

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 074 768

EM 010 966

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TITLE An Initial Investigation into the Nature and Use of Support Services and Resources for Instruction in the Public Schools.  
PUB DATE Feb 73  
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (New Orleans, Louisiana, February 25-March 1, 1973)  
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29  
DESCRIPTORS Community Resources; Information Seeking; Information Services; \*Information Sources; Resource Centers; Resources; \*Teachers; \*Use Studies

ABSTRACT

This study had two purposes: 1) to determine what kinds of instructional support teachers used; and 2) to identify factors which facilitate or inhibit the use of such resources. The methods used to obtain data were, first, participant observation of school district activities, and second, interviews of 19 teachers. One result of the study was a list of various types of support services and resources teachers said they used. These types of services were used: building instructional staff; building instructional support personnel and agencies, such as school libraries; district curriculum staff, such as coordinators; and agencies outside the district, such as educational companies and university faculty. Resources used included curriculum design and evaluation materials, reference and other materials, and professional preparation. A list of 15 facilitating and 15 inhibiting influences was compiled. The former included: available, occurs frequently, efficient, see them often, and understandable. The latter included: confusing, costly, and inaccessible. Further research should center around two questions: what are the characteristics of services and resources which cause some to be used more than others, and what causes some teachers to use many resources while others use few?

(JK)

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AN INITIAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE NATURE  
AND USE OF SUPPORT SERVICES AND  
RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS\*

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Overview

This paper is a report of a pilot study designed to generate some initial speculation about the use of instructional support services and instructional resources by teachers in public schools. The reasons for this study, the methodology used, and the initial findings will be discussed.

For this study, instructional support services are defined as those people or agencies that facilitate the teacher-resource interface by way of logistical acts or by production of instructional resources. Instructional resources are defined as facilities, materials, or information which may be used by the teacher or by the support service with the intent of increasing the effectiveness and/or efficiency of instruction.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, the authors sought to determine what kinds of instructional support services were used by teachers

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\*Paper read at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, February, 1973.

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for each of five instructional activities. Second, the authors sought to identify the kinds of influences cited by teachers as either facilitating or inhibiting their use of support services or resources.

The joint pressures of financial constraints and demands for accountability by consumers of education (parents, students, and teachers) demand that more efficient and effective use be made of existing services and resources. One way of dealing with these pressures is to follow a systematic curriculum and instructional development process. Such processes are intended to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of services and resources while seeking to maximize instructional impact. Stipulated or implied in most instructional development processes is the assessment of resources and services which are available. An analysis of the types of characteristics of services and resources available in public schools is important in conducting such an assessment.

The increasing variety of instructional services and resources available within school systems, as well as from external agencies and companies is further reason for investigation in this area.

#### Some Early Speculation

Questions generated as a result of an investigation are typically reported in a section dealing with the analysis of the findings and suggestions for further study. However, it seems useful at this time to mention two major questions which have resulted from this study in order to give the reader a clear idea of the direction of this paper.

Those major questions are:

- What are the characteristics of services and resources which cause some to be used more often than others?
- What is it that causes some teachers to use many resources and services while others use relatively few?

Those questions will be dealt with in more detail later in this paper.

### Methodology

The setting for this study was the North Syracuse, New York, School District, which is located in a suburb of the city of Syracuse. The student population is primarily drawn from white, middle income, suburban families, with a small number of students from lower income minority groups. The district is composed of nine elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools. It is staffed by approximately 800 teachers. The central administration of the district includes an Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and nineteen district curriculum coordinators and directors.

The technique of participant observation was chosen as a first step in the investigation in order to allow the authors to become familiar with the district. It also served as a vehicle for identifying and selecting problems for study. In addition, the district staff became familiar with the authors, thereby promoting casual conversations which often proved to be quite informative.

During this phase of the study, the authors attended and participated in a wide variety of district activities, such as school board meetings, development and planning sessions for an alternative high school, staff meetings of the curriculum coordinators, and classes in the schools. Emphasis was placed on observation of the district Curriculum Coordinators and Directors, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, and teachers,

as they went about the business of curriculum design and instructional development. Field notes were taken for all activities.

An initial analysis of the field notes, combined with formal and informal conversations with district personnel suggested areas which could serve as a focus for the initial study of support services and resources.

The use of an interview was chosen as the next step to gather further information about the topic areas. Since the focus was on the use of resources and services for instructional purposes, questions had to be formulated which would elicit responses about the wide range of instructional activities. In order to systematically generate questions, a matrix was developed which combined typical instructional development process steps with instructional activities to be accomplished. The intersection of the vertical and horizontal axes of the matrix produced areas about which questions could be developed. (Appendix; Table A)

A relatively structured interview schedule consisting of thirteen open-ended questions was constructed. This combination of structured interview with open-ended questions ensured that each respondent would be asked the same set of questions with only minor variations to enhance the naturalness of the interview. In addition, in answering the questions, the respondent would be free to say as little or as much as he would like in his own words.

The resulting interview schedule was field tested with several teachers in the North Syracuse District. As a result of the excessive time required during the initial field trials, the instrument was reduced from thirteen questions to five. The five questions that were finally used were selected because they reflected areas which were most central to the focus of the study.

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\* See Appendix, Table B.

Interviews were arranged with a group of nineteen teachers selected to represent a wide range of subject areas and years of teaching experience. Five teachers were selected from each of the district's two high schools. Six teachers were selected from one of the district's nine elementary schools and three were selected from another. District activities precluded scheduling interviews in the middle schools.

Following the interviews, initial categories of support services and resources were developed by examining the types of responses given to the questions. A coding scheme was then developed and each response was classified according to the codes. A similar procedure was used to classify the responses made about influences cited as inhibiting or facilitating use of resources and support services. Visual displays of the results were made in order to facilitate further analysis.

### Results of the Study

It is important to reiterate that this investigation is a pilot study and is exploratory in nature. Consequently, the findings offered here will necessarily be of a tentative nature. The results are nominal data and should be treated as such. Nonetheless, useful information was gained as a result of this investigation.

One of the initial outcomes of the study is a list of the various types of support services and resources that teachers said they used. Organization of these types of services and resources into broader classification categories provided a useful framework for further analysis of the responses. These categories are listed in Tables 1 and 2 below.

TABLE 1  
CATEGORIES OF TYPES OF SERVICES USED BY TEACHERS

<p>1. <u>Building Instructional Staff</u>                  Department Chairman                  *Specialists                  Teacher Aides                  Teachers (other)                  Teachers (student)</p> <p>**Parents                  **Students</p> <p>3. <u>District Curriculum Staff</u>                  Assistant Supt. (Curriculum)                  Coordinators &amp; Directors                  Psychologist</p>	<p>2. <u>Building Instructional Support Personnel and Agencies</u>                  Administrators (Building)                  Audiovisual Department                  Clerical Staff (Building)                  Guidance Counselors                  Library (School)</p> <p>4. <u>Agencies Outside District</u>                  ***B.O.C.E.S.                  Community &amp; Univ.-Coll. Agencies &amp; Businesses                  Educational Companies                  Library (University &amp; College)                  Professional Association Activities &amp; Meetings                  University &amp; College Faculty</p>
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- \* Specialists includes elementary reading teachers, Title I resource teacher, & nurse.
- \*\* Parents and students are included with the Building Instructional Staff since that represents their most direct affiliation with the district.
- \*\*\* B.O.C.E.S. is the Board of Cooperative Educational Services, a state-affiliated agency which provides services to all school systems within its geographical region.

TABLE 2  
CATEGORIES OF TYPES OF RESOURCES USED BY TEACHERS

<p>1. <u>Curriculum Design &amp; Evaluation Materials</u>                  Curriculum Guides (District)                  Curriculum Guides (State)                  Curriculum Material (Commercial)                  Old Lesson Plans                  Texts                  Review &amp; Supplemental Material                  Standardized Tests                  Teacher Made Tests                  Textbook Tests</p>	<p>2. <u>Reference &amp; Other Materials</u>                  Audiovisual Material                  Books (Not Texts or Supplements)                  Catalogs &amp; Fliers (Building)                  Catalogs &amp; Fliers (Commercial, University Agency, Gov't. Agency)                  Catalogs &amp; Fliers (District)                  ERIC Collection                  Journals                  Magazines &amp; Newspapers                  Television Programs                  Television Program Guides</p>
<p>3. <u>Professional Preparation</u>                  Courses (Inservice-district)                  Courses (University &amp; College)                  Observations &amp; Visits</p>	

No attempt has been made to classify these services and resources into a hierarchy based on such factors as perceived usefulness, availability, or desirability. Such classification may be a useful focus for further study.

A second result of the study was the generation of a list of influences which, according to teachers interviewed, facilitated or inhibited their use of services and resources (Table 3). The terms used were derived from actual responses given by the teachers.

TABLE 3  
INFLUENCES WHICH FACILITATE OR INHIBIT  
THE USE OF SUPPORT SERVICES AND RESOURCES

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<u>Facilitating Influences</u>	<u>Inhibiting Influences</u>
Available	Unavailable
Accessible-Easy to Contact	Inaccessible-Difficult to Contact
See Them Often	Don't See Them Often
Occurs Frequently	Occurs Infrequently
Requires Little Time	Requires Much Time
Efficient	Inefficient
Effective	Ineffective
Cooperative	Not Cooperative
Proactive	Not Proactive
Pertinent	Not Pertinent or Little Substantive Help
Well Informed-Experienced	Uninformed-Inexperienced
Wide Variety	Limited Variety
Understandable	Confusing
Low Cost or Free	Costly
Essential	Unnecessary

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Knowledge about the existence and nature of these influences may have implications for improving the quality of services and resources available in a school system. For example, one might be able to use this set of influences as a framework to describe the perceptions of school personnel about a given service or resource. This information could then be used to arrive at some judgment about its utility and might also suggest ways for improving the effectiveness of that resource or service. Similar methods could also be used to analyze services and resources available from agencies outside the school system.

A third finding of the study results from an analysis of the specific types of services or resources cited for each interview question. This information is presented in Tables 4 through 7 below. Tables 6 and 7 are graphic portrayals of the data contained in Tables 4 and 5.

Visual inspection of these tables indicates some services and resources are used over a wider range of activities than are others. Although one would expect this to be the case, it might be useful to study this further to determine whether this is an accurate representation of the district as a whole. If these findings hold for the entire district, one could then speculate about their possible implications. For example, in Table 6, in response to the five questions\*, building administrators are cited, for four of the questions by elementary teachers, but only for one question by high school teachers. If this were true for the district as a whole, it would raise questions about the role of the principal as instructional leader in the high schools. One might also raise questions about the type of professional preparation required for the two positions. The question of whether or not principals should be used more often in an instructional role might also be considered.

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\*See Appendix, Table B.

TABLE 4  
 FREQUENCY OF USE OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES  
 FOR EACH INTERVIEW QUESTION

Question:*	CONTENT		TECHNIQUES/ STRATEGIES		MATERIALS EXISTING		MATERIALS DEVELOP		STUDENT OUTCOMES		CITATION* INSTANCES	
	10	9	10	9	10	9	10	9	10	9	10	9
[teachers] n=	HS	EL	HS	EL	HS	EL	HS	EL	HS	EL	HS	EL
Building Instructional Staff												
Department Chairman	1	-	2	1	3	1	-	-	-	2	3	3
Specialists	-	3	-	4	-	4	-	2	-	6	0	5
Teacher Aides	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	1	2
Teachers (other)	5	4	4	7	1	8	3	5	4	2	5	5
Teachers (student)	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Parents	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	0	3
Students	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	2	2
<u>Bldg. Inst. Support Personnel/Agencies</u>												
Administrators (Building)	-	1	-	3	-	6	1	3	-	-	1	4
Audiovisual Department	2	1	3	-	3	4	5	1	-	-	4	3
Clerical Staff (Building)	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	0	1
Guidance Counselors	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	1	1
Library (School)	-	-	1	2	2	5	2	2	-	-	3	4
<u>District Curriculum Staff</u>												
Assistant Supt. (Curr.)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	0	1
Coordinators & Directors	4	6	2	5	3	3	2	3	1	-	5	4
Psychologist	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	1	1
<u>Agencies Outside District</u>												
B.O.C.E.S.	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	0
Community & Univ.-College Agencies & Businesses	2	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	1
Educational Companies	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	1	1	2
Library (Univ. & College)	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2
Professional Assoc.-Mtgs.	-	-	3	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	1
Univ.-College Faculty	1	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	2

\* See Appendix, TABLE B for Complete Question

\*\* The number of questions for which service was cited. Table 6 is visual display of this data.

TABLE 5  
 FREQUENCY OF USE OF INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES  
 FOR EACH INTERVIEW QUESTION

Question:*	CONTENT		TECHNIQUES/ STRATEGIES		MATERIALS EXISTING		MATERIALS DEVELOP		STUDENT OUTCOMES		CITATION** INSTANCES	
	10 HS	9 EL	10 HS	9 EL	10 HS	9 EL	10 HS	9 EL	10 HS	9 EL	TOTAL	
TYPE OF RESOURCE [teachers] n =												
Curric. Design-Eval. Matls.												
Curric. Guide (District)	2	4	-	1	1	-	-	3	-	2	2	4
Curric. Guide (State)	5	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
Curric. Matl. (Commercial)	3	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
Old Lesson Plans	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Texts	3	3	3	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	2	3
Review & Supplementary Mtl	5	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Standardized Tests	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	6	1	1
Teacher-Made Tests	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	4	2	1
Textbook Tests	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	1	1
Reference & Other Materials												
Audiovisual Material	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2
Books (Not Texts or Supple)	-	1	-	2	-	1	1	2	-	-	2	3
Catalogs & Fliers (Bldg)	5	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	2	1
Catalogs & Fliers (Dist.)	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	1	1
ERIC Collection	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1
Journals	-	2	3	5	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	3
Magazines and Newspapers	3	1	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	2
Television Programs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Television Program Guides	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Professional Preparation												
Courses (Inservice-Dist.)	-	1	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Courses (Univ. & College)	1	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	1
Observation & Visits	1	-	2	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2

\* See Appendix, Table B for Complete Question.

\*\* The number of questions for which resource was cited. Table 7 is visual display of this data.

TABLE 6  
 NUMBER OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR WHICH INSTRUCTIONAL  
 SUPPORT SERVICE WAS CITED\*

TYPE OF SERVICE	NUMBER OF TIMES CITED	
	High School Teachers n=10	Elementary Teachers n=9
	5	5
<u>Building Instructional Staff</u>		
Department Chairman	3	3
Specialists	0	5
Teacher Aides	1	2
Teachers (other)	5	5
Teachers (student)	1	1
Parents	0	3
Students	2	2
<u>Building Instructional Personnel or Agencies</u>		
Administrators (Building)	1	4
Audiovisual Department	4	3
Clerical Staff	0	1
Guidance Counselors	1	1
Library (School)	3	4
<u>District Curriculum Staff</u>		
Assistant Supt.-Curric. Coordinators & Directors	0	1
Psychologist	5	4
<u>Agencies Outside District</u>		
B.O.C.E.S.	1	0
Community & Univ-College Agencies & Businesses	3	2
Educational Companies	1	1
Library (Univ.-College)	1	2
Professional Assoc.-Mtgs.	2	1
Univ.-College Faculty	2	2

\*Data for this Table derived from last column of Table 4.

Use of Table: E.G., High school teachers cited "Department Chairman" as an instructional support service in response to 3 of the 5 interview questions. The number of teachers making citations and the specific questions involved can be identified in Table 4. In this instance, 1 teacher cited the chairman in response to question 1 (content), 2 teachers cited him in response to question 2 (techniques/strategies) and 3 teachers cited him in response to question 3 (materials-existing).

TABLE 7

NUMBER OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR WHICH INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES WERE CITED\*

TYPE OF RESOURCE	NUMBER OF TIMES CITED	
	High School Teachers n=10	Elementary Teachers n=9
	5	5
<u>Curriculum Design and Evaluation Materials</u>		
Curric. Guide (District)	2	4
Curric. Guide (State)	2	1
Curric. Mat'ls (Commercial)	2	1
Old Lesson Plans	1	0
Texts	2	3
Review-Supplemental Mat'l	1	2
Standardize Tests	1	1
Teacher Made Tests	2	1
Textbook Tests	1	1
<u>Professional Preparation</u>		
Courses (Inservice)	1	2
Courses (Univ.-College)	3	1
Observation-Visits	1	2
<u>Reference &amp; Other Materials</u>		
Audiovisual Material	1	2
Books (Not Texts)	2	3
Catalogs & Fliers (Bldg.)	2	1
Catalogs & Fliers (Dist.)	1	1
ERIC Collection	1	1
Journals	2	3
Magazines-Newspapers	3	2
Television Programs	1	0
Television Program Guides	0	1

\* Data for this table derived from last column of Table 5.

Use of Table: E.G., high school teachers cited "curric. Guide (Dist.)" as an instructional resource in response to two of the five interview questions. The number of teachers making citations and the specific questions involved can be identified in Table 5. In this instance, two teachers cited the district curriculum guide in response to question 1 (content) and 1 teacher cited it in response to question 3 (materials-existing).

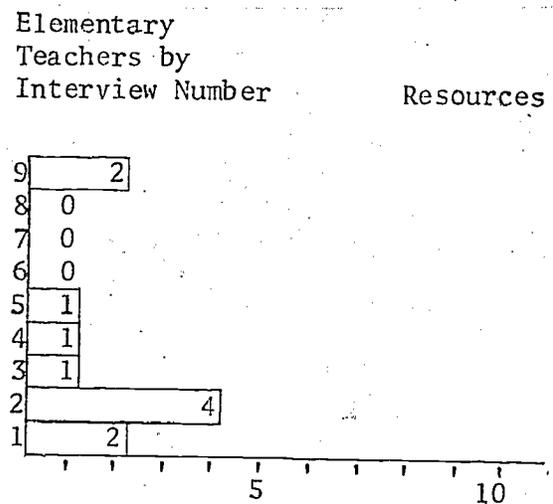
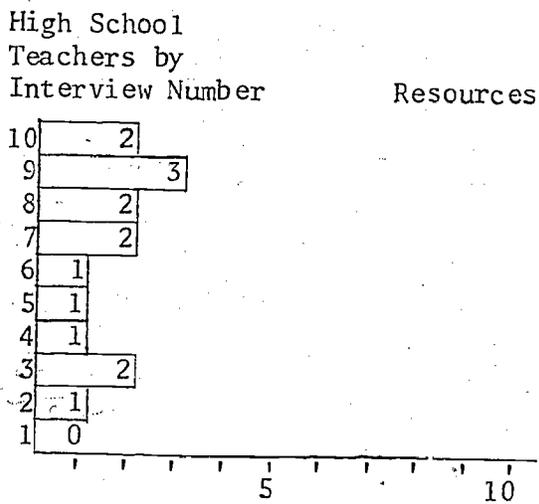
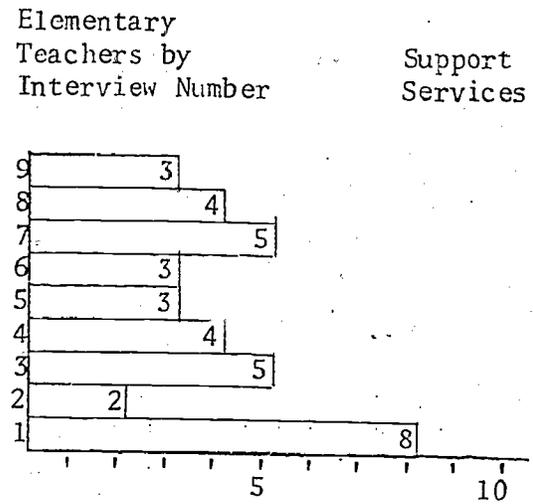
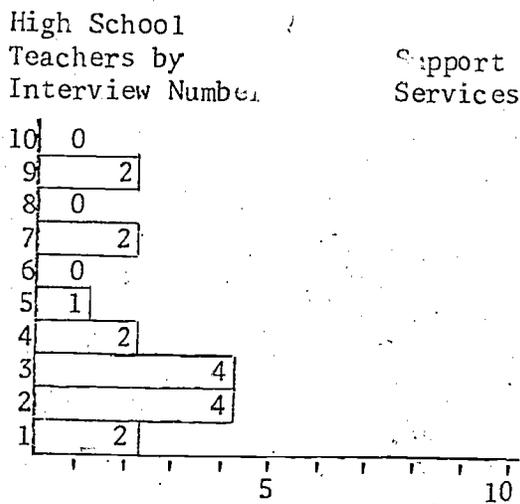
Another observation made about the study data is that individual teachers appear to use instructional support services and resources to varying degrees. For example, Table 8 indicates the number of different types of services and resources cited by individual elementary and high school teachers to help them keep informed about instructional materials. It is possible that testable hypotheses could be generated about the degree of individual use of services and resources and selected teacher characteristics such as experience, subject taught, preservice training, etc.

Relationships between teacher characteristics and the teachers' level of use of a particular service or resource might provide school systems with additional information for judging how to more effectively use available services and resources. For example, if English teachers with five or more years of experience did not use the curriculum guides, one might ask why this was so. Findings might indicate that the guides should be used during the first years of teaching as a form of inservice training, rather than as a direct service for curriculum planning.

Table 8 indicates that there is a difference in the use level of services between high school and elementary school teachers. If this were found to be true for the entire district, one might seek to determine whether this is due to a lack of services at the high school level. On the other hand, it might also be the case that the services available to high school teachers are more efficient, thereby eliminating their need for a large number of services.

TABLE 8

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF SERVICES AND  
RESOURCES CITED BY INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS  
AS USED TO HELP KEEP INFORMED ABOUT MATERIALS



### Suggestions for Further Research

Further research should center around two major questions. First, what are the characteristics of services and resources which cause some to be used more often than others? Second, what is it that causes some teachers to use certain resources and services while others use relatively few?

The authors suggest that there seem to be identifiable influences which facilitate or inhibit the use of instructional support services and instructional resources. This tentative finding should be examined further in studies of district-wide samples. Further information about how these influences affect use of resources and services would be useful for planning purposes as discussed earlier in the paper.

The authors also suggest that particular audiences seem to use different types of instructional support services and instructional resources to meet their needs. Additional studies of district-wide samples might provide more conclusive data about this tentative observation. If it can be demonstrated that there are differences between the types of resources and services used by specific audiences, subsequent studies should be made to determine possible factors accounting for these differences.

Finally, it is important to note that the creation of categories to describe instructional support services and instructional resources facilitated this study. This study, however, was just an initial step. It is unlikely that the categories generated (see Tables 1 and 2) are the only alternatives available. Additional research could be undertaken to refine and/or extend these categories in order to produce a more precise conceptual framework for analysis of instructional support services and instructional resources.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A

Matrix Used to Generate Interview Schedule

TABLE B

Interview Schedule: Support Services & Resources

TABLE A

Matrix Used to Generate Interview Schedule\*

	Techniques & Strategies			Materials	Student Outcomes
	Content				
Define					
Develop					X
Implement	X				X
Evaluate					

 indicates dysfunctional cells

\*The vertical axis of the matrix represents a basic four-step instructional development process model.

The horizontal axis represents major instructional activities.

Example: the intersection of the terms "Develop" and "Materials" led to the following question: "If there are no instructional materials readily available for your needs, what resources and services are available to help you develop some of your own?"

TABLE B

Interview Schedule: Support Services & Resources

MAJOR QUESTIONS

1) CONTENT:

What resources and services are available to help you decide on the general content area you want to teach?

2) TECHNIQUES/STRATEGIES:

What resources and services are available to help you keep aware of the variety of methods or techniques you might use to teach a unit, or to keep you aware of new approaches to instruction?

3) MATERIALS-EXISTING:

What resources and services are available to help you keep informed about materials -- old and new, wherever they might be -- that you might use in teaching?

4) MATERIALS-DEVELOP:

If there are no instructional materials readily available for your needs, what resources and services are available to help you develop some materials of your own?

5) STUDENT OUTCOMES:

What resources and services are available to help you evaluate student performance and progress in their coursework?

SUB - QUESTIONS - TO BE ASKED IN CONJUNCTION WITH EACH MAJOR QUESTION

- a. Of these, which do you actually use?
- b. Why did you choose not to use these others?
- c. Of these (that you actually use), which do you use more often and which less often?
- d. Why do you use these more (or less) frequently than the others?
- e. Are there any additional resources or services which, to the best of your knowledge, are not available, but which you feel would be desirable?