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# Introduction

## Educational Intervention Research

### Background and Purpose

In the early 1990's the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) appointed an ad hoc committee to explore various issues related to effective intervention for people with learning disabilities. The request came from parents and professionals who wanted to know more about the bases for the practices that are recommended, as well as research pertaining to various methods and approaches.

The committee began with a review of the literature. As expected, more descriptive than intervention studies were identified. However, in recent years more intervention studies have been completed. Despite the growing body of knowledge, concerns were expressed about the heterogeneity within the population in some studies and the lack of detail regarding the intervention procedures. Consequently, many studies were not replicable. In addition, some well designed studies were not disseminated in a way that the findings reached regular and special educators. Therefore, the committee organized a symposium, funded by the ACLD Foundation, at which time, leading researchers were asked to respond to questions regarding best practices. The questions included criteria for conducting intervention research, measurement of change, ethical issues, and approaches to dissemination. Papers and discussions from that symposium were published in the Fall 1999 as a special issue of *Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal* (Vol. 7, No. 2).

The committee later wrote a position statement, approved by the LDA Board of Directors, which highlighted several factors that should be included in an intervention research study. Information about the subjects, a detailed description of the intervention procedures, information about the school, the curriculum, and the methods used in the classroom in order to understand possible relationships between the experimental procedures and the regular education program were included in this position statement. This paper is available from the LDA National Office.

In 1999, the committee hosted another symposium, also funded by the ACLD Foundation, at which several scholars were asked to respond to a set of questions pertaining to the theory that guides their approach to intervention and the role of the teacher. These questions form the basis of the papers in this volume, and are listed below:

1. Briefly describe the essence of the instructional approach that you advocate and study.
2. Briefly discuss the theoretical basis and rationale for the instructional approach you advocate. How does this theory inform the instructional approach you advocate?
3. What conscious decisions should teachers make before, during, and after teaching when using the instructional approach you advocate?
4. Within the context of this approach, how would you characterize the role of the teacher? What are the attributes of the teacher-child interaction?

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5. Describe the preferred context (e.g., group, individual, length of time needed, etc.) for instruction using the approach you advocate. To what extent does the interaction and/or approach vary with changes in context?

6. Briefly describe the methods or procedures you use or would recommend that teachers use to evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction.

Speakers with different perspectives were invited to respond. They included Sara Tarver, PhD, from the University of Wisconsin in Madison who discussed direction instruction; Frances Clark, PhD, from the University of Wichita in Kansas who represented a strategy approach; Candace Bos, PhD, from the University of Texas at Austin focused on collaboration and some aspects of social constructivism. The fourth speaker, Katherine Garnett, PhD, from Hunter College in New York, focused largely on one method for teaching decoding skills while also addressing several issues regarding educational practices and the role of the teacher. The fifth speaker, Paula Stanovich, PhD, from the University of Toronto, was invited because of her research on effective teaching. Hence, rather than addressing a specific theoretical perspective, she presented summaries of studies which highlighted what good teachers do. Their papers, responses from members of the committee, and a summary with directions for the future are included in this issue.

Doris Johnson  
Jane Blalock  
Frank Kline  
Melinda Parrill  
Warren Weinberg