is a thematically based one, so a lot of new teachers need that kind of support. How do you integrate – how do you have a system that looks at the individual needs of the student, but also does it in a unique way?” (personal communication, July 14, 2003). According to R. Yamato, the AAT must provide that kind of support. He states that AAT members also have another role in regard to the teaching component. As consultants, AAT members consult and collaborate with teachers to provide strategies with regard to language arts instruction, how to integrate across the curriculum, and how to do hands-on science.

The Counseling/Behavior Hat

Another role or hat of AAT members is “counseling/behavior” which has changed a little in intensity since it was originally conceived. In the time of B. McCandless, ASSETS started with no formal school counselor, so AAT members provided counseling (J. Roberts, personal communication, July 9, 2003). The philosophical perspective has not changed, as there has always been more emphasis on what students can do to improve and resolve the situation rather than focusing on what they should not and cannot do (Hishinuma, 1993). The counseling role today is to provide support to the classroom teachers and to the school counselor. If there are a lot of students that the school counselor needs to see, then the AAT will assist. J. Roberts states, “It’s collaborative in the sense that the counselor will share with us if she feels that there’s an issue that might spill over into other aspects of the school day, so we need to be aware, and to know that

child.” She adds, “those are pretty confidential discussions, but if it’s important information, then we have those discussions professionally” (personal communication, July 9, 2003). R. Yamato stresses the need for AAT members to have the skills to talk to students, as well as provide appropriate counseling and discipline. Furthermore, the AAT must also “help teachers to arrive at systems of intervention for these kids, whether it be individual contract, a class token economy system, etc.” (personal communication, July 14, 2003).

The Testing/Diagnostic Hat

The next role or hat is “testing/diagnostic” and J. Roberts says the AAT needs to be involved “in just the logistics of testing all of our kids as much as we do. It isn’t going to happen unless we all pitch in and help” (personal communication, July 9, 2003).

Testing ranges from informal assessment of phonetic sounds and ongoing curriculum based assessment to formal standardized tests that are nationally normed. R. Yamato agrees that AAT members have to be involved in testing and he states, “AAT must know what the testing is and help teachers to be able to assess students informally and formally, and teach them the things they need to know in order for them to become good evaluators” (personal communication, July 14, 2003). The goal is to enhance instructional outcomes for each student. ASSETS utilizes this data in an ongoing process to put the pieces together to promote student growth and development. This is done through joint examination of the data and explicit attempts to link change with student performance. It also includes not letting kids slip through the cracks, constantly evaluating student growth by utilizing a holistic approach, and obtaining feedback from

all involved, including the students. This kind of approach makes certain that the focus of attention is on student progress.

The Administrative Hat

Examples of administrative roles and responsibilities include paperwork, consulting with parents, answering questions, and conducting presentations and inservices (J. Roberts, personal communication, July 9, 2003). R. Yamato expands upon consulting with parents with the following statement:

If you have a difficult parent who is calling you – how do you handle that situation? Our AAT must be able to get involved in that situation, provide insight, and strategies that might be effective for them. Also, the AAT are like a buffer. If we have a real difficult parent, they will intervene at that point in time. Because the goal is always supporting the teacher, they [AAT] will have to deal with this issue. The AAT is someone the parents can go and talk to at the next level. So really, the AAT is another level in the hierarchy. If there is not success at this next level, it goes to the principal, and the last level is the head of school. That kind of system – I think what we have – helps teachers because they don't really need to get so involved in such a negative interaction. They can say if you have any other concerns or issues, go see my AAT, or go and see Rick, or go and see Lee. (personal communication, July 14, 2003)

L. Severt, the Head of School, concurs with the assessment that the AAT is important in communicating with parents and giving teachers necessary support. He adds that another important job the AAT has is keeping him on track. AAT members meet once a week, and L. Severt states, "I rely on them and their collective wisdom when there are matters of campus organization, programmatic decisions, you name it. They are involved in almost every aspect of administration, and I rely on them with a great deal of confidence that the advice I'm going to get is sound" (personal communication, July 9, 2003).

Individual/Additional Roles

As stated earlier, the AAT includes the Head of School, the K–8 Principal, the High School Principal, the Head Diagnostician, the Counselor, and three Curriculum Specialists. Each AAT member has his or her own area of responsibility. According to L. Severt, his real responsibility as the Head of School would be to make sure that “commitment to a team approach decision-making happens.” He does not even like the word team and would prefer to think of the AAT as more of a council, and his responsibility is to create “white space” for people to think, “Strategically, to think in terms of problem solving, to help them and me figure out how the administration can support instruction and take as much of the other distractions, pressures, and issues out of teachers way.” Furthermore, AAT must “remove the barriers – sometimes you’re running interference for them, and sometimes you’re giving them direct support” (personal communication, July 9, 2003). Additional areas of responsibility include managing the business of the school, dealing with finances and maintenance, working with the board of trustees, fund raising, working with parents, and raising community awareness. L. Severt asserts that there are still people in the community who don’t understand the kids who attend ASSETS and a big part of his job is to get them to understand. He states that there are “parents who are grateful to the school and write me letters every year that will reduce you to tears, are embarrassed to say to their friends and neighbors, my kid goes to ASSETS because of a lack of understanding about who these children are” (personal communication, July 9, 2003).

L. Severt highlights one more responsibility and that is “to listen a lot to what the principals – the high school principal and the K-8 principal – are saying about their

programs, and to help them hear each other.” In 1997, there was a big debate as to whether the high school should be discontinued or not. The high school survived this crisis and L. Severt utilizes one Wednesday a month to help people understand what is going on K-12 in the school. Using slide shows and other formats, L. Severt states, “I show people in K-8 what the high school is doing – I show people in the high school what the K-8 is doing. I help them to understand, I think, that we all contribute to the accomplishment of our mission in very specific and clear ways. We celebrate the successes of our kids and each other” (personal communication, July 9, 2003). L. Severt concludes that because at times he is a cheerleader, a troubleshooter and/or an enforcer, there are many aspects to his job. These also include “pastoral aspects, counseling aspects, regular management aspects, leadership aspects, educational aspects, instructional aspects, public speaking, and politics” (personal communication, July 9, 2003).

P. Jones is the high school principal and she agrees that it took awhile before ASSETS began to transition from K-8 to high school. In the beginning, she believed that K-8 and the high school were two separate entities. She states, “Within the framework of the AAT, I feel I have to contribute the high school perspective to the discussions, so that’s primary. I reflect the high school, and we reflect, all together, the whole group, the needs of the school – K – 12,” (personal communication, July 15, 2003). Another aspect that P. Jones brings to the AAT is that she was actually in public education and she alleges, “I think I offer another view not having been in ASSETS forever, which is good. I guess that’s my job to make sure we know what’s going on – not to be in a vacuum”

(personal communication, July 15, 2003). Some of the most important aspects of what P. Jones does can be found in the following statement:

I think I have to set the course. I think I have to reassure and inspire and nurture and support teachers, so that we can get the job done that is clearly set for us. I set the course, it's right in line with what the mission of the school is, and then I have to support and manage and help along to actually get that job done. That's what I do – I do curriculum design, I do instructional strategies, I do behavior management, all the different elements. (personal communication, July 15, 2003)

R. Yamato is the K-8 principal as well as the Orton-Gillingham and Mortensen Math teacher trainer. In addition to training all the teachers at ASSETS in the Orton-Gillingham methodology of instruction, he has established an outreach program to conduct multisensory training for all the Hawaii public and private schools as well as in Singapore. He also set up an evaluation conducted by the Orton-Gillingham Academy. As a result, ASSETS has been accredited as a teacher-training site, and is in the process of being accredited for providing services for dyslexic students. In assessing his own specific roles and responsibilities, R. Yamato states:

My role is a little bit different. As the principal, I'm the one who provides evaluations for all the staff – hiring the staff, providing training for the staff, etc. As an AAT, basically, it's to give whatever support the teacher needs in regard to curriculum development, issues relative to classroom management, students who have behavioral concerns – what do you do with this child, etc., providing an intermediary by helping them to work with the parents and concerns that parents might have, and intervening on behalf of the school and the teachers relative to issues and concerns that parents may have relative to the student. There is a whole other range of things, such as resources, what kind of resources, etc. It's a real comprehensive role. Fortunately my teachers are fairly “old-timers.” The support they need is more limited at this point in time because they pretty much know our system; they've been in the system for a long time, so it's not as large as with a new teacher, for example. The new teacher may need a tremendous amount of support transitioning to our system. (personal communication, July 14, 2003)

R. Yamato oversees three classrooms, so he works with three head teachers and three assistant teachers.

As the Head Diagnostician, S. Tadashi coordinates all of the testing done in-house at ASSETS. In addition, she conducts testing herself, supervises diagnosticians, monitors all of the testing done, and/or makes sure that the resources are available to do it. In regard to her responsibilities, S. Tadashi states, “It’s to evaluate tests to implement for our population, it’s to provide consultation to other AAT members or to parents or even students, or to other school personnel about what our student profile might mean, although other AAT members also do that” (personal communication, July 11, 2003). She also supervises two classrooms, which includes two head teachers, and two assistant teachers.

As the school counselor, P. Luke does not manage any particular classrooms. She works in collaboration with the teachers and the AAT to provide counseling and behavior support. In addition to working with the K-8 students, P. Luke consolidates all counseling/behavioral referrals and documentation, and keeps parents, teachers and AAT members informed and in the communication loop. In addition, she networks with other professionals and makes referrals to outside community resources when necessary (personal communication, July 9, 2003).

J. Roberts is a curriculum specialist in the area of remediation, who supports five classrooms in middle school, primarily focused on 7th and 8th graders. Although she finds that working with ten teachers and their five classrooms keeps her busy, she also finds it to be a manageable load. In addition, J. Roberts is R. Yamato’s training assistant for Orton-Gillingham and Mortensen Math. She also oversees the enrichment program, works on budgets, programming, and facilitates departmentalized math for the middle school. In regard to departmentalized math J. Roberts states, “The coordination and the

scheduling and who is going to what group is a collaborative effort, but I facilitate that process. All of the scheduling for the school – such as music, dance, art, library, computer, PE – all those schedules have to mesh, so one person has to oversee that everything goes smoothly. That’s me – schedule queen” (personal communication, July 9, 2003).

D. Robbins is another curriculum specialist in the area of remediation. She usually works with K-6 grade students supervising ten teachers and five classrooms. D. Robbins states, “I serve as the self-study K-8 accreditation coordinator, and that’s taking up a lot of time right now.” She adds, “I also serve as the Slingerland program coordinator and teacher trainer in the school and the community. And then another thing that I’ve done is work with the program called Schools Attuned, and so I’m training on that” (personal communication, July 12, 2003). According to D. Robbins, she has conducted Slingerland training for at least five years and she was unable to do it this year because along with S. Tadashi, she started a Master’s degree (funded by ASSETS) in educational leadership.

As the curriculum specialist in the area of giftedness, R. Mason is a fairly new member to the AAT. Prior to serving on the AAT team for two years, R. Mason was a teacher at ASSETS for eight years. She supervises eight teachers in four classrooms, and she is the ASSETS representative to the state gifted advisory board, which entails attending those meetings. R. Mason states, “I’m also able to go into the classrooms – I do Project Read with some of the grades, so it’s basically working with our wonderful students and just seeing them progress” (personal communication, July 9, 2003).

Conclusions about Roles

Before the AAT existed, ASSETS tried to train teachers in the 4 Hat Model. Teachers were responsible for testing, counseling, analysis, diagnosis, etc., in addition to developing/implementing curriculum and running their classrooms. The school was smaller then with 150 students. Despite a small student population and how much teachers learned, D. Robbins stated that this kind of process was extremely time-consuming. In order to meet timelines in the development of student profiles, teachers started the process in January. As a result, teachers spent considerable time analyzing and writing up the data for each student, and this impacted planning and implementation of curriculum. With close to 400 students, ASSETS is bigger today and the AAT keeps the system running and in place. This is important for consistency, continuity, sustainability, and effectiveness of evidence-based practices. The AAT attempts to remove barriers, run interference, and provide back up and support so that teachers can teach. For example, there are two qualified teachers in each classroom. If one teacher leaves in the middle of the school year, the AAT could step in to teach a language group, a math group, and/or provide whatever support the remaining teacher might need until the situation is rectified. Several AAT members also teach enrichments on a regular basis. For example, R. Yamato teaches dissection, while D. Robbins and J. Roberts teach stained glass. Other ways AAT provide support include helping teachers develop curriculum, analyze student data, and implement academic and behavioral interventions. These examples provide glimpses of the support provided, as well as the system at work.

The AAT is a multidisciplinary team and each member contributes his or her particular expertise to the team and to ASSETS. As D. Robbins states in the following:

Yes, because we're like a multidisciplinary team, and so, I do provide some counseling, but the counselor would provide the more intensive counseling, or would have knowledge of where to go if a child needs additional counseling. We also have a diagnostician if we have real specific questions on diagnostics. We're all able to test, but she has the more in depth knowledge – more breadth and depth. We have our principal who's not just a principal. He has knowledge of curriculum, and he also has a social work background, which he brings into play when it is needed. We all bring in to the AAT our own perspective and our own type of expertise. (personal communication, July 12, 2003)

Essentially, with the 4 Hat Model, the AAT talk the same talk, and they establish a system for managing the day-to-day running of ASSETS. This system is also found in the integration piece and having a strong foundation is important as everything is built upon it. Adding each AAT member's knowledge to the system provides more resources and layers of textured expertise.

The AAT are facilitators. They facilitate buying into the system and the integration of all the pieces. If a person is on the AAT team, they have bought into the system or they would not be there. The AAT also facilitates communication, keeping the ASSETS community in the loop. For example, there are schools where an important meeting is held without key people knowing about it. The AAT make it a priority to meet and communicate with teachers, parents, and students on a regular basis. With the 4 Hat Model, there are different levels of presentation. According to J. Roberts:

Okay, so you've got curriculum/teaching, you've got counseling, you've got testing, you've got administration, and all of those hats come on and off and with different constituents of the school. Sometimes it's with the kids, sometimes with the teachers, other faculty or staff members, parents, board members, visitors, you name it. There are a lot of different levels of presentation. All of the AAT have taken training including Lee and Peggy – they just don't all oversee classrooms. (personal communication, July 9, 2003)

In regard to the consultation literature, Gold (1996) suggests that two types of support need to be provided to beginning teachers. They need both instructional and

psychological support. In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on providing orientation, support and guidance, which is collectively known as induction, to beginning teachers. According to Kelley (2004), “Providing meaningful assimilation into the profession is one way school districts can retain novice teachers, but existing induction programs vary in their substance and quality” (p. 438). Thus, there are many programs that offer superficial forms of support. Examples include periodic workshops, instruction in general classroom management strategies, or district orientations (Gold, 1996). Furthermore, “some state-sponsored programs offer induction as an evaluation process that applies formulaic criteria for narrowly defined teaching behaviors to assess new teacher performance” (Darling-Hammond et al., 1999, as cited in Kelley, 2004, p. 438).

New teachers to ASSETS can be compared to beginning teachers in many ways. ASSETS provides extensive training and support. Just like teachers at ASSETS address academic and social-emotional concerns for students, the AAT do the same for not only the students, but also the teachers. In regard to the AAT, L. Severt states:

Well, you name it - they provide it - on a rotating or as needed basis. First of all; what they provide to a teacher is a place to go if they need a sounding board, they have questions, they have issues about choice of curriculum, understanding a particular child's' needs, looking at their group; seeing what issues they can safely generalize. They make use of the administrators' expertise. Bear in mind now that we have three curriculum specialists, a head of diagnostic services and a principal serving as the advisory team member to his teachers. Now two of those people have twenty years experience with diagnostics and testing curriculum, and one of them is a director of the Slingerland Institute. That's teacher training here at ASSETS. In addition, one of them is a fellow of the Orton-Gillingham Academy, and so these are very knowledgeable, insightful, expert kinds of people. A teacher who may have zero to only four or five years experience in the classroom can look at, draw on, and puzzle through problems. You've always got a partner who can sit down and do this. Another form of support is the kind of support that teachers talk about being very important to them and that is support with contentious parents or difficult kids. Administrative support for teachers

who are trying to practice their craft in the classroom becomes of paramount importance when someone needs to have a lot of information or is questioning why is this curriculum being used, and why are you imposing this kind of behavior management program on my child. It's hard to understand the ASSETS behavior management system. It's hard to picture how integrated counseling and individual or group counseling integrates with that behavioral management program. (personal communication, July 9, 2003)

In addition to providing instructional and psychological support to teachers, the AAT also utilizes and emphasizes a teacher's strengths, as well as shoring up a teacher's weaknesses. This perspective of balancing remediation and strengths is similar to what is addressed with students. According to D. Robbins, the amount of support provided "depends on the expertise. There have been some years when I've had to plan language arts and actually go in to a class. There have been other years when I've not needed to because the teachers were just right on top of it" (personal communication, July 12, 2003).

Finally, by being role models, the AAT promotes stewardship of the school. This is illustrated by S Tadashi's statement:

So I do counseling, I do testing, and my role as part of the team that meets with Lee is to provide whatever support he might need. I also see my role as helping Peggy or Rick in whatever else they need to get done. Even if it's a stupid thing like going to Costco and buying whatever, you know, I do it. We're all there for the school. A term that I learned was stewardship, and I think that everybody on our team needs to look at how big a role we have in that. And these are my values I'm imposing on everybody, but this is more than your job, this is your school. How invested are you really in this school? Support our kids, you know, if you can, go see a volleyball game, go see their basketball game. Just a little bit here or there goes a long way. When they ask for volunteers for this event – volunteer! It's your school. It's not just your job. I'm not sure that everybody shares that sentiment. I embrace it completely, but that's just me. (personal communication, July 11, 2003)

L. Severt agrees and points to the research that indicates that there are a couple of things one can do to ensure success and community in school. He gives an example by stating

“One is, and it doesn’t cost much you know, it’s greeting the child in the morning and saying their name when they come in the door. Like, we’re happy to see you” (personal communication, July 9, 2003). Every day that L. Severt is present at school, he makes it a priority to greet the parents who come to pick up their children after school as he escorts the students to the cars (S. Tadashi, personal communication, July 11, 2003).

R. Yamato also agrees; however, he voices a concern in the following statement:

Fifteen years ago when we had about 150 students till now when we have 300 students in the K – 8 program – it’s a huge jump. This means that as principal, for example, I don’t get a chance to know every student as I used to. We seem to be getting bigger and bigger, which means that in terms of all the pieces holding together, we’ve created an environment and we may begin to see some pieces being not as effective. So for us, the number of students here is a real critical issue. I think we’ve had some discussions about that. With the increasing number of students, we’re beginning to see its impact on our effectiveness. Or at least if it’s not in the effectiveness, then it’s got to do with the problems it creates – it affects communication between students and teachers, between teachers and administrators, etc., so I think that’s becoming a barrier for us. (personal communication, July 14, 2003)

Teachers at ASSETS work long hours and the AAT work longer hours. The AAT are an integral factor that fosters the unique service model at ASSETS School. R. Yamato concludes, “I think for anyone who is on the AAT, they should not be thinking of any kind of reward except relative to the children. There should be no kind of personal reward or any kind of personal benefaction. It must derive from kids being successful – kids doing well in their life and in their homes, etc.” (personal communication, July 14, 2003).

Integration of Services to Meet the Needs of all Students

ASSETS School functions systematically by ensuring that school wide components such as counseling and behavior management are central to the curriculum and integrated into all educational aspects of the program. Integration is defined as a

philosophy that seeks to increase student understanding by blending systematic programs and teaching across the disciplines. This approach maximizes academic engaged time and supports a need-based response to intervention in the classroom. Integration is evident in a set of promising practices that ASSETS has developed, modified, refined, and blended in order to try and address the needs of their students. It is a transformative process as the use of these promising practices has led to practical talk among ASSETS teachers and administrators about the viability of various components of the program and adjustments that might render the practices more effective with individual students. The end result is a multi-modal model that focuses on a thematically differentiated-integrated curriculum, enrichment courses, and a mentoring program. It should be noted that these components are integrated with each other along with a school wide counseling and behavior system, diagnostic testing, and remedial instruction (Yoshimoto, 2000).

In this section, six subcategories of integration, which emerged from the data, will be described: thematically differentiated-integrated curriculum design, affective curriculum, behavior system and counseling, multisensory structured language approaches, enrichment courses, community mentoring program, and monitoring student performance and progress.

The Thematically Differentiated-Integrated Curriculum Design

ASSETS School utilizes the *Differentiated-Integrated Curriculum Grid Model* developed by Sandra Kaplan and adapted to guide instruction for all K-8 students (Yoshimoto, 2000). Renzulli (1994) states that the model places emphasis on blending content and process, focuses on learners as first-hand inquirers, and structures interconnectedness of disciplines. The model allows for adaptation, and Kaplan (1986)

recommends modification by encouraging teachers to be discriminating consumers and generators of knowledge rather than technicians of curriculum. In this model, teachers are active decision makers; they are responsible for linking content, process, and product, as well as student interest. Thus, the curriculum provides a foundation for integrated and comprehensive learning experiences for each student. The curriculum uses themes as organizers to allow for a broader scope of learning. Teachers choose broad-based themes such as patterns, structures and functions, cycles, discovery, conflicts, evolution, and interrelationship (Yoshimoto, 2000). According to Yoshimoto, “The theme serves as a vehicle for teaching basic skills and higher level thinking skills. As the framework for curriculum development, integration is the cornerstone and hands-on as well as discovery-oriented experiences are the modes for learning” (p. 2).

Yoshimoto (2000) provides an example of the thematically differentiated-integrated curriculum in the following:

Hence, if a teacher uses structures and functions as the theme for the class, then her social studies unit on American history focuses on the political structures of the United States, and she integrates art, music, science, reading, writing, and career awareness into the lessons. The science unit on biology includes dissection of specimens to discover the structures or anatomy of different classes of animals. The students integrate math via measurement of specimens; and population counts, art through drawings and sculptures, and writing skills through composition of cinquains, acrostic poems or haikus related to the specimens studied in the class. (p. 2)

D. Robbins adds that the curriculum can be done through the lens of a science-based theme and a project or an assignment can be presented in different ways. In regard to a project on Hawaii, one student may choose to do it through art, another may choose to write a paper, and yet another student may choose to do it through dramatization (personal communication, July 12, 2003). In another example, students were asked to

make their own version of a cell and its structures (e.g., mitochondria) as a homework assignment. The results included objects representing cell structures suspended in Jell-O, a construction paper depiction, and a cell and its structures carved out of styrofoam. My experiences as a former teacher at ASSETS supports the example presented by Yoshimoto above. Our curriculum theme one year was structures and much of the focus was on much of what Yoshimoto highlighted. We had an end of the year project and students were given a choice. They could choose to build a miniature golf course or they could work on a project that most interested them. The majority of the class chose to work on the golf course and we teamed up with another class to produce a more complete course. The project combined language arts, group discussion, geometry, and hands-on work.

Although students teamed up to work in groups of two, each student was responsible for taking their own notes, keeping an individual journal, and writing their own research paper. These assignments were related to the language arts aspect of the project. In preparation for the project, students had to learn about geometry transformations, line symmetry, and properties of reflections. Students used mirrors and paper folding to draw reflections on paper, and looked at examples in miniature golf and billiards to figure out angles of reflection. Scale drawings developed into scale models where students had to prove that the par they designated to their green could be attained. There was a field trip to meet with golf course development experts followed by the opportunity to play on a miniature golf course. Finally, students used a 4 by 8 foot sheet of plywood, carpeting, paint, and a host of other materials and tools to create their green. The end results were replete with creativity, water hazards, sand traps, and tunnels. The

students set up the golf course with a sign up sheet, so other classes, administrators, and parents could schedule an appointment to play. To mentor the younger children in grades 1 to 3, the students went to their classrooms to hold golf clinics and to read “Pigs on the Ball: Fun with Math and Sports” with them.

As stated earlier, some students chose projects that they were interested in. In one case, a student had some lovebirds and he wanted to learn how to breed them. He conducted extensive research and consulted experts. At one point, he obtained permission from the school to bring the baby lovebirds to the classroom because they had to be handled throughout the day. By the end of his project, this student was a bonafide breeder as he developed an agreement with a local pet store to buy the baby lovebirds for \$50.00 a piece. In his project, he included information on how to structure a home-based business as well as how to structure a comfortable habitat for lovebirds.

In a final note on this category, S. Tadashi commented during the interview that, for the most part, the curriculum works well. She added that “it works really well only if the person who is implementing the curriculum has really internalized the conceptual framework. If the teacher has not really gotten it, if they are only superficial, then that is clearly evident in their lesson plans and how they approach the kids.” It was also stated that ASSETS should look at and reprioritize certain aspects of the curriculum to keep nurturing it because sustaining and advancing the curriculum is a constantly evolving process. In S. Tadashi’s opinion, one area of the curriculum that needs fine-tuning is reading fluency in grades K – 8 (personal communication, July 11, 2003).

Affective Curriculum, Behavior System, and Counseling

In addition to addressing educational needs through an integrated curriculum, ASSETS also addresses the social-emotional needs of the students. According to D. Robbins, the counseling and behavior system used at ASSETS is based on the Adlerian philosophy of discipline, as it was adapted from Adler's logical consequences (personal communication, July 12, 2003). According to the Adlerian Society of Arizona "logical consequences must be discussed and agreed upon . . . in advance of their application (otherwise, they may be experienced by the child as punishment from above to below rather than as an outcome of personal choice and actions)." Furthermore, the goal of logical consequences is to enhance "the child's developing sense of him or herself as a responsible participant in shaping the experience of life" (Bear, 2005).

The school wide counseling and behavior system is comprised of a point out system, counseling provided by the school counselor and the AAT, magic circle, class council, and weekly individual discussions between teachers and students. Point out requires teachers to divide each day into preset time periods, which the students are informed about. Younger students have preset time periods that last between 15 and 20 minutes. Older students have longer preset periods that can last between 20 and 30 minutes. If a student is interrupting his own learning, the learning of others, or the flow of instruction, he is given a point out. The prompt acts as a reminder and he goes to a designated area in the room to reflect upon his behavior and regroup. The first reflection period lasts between 30 seconds and 1 minute. The student is brought back, and if he gets a second point out in that time period, he goes back to think about his actions for a few minutes. With a third point out, he will have to stay in the point out area for the rest

of that preset period. Missed work is always made up sometime during the day, often during study hall. If there is a fourth point out during a preset time frame, the student goes to the office to talk to the counselor. According to Hishinuma (1993), “The general method underlying behavioral management interaction and counseling is one of mutual respect, giving of responsibility (in order to teach responsibility), acceptance of consequences, problem solving, and monitoring of progress” (p. 30).

L. Severt asserted that there is big difference between handing out false praise like candy and a real self-esteem building process. He equates “at a boy stuff” to junk food that eventually makes you fat, flabby, and unhealthy. L. Severt stated the following:

Real self-esteem is a process whereby kids are collecting data about themselves from what’s available to them in the environment. At ASSETS, what’s available is point out. Point out is the data they need about their social adaptation and nothing happens for a kid if they are not socially adaptable to the classroom, to the playground, to the hallways and so forth. And so there’s one aspect of research where it’s clear that without the ability to give kids this data about their own adaptation - what Priscilla Vail says, this on/off switch for learning is off, because they are going to be frightened - they’re not going to feel safe, they’re going to be worried all the time. And a lot of kids feel frightened and unsafe in their campuses. The other thing is that we’re actually making affective curriculum - a curriculum. It’s something kids learn about - it’s something kids talk about. (personal communication, July 9, 2003)

D. Robbins adds that students who come to ASSETS need consistency and “something that’s predictable.” When you have a school wide behavioral system, consensus, common terminology and expectations are put in place. The teachers in 1st grade use the same system as the teachers in 8th grade. If a child has an office visit, everyone there knows about and understands the behavioral system. If told they have a point out, students know exactly what that means. According to D. Robbins, that is important, and she states that point out is not punitive. Instead, the behavioral system is based on:

Okay, you're doing something inappropriate right now, so you need to go to point out to think about it, we'll call you back in just a little bit, and then you know, of course, if you get so many point outs, there's different consequences. But none of them are punitive – it's all self-reflecting - let's see what you did - or they are reminders – point out is just a reminder - which is why when our kids leave the school, their counseling record does not follow them - because our counseling system is so different. A suspension in another school would be something drastic – in our school system; it's just an extension of the point out system. Okay, we've got x number of this, so it's a suspension, but it's not a black mark on their record, and there's no such thing as well, if you get 10 suspensions, you're out of this school. (personal communication, July 12, 2003)

P. Jones, the high school principal verifies that everything begins with the way classrooms are managed. She supports the previously made observations by stating, “Everyone has consensus and consistency – we will all manage our classrooms in such a way. We use a point out system very similar to K-8 – ours is modified a bit for secondary students, but we establish a common language among all the teachers” (personal communication, July 15, 2003).

Counseling provided by the school counselor and AAT members is directly linked to the school wide behavioral management system. Students are referred for a variety of reasons including clarification of rules, going over the rationale for rules, and discussing behavioral expectations. The goal is to equip students with problem-solving strategies that can also be applied to academics. In addition, there is also emphasis on instilling the desire to follow through (Hishinuma, 1993). Hishinuma states, “There is a greater emphasis on what students can do to improve/rectify the situation rather than on exclusively what they cannot do or should not do” (p. 31). When necessary, more individualized techniques such as positive behavior modification are implemented to provide additional support for students (S. Tadashi, personal communication, July 11, 2003).

The magic circle is held three or four times a week. It is a values clarification time and a critical component in meeting the social-emotional needs of the students. The teacher is there as a facilitator, and in this venue, everyone's comments are honored (D. Robbins, personal communication, July 12, 2003). In addition to clarifying values, the other goal of magic circle is "fostering tolerance and acceptance of different perspectives" (Simon, Howe, & Kirschenbaum, 1972, p. 31, as cited in Hishinuma, 1993). As the facilitator, the teacher provides a "social forum that allows students to express their feelings/thought in a nonjudgmental atmosphere that is trusting and accepting" (Hishinuma, p. 31). Discussion topics are abundant and varied. For example, students discuss current events, daily school activities, role models, greatest strengths and weaknesses, dreams, accomplishments, fears, frustrations, most embarrassing moments, favorite songs, musical groups, movies, and so on.

The class council component is held once a week and as a forum for students to raise school-related problems and request possible, appropriate solutions. Criteria for bringing up a problem includes not using any names and having already tried two solutions. The teacher offers no solutions as he/she is there as a facilitator. Peers bring up possible solutions, and again, all comments are listened to and honored. The student who brought up the problem chooses and/or prioritizes solutions that they think might work for them. Instead of passively airing grievances, students actively solve problems and the goal is to have these skills generalize to other domains (D. Robbins, personal communication, July 12, 2003; Hishinuma, 1993). P. Luke, the school counselor, makes the following statement:

You've got the magic circle, you've got the class council, and if these components are not implemented, students will ask about it and/or submit a

complaint that they have not had magic circle that week. So those components within the classroom setting are critical to get to know the kids, to get the kids in the problem-solving mode that we want to develop here. But also, when they come to see me, that follows through with my counseling even though there is the discipline side of things too. It's along the same lines of helping the child develop self-awareness, problem solving, and raising self-esteem, those kinds of things. It isn't one thing, it's the whole team approach, and it's the school wide philosophy that makes it work so well. (personal communication, July 9, 2003)

Another unique aspect of the counseling system at ASSETS pertains to the

individual discussions between teachers and students on at least a weekly basis.

According to L. Severt, students have "this place defined for them where they'll be listened to by one person, in a week, for fifteen minutes, where there is nothing else and nobody else on the agenda, just teacher to child, and this is a very important underpinning of everything else we do" (personal communication, July 9, 2003). The conversations between the teacher and student are private and nonjudgmental. Again, topics are wide and varied. They can include what the student did over the weekend, role-playing, goal setting, interests/career options, hobbies, and transitioning. Additional sessions can be scheduled as needed by teachers or students. These opportunities are important as they support preventative rather than reactive interventions (Hishinuma, 1993).

In his work at ASSETS, Dr. Hishinuma's positions included high school principal, acting head of school, and researcher. Dr. Hishinuma conducted a study of the counseling services provided at ASSETS during the 1991-1992 academic year.

Approximately 275 students were enrolled and no one was admitted with knowledge of any diagnosed behavior disorder. Hishinuma (1993) documented that the following services were provided:

(1) Students received over 1,750 hours of individual discussion time, (2) students had over 1,000 documented sessions with the multidisciplinary team [AAT] members/counselors totaling over 600 hours of counseling and case management time, (3) "incidental" counseling and case management not directly associated

with teacher referrals totaled over 800 additional hours, and (4) over 15,500 hours were spent in group discussions if one summed each student's time during the two group formats. (p. 32)

Multisensory Structured Language Approaches

Every student that comes to ASSETS School has previously been evaluated and diagnosed with learning disabilities. According to Lyon et al. (2001), 94% of students with learning disabilities have difficulty with reading and language arts. Thus, multisensory structured language approaches are a key component of the curriculum for all students. The multisensory structured language approaches utilized at ASSETS include Orton-Gillingham (Axelrad-Lentz, 1996; Dev, Doyle, & Valente, 2002; Joshi, Dahlgren, & Boulware-Gooden, 2002), The Slingerland Method (Clark & Uhry, 1995; Guyer & Sabastino, 2001), The Spalding Method (Clark & Uhry, 1995), Project Read (Clark & Uhry, 1995), and Lindamood-Bell (Torgesen, 2000) (D. Robbins, personal communication, July 12, 2003; J. Roberts, personal communication July 9, 2003; S. Tadashi, personal communication, July 11, 2003; R. Yoshimoto, personal communication, July 14, 2003). According to Spear-Swerling, and Sternberg (1996), “. . . no single program is the solution to preventing reading failure. No single program succeeds with all children, and effective intervention can be accomplished in a number of ways” (p. 273). L. Severt, the head of school, expresses agreement with Torgesen (2000) when he states the following:

You know, seventy five percent of all the kids that go to school in the first grade. It probably doesn't matter much how you teach them how to read. But we do know that for about twenty or twenty five percent, it matters a lot. And that's when research becomes really important and that's where generalizations become really important. So we know that all the kids at ASSETS fall into that twenty percent group, where it matters a lot what kind of method you use to teach them to read. So wherever you are - ASSETS, public school, where ever - if you know

you have a non-intuitive language learner, be very deliberate and specific about the kind of reading methodology you choose for that child.
(personal communication, July 9, 2003)

Multisensory structured language programs teach phonology and phonological awareness, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, syntax, and semantics.

Principles of instruction include simultaneous and multisensory (VAKT – visual/auditory, kinesthetic-tactile), systematic and cumulative, direct instruction, diagnostic teaching, and synthetic and analytic instruction (Clark & Uhry, 1995).

The Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR), the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), and the National Reading Panel (NRP) identify five necessary components of reading. Dr. Horowitz from NCLD states that although these components are important, they may still not be sufficient to the reading process. The five components are as follows: 1) phonemic awareness (PA); 2) systematic phonics (PH); 3) fluency (F); 4) vocabulary (V); and 5) text comprehension (C). Although NCLD does not endorse or recommend any particular products or approaches, Dr. Horowitz provides a list of some “research-based strategies and approaches to teaching reading that have been mentioned in the professional literature” Dr. Horowitz goes on to list that Orton-Gillingham addresses PA and PH components, The Slingerland Method addresses PH and F components, The Spalding Method addresses PH, F, and C components, Project Read addresses Ph and C components, and Lindamood-Bell addresses PA and PH components. (Torgesen, Alexander, Wagner, Rashotte, Voeller, & Conway, 2001).

According to Torgesen, Alexander, Wagner, Rashotte, Voeller, and Conway (2001), “Our current understanding of the most common form of reading disability suggests that for children with reading disabilities to achieve adequate reading skills, they must receive more

intensive, explicit, and systematic instruction in word-level skills than is typically provided in schools” (p. 35; see also Clark & Uhry, 1995; Foorman, Francis, Fletcher, Schatschneider, & Mehta, 1998). A typical lesson plan format at ASSETS school utilizes components from several approaches. For example, teachers address phonemic awareness and systematic phonics through Orton-Gillingham and Lindamood-Bell. Orton-Gillingham also includes an emphasis on sight words, nonsense words, and Latin and Greek roots, suffixes, and prefixes. Slingerland and Spaulding provide fluency components, teachers often utilize The Wilson Reading System vocabulary component, and reading comprehension can be addressed through Spaulding, Project Read, and Junior Great Books. In addition, teachers implement curriculum-based measurement (CBM), multisensory grammar, a variety of writing approaches, and transitional life skills such as study skills, organizational skills, and time management. The classroom theme and other subjects such as math, science, history, and enrichment are frequently blended into reading and writing activities. Hands-on activities are also prevalent. For example, students could depict scenes from Richard Adam’s *Watership Down* through dioramas, maps, skits, or a cartoon strip. In another example, students play and experiment with silicon covered sand as they are introduced to the vocabulary word hydrophobia.

At the high school level, the teachers learn basic multisensory structures to provide a solid language base. At the same time, the high school places a heavy emphasis on advanced language structures and fluency training (P. Jones, personal communication, July 15, 2003). S. Tadashi would like to see the elementary and middle school place as heavy an emphasis on reading fluency as the high school does. In regard to students who need more intensive language and reading intervention, she thinks that

Slingerland is more appropriate than Orton-Gillingham. She states, “There’s still a lot more that we need to do . . . in regard to something like fluency research. I mean, you’re in Florida with Torgeson – you know all of that kind of stuff” (personal communication, July 11, 2003). Presently, students who require more intensive intervention are tutored after school utilizing the same methods described earlier. Many teachers and AAT members provide this tutoring, as working with individual children is required for ongoing education and the next levels of certification in approaches like OG.

R. Yamato, the K-8 principal and Orton-Gillingham trainer, acknowledges that there are many programs used to remediate children experiencing difficulties with language. His concern, however, is that the emphasis of many of these programs focuses on “the student’s weaknesses, which continues to adversely impact their self-esteem. As such, there is a need to balance remediation with a rich and stimulating curriculum that identifies and nurtures their strengths and talents” (Yoshimoto, 2000, p.1). Thus, the thematically differentiated-integrated curriculum and the affective curriculum/behavior system are integrated with the multisensory language approaches. Examples include oral and silent reading assignments related to areas of study, words for reading and spelling, readings related to hands-on experiences in other subjects, and the study of Greek combining forms and Latin roots integrated with content subjects (Yoshimoto, 2000).

Enrichment Courses

The enrichment program utilized at ASSETS is adapted from Renzulli’s Enrichment Triad Model (1977). There are three types of enrichment: 1) Type I enrichment exposes students to a number of general exploratory activities to investigate areas of potential interest; 2) Type II enrichment emphasizes group learning experiences

targeting thinking and feeling processes such as problem solving and reflective thinking; and 3) Type III enrichment pertains to giving students opportunities to pursue their interests piqued in Type I enrichment and apply their skills developed in Type II enrichment (Yoshimoto, 2000).

Type I enrichment courses for K – 8 students take place every day except on Wednesdays. Type II and III enrichment are incorporated into the class curriculum. Since one enrichment course lasts about 3 weeks, each student can participate in over 10 electives during the school year. Students also have the opportunity to evaluate enrichment electives, provide input, and submit requests regarding additional courses they would like ASSETS to consider offering (Yoshimoto, 2000).

J. Roberts organizes the enrichment courses and she receives calls several times a year from people requesting information in regard to setting up an enrichment program. She believes that anyone can set up an enrichment program; however, they may have to modify it. According to J. Roberts, ASSETS “may offer thirty choices, but they fall in categories and I try to make sure that there’s something for each kid’s kind of category” (personal communication, July 9, 2005). The main categories include athletics, computers and technology, the arts, science/math, and a miscellaneous category. Examples of athletic electives include volleyball, flag football, basketball, golf, baseball, golf, and juggling. Computers and technology electives can include the Internet, computer simulations, graphics, multimedia, and computer lego-logs. Science/math electives include dissection, laser/holography, rocketry, robotics, boatmaking, Hawaiian ethnobotany, science and toys, math games and puzzles, kitchen physics, kitchen chemistry, K-nex, marine biology, and string art. Examples of art electives include

jewelry-making, tile mosaics, stained glass, card making, raku, video/filmmaking, ceramics, pottery, creative movement, hula, line dancing, folk dancing, street dancing, drama, painting, junk art, photography, maskmaking, puppetry, silkscreening, air brushing, beading and basket weaving. Miscellaneous electives include cooking, clowning around, magic, board games, Hawaiian culture, Japanese culture, Spanish culture, and French culture (J. Roberts, personal communication, July 9, 2003; Yoshimoto, 2000).

ASSETS School utilizes the talents, interests, and creativity of teachers in implementing enrichment classes. Teachers are also trained to teach other enrichment courses, which results in each teacher having a wide repertoire of skills. Teachers are then able to integrate and expand many of these enrichments into their curriculum. The students look forward to and enjoy the enrichment electives, which are held in the afternoon (J. Roberts, personal communication, July 9, 2003). According to Yoshimoto (2000), teaching enrichment exposes “students to an array of experiences that may create interest in different areas as well as provide avenues for children to demonstrate their talents and strengths” (p. 3). In addition, enrichment teachers are able to provide important feedback to the classroom teachers in regard to students’ weaknesses, strengths, and talents (J. Roberts, personal communication, July 9, 2003; Yoshimoto, 2000).

Community Mentoring Program

ASSETS School has a mentoring program that is part of the curriculum for all high school students. Additional elements of the mentoring program involve intermediate and elementary students. Mentorship sites for high school students are

carefully selected taking into consideration student interests, strengths, and qualifications. Students participate in an application process that includes writing a cover letter, submitting a resume, and participating in personal interviews before getting “hired.” The students go to work at their mentorship sites every Wednesday, and they are expected to adapt the appropriate standards of dress and behavior required by each site (P. Jones, personal communication, July 15, 2003; Yoshimoto, 2000). A list of selected ASSETS High School mentorship sites is provided in Table 3-1 on the next page.

Table 3-1 Mentorship Sites

Mentorship Site	Position
Aloha Animal Hospital	Veterinarian and Office Assistant
American Savings Bank	Business Banking Intern
Belt Collins	Environmental Intern
Borders Books, Music and Cafe	Retail Sales Assistant
Cycle City	Service Assistant
Durrant-Media Five	Design Intern
First United Methodist Preschool	Teacher's Aide
Hanauma Bay Education Center	Park Interpreter
Hawaii Physical Therapy	Physical Therapy Aide
Honolulu Community College - Marine Science Center	Woodshop Apprentice
Honolulu Weekly	Journalist Apprentice
Honolulu Zoo	Children's Zoo Assistant
Lilila Healthcare Center	Activity Assistant
Lyon Associates	CADD Trainee
Marvin Horton Financial Services	Financial Advisor Intern
Min Plastics and Supply	Shop Apprentice
Music Center of Hawaii	Repair Technician/Store Associate
Outreach for Grieving Youth Alliance	Executive Assistant
Pacific Stained glass	Glass Apprentice
Pearl Country Club	Golf Pro Assistant
Prudential Locations	Realtor Assistant
Rainbow Marina	Assistant Sailing Instructor
Recorded Media Services	Recording Technician
Rod's Auto Service	Mechanic Assistant
Sam Choy's Breakfast, Lunch, and Crab	Back of the House Assistant
Shriners Hospital for Children	Radiology Files Clerk
T&C Surf Designs	Marketing Assistant
TLC Motorcycle Repair	Motorcycle Technician

The mentorship program seeks to provide students with opportunities to pursue interests via special projects and to work with mentors in the community who share similar talents or interests. According to Yoshimoto (2000), mentorship extends the “boundaries of the school to the community, expands the concept of ‘teachers’ to include other professionals who serve as positive role models and provides students with learning activities whereby they may apply academic skills and strengths in real world settings” (p. 3). S. Tadashi is quite straightforward in her following assessment of the mentorship program:

I think mentorship in the high school is invaluable. It is probably of all the programs we offer in the whole entire school, mentorship has got to be the shining star. It is unbelievable how it changes people’s lives. It gives them a motivation and a direction to work toward, and when you’re talking about teenage kids, you’ve got to kick them in the butt to get them going anywhere. I’ve seen so much of it. It does so much, because it addresses so many different areas simultaneously. You know talking about kids sitting in classrooms disenchanted because they’re thinking well, what does this have to do with real life. Well, bam, mentorship shows you what it has to do with real life up close and personal. And it teaches you things, you know, we nag on them about personal responsibility but man, when the pedal hits the metal, and if they don’t show up for work on time or if they show up looking like shit, they get canned and that is real life. (personal communication, July 11, 2003)

Additional benefits may include increased self-esteem due to career-related responsibility, stimulation of new interests or possible careers, recognition of how academic skills apply to everyday life and the working world, and consequently, more enthusiasm for classroom learning. Students receive high school credit towards graduation. In order to obtain credits, students must keep weekly journals, complete an end of the year evaluation, and an independent project related to their placement for a mentorship fair (P. Jones, personal communication, July 15, 2003; Yoshimoto, 2000).

A different aspect of the mentoring program is provided for elementary and intermediate students, as well as teachers. Mentors such as choreographers, dancers, actors, and various artists come to ASSETS to mentor students and teachers for several months. This program contributes to professional development for teachers, while enhancing skills, talent, interests, and strengths of both students and teachers (Yoshimoto, 2000).

The final aspect in the mentoring program is peer mentoring. Students have opportunities to mentor their classmates as well as younger students in academic areas, science, and the arts. Through this program, intermediate students were able to plan and implement art lessons with third graders in other schools. According to Yoshimoto (2000), this has led to students also having “mentored children and parents in the arts in an annual Art Links program held on a Saturday. Because of this success, a similar program was established in the sciences whereby the students created lessons in science and implemented them with younger children” (p. 4). The impact was overwhelmingly positive and everyone benefited.

Monitoring Student Performance and Progress

Monitoring student performance and progress is an extensive and ongoing process utilizing diagnostic testing, a student profile, which is similar to an Individual Education Plan (IEP), report cards and differentiated/integrated curriculum progress reports (DI), and portfolios. As teachers prepare for a new academic school year in August, they receive their class lists and accompanying student profiles. For returning students, these profiles were completed at the end of the previous academic school year. New students are required to attend summer school and their student profiles are developed during that

period. Teachers conduct file reviews on each student and develop a chart with pertinent information on it. The information gathering process continues as soon as school begins. Curriculum-based assessment is utilized to garner data on fluency. Individual assessment is conducted to collect information about phonemic awareness and reading comprehension. Teachers use inventories, student interviews, and parent conferences at the beginning of the year to obtain information about interests, goals, concerns, and learning styles. As stated earlier, four subcategories of monitoring student performance and progress, which emerged from the data, will be described: diagnostic testing, report cards and differentiated/integrated curriculum progress reports, and portfolios.

Diagnostic testing. The diagnostic testing done at ASSETS School is one of the methods utilized to assess weaknesses, as well as strengths of each student. In regard to specific areas (e.g., academic, cognitive, and processing), ASSETS evaluates students' progress and this is completed at the end of every school year. Comprehensive testing averages about 6 to 7 hours for every student, with some students requiring a little more. According to R. Yoshimoto, student growth is "critical because we take a look at the possibilities of mainstreaming. All those test scores go into the student profile, which we share with the parents. That is a critical evaluation of our program. If it's not effective, we should not be seeing progress with the students, and indeed, we are" (personal communication, July 14, 2003). Furthermore, when parents see the progress their children have made, it provides validation that they made the right decision in sending their child to ASSETS.

D. Robbins talks about the importance of the student profile and the diagnostic tests because "the teacher and the AAT actually have to look at the tests and see if this

matches what the teacher sees in class. And if it is – good. If it doesn't – why not? Why don't the test scores match what the teacher sees? So, there's that discussion that occurs between the teacher and their AAT before we bring it up" (personal communication, July 12, 2003). J. Roberts agrees with this observation and adds that diagnostic testing is even more informative when you personally administer the tests, as it is the only way to know what the tests are assessing. This kind of experience allows ASSETS to evaluate whether a test is meeting diagnostic needs (personal communication, July 9, 2003). L. Severt blends it all together with the following statement:

We do, you know, qualitative stuff as well as quantitative stuff. You know the ultimate measure of our effectiveness in our evaluation is done kid by kid. We look at where you are when you arrive and where you are at the end of the year. And we have in place, you know, this unbelievable list of measures - nationally, standardized measures that we use to see, okay; we have a sense that this kid is doing really well. He has made great adjustments, he's coming to school, he's doing good, he's able to write this, he's able to do that, we have a portfolio assessment, you know, every kid has a portfolio. At the same time, we also want to know, well, really, how he is doing, compared to his cohort or her cohort across the country. Then you get a SAT, you know, you get a Woodcock Johnson, you get a GORT, you get a – whatever you need - and you figure out, okay, where is this kid performing compared to those kids. And so you put that quantitative data together with the qualitative data that you have in the portfolio and then you have an assessment that you do, and then you meet with the parent, and you do this three times a year. (personal communication, July 9, 2003)

Student profile. Although the student profile is similar to an Individual Education Plan (IEP), it is more comprehensive as it includes such information as both quantitative and qualitative data, academic and social-emotional functioning, and characteristics related to learning, motivation, leadership, and creativity (Yoshimoto, 2000).

A student profile is updated each year, and the document evaluates every student individually indicating what they have learned and how they have learned this. There is a

record of services and accommodations students have needed and may need for future learning. Making informed decisions requires accurate assessment information, and the student profile, as well as the report cards, gives one a sense of how all those things are blended in (Hishinuma, 1993; R. Yamato, personal communication, July 14, 2003). R.

Yamato explains:

I think the student profile and the report cards that we have kind of give you a sense of how all those things are blended in. If you're looking at the student profile, for example, it talks about the academic testing and all the results that took place, and the kinds of services that teachers are to provide relative to multisensory approaches for reading, writing, and spelling. There are also support services, which means extended time, preferential seating, etc. That kind of tells us about the kinds of things we need to do educationally. In the student profile, we also have social-emotional. We look at their self-esteem, through the Piers-Harris, behavioral rating scales by the teachers, the Connor's for the ADHD component, and rating the students numerically in all different behaviors – organizational skills, etc. That tells a lot about what we need to do from an emotional standpoint. So that part is all blended into one document. What we do have also are report cards that talk about the objectives in terms of curriculum that we need to meet; it has comments for parents to understand the social-emotional component. We also have a second report – it is a report card, which is the DI – the differentiated integrated curriculum report. That tells us now how everything integrates across the board – in counseling, math and science together, with particular themes – all those are put together to reflect where the kids are at, and to meet all the needs of the kids. So, with that DI, report cards, and the student profile, those are documents that reflect how and what we do.
(personal communication, July 14, 2003)

D. Robbins talks about the importance of the student profile and clarifies that “although the product is important, it is more the process you go through when you develop this student profile” (personal communication, July 12, 2003). Teachers work closely with AAT consultants, parents, and other professionals to develop this document. R. Mason values the student profile for the framework it provides, allowing teachers and AAT to best meet the needs of each student and to focus on the curriculum. She states, “the teachers individualize learning and then they have like the framework to fill out,

each one is individual, and so it's blending to the individual needs of the student" (personal communication, July 9, 2003). S. Tadashi gives a tremendous amount of credit to the student profile. However, she has also found that it takes "an inordinate amount of training to help teachers to understand that, and regretfully, honestly, teachers and the classroom assistants - very few of them have a really sound understanding of that document and the wealth of information that it contains." In her opinion, with the exception of high school, she feels that "many of the teachers understand that document on a very superficial level" and that more in depth training and understanding would contribute to more efficient dissemination of information (personal communication, July 11, 2003).

Report cards and differentiated/integrated progress reports (DI). In conjunction with the student profile, the report card/DI is intended to enhance communication on student progress made. The report card/DI should be read in combination with the student profile where expectations are defined in terms of goals. At the end of the year, these documents present beginning and ending functional academic grade levels of performance. The report card also includes attendance, behavior, enrichment courses attended, teacher comments, and grades and objectives for language arts, math, social science, science, health, physical education, transitional skills, technology, and fine arts. In regard to behavior, students are rated on attitude, responsibility for classwork, homework, and behavior, attending/listening, participation, and respectfulness. The ratings codes include S = Supportive, A = Adequate, V = Variable, and I = Interfering. As stated previously, ASSETS also includes transition objectives on report cards. Objectives include study skills, time management/

organizational skills, test-taking skills, compensatory technology, survival skills (e.g., budgeting/banking, reading roadmaps and schedules), and career related experiences (e.g., presenting, research, interview, completing applications, and applying for mentorship).

The DI highlights the theme used in the classroom that year. As stated earlier, the DI provides detailed documentation of projects, assignments, and activities, and how they were integrated throughout the curriculum. For example, if a teacher chose the global theme of structures, one might divide the year into four foci - physical structures, social/political structures, structures of the intellect, and structures of the universe. Within each area, the teacher can develop a primary focus and a set of objectives for the students. Delving further into this example, the primary focus of physical structures might be the bridge. Overall objectives could include: 1) the study of technology and principles of physics and math used in construction of bridges; 2) types of bridges – factors and variables that determine the type of construction selected for a particular situation; 3) investigation of the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge – from an historical and technical perspective; and 4) analysis of literary works whose backdrops for dramas are bridges.

Brainstorming for a working definition of structures is an appropriate way to introduce the global theme. This includes reviewing the concepts behind brainstorming and discussing how structures can be found within an activity that appears as haphazard as brainstorming. Moving from the global theme to the first area of focus – bridges – students might consider the question, “What is a bridge?” The end result of this exercise would be the students’ understanding that a bridge may be literal or figurative. With this

in mind, students could be asked to write an acrostic poem using the letters B-R-I-D-G-E.

One student came up with the following:

Bridge

Built or imagined,
Road or rail,
In between a gap a bridge spans
Down below, a
Gorge lies-
Except if the bridge is mental!

Posting both the working definition and the poetry in the classroom provides a way for the students to be able to refer to their focus at anytime during the year. Thus, each of the four foci, along with the primary focus, the set of accompanying objectives, and corresponding activities along with what is integrated (e.g., math, physics, economics, estimation, creativity, and timeliness) are all documented on the DI form.

Portfolios. When it comes to assessment and the evaluation of students, ASSET considers authentic assessment in addition to the diagnostic piece. The student portfolio is a showpiece to demonstrate authentic assessment. According to D. Robbins, “what we did add this year is a self-assessment piece for the portfolio. We have developed, as part of the accreditation process, something called school-wide learning expectations.” The whole ASSETS community was involved in developing these school-wide learning expectations. Examples include critical thinking, citizenship, organizational skills, and technology. D. Robbins adds, “what we had the students and the teachers do this past year is to develop rubrics that students could use to assess themselves in terms of being a technologically proficient student, their understanding of being an organized learner, and so forth. And so we’ve included that piece in the portfolio” (personal communication, July 12, 2003).

Each student develops a portfolio and both students and teachers have the opportunity to pick out what they consider their best work. The portfolio often includes reports, tests, projects, poems, awards, accomplishments, goals that were set and met, as well as pictures of artwork, enrichment products, etc. In addition, students frequently write reflection pieces on their chosen work.

Conclusions about Integration of Services to Meet the Needs of all Students

In this section, seven subcategories of integration, which emerged from the data, were described: thematically differentiated-integrated curriculum design, affective curriculum, behavior system and counseling, multisensory structured language approaches, enrichment courses, a community mentoring program, and monitoring student performance and progress.

The critical foundation underlying integration of the various components that ASSETS utilizes to best serve the needs of each student includes consistency, consensus, commitment, and community. Having school-wide systems and practices in place ensures that everyone has a basic understanding of what they are expected to do and how they will do it. Everyone understands fundamentals such as what kind of curriculum they are expected to implement and what forms of counseling to provide. P. Jones, the high school principal states:

First of all, we all talk the same talk. Maybe I should back up because I think first of all, first and foremost, everybody believes that we all are here to do the same thing, which is have our students really learn, and we do that through an integrated approach, and we do that specifically for the dyslexic students, the dyslexic/gifted student, and we really do commit to the notion that we're going to prepare them for the next step. It's totally clear. We have this system for how we are going to manage the day to day. This is how we work. From that, everything else happens. Everything that I facilitate in orientation is geared towards setting up the curriculum design, for example, or implementing mentorship, or whatever it might be with the mission and the framework that are established. There's just

not any question as we go on. We'll have some discussions, but we always go back to the basics and we know what we need to do. I guess that that's the best way to do it. I think that we are real clear about the high school curriculum about what needs to happen within the curriculum and we really do focus on process. We really do focus on integrating the skill and opportunities for kids to be good and successful learners, as opposed to content and acquisition. That is infused all the way through the day – from the beginning when the kids first put their foot on the campus and they have to get organized. The expectation is that they will and they do – all the way through to the biology class where they're organizing information, making their own unique notebook system, and becoming a biology learner. (personal communication, July 15, 2003)

Talking the same talk is vitally important as it contributes to consistency, consensus, commitment, and community. Everyone in the ASSETS community - from teachers, students, parents, AAT members to board members and school staff - knows words like point out, theme, multisensory, enrichment, mentorship, magic circle, and class council.

Integration allows ASSETS to balance remediation with an engaging and enriched curriculum. Similarly, it allows ASSETS to address both academic and social/emotional issues. This balanced approach is key and Yoshimoto (2000) likens this type of “holistic educational programming” for learning disabled (LD) children to the process of discovering and polishing gems. According to Yoshimoto, the task entails “digging through the layers of self-doubt, confusion, and feelings of incompetence using specialized tools that enhance success. Upon finding the ‘rough’ stones, other instruments are employed to cut, slice, size, and polish them to showcase their beauty, uniqueness, and quality” (p. 1). L. Severt talks about how the metaphor of the sea turtle has really caught on at ASSETS. His observation is that someone observing the sea turtle on sand may draw a very different set of conclusions from someone observing the sea turtle in the water. His point is that the difference lies in the environment, not the sea turtle. L. Severt states, “So the idea that our job is to get kids over the sand into the water

is a very clear indication of what our responsibilities are and as a school I think it's our responsibility to create an environment where kids can get a glimpse, maybe a taste of the experience of swimming if they are a turtle because right now they are struggling over this patch of sand we call school" (personal communication, July 9, 2005).

Integration supports creating a safe environment for kids. ASSETS stresses the importance of this kind of environment and all of these integrated components contribute to this goal. When children feel safe, then they are able to participate and contribute without fear of someone making fun of what they said. According to R. Yoshimoto, many parents consider ASSETS a "last resort" measure for their children. For example, prior to coming to ASSETS, one student had his desk right outside the classroom where the teacher could see him through the sliding glass door. Many of the students had been teased and bullied because they were "slow." As a result of previous school experiences, many students have low self-esteem and a history of failure (personal communication, July 14, 2003). L. Severt refers to literature by Brooks and Goldstein (2002) about raising resilient children. He states:

They've done research now on children who've managed to survive traumatic situations and I think learning disabilities and dyslexia and failure in school rates - meets - the standard of trauma for a kid. Well, you want them to be resilient; you have to have kids who are committed to something bigger than themselves. You have to have kids who are able to experience failure without feeling like a failure. They learn from those things and they meet the challenge and are able to move forward. And that kids are able to use the data that they are getting from their environment to help them grow and to become more resilient and that mostly, resilient kids have a charismatic adult in their lives who is able to help them see themselves and their experience differently.
(personal communication, July 9, 2003)

L. Severt refers to other literature (Vygotsky and Alice Miller) and states that ASSETS has a way to build kids self-esteem that is realistic, in that if you think of self-esteem as a conclusion that kids draw about themselves.

Integration allows for both individualization and monitoring progress over time. In general, teachers have most of their students for 2 years. At the end of those 2 years, there would be a total of 3 student profiles for each student – one developed the summer the student enters ASSETS, one at the end of the first year, and one at the end of the second year. This kind of documentation is compiled annually for each student for the duration of his or her stay at ASSETS. The goal is mainstreaming to regular public and private schools, so documentation is important. Teachers and the AAT can see where the child started at the beginning of a school year, monitor progress throughout the year, and then see how the child has cumulatively progressed at the end of the year. L. Severt states:

For every kid it's different, but it basically happens on a one to one basis. Every time you generalize Tanya, every time you try to put kids in these, you know, large groups, the margin of error increases to the point where your generalizations become pretty meaningless. But if you keep it – this kid, this year, in this class- you can say some meaningful things. (personal communication, July 9, 2003)

P. Jones observes that teachers may not be able to identify all the terms used in research; however, they have integrated everything that needs to be integrated. She states, "It's a much more authentic way to produce that sort of curriculum. Everything is integrated, and it's not just study skills, it's the counseling component, it's the behavior management, and it's all of those aspects that we want for our kids" (personal communication, July 15, 2003). L. Severt adds:

Yeah, and then you know what you do is you make alterations and change things as you learn more, and I love kids who challenge our system because when you

have a kid who's really tough and challenging, it tests your entire system and it forces you to look at what the limitations of that system might be. But it also makes it stronger because you're able to put other things in place that you didn't think might would be possible. (personal communication, July 9, 2003)

Diagnosed as dyslexic, L. Severt remembers “what it was like to be a failure in school.” He thinks it's a huge issue and he doesn't think schools can afford to let kids be failures in school.

ASSETS School has had a substantial amount of success in integrating services to meet the needs of their students. At the same time, ASSETS must continue to push the envelope by continuing to grow and develop. Areas of continued emphasis include developing teachers' understanding of how to implement the thematically differentiated-integrated curriculum on deeper levels, advancing the fluency component, and providing more in depth training on the student profile. As S. Tadashi stated earlier, a deeper understanding of the wealth of information this document contains would contribute to more efficient dissemination of information. According to Skrtic (1991, as cited in Bondy & Brownell, 2004), “Meeting the individual needs of students with disabilities, or any struggling learner for that matter, requires continuous innovation and evaluation” (p. 54). Thus, Bondy and Brownell (2004) call for “continuous renewal and evaluation of classroom and school practices” (p. 54).

Creating a Dynamic Learning Community

In this section, three subcategories of dynamic learning community, which emerged from the data, will be described: synergy, linking joint examination of the data and a deliberate plan for professional development.

At ASSETS, the AAT is the glue that holds everything and everybody together and the engine that drives everything forward. Parents, students, faculty, staff, and board

members come to ASSETS to find that school-wide systems provide a basic foundation that everyone must build upon. There is an atmosphere of interdependence as all involved must learn and grow in order to improve the prospects for a child at school. The view is that the community cannot afford to let any child be a failure in school. In order to accomplish this goal, everyone has an important role to play. If one component is dysfunctional, it affects the whole. Examples include an uninvolved parent or a disengaged teacher. Those involved at ASSETS must walk the walk rather than just talk the talk. Ideally, all must participate, contribute, and reflect. Inevitably, many previously held assumptions must be challenged.

Groups become communities when they interact with each other and stay together long enough to form a set of habits and conventions, and when they come to depend upon each other for the accomplishment of certain ends (Wilson & Ryder, 2003). Learning cannot be separated from action so a community shares a consensual goal to support each other in learning. Everybody expects to learn and is prepared to engage in activities at least partly for that reason. The term *dynamic* is added to distinguish the construct from traditional, centralized groups of learners found in many classrooms. In a dynamic community, all members share control, and everyone learns, including the teacher or group leader (Wilson & Cole, 1997). Transformative communication is the norm, with both sender and receiver of messages changed by the interaction (Ryder, 1995). In a classroom where the teacher assigns a project, expecting the students to learn something but not expecting him or herself to learn - such a classroom would not yet be a dynamic learning community because all participants are not engaged in the learning experience. Dynamic learning communities are generally characterized by distributed control,

commitment to the generation and sharing of new knowledge, flexible-learning activities, and community members having autonomy. In addition, there are high levels of dialogue, interaction, and collaboration, and problems, goals, or projects play a role in the constructive process (Wilson & Ryder, 2003).

Synergy

Synergy is defined as increased effectiveness or achievement produced by combined action or cooperation (Hall, 2001). Collaboration is essential to meet the needs of each student and to achieve mutual goals. Everyone involved in this endeavor has an important role to play. The first layer of synergy consists of the basic foundation – the promising practices integrated to make up the system. Then, the AAT provides support in two important ways. P. Jones explains:

One being that there's this wonderful nucleus of administrators who are managing programs all under the same leadership, which is the head of school. The support I get from that – there is tremendous expertise, and tremendous understanding of kids, and clarity of what we are all doing. There's a lot of support and nurture and expectation and collegiality that's very important. In addition to that, support in terms of program management. Certainly when you speak about policy and actions and K – 12 perspectives, we work until we become in concert with one another before the action takes place. (personal communication, July 15, 2003)

Working in concert is critical when the goal is to develop a dynamic learning community.

Working together is also essential “so it's never just one way, just one person, it's diffused throughout the system. So the expectation for everyone – from the brand new teacher to me – is that we're learning – we're not done – and there are many people who can support what you need in our system” (P. Jones, personal communication, July 15, 2003).

When it comes to achieving a dynamic learning community and working in the best interest of the children, J. Roberts thinks this also comes in layers. She says that one

layer consists of the classroom teachers and the child. The teachers know that child intimately on a daily basis. Another group of people that know the child intimately are the parents. Every day, the teachers are going to be looking at all of the pieces that come together for that child's social-emotional and academic functioning because they're all pieces of that puzzle. In addition, "there is the parents' input and perspective on the child at home and in other settings, their aspirations and expectations for their child, their concerns, what they see as issues and what they really want us to work on. That has to be a piece of that kind of daily process too" (personal communication, July 9, 2003).

That daily level of assessing and knowing each student leads to the next level, which centers upon the AAT. Unless an AAT member happens to be teaching a language or math group, they do not have the same kind of daily interactions and intimate knowledge that teachers have. According to J. Roberts, what they do have is as follows:

I have a more global picture maybe of how they fit in the big picture of the school – the social community that we have. The academic aspects of our day and from the parent side, fits in with me too, because you know that, they come at that level too. And it's not just me as the classroom AAT that's assigned to be the curriculum specialists for that class, but it's Page as the counselor, it's Rick as the principal, sometimes it's Lee as the headmaster. And it's even the other curriculum specialists who may not be personally overseeing that classroom and responsible for that child in their life here at school. But we talk a lot and we try to know, at least to some degree all of the kids. Obviously, there are three hundred of them from the K to 8. I can't claim to know all of the kindergarteners. I don't know all of the little guys. Because my group of kids are at the other end of the school and they are my focus. I trust Danielle to know them intimately, and if I need to know one of the little guys or if it's important for us to all have a big picture of something that's happening in that classroom or whatever. (personal communication, July 9, 2003)

Many of the AAT also referred to another level, which includes the board of trustees. The board of trustees is "wonderful" and "have done a lot to support the school – that goes without saying" (R. Mason, personal communication, July 9, 2003; S. Tadashi,

personal communication, July 11, 2003). The trustees are involved in fundraising and projects, and are supportive of the AAT, decisions, personnel searches, and student events. In addition, they go on retreats, participate in accreditation, have helped construct the playground, and attend every open house (D. Robbins, personal communication, July 12, 2003; J. Roberts, personal communication, July 9, 2003; L. Severt, personal communication, July 9, 2003; P. Jones, personal communication, July 15, 2003; & R. Yoshimoto, personal communication, July 14, 2003).

As referred to in the roles piece, transitioning from K-8 to high school was an extensive process. P. Jones observes that in the beginning, it was two separate entities. When she looks over the past six years, she states that there has begun to have some actual connection between the two systems. According to P. Jones, the high school had to gain some credibility and to see how they were going to fit because they were different due to the needs of the adolescents. In her opinion, today everyone works very well together and that they have all done a lot of growing together. With P. Jones presenting the high school perspective, “we reflect, all together, the whole group, the needs of the school – K – 12. We’re working on policy, we’re working on who we are, we’re working on some of the me stuff too, and like when are we going to schedule this or that. Overall, we’re trying to make certain that our system is strong and sound and responds to what we want” (personal communication, July 15, 2003). L. Severt agrees with this perspective. In a recent faculty meeting the topic was about the new campus and how it might be cheaper to move the high school first. Many people on the faculty did not want that because they regarded ASSETS as a K-12 school and they did not want the two

separated. P. Jones describes what ASSETS has been able to achieve in the following statement:

I think there is nothing better than actually realizing that you have a hand on creating this dynamic learning community, and you see the effort, the patient, methodical work towards that end. That's just exciting, so when I look at things that are actually happening, that I could see previously weren't yet there, that's just great. I love working with the secondary programming – I get a great deal of satisfaction in talking to kids, and I'm very fortunate as a principal, to have a real unique relationship with our student population. I know every student. I can go outside during lunchtime and they welcome me into that group, which is unusual. The feedback that I get from them is very honest and it fuels my passion and helps me be creative about what still needs to be done. I get firsthand, they're the ones that we're trying to work with, so to have them actually speak to what we're doing is very rewarding. Their success is very rewarding. At graduation with twenty students – everybody in the crowd is just embracing them – it's a remarkable intimate celebration. And they're ready to go to the next step. It's like wow – the fourth of July! I love it and I would say, this was not initially satisfying. I have come to recognize this is a good thing. When your teacher actually say I can do that, or repeat something that I said in order to establish this program, it's just kind of comical because all these things I've been working towards – they use that now to continue the work. It's comical, but it's also gratifying and satisfying. They are truly committed. There are hundreds of things. I get great satisfaction from talking with my administrative colleagues, jumping off ideas and continuing to learn. I can't imagine, at this stage of my career, not being able to feel that way. (personal communication, July 15, 2003)

Linking Joint Examination of the Data and Change

ASSETS School attempts to put the pieces together to promote student growth and development. This is done through joint examination of the data and explicit attempts to link change with student performance. It also includes not letting kids slip through the cracks, constantly evaluating student growth by utilizing a holistic approach, and obtaining feedback from all involved, including the students. According to Englert and Rozendal (2004), "Learning to use data for collaborative decision making is thus both a cause and consequence for changing school culture" (p. 39).

The integration piece addressed practices such as diagnostic testing, the annual development of the student profile, and the collection of qualitative and quantitative data to meet the needs of their students. L. Severt states:

Well, you know, that's the way we try to figure out whether we are effective or not. And obviously, for some kids you're going to be very effective and for other kids you're going to be scratching your head in January saying wait a minute, why isn't this kid doing better than he is? And then, that's where your AAT sits down with your teacher you know, looks at well, what would help, what do we know about this kid - maybe it's that we have to just do more of what we've been doing or maybe we have to eliminate this and really pair everything down and focus on these issues. For every kid it's different, but it basically happens on a one to one basis. (personal communication, July 9, 2003)

Not only does joint examination of the data and explicit attempts to link change with student performance happen on a one to one basis, it happens informally every day. At the classroom level, the teacher and the AAT frequently evaluate a problem area.

According to J. Roberts, common questions include "What are we doing, and so what about this? Is it the physical set up, is it the personality thing, is it the curriculum, is it no lunch, and what is it that's not working?" (personal communication, July 9, 2003). On another level, there is also programmatic evaluation going on at the same time. There are discussions going on all the time as "anyone of us can say, 'What do you guys think?' – here's what's going on. Because we come from different perspectives, it's a good brainstorming session and an evaluation of what's happening" (J. Roberts, personal communication, July 9, 2003). Teachers and AAT members have discussions with parents, with students, as well as with each other.

At the high school level, the 10:00 meeting is key. P. Jones states, "I think we have this unique opportunity to pull everything together – with teacher training, with interpreting diagnostic data, with curriculum design, and doing everything that works for

kids in this time between periods every day” (personal communication, July 15, 2003).

The 10:00 meeting was implemented 6 years ago and P. Jones alleges the meeting has evolved based on the needs of the faculty. Initially, it was “designed to help teachers understand what dyslexic students do and how they operate, so it was all about case studies and informational studies.” P. Jones continues with the following statement:

Well, that was six years ago, so now, you would find that you go in and you talk about observable classroom behaviors, for example, and what does that mean to us, what kind of exceptionality might that be, what are the instructional strategies, how do the diagnostic tests confirm or validate what we’re talking about, how could our curriculum change or alter our response to this particular youngster’s needs? And we always have a student as the centerpiece, which is pretty amazing for high school – we don’t talk science and math. So I’m able to reestablish every single day what we are. (personal communication, July 15, 2003)

In the end, it does not matter what educators think unless it really works for students after they leave school.

A Deliberate Plan for Professional Development

There is a spectrum that ranges from basic training to facilitating, sustaining, and improving a viable service model. This includes a deliberate plan to promote use of evidence based practices, and sufficient administrative support to promote sustained practice (McLeskey & Waldron, 2004). Everyone at ASSETS is expected to develop, contribute, reflect, and challenge their own assumptions.

The program at ASSETS is so specialized; it requires a substantial amount of in-house teacher professional development. D. Robbins states, “Even though you may take the training for 3 or 4 weeks, you don’t really get to know it until you use it, and use it, and use it, and use it.” This specialized process affects the level of competency of the teachers and that is why the AAT is “there a lot – is to help provide that support for the questions, or to actually go in if we need to demonstrate. Yeah, those three things – time,

the buy in, and the level of competency require support, not that our teachers are incompetent, but we're talking about those real specific programs and requirements" (personal communication, July 12, 2003).

J. Roberts agrees with D. Robbins and adds that ASSETS can be a complex place with a variety of systemic programs that need to be integrated to serve a pretty diverse population of students with a lot of needs. It is also not an easy place for teachers to integrate into, much less reach the point where they feel that they know what they are doing. J. Roberts states:

There's so much going on, there's so much to learn. It's very . . . our expectations are high, it's very structured - I mean there's a lot of annoying rules and do it this way and whatever to learn. And at first it feels kind of rigid and you know, and overwhelming. You don't have any clue why maybe you're being asked to do something this way because the big picture hasn't come clear yet - you're just in the little picture at that point. But the little picture is hard to get a handle on, and as a new person coming into the school - it's pretty overwhelming. So the first year, it takes you the whole year to even have enough hindsight to say, "Oh I get it, that's why she told me to do that", you know. But it kind of comes clear by the end of the first year. So the second year is better. We do have, as you know, a fair number of military spouses that we employ. Their third year is fabulous because they've really got their feet on the ground, they really understand the kids, and they've got the system. Now they're bringing their own stuff, you know, to the school, and they're really contributing more of their own individuality and then they move and we start over. (personal communication, July 9, 2003)

S. Tadashi thinks that the AAT/teacher pairings are very important because the teachers do feel supported. With this kind of specialized process in place, the teachers need someone they can go to consistently to help them. One of the AAT's primary functions is to help teachers so they can be most effective in what they need to do. ASSETS provides each teacher an individual professional development experience with built in mentoring and peer support. This approach is consistent with what is done with students. Just as teachers individualize learning and support for each of their students, the AAT

individualize learning, mentoring, and support for each of their teachers (personal communication, July 11, 2003).

L. Severt adds that the teachers have “lots of choices about what they do in the classroom, but they have to talk about it with somebody. They have to share it and we are in and out of their classrooms all the time anyway, so they are kind of used to that” (personal communication, July 9, 2003). Furthermore, L. Severt asserts that it is really important to give teachers an opportunity to talk about their practice. He states, “You know, we don’t do that in schools, and that’s what AAT do for the elementary teachers. If you go to our high school, we have a 10:00 meeting every day. It’s kind of a debriefing, a staffing where teachers talk about their practice.” L. Severt is unsure how to go about this in other schools; however, he believes teachers could only benefit from the opportunity to discuss their practice. He used to work in a hospital where he participated in diagnosis during pediatric grand rounds. It was a time and place where doctors could exchange notes, experiences, suggestions, and observations. According to L. Severt, teachers often close their door and “they are the reigning monarch in their room, but there’s a price to be paid for that. They have a lack of confidence about what they are doing. Many times they don’t want other people to see it, because they are not sure they are doing the right thing. They need an opportunity to talk about practice” (personal communication, July 9, 2003).

In addition to in-house training, inservices, and conferences, ASSETS provides additional professional development opportunities for teachers. P. Jones recently created a group with teachers called the professional development (PD) group. The group consists of 7 or 8 teachers and P. Jones would like to see them “develop a different kind

of approach to summer school which integrates strategies and content. They have continued on to do planning for the professional development next year. I'm trying to get the teachers really engaged in planning their own professional development" (personal communication, July 15, 2003). Furthermore, P. Jones made professional development grants available so teachers could apply for funds in their area of interest. For example, one teacher went to Harvard for the learning and brain research conference. According to P. Jones, "they're at the level they deserve to be excited about those kind of things. So, I think we do a lot. It's a priority. You asked me what the barrier was – obviously, personnel and providing training. As a result, I believe I spend a huge amount of time doing this" (personal communication, July 15, 2003).

L. Severt states that two years ago, ASSETS started an administrative intern program. He is currently working with a teacher in high school who is conducting diagnostic studies. In his opinion, this teacher is a future AAT person – if not at ASSETS, then somewhere else. Another example of professional development is the pilot program going on in the K-8 where the AAT are identifying individuals to give more responsibility to in the summer. L. Severt states, "We sent Stacy and Danielle to get their master's degrees. So Carol is now doing Stacy's job, and we have a teacher in the AAT office this summer actually being an assistant to them learning some of the things they do. So we're trying to take our responsibility to replace ourselves seriously" (personal communication, July 9, 2003).

Everyone has opportunities for professional development at ASSETS and this includes the AAT. According to D. Robbins's statement:

There are a lot of opportunities for growth, for stretching, very much so – and it's encouraged by our Head of School – Lee Severt. What he does is, he doesn't just

talk the talk, he's a walk the talk kind of person, and so he even uses himself as a model. His personal goal for this year was to publish, and so he has a piece in the Perspective. So, he says because we can't stop stretching and getting refreshed and things like that. It's dynamic – it's a very dynamic kind of thing, which is good, no one wants to get stale. It's the growing and the evolving of my personal self, and then, whatever I've learned from my personal self – the growing and evolving, I can also apply to school. What I really like too are the colleagues I'm with. I get to dialogue with people that are on the same wavelength that I'm on. I find that exciting. Dr. Earl had once told me, many times with jobs, it's 90% the people that you're with, and I'm finding it to be true. (personal communication, July 12, 2003)

As stated earlier, ASSETS is funding D. Robbins and S. Tadashi in a Master's program in educational leadership. S. Tadashi calls L. Severt, the head of school, a charismatic adult. She states: "He nurtures me; he takes care of me, as a professional, definitely. The reason I'm in this master's program is because of him. He pushed me - I did not want to go, and I am so grateful he did. He sees in me more potential than I can ever imagine" (personal communication, July 11, 2003).

In regard to support for the AAT, the board of trustees supports the team, and the team members support each other. R. Mason is the newest member of the AAT and she has been trained and supported by the whole team (personal communication, July 9, 2003). R. Yamato verifies that training usually takes place with other AAT members. In addition, almost all new AAT members are "selected based on their experience at ASSETS School" (personal communication, July 14, 2003). In fifteen years, R. Yamato can remember only one "outside" person who joined the AAT, and that person did not last very long. P. Jones might be considered an "outside" person because she worked with the Department of Education (DOE) for 10 years; however, prior to working for the DOE, she taught at ASSETS for 2 years before becoming the first principal of ASSETS. According to D. Robbins, the AAT meet once a week on Wednesday afternoons after the

regular inservice. Informally, the AAT communicate via email or they “just drop by and chit-chat” (personal communication, July 12, 2003). P. Jones concludes, “I always feel like I’m learning something new, and that’s very exciting. So you replicate that for kids – I’m this old person and I get excited – kids must, if you really get them jazzed and they get a handle on this - this is powerful stuff” (personal communication, July 15, 2003).

Conclusions about Dynamic Learning Community

The specialized program implemented at ASSETS is most beneficial to all those involved if everyone buys into the system. R. Yoshimoto highlights that one of the most challenging aspects the AAT encounter is when you have an individual who does not buy into the system. He states, “What do you do to continue to support, to continue to assist, and where is the line drawn where it will not work out in terms of support?” (personal communication, July 14, 2003). D. Robbins also addresses the “buy in” by claiming “whenever we have to introduce an aspect of a program or we have to change something, the buy in with the teachers takes a long time, so I guess I would consider that a barrier” (personal communication, July 12, 2003). Complicating the issue is the AAT endeavor to mentor all the different personalities in the classroom appropriately and well (J. Roberts, personal communication, July 9, 2003).

In order to develop a dynamic learning community, everyone must subscribe to learned responsibility. For example, students and their issues are addressed, not passed on year after year, from classroom to classroom. It may take sustained, long-term and consistent effort to address academic and social-emotional issues, so everyone has to do what it takes. L. Severt addresses this barrier to growth in the following statement:

You know, one of the biggest barriers that I find is our own experience of school as adults, as teachers. You can all go back all the way to John Dewey – 1908 -

and read reflective morality - is a theory of morality where he talks about reflective morality. Where he talks about the praise, blame game. You know, how praise and blame are used as the basic economy in school. The result of that is that you get kids that basically try to duck responsibility, but you also get teachers who duck responsibility, and the need to have a more reflective morality. I think the campus wide integrated behavior management counseling helped that a lot. But it's interesting, our kids are better at it than our adults. So, our kids are actually better at problem solving, better at confronting issue, better at identifying problems than the adults in the community. Big barrier - we haven't learned enough from our kids. We have not done for ourselves what we do for our kids. I think that's a big weakness. (personal communication, July 9, 2003)

As stated at the beginning of this theme, in a classroom where the teacher assigns a project, expecting the students to learn something but not expecting him or herself to learn - such a classroom would not yet be a dynamic learning community because all participants are not engaged in the learning experience. In addition, the teacher cannot teach what they do not practice themselves.

Working together as a team does not always come naturally. According to L.

Severt:

ASSETS has a head teacher, second teacher model. I want to tell you that is really hard Tanya. You know, sometimes you'll walk into a room and there's a team that are operating and they are doing a tango. They anticipate each other's steps. They know when to dip, they know when to duck, they know when to turn and swirl and it's just marvelous. You just walk in there and you know, wow, this team is doing great! And then you walk into other classrooms and the team is - they are learning the waltz. And they're looking at their feet all the time, and they're counting and they're listening to the music, and they're looking at their feet and sometimes they step on each others toes, but they are really trying and they're struggling and they're working and it's, you know, it's not easy. And then you go into other rooms and it's a mosh pit - they're doing a slam dance, they're banging into each other, they're hurting each other. And I would say that's a huge liability. We haven't figured out how to help people be better at teaming because there is just not a whole lot of history about that in the American education. (personal communication, July 9, 2003)

The AAT have been in existence for a substantial amount of time; however, the dynamics do not always run smoothly for this group either. What offsets any rough transitional

periods is keeping in mind what is best for students, and S. Tadashi states that in the end, “We support each other. As screwed up as our dynamics can be sometimes, I have a lot of affection for everybody that I work with. I think that my personal regard for my colleagues has kept me on this job far longer than anything else has” (personal communication, July 11, 2003).

The AAT strive to offset the barriers referred to above by being positive role models, talking the same talk, walking the talk, and following up extensive in-house training with individual support. An AAT team member clearly buys into the system. They know teachers cannot be trained in various methodologies and then left to their own devices. The AAT understand that competency will only be developed through daily practice. S. Tadashi asserts that “teachers, until they actually go through the training and work through it for a while, don’t know how much they don’t know. It’s a constantly evolving process. It’s something that requires a lot of careful nurturing” (personal communication, July 11, 2003).

The AAT make an effort to provide a balance of autonomy and support. Teachers do personal professional reflections four times a year, and according to P. Jones, teachers really love the fact that they have autonomy. They appreciate the opportunity to create with their curriculum. On the other hand, P. Jones states:

If it’s something they’re not very secure about, they want a cookbook, and that tells you loud and clear that you really need to develop and train and you have to start things off. I’ve seen that over and over again in different ways. It’s not pervasive; I think that the majority of the teachers are fine. For example, with linguistic structures, which is a very, very critical area, but people don’t know how to do that in high school. So it’s taken a lot of leadership to pull them through that. I have this perspective as a classroom teacher that I love to create curriculum so I think that it’s a gift. To say here are the objectives – see ya in May. I have to be careful that I don’t expect that teachers are all going to want that. For some, that may be a scary thing. (personal communication, July 15, 2003)

The faculty and staff come to work at ASSETS bringing varied experiences, knowledge, skills, strengths, weaknesses, self-efficacy, expectations, and preconceived notions. Some teachers who come to ASSETS with little to no experience thrive in comparison to someone who has a considerable amount of experience. According to L. Severt, “it’s an important thing to worry about even when you have a great faculty, and a great system - terrific curriculum. You still have to be careful because we all came through this system and we all generally default back into modes of being that don’t necessarily help kids succeed” (personal communication, July 9, 2003). He goes on to state that although ASSETS has an established system, they are always working on it as it is never one hundred percent.

Despite barriers and challenges, ASSETS displays many of the characteristics that contribute to a dynamic learning community. Examples include distributed control, commitment to the generation and sharing of new knowledge, flexible-learning activities, and community members who have both autonomy and support. In addition, there are high levels of dialogue, interaction, and collaboration, and problems, goals, or projects play a role in the constructive process.

CHAPTER 4 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study included exploring what makes the ASSETS model effective, and the role of the AAT in supporting and facilitating the use of evidence-based practices. Following a series of interviews with AAT members at ASSETS School, data analysis revealed three overarching themes that contributed to an understanding of the factors that impact the ASSETS service model. The three themes were: (1) roles and responsibilities of the AAT highlighted by *the Four Hat Model*; (2) integration of services, programs, and resources to meet the needs of all students; and (3) creation of a dynamic learning community.

The following is a brief review of the conclusions for each theme presented previously in Chapter 3. In regard to *the Four Hat Model*, interview data revealed that AAT members are involved in almost every aspect of ASSETS operation including support with curriculum, counseling and behavior, testing and diagnostics, and central administrative issues. Essentially, the AAT supports the ASSETS model as members work to identify and supplement what a teacher provides and what a student needs to allow teachers to teach and students to learn. The AAT keeps the system running and in place, and this is important for consistency, continuity, communication, sustainability, and effectiveness of evidence-based practices. As a multidisciplinary team, each member contributes his or her particular expertise to provide more resources, to facilitate confidence in the system and the integration of all pieces. The integration of all the

pieces requires balance. Examples of balance include providing both instructional and psychological support for teachers, and implementing an academic as well as a social-emotional curriculum for students. Finally, AAT members set standards and expectations for teachers by being role models who promote stewardship of the school and each student.

The integration of services, programs, and resources to meet the needs of all students provides a critical foundation to the entire ASSETS system. Having school-wide systems and evidence-based practices in place at ASSETS ensures that teachers have a clear understanding of expectations, fundamentals, and core curriculum. This includes a thematically differentiated-integrated curriculum design, affective curriculum, a behavior and counseling system, multisensory structured language approaches, enrichment courses, a community mentoring program, and monitoring student performance and progress. Integration fosters common terminology so everyone talks the same talk; it allows ASSETS to balance remediation with an engaging and enriched curriculum, and it also allows ASSETS to address both academic and social/emotional issues. As a result, integration supports creating a safe environment for children enabling them to participate and contribute fully in the learning environment. ASSETS stresses the importance of this type of environment and all the integrated components contribute to the common school goals.

The creation of a dynamic learning community represents an extension beyond consensus regarding what the core curriculum and systems are, how they will be implemented, and having faith and confidence in these systemic processes. In a learning environment, a properly laid and supported foundation allows everyone to aspire to

shared responsibility and utilizing the knowledge they acquire in novel ways. For example, a middle school teacher can be confident that students coming from an ASSETS elementary classroom have been immersed in a thematically differentiated-integrated curriculum, affective curriculum, a behavior and counseling system, multisensory structured language approaches, and enrichment courses. New students to ASSETS have been exposed to the core curriculum during the summer. The teacher also knows the scope and sequence taught in the multisensory structured language approaches have been adhered to. This kind of knowledge allows continuity and a continued growth curve as teachers and students maintain a focus on the basics. At the same time, testing limits in order to see what more can be achieved is supported and encouraged. In another example, teachers understand that student needs are addressed, not passed on year after year, from classroom to classroom. Students at ASSETS frequently require sustained, long-term and persistent effort and support to address academic and social-emotional issues, so everyone has to do what it takes. One teacher passes the torch to another by talking, sharing information, and collaborating.

Everyone in the school must be engaged in the learning experience. There is an atmosphere of interdependence as all involved must learn and grow in order to improve the prospects for a child at school. Establishing this kind of atmosphere entails fostering communication and practical inquiry, ongoing professional development, overcoming barriers, and working together. The view is that the community cannot afford to let any child be a failure in school.

Although several of these thematically-linked conclusions might be helpful to other mainstream public schools, it is clear that ASSETS is a separate school with a

different school structure than is normally found. As stated earlier, the AAT members play a critical role in facilitating the ASSETS model; however, most schools do not have systematic coordination of support personnel involved at every level of a school.

Through examination of the data, three general ideas were identified related to the use and sustainability of evidence-based practices that would benefit professionals involved in school improvement. The remainder of this chapter will discuss these main ideas, as well as look at limitations of this research, and explore future research agendas.

Discussion

Three main ideas relevant to the use and sustainability of evidence-based practices include: 1) establishing a system with the capacity to solve problems; 2) addressing the technical and conceptual aspects of change; and 3) linking research and student data to improvement in learning.

Establishing a System with the Capacity to Solve Problems

Schools are considered living systems because people give schools their meaning. According to Curtis and Stollar (2002), “a system is the orderly combination of two or more individuals whose interaction is intended to produce a desired outcome” (p. 224). Administrators, teachers, students, counselors, and school psychologists are all examples of component parts of a school that are organized and interact for the common goal of educating children. As a living system, a school has the ability to interact and respond to its environment. Thus, living systems are “open systems” as each part of a system, regardless of role or size, influences the other parts, and impacts the performance of the entire system to some degree (Curtis & Stollar, 2002). The capacity of a school system to solve problems depends on a healthy system with identified goals. A school will screen

environmental information based on these goals in order to determine what is important and needs to be addressed. Curtis and Stollar (2002) state that “healthy systems demonstrate the capacity to analyze problems and to solve them in a manner that facilitates the attainment of their goals” (p. 225).

ASSETS School is an example of a healthy system and an effective model, as there is significant emphasis and structures that involve everyone collaborating to solve problems. The AAT ensures the school’s ability to provide a balance between being too closed (the inability to solve problems) and too open (trying to solve all problems). The implication is that the AAT will find a way to provide supports for whatever teachers and students need to be successful. School systems that are too closed tend to be rigid and adverse to risk and addressing new problems. In contrast, school systems that are too open often promote an atmosphere of instability and discontinuity. Everything is constantly changing at such a rapid rate, it becomes difficult to set identified goals, much less develop a plan to attain these goals and monitor progress (Curtis & Stollar, 2002).

Maintaining a balance that enhances effective problem-solving over time can be difficult due to factors that can impact the effectiveness of any system. One factor impacting ASSETS is school size. Fifteen years ago, there were 150 students in grades K-8 (D. Robbins, personal communication, July 12, 2003). The high school was started in the fall of 1991 with 2 students. Presently, there are 258 K-8 students and 119 high school students enrolled for the 2005-2006 school year. In addition, there are 42 K-8 teachers, 23 high school teachers, a librarian, and 7 resource teachers all supported by the AAT. As an independent school, ASSETS does not receive federal funds, so the school is supported by tuition, grants, and donations. There are a substantial number of children

on the waiting list and there is constant pressure from different constituencies lobbying for ASSETS to expand. According to R. Yamato, the expansion to date has already resulted in barriers that people would not usually think of. He goes on to state:

I think the barriers occur when we lose our sense of mission. We forget about how all the pieces tie in. I think that's a barrier because then we begin to see systemic changes that we did not anticipate. There is another barrier and that is an increasing number of students that we are having at ASSETS school. Fifteen years ago when we had about 150 students till now when we have 300 students in the K – 8 program – it's a huge jump. This means that as principal, for example, I don't get a chance to know every student as I used to. We seem to be getting bigger and bigger, which means that in terms of all the pieces holding together, we've created an environment and we may begin to see some pieces lose some effectiveness. So for us, the number of students here is a real critical issue. (personal communication, July 14, 2003)

The school size factor is a part of the system that may result in financial and space issues, increased bureaucracy, and affect support in training, curriculum implementation, and follow up (AAT interview, July, 2003). As stated earlier, AAT members play a critical role in facilitating the ASSETS model, so a factor like school size could impact the systemic coordination of services at every level, as well as consistency, communication, consensus, and community.

ASSETS must continue to evolve, plan for future change and continue to strive for system-level improvement through self-analysis and problem-solving methods sustained over time. It is a never-ending process because the goal is to always improve as an effective problem-solving entity. ASSETS has had an established, encapsulated system in place for a substantial amount of time and the data indicates that the AAT have focused an inordinate amount of energy on the process of keeping each piece intact. Change is inevitable, so in the process of maintaining the status quo, there may be times when ASSETS inadvertently shifts from an emphasis on prevention and problem-solving to an emphasis on reaction. Since the process is already well established and in place, the

next logical step would be to focus on outcome and accountability data in order to move ASSETS to the next level of school change and improvement. Bridging the gap between research, practice, and accountability have become focal points of both the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLBA) and the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004). Although ASSETS School is a non-profit organization that does not accept any federal funds, they would most certainly benefit from looking at critical outcome indicators to improve their own practice. Some of these indicators include direct and continuous measurement of behavior, achievement, and the instructional environment to determine effectiveness, the compilation of longitudinal outcome data on students, and improving documented follow up of students after they leave ASSETS.

What works specifically for ASSETS may not work for other schools; however, establishing a dynamic system that will respond to specific characteristics and needs is critically important. According to L. Severt, faculty and staff often get very attached to certain things they do in school because they think these things are important. When AAT members were asked which component they thought was most effective and why, P. Jenks stated that she didn't think one could separate the components out, and S. Tadashi, J. Roberts, and R. Mason indicated that all the components were effective or ASSETS would not be utilizing them (AAT interview, July, 2003). In contrast, L. Severt states:

I would like to know that they [components] are important, because I wonder if there are some things that we're doing that we don't need to do. Do you remember Charles Lamb's dissertation on Roast Pork? Did you read that one in college? It's a wonderful story about innovation. Charles Lamb wrote this wonderful little humorous piece where he talks about the discovery of cooking meat for the first time. It's a story about this father who leaves his son in charge

of the family compound and they have these pigs that are sort of family pets. The pigs are eaten, but they are eaten raw. The son messes up, the house catches on fire, and all the pigs are consumed in the fire. The father comes back and they are picking through the rubble and dad accidentally burns his hand on what's left of one of these little suckling piglets. In order to relieve the burn, he puts his fingers in his mouth and has the first taste of crackling pork. Charles Lamb goes on to talk about how the residents contrived to keep this pork-cooking secret in their village. However, neighboring villages always wondered why there were so many house fires there. Basically, what people in this village did was, they herded the pig into the house and burned the house down to get a roasted pig. They were unclear on attribution - what is it that cooks the pig? Well, you can put the pig in an oven and burn just the pig and not lose your whole house. So I think attribution is important in schools because I think we probably use way more resources thinking that what we're doing is effective when it might not be. What cooks the pig? What cooks dinner, and parents need to know, we need to know, and the entire nation needs to know because we don't have an unlimited amount of resources. We can't burn a house down every time we want to have dinner. (personal communication, July 9, 2003)

Twenty or thirty years ago, many educators may have considered ASSETS to be ahead of its' time. Clearly, there are still innovative practices in place at ASSETS today. The question is whether ASSETS is doing everything that needs to be done.

Addressing the Technical and Conceptual Aspects of Change

The second main idea regarding the quest for the use and sustainability of evidence-based practices concerns addressing the technical and conceptual aspects of change (Cook & Cook, 2004; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001). As stated in Chapter One, the research literature indicates that merely exposing teachers to effective practices via inservices or one-day workshops is insufficient to evoke sustained change in teaching practices (Boardman et al., 2005; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001). Providing opportunities for teachers to attain mastery of effective practices increases the likelihood of continued use over time (Huberman & Miles, 1984). Conceptually, teachers benefit from opportunities to construct understanding of interventions, and link research ideas to classroom

situations and problem-solving through discussion with colleagues, consultants, and other professionals (Englert & Rozendal, 2004).

One example of the importance of addressing technical and conceptual aspects of change can be found in designing programs to prevent reading disability. Spear-Swerling and Sternberg (1996) provided a review of specific ready intervention programs and emphasized three broad characteristics common to programs designed to prevent reading disability.

First, successful intervention programs stress how important it is for children to experience immediate and continued success in reading. For example, texts can be adapted for children to make them easier to read. Second, all professionals involved in development and implementation believe that all children can benefit from appropriate instruction and learn to read well. Finally, successful intervention programs are distinguished by ample support for teachers and abundant opportunities to receive feedback from colleagues. According to Spear-Swerling and Sternberg (1996), strong support for teachers includes opportunities not only to learn from colleagues with similar expertise, but also from colleagues who are more knowledgeable.

As stated in Chapter three, the primary reading intervention programs utilized at ASSETS are Orton-Gillingham, Slingerland, and Spaulding. It can reasonably be debated whether these three specific reading intervention programs are sufficiently evidence-based, given that questions exist regarding adequate methodology of existing studies. And in fact, ASSETS could be even more effective with ready intervention programs if they considered current studies on alternative program options. S. Tadashi

provides a primary example of what ASSETS might need to consider in her following statement:

And so it takes somebody you know like the curriculum leader to help push forward, advance the curriculum, and take the next step in morphology. We need to add more layers to this curriculum. There's still a lot more that we need to do. Fluency research - I mean you're in Florida with Torgeson - you know all of that kind of stuff - we are so lacking in that. The high school is working, or one teacher in particular is working very hard on developing fluency with her high school students. But in the lower schools, to be perfectly honest, that is just not something that they are able to integrate into their curriculum right now, primarily because an OG [Orton-Gillingham] lesson takes forever. And there are so many minutes in the day and so we need to look at how we need to improve. We really need to do this because kids they go up to a point, and then they stop. And they stop because it's the fluency part that missing. We're remiss to not provide that for them. So we really need to look and reprioritize certain aspects of our curriculum to find the time so that this can work.
(personal communication, July 11, 2003)

On the other hand, regardless of which intervention programs ASSETS utilizes, it is important to highlight that the three broad characteristics of Spear-Swerling and Sternberg (1996) are present. AAT members provide in-house training, extensive and knowledgeable follow up and feedback that results in encouraging teachers to be discriminating consumers and generators of knowledge rather than technicians of curriculum. Teachers are trained to become active decision makers; they are responsible for linking content, process, and product, as well as student interest. Thus, the curriculum provides a foundation for integrated and comprehensive learning experiences for each student. R. Yamato, the K-8 principal and Orton-Gillingham trainer, acknowledges that there are many programs used to remediate children experiencing difficulties with language. His concern, however, is that the emphasis of many of these programs focuses on "the student's weaknesses, which continues to adversely impact their self-esteem. As such, there is a need to balance remediation with a rich and

stimulating curriculum that identifies and nurtures their strengths and talents” (Yoshimoto, 2000, p.1). Thus, the thematically differentiated-integrated curriculum and the affective curriculum/behavior system are integrated with the multisensory language approaches. This balanced approach is key and Yoshimoto (2000) likens this type of “holistic educational programming” for learning disabled (LD) children to the process of discovering and polishing gems. According to Yoshimoto, the task entails “digging through the layers of self-doubt, confusion, and feelings of incompetence using specialized tools that enhance success. Upon finding the ‘rough’ stones, other instruments are employed to cut, slice, size, and polish them to showcase their beauty, uniqueness, and quality” (p. 1).

Support for teachers is strong and diverse in that the AAT provides consultation based on *the ASSETS Four Hat Model*. These four hats include being involved with curriculum, counseling/behavior, testing/diagnostic, and central administrative issues. For teachers, the AAT provides academic, professional, and psychological consultation. For students, both an academic and a behavioral/social-emotional curriculum are provided. In addition, this kind of support is individualized for both teachers and students to capitalize on strengths and knowledge, and to shore up weaknesses. Finally, consultation and follow up includes providing a supportive, safe and predictable environment that encourages teachers and students to take risks. This is important because risk-taking is an opportunity for professional and personal growth. Additionally, teachers and students are structured for success. Examples include one on one mentoring for teachers and various levels of intervention for students. Responding to specific characteristics and needs of the school, ASSETS has universal interventions in place,

including a school-wide behavioral and counseling system, and specialized academic and affective curriculum. Choosing effective, evidence-based interventions is as important as the degree to which the intervention is implemented with integrity. According to Gresham (2001), “Establishing and maintaining the integrity of treatments is one of the most important aspects of both the scientific and practical application of instructional procedures” (p. 23). As a result, ineffectiveness of interventions is often at least partly attributed to poor integrity in regard to procedural implementation (Gresham, 2001). One of the primary functions of AAT members is to ensure the quality and integrity of treatments.

Linking Research and Student Data to Improvement in Learning

The third main idea contributing to the use and maintenance of evidence-based practices entails linking research to improvements in student learning (Abbott, Walton, Tapia, & Greenwood, 1999; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001). The research indicates that “helping teachers learn to use a problem-solving method of inquiry that links change in practice directly to change in student performance is fundamentally important” (Abbott, Walton, Tapia, & Greenwood, 1999, p. 349).

ASSETS School attempts to put the pieces together to promote student growth and development. This is done through AAT members and teachers utilizing problem-solving, joint examination of the data, and making explicit attempts to link change with student performance. ASSETS utilizes practices such as diagnostic testing, the annual development of the student profile, and the collection of qualitative and quantitative data to consider the needs of students. In addition to more formal measures and programmatic evaluation, joint examination of the data and explicit attempts to link change with student

performance happens informally every day as the AAT and teachers try to figure out if they are effective or not.

As stated earlier, ASSETS must continue to plan for future change, so they might consider implementing direct and continuous measurement of behavior, achievement, and the instructional environment to determine whether they are effective or not (Ysseldyke, 2005). This kind of progress monitoring would utilize “authentic” assessment because it is more sensitive to small changes in student social and academic behavior (Batsche et al., 2006). Adopting an integrated data system and the latest software technology would be the next logical step for ASSETS. In addition to assessing specific skills and showing small increments of growth over time, an integrated data system could be administered repeatedly and efficiently over short periods of time and assess variables that would lead to ultimate instructional targets. Furthermore, the data could be summarized in formats and displays, and used to make comparisons across students and/or used to monitor a student profile over time. Finally, an integrated data system is directly related to the development of instructional strategies associated with need (Batsche et al., 2006).

In comparison to the K-8 program, the data indicates that the high school has made more progress regarding problem-solving, addressing the technical and conceptual aspects of change, and linking research and student data to improvement in learning. There are several reasons for this. One of the reasons is related to necessity and in having to build a foundation from very little. P. Jones, the high school principal states:

We're the stepchild, almost, because we're so new to the program. The kinds of things that have been going on in the K – 8 have been going on forever and have solid application and practice in regard to the research and methodology that has come along. So the high school has just taken a leap and gone off on their own. Obviously, all of the kinds of components that are solidly research-based in terms of classroom management, curriculum design, support services, and integrated

systems are intact at a different degree than the K – 8 program. We're just getting our footing in terms of linguistic structures and some of the language-based programming that we're doing because we have to bring it to a different place. We don't have anything to replicate, so we really struggled with that. We're making good, sound gains, but we're not there yet. So, in terms of research-based – I think everything that we do is based on sound practice, and things that we could easily point out as showing, without doubt, methodologies that work. (personal communication, July 15, 2003)

The K-8 program has been firmly established for a long period of time and the changes have been incremental. In contrast, the high school has had to grow and evolve in order to survive. In 1997, there was a huge debate as to whether ASSETS would continue with the high school or shut it down. The daily 10:00 meeting has developed out of these circumstances. According to P. Jones, "I think we have this unique opportunity to pull everything together – with teacher training, with interpreting diagnostic data, with curriculum design, and doing everything that works for kids in this time between periods every day" (personal communication, July 15, 2003). The 10:00 meeting was implemented 6 years ago and P. Jones alleges the meeting has evolved based on the needs of the faculty. Initially, it was "designed to help teachers understand what dyslexic students do and how they operate, so it was all about case studies and informational studies." P. Jones continues with the following statement:

Well, that was six years ago, so now, you would find that you go in and you talk about observable classroom behaviors, for example, and what does that mean to us, what kind of exceptionality might that be, what are the instructional strategies, how do the diagnostic tests confirm or validate what we're talking about, how could our curriculum change or alter our response to this particular youngster's needs? And we always have a student as the centerpiece, which is pretty amazing for high school – we don't talk science and math. (personal communication, July 15, 2003)

Other practices that have been developed for teachers include hands-on education in curriculum design, research projects, and grants to pursue education, projects or research of interest.

Another reason for the growth exhibited in the high school may be attributed to AAT members with a different perspective. The majority of the AAT members have been with ASSETS from between 10 years to over 20 years. Clearly, their experience and expertise is valuable. On the other hand, P. Jones came to ASSETS from public school education. She states, “I think I offer another view not having been in ASSETS forever, which is good. I guess that’s my job to make sure we know what’s going on – not to be in a vacuum” (personal communication, July 15, 2003). Both perspectives are important because both programs, as a whole, reflect the needs of the school.

Clearly, any school would benefit from establishing a system with the capacity to solve problems, addressing the technical and conceptual aspects of change, and linking research and student data to improvement in learning. Benefits include focusing on student need and how the student is doing, enhanced student performance, accountability, and greater faculty, student, and parent involvement. Ysseldyke (2005) appropriately concludes:

We envisioned a bright future in which school personnel monitored the progress of all students and used the information they obtained either to put in place evidence-based interventions designed to enhance the competence of individual students, or to build the capacity of systems to meet student needs (Ysseldyke et al., 1997). Of course, if this were true, there might be few learning disabilities. (p. 127)

Limitations and Future Research

A review of the literature reveals problems inherent in connecting research to practice, and what it might take to remedy this situation. There still remains a need for further research and knowledge that must be gained from looking in-depth at individual school sites that have been successful in establishing many of the research to practice connections. In this study, the researcher focused on obtaining information from the

AAT because administrators have a key role in determining school culture and climate. In addition, AAT members are involved in virtually every level of the school, and they have unique functions and responsibilities as they provide systematic supports, and endeavor to support and facilitate the ASSETS service model as well as sustainability of evidence-based practices.

Extensive analysis of the data collected indicated limitations in the methods chosen for this study. First, the importance of the researcher's teaching experience at ASSETS was over emphasized. Consequently, perspective was limited as the researcher operated on key assumptions based on personal experience. Second, ASSETS is a unique, and very specialized educational setting. As a result, there are limitations in the ability to transfer/generalize information to other students and more traditional settings.

Finally, the AAT provided an abundance of information; however, this information emphasized process and was filtered through each member's personal perceptions. If the goal was to triangulate data in order to ensure that the claims made were supported, future research would also entail observational data, and talking to teachers about a variety of topics (Patton, 2002). Examples include asking questions in regard to how teachers think this system supports them and helps their development, and if they think ASSETS serves the needs of the students. One could also talk to students and parents about their experiences at ASSETS School and if the system had made an impact on their lives. In future studies, the researcher could add the perspective of teachers and contrast this perspective with AAT members. The researcher could also consider AAT member's perspective and behaviors by utilizing observation to validate their roles and support provided to teachers. Another possible area of exploration would

entail looking at utilizing measurement tools and collecting more frequent data to measure instructional and behavioral gains, and enhance the problem solving process at ASSETS.

There are a number of possible questions to consider in future research. How can progress monitoring be used to enhance student outcomes? Can student outcomes be measured systematically and compared over time to other external norms? According to Slavin (2003), “In every successful, dynamic part of our economy, evidence is the force that drives change” (p.12). Slavin goes on to observe that this has not been the case in the education realm where untested innovations have come and gone. Evidence-based reform prompts schools to utilize effective practices to improve outcomes for students in order to move to the next level. While researchers and educators work to create new and effective models, ASSETS might benefit from improving their existing model in order to move to the next level.

APPENDIX A
LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Administrative Advisory Team Member (AAT):

July 2003

The purpose of this letter is to obtain your consent for participation in a qualitative research study to determine what systems of support the AAT team provides. Specifically, participants will be involved in the following:

- **Interviews:** Interviews will be conducted with individual participants in July 2003. Interviews will last approximately 40 minutes and will be audio recorded and transcribed. All identifying information will be removed from the transcriptions.
- **Brief demographic protocol:** Individual participants will be asked to fill out a brief demographic protocol related to pertinent background information such as age range, relevant experience, position(s) held at the school, and number of years employed at ASSETS.
- **Follow-up:** The investigator will send the transcribed data to each participant for review, to check the validity of statements made, comments, and clarification as needed.

Your participation in this project is voluntary and will provide insight in the development of a framework for other institutions to follow. Hopefully, this framework will encapsulate the standard practices of successful educational environments like that of ASSETS school.

I do not perceive that there are any risks in your participation. There will be no compensation for participating in this study. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.

Please sign and return this letter. A second copy of the letter is provided to you for your records. If you have any questions about the study or the procedures for data collection, please contact the investigator, Tanya L. Kort (352 374-8606 or tanyakort@hotmail.com), or the university supervisor, Nancy Waldron, Ph.D. (392-0723 ext. 232 or waldron@coe.ufl.edu). If you have any questions about the rights of research participants, you can contact the University of Florida Institutional Review Board (P.O. Box 112250, UF, Gainesville, FL 32611).

Sincerely,

Tanya L. Kort
Graduate Student, School Psychology

I have read the study's description and agree to participate in the study. I have been provided a copy of this description for my own records.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B
ADMINISTRATIVE ADVISORY TEAM INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction:

Thank you for volunteering to take part in this research study. I want to talk with you about your experiences as an AAT member at ASSETS school. I would also like to ask you a few questions.

1. What systems of support does the AAT team provide?
2. What research-based components/services are utilized?
3. How does ASSETS evaluate program effectiveness?
4. Which of these components is the most effective and why?
5. Most institutions are not based on a multi-modal model where services are coordinated with all other programs and resources. Bearing this in mind, what component(s) could be implemented somewhere else?
6. How would you implement the component(s)?
7. What barriers does the team encounter?
8. How are all components/services coordinated into a unique “blend” for each student?
9. What specific roles/responsibilities do you have as an AAT member?
10. Who trains and supports an AAT member?
11. What do you find most challenging?
12. What do you find most rewarding?

Is there anything that you would like to add? Do you have any questions or comments?

APPENDIX C
DEMOGRAPHIC PROTOCOL

Your initials _____

1. Please indicate your age in years from the ranges below:

- 26 - 30 31 - 35 36 - 40 41 - 45
 46 - 50 51 - 55 56 - 60 61 - 65

2. How many years have you been employed by ASSESTS School? _____

3. Please indicate (with your most recent experience first), each position you have held at ASSESTS School and the length of time in each position.

4. What previous experiences have been helpful in your role as an AAT member?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tanya Leimomi Kort was born on January 1, 1960, in Honolulu, Hawaii. Daughter of Paul and Emily Luke, she grew up with a younger brother, Paul Scott Luke. She spent her childhood years in Honolulu and graduated from Sacred Hearts Academy in 1978. She attended Methodist College in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and received a Bachelor of Arts degree (B.A.) in English, and a Bachelor of Science degree (B.S.) in biology. Following her graduation, Tanya spent several years in North Carolina before moving back to Hawaii in 1990. She then spent seven years teaching elementary students at ASSETS School, an independent school for students with dyslexia and learning disabilities. Tanya met and married Denny, her husband, and they moved to Singapore in 1998. She served as the principal of the Dyslexia Association of Singapore for two years. In 2000, Tanya moved to Gainesville, and she began her graduate studies in school psychology at the University of Florida in 2001. Currently, she is completing her Master of Arts in Education (M.A.E.) degree. In fall 2006, she will continue to work toward a Doctor of Philosophy degree in school psychology at the University of Florida.