An Ethnographic Exploration of Factors Influencing Learning and Social Outcomes for Students with Learning Difficulties Participating in a Secondary School Peer Tutor Reading Support Program.

Geoffrey Mark Burke

University of Sydney

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education and Social Work as fifty percent requirement of the degree Doctor of Education.

2013
Author’s Declaration

This is to certify that:

I. This thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree Doctor of Education, EdD.

II. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.

III. The thesis does not exceed the word length for this degree.

IV. No part of this work has been used for the award of another degree.

V. This thesis meets the University of Sydney’s Human Research Ethics Committee requirements for the conduct of research.

Geoffrey Mark Burke

30 January 2013
# Table of Contents

Author's Declaration ........................................................................................................... ii

Table of Contents .................................................................................................................. iii

List of Tables ........................................................................................................................... vi

List of Figures .......................................................................................................................... vi

Abstract ..................................................................................................................................... vii

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................... ix

Motto ......................................................................................................................................... x

Acronyms ................................................................................................................................. xi

CHAPTER 1 ................................................................................................................................. 1

Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER 2 ................................................................................................................................. 7

Literature Review - Recent Research ..................................................................................... 7

Definitions ................................................................................................................................. 7

Recent Research ......................................................................................................................... 9

Conclusion ................................................................................................................................. 14

CHAPTER 3 ................................................................................................................................. 16

Literature Review - Theory ..................................................................................................... 16

Theoretical Framework ........................................................................................................... 16

Discussion ............................................................................................................................... 24

Conclusion ................................................................................................................................. 30

CHAPTER 4 ................................................................................................................................. 32

Research Design ....................................................................................................................... 32

Research Methods ................................................................................................................... 32

Research data ........................................................................................................................... 44

Research Environment .......................................................................................................... 55
Appendix E Descriptive Characteristics: Staff ................................................................. 242
Appendix F Descriptive Characteristics: Tutors .............................................................. 244
Appendix G Descriptive Characteristics: Tutees ............................................................. 245
Appendix H Descriptive Characteristics: Others ............................................................. 249
Appendix I Development of Research Domains ............................................................ 250
List of Tables

Table 1: Summary of Data Collection Instruments ................................................................. 34
Table 2: Research Study Domains .......................................................................................... 48
Table 3: Annual Percentage of School Days Absent and Unexplained Absences ............ 70
Table 4: Self-concept of tutees (SDQ 1) .............................................................................. 71
Table 5: Self-concept of tutors (SDQ II) .............................................................................. 71
Table 6: Percentage of Students Below National Literacy Benchmarks .............................. 72
Table 7: Semester Report Grades by Majority Percentage .................................................... 73
Table 8: Most Enjoyed Reading Material .............................................................................. 146
Table 9: Most Useful Reading Material ................................................................................ 147

List of Figures

Figure 1: Research Study Domains - relationship to learning and social outcomes ....... 49
Figure 2: Hierarchical Concepts Model - developed and applied to research study ....... 50
Abstract

This contemporary educational ethnographic research study explored the daily life experiences of adolescents participating in an inclusive cross-age peer tutor reading support program. Set in a suburban Sydney public high school the study’s focus was upon junior secondary students with learning difficulties. The study sought to ascertain the tangible and abstract factors influencing student learning and social outcomes then consider responses that may enhance their educational opportunities.

The peer tutor reading program supported international, national and local education objectives for developing proficient standards of adolescent literacy deemed important to the promotion of an enriched, egalitarian and prosperous society. Adolescents with low literacy levels may never experience the elevating advantages of being fully literate, while further consequences result if they do not acquire the “new literacies”, skills required to competently engage with Information Communication Technology. Many adolescents with learning difficulties become disengaged from their high school education and subsequently experience long term disadvantage.

Vygotsky’s work on social constructivism formed the epistemological basis of the research study’s theoretical framework, while a subjective ethnographic methodological approach, with an interpretative perspective, engaged the qualitative research methods of participant observation, questionnaires, focus groups, interviews and document analysis.

A year long, in situ, descriptive daily narrative formed the basis of the study’s data, together with a probing exploration of participants’ views, to reveal a range of factors influencing student learning and social outcomes. Emerging factors categorised into established domains were conceptually ordered into a Hierarchical Concepts Model for analysis and then discussion in context of five key ideas: ethnographic diversity; inclusive education; learning support culture; social constructivist pedagogy; and evolution of technology.
Peer tutoring emerged from the study as a practical inclusive education strategy that can accommodate diverse learners within a socially supportive environment. Adolescents considered reading important for their future while quality tutor-tutee relationships; trained skilled tutors; sensitivity to peer social status during support program implementation; learning resources with socio-cultural relevance; empowerment of learners through educational choices; and integration of new technologies into pedagogical methodology, were key influences upon students’ learning and social outcomes. Furthermore, the study concluded that an ontologically secure learning environment and a positive learning support culture were central to enhancing student outcomes.
Acknowledgements

Firstly I acknowledge the Cadigal and Darug people, as the original custodians of the land upon which this research study was conducted, and pay my respects to the elders, past, present and future, as they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of Aboriginal Australia.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the students, parents and staff of the Sydney high school whose willing contributions and naturalistic participation were the essence of this ethnographic study.

The cooperation of the public education sector, school administration and my fellow work colleagues enabled the study to be undertaken.

Central to successful completion of the thesis was the ongoing guidance and support of my supervisors Dr David Evans and Dr Ilektra Spandagou. I also appreciate the advice of Dr Lesley Scanlon during developmental stages of the study and the final editing support provided by Maureen Pride.

Thank you to the University of Sydney management and staff in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, Fisher Library and Information Communication Technology department for maintaining the services and facilities necessary for post graduate research studies.

I commend the Federal Government post graduate research study scholarship scheme, which encourages Australian students to undertake research and enrich the knowledge base of our society.

The moral support and encouragement of my friends and family was invaluable.
Motto

In 1859 when the University of Sydney’s Great Hall proudly opened, the roof was adorned with a two metre stone statue, the Angel of Knowledge, and twelve carved wooden angels decorated the hall’s interior. Symbolically presiding over this educational ethnographic research study are the Angel of Knowledge and four of the wooden angels holding Latin inscribed books: Ethica bears a St. Mary’s lily; Grammatica a papyrus roll; Dialectica has Aristotle’s three syllogistic figures; and Metaphysica a symbol of the Deity.
### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASD</td>
<td>Autistic Spectrum Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Compact Disc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLA</td>
<td>Covered Outdoor Learning Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCL</td>
<td>Computer Supported Collaborative Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEAR</td>
<td>Drop Everything And Read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information Communication Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC</td>
<td>Intensive English Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individual Education Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISTB</td>
<td>Itinerant Support Teacher Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISTH</td>
<td>Itinerant Support Teacher Hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBOTE</td>
<td>Language Background Other Than English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LST</td>
<td>Learning Support Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODD</td>
<td>Oppositional Defiant Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTR</td>
<td>Opportunities To Respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLP</td>
<td>Personalised Learning Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PODS</td>
<td>Providing Opportunities for Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Pause, Prompt, Praise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTRRCP</td>
<td>Peer Tutor Reading Roll Call Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRR</td>
<td>Repetition, Revisiting and Revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDQ</td>
<td>Self Development Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>State-wide Literacy Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNA</td>
<td>State-wide Numeracy Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPS</td>
<td>Special Purpose School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STLA</td>
<td>Support Teacher Learning Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STLD</td>
<td>Support Teacher Learning Difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TQM</td>
<td>Total Quality Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZPD</td>
<td>Zone of Proximal Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A prime universal educational objective, bound by an international commitment to the principles of inclusive education (Mitchell, 2008), is the development of literacy skills worldwide to assist improve standards of living, enhance quality of citizens’ lives, and promote culturally enriched societies.

In Australia, attainment of proficient national literacy standards for adolescent students is considered by education authorities as being important to securing an enriched and prosperous society for future generations.

Students with literacy and other learning difficulties are viewed as being significantly socially disadvantaged and it is considered they may never benefit from the personal, social and economic advantages of being fully literate. Those who do not acquire the “new literacies”, skills associated with rapidly advancing Information Communication Technology (ICT), are further disadvantaged (Schrum & Levin, 2009). Many develop poor attitudes to education, experience psycho-social health and behavioural problems, live through long periods of unemployment, become socially disengaged or enter the juvenile justice system (Rowe, 2003).

Literacy competency is important for learning as it facilitates the development of higher order cognitive and intellectual skills (Glynn, Wearmouth & Berryman (2006). One of the 20 key recommendations in the report of the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy conducted for the Australian Government was that teaching of literacy within subject areas be included in the tertiary training coursework of secondary teachers to promote the literacy development of secondary students in all curriculum areas (DEST, 2005). Students’ progress in reading, comprehension, vocabulary, writing, spelling and speaking is not viewed as the sole domain of English faculties and presents particular challenges for subject faculties whose primary focus is not the explicit teaching of language.
Furthermore, social-educational inclusion policies expect high student retention rates and teachers to facilitate positive literacy outcomes for all students (Florian, 2007).

Social inclusion, as a broad-based societal philosophy, underpins social cohesion within socially and culturally diverse communities. Globally, social inclusion and inclusive education was adopted at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000 as a World Declaration on Education for All. Disparities between the rich and poor nations found inclusion referred to initial access to a basic education system for millions of citizens in developing countries (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010). In Australia and other nations, where the social, cultural, political and economic fabric supports a compulsory comprehensive secondary education system, the concept of inclusive education has different interpretations. Policies of inclusive education appear to have evolved from integration of students with special needs in mainstream schools (Spandagou, 2002), however, inclusion is no longer considered the exclusive sphere of special education. This research study considered inclusive education as being equitable access for all students to a curriculum of socio-cultural relevance, within a socially supportive learning environment (Rix, Simmons, Nind & Sheehy, 2005).

An inclusive pedagogical strategy to help schools respond to secondary students’ literacy needs are cross-age peer tutor reading programs, in which competent tutors assist readers experiencing difficulties with reading of curriculum based materials. The purpose of these programs are to develop students’ literacy skills using subject based reading material, promote engagement with classroom learning, and foster a socially supportive environment.

Peer tutoring, based on social-psychological theories, is considered a successful teaching strategy for increasing academic achievement and promoting students’ social skills (Mitchell, 2008). Social constructivist learning theory embraces peer tutoring as it supports collaborative construction of knowledge through social negotiation (Shunk, 2000).
To explore factors influencing the learning and social outcomes of students, this research study adopted a qualitative interpretative ethnographic approach, involving submersion of the researcher into a peer tutor learning environment with educational, social, cultural, linguistic, psychological, emotional, physiological, political and economic factors assimilated into the observation, recording and analytical processes (LeCompte, Preissle, Tesch & Goetz, 2003).

Three research questions regarding the learning of students participating in a secondary school cross-age peer tutor reading support program are posed in this ethnographic study:

1. What are the observable, predictable and readily comprehensible factors influencing the learning and social outcomes of students with learning difficulties?

2. What are the obscured, unforeseen, phenomenological and interpretative factors influencing the learning and social outcomes of students with learning difficulties?

3. What responses to these factors may improve the learning and social outcomes of students with learning difficulties?

The set of research questions provided a frame of reference and focus for this ethnographic study. Firstly, to explore factors influencing the social and learning outcomes of students identified with literacy difficulties, and secondly, to consider responses to enhance these outcomes. Questions one and two differentiated between the influence of tangible and abstract factors. This clear distinction led the study to explore and analyse data at different levels of abstraction, ranging from easily recognisable factors to the less concrete. Question three then sought responses to factors revealed through the data that may assist educators improve the outcomes for students experiencing learning difficulties. Collectively the three questions sought to specifically address the learning needs of adolescents with literacy difficulties. In doing so the study aimed to contribute to the
facilitation of socially just educational outcomes for a potentially socially marginalised student group.

Peer tutoring may be likened to an apprenticeship relationship, used since early civilisation, it is recognised as an important, effective, teaching-learning strategy. The first and most ancient conception of an educator’s role is to engage learners in a relationship with the guidance of a knowledgeable and skilled person (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, & Miller, 2003). Early human hunting and gathering societies instructed each other in survival techniques (Jenkins & Jenkins, 1987), while peer tutoring in western civilisation is traced to Greece and Rome in the first century A.D. An ancient Roman philosopher, Quintilian, once recommended a student tutor as a sound role model, who other young Romans would endeavour “to imitate, then to outdo” (Gordon, 2005). Peer tutoring was also known to be used in France, Germany and other European countries (Wagner, 1982).

The first recorded use of an organised, systematic peer tutorial learning project in the western world is credited to Andrew Bell, Anglican clergyman and superintendent of the Military Male Asylum for war orphans at Egmore, England. Arising from school budget concerns in the late 18th and early 19th centuries during the reform stages of the industrial revolution, Bell’s peer tutoring offered a practical way of providing educational opportunities to underprivileged male children. Sand trays were introduced as cheap writing material and children were used as teaching monitors. In each class, half the students were tutors, while teachers and assistants roamed the school helping students, monitoring tutors and ensuring the teaching system was working. Bell's experiment is one the first examples of a system’s approach to educating people (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989).

In 1801, Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker schoolmaster, opened a school in London, England, where he was responsible for approximately 350 socially disadvantaged male students and drew upon Bell’s tutor experiment. Lancaster determined that boys who knew a little were qualified candidates to teach those who knew less and he provided selected
tutors with detailed instructional materials. He designed very structured, organised teaching materials with answer keys for tutors to drill other students. Students not receiving the headmaster's direct instruction could be engaged in the learning process throughout an entire school day (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989).

Another key player in the introduction of systematised peer tutoring was William Fowle, who used a monitorial approach at his school in England in the late 1800s (Ehly & Larsen, 1980). Fowle claimed children could be better teachers than adults because they had empathy with the learner, were more respectful, considerate of each others’ feelings and less judgmental.

The egalitarian work of Bell, Lancaster and Fowle in England was particularly influential pre-1920s in the United States of America (Gordon, 2005), before the use of professional teachers became widespread (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989). Educators with a lack of finances necessary to employ sufficient numbers of teachers adopted their ideas (Ehly & Larsen, 1980). The 1960s saw a resurgence of peer tutoring as a strategy to improve classroom learning.

This ethnographic research study found similarity in the historical and contemporary social-educational issues addressed through peer tutoring. In particular, peer tutoring is utilised as a teaching and learning strategy to enhance educational opportunity, promote learning apprenticeships, facilitate mentoring, develop social skills and bridge social disadvantage, while more efficiently managing limited human or fiscal resources.

The study furthered the recorded history of peer tutoring and contributed to existing knowledge by revealing a range of factors influencing learning and social outcomes for students participating in a peer tutor reading program. Emerging issues are discussed in Chapter 9 in the context of five key ideas: ethnographic diversity; social cohesion; learning support culture; social constructivist pedagogy; and evolution of technology. The research questions are specifically addressed in Chapter 10 with the vision of raising educators’
awareness of approaches to education that may enhance the outcomes for students at risk of experiencing lifelong social disadvantage. Due to the study’s broad socio-cultural perspective the discussion can be related to a diverse range of educational settings. More specifically these findings are relevant to educators engaging with peer tutoring as an inclusive education strategy to support the learning needs of students experiencing literacy difficulties in secondary schools.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review - Recent Research

The literature review for this study spans two distinct chapters. Chapter 2 defines the key concepts in context of this study: learning difficulties, peer tutoring, learning and social outcomes, then reviews recent relevant literature and findings of contemporary research studies relevant to peer tutoring. Chapter 3 presents literature supportive of the study’s theoretical framework to position this research study within a broader academic context.

Definitions

**Learning difficulties.** Whilst the terms “learning difficulties” and “learning disabilities” are often used synonymously, it is important to clarify and differentiate between the use of terms in this research study at the onset.

The inherent difference between learning difficulties and disabilities lies in causal factors. Learning difficulties are due to developmental, emotional, behavioural, social, health, environmental or organisational issues, whereas learning disabilities indicate innate or adventitious sensory-neurological disorders (DECS, 2008). Causal factors may have implications for the nature of management strategies and pedagogical methods deployed in learning support or intervention programs.

Throughout this study the term, “learning difficulties”, refers to students experiencing problems with their literacy development, specifically reading. Some of these students have learning disabilities while most experience difficulties with other aspects of their learning and/or social development.

**Peer tutoring.** Peer tutoring is a mediation teaching strategy, which supports a social constructivist approach to learning. Specifically, peer tutoring refers to instruction during which learners help each other and learn themselves by teaching (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989) on
a one-to-one basis (Dueck, 1993). Key to this definition is the word “peer”, meaning someone with the same or nearly equal status as the person being tutored. Peer tutoring may also be defined as an alternative teaching arrangement in which peers serve as instructional agents for other students (Strain, 1981). Peer tutoring occurs when tutor and tutee are the same age, while cross-age peer tutoring usually means the tutor is older (Damon & Phelps, 1989). Throughout this secondary school ethnographic study, the term “peer tutoring” refers to cross-age peer tutoring.

Different types of peer or cross-age tutoring programs, outlined in Chapter 3 (pp.29-30), are sometimes referred to as peer education, peer teaching, partner learning, peer learning, child-teach-child, learning through teaching and cooperative learning (Wellington, 2006). Peer tutoring shares attributes with youth service, peer support, peer counselling, peer mediation, peer leadership, peer cooperation and peer collaboration. Peer collaboration differs from peer tutoring in that children begin at similar levels of competence when they collaborate to solve tasks (Damon & Phelps, 1989). Mutual instruction at times can be a more descriptive term than peer tutoring (Dabkowski, 2000) as not all tutors are experts and may be randomly assigned classmates with varying knowledge or skill levels (Greenwood, Delquardi & Hall, 1989; Pigott, Fantuzzo & Clement, 1986).

Learning and social outcomes. During this study learning outcomes refers to students’ relative development along the continuum of literacy skills and active engagement with the curriculum, while social outcomes refers to progressive acquisition of the social competencies necessary for productive learning, quality human relationships and positive community participation. Whilst the extensive dimensions of the generic terms learning and social outcomes (OECD, 2007) are not fully embraced by this study, a wide range of factors influencing student outcomes are considered in a qualitative socio-cultural context.
Recent Research

In the following review of recent research studies existing knowledge in the field of peer tutoring is updated and consolidated. Of particular relevance to this study were findings that revealed factors known to affect the learning and social outcomes of students in peer tutoring programs. The critique of methodologies used in recent studies identified limitations which provided guidance for the development of this and future research studies.

Findings. The focus of recent peer tutoring research studies ranged from measurement of academic progress to exploration of peer interaction processes and development of social attitudes in a learning environment. The literature of both quantitative and qualitative studies concluded that peer tutoring had significant merit as an academic and social learning strategy. Further evidence beyond this review, which confirmed the benefits of peer tutoring, can be found in associated literature (Mitchell, 2008). This research study used these findings as a premise before proceeding to explore factors affecting the social and learning outcomes of students participating in a secondary school peer tutor reading support program.

Quantitative research studies found peer tutoring reduced student errors, assisted mastering of content, contributed to improvements in writing and speaking over baseline levels, resulted in gains on standardised tests (Greenwood et al, 1987), achieved better outcomes with structured programs of short duration focusing on lower level skills (Mahnaz & Kermani, 1997) and improved reading performance. Peer tutoring was found to be an effective method for teaching specific short story elements to high school students and improving skills of tutors (Ankcorn, 1997). Results of a secondary school study revealed that academically orientated peer tutoring had a positive impact on the academic achievement and self-concept of tutees, and contrasted with previous meta-analyses that found almost no impact on their self-concept (Leung, 2007). Another study noted tutoring
contributed to improvements in reading abilities of students over a school year but found no
difference on items of attitudinal measurement (Hurtado & Curtis, 2001). One study
disclosed significant improvements in secondary tutees’ linguistic competence and tutors’
self-concept as writers. Tutors’ self-esteem increased, and tutees in the cross-age setting
were more satisfied with assistance from peer tutors than their teachers (Gisbert & Font,
2008). Whilst a study of high school peer tutors which examined relationships between self-
esteeand the variables of grades, enjoyment and efficacy of peer tutoring did not find
significant correlations, the literature review of similar studies confirmed positive
relationships (Choo, 2008).

Research into teaching-learning processes identified peer tutoring as an effective
instructional practice with potentially positive influences upon the learning of students with
special needs. Peer tutoring studies revealed improvements in oral reading rates and
comprehension of students with learning disabilities, academic delays and mild intellectual
impairments in integrated settings (Greenwood et al, 1989). Other studies accredited peer
tutoring as more effective than conventional strategies for students with a mild disability
(Maheady, Harper & Mallette, 2001), Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Kamps, Barbeta,
Leonard & Delquadri, 1994), hearing impairment and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity
Disorder (ADHD) (DuPaul, Ervin, Hook & McGoey, 1998). Peer tutoring can also support
inclusion of students in physical education activities (Lieberman & Houston-Wilson, 2002),
while the increased opportunities to respond (OTR) facilitated through peer tutoring
enhanced skill acquisition for students with moderate and severe disabilities. Students with
ASD gained from skill generalisation while cooperative learning and peer assisted learning
groups also enhanced their performance through simultaneous provision of more OTR and
social interaction (Betts, Betts & Gerber-Eckland, 2007). Additionally it was found trained
peer helpers who learnt about ASD assisted students in a variety of constructive ways, such
as orientation, organisation, communication and peer relationships. Peers educated and
trained as social agents improved the performance of students with ASD, as measured by social reciprocity through peer-mediated social skills instruction, which included drama activities (Heflin & Alaimo, 2007).

Qualitative research studies in peer tutoring identified benefits for both tutors and tutees. An evaluation of a reading tutoring program noted university student peer tutors were positive role models as they provided encouragement and motivation to learn for secondary school students (Harris & Shaw, 2006). One research study found engagement of socially at risk adolescent students as peer tutors for younger students contributed to their own social and personal development with improved self-esteem, social competence and realisation that education was an important part of their lives (Roberge, 1995). The Fast Track program, developed for behaviourally and socially at risk students, provided bi-weekly academic tutoring by trained paraprofessionals as one component of an integrated approach. Rated as exemplary by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and included in the National Registry of Evidence Based Programs, the remaining components of the Fast Track program included parent training, home support visits, student social skills training and cognitive-behavioural classroom intervention (Mayer, Van Acker, & Lochman, 2009).

Another research study found tutors developed more positive attitudes towards students with disabilities (Clemenz, 2002). Other qualitative studies revealed peer tutoring programs assisted to facilitate successful inclusion of students with disabilities (Fisher & Frey, 2003); individual tutor instruction improved pedagogical and motivational outcomes; feedback assisted tutees’ problem solving (Merrill, 1995), but tutors’ successful use of scaffolding was limited (Mahnaz & Kermani, 1997). Researchers who examined gender tutee-tutor relationships reported same gender partners were preferred, especially by girls. They found when same gender pairing was not possible, assigning older girls to tutor younger boys was more effective (Alvermann, Hinchman & Moore, 2002). Reviews of the strengths and limitations of several peer mediated programs, including reciprocal teaching,
cooperative learning, peer tutoring and peer assisted learning add additional support for these as valuable pedagogical strategies (Florian, 2007).

Training of peer tutors was considered the single most important element of program implementation (Gordon, 2005). Effective implementation practices emerging from research studies included tutor training prior to and during the program, a minimum of three tutoring sessions per week, fully implemented programs and formal evaluations (Greene, Stewart, Obeidallah, Swartz, & Moss, 2001). The STAR peer tutoring program evaluation identified six key factors for success: matching of tutors’ skills with students’ needs; development of rapport between tutors, students and teachers; provision of learning activities conducive to peer tutor participation; initiative of tutors to engage students with learning; youthful tutors who can communicate and empathise with students; and voluntary tutor participation (Harris & Shaw, 2006). Whilst the findings of studies in peer tutoring as a pedagogical strategy are generally positive, they are conditional to the fulfillment of primary prerequisites such as tutor training and skill development; program frequency, accreditation and evaluation; and constructive tutor-tutee relationships.

Sample populations. The different types of peer tutoring programs are evident in the sample populations of recent research in cross age peer tutoring which included children in kindergarten (Mahnaz & Kermani, 1997) and primary school (Ankorn, 1997; Greene et al., 2001; Hurtado & Curtis, 2001) through to secondary (Fisher & Frey, 2003; Gisbert & Font, 2008; Harris & Shaw, 2006; Leung, 2007; Roberge, 1995), tertiary and adult education students (Merrill, 1995). Particular peer tutoring studies involved special education students with various disabilities (Clemenz, 2002; Fisher & Frey, 2003; Greenwood et al., 1989), socially at risk students (Mayer, Van Acker, & Lochman, 2009; Roberge, 1995) and persistent adolescent truants (Gordon, 2005). Junior secondary school students experiencing
learning difficulties, in particular literacy difficulties, and students with special needs integrated into mainstream classes, are participants in this peer tutoring research study.

**Methodologies and methods.** Quantitative methodology studies seeking to investigate academic and psychosocial development, using respective measuring instruments with an experimental perspective, may be clearly distinguished from those using interpretative qualitative methodology that explore the diverse nature of human interactive factors associated with learning through peer tutoring.

Quantitative research studies used academic measures ranging from standardised testing instruments for oral reading, comprehension (Greenwood et al., 1989), spelling, vocabulary and Mathematics (Greenwood et al., 1987) to tests and criteria for specifically taught units of written work (Ankorn, 1997). Non-academic instruments included observational inventories for classroom behaviour and standardised psychosocial metric measures for attitude and self-concept (Choo, 2008; Cohen & Kulik, 1982; Leung, 2007). An experimental control group was used in one study involving special education students (Greenwood et al., 1989) and pre and post testing of academic performance in others (Gisbert & Font, 2008; Greene et al., 2001; Greenwood et al., 1987; Hurtado & Curtis, 2001).

In a previous qualitative research study of an elective class of high school tutors and middle school tutees with disabilities, data collection methods included a survey, interviews and open-ended questions (Clemenz, 2002). A two-year longitudinal evaluation of the STAR peer tutoring program, which involved voluntary university student tutors working with secondary school students, utilised a combination of interviews and questionnaires with peer tutors, students and teachers (Harris & Shaw, 2006). The evaluation of the Providing Opportunities for Success (PODS) program used a parent survey and teacher logs as part of data gathering (Roberge, 1995). Teacher logs, whilst not specifically maintained to describe
events in context of the social and cultural environment, have some affinity with participant observation notes used in an ethnographic approach. Videotaped observations as well as audio taped transcriptions facilitated exploration of the features and processes of peer interaction during practical learning tasks in a research study of Year 5 tutors with kindergarten tutees (Mahnaz & Kermani, 1997). In a study of peer tutoring sessions between undergraduate and graduate university students participants were audio taped to facilitate a discourse analysis of the verbal dialogue (Merrill, 1995).

Each of the methodologies used in recent research studies had merit in relation to their respective purposes, but provided limited scope for consideration of findings within a broader socio-cultural context. Standardised test results and observation inventories for pre and post peer tutoring intervention periods were popular methods used to determine peer tutoring as an effective instructional strategy. However, demographic factors influencing the socio-cultural position of these studies were rarely embraced. While all studies contributed to a knowledge base about peer tutoring, some appeared to have a hidden political agenda, for example, America Reads (Hurtado & Curtis, 2001), AmeriCorps (Greene et al., 2001) and PODS (Roberge, 1995). These major tutoring projects for targeted marginalised groups were dependent upon high levels of funding, and positive findings of research studies were emphasised to justify further funding.

Conclusion

This literature review of recent studies in peer tutoring found the majority of research designs included quantitative methods, and whilst several studies used various qualitative techniques, none engaged an ethnographic approach. Optimum conditions for delivery of effective peer tutoring like tutor training, regular structured sessions and authentic learning tasks received little mention, while scant consideration was given to socio-cultural factors upon learning outcomes. It appeared many studies were conducted in a social vacuum with
limited consideration of factors related to human diversity and socio-cultural interaction within dynamic learning environments. Such socially and culturally decontextualised research reflects the Piagetian individualistic perspective upon the learning process with minimal interest in instructional techniques or societal relevance (Hynds, 1997). In contrast, this educational ethnographic study was placed within a socio-cultural context and incorporated enriched descriptive textual data gathered through direct engagement in the research environment. Previous studies did not span the range of domains presented in this study or synthesise socio-cultural influences into their findings. The peer tutoring research undertaken within this study therefore stands apart from prior studies in respect of purpose, methodology and investigative scope, but together with previous research in that the findings contribute to educationists’ comprehensive understanding of peer tutoring.

Following consideration of these previous research studies the direction, focus, three research questions and design of this educational ethnographic study was developed. This review has clarified the use of key terms, learning difficulties, peer tutoring, learning and social outcomes, as well as clearly distinguishing methodological differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches.
In Chapter 3, this research study’s theoretical framework is outlined; Vygotskian ideas explained; advantages of peer tutoring clarified; program implementation issues discussed; and the study’s methodology justified.

**Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework may be defined as a set of statements regarding the relationships between two or more concepts or constructs (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010). The theoretical framework, which guided this study to address the research questions, comprised interrelated concepts embedded in: an adopted epistemology of social constructivism; an interpretative theoretical perspective; an ethnographic methodology; and complementary qualitative research methods.

Social constructivism formed a suitable epistemological basis for this research study, given the collaborative, interactive, and intersubjective nature of the daily peer tutor reading program, set in a culturally diverse and socially dynamic, secondary school inclusive education environment. An ethnographic methodological approach used qualitative data collection methods of participant observation, questionnaires, focus groups, interviews and document analysis. These methods facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the range of emerging factors, and an examination of the relationships between concepts influencing learning and social outcomes for students (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), an approach not found in the review of previous peer tutoring research. The inherent subjective nature of this methodology enriched the data, while interpretative theoretical perspectives assisted the collection, processing, analysing and construction of meaning from data.
**Epistemology - social constructivism.** Constructivism had its origins in philosophy, psychology, sociology and education with the central idea being that human learning is constructed and learners build knowledge upon the foundation of previous learning. Emphasised by social constructivism is the importance of culture and context in learning, and to social constructivists knowledge is socially and culturally constructed (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000), with meaning created by individuals through interactions with each other and their environment. Intersubjectivity is the shared communication, interaction and understanding among individuals based on common interests (Rogoff, 1990), socially agreed ideas, social patterns, rules of language (Ernest, 1998), and cultural-historical factors (Gredler, 1997; Prawat & Floden, 1994) which helps people derive knowledge and understanding (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1987) that resides within cultures (McMahon, 1997; Shunk, 2000).

The contexts in which learning occurs and the social perspectives that learners bring to their learning environment are critical to learning (Gredler, 1997). Social constructivists consider the effects of wider society on knowledge formation, as well as learning communities within educational establishments (Beck & Kosnik, 2006), with meaningful learning regarded as a social process which occurs when individuals are engaged in socially-based activities (McMahon, 1997).

Constructivist approaches to teaching and learning emerged from the work of psychologists and educators such as Jerome Bruner, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. As a Russian psychologist and social theorist Vygotsky worked extensively on ideas about cognitive development at the Institute of Psychology in Moscow from 1924-34.

Instructional models based on the social constructivists’ perspectives stress the need for collaboration among learners and practitioners in society (Lave & Wenger, 1991; McMahon, 1997). Vygotskian social constructivism principles are reflected in the classroom when learning and development is a social and collaborative activity (Lee & Smagorinsky,
Students construct their own understanding in the context of intersubjective factors and the teacher acts as a facilitator. Knowledge creation results from continuous inner intersubjective construction processes with reliability determined by evolutionary viability (Schwandt, 2001). An important factor in students’ learning is their prior knowledge which includes social knowledge connected with race, class, gender, cultural and ethnic affiliations (Kozulin et al., 2003).

Vygotskian constructivism suggests that since learning is primarily social in origin, students should engage in frequent collaborative experiences through learning from and with each other, as well as teachers (Hynds, 1997). Education is viewed as an active and constructive process in which social interaction, including student-teacher dialogue, play an integral role in stimulating learning (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). Current inclusive education practices were influenced by Vygotsky’s belief that the limited participation of institutionalised children in normal social life restricted their social and educational development (Florian, 2007).

Inherent to the positive findings of previous research studies in peer tutoring discussed in Chapter 2 is Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD refers to the difference between a learners’ independent functional ability and their potential when provided with assistance from more capable adults or peers, and the utilisation of mediation concepts and scaffolding strategies (Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD guides the design of learning experiences with appropriate support for optimal learning, whilst peer and group interaction assists students develop their own explicit understanding. Peer tutoring is one social constructivist approach to learning; others include reciprocal teaching, peer collaboration, cognitive apprenticeships, problem-based instruction, web quests, anchored instruction and other means that involve cooperative learning (Shunk, 2000).

Social constructivist learning environments acknowledge students’ prior knowledge, emphasise social relevance and present authentic tasks in a meaningful socio-cultural
context, rather than abstract instruction out of context (Daniels, 2008). Social constructivism anticipates students be meaningfully engaged with ideas and learning experiences relevant to the real world, with a classroom culture that supports critical and productive enquiry, a sense of community and collaborative learning. An epistemology of social constructivism fosters a holistic learning experience where social, emotional, attitudinal, aesthetic and bodily aspects of expression promote comprehensive personal development. In this way the depth of understanding, and experience, required for knowledge construction that stimulates lifelong learning is ensured. This holistic perspective of learning acknowledges the links between knowledge and popular culture, such as television programs, movies, art, music, dance and fashion. Social constructivists minimise the contrast between academic and popular culture domains for students by facilitating expression, discussion and critiquing of academic knowledge in light of popular culture, and vice versa. Students need to interpret new ideas in context of their current interests and understandings for learning to occur or knowledge to be constructed (Beck & Kosnik, 2006).

Vygotsky also introduced dynamic assessment and the notion of assisted performance as a legitimate parameter of assessment (Poehner, 2008). Dynamic assessment was the only paradigm accepted by psychology and remedial education in the former Soviet Union. Russian reviews of dynamic assessment noted differentiation of children on the basis of self-esteem, internal or external motivation, while associated research emphasised emotional and motivational factors in assessment (Kozulin et al., 2003). According to Vygotsky, dynamic assessment based on the ZPD provided an alternative to standardised tests that confuse natural latent capacities with socially developed abilities (Vygotskiĭ, 1986). Using generic problem solving tasks such as matrices, dynamic assessment focuses upon students’ learning potential and their modifiable cognitive processes, assessing changes possible with psycho-educational interventions and scaffolding strategies (Kozulin, et al 2003).
When applied to qualitative research, social constructivism attempts to understand social phenomena from a context-specific perspective as a complex whole, bound by the historical, socio-economic and cultural circumstances in which they are embedded. Different persons bring varying conceptual frameworks to a situation based upon their experiences which influences their perceptions. Consequently, one role of the qualitative researcher is to understand complex and multiple realities from the participants’ perspectives during the research process (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle 2010).

With social constructivism established as the epistemological basis of this ethnographic research study into the factors influencing the learning and social outcomes of students with learning difficulties, an interpretive theoretical perspective was adopted to effectively accommodate the intersubjective nature of data.

**Theoretical perspective – interpretative.** This contemporary ethnographic research study’s interpretative theoretical perspective sought to explore, clarify and understand the social phenomena (Schwandt, 2001) associated with the educational environment of students experiencing learning difficulties. It has both ontological and phenomenological affiliations; ontology referring to conceptions of human existence and nature of being (Carspecken, 1996), and phenomenology to consciousness of mind and self-awareness (Schmicking & Gallagher, 2010).

Edmund Husserl believed the objectivism of science precluded an adequate apprehension of the world (Husserl, 1970; Husserl, 1983) and developed phenomenology, along with philosophical conceptualisations and techniques, to locate the essence of reality in human consciousness. Human knowledge cannot consist of a reality that is non-phenomenal (Schwandt, 2001). Phenomenological society is located in the Weberian tradition which emphasises “Verstehen”, the interpretative understanding of human interaction. According to phenomenology, reality is socially constructed and the observable
is the ongoing reality of the sociological object (Berger & Luckmann, 2000). Researchers in phenomenological mode attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions of ordinary people (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007).

This peer tutoring study’s ontological and phenomenology affiliations were supported by the qualitative approach. The research methods facilitated an exploration of participants’ frameworks of existence (Carspecken, 1996) and states of awareness (Schmicking & Gallagher, 2010), with subsequent consideration of the implications upon students’ learning and social development.

**Methodology – ethnography.** The origins of ethnographic research are found in cultural and social anthropology. *Ethnos* is a Greek term meaning a people, race or cultural group, while ethnography refers to a social scientific description of people and their cultural basis (Merriam-Webster, 2011), it is the branch of cultural anthropology that studies living cultures. Ethnographers study communities or groups of people to learn about their lifestyle, culture, social interactions, beliefs, behaviour and activities. Ethnography developed from anthropological studies associated with European colonisation, when participant observation was used as a method where researchers lived with the tribes they were studying to collect authentic data over extended periods of time. European anthropologists were often described as “going native” or “going troppo”, as many early ethnographic studies were of primitive tribes in the tropics (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Eves, 1999).

In western society the first examples of ethnography came from researchers in the University of Chicago sociology department during the 1920s-30s (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The Chicago School sociologists gathered first-hand data for qualitative research and used an ethnographic approach to conduct research studies into migrant life and urban gangs. Whilst most Chicago School doctoral dissertations related to sociology, ethnographic methods in educational research have since become more widely used. More
recently “virtual ethnography” has been explored as a research method, using the internet as the primary data source (Hine, 2000).

The central task of ethnography is cultural description, which is the first step in understanding the human species, and with the realisation that cultural diversity is a great gift of the human species there has been a quiet ethnographic revolution (Spradley, 1980). Although qualitative ethnographic description of human social phenomena based on months of fieldwork is subjective by nature, its true essence lies in the meaning derived from interpretation of complex human interactions. Ethnography is a valid research method, which accommodates the subjectivity of a researcher in the routines of a social environment to discover its specific and unpredictable patterns. Key assumptions are that close, prolonged interaction with people in their daily lives empowers ethnographers to better understand the beliefs, motivations and behaviours of subjects than by any other methodology (Hammersley, 1992). The purpose of this study was to explore predictable and unforeseen factors influencing the outcomes for students participating in a secondary school peer tutor reading program. Processing and analysis of enriched descriptive qualitative ethnographic data, gathered primarily in situ on a daily basis over a school year, facilitated significant insight and better understanding of these factors.

According to interactionist sociologists, research is a social encounter, not a disembodied agent of logic, and knowledge is furnished by immediate experience, not scientific method (Bryman & Burgess, 1999). Phenomenalism maintains the observable as the prime resort of sociologists with participant observation describing the reality of immediate social experience. Through revealing the range of stable, emergent and developmental factors, ethnographic research methods promote a sense of social interaction over time (Woods, 1996). Social reality is built up through continuous interactions and conversations between people. What, how and why people think, as well as how diverse identities and social networks impact upon participants’ perceptions, is of interest to
researchers (Bryman & Burgess, 1999). Qualitative researchers acknowledge the innate possibility of significant observer bias and changed behaviours due to researcher-participant interaction.

It is the quality of recordings, rather than quantity of observations, that determines the measure of useable observational data. Researcher participation is seen as a legitimate base from which to conduct observation whether it is peripheral, active or complete membership (Adler & Adler, 1994). Observations may be general with broad description focused through well-defined interviews, or selective by concentration upon particular attributes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The requirement for direct, prolonged, on-the-spot observation cannot be avoided or reduced, as it is the basis of an ethnographic approach.

Ethnographic methodology was employed by this research study to comprehensively explore the factors influencing outcomes for secondary students experiencing reading difficulties participating in a Peer Tutor Reading Roll Call Program (PTRRCP). The study may be viewed as a micro-ethnographic study, as it focused primarily upon students in one learning support program. The study, however, also has macro-ethnographic perspectives, as it is contextually positioned within the organisational framework of a large public school, and public education department, in the suburbs of Australia’s largest city. The research design considered that data revealing the diversity and intricacies of human communication, culture, attitudes, emotions, social interactions and interpersonal relationships operating in situ over time were best collected using ethnographic methods. This methodology provided the means to reveal the predictable and unforeseen factors influencing outcomes for students participating in the program. An ethnographic approach offered potentially the most effective means of exploring the breadth and depth of these factors. Data reliability rested with the accuracy of interpretation in participant observation notes and the truthfulness of participants’ responses (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).
The ethnographic methods used in the study were drawn from a range of traditional and contemporary qualitative approaches. They included participant observation, parent questionnaires, student program evaluation questionnaires, student Self Development Questionnaires (SDQ), focus group interviews, individual interviews and document analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Audio taped recordings were used to enhance the quality of descriptive data gathered. Further explanation of these methods and how each relates to this study is outlined in Chapter 4.

Discussion

This next section focuses upon literature relating to key aspects of the research study and guides an appreciation of the diverse range of factors being explored. In particular, the nature of Vygotsky’s work as it relates to peer tutoring is explained; advantages of peer tutoring as a teaching-learning method are presented; issues associated with implementation of peer tutoring programs are considered; and alternative delivery models are proposed.

**Vygotsky and peer tutoring.** Mediation concepts facilitated through scaffolding, apprenticeships, reciprocal teaching or peer tutoring relate to Vygotskian ideas which recognise that many students’ learning difficulties originate from poor cognitive strategies and metacognitive skills (Kozulin et al., 2003). Mediation teaching methods develop basic thinking skills, promote generalisation of meanings based on student experiences, and foster metacognitive processes. Cognitive education strategies provide students with new psychological tools that develop general or domain specific cognitive functions necessary for competent learners to understand individual, social and cultural dimensions of learning (Kozulin et al., 2003). These psychological tools or human cultural artefacts such as speech, symbol and sign systems are encoded with important socio-cultural meanings that develop higher mental functions (Hick, Kershner & Farrell, 2009). Different forms of mediation
provide students with a secure learning environment, encouragement (Tauber, 2007),
challenge and feedback. Peer tutoring assists development of literacy through predicting,
alternating reading roles, questioning, summarising, clarifying and discussion of texts with
meaningful connections established between familiar everyday concepts and newly
introduced concepts. Three aspects of mediation include apprenticeship, which provides a
community activity model of socio-cultural patterns, guided participation, which covers
interpersonal aspects of shared activities, and appropriation, which relates to adopted
cognitive processes (Kozulin et al., 2003). What learners initially carry out with assistance
can be performed independently by them in the future with a greater capacity for more
demanding collaboration (Hick et al., 2009).

Methodological advantages of peer tutoring. The findings of recent research
presented in Chapter 2 support peer tutoring as a pedagogical strategy that can enhance
students’ literacy proficiency, academic performance, self-esteem, self-confidence and
social competence. Peer tutoring can be an effective instructional procedure that actively
engages students in learning, whilst providing mastery, accuracy and fluency in particular
subject fields (Strain, 1981). Programs that utilise peer tutoring also contribute to a
supportive peer social structure with mentoring (Allen & Eby, 2010), role modelling,
guidance and interpersonal support reducing potential for the development of poor attitudes
and associated behaviours among disadvantaged students. The overall effectiveness of
inclusive classroom teaching is enhanced when peer tutoring programs are appropriately
facilitated (Mitchell, 2008). Common opinions among tutors, tutees, teachers and
administrators involved in peer tutoring are that programs have been enjoyable and
successful (Gautrey, 1990).

Peer tutoring is considered a cost effective learning support program initiative, which
reinforces the curriculum and enhances student learning outcomes (Gordon, 2005).
Opportunities for teachers to maximise their instructional influence and use of resources are created during peer tutoring sessions (Dueck, 1993). Management of large classes is assisted by peer tutoring sessions as teachers can provide professional help for individual students whilst tutees receive more individualised instruction and teaching time from tutors (Goldgrab, 1992; Goodlad & Hirst, 1989). However, peer tutoring remains a supplement, not substitute, for quality teaching and the literature claims it is better utilised to revise material rather than for presentation of new content (Mitchell, 2008). Concerned parents who believe their children should not be taught by other students need to be made aware of the advantages of peer tutoring (Gordon, 2005).

Considered an elaborate rehearsal strategy, peer tutoring motivates adolescents through social interaction to engage with and process new information (Crawford, 2008). Tutors gain valuable experience, and are given opportunities to view content from a different perspective, present explanations of concepts and be exposed to other students’ thinking processes.

Explanations from peers are often more relevant and easily understood as they use similar language and communicate with empathy (Wellington, 2006). A tutor can readily show a tutee the way through a problem, often re-organising the problem to promote learning (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989). Peer tutoring enables students to take responsibility for reviewing, organising and consolidating existing knowledge and material, understanding the basic structure, finding additional meanings and re-formulating knowledge into new conceptual frameworks (Dueck, 1993; Whitman, 1988). When learners locate an item in an intellectual structure, they gain deeper understanding of subject matter and learning outcomes are improved (Gordon, 2005). Tutoring sessions can introduce students to processes by which communities of knowledgeable peers create connections between the symbolic structures of academic disciplines and reality. Tutors have potential to guide tutees
to a better understanding of their community, academic disciplines and constructs of reality by providing approaches that improve the quality of students’ work.

Effective peer tutoring facilitates immediate discussion and feedback from a tutor with a breadth of subject knowledge. Dialogue stimulated between students encourages questions and discussions that do not occur in a whole class instructional environment, motivating students to clarify their understanding (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989). Learning becomes more effective because learners are teaching themselves (Whitman, 1988). Supporters of individual instruction assert students will be motivated to continue effective learning if correct student responses are immediately reinforced with verbal or non-verbal feedback (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989).

Relevant engaging conversation, discussion and questioning can also aid development of successful writing. Peer writing tutorial sessions are based around conversations where tutors facilitate student discussion about a topic in preparation for, and throughout, the writing process. Writing tutorial sessions provide a social context in which students can converse and become more knowledgeable about their writing topic (Dabkowski, 2000).

Studies find many tutees feel more relaxed and concentrate better on subject matter with peer tutors or learning companions rather than professional teachers, while tutors increase their own understanding of subject matter with resultant attitudinal benefits (Ehly & Larsen, 1980). The old adage, those who teach learn twice, endorses peer tutoring as an effective consolidating teaching-learning methodology for tutors.

Just as a child feels more secure in the presence of an older person in a social situation, so a student often feels more secure when similarly guided by an academically competent tutor (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989). However, it is acknowledged that some students prefer working solo and may feel uneasy working with peers, while high achieving student tutors may become impatient with the slow progress of tutees. Competent peer tutors with
similar cultural traits of language, religion or country of origin, can also offer support to
marginalised students who may otherwise reject support from perceived authority figures.

Peer tutoring spans all age groups, including adults, and can empower learners to reach self-determination, improve communication skills, create knowledge, increase motivation to learn and foster self-esteem (Dueck, 1993; Goldgrab, 1992; Imel, 1994; Randels, Carse, & Lease 1992; Schneider 1989; Whitman, 1988). Peer tutors can assist adult learners identify learning needs, develop ownership of learning and self-evaluate (Goldgrab, 1992).

In addition to learning support, the mentoring aspect of peer tutors’ role can provide tutees with social support, direction and guidance (Allen & Eby, 2010). Peer relationships can exert significant influence on the development of an individual’s identity, autonomy (Benard, 1990), performance and achievement (Thomas, 1993). Improved socialisation skills have been attributed to improvements in students’ self-concept, due to regular positive learning experiences, while role modelling of appropriate communication skills by tutors has assisted tutees to develop their interpersonal skills. The social and cognitive development associated with peer tutoring engagements can result in positive outcomes for learning, friendship and social growth (Thomas, 1993). As well as positive attitudes, values and skills acquired through peer modelling, both tutors and tutees learn to share, help, comfort and empathise with others through peer interaction. Improved race relations can result (Gordon, 2005). Peer tutoring encourages students to be more responsible and accountable in the process of helping others. The literature provides clear evidence that beneficiaries of peer tutoring programs include not only tutees, but tutors and teachers as well.

**Implementation of peer tutoring programs.** Total Quality Management (TQM) theory places importance upon developing vision and mission statements to establish a common direction within an educational institution, in conjunction with strategic,
organisational and operational plans to facilitate the implementation and achievement of stated goals (Sallis, 2002). Societal expectations that students attain proficient literacy standards require educational authorities to develop and implement plans to achieve these objectives. Consequently implementation of peer tutoring learning support programs can be considered in context of school organisational and operational plans.

The effectiveness of any learning support initiative or given teaching strategy varies significantly with the context and quality of implementation. Initial and ongoing tutor training is necessary for implementation of quality tutoring programs. Tutor training theory promotes an understanding of reading and learning processes, interpersonal dynamics of tutoring and the philosophical basis of inclusive education (Fisher & Frey, 2003). There are pre-, during and post-reading strategies that tutors need to use while tutoring. The primary text decoding method used by tutors, Pause, Prompt, Praise (PPP), has been applied successfully in many reading intervention contexts (Westwood, 2003). PPP is used when tutees cannot instantly decode a word during reading of text, tutors pause for a few seconds to allow decoding processing time, and then if tutees make no progress, prompt with phonetic, semantic or contextual clues, and finally, praise tutees when they successfully decode the word before continuing reading. Tutors, however, require additional skills in task analysis, scaffolding, instruction giving, questioning and discussion generation to facilitate a truly quality tutoring engagement. Discussion, role playing, social rehearsal, practice and tutoring checklists can be used to train quality tutors (Gordon, 2005), however, unless tutoring skills are reinforced on a continued basis students tend to revert to less productive ways of interacting in group settings.

Alternative delivery models of peer tutoring programs may be considered. Peer tutors can assist students in the same or lower year levels. In some cases, able or gifted and talented students may be engaged as tutors of students in higher year levels or those with special needs. Students with special educational needs can be utilised as tutors for younger
students (Mitchell, 2008). While most peer tutoring occurs in pairs, sometimes organising learners in groups of three or more helps tutors to respond more effectively to the needs of students and requirements of the learning task (Dueck, 1993). Cross-age tutoring may be facilitated between schools, for example, kindergarten-primary, primary-secondary, primary-special, secondary-special or secondary-tertiary. Advances in ICT provide increasing opportunities for Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL), which includes cyberspace learning communities and online peer tutoring (De Smet, 2008).

Tutoring may be deployed as an inclusive education strategy to support the learning and social-cultural needs of students. Peer tutors can be engaged in a range of learning support roles during and after school (Richards & Lassonde, 2009). This may include assisting with reading, writing, mathematics, computing, set classroom or practical work, assignments, homework, personal and social development programs. As well as demonstrating practical tutoring skills, tutors may be required to write a report, keep a log, conduct interviews, conduct surveys or review literature or texts as part of the program. Formal assessment of peer tutors’ competencies can be linked to specific program learning outcomes. Schools can further endorse tutors’ valued role by approving accreditation towards graduation (Fisher & Frey, 2003). Tutor training remains a key element for success of peer tutoring programs, but to sustain student interest, it is suggested that complex training, record keeping and administration be avoided (Gordon, 2005).

Conclusion

The theory surrounding peer tutoring presented in this literature review chapter reflects the changed contemporary focus of literacy development from the sole reader, a Piagetian psychological constructivist position, to a focus on readers as they interact with others, developing identities as readers and literate persons. This Vygotskian social constructivist position acknowledges that readers require social interaction and social
competence in order to understand the cultural and interpersonal dynamics of texts. Literacy development is considered in the context of social and cognitive practice, as well as political and personal engagement, with greater status than an examinable cognitive capacity (Hynds, 1997).

Positioned in an interpretative and subjective theoretical framework of social constructivism, this research study acknowledged that literacy development cannot be studied in isolation from educational, social, cultural, lingual, psychological, emotional, physiological, political and economic contexts. Ethnography, as the chosen methodology of this research study, cast aside scientific measurement and openly embraced the qualitative dimensions of these factors (Hammersley, 1990).
CHAPTER 4

Research Design

The purpose of this ethnographic research study was to explore, probe, analyse, consider and discuss the diverse range of factors influencing the learning and social outcomes for adolescents with literacy difficulties participating in a mainstream secondary school, peer tutor reading support program. Literature reviewed in the previous chapter supported peer tutoring as a pedagogical strategy that lead to enhanced learning particularly in the areas of reading, comprehension and writing for students in primary and secondary schools.

It was not the research study’s objective to seek further evidence that endorsed peer tutoring; rather this study intended to explore the surrounding socio-cultural-educational factors influencing students’ learning outcomes, then consider responses to these that may enhance their educational opportunities. To achieve the intentions of this study a qualitative research design was developed that engaged within an epistemology of social constructivism, then gathered and analysed ethnographic data using an interpretative theoretical perspective. Questionnaires, participant observation, focus groups, interviews and document analysis formed a complementary suite of qualitative data gathering methods to address the research questions.

This chapter discusses these research study methods, data analysis processes, reliability of data and ethical issues. Details of the research environment in which the study was undertaken are also outlined, including the location, participants and information about the peer tutor reading program.

Research Methods

The variety of qualitative, social research methods used in this study over a time frame of one school year to facilitate an exploration of factors influencing student learning
and social outcomes yielded data with scope and depth. A range of analytical techniques enabled more comprehensive analysis of the data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009).

Contemporary ethnographic research methods were able to explore the intricacies of influencing factors, including students’ perceptions, communication, language, culture, attitudes, emotions, social interactions and interpersonal relationships. The techniques probed diversity of human interaction, grasped a sense of social interaction over time (Woods, 1996) and allowed development of the research study in situ (LeCompte, Milroy & Preissle, 1992). The research approach revealed the participants’ views, originally referred to as the natives’ point of view by ethnographers, to promote an understanding of influential emerging factors affecting outcomes for students (Geertz, 1973).

The next section provides an explanation of each of the data collection methods used in this ethnographic study. A summary of the data collection instruments, with reference to which groups of participants they were administered and the constructs explored, is shown in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Participants and Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Description Questionnaire I &amp; II</td>
<td>Year 7 and 10 Year 7 and 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-wide Literacy Assessment (SLA)</td>
<td>Year 7 Year 7 and 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardised assessment, administered annually to Year 7 and 8 students.</td>
<td>Educational: writing, reading, language, literacy achievement levels: High, Proficient, Elementary, Low. Educational: grades, class rankings and comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Subject Reports</td>
<td>Year 7 Year 7 and 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi-annual reports to parents based on assessments of student progress in relation to subject learning outcomes.</td>
<td>Year 7 Year 7 and 10 Various special needs data and support data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School File Documents</td>
<td>Year 7 Year 7 and 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social, education and health professional reports, relating to special needs of students.</td>
<td>Year 7 Year 7 and 10 Various special needs data and support data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Roll Books</td>
<td>Year 7 Year 7 and 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official school records of student attendance.</td>
<td>Year 7 Year 7 and 10 Educational: attendance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Questionnaire</td>
<td>Year 7 Year 7 and 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher’s purpose-developed instrument consisting of Likert Scale statements and extended response items (Appendix C).</td>
<td>Year 7 Year 7 and 10 Perceptions and attitudes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Interview Tapes</td>
<td>Year 7 and 10 Year 7 and 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcripts for assessment and analysis.</td>
<td>Year 7 and 10 Year 7 and 10 Perceptions, attitudes and language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Observation Notes</td>
<td>Year 7 and 10 Year 7 and 10; school personnel, parents Environmental, social, educational and cultural data in situ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log of descriptive, naturalistic, field notes for analysis in context of domains.</td>
<td>Year 7 and 10 Year 7 and 10 Perceptions, attitudes and language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Questionnaire</td>
<td>Year 7 and 10 Year 7 and 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative descriptive characteristics of participants (Appendix C).</td>
<td>Year 7 and 10 Year 7 and 10 Biographical, social, cultural, socio-economic and educational data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questionnaires. Commonly used as a research data gathering method, questionnaires differ in purpose, design, implementation and analysis (Neuman, 2003). To gather descriptive qualitative data this research study specifically developed a parent or care-provider questionnaire and a student program evaluation questionnaire. A questionnaire developed by university academics, the SDQ, was used to ascertain students’ self-concept (Marsh, 1990a; Marsh, 1990b). The questionnaires were administered in context of the ethnographic methodological approach of the research study.

Whilst mail-out questionnaires offered privacy, convenience and a high response rate from consenting population samples (Neuman, 2003), the parent questionnaire, particularly designed for this study to gather family socio-cultural background data, was personally explained to students and distributed in Term 1 for them to take home to parents and return completed. As family is acknowledged as fulfilling a significant role in the process of socialisation and development of socio-cultural values among adolescents (Berns, 2012), this questionnaire data was considered as fundamental to an exploration of factors influencing student learning and social outcomes.

Established as a respected research instrument, the SDQ facilitated an exploration of students’ academic and non-academic self-concepts (Marsh, 1990a; Marsh, 1990b), contributed to the study’s ontological (Carspecken, 1996) and phenomenological (Schmicking & Gallagher, 2010) affiliations. The SDQ provided insight to students’ perceptions of their relationships, values, emotions, physical attributes and learning abilities. Self-concept is relevant to this study as it is accredited with fulfilling a critical role in the personal development, social growth and academic achievement of individuals (O’Mara & Marsh, 2006). In this study SDQ I and II were group administered during the PTRRCP with tutees and tutors at separate times during Term 2. The tutors, who independently completed the SDQ II for ages 13-17 years, were given clear directions how to provide reading assistance if required to tutees completing SDQ I for ages 8-12 years. Reading assistance
which allowed tutees to better understand the statements and select their responses has been used for administration of SDQ in other studies (Tracey, 2002).

The student program evaluation questionnaire was developed specifically for this study with response statements linked to the study’s research domains (Table 2) to assist with data analysis. This questionnaire, group administered in Term 4 during PTRRCP, used statements with a Likert response scale to ascertain student perceptions, views, attitudes and feelings regarding aspects of the peer tutor reading program.

Many tutees received reading support from their tutors to assist with the comprehension of statements or items during administration of both the SDQ and the evaluation questionnaire. Tutees responses to these, especially those relating directly to tutors, were therefore subjected to the influences of peer relationships developed during their daily interpersonal engagements.

**Participant observation.** In this study the unique dual role of ethnographic researcher and learning support teacher facilitated a prolonged naturalistic submersion in situ as a participant observer in an educational environment for gathering first-hand, descriptive qualitative data (Fetterman, 2010). Participant observation from Terms 1 to 4 became the major data collection method employed in this study with the findings presented as ethnographic narrative accounts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Potential influences of a participant observer’s socio-cultural background upon their perceptions and subsequent data gathered in a research study need to be acknowledged. The perceptions of a mature-age, several generation Australian born resident of Irish-Scottish ancestry, educated in the Australian public school and tertiary education system, as in this study, may vary significantly from those of a researcher with a different socio-cultural background. Furthermore, the perceptions of a humanities trained secondary school learning support teacher of 25 years experience in the public education sector, coordinating the
PTRRCP, would likely provide alternative data to that of a researcher with a different education and employment background.

Daily, on-site attendance as a teacher employed in a public high school provided research advantages, and constraints. Familiarity with students, worksite personnel, procedures and systems assisted in the gathering of relevant background data, particularly during the selection process for tutees and tutors, whilst ongoing interaction with participants contributed to the collection of enriching, intimate, qualitative data throughout the study (Zou & Trueba, 2002).

Obligatory role expectations and protocols associated with being an on-site employee not only limited researcher autonomy, they inherently influenced participants’ relationship and interactions with the researcher (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010). It is recognised that the researcher’s perceptions, and subsequent observations in the study, were subject to the influences of role expectations, prior experiences and pre-existing schemata. World renowned anthropologist Margaret Mead (1970) acknowledged that researchers bring varying competencies in participant observation to a research environment (as cited in DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, pp.17-18). It is suggested that participants’ disclosures and the observations recorded by an independent researcher may have resulted in the collection of a different set of data. Similarly, a study involving participants in another school and location where the demographic characteristics are different may yield different data.

Regarded as one the most personal sociological research methods (Bryman & Burgess, 1999), participant observation is characterised by the sharing of personal experiences over time and trusting self-disclosure (Mauthner, Birch, Jessop & Miller, 2002). It was the opportunities facilitated through frequent engagement and the establishment of close relationships that provided the researcher in this study access to unique qualitative data.
With the limitations of this unique role acknowledged, the researcher proceeded to record highly descriptive daily observation notes as accurately as practicable to portray the socio-cultural phenomena surrounding the PTRRCP. This included descriptions of the learning environment, learning program, school personnel, students, peer relationships, social interactions, conversations, key events, everyday occurrences and unusual happenings. These participant observations culminated in the production of an integrated, coherent, graphic written account (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland & Lofland, 2005) of daily life in a Sydney secondary school that informed the study’s exploration of factors influencing the learning and social outcomes of students with learning difficulties.

Observations throughout an ethnographic research study need to be conceptualised, prolonged, repeated and reflective of the participants’ views of reality, whilst also acknowledging the researcher’s social, personal and interactional position (LeCompte et al., 1992). As socio-cultural knowledge is elicited from participants and transcultural perspectives emerge, implicit or tacit knowledge affecting behaviour and communication must be made explicit.

From the early stages of this study sensitisation to or orientation of the researcher’s participant observations required a theoretical foundation. In qualitative research sensitising concepts are used as initial guiding concepts that often lack specification of attributes and remain to be refined during the course of the study (Corbetta, 2003). Sensitising concepts are fundamental in determining the nature of data gathered and assist pursuit of emergent themes (Atkinson et al., 2005). Aligned with the inductive principles and techniques used in grounded theory, which establishes general concepts during data gathering to assist development of a theory, the sensitising concepts became research domains that provided a general sense of reference, guidance and direction for the gathering of data through participant observation in this study (Bowen, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As this educational ethnography did not seek to develop a theory it cannot be considered as a
grounded theory study. The evolution of sensitising concepts in the early stages of data gathering was informed by emerging subject matter, issues, patterns and insights found in the data (Patton, 2002). Insight to the nature of initial data that led to development of the sensitising concepts and domains is provided in Appendix I. Consolidation of the study’s final domain categories was aided by the researcher’s pedagogical experience and understanding of issues generally considered among educators as yielding influence upon student learning and social outcomes. The domains provided the necessary guidance for a researcher immersed in situ as a participant observer to gather data that addressed the research questions.

Theoretically informed, contextually thick description of facts (Geertz, 1973) provides the context, intentions and meanings of lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Such description of facts allows the subjectivities of experiences to be understood (Bloom & Munro, 1995); makes aspects of the world vivid; generates empathy (Eisner, 1995); and heightens awareness of unseen qualities (Simons, 1994) whilst stimulating thinking as much as expressing conclusions.

The complexity, ambiguity and contradictions of participant observers’ lived experiences may impact upon traditional, coherent text, but must be allowed, as these subjectivities need to be understood (Bloom & Munro, 1995). Authenticity is reflected when accounts recreate, reawake, evoke and bring penetrating insight into a situation (Eisner, 1991), so readers share the researcher’s experiences. Whilst it is suggested that participant observers cannot effectively study their own people, as they share the same concerns and perspectives as participants (Bryman & Burgess, 1999), it can also be argued they have greater empathy and insight. The participant observer’s “natural” role in the research environment is different to that of participants, thereby providing another perspective. Furthermore, the use of multiple observers from varying backgrounds, together with a range of data collection methods, can offer enlightened insights. It is necessary, when an
ethnographic researcher finally withdraws from observation, that intelligible recorded material has been gathered for meaningful analysis.

Direction of an ethnographic research study in progress should be responsive to emerging data, with instruments, codes, schedules, questionnaires and interview agendas being better generated in situ. The initial participant observation notes gathered through this study formed the basis for further focused and selective observations. As the study progressed it became apparent many students’ experienced difficulties processing questions and meaningfully expressing their views, attitudes or beliefs adequately. Evaluation questionnaires and focus group questions were consequently modified.

Contemporary technology enables ethnographic research to capture live data for comprehensive and descriptive observations (LeCompte et al., 1992). During this study, a hand-held, cassette tape recorder was used to assist record observations, while a portable recorder was used during focus group interviews. The taped data was later manually converted to word-processed text, using headsets and a transcribing machine. More recent technology options include hand-held, digital data recorders and voice recognition transcription software.

Critics of participant observation claim the research method is more like spying than academic research, as it conflicts with the principle of informed consent and invades privacy. Whilst human research ethics guidelines govern the responsible study of society by requiring respect for the integrity, dignity and autonomy of participants (Mertens & Ginsberg, 2009), there has been fieldwork undertaken by extremist groups, such as the National Front with racist ideology (Fielding, 1981). Researchers have been reported to experience personal anguish over deceptions in research, as in studies relating to Glasgow gangs and homosexual encounters (Galliher, Brekhus & Keys, 2004; Humphreys, 1975; Newman, 2008). Anxieties of researchers develop from research agenda management, relationships with participants and data processing (Bryman & Burgess, 1999).
Appropriately, this educational ethnographic research study complied with all relevant human ethic guidelines, nevertheless, some researcher anxieties relating to participant anonymity and disclosure of subject material of a personal nature were experienced.

**Focus groups.** The purpose of tape recorded focus groups conducted by the researcher during Terms 3 and 4 was to collectively explore issues associated with the peer tutor reading program. Focus groups facilitated discussions with separate small groups of tutors and tutees. Four focus groups of three to five tutees sought to facilitate free expression of opinions and ideas from a marginalised student group (Neuman, 2003), specifically those who experienced literacy difficulties. Another focus group generated discussion of the perspectives of six tutors. To assist in creating a relaxed environment for sociable discussion, snack food and beverages were provided during the focus groups held in a small meeting room setting.

Initially the focus group participants were introduced to a Thinking Hats framework model developed by Edward de Bono to stimulate lateral thinking and discussion (de Bono, 1985) about the PTRRCP. Six labelled coloured cardboard hats were displayed to promote and guide an exploratory discussion of participants’ various perceptions of the peer tutoring program: yellow-positive, black-negative, white-facts, red-emotions, green-creative and blue-reflective. Emerging issues from the initial focus groups, participant observation notes, parent and student questionnaires were then later further explored in one follow-up focus group of five tutees and one of seven tutors.

Qualitative researchers distinguish focus groups from normal group interviews in that interactions highlight respondents’ attitudes, priorities and language, as well as their framework for understanding group norms and social pressures. Focus groups encourage communication, articulation of knowledge, expression of ideas or experiences and open conversations with anecdotes, jokes or loose word associations providing insight and
understanding of participants’ perceptions. Interview transcripts of focus groups allow
analysis of interactions between participants and assist schema analysis (Bryman & Burgess,
1999). The dynamics of focus groups allow examination of how knowledge or ideas develop
and operate within a cultural context, thereby revealing dimensions of understanding
unexplored by conventional interviews. Group activities may be employed to encourage
interaction between research participants, while participants can assist each other overcome
embarrassment and express feelings common to the group or deviant to mainstream culture.
Group participants may censure certain types of information or promote explanation of
participants’ thinking (Bryman & Burgess, 1999).

In this study focus groups provided an opportunity for phenomenological
relationships between students’ awareness, their learning and social development to be
explored, recorded and analysed (Schmicking & Gallagher, 2010). Transcript data from the
focus groups were sorted according to the research study domains and assimilated with other
data sources into both the narratives of Chapters 5-7 and the presentation of participants’
views in Chapter 8.

**Interviews.** A series of three to five individual follow-up focused literacy
assessment sessions of 45 minutes duration were conducted by learning support teachers
with students who obtained low achievement levels in the State-wide Literacy Assessment
(SLA). These sessions in Terms 3 and 4 provided an ideal opportunity for an immersed
researcher to make specific observations about students’ literacy skills and collect
qualitative data from tutees via reflexive interviews. Qualitative interviews are intended to
be naturalistic conversations directed by researchers to gather descriptive data for
interpretative insight (Cohen et al., 2007), with good interviews promoting cultural
knowledge in its natural form, without preconceived agendas, and producing enriched data
to reveal respondents’ perspectives (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). Quality reflexive interviewing
involves interpretive data analysis of preceding interviews to assist with the next. Constant reflection upon researcher-participant relationships and emerging data is a requirement of sound interpretive research. To ensure validity of data, ontological security is a necessary consideration when conducting qualitative interviews, as respondents should feel safe in their environment and comfortable during interviews (Williams, 2003). This study was able to intimately explore tutees’ literacy difficulties, together with their perspectives of literacy learning, and identify emerging issues through data gathered from individual interviews. The focused literacy assessments involved students reading aloud three different set text types and orally responding to questions. For those who struggled with text decoding, additional assessment focused upon an analysis of their articulation of sounds, sound blends, key sight words and syllables. Students were provided with instruction and strategies to address their identified text decoding and comprehension difficulties. During these sessions informal social conversation and emergent discussion relating to current life issues, as well as the literacy assessment processes and results, provided research data. Post interview observation notes data was synthesised into the study’s findings to enrich the descriptive, ethnographic narratives in Chapter 7 and enhance an understanding of tutees’ views presented in Chapter 8. The data was then subject to the study’s data analysis processes.

**Document analysis.** Documents analysed to enrich this study’s descriptive ethnographic narrative included students’ school file information, attendance records, school semester reports and SLA results.

While educators hold varying views about mass testing, with the Australian government’s support of national literacy and numeracy tests, students’ results have become standard school file data. Advocates believe standardised testing is necessary for true school improvement, like William Glasser whose quality school criteria includes better student performance on state proficiency tests and an emphasis upon their importance (Glasser,
Opponents express concern of anti-democratic, government, curriculum control (Burron, 1994; Zlatos, 1993), with reduced instruction time due to test preparation and administration (Kohn, 2000). Testing is claimed to be anti-educational, distorting the curriculum by making teachers focus on trivial and discrete tasks amenable to standardised tests. Tests are also considered classist and racist, discriminating against students from low socio-economic or non-European backgrounds (Covaleskie, 2002). In Australia, panels of educationalists develop national tests, which are open to professional and public scrutiny. The tests provide national achievement benchmarks, together with individual student and school performance data. Students’ progress throughout the nation is longitudinally monitored. Results of these literacy-numeracy tests can help identify students and facilitate appropriate follow-up learning support programs to benefit those experiencing difficulties, however, the interpretation and politicising of results through the publication of school performance tables in the mass media remains an issue of contention.

**Research data**

**Data analysis.** Transcripts of daily hand-written and tape-recorded participant observation field notes, gathered over a whole school year (Zou & Trueba, 2002), formed a basis for the descriptive, ethnographic, narrative account of everyday life for participants in a secondary school educational setting. This narrative account was enriched by descriptive biographic, socio-economic, self-concept, social, cultural, education and historical data gathered from questionnaires, focus groups, observations and documents (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The decision to synthesise research study data from various collection sources into the narrative, rather than consider data sets in isolation, positioned the data within a real life context. In this way data was considered holistically, with the study able to contemplate surrounding and related socio-cultural phenomena as it explored the factors influencing outcomes for students. Through using research domains the emerging,
prevailing and dominant factors influencing student learning and social outcomes were identified in situ, sorted, ordered, analysed, and then discussed. After the research study anecdotal recordings were made during the thesis write-up phase which provided further unfolding information of a continuous daily life context (Appendix A). Educational ethnographic research has been criticised at times for being simply “educational travel writing”, likened to observation notes of colonising European explorers, missionaries and travellers, rather than meaningful social scientific research (O’Reilly, 2008). To ensure this study avoided similar criticism, the research design incorporated the analytical processes of constant comparative data management, domain and componential analysis, conceptual ordering, and social scientific model building to aid understanding (Murchison, 2010).

Ethnographic methodology encourages development of methods in situ and continual analysis of field notes to guide future observations. This constant comparative data management strategy, used in conjunction with domain and componential analysis (Spradley, 1980) throughout this peer tutoring research study, complemented the emerging ongoing nature of ethnographic data. Analysis of qualitative data was approached from a sociological tradition, which views text as a window into human experience (Tesch, 1990), rather than a linguistic tradition that treats text itself as an object of analysis. As qualitative data was collected, the constant comparative method was used to identify and sort emerging key themes into eleven domains for componential analysis (Cohen et al., 2007).

Developed from the loosely labelled emergent synthesising concepts identified in data (Appendix I) (Patton, 2002), the final eleven research domains used were: methodology, performance, attitude, inter-intrapersonal, environment, organisation, program, personnel, cultural-family, health-learning difficulties, socio-economic and technology. An explanation of the dimension of each of these domains is provided in Table 2 while a graphic representation of the domains, as they relate to learning and social outcomes, is presented in Figure 1. The graphic is presented with an understanding that the
emerging factors often interact with, and influence those within, the same or other domains. A logical illustration of inter-domain relationships finds methodological factors influence student performance, which reflects attitudes to learning, while personnel, organisational and environmental factors influence program delivery, which combine to influence student learning and social outcomes.

Emerging factors, identified in situ throughout the ethnographic narrative, were recorded as footnote factors within domain categories and a summary of these appear in Appendix B. The constant comparative data strategy allowed emerging factors to be focused upon, further data collected and initial relationships established (Glaser, 1978). As the factors affecting student learning and social outcomes were often interrelated, it meant they could exist in two or more domains. The eleven domain categories became headings (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007) for the first level of data analysis.

Qualitative data is inherently interpretative and concepts of varying levels of abstraction form the basis of deeper analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). To help gain a better understanding of the complex data collected in this research study a process of conceptual ordering was used. Emerging in situ factors from the eleven domains which influenced learning and social outcomes for students were re-categorised in terms of broader abstract concepts that emerged from the initial stages of analysis (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010). These broader concepts were then considered and ordered according to their level of abstraction (lower, middle and higher order) before being organised into a Hierarchical Concepts Model (Figure 2, p.50). The category and conceptual order to which each of the factors was allocated to facilitate this deeper analysis appear in Appendix B.

Software for qualitative textual data analysis is more recent in development than for quantitative analysis (Neuman, 2003) with emerging technology bringing change to data processing and analysis (Babbie, 2010; Patton, 2002). Optical scanning equipment converts written texts to word-processed documents, while voice recognition software transcribes
interviews and recorded observation notes into a similar form. Qualitative data analysis software can then be programmed to facilitate coding, sorting and processing of large quantities of word-processed text. Due to the human interpretative input required to process the contextual nature of qualitative descriptive text effectively, this study deemed the flexible editing features of Microsoft Word as the most efficient tool for managing data.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Methodology</td>
<td>Pedagogical methods, procedures and techniques used for teaching, facilitating learning and managing students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Performance</td>
<td>Student engagement in learning and attainment of educational outcomes; teacher work performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Attitude</td>
<td>Student preparedness and approach to learning or socio-cultural engagements; teacher attitudes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Inter-Intrapersonal</td>
<td>Social interactions, internalised thoughts and feelings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Environment</td>
<td>Physical facilities, socio-cultural, geographical, historical, economic and political surrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Program</td>
<td>Curriculum, resources, learning activities and support programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Cultural-Family</td>
<td>Customary beliefs and values, social units of people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1: Research Study Domains - relationship to learning and social outcomes.
Figure 2: Hierarchical Concepts Model - developed and applied to this research study.
Reliability of data. In qualitative research, reliability often refers to the degree of consistency with which data is recorded and categorised, while validity is the extent to which an account accurately represents social phenomena (Hammersley, 1992). In this ethnographic research study the reliability and validity of data gathered was influenced by the study's subjective and interpretative paradigms (Cohen et al., 2007). For this reason the concepts of methodological trustworthiness, the extent to which research can be audited by a third person (Healy & Perry, 2000), and authenticity, the provision of a balanced and fair view of all perspectives to ensure ethical qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), are particularly relevant.

Methodological trustworthiness was accounted for during this study with the equivalent of an audit trail, also known as a confirmability or process audit (Thyer, 2010), which maintained a transparent account of the data collection processes, data documentation and progressive stages of data analysis. Member checking, the process of using research peers to verify qualitative research study data, was undertaken through regular discussions with the study’s supervisors to further ensure methodological trustworthiness.

A methodological triangulation strategy, or multi-methods approach, used in this study provided diverse viewpoints which were combined and then analysed in the context of the research study’s domains (Patton, 2002). This range of participants’ perspectives contributed to authenticity of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Whilst data triangulation can provide a cross checking strategy and an alternative to validation, this study used the multi-methods approach to crystallise and consolidate themes within the context of the domains (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The reliability and validity of each of the methods used in this study are briefly considered in this section.

The purpose-developed questionnaires were auditable and allowed consideration of a balance of perspectives, and thereby enhanced methodological trustworthiness and authenticity of the study. The parent questionnaire designed to gather background
biographic, socio-economic and socio-cultural data provided reliable data as it was willingly completed in private by consenting participating parents or care-givers (Appendix C). While students’ diverse perceptions of the peer tutor reading program were gathered using an evaluation questionnaire with statements linked to a Likert response scale. Pilot student program evaluation questionnaires were conducted with a small sample of participants (Neuman, 2003) to ascertain their functionality in terms of language comprehension, sensitivity or objections to questions, time to complete, collation, suitability and management of data. Responses to the pilot questionnaires assisted determine the questions and format of the final questionnaires. The evaluation questionnaire for readers was revised, administered with reading support, and further modified in situ with supportive verbal clarification.

The SDQ for specific adolescent age groups was a leading internationally and professionally accepted assessment instrument of multi-dimensional self-concept (Marsh, Ellis, Parada, & Richards, 2005) which contributed to the study’s authenticity by facilitating insight to participants’ perceptions. The instrument had a high degree of reliability with a sample base of 5000 students factored in to the norm-referenced results (Marsh, 1990a; Marsh, 1990b).

Document analysis supported both methodological trustworthiness and authenticity in that data was auditable and perspectives of examiners, teachers and school personnel contributed to the descriptive narrative (Patton, 2002). Literacy data from results of the annual SLA designed by teams of education experts and completed under examination conditions were accessed by this study. School semester reports, written by subject teachers with a sound knowledge of the curriculum and students’ performance, provided considerable educational performance data while accurate attendance records, maintained by school staff as a legal requirement, had implications for students engagement with learning. Whilst students with special needs assessment data had been compiled by a range of professionals
from varying agencies, considerable information conveyed orally or anecdotally was not necessarily held in students’ school files. Knowledge of health conditions referred to throughout the study such as ASD, ADHD, ODD, anxiety and intellectual impairment, as well as prescribed medications, was more often sourced from an exchange of information between parents, health professionals and education personnel rather than witnessed documents of diagnoses.

Participant observation submerged the researcher into a social-educational environment where reliability of data rested in the researcher’s ability to reflect reality in observation notes through accurate interpretation, recording and categorising of events (Cohen et al., 2007). However, ethnographic data gathered by one researcher in a limited time frame, as in this study, had limitations and possible bias. A longitudinal ethnographic research study involving participant observation accounts compiled by a group of field researchers in a variety of participant roles may provide greater methodological trustworthiness and authenticity with scope for a range of new alternative perspectives and a broader variety of issues.

Focus groups, conducted and modified in situ to engage participants and improve the quality of data collected, also enhanced authenticity of the study by providing a variety of viewpoints. The integrity of focus group and interview data relied upon the truthfulness of student responses.

Based upon the range of qualitative data gathering and management methods used the findings in Chapters 5-8 represent a depiction of the daily lived experiences of participants and the social realities as perceived by the researcher. In this context the study’s findings are considered to be an authentic and trustworthy representation of the social phenomena being researched.
**Ethical issues.** This study embraced the values and principles of ethical conduct as outlined in the National Statement of Ethical Conduct in Human Research (Australian Government, 2007).

Confidentiality of data collected was a priority due to its potentially sensitive nature. In particular, data detailing academic performance, health and family information were bound to abide by privacy legislation designed to protect the rights of citizens. Such information may be misinterpreted or misused by persons with limited background knowledge or an improper agenda. Employees and researchers in education are similarly obliged to ensure confidentiality and privacy. As the inherent nature of the study’s ethnographic methods probes social phenomena and transverses sensitive issues, every effort was made to ensure anonymity of the participants and research site in publishing the research findings. Participant and place names that appear in the published thesis are fictitious but culturally representative. All data collected were securely stored, treated as confidential during processing, and shredded after seven years.

Details of the proposed research study were submitted to, and approved by, the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics and Academic Review Committees (Appendix D). An application to conduct a research study in a government schools was lodged with the public education sector strategic research department, and details of the proposed study provided to the school principal. Written approval to proceed with the research study was received from all relevant authorities before commencement. Parents, students and staff were informed of the nature, purpose and duration of the research study through a letter, and the informed consents of participants were sought.

**Recipients of findings.** The study’s findings culminated as a discussion of factors influencing the learning and social outcomes of students participating in a secondary school
peer tutor reading support program. Ideas to enhance outcomes for students are stimulated through discussion, but the study does not make policy recommendations.

A copy of the abstract, summary of the research study’s findings, and notification of where to obtain a complete copy of the study were made available to the: principal; staff, students and families of the school community; public education sector strategic research department; and post-school training college.

Complete bound copies of the research study were submitted to the University of Sydney for accreditation of the degree Doctor of Education (EdD).

**Research Environment**

This contemporary ethnographic study contextually embraced the socio-cultural characteristics of the urban geographic location, physical surroundings of the school and human diversity of the participants within an educational setting as the research environment.

**Location.** The ethnographic study was conducted in Sydney, Australia’s largest city with a population of 4.3 million, built around a harbour and bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the east, Blue Mountains to the west, Hawkesbury River to the north and National Parks to the south. Sydney has a temperate climate with warm summers, mild winters and rainfall throughout the year (Bureau of Meteorology, 2008). The city is noted for the Sydney Opera House, Harbour Bridge and its beaches. Sydney is a state capital, regional administrative hub, Australia’s principal corporate and financial centre, and has an important role in the Asia Pacific region. Domestic and international tourism plays a major part in the economy with millions of visitors annually (Tourism NSW, 2004).

Abounding with seafood, wildlife, vegetation and fresh water the Sydney region was populated by Aboriginal people for at least 30,000 years prior to the arrival of British sea
captain, Lieutenant James Cook at Botany Bay in 1770. Sydney, named after the British Home Secretary, Thomas Townshend, Lord Sydney, was declared a British colony in 1788 and initially established as a convict settlement. The original inhabitants of this area, known collectively as the Eora people, included the Cadigal and Darug clans who lived within defined territories and spoke coastal dialects of Darug, Dharawal and Guringai (Flood, 2006). The Aboriginal population and its culture were decimated due to European diseases, and violent resistance to British settlement and economic development within the region. Roads, bridges, wharves and public buildings were constructed by British and Irish convicts, while banks, markets, transport routes and a constabulary rapidly emerged. The 4000-8000 Aboriginal people who lived in the region were reduced to a few hundred by 1820 when Governor Macquarie introduced initiatives that were intended to civilise, Christianise and educate Aboriginal people by removing them from their clans (Kohen, 2000).

With the arrival of immigrants from Britain and Ireland seeking a new life Sydney continued to grow. Gold rushes attracted many people from around the world. Later in the 19th century, with the advent of steam-powered tramways, railways and industrialisation, Sydney’s suburbs expanded rapidly and the population exceeded one million by the early 20th century. Further growth, especially following World War II, saw large numbers of European, and later, Asian immigrants populate the metropolitan area (Jupp, 2001).

Sydney has a diverse population and highly cosmopolitan atmosphere. The most common ancestries of residents are English, Irish, Scottish and Chinese. Census data from 2006 revealed 1% of Sydney's population was indigenous origin and 39.4% were born overseas. Britain, China and New Zealand were the three major sources of immigrants with significant numbers coming from Vietnam, Lebanon, Italy, India and the Philippines. Sydney has the seventh largest percentage of foreign born population in the world. English is the most common language with many second languages spoken, including Arabic, Chinese and Italian (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006).
**Site.** Site of the research study was a public education sector, comprehensive, coeducational high school of a low-middle socio-economic suburb of Sydney. The school was serviced by a private bus company with connections to a major railway station and large regional shopping complex. Population growth and urban expansion in the 1960s brought about construction of the high school on former dairy grazing land. The school comprised an administration building, double storey classroom blocks, portable classrooms, a hall with stage, a large Covered Outdoor Learning Area (COLA), basketball courts and grassed playing fields. The daily focus of the research study was in the school library.

**Participants.** The school attracted a student population, drawn from surrounding suburbs, of approximately 1000 students in Years 7-12, aged 12-18 years, with over half from a Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE). School staff included a principal, deputy principals, head teachers, classroom teachers, and ancillary personnel.

Whilst all students were engaged in a comprehensive curriculum at the school, the research study focused upon students participating in a daily cross-age PTRRCP. Twenty-two Year 7 tutees, aged 12-13 years, who experienced difficulties reading, understanding and meaningfully engaging with curriculum subject texts, were paired with Year 10 volunteer peer tutors, aged 14-15 years. All Year 10 tutors agreed to participate in tutor training and were familiar with the academic content, intellectual structures, language and terminology of the curriculum based reading material provided. Students, parents, the PTRRCP coordinator, roll call teachers and a post-school training college head teacher were key participants central to data gathering. However, in the course of the research study, other persons such as the principal, head teachers, school counsellor, welfare consultant and teacher aides contributed to the data. All staff participants were public sector employees. A group of Year 8 students, aged 13-14 years, who required continued assistance with
development of their reading skills, participated in the program for a second year with their Year 10 tutors, but were not directly included in this study.

Year 7 students with reading difficulties were identified through primary-high school transition information, collected via interviews with primary class teachers and educational performance data pro formas, as well as results of a general language screening test held in the first week of the school year. Parents, teachers, counsellors or students were able to request additional reading support. Students were placed in the PTRRCP and a waiting list established. During the year, results of the annual SLA were used as a literacy safety net to identify and respond to low achieving students. These students were included in the peer tutor reading program as part of the school’s literacy support and SLA follow-up response strategy. Students who made significant progress, according to SLA results or school semester reports, returned to Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) roll call, a whole school, silent, free-choice reading program, and were replaced by students on the waiting list.

Selection and participation of volunteer peer tutors from Year 10 was subject to vetting by teachers, parent permission notes and personal commitment contracts. A 90 minute in-school tutor training session was conducted by the program coordinator as a prerequisite to participation which introduced tutors to the causal factors of reading difficulties, reading development theory, the fundamental tutoring strategy of PPP, and interpersonal issues associated with tutoring. Trainee tutors were then provided with opportunities to role play and discuss tutee-tutor scenarios. In addition, most tutors completed the volunteer tutor training course throughout the year. Descriptions of the training course content and students engaged in learning during this course are included in the narrative. Assessment of tutors' practical skills, according to specified criteria, was ongoing during regular visits by the post-school training college head teacher, and attendance was recorded to ensure the required number of practical hours was completed. A college accredited Volunteer Literacy Tutoring Certificate was awarded to those students
who attended both theory training days, maintained their portfolio of notes and demonstrated the required practical skills.

**Educational setting.** The PTRRCP aimed to develop students’ reading skills and facilitate knowledge construction in context of an inclusive education setting. A socially supportive and interactive learning environment was paramount to the program’s objectives. As a key learning support initiative, PTRRCP was conducted daily in the library during morning roll call before lessons commenced, while the wider school participated in DEAR. Roll call was deemed an expedient time by the school to facilitate development of all students’ literacy skills through regular practice. The 10-15 minutes per day duration of roll call period totalled 65 minutes per week, which equated to 44 hours 25 minutes or 9 full school days per year. Eleven tutees were paired with Year 10 tutors in each of three peer tutoring roll call classes, two Year 7 and one Year 8, involving a total of 66 students. Personnel directly associated with the program included a coordinator, three roll call teachers and a post-school training college head teacher. Subject faculty programs provided a guide in the selection of age-appropriate, authentic curriculum-based reading material and follow-up learning activities. Reading material was scheduled concurrently to support students’ classroom learning whenever possible. Reading resources were obtained from collections in the school library, learning support and subject faculties. Online internet resources were also accessed. Each morning tutees were expected to read curriculum related material aloud to their tutors who directed, guided, prompted, corrected, questioned, discussed, explained and assisted with completion of associated set written learning tasks.

**Conclusion**

This study, informed by the designs and findings of previous research studies in peer tutoring, guided by a sound theoretical framework, and underpinned by a probing
contemporary educational ethnographic research design, was primarily implemented as intended. In subsequent chapters the study’s findings intimately immerse the reader in to the daily life of a Sydney secondary public high school. Through a synthesised descriptive narrative the everyday lived experience of students with learning difficulties is portrayed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Such an ethnographic methodological approach provided enlightened insight to the factors influencing the social and learning outcomes of students.
CHAPTER 5

Findings

The next four chapters report the research study findings. Chapters 5-7 are presented primarily as an in situ ethnographic narrative account spanning a full school year, while Chapter 8 explores participants’ views in detail. With the researcher submerged in the learning environment as a support teacher and PTRRCP coordinator, a descriptive narrative was compiled from daily participant observation notes, enriched by questionnaire, focus group, interview and document data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). A narrative account, selected as an effective and powerful style for presenting the findings of ethnographic studies (Murchison, 2010), immerses the reader into the real-life experiences of students and facilitates direct in situ connections to the data. The narrative endeavours to convey the complexity of participants’ lived experiences and, as previously explained in Chapter 4, conventional, articulate text is interspersed with subjective observations, informal language, colloquial expressions, humorous comments, emotional reactions and politically incorrect remarks.

The educational ethnography commences in Chapter 5 with a description of the researcher’s journey to a large suburban public high school located midway between Sydney’s Central Business District and the urban fringe. An overview of the social background and educational characteristics of student participants are also presented. The ethnographic narrative of daily life, throughout semesters one and two in Chapters 6-7 respectively, is embedded with descriptions of individual participants and focused upon the socially interactive learning environment of the PTRRCP. Whilst the narrative proceeds in chronological sequence throughout the year, the ethnographic accounts are not itemised on a day to day basis.

Ethnographic methodology generally, and participant observation in particular, provides inherently unconventional research data which requires more resourceful academic
approaches to data management. As a result, this study has developed and engaged alternative methods of presenting, analysing and discussing data. To assist the reader, two features have been included throughout the study’s narrative. The first is italicised names, for example, Margo, signifies further description of the staff, tutors, tutees or other research study participants may be referred to in Appendix E-H. Non-italicised names indicate no further information is presented in the Appendix.

A second feature is the domain footnotes. The numerals, 1-11, identify which of the study’s eleven domains (Table 2) proximal text refers to, while in situ footnotes describe the factor influencing learning and social outcomes. It is acknowledged some factors hold validity in more than one domain, and that this narrative footnote feature highlights only a selection of significant factors influencing outcomes for students experiencing learning difficulties. A summary of these footnoted factors grouped in respective domains, with their Hierarchical Concepts Model categorisation in brackets, is located in Appendix B.

Chapter 8 probed participants’ views of their learning and social experiences in the PTRRCP. In Chapter 9 key ideas embedded in the Hierarchical Concepts Model which emerged from the findings of Chapters 5-8 are discussed. Finally, the conclusion in Chapter 10 presents key findings, suggests related fields for further research and reflects upon the study.

An Ethnographic Account - Part One

The journey. After departing a central city station the train passes under a road bridge in a blighted neighbourhood where societal discontent, combined with simmering relations between Aboriginal communities and police, recently erupted as an abusive rock throwing street clash⁹. The 35 minute journey through 200 years of unfolding inner-city and

1-11 Denotes proximal text contains factors influencing learning and social outcomes for students.

⁹ Cultural-Family factor: status of relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community.
suburban development is characterised by terrace houses, brick bungalows, old hotels, low and high rise multi-storey apartments, small red brick, fibro-plaster and weatherboard houses. Retail precinct signs indicate changing cultural demographics: Asian Groceries, Halal Meat, Hong Kong Hair Salon, Philippine Restaurant and Lebanese Patisserie⁹. A youth graffiti epidemic is evident by numerous sprayed painted graffiti tags along the railway embankments of the railway corridor³.

At 7.59 am the train arrives at my destination station. Built by 1990’s architects the elevator access to boarding platforms reflects the anti-discrimination legislation and improved social awareness of the needs of people with physical disabilities or mobility issues. The double storey school where I worked provided no elevator access, as it was constructed prior to these social rights initiatives.

The station is busy with people walking in all directions, waiting or arriving on platforms, checking departure boards and purchasing tickets. There are several retail shops and station security personnel are on patrol throughout the complex. Often I buy food from the Chinese bakery on my way to one of the eighteen bus bays.

Private bus services are contracted to provide free daily transport to and from the railway station for students from several schools in the area. Hundreds of mostly secondary school students from diverse cultural backgrounds wait in congested bus bays. Most students congregate in regular pairs, or groups of three to six, and stand around socialising, as if at a cocktail party. Some are by themselves, but those from similar cultural backgrounds appear to gravitate to each other, and a recent increase in the number of African students is observable⁹. Every morning a group of Arab boys sit in a bus shelter away from other students. Students of Anglo-Saxon and European origin wait with those from Afghanistan,

---

⁹ Cultural-Family factor: multicultural society and LBOTE.
³ Attitude factor: expression of youths’ societal attitudes.
⁹ Cultural-Family factor: cultural identity and peer bonding.
Arab states, Africa, India, China, South East Asia and Pacific Islands. I cannot understand the many conversations conducted by students in their native languages.

Students sit on the seat benches, chew bubble gum, suck lollipops, tease or chase each other, talk, laugh, play with tennis, soccer, rugby or basket balls, listen to music through headsets or earphones connected to mobile phones, walkmans or i-pods, some occasionally play a guitar. Hot chips with gravy and soft drinks are popular pre-school snacks. Adolescent relationships are formed, developed and broken over the course of time at the bus bay. Romantic interludes may last from a couple of days to a few weeks, or even longer in rare cases.

Adolescents are very conscious of their appearance; many groom themselves each day with elaborate and creative hairstyles. As the schools have specified uniforms, there is little room for self-expression in clothing. Girls tie their long hair in ponytails, buns or plaits, the African girls favour multiple narrow plaits. Many boys have creative haircuts, adding hair colour and gel to spike their hair. Long hair for boys is rare.

After the 10 minute non air-conditioned bus journey to my school students disembark, chatting and socialising as they walk into the school grounds.

The school. Students arrive at Stewart High School by bus, bike, motor vehicles driven by parents and caregivers, or on foot. With the onset of their adult status a few senior students park their aged, second-hand, stereo-thumping cars in front of the school. Several gates are located in the 1.8 metres high green aluminium tubing security fence that spans the perimeter of the school property.

---

9 Cultural-Family factor: LBOTE.
10 Health-Learning Difficulties factor: diet.
4 Inter-Intrapersonal factor: peer relationships.
4 Inter-Intrapersonal factor: self-concept.
6 Organisation factor: conformity to school uniform expectations and routines.
I recall my first day at the school when I was greeted by a burgled, learning support computer room. Regular break-ins and vandalism attacks resulted in the erection of standardised fencing at this and other schools in the area as an effective deterrent.

A cement path leading from the front gate near the bus bay to the administration building divides a lawn and a stand of graceful eucalypts. Many senior students spend non-lesson time gathered under the trees or around outdoor tables and benches.

On tall freestanding flag poles outside the air-conditioned, double storey administration block, an Australian flag bearing the British Union Jack and Southern Cross stars flew alongside an Aboriginal flag depicting symbolic cultural associations with the earth, sky and sun. The school was named after a high ranking official who was appointed to assist British administrators of the colony in 1827. A wall-mounted school crest above the main entrance to the reception area displays symbols and an inspirational motto. The symbols represented four school house groups, each given indigenous names by the school’s first principal in recognition of the area as a former Aboriginal settlement. I am a patron of one house for swimming carnivals and athletics days. The non air-conditioned teaching blocks, connected by leaking galvanised iron undercover walkways, proudly display polished linoleum corridors and wooden doors. Dowdy change rooms, toilets, a canteen and an indoor basketball court are adjacent to a COLA which resembles a warehouse without walls.

During the fifteen minute weekly school assembly, students are addressed with a microphone from a raised brick platform by the principal, deputy principals, head teachers and staff about school related matters. Students regularly receive awards for various academic, sporting and community achievements. Surrounded by the watchful eyes of teaching staff, the students sit patiently on asphalt in rows of vertically grouped year levels according to alpha-numeric prefix codes of their sport house and roll call class. Patrolling

---

5 Environment factor: school security.
teachers issue students without correct uniform with parking inspector-style carbon copy tickets, which may result in a loss of privileges, such as attending school dances or excursions.

While two unfenced, newly surfaced, outdoor asphalt basketball courts and two grassed oval areas are shared by all students during recess and lunch, few girls are seen participating with boys in the daily, hastily organised basketball and rugby games. Groups of girls sit together on benches, grassed areas and in the outdoor learning space.

A school hall built in the 1970s uncomfortably accommodates all 1000 students and staff at rare, full school assemblies. Five hundred students come from a LBOTE and twenty are Aboriginal. The school library, with its trodden bubblegum-spotted blue carpet, and adjacent Blue Room share the ground floor of one classroom block. The Blue Room was formerly the library bag-rack space partitioned to create a learning support facility. It is my home base in the school and is equipped with eight computers, learning support texts and resources, as well as small group and individual tutoring areas. Many students ask why it is called the Blue Room but I can only suggest the blue library carpet, light-blue painted walls and dark blue door are the origin of the name.

**The job.** My position at Stewart High School was the Support Teacher Learning Difficulties (STLD) which was later re-jargonised as Support Teacher Learning Assistance (STLA). The position title has a long history ranging from Teacher of Slow Learners, Reading Teacher, Teacher of Learning Impaired, Remedial Teacher, Enrichment Teacher, Learning Assistance Teacher, Learning Support Teacher, Support Teacher Learning Difficulties, Support Teacher Learning Assistance, and more recently Learning and Support Teacher.

My job brief, outlined upon my arrival by a head teacher, was to support junior secondary students experiencing literacy and numeracy difficulties. The principal assigned
me the responsibility of administering the annual State-wide Literacy (SLA) and Numeracy (SNA) Assessment to all 400 Year 7 and 8 students. As STLA, I was expected to follow-up and facilitate learning support for students whose test results were below the national benchmarks. Specific published guidelines were provided for follow-up assessments of students with low achievement in the SLA reading section.

I also undertook the educational programming responsibility of developing and implementing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for funded integration students with confirmed disabilities relating to physical impairment, ASD, or mental health issues. Three year funding allocated to support students with learning difficulties or other disabilities was based upon schools’ SLA and SNA results. Additional funding schemes were accessible for Aboriginal or socially at risk students. A teacher aide-special who lived locally was very friendly and helpful during my orientation phase at the school.

The program. In previous years a peer tutor reading program was a strategy used in the school to support students’ literacy development, however, state-wide changes to improve the literacy outcomes for students participating in peer tutor reading programs were planned. My responsibilities included implementation of these changes and I attended a regional program orientation day. The main initiatives undertaken were a formalised accredited, tutor training course and guidelines, which insisted upon the use of authentic curriculum reading materials only. A joint agreement between the school, training provider and the public sector funding body, required respective signatories.

Using my scribbled notes from the Year 6-7 transition meetings, held at the two main feeder primary schools, I prioritised students for roll groups with eleven readers and their tutors in each. Transition form information completed by Year 6 teachers from twenty other

---

7 Program factor: follow up literacy support.

6 Organisation and personnel factor: specific funding to support students with special needs.
feeder schools and primary school STLA’s records were also useful. The twenty-two Year 7 positions for students experiencing reading difficulties were soon filled. Two areas in the library provided a comfortable space for each of the Year 7 roll call groups, while the Year 8 and additional Year 7 students were located in an adjacent room. Daily tutees attended PTRRCP and paired with their Year 10 tutor to read aloud scheduled curriculum based materials of different text types that related to their subject classroom lessons. Tutor questioning and discussion accompanied reading sessions while associated literacy based activities to reinforce learning were also programmed for completion. The PTRRCP, which aimed to provide learning and social support for students with reading difficulties, was one aspect of the school’s approach to improving literacy standards.

Increasingly so, rightly or wrongly, the SLA and SNA results were also used as an indicator of school performance and I was required to present a report on the school’s performance. As the SLA was held mid first term each year, I commenced the reading program with the previous years’ colourful stimulus magazine and the reading section questions for familiarisation as well as practice. Fundamental literacy difficulties could not be overcome in a short few weeks, or without explicit instruction, and invariably PTRRCP students attained low or elementary achievement levels. Students who received proficient or high achievement returned to DEAR roll call for daily silent reading.

The participants. Adolescent participants in this ethnographic research study came together via separate life paths into a reading support program developed by educators to provide learning and social support for junior secondary school students experiencing literacy difficulties. Whilst all students resided locally who attended the high school they were from diverse cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds with varying self-concepts and educational abilities.
Social background. Many students were born in local hospitals and lived or moved within neighbouring suburbs, while others came from different parts of Sydney, Australia and overseas. A significant number were born to parents of non English speaking backgrounds, some migrated to Australia with their families, while others were born in Australia. A few refugee students from war ravaged parts of Africa, Afghanistan and the Middle East were separated from family members. This part of suburban Sydney attracted large numbers of migrants with lower cost housing connected by the rail network to diverse employment opportunities and services throughout the city. Students and their families resided in a variety of housing from government subsidised rental units and townhouses; private rental and owner-occupied weatherboard, red brick and fibro plaster houses built in the 1950-70s; to large private homes in recently developed housing estates. Languages spoken in families included Afrikaans, Arabic, Dari, Darug, Dinka, English, German, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Kurdish, Lebanese, Maori, Persian, Filipino, Punjabi, Samoan, Serbian, Tamil, Tongan, Turkish and Yugoslavian. All students spoke English, although for many, it was their second language. Christianity, Hinduism and Islam were the main religious affiliations.

Educational performance. The characteristics of participant tutees and tutors were notably different in relation to attendance, self-concept and educational performance. Student school attendance records revealed tutees had a significantly higher rate of absenteeism and unexplained absences than tutors (Table 3). Attendance was a security, welfare and legal issue with significant implications for the social and learning outcomes of students.
Table 3: Annual Percentage of School Days Absent and Unexplained Absences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tutees</th>
<th>Tutors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Days absent</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained absence</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The academic and non-academic self-concepts of tutors and tutees are indicated by results of the Self Development Questionnaire (SDQ) in Tables 4 and 5. Displayed are the means of the raw scores of male, female, and all participants. The percentile indicates all participants’ results in context of the SDQ’s population sample norm.

Tutees’ non-academic self-concept as reported by the SDQ I (Marsh, 1990a) was significantly better than their academic self-concept. Their self-concept was healthier concerning their physical abilities, physical appearance and peer relations than for parent relations, reading, Mathematics and school generally. Male participants had a slightly elevated self-concept in relation to physical abilities, parent relations and general self, while females had an enhanced self-concept in reading. Notably tutees total academic percentile score of 15 and total self-concept score of 20 highlighted their socially marginalised status in context of the population norm (Table 4).

Not surprisingly, tutors had a much higher self-concept than tutees according to the SDQ II (Marsh, 1990b). Their self-concept peaked in terms of verbal ability, honesty, trustworthiness, same sex relations and school generally. With regard to physical abilities, physical appearance and parent relations, tutors’ self-concept were slightly lower, but nevertheless, higher than tutees. Male tutors had a better total self-concept than female tutors. In particular, males’ self-concept in Mathematics, physical appearance, physical abilities, emotional stability, parent relations and school generally was strong, while females had elevated verbal self-concepts. The percentile scores for tutors, which were significantly
higher than those for tutees, indicate they generally have an above average self-concept in relation to the population norm (Table 5).

Table 4: Self-concept of tutees (SDQ I)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Physical abilities</th>
<th>Physical appearance</th>
<th>Peer relations</th>
<th>Parent relations</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>General school</th>
<th>General self</th>
<th>Total non-academic</th>
<th>Total academic</th>
<th>Total self-concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female tutees</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male tutees</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All tutees</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Percentile            | All tutees         | 34                 | 49             | 38               | 20      | 24          | 21             | 18           | 31                 | 15            | 20                 |

N=22, 9 Female 13 Male

Table 5: Self-concept of tutors (SDQ II)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Physical appearance</th>
<th>General self</th>
<th>Honesty-trustworthiness</th>
<th>Physical abilities</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Emotional stability</th>
<th>Parent relations</th>
<th>General school</th>
<th>Same-sex relations</th>
<th>Opposite-sex relations</th>
<th>Total self-concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female tutors</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male tutors</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All tutors</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Percentile            | All tutors         | 57                 | 43            | 45                       | 69                 | 38     | 78                  | 52               | 45             | 64                  | 65                      | 49                 | 64                 |

N=22, 12 Female 10 Male

Before considering tutees’ literacy and academic performance data acknowledgement needs to be made of the range of professionally recognised causal factors
of literacy difficulties: dyspedagogia; minimised literacy instruction time; interrupted education; family-school socio-cultural disparities; family-cultural attitudes of low expectations; emotional effects of failure; a LBOTE; unsettled family structure; socio-cultural and socio-economic disadvantage; poor attendance and chronic truancy; learning disabilities; poor cognitive ability; deficiencies in psychological processes like working memory, visual and auditory perception; neurological, behavioural and mental health issues (Glynn, Wearmouth & Berryman, 2006; Westwood, 2008). All tutors were considered as having proficient English literacy skills.

The Federal Government’s National Benchmark Statements for literacy applied to the Year 7 SLA results found 43 of 190 students failed to meet all literacy benchmarks (Table 6). Nearly all these students participated in the PRRCP.

**Table 6: Percentage of Students Below National Literacy Benchmarks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy sections</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Year 7s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Available school semester reports, with an A, B, C, D or E grade allocated for results, attitude and conduct, highlighted the learning difficulties experienced by tutees. The largest percentage of tutees obtained a D or E grade in all performance areas in contrast with the majority of tutors who obtained A or B grades (Table 7).
Table 7: Semester Report Grades by Majority Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tutees</th>
<th>Tutors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>A-B negligible</td>
<td>A-B 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D-E 52%</td>
<td>D-E negligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>A-B minimal</td>
<td>A-B 80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D-E 36%</td>
<td>D-E minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct</td>
<td>A-B minimal</td>
<td>A-B 82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D-E 40%</td>
<td>D-E minimal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptors used by teachers in school subject reports provided unique insight to the characteristics of both tutees and tutors. Many tutees were described as friendly, pleasant, good-natured and well-mannered with positive attitudes to learning, “Bridget is a friendly and hardworking student who displays a pleasing attitude”. Some were attentive, interested, enthusiastic, conscientious and diligent students, who demonstrated initiative, asked questions, sought advice and strove for improvement, “Andrea is an enthusiastic and attentive student who regularly seeks assistance”. Several students were reported to have worked independently and cooperatively, participated in discussions and enjoyed leadership responsibilities, “Alim is a hard working student who enjoys working independently”. Tutees actively participated in the practical subjects of Physical Education, Creative and Performing Arts with some demonstrating talent, outstanding progress and a high level of achievement, “Crystal demonstrates a high level of competency in a wide range of sports”. However, apart from these subjects, competence was rarely noted. English teachers referred to improvements in text decoding, fluency, comprehension, punctuation, editing, oral skills and confidence, while Mathematics teachers acknowledged mastery of multiplication tables,
“Developments in Andrea’s reading comprehension are pleasing and allow her to read with increased confidence and enjoyment”. Teachers commented that students made greater effort and produced work of higher standard with peer support or teacher assistance.

On the negative side, poor punctuality, preparedness for lessons and organisational skills were fundamental issues for some tutees. Many experienced difficulty sustaining attention, listening and concentrating in lessons, unable to avoid distractions, maintain focus or remain on task, resulting in missed information, frustration and inconsistent participation, “Heath is talkative and misses vital information during explanations”. Regular directions, repeated reminders, frequent encouragement and constant supervision from teachers were needed, “Steven requires supervision to ensure he remains on task and focused”. Several were talkative, wasted time, failed to follow instructions, lacked self-discipline and displayed attention-seeking, distracting or disruptive behaviour, “Brad’s attention seeking behaviour often hinders his progress and distracts his peers”. Students had difficulty working cooperatively, often did not participate in classroom learning or discussions, rushed work and made careless errors, “Silei is often unwilling to attempt tasks in class even with prompting”. Other negative comments from teachers included lack of confidence, motivation and responsibility, immaturity and reluctance to assume leadership roles, “Crystal lacks confidence in her abilities and is reluctant to assume leadership roles.” Many tutees were described as struggling students who found lesson material challenging and courses difficult. They worked slowly and experienced difficulties completing practical or homework tasks. Some required intensive support. Frequent comments referred to students’ lack of fundamental knowledge, basic understanding, elementary skill level and minimal progress. Many experienced difficulties applying concepts, interpreting, evaluating and retaining data, “Brad works slowly and has struggled to understand the concepts being taught”. Some needed to maintain their notebooks, improve work presentation and develop
independent work practices with a regular revision program, “Silei’s lack of revision and inability to retain skills practised in lessons inhibited better results”.

Students struggling with literacy difficulties were acknowledged with particular comments regarding reading, comprehension, speaking and writing, “Bridget continues to find reading comprehension difficult but is decoding with increased fluency”. Teachers referred to the need to read instructions thoroughly and engage in extensive reading at home, “Brad needs to read more widely at home to improve his comprehension, spelling and expression”. Poor comprehension of both written material and verbal instructions was accompanied by difficulties with written expression. In addition, limited speaking skills made it difficult for students to complete written tasks and express ideas effectively.

Quite a few still required multiplication tables practice to assist their numeracy development. Incomplete and non-submitted work was a significant concern of teachers while absenteeism hindered progress of some students who often did not complete examinations or major assessment tasks, “Suzanne failed to submit the technology assignment”. Development of students’ self-management skills including organisation and time management emerged as an identifiable need, “A lack of essential equipment during examinations hindered Paul’s ability to achieve a better result”. Similarly, the study skills of task analysis, planning, organisation, drafting, proof reading, editing and presentation needed development. Many students also needed encouragement and motivation to actively seek assistance in order to attempt and complete set learning tasks.

Descriptors used by teachers in tutors’ semester reports were typically positive in nature. Frequently their personal characteristics were described as personable, pleasant, well-mannered and friendly, “John is a personable and very social class member”. While their attitude to learning was regarded as attentive, enthusiastic, inquisitive, quiet, motivated, conscientious, mature, diligent, consistent, focused, persistent, perceptive, productive, well organised and well-behaved, “Kylie is a mature student who exhibits a diligent work ethic”.

75
Many were considered as being competent, talented, gifted, thorough, articulate, thoughtful and confident students, “Mike is a talented and conscientious student who strives to achieve high results”. Tutors regularly contributed meaningfully to discussions, confidently participated as part of a team, were cooperative, interested, self-directed, motivated, asked relevant questions, worked independently, utilised time effectively, sought advice and clarification for sound understanding, “Jamal is an excellent listener who asks insightful questions and contributes meaningfully to discussions”. They produced well researched, structured assignments, demonstrated clear understanding, high standards, excellent work and achieved outstanding results, “Katherine demonstrated advanced research skills and presented an outstanding assignment”.

Characterising this chapter was thick description which provided the necessary socio-cultural and educational contextual background to comprehensively inform the forthcoming ethnographic accounts of daily life at Stewart High School. In subsequent chapters, this contextual background, together with an intimate portrayal of students with learning difficulties and their everyday school life experiences, contributed to a better understanding of the complexity of factors influencing social and learning outcomes.
CHAPTER 6

Findings

Chapters 6 and 7 present the findings as an ethnographic narrative spanning semester one and two of the school year respectively. The focus of the narrative is upon the daily life of secondary school students who are participating in a peer tutor reading support program. Unfolding chronologically over the school year are the descriptive accounts of key participants, daily events, social phenomena and learning experiences surrounding the PTRRCP. Revealed, as the first stage of data analysis to address the research study questions, are factors embedded in situ that influence the learning and social outcomes of students experiencing learning difficulties. These factors are identified with the use of footnotes.

An Ethnographic Account - Part Two

Daily Life - Semester One: Term 1. Each day before school, several students congregate on the carpeted foyer floor outside the library and play cards, pocket size game machines, read, complete unfinished homework or talk as they wait for the librarian to arrive. I typically greet the waiting students with a cheerful, “Good morning, folks” when I arrive at 8.30 am. Students with whom I work, and their friends, regularly visit me in the adjacent Blue Room before school for a chat or to use the computers. I consciously encourage, develop and maintain a friendly constructive rapport with students before roll call\(^4\). It provides students with an informal social and learning support network, orientation time, and a forum to discuss issues of interest or concern. Unaddressed matters can later manifest themselves into more significant problems. Weekend experiences, current affairs, latest movies, hobbies, school organisational issues, timetabled lessons and current subject

\(^4\) Inter-Intrapersonal factor: positive teacher and student relationships.
assignments are frequent conversation topics. Students enjoy informal contact with a teacher and an opportunity to touch base outside a classroom environment. In particular, students with ASD, a mild intellectual impairment, or mental health issues, seem to respond well to this form of engagement.

*Clare*, the teacher-librarian and roll call teacher, arrives at 8.40 am after she has driven her three children to an inner suburb primary school through the morning traffic congestion. This contributes to her stress levels, as does one of her daughter’s behavioural problems⁹. Other assigned daily roll call teachers include *Balbir*, a gently spoken, middle-aged, male Mathematics teacher of Fiji-Indian descent, and *Janet*, a slim, sprightly Physical Education teacher. She is a Year Adviser and has a young child.

The PTRRCP, accommodating 66 students, is held in the carpeted, well-lit library and an adjacent class room⁵. A tutor, *Christopher*, reliably delivers the roll books by 8.45 am everyday for the three PTRRCP classes. He appreciates having responsibility during idle time before school, as he arrives at 8.00 am, when his father drops him and his brother off on the way to work. It ensures a smooth start to each day, as unnecessary confusion results if roll books are not immediately available. Roll marking is not difficult, but is one of those routine fundamental administrative duties. It is an obligatory legal responsibility, whilst being a pragmatic security and welfare issue. When the bell sounds, students stream into the library area. The blue plastic boxes containing students’ folders and books for PTRRCP are usually carried in by volunteer students⁶. In order to maximise reading time, I allow students to enter the library upon the bell and generally roll teachers arrive within a few minutes. Monday and Tuesday roll call period is 10 minutes, which is too short, if students do not

---

⁹ Cultural and Family factor: personal life stress.
⁵ Environment factor: classroom learning environment and facilities.
⁶ Organisation factor: established routines for entry, roll marking and material collection.
settle immediately to read. Wednesday through to Friday provides 15 minutes, which can be adequate time for a good reading session\(^6\).

During the session I circulate, redirect students to task, answer questions, attend to matters such as broken pencils, supplies of reading material and provide some tutoring tips. As often as possible I endeavour to listen to students read or observe tutors, in order to provide feedback, but usually time is stretched attending to routine matters. The Year 7 students respond well to teacher attention, as they like to demonstrate their reading ability.

The tutors are volunteers, generally the type of students that become school captains, achieve academically, participate in school sporting teams or other activities, and are rarely discipline problems\(^3\). The tutees are mixed, some quiet in nature with learning difficulties, others have attention, self-management or behavioural issues, which contribute to their current difficulties with reading. Tutees react in different ways to placement in the program, most accept they have reading difficulties, whilst some question their placement or comment they would rather be in DEAR roll call. A few students suggest placement reflects upon their social status in that they cannot read well and must participate in a special reading program\(^4\), while others with limited English skills who recently arrived from overseas are keen to improve their reading\(^10\). I limit changes to the rolls and inform them that placements will be reviewed when SLA results arrive mid-year. The students vary in their application to reading, many on task and conscientious, a few off task with little motivation or willingness to focus. Generally, most settle in to the program and work well with their peer tutor.

---

\(^6\) Organisation factor: adequate time allocation for program.

\(^3\) Attitude and Inter-Intrapersonal factor: characteristics of tutors.

\(^4\) Inter-Intrapersonal factor: peer social status.

\(^10\) Health and Learning Difficulties factor: characteristics of tutees.
Considerable organisation prior to commencement was required to place students appropriately in the program\(^6\). When practical I pair tutees and tutors with the same LBOTE to assist with the development of reading skills. By being able to speak the tutees’ first language, the tutor can help comprehension of English during the tutoring process, while sharing similar cultural backgrounds may assist students develop a comfortable rapport. I paired Hindi, Turkish, Arabic and Italian speaking students. A smile of relief beamed from Ajanta’s face when she was informed her tutor, Tarang, also spoke fluent Hindi.

Most families living in the local neighbourhood choose to send siblings to the same school. Relationships between siblings at school vary from protective close companionship to disowning embarrassment. Donald in Year 7 requested his older sister, Lisa, as a tutor. Lisa claimed they worked well together without sibling conflicts, so I agreed\(^9\). The sibling pair related well to each other and often talked with others at their table. Bridget, a pleasant and attractive Year 7 girl in the program, had an older brother, Corey, and sister, Lara, at the school, who had previously been paired in the program. Both Bridget and Corey had a mild intellectual impairment. Bridget tried consistently but was very slow to comprehend and complete tasks.

I received a note from Waylon’s mother, stating he did not need to improve his reading skills and therefore would not participate in PTRRCP. This was contrary to primary school transition information, which advised he took part in an intensive reading program and needed continued assistance. Waylon’s sister was previously a tutee in the program. I expect Waylon, who was overweight\(^10\) with a Maori language background, did not want to participate so pressured his mother to write the note.

\(^6\) Organisation factor: program placement and pairing of tutees and tutors.

\(^9\) Cultural and Family factor: sibling relationships.

\(^10\) Health-Learning Difficulties factor: obesity and self-concept.
A concerned mother of a Year 7 student with a Turkish background, Metin, visited the school as her son was upset by the program placement letter and could not sleep. I explained the PTRRCP in more detail. It is not unusual for students to feel uncomfortable being separated from their normal class for participation in learning support programs, and may feel they have done something wrong. Occasionally students openly reject learning support, their perceptions are important, and tact is required. Upon invitation Metin’s mother borrowed a selection of eight novels, biographies and general interest books from the Blue Room collection for him to read at home. I suggested she listen to him read, discuss the books and ask questions. The next day Metin greeted me with a smile and was happy to participate in the program.

A volunteer tutor was not permitted to participate as his father thought Heng’s results would suffer because of his involvement in extra curricula activities.

Steven returned a permission letter and informed me because of dyslexia he needed to wear special glasses with tinted lenses for reading. Whilst he appeared to accept the prescribed glasses as a matter of fact, he wore them only spasmodically. I found him to be well-mannered and keen to improve his reading during the program, however, he developed behavioural problems and was diagnosed with ADHD. Christopher explained that he needed reading glasses following a recent check-up and accepted with disappointment the necessity of wearing them. I shared my recent experiences of acquiring prescription glasses.

On the first day of the PTRRCP in week 3, Clare had not arrived at school, so I hurriedly took the roll of her class. The previous year I had complained to her about frequent lateness. Clare later apologised, dramatically claiming she thought I would be annoyed. She had been stuck in congested traffic. Occasional lateness is unavoidable, but the daily

---

4 Inter-Intrapersonal factor: feelings, self perception and participation willingness.

10 Health and Learning Difficulties factor: dyslexia, prescribed glasses, ADHD.
punctuality of teachers is important for the smooth running of the program. Several students were absent.

Establishing expectations and good routines early in the year is important for the program’s success and I occasionally reinforce focused reading by complimenting the whole group saying “Well done today. Good on task reading, that’s the way to improve.” During the year, a variety of school events disrupt the daily PTRRCP routine. The Year 7 camp, an excursion to the mountains, and mufti days generate an air of excitement and anticipation among students dressed in casual clothes. On days when nurses are administering injections, or tests and examinations are scheduled, an expectant nervousness prevails.

Several minutes after the morning bell had sounded no roll call teacher had arrived. Irritated, I complained to the looming deputy principal, Ken. He undertook to discuss the issue with the head teacher, who was commencing work in a new environment with different systems, personnel, times and procedures. Later I visited the school administrative officer in charge of attendance records and explained there were data entry errors in the rolls. “I’m flat strap,” she claimed which is her usual response when approached with complaints. She often jokes with me about my summer attire of shorts and black socks suggesting white would be more fashionable.

Before roll call, I assisted Nick, a Year 8 student with Asperger Syndrome, he had a writing task to complete relating to a social development program he attended. Nick was not in PTRRCP but I developed his IEP and he regularly visited the Blue Room.

Jamal explained his absence was due to an operation and pointed towards his appendix. Jamal and his reader, Mehmet, were placed together with the intention of facilitating cultural support, and translation benefits, based on their Arabic backgrounds.

6 Organisation factor: punctuality, routine roll marking.
6 Organisation factor: establishment and reinforcement of expectations.
6 Organisation factor: program placement, tutee and tutor pairing.
Another tutor, Agira, reported his father would not allow him go to the tutor training day, as he would miss out on Physics at school.

*Clara* returned her permission form with the guardian comment, “I hope this program helps her with reading it is very weak”. *Clara and Lusala*, arrived from Sudan with refugee status twelve months prior and spent six months attending an Intensive English Centre (IEC)\(^9\). As their previous Year 7 course was incomplete, they were repeating the year. I placed them in the Year 8 roll call to avoid social dislocation from their peer group. I selected two easy novels for them to practise their reading. Placement in the Year 8 program informs students their reading skills require further development. Pleasantly mannered Dimitri, of Greek background, experienced continuing difficulties with English. Vedran, from a Yugoslavian background, objected to being in the program for a second year. Adem was placed mid-year when John, a quiet Australian born student, returned to DEAR due to improved results. *Asofa* demonstrated talent in Visual Arts, but with a mild intellectual impairment, struggled academically and needed additional learning support. He had other siblings in his Tongan family who attended the school, all of whom experienced learning difficulties.

Vicki arrived late so I warned she would be sent to the late room next time. As the year progressed, Vicki was often absent, truanted, exhibited behavioural problems, which resulted in suspension, and finally she left the school\(^10\). I explained late procedures to *Cathy* who arrived after roll call. When I enquired about her lateness, she started to cry and claimed her older sister who brought her to school had slept in. I made light of the issue to avoid an emotional scene. *Cathy*, with short light brown hair and fair skin, had a mild intellectual impairment and found it difficult to complete set learning tasks independently\(^10\).

\(^9\) Cultural-Family factor: LBOTE.

\(^10\) Health and Learning Difficulties factor: attendance and behavioural issues.
Her reading fluency was exceptionally slow with limited comprehension, and her frustrated tutor was grateful to be assigned another student mid-year. Cathy’s two older siblings at the school also experienced learning difficulties.

Paula, a new teacher aide at the school, had a daughter Kylie doing the tutor course and enquired if it would help achieve her ambition to be a primary teacher. I explained that the credentials were positive evidence to support future teaching course applications.

Clare enjoyed a cup of coffee and reading the newspaper upon arrival in the library each day. One morning we had a conversation based on a newspaper article about residential real estate prices and dangerous suburbs titled “Sydney’s No Go Zones”. We discussed an old inner-city, blighted urban area and Aboriginal residential zone.

Margo, a friendly, pleasant-natured, Aboriginal girl, was a reader in the tutoring program. I offered her a choice of storybooks written by Aboriginal people. I purchased the books, as a series of six with an accompanying teacher resource book, to foster cultural relevance and inclusiveness. She chose one about an Australian Rules footballer and another called “Emu Egg”. One day, Margo enthusiastically and proudly suggested her father perform traditional Aboriginal music and dance at school during multicultural celebrations on Harmony Day. Unfortunately her idea never came to fruition. Margo was enthusiastic about learning and worked cooperatively with others in the classroom. However, due to a high unexplained absentee rate and rarely completed homework, her engagement with learning was limited. Margo spent two weeks at Cannon House, a live-in respite care program for socially disadvantaged students, and participated in a whole day bi-weekly, off-campus, personal development program for socially and educationally at risk students.

---

3 Attitude factor: career and employment aspirations.

11 Socioeconomic-Technology factor: disadvantaged suburban areas, cultural ghettos, low socioeconomic status of Aboriginal community.

7 Program factor: social and personal development support programs.
Cathy was sitting by herself, looking vague with an unopened folder, while her tutor delivered a message. I opened the folder and a SLA magazine page for her to read, but knew she would struggle with the material. She would have to do the forthcoming SLA test. Next in the program were a selection of novels which I anticipated would be easier for her to engage with.

I attended a learning and behaviour conference addressed by a former Special Education teacher and lecturer. She was an informative, interesting and entertaining speaker who recited case study anecdotes to engage the audience and highlight issues for students with learning difficulties.

Bridget made a 5.00 pm appointment for her parents at an informal, “Meet the teachers” evening. There was a sausage sizzle and cans of drink available under shading gum trees. I had met Bridget’s parents before through Corey. They were pleasant, interested and supportive, so discussions were productive. The crowd grew to about a hundred people, including teachers. I introduced myself to Steven’s mother and her male companion. They cited a dyslexia report recommending Steven wear prescribed tinted glasses and a cap to shade him from the pulses of fluorescent lighting, which affect dyslexic students’ ability to read. They could not recall the exact recommended paper colour on which his tests, examinations and major assignments should be printed. I requested a copy of the recommendations and undertook to circulate relevant, summarised information to key staff. Briefly I talked with the Mathematics head teacher, who had worked at the school for more than twenty years, about an interactive modulised Mathematics compact disc (CD) program I purchased which recorded student progress and test results. Anxious not to miss my connecting bus for the 90 minute trip home, I departed.

---

6 Organisation factor: professional learning.
9 Cultural and Family factor: parent and teacher communication.
7 Program factor: assistive technology.
Margo visited the Blue Room before roll call and we had a conversation about religion, as it was scripture day for Catholic, Protestant and Muslim students. She commented that her church baptism ceremony was “Cool”. Margo enquired if I had been baptised, I replied I hadn’t. While I have a Protestant background and respect many values of Christianity, I consider myself non-practising in regard to religion. An ESL teacher shared that members in her family had been christened in a Catholic church.

As roll call commenced, a tutor was putting on lipstick with a long brush in the presence of Margo. She complied with non-verbal expressions of annoyance to my directions to put it away. Steven did not have his tinted glasses and the tutor confirmed he had not been wearing them regularly. I restated his parents’ expectation that he wear the glasses as recommended. A daily notice about local police-station work experience opportunities was relevant to Christopher as he aspired to be a police officer.

Appearances are important to adolescents. Clare dubbed a group of Year 10 female tutors, who always attentively groomed themselves, as the “supermodels”. Bridget aspired to become a beautician or model. A couple of male students wore creative accessories and hairstyles. Ben, a tutor, had ornamental studs through his eyebrow, bottom lip and right ear, while his fingers protruded from the ends of black and white checked gloves. One half of his hair was peroxide blonde, while the other was dark with blonde tips. Heath, a tutee, who was lively at times, but contained enough to derive benefit from the reading program, regularly experimented with thickly gelled, spiked hair. His older sister also experienced learning difficulties and was previously in PTRRCP.

Before roll call, I assisted a Year 10 student with a History assignment titled “Changes in Australian society between the wars”. Jarod, who had ADHD, was residing in a boys’ youth shelter and visited his parents alternately on weekends. I emerged as a mentor

---

9 Cultural and Family factor: inclusive education and religious affiliations.

4 Inter-Intrapersonal factor: self image and role modelling.
and key support person for him at school. Corey, former reader and brother of Bridget, also arrived for assistance with a History heritage site essay. We discussed essay writing strategies and I suggested he use sub-headings to organise his notes. He had taken colour photographs of war memorials in the CBD to accompany his essay.

I redirected Terry, an overweight reluctant reader who was frequently off task, to focus and read. Lots of practice was necessary as he read with stilted fluency, hesitated to decode words, and lacked confidence. Where possible I praised him for his good work as Terry’s attention and behavioural issues continued to limit his progress at school. Paul also had to be regularly redirected to task; his reading difficulties had accumulated from years of attention difficulties. Troy, of Maltese background, was focused and reading fluently to his attentive tutor. He achieved proficient SLA results and was later moved to DEAR. I reminded tutors to ask questions during and at the end of chapters. Whilst holding a whistle the roll teacher, Janet, walked around the room observing students in a supervisory manner. The bell sounded and students returned their folders to the blue box as they left.

Clare was dressed in the theme colour orange on Harmony Day which was held annually throughout Australia to celebrate multiculturalism by promoting respect, fairness, a sense of belonging, and inclusion. With her below shoulder, straight blonde hair, batik shirt and sarong she reminded me of the 1970’s hippy era. Clare had prepared an orange, Mexican-style rice dish for a themed staff lunch.

Margo requested a uniform note because she was wearing sneakers, not the regulatory black shoes. She wandered around during roll call, so I raised my voice and directed her to sit and read. Asin had literacy problems relating to his language background,
compounded by difficulties maintaining attention\textsuperscript{9}. He was keen to improve his reading, especially after his Kurdish speaking father came to parent-teacher night to discuss Asin’s education with the assistance of an interpreter. I issued Christopher with a blue merit award and thanked him for his services as roll book monitor. The awards accumulated in a school wide scheme to acknowledge students’ good behaviour or work. Christopher had gained a Silver Award\textsuperscript{1}.

Next morning, an Itinerant Support Teacher Hearing (ISTH) arrived to support a Year 12 student during the mid-year examinations\textsuperscript{10}. The reliable teacher aide had already organised the examination papers and a laptop computer for the student to use as a special examination provision\textsuperscript{7}.

In roll call, as an apparent form of greeting, Terry pulled the hair of a female reader with whom he shared his table, laughed and sat down. I warned him to keep his hands to himself. Shortly afterwards Terry raised his pencil as if to hit his female tutor. Although this taunting behaviour is common amongst some teenagers, it is socially inappropriate. The roll teacher read out the daily notices. Austin completed a spelling quiz\textsuperscript{1} and believed he knew how to spell words accurately. His tutor, Zenia, who wore a blue Muslim hijab, indicated he needed more practice. After receiving a zero mark for alleged internet plagiarism, Tarang revealed he won an appeal to be awarded marks for a Geography assignment.

Daily for 15 minutes the PTRRCP aimed to engage student \textsuperscript{9}Cultural and Family factor: LBOTE. \textsuperscript{10}Health and Learning Difficulties factor: hearing impairment and special examination provisions. \textsuperscript{7}Program factor: assistive technology. 

\textsuperscript{1}Methodology factor: spelling quiz.

\textsuperscript{9}Cultural and Family factor: LBOTE.
\textsuperscript{1}Methodology factor: acknowledgement and positive reinforcement.
\textsuperscript{10}Health and Learning Difficulties factor: hearing impairment and special examination provisions.
\textsuperscript{7}Program factor: assistive technology.
\textsuperscript{1}Methodology factor: spelling quiz.
successfully engage some students with learning was difficult due to the impact of other significant issues. Rick was a chronic truant. His brother, also in the peer tutor program two years earlier, had similar poor attendance. Both were permanently on the Home School Liaison Officer follow-up list. Suzanne had ADHD, without daily medication, she became fidgety, restless, interrupted classes and was unable to focus on set learning tasks. Her primary school teachers had warned she wreaked havoc without medication, which occurred regularly, as she either forgot to take it or supplies from home were intermittent. She was disorganised, had awkward, untidy handwriting and found basic literacy-numeracy tasks difficult. Often she was cautioned for disruptive behaviour, and conflict with peers often resulted in her sitting outside classrooms during lessons. One day she threatened to kill herself in an emotional outburst. Suzanne had visits from an ISTB continuing from primary school and received mental health integration funding for teacher aide support time. An IEP was developed in consultation with key persons, including Suzanne’s mother, who revealed at an IEP meeting that she herself was dyslexic and required assistance to read and respond to school correspondence. Goals and strategies were set for managing and teaching Suzanne. She attended support programs at Cannon House and the off-campus personal development program. I reflected upon the difficult circumstances of a parent with dyslexia and an adolescent daughter with ADHD.

**Summary.** This in situ account of Term 1 notably described the educational setting of the research study, outlined PTTRCP organisational matters, introduced key participants, portrayed daily social phenomena and assisted identification of factors influencing student learning and social outcomes.

---

2 Performance factor: attendance.

10 Health and Learning Difficulties factor: ADHD and medication.

10 Health and Learning Difficulties factor: mental health and integration support.

7 Program factor: IEPs and personal development support programs.
Term 2. I noticed Bridget’s hair was now dyed red as I supervised students entering the library, and reminded Jamal to take his hat off. James, an affable tutor, was on crutches and I warned two male students to cease hitting each other. Steven claimed he did not have his glasses because they were being repaired.

Significant social interaction occurred between tutor-tutee pairs while working on SNA test questions, as the required numeracy, problem-solving processes generated additional questioning and discussion with associated tutor explanation, clarification and demonstration\(^1\). Cathy was struggling with the first question involving a timeline, so I provided several prompts and re-read it aloud to her. The next question involved enlarging a shape onto a grid and I directed the tutor to demonstrate procedures\(^1\). Aloud to all students, I praised them for their focused productive work.

Clare was annoyed with several female tutors talking among themselves, especially as they often strolled in late. Privately she claimed they were the worst tutors she had seen in the program\(^3\). In their defense, I commented that one was paired with a frequently absent tutee, Rick, and that made engagement in the program difficult. I suggested we send the rest to the late room to restore a punctual routine. Clare was also annoyed with another tutor, Michelle, who she claimed talked all the time and argued about teacher directions or school procedures. Michelle was self-opinionated, but was a good music student and swimmer. We shared concerns about the attendance of Rick and a tutor, Lorenzo.

Next morning Clare was late due to a flat tyre. Celia, a head teacher in charge of tutor training, telephoned a reminder for students to bring their notes folder to training day. I attended the fortnightly Learning Support Team (LST) meeting at lunchtime\(^6\).

\(^1\) Methodology factor: socially interactive learning generating discussion and problem solving.
\(^1\) Methodology factor: one to one teacher instruction, verbal praise, prompting and re-reading.
\(^3\) Attitude and Inter-Intrapersonal factor: characteristics of tutors.
\(^6\) Organisation factor: LST forum for professional discussion and administration of learning support issues.
I met students in the busy railway station on tutor training day\(^7\). Tutors greeted each other with normal social behaviours and several purchased take-away hamburgers\(^10\). They formed small groups and socialised, while morning commuters darted in all directions. The forecast was for 29 degrees Celsius.

Most girls dressed in summer tops with thin shoulder straps, jeans and thongs. Several females wore pink tops or shorts. Two boys, dressed in jeans and t-shirts, brought their skateboards for transport. I explained that the use of skateboards was not permitted due to potential accidents. Most students wore sneakers. My attempted humour drew some smiles and giggles when I informed students I paid for an adult rail ticket, and, for them it was half price as they were half size. Several policemen gathered nearby, which prompted Christopher to remind me he aspired to be a policeman. We boarded a non air-conditioned train for the short trip. Dahlia complained her face was melting from the heat, so I assured her the classroom was air-conditioned.

At the college we were greeted by Celia who was dressed in a smart pale blue outfit. In her usual pleasant manner, she conducted a brief orientation tour of the college, led students to the carpeted classroom, guided them through completion of carbon-triplicate enrolment forms, issued the course outline and explained assessment requirements. Students were given plastic folders in which to keep their printed handouts. Celia commenced the training session with an overhead projection transparency of the key interpersonal and methodological characteristics of a good tutor. Factors contributing to students’ reading difficulties, and tutoring methods to use before, during and after reading were key content areas covered. During the training course, Celia used a variety of teaching-learning methodologies, including lecture style, overhead projector transparencies, printed handouts, class reading, whole class discussion, group work, student oral presentations, scribing on

---

\(^7\) Program factor: tutor training.

\(^10\) Health and Learning Difficulties factor: diet.
butcher’s paper, worksheet reading, written responses and task-based internet navigation training. The library staff used a large screen computer projection of the online library catalogue and borrowing system to instruct students. During morning tea, students attended the office for an identity card photograph.

Theory training continued, covering factors relating to graphophonics, phonics, grammar and context in reading. A selected student read aloud a passage to demonstrate that despite perfect text decoding, meaning may not be gained. PPP was presented as the key text decoding strategy for tutors to use, while model and shared reading were other strategies to develop reading skills. Questioning, discussion and visual mind maps were presented as good strategies for developing comprehension. Tutors were provided with a self-assessment criteria checklist as a quality tutoring maintenance strategy\(^1\).

Students were given an opportunity to raise any concerns regarding the PTRRCP and to discuss possible solutions. Among concerns raised included the lack of time; frequency of correction required; tutee absenteeism; and programmed reading material. One tutor enquired as to whether they should correct every error of “easy words”. Celia and I explained that over-correction limits the development of readers’ fluency and comprehension, therefore, if the error did not change the context or meaning, it was better not to interrupt to correct the reader. We also acknowledged that, in some cases, students needed to practise instant recognition of key sight words. Other tutors claimed tutees wanted to choose their own books, and not read scheduled material, so I explained that the PTRRCP guidelines specified only curriculum based texts be used. From the subsequent discussion, it was considered possible a wider selection of curriculum based texts could be provided, and a free choice reading section scheduled in the program\(^7\).

\(^1\) Methodology factor: strategies to develop reading skills - graphophonics, grammar, context PPP, model reading, shared reading, questioning, discussion and visual mind maps.

\(^7\) Program factor: curriculum texts and choice of reading material.
I used non verbal and classroom proximity strategies to refocus students who were doodling illustrations and writing messages. As students left the classroom for lunch, one quipped they would be in the bar. I replied they would have to buy me a beer. The exchange of humour was in the context of earlier directions that underage students were not allowed in the bar. The hot weather did not deter students from consuming pizzas, deep fried fish, hot chips and bottles of cola soft drink from the college canteen. The food available here contrasted with that at the high school which practiced the public sector healthy school canteen policy. Girls sat in a large group and boys in pairs. After lunch, Celia summarised the main points. The training session concluded with a library information tour, which included directions on how to borrow college resources.

During the return train trip students checked their mobile phones for messages, two male students shared ear plugs with friends and listened to music on MP3 players. I felt satisfied that the training sessions would develop tutors' skills, and relieved there were no major problems during the outing. The day facilitated a bonding experience which was beneficial to positive peer and teacher relationships.

As SNA coordinator, the annual test day was busy for me with four hundred students completing the test at the same time. Over thirty students with reading difficulties, many of whom were in the PTRRCP, required text decoding support in a separate room where teachers read questions aloud.

When the state-wide literacy and numeracy tests were over, and tutor theory training was complete, I turned my focus to locating additional texts for the PTRRCP. Clare could instantly recall the library Dewey number for Medieval Ages, which was the next Year 8

10 Health and Learning Difficulties factor: diet and healthy canteen policy.

4 Inter-Intrapersonal factor: peer social bonding.
programmed topic. I browsed the collection then selected books with coloured images and minimum text for tutors to use with tutees.

Michelle claimed the Science books were too hard for her tutee, Bridget, and sought advice. I suggested she model read; direct the student to repeat read short sections to develop fluency; list and revisit difficult words; ask questions; and discuss passages to assist comprehension.

As Lorenzo, a tutor, and Rick, a tutee, had poor attendance records I re-arranged pairs and put them together. “A good pair,” Clare commented. The deputy principal requested information about a Year 8 reader, Hassin, as a long suspension report was to be written.

I asked the ESL teacher about reading resources for Sudanese students which would have some cultural or social relevance, similar to another school novel about an Afghani refugee settling into an Australian school. Unfortunately there were currently no such resources in the school, however, there were plenty of Anglo-European readers from a previous generation like My Mum’s An Alien, Fifty Thousand Dollars and Cupid Idiot. The relevance of these novels for African refugee students like Lusala and Clara was questionable.

Upon arrival of the SLA results I re-organised the class rolls by replacing students who achieved “Proficient” for reading with those who attained a “Low”. There were four achievement levels, “High”, “Proficient”, “Elementary” and “Low”. Participation in PTRRCP was part of the follow-up literacy support program. Literacy reports for parents

---

7 Program factor: selection of quality age-ability appropriate and attractive curriculum texts.

1 Methodology factor: strategies to develop reading skills – model reading, rereading, difficult word list, questioning and discussion.

2 Performance factor: behaviour and suspension from school.

7 Program factor: cultural relevance.
were distributed at parent-teacher evening along with school semester reports, and the school’s results were published in the monthly newsletter².

Frequent lateness and absenteeism made it very difficult to provide support for some students. I distributed a list of students with low achievement levels and recommended reading development strategies to teachers. The principal suggested I invite parents of students with low achievement to meet with me on parent-teacher night to discuss their child’s literacy development. Whilst this was a good idea, it is often difficult to arrange interviews with parents of students with learning difficulties, possibly because the concerns have often been expressed by primary school teachers. I mounted SLA and SNA display posters in the library with copies of tests and complimentary pencils for Year 6 parent-student information night.

Fourteen candles and sparklers illuminated the cake as we sang “Happy Birthday” to Cathy. Birthday club lunchtime parties were an informal, practical, social skills activity I facilitated for students with special needs. Students were required to organise the social event using invitations, as a means of developing social etiquette and peer relationships⁷. Even though cigarette lighters were banned at school, Brock, brother of Cathy, had located one to light the candles. Due to harassment issues Brock had transferred from a neighbouring boys’ high school, where some students perceived he had effeminate tendencies to which they reacted unpleasantly⁴. Brock was eligible for integration support funding because of mental health issues relating to anxiety. The siblings, whose indigenous heritage was not visually apparent, maintained a close bond. Cathy cut the cake and offered everyone a slice. The girls laughed and ate cake while they watched a video in which a British comedian and mime artist head butted the Queen at an official reception.

² Performance factor: State-wide literacy results, follow up program, teacher and parent communication.

⁷ Program factor: social skills support programs.

⁴ Inter-Intrapersonal factor: harassment.
Margo was out of her seat again and not focused on reading which annoyed me. I asked Cathy to predict the contents of a page based on accompanying pictures. “About people working,” she replied; a reasonable prediction, as it was about recycling and energy. She enjoyed the subsequent reading and questioning engagement as I recorded difficult words on her list: “economy”, “economising” and “materials”. I listened to another reader who had difficulties with pronunciation of: “desalination”, “precious” and “stalagmite”. Other students settled to daily reading.

Kirsty was an Australian born girl with significant literacy and numeracy difficulties who appeared socially confident among her peers but behaved inappropriately during lessons. Suzanne needed redirection to task after calling someone a “Dude”. Donald read, as Lisa pointed to words. Bridget explained her sister helped with the SLA follow-up homework. “Thank goodness for sisters,” I commented.

Celia visited to continue assessment of tutors’ practical skills. Students selected library books about Egypt. To reinforce appropriate modelled behaviour to students, I praised Steven for being the first student with a book open. Bridget was revising her difficult word list. I gave Paul a pencil to complete a word puzzle.

Brock had prepared a Mathematics test for his sister Cathy. He wanted to help her at home, so I offered to provide work. Brock was very protective and regularly hovered around Cathy at school.

When Medieval Day arrived, I hoped PTRRCP students had developed topic-related vocabulary and supportive background knowledge to enrich the learning experience. Annually, a performance group visited the school to present a day of medieval “edutainment” including talks, costumes, weapons and re-enactments of sword fights.

1 Methodology factor: strategies to develop reading skills - prediction, difficult word list.

7 Program factor: completion of set homework.

7 Program factor: tutor training and assessment of practical skills.
The deputy principal, Silvia, discussed a behavioural report I had submitted where a student, Imad, yelled at a fellow male colleague through a bus window, “Faggot,” as we had walked past. I reported the incident in context of inappropriate school bus behaviour and repeated sexual harassment. The student had previously been referred to the school counsellor for sexual remarks, gestures and repeated personal questioning of staff. The deputy principal issued a formal caution letter to Imad and his parents referring to homophobic bullying. Whilst the incident was an uncomfortable issue to report, it raised the issue of bullying and content of personal development programs.

A student produced a medical certificate so not to receive zero marks for an assessment task. I discussed an incident of swearing and inappropriate behaviour in the bus bay the previous afternoon with Michelle. For the remainder of the day I attended IEP meetings with students and their parents.

Julie, the trainee counsellor acting as a STLA-ESL teacher, commented that she thought Kevin smelt of urine. We undertook to observe him more closely and report concerns. Kevin was a likeable, short, dark haired 14 years old with an unkempt appearance. He had moved mid-year from an interstate primary school to Stewart High School. He experienced anxiety; had a high unexplained absentee rate; found focusing on learning tasks difficult; was easily distracted in classrooms; did not complete homework; and ranked near the bottom of his classes.

David was an Aboriginal student whose attention and learning difficulties were compounded by poor attendance. Welfare care issues also impacted upon his learning and literacy development. He often came to school without food and was issued with school canteen lunch vouchers. When he moved to live with another relative, the issues of food,

---

4 Inter-Intrapersonal factor: harassment of employees.
9 Cultural-Family factor: family mobility and changing of schools.
10 Health and Learning Difficulties factor: anxiety.
clean clothing and regular attendance improved. With a recent diagnosis of ADHD, medication was prescribed to assist him focus on tasks. *David* was counselled about inappropriate sexual comments to his peers and there were unconfirmed reports that he had viewed pornographic material. He attended Cannon House for a couple of weeks and participated in the off-campus personal development program. I often saw him at the rail-bus interchange in the morning where he greeted me and chatted. One morning he reported a bullying incident and appeared quite scared. A Year 9 student had intimidated *David* by verbally threatening and physically forcing him to hit his own cheek. The student was suspended and asked to leave the school permanently.

As I anticipated, there were no parent responses to the invitation to discuss students’ literacy development at parent-teacher evening interviews in the school hall. Being the winter month of June it was becoming dark when I left at 5.30pm.

**Summary.** This exploratory account of Term 2 revealed further factors influencing student learning and social outcomes. Particularly noteworthy are the descriptions of the tutor training program with key aspects of reading theory and tutoring strategies outlined. The narrative continued to portray the diversity of socio-cultural phenomena associated with the PTRRCP.

9 Cultural and Family factor: welfare issues.

4 Inter-Intrapersonal factor: bullying and harassment of students.

9 Cultural and Family factor: parent and teacher communication.
CHAPTER 7

Findings

The descriptive scenarios associated with the PTRRCP in Chapters 5 and 6 facilitated the identification of factors influencing the learning and social outcomes of students with learning difficulties. Similarly, in Chapter 7 the continued in situ representation of the PTRRCP and socio-cultural phenomena surrounding students’ learning contributed further to understanding the emerging issues.

An Ethnographic Account - Part Three

Daily life - Semester Two: Term 3. At the commencement of term I reinforced the importance of punctuality by announcing that students arriving after the bell would be sent to the late room. Two girls subsequently arrived and despite their protests I directed them to the late room\(^6\). Students completed sportsperson biography worksheets as I insisted a tutee cease making silly noises. The punctuality blitz continued and I personally greeted students as they arrived. Ajanta, a gracious student from an Indian family, who spoke Hindi, corrected my pronunciation of her name. Her step-father was Aboriginal and she had an older sister at school also experiencing literacy difficulties.

Clara liked being helpful and was usually first lined up to enter roll call. She willingly accepted the task of issuing books about Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Opera House and Great Barrier Reef to Lusala, Shaheen and herself. As new migrants I thought it would be interesting for them to read about these Australian icons. I cautioned Christopher for mild bullying, as he hit his tutee Kevin lightly on the face with a book. Suzanne wandered across the room to tell me she had finished her book. Heath was reading with a football at his feet

\(^6\) Organisation factor: management of punctuality.
and when directed to store it on the bag shelf became concerned it might be stolen. Despite Donald chatting and Asin being reluctant to start reading, most students settled to the task.

After a discussion with the deputy principal Michelle was withdrawn from PTRRCP due to poor role modelling, unsatisfactory engagement as a tutor, and for directing abusive language towards a bus driver of Indian background and me. Due to her sibling care responsibilities she had become anxious when the bus departed without her sister who had been detained at school. Her concerned father visited the school office to discuss the matter. Clare was impressed with the replacement tutor’s motivation and tutoring skills.

An attractive Indian female casual teacher arrived to supervise a roll class. Suzanne complained her game machine had been stolen from her bag yesterday lunchtime. Terry forgot his absentee note, but proudly told me he only had two pages of his book left to read. I thanked Christopher for his work as roll monitor and issued another blue merit award.

Shaheen of Afghani background experienced difficulties reading the text, I suggested he read one paragraph, while his tutor prompted and recorded difficult words, then practise these words, before re-reading the whole paragraph again to build confidence. I demonstrated.

Clare humorously imitated the walking style of female tutors she considered not interested in tutoring, as they sauntered in late. She described the group of socialites as “A dodgy bunch”. Despite previous warnings, concerns remained that students’ social conversations too often dominated reading sessions. Changes to pairs and seating arrangements were necessarily pending. I issued self-assessment criteria forms to tutors to facilitate self-reflection upon their tutoring skills. Later I instructed they use the criteria forms to observe, assess and provide feedback to each other as a quality tutoring assurance strategy.

---

3 Attitude factor: characteristics of tutors.

1 Methodology factor: peer feedback.
Steven provided a copy of his dyslexia report as requested. Recommendations included prescribed tinted glasses, wearing a cap inside, avoiding fluorescent lighting, propping up books to avoid reflection, use of blue paper, practising reading at home, further work on spelling patterns and irregular spelling words. I organised a supply of blue paper recommended for writing, note taking, and the photocopying of major assignments or examinations. Steven needed to accept responsibility by ensuring he wore his glasses, sat near windows for light and reminded teachers about blue paper requirements. I welcomed a sniffling Waylon back to school. Ben, his tutor, joked that Waylon had really been holidaying in Fiji rather than absent due to sickness. Donald had also been away sick, while Heath’s absence was due to hospitalisation after his foot was run over by a vehicle. Heath returned to school on crutches with his sore foot wrapped in a support bandage. I directed students to the new seating plan, designed to reduce frequent round table chatting.

Ben and Jamal were revising for a Year 10 Mathematics examination. A student asked for a pencil, by coincidence I was carrying an extra pencil and joked that I had a premonition. Cathy laboured through the text with regular prompting from Kylie. To assist Cathy’s short term memory, enable her to retain words and develop fluency, I suggested that Kylie focus on one sentence at a time, prompt or correct words and re-read the sentence. I later rearranged pairs so Kylie could tutor a more able reader.

Suzanne was late and sulked after being chastised. Her new, well-groomed tutor showed empathy and skill in dealing with the situation. I asked two tutors to stop talking.

---

6 Organisation factor: accommodations for special needs.
2 Performance factor: prolonged absence due to illness or injury.
6 Organisation factor: seating arrangements.
1 Methodology factor: strategies to develop reading skills – prompting, correcting, re-reading.
4 Inter-Intrapersonal factor: emotions.
and focus on tutoring. One tutor’s attendance did not meet tutoring course requirements. *Natasha* withdrew *David* from the roll call spelling group as he was not focused and responded better to the PTRRCP with individual tutor attention.

At times there was a frustrating break down in the school’s communication and mail delivery system when messages or correspondence went astray.  

Jeans for Genes Day, a disease prevention novelty fund-raising event, was like a fashion parade. Students arrived in all types of jeans, bleached, striped, baggies, cords, embroidered and studded.

Roll book monitor, *Christopher*, was absent so semi panic occurred. *Andrea* sold chocolate frogs to raise funds for her sister’s after school care centre.

*Frank, Hassin* and *Suzanne* had behavioural problems which contributed to their learning difficulties. *Silvia* placed all three in a weekly personal-social development program, which affected PTRRCP participation. They were also placed in a fortnightly pro-social behaviour program which the trainee counsellor and I developed. Letters had gone home notifying parents of both arrangements, but there were scheduling clashes, a lack of communication and coordination was evident. As events unfolded, *Frank* left to attend a Christian school. I discussed my concerns with *Silvia* about students attending other support programs and missing PTRRCP.

Students commenced reading Energy and Water series books I obtained from the Science faculty. They were particularly suitable for tutoring students with reading difficulties, well laid out, large font, colourful illustrations, photographs and a glossary. I organised indigenous authored readers for *David*, who had returned after a prolonged absence.

---

6 Organisation factor: communication.

6 Organisation factor: coordination of learning support programs.
Most students were engaged by a Science wonder word activity, except Christopher and Kevin, who required regular redirection to the task. Kylie issued students with donation envelopes for Cannon House.

At a staff meeting, Silvia and I presented the school’s SLA results. Twenty percent of Year 7s had not met the National Benchmark in reading. Strategies and recommendations for each class were discussed.

SLA follow-up sessions enabled me to more closely assess and address students’ literacy difficulties. Bridget experienced considerable difficulty with text decoding and comprehension. On the whiteboard I explained and demonstrated syllable based text decoding strategies. I sensed she was turned off, but emphasised the need to apply strategies consistently.

Robert, a new integration funded student from the country was placed in the support class and considered for the PTRRCP due to his emotional and reading difficulties. He had a diagnosis of ADHD and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)\(^\text{10}\).

I photocopied student worksheets titled Readers’ Restaurant Menu and Measurement Units for the cookbook reading section of the program. Literacy proficiency requires students decode and make meaning from a range of text types including text, tables, graphs, timelines, maps, charts, flow diagrams, measurements, symbols and codes\(^\text{7}\). While cookbooks from most cultural backgrounds were available in the library, there was limited material from Africa and none from Aboriginal Australia, apart from a bush food book\(^\text{7}\).

Students engaged curiously with Spanish, French, Greek, vegetarian and other cookbooks, looking at pictures, focusing on difficult words and making comments. I referred to an index of one cookbook to explain the learning task, which required students complete a

\(^{10}\) Health-Learning Difficulties factor: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder.

\(^{7}\) Program factor: reading material with a variety text and information types.

\(^{7}\) Program factor: culturally and socially relevant reading material.
worksheet with a table of ingredients as well as units of measurement for solids, liquids and cooking time. A description of each course was to be written on their menu card. Jamal enquired what an entrée was. Most students, including Cathy, were engaged by the task. I joked with one pair that their garlic soup was expensive, and commented it must be a posh restaurant.

One morning police were in attendance at the transport interchange with a paddy wagon following a fight in the bus bays. I was relieved that students from a neighbouring school were involved, so my day was not consumed by report writing.

It was mufti and junk food day, so students wore casual clothes for a gold coin donation. It was a special arrangement, as the healthy canteen food policy did not allow junk food. The change to a more casual atmosphere unsettled students but they relished the personal freedoms it allowed.

Bridget claimed she was tired and hated school. Christopher showed me his acceptance letter to a secondary college. Clare and I discussed Kevin, as he had failed to report for detention.

The distribution of Summer School advertising material distracted students from reading. I directed some students to commence The Sydney Daily Post website activity. Christopher’s engagement as a tutor was unsatisfactory so I negotiated with him in context of the PTRRCP social-learning contract. He was expected to engage Kevin with reading, change tutees, or return to DEAR. He chose to recommit himself to tutoring Kevin while being monitored.

---

7 Program factor: reading material relevant to literacy of mathematics.
8 Environment factor: community security.
9 Health-Learning Difficulties factor: diet.
10 Performance factor: quality of tutors.
Coincidently, I met the new in-class literacy and numeracy tutor for Aboriginal students, Loren, at the train-bus interchange on her first day. She was from New Zealand and of Maori background, but married to an Aboriginal. Margo was interested to hear of Loren’s arrival. I introduced Loren to David as he drank cola soft drink through a straw, he listened but did not maintain eye contact. Another female Aboriginal student was currently suspended and could not be introduced.

I attended a transition meeting about a student with Asperger Syndrome to discuss plans for development of his social, communication and academic skills. A transition program and integration aide support was intended. With average academic ability, a PTRRCP placement was considered primarily for daily social support and mentoring.

Following a staff meeting presentation of the school’s SNA results, I set an exercise for teachers to write a numeracy test question in their subject area to raise awareness of standards for nationally assessed literacy and numeracy skills. Results were available in a software package for staff analysis, but interest and uptake of the technology appeared limited.

Although Christopher still issued directions abruptly, his tutoring had temporarily improved. Kevin chewed gum as he read, but tried hard, and periodically looked at Christopher for reassurance. He liked the attention. Christopher recorded difficult words. “Hang on, what’s that? Sound it out,” Christopher interrupted. They both pointed to the word “habitat,” as Christopher prompted. Kevin was keen, but needed regular focusing. His body movements were awkward, he leant on his hands, held his forehead and slouched in his chair. Clare warned Kevin not to chew gum in the library.

Heath spun a football on his index finger, I asked him to put it away. He continued writing his pumpkin soup description, as another tutee showed me his completed, untidily

______________

6 Organisation factor: transition support program.
1 Methodology factor: social and mentoring support.
written menu. Suzanne wandered and fossicked as her tutor was absent, she eventually settled. Terry could not write with a broken right arm so his tutor scribed. Asin’s tutor pointed to a recipe and explained the task. Most students seemed productively engaged.

A tutor assisted Susan with computer tasks. She always denied needing assistance and resented PTRRCP placement. Despite this, she developed a good rapport with the “supermodel” tutors. Silei, a girl of Samoan descent, was initially tearful and also objected to PTRRCP placement³. It was suggested she had a mild intellectual impairment but a disability confirmation assessment had not been processed¹⁰. Travis was an overweight Australian born lad who lacked motivation. With tutor and teacher perseverance and encouragement throughout the year his on task reading improved.

During Multicultural Day Margo participated in an indigenous dance performance. Dressed in black skirts, loin cloths and decorated with body paint designs, the girls performed as brolgas and boys as kangaroos. There were also visiting oriental and Bavarian dance performers. Shaheen and other boys of Afghan decent wore customary kaftans, while many Indian girls danced to traditional music in colourful saris. Suzanne participated in all the dance activities. A variety of foods were available from the Maltese, Greek, Italian, Middle Eastern, Indian, Asian, Australian, European Café and World Vision stalls. In previous years there were Aboriginal kangaroo-burgers and Dutch-American doughnuts⁹.

During Loren’s training, we discussed ways to support students with the organisation of their bags, equipment, exercise books and assignments, and then observed David in a lesson⁶.

---

³ Attitude factor: denial assistance required and reluctance to participate.

¹⁰ Health-Learning Difficulties factor: completion of special needs assessments.

⁹ Cultural-Family factor: inclusive multicultural education.

⁶ Organisation factor: employee training.
SLA magazine texts were too difficult for Cathy, so I read to her during literacy follow-up sessions, and engaged her in discussion with limited questioning. She could not always find words to express herself. Cathy was eligible for a high school integrated support unit placement but her parents had not approved.

Clare commented that we did not need any more beauty queens next year as tutors. Suzanne wore mascara, so I reminded her that makeup was not permitted. A tall red headed tutor, with pen behind his ear, wore a wrist glove and hippy-style shoulder bag across his body. All students were in uniform except Ben, who slouched in his chair, wearing a new earring and hooded windcheater. Steven had new glasses to assist with his dyslexia.

*The Book of Records* always seemed to capture students’ attention and was a popular section of the PTRRCP. Students’ interest was often reinvigorated with a timely change of reading material and learning tasks.

Three programmed activities overlapped in a multi-task learning environment, the *Readers’ Restaurant Menu, Sydney Daily Post* and *The Book of Records*. Terry, who was usually a reluctant reader, wanted to commence the internet activity.

Kevin was reading to Christopher. Asin leant forward, contemplated his worksheet, then tapped Jamal on the shoulder for assistance. Crystal socialised and laughed with two “supermodels”.

Bridget, Cathy and Andrea chewed gum, as they negotiated scheduling of their SLA follow-up sessions. Celia arrived to complete tutors’ practical assessments. Clare threatened a student with detention if he sent rude computer messages to others again.

A transition meeting of primary and high school teachers discussed students in Year 7 next year. Students were identified for the PTRRCP, support, ESL and independent

---

6 Organisation factor: educational placement of students with special needs.

7 Program factor: timing and motivating reading material.

4 Inter-Intrapersonal factor: socially supportive environment.
learners’ classes. As we waited for the meeting to commence, the conversation centred on the court case of a female high school teacher gaoled for two years for sex with teenage boys. Year 6 teachers spoke positively about most students. I made notes on students with special needs, who required social, behavioural or learning support. Needs of students with literacy and numeracy difficulties, ADHD, ASD and mild intellectual impairment were discussed in greater length. Those with significant behavioural issues were noted for inclusion in the pro-social program. I rated nominated students as high, middle or low priority for PTRRCP placement. Following a similar meeting at another major feeder school, I prioritised a list of students for next year’s PTRRCP. Diagnoses of two students mentioned during the meetings were questioned by teachers, one with a mild intellectual impairment achieved uncharacteristic learning outcomes, while another with an ADHD diagnosis apparently behaved poorly due to dysfunctional family relationships.

During an SLA follow-up session, Margo told me she received a necklace and key ring for her birthday. Margo cared for her six month old baby brother and changed his nappies. She could not wait to get married at age thirty and wanted a honeymoon in Fiji, by which time her brother would be out of gaol. Margo selected a novel from the Aboriginal authored series, and read it with a few mispronounced words, “hop” instead of “hope”, “locked” instead of “looked”, “want” instead of “what”, left off the end “s” from “Simpsons” and the “ed” from “interrupted”. Using a soft monotone voice, she lacked reading confidence, but retold the story well and demonstrated clear understanding, when answering literal, inferential and applied questions. Margo had sniffled continuously for days, so I suggested she seek medical advice. Occasionally she visited an Aboriginal health clinic.

---

6 Organisation factor: child protection.
10 Health-Learning Difficulties factor: diagnoses and management strategies.
10 Health-Learning Difficulties factor: welfare and health services.
I insisted Kevin complete all his menu descriptions. Brad was a shy quiet lad who needed encouraging, the most interesting item he had read in The Book of Records related to the circumference of a steer horn.

After showing students a printed version of The Sydney Daily Post newspaper to compare with the website version, I explained that articles had similarly worded headlines, text and pictures, before emphasising they must learn to locate information from online sources.  

Celia assessed Tarang’s tutoring skills. We finalised the list of tutors who successfully completed course requirements. Four of thirty-three tutors were removed from PTRRCP during the year.

Fortunately I found a new semi cross-cultural series of easy to read, high interest readers for adolescents with accompanying audio CDs for model reading to purchase. The school was well stocked with easy to read novels but the absence of cross-cultural novels concerned me. Other books I bought from a visiting bookseller related to paragraph writing, visual literacy and different text types.

Margo, Suzanne, Kevin and Abby were worried that they would be in trouble, having knocked a picture off the school entry foyer wall as they waited for a minibus to the off-campus personal development program. Applications had been submitted for Margo and George to attend Cannon House because of high absenteeism and welfare issues.

Brad had daily medication for ADHD. The associated inattentiveness, impulsivity and hyperactivity of ADHD negatively impacts upon the development of students’ literacy and numeracy skills.

---

1 Socioeconomic-Technology factor: online reading resources.
2 Performance factor: tutor training and assessment.
7 Program factor: socially and culturally relevant reading material.
The unsettled dynamics of the Year 8 group were largely due to tutor and teacher changes, as well as the removal of student sub-groups to attend other support programs. Pride Cards reinforced school values by entitling students to discounts at the school canteen and local businesses. I arranged for tutors to assist tutees complete criteria on the Pride Card application forms.

A peer tutor program network newsletter and evaluation questionnaire from the funding body arrived with questions about numbers of tutors and tutees, perceived program benefits and improvement in students’ SLA results.

In a library withdrawal room I worked individually with David on an English writing assignment which required a text be re-written in a light-hearted manner. With typical characteristics of dyslexia, it was difficult to decode his written work with poor spelling, punctuation and grammar accompanied by untidy handwriting. We clarified his partial understanding of the task, wrote, read, corrected, re-wrote and re-read his writing task. David was restless after 25 minutes, so I allowed him to word-process his writing. David’s keyboard skills were reasonable and his concentration span improved while typing, he added capital letters and made corrections where directed, included a picture, then printed and glued his work into his book. I found students with literacy difficulties were encouraged when they completed a writing task in one session. In another session, David’s learning task was to discuss and write three movie character descriptions. After he described each character, we wrote paragraphs together. As he conveyed his thoughts better orally, I scribed his responses, added the correct punctuation, grammar and spelling then he copied it into his book. With spasmodic learning support David had showed little improvement since Year 7.

6 Organisation factor: group dynamics.
6 Organisation factor: inclusion of students with learning difficulties.
6 Organisation and performance factor: networking and program evaluation.
1 Methodology factor: strategies to develop writing skills using assistive technology – word processing.
1 Methodology factor: strategies to develop writing skills – discussion, scribing, shared composition, rewriting.
Clare thought David was so cute, she wanted to take him home. We were informed he had ADHD medication and experienced mild epileptic seizures. Due to welfare issues David attended Cannon House. He was a nice lad, but had attention difficulties, messed around in classes and was often in trouble with teachers.

I worked with Clara, who had spent time in Sudan and Kenya, to create an African menu. Lusala had his broken arm in plaster. Clare arrived late, as she had watched her daughter’s school performance of Waltzing Matilda.

On the last day of term I searched for books about planets with large text and pictures for next term. Feeling tired, I was pleased the end of term had arrived.

Summary. Description of the PTRRCP reading materials, accompanying literacy development activities, and students’ engagement with these are embedded in this Term 3 narrative. Insight was also gained into the tutee selection processes, factors contributing to students’ learning difficulties, tutoring strategies in action, intensive pedagogue literacy instruction and program management issues. Furthermore, socio-cultural phenomena influencing outcomes for students became apparent through the depiction of welfare support programs and school community events.

Term 4. A tutor, Jamal, claimed he was tired then joked that he could not wait to get back to school. Clare sarcastically suggested he was tired because of holiday studying. The teacher aide remarked she was pleased to return to work for a rest after attending to her husband’s health. I distributed books about planets and booklets on the effects of smoking to students.

To develop rapport, improve oral language and relax students, I commenced individual sessions with a general conversation. Bridget had scored 56 at the new ten-pin bowling centre. I administered an assessment which focused on words and their sounds which confirmed Bridget had considerable difficulty identifying sound blends and syllables.
I recorded the error pattern of omitted, substituted or inserted letters, there was a graphophonic issue. She did not apply the long vowel sound rule for words ending with “e” and incorrectly inserted letters “n” and “r”. She was not aware of any hearing issues but her mother complained she talked too loudly so I suggested a hearing checkup.

Margo, Suzanne and Cathy looked up the dictionary meaning of “mass media” during an English withdrawal group. We discussed the differences between television, radio, newspapers and magazines. Verbalisation is integral to students’ spoken, reading and written language development. The students watched popular nightly prime time soap operas on television, read teenage girl magazines and listened to pop music radio stations. Margo enjoyed listening to an Aboriginal radio station.

Motivated to improve his reading, Asin borrowed many books for home reading during the year. His interested father attended parent-teacher evening with the assistance of a Kurdish-English interpreter. Asin enjoyed reading basic level novels and confidently answered direct, inferential and applied questions. With a bright, friendly personality, he talked of his pending thirteenth birthday, his Year 4 brother’s school pen license and Ramadan. During the Muslim religious festival, Asin tried fasting but became hungry and ate when his dad bought pizza. He explained fasting made him “a good guy”.

Suzanne was rummaging in her bag. She remained in a difficult mood, making smart comments, failing to respond to directions or participate in activities. I gave her five minutes’ time out and finally a recess detention. Suzanne often forgot her prescribed medication. Routine, structure and consistency is recommended to successfully manage students with ADHD, while a colour-coded timetable can assist their organisation.

---

10 Health-Learning Difficulties factor: graphophonics.
1 Methodology factor: verbalization and language development.
9 Cultural-Family factor: influences of mass media.
10 Health-Learning Difficulties factor: ADHD management and organisation strategies.
Computers attracted students like magnets, enthusiastically they headed straight for them upon entry to the library to work on their newspaper website worksheet.\(^\text{11}\)

Follow-up literacy assessments allowed time to work with PTRRCP students and focus on technical literacy issues like phonological awareness, syllables and word building strategies. *Ajanta* of Indian descent repeatedly said “s” instead of “z”. *Margo* also required sounds clarification, but unlike *Ajanta*, was readily able to correct her sound blending. *Margo* put an “s” at the beginning of words saying “slash” instead of “lash”, “swept” instead of “wept” and replaced letters like “c” with a “g”, saying “grab” instead of “crab”.

Opportunities for follow-up consolidation sessions were limited.

I completed a check of *Cathy’s* sound blends and frequent sight words. She had difficulty instantly recognising key sight words such as “like”, “must”, “between”, “may”, “any” and numerous others. Even short vowel sounds in simple, three letter formations like “lag”, “fez”, and “jut” proved difficult. She completed homework based on sound blends and letter formations but *Cathy* struggled with the pace of high school life.

*Asofa* was a gentle, good natured student placed in PTRRCP and support classes, receiving all lows in the SLA. I explained syllables, word building strategies and provided related homework\(^\text{1}\). His sister also experienced difficulties and had received speech pathologist support. They often talked about moving overseas.

Four boys on computers were interested in the newspaper motoring website, which they accessed to complete a worksheet question relating to purchasing motor vehicles. *Terry* and *James* recorded their sixth entry on *The Book of Records* worksheet, as most goals scored in an ice hockey game. *Donald* made funny faces to make his sister laugh, momentarily browsed his book, then talked to students so needed to be re-directed.

\(^{11}\) Socioeconomic-Technology factor: motivation, empowerment and information communication technology.

\(^{1}\) Methodology factor: text decoding strategies - syllables, word building, homework practice.
Julie, a trainee counsellor who exuded positive energy was a part-time support teacher while completing a psychology degree. We joked about fashionable trends of our dye-coloured hair, bleached teeth and spray-on tans as being “so natural”. Julie conducted a series of pro-social sessions to develop interpersonal skills and self-management strategies for targeted students, including Suzanne, Robert and Cathy. During one session, students viewed excerpts of a popular American cartoon family television series, to identify emotions and social behaviours for discussion.

An ESL teacher explained to me that although Clara was Sudanese she most recently came from a Kenyan refugee exit camp. Kevin and Steven searched pictures of cars on the internet. Ben commented his tutee could read without assistance. Katherine and Heath focused on The Book of Records, while Kylie engaged her tutee, and James read alone.

Clare listened to Cathy read, then exasperatedly asked what to do because “She just couldn’t read at all.” I suggested picture browsing, reading to her, a shared reading experience by reading difficult words for her and directing she read easier words, modifying questions and discussion.

Several tutors had not met minimum tutoring hours for their certificate course for a variety of legitimate reasons. The presentation ceremony was re-scheduled because the teacher’s union called an industrial stop-work meeting.

Ajanta was happy with her tutor Tarang, she read quietly to herself, then he asked questions. Although they never spoke Hindi together I sensed there was a cultural bond.

During the weekly assembly Silvia talked about thieving of wallets and purses at school. Students were directed to keep their personal possessions on themselves. Theft of

---

2 Performance factor: professional qualifications and competence.

7 Program factor: social skills and personal development programs.

10 Health-Learning Difficulties factor: refugee related issues.

1 Methodology factor: strategies to develop reading.
mobile phones or iPods was considered “tough luck” because they were not permitted at school.  

Due to under-performance boys’ literacy outcomes became a focus area of an Australian Government nationwide program initiative. I collated results for boys below the literacy state average to include in a funding submission.

*Bridget* correctly read half the difficult words we revisited during a follow-up session and was keen to complete an interactive CD language module.

*Suzanne, Margo and Cathy* practised reading television news scripts during an English support group. *Cathy* struggled, so I allocated her a smaller reporter role. We planned to record the news television program with a video camera. Using the internet the girls researched the history of Australian television which commenced black and white transmission in 1956. I explained technology continuously developed, citing examples of satellite, cable, digital, internet and mobile phone television. *Margo* enthusiastically showed me an Aboriginal radio station website.

It was time to acknowledge students’ contributions to the school community at an annual ceremony in the library. Tutors received a Volunteer Literacy Tutoring Certificate, graduate badge and pen, as well as a School Service Award. Pride Cards and School Service Awards for were also presented. Many students compiled an education portfolio containing their certificates, awards, a résumé and supportive documentation for employment applications. The ceremony was delayed because of teachers’ stop-work meetings to ratify

---

5 Environmental factor: security of personal possessions.

7 Program factor: boys’ literacy support programs.

7 Program factor: multimedia language modules.

6 Organisation: literacy support groups.

9 Cultural-Family factor: mass media.

9 Cultural-Family factor: ceremonial acknowledgement and recognition.
a pay rise decision\textsuperscript{8}. Parents were invited and the school canteen catered for 150 people at morning tea. I put on a silk tie for the occasion. When \textit{Celia} arrived, I complimented her on her appearance, then we discussed the ceremony format with the principal, Sonya. Humorously we acknowledged the readiness of recycled speeches.

\textit{Ken} welcomed parents and introduced Sonya who spoke about community spirit. Contributions of students as tutors were acknowledged as attributes required for a healthy community. She thanked students and commented they were a reflection of good parenting\textsuperscript{9}. \textit{Celia} spoke about the reading program and then thanked tutors, teachers, library staff and myself. Students smiled when shaking the principal’s hand and appeared proud of their contributions. Given it was a stop-work day, I was satisfied to see a dozen parents dressed in casual clothes sitting at the rear.

During morning tea \textit{Christopher’s} parents informed me he was changing schools, as they had moved house. I chatted with another mother. \textit{Brock} and his friend were more interested in eating than talking, showing little etiquette as they consumed large mouthfuls of food. James, Kian and \textit{Dahlia}, wearing her lip studs, conversed with each other. After a year’s work, I felt disappointed that half the tutors did not attend the ceremony because of the teachers’ industrial action. The presentations went smoothly and parents were obviously pleased to see their children receive these awards.

The principal signed paperwork authorising next year’s tutor training course. \textit{Celia} wished me Merry Christmas, which reminded me of the approaching staff Christmas party at a local Thai restaurant.

\textsuperscript{8} Personnel factor: industrial relations.

\textsuperscript{9} Cultural-Family factor: supportive effective parenting.
I prepared an article for the school newsletter thanking peer tutors for their work. As well as public recognition of tutors’ efforts the article promoted the PTRRCP as a whole school literacy and social support strategy. When Year 10 students completed their end of year examinations there were few tutors available. Many had sought part-time work at the regional shopping complex.

After an extended absence from school, David was back on the bus with a bottle of soft drink. His reading accuracy and comprehension age was 6.10 years. He used some effective strategies to decode text and gain understanding, but pronunciation errors resulted in loss of meaning. David required lots of individual reading practice to consolidate and develop his skills.

Year 7s dressed in casual clothes for a Geography field excursion to the Blue Mountains. Ajanta and Cathy were the only students who did not go, claiming it was too expensive. A Bandana Day to raise funds for young people living with cancer caused some disruption, as students wrapped bandanas around their heads. Margo had a new hair style with pigtails. I confiscated Paul’s football, and Christopher claimed he had little sleep. Following a shoulder injury he had received a medical all-clear to play cricket on Saturday. Silei sighed and stomped off when I tried to arrange a follow-up literacy support session as she did not like being withdrawn from classes.

During a meeting in the deputy principal’s office I asked Ken if roll call could be extended to 15 minutes on Mondays and Tuesdays, but he deemed it not possible. Later I met with Silvia and discussed further my concerns with students’ attendance at an off-campus personal development program. Absence from PTRRCP and regular lessons would impact upon their literacy development. Daily attendance, productive routines, continuity of

---

*Cultural-Family factor: public acknowledgement and recognition.*

*Socioeconomic-Technology factor: employment and career aspirations.*

*Socioeconomic-Technology factor: educational expenses.*
reading material and consistency of relationships with tutors were emphasised as essential aspects of PTRRCP. With low levels of literacy and social-behavioural difficulties, both programs targeted students’ needs. No change was possible so a program time clash remained.

Shaheen, Lusala, Clara, Ajanta, Cathy and Bridget were placed in the program for another year. Improvement appeared slow and I questioned whether they had improved at all. Cathy completed a CD language module and I issued her with a homework merit award. Her reading of the television news report improved with practice and I highlighted words of which she was unsure, like “facilities” and “appropriate”. She read with increased fluency and confidence but long term retention was not assured. Repetition and real life context to consolidate learning is especially necessary for students like Cathy with a mild intellectual impairment.

After the library aide told me her grandson scored well in the Year 5 state-wide tests we discussed competitive entry processes of schools for high academic achievers. Private after-school tutoring centres, which assisted students improve entry placement test scores as well as Year 10 and 12 examinations results, appeared particularly popular with parents of Asian and Indian background who had high expectations for their children.

Asin returned borrowed books. His reading had improved significantly. “Wow, yeah!” he excitedly responded upon completion of a CD language module, then entered his results on the score chart.

---

6 Organisation factor: coordination of support programs.
1 Methodology factor: repetition, reinforcement and revision.
9 Cultural-Family factor: family educational values and parental aspirations.
3 Attitude factor: motivation.
Margo, Suzanne and Cathy had fun rehearsing their television news script. It was a relevant, enjoyable, motivating and effective method to teach reading to students, compared with constant labouring through texts.

Although staff uptake levels of technology varied considerably I had established a LST intranet site for dissemination of information regarding learning support students, relevant teaching-learning strategies and resources.

The counsellor and I had a conversation about educational and psychological testing materials. Various items of a language assessment kit, where students made picture-word associations and identified sentences with a similar meaning, were the focus of discussions. Results led to speech pathology referrals or provided support for school-work transition funding applications.

Clare’s roll class was a functional group, as she kept a firm reign without being too strict. The other class was often unsettled as the gentle mannered teacher did not rigorously reinforce behavioural and work expectations.

At the welcome assembly for a Japanese girls’ high school visiting students performed a high-energy dance routine to contemporary music followed by a country and western song. Performing like a rock and roll star, a host school student wiggled his hips to excite the girls as he sang a 1960’s hit. Ironically, while speeches were about Australian and Japanese culture, the entertainment was notably American in nature, highlighting post World War II socio-cultural influences. Cultural exchange activities scheduled for students included calligraphy, flower arranging, origami, a tea ceremony, a wildlife show, a tea ceremony, a wildlife show,

---

6 Organisation factor: communication.

6 Organisation factor: language assessments and follow up support.

1 Methodology factor: behaviour management - established and reinforced behavioural expectations.

9 Cultural-Family factor: historical and cultural influences.
boomerang throwing, indigenous painting, tug-of-war, golf, cricket and a barbeque steak sandwich lunch.

I continued assessments for the Aboriginal tutor program. One student scored well, while another 13 year old had a reading age of 9.2 years.

One morning I chatted with the railway station master’s wife about disruptions caused by railway line suicides, following an incident where a man threw himself in front of a departing train. We discussed train security and the new shoot to kill terrorist legislation.

Using headsets connected to library computers, Clara, Andrea and Kevin keenly listened to an audio book CD, which modelled reading to students. As Kevin packed up the activity, he awkwardly held a book, headsets and CD case, but forgot to remove the disc from the computer’s drive. Kevin’s anxiety, poor coordination and organisational ability impacted negatively upon his engagement with learning.

Bridget noticed the support class teacher, Natasha, and I frequently argued. Due to simmering tensions between us I complained one day when Natasha was stressed while teaching and yelled at me to leave her classroom. Natasha was mentored by the all female English faculty. Later, one of these teachers became my supervisor which felt uncomfortable as we had rarely conversed apart from a verbal clash over mislaid reports. Workplace stress and collegial relationship issues noticeably impacted upon effective communication and team work.

______________________________

2 Performance factor: literacy assessment data and program responses.

10 Health and Learning Difficulties factor: community mental health.

5 Environment factor: community and national security.

7 Program factor: assistive technology - audio compact disc books.

10 Health and Learning Difficulties factor: anxiety, motor coordination and organisation skills.

2 Performance factor: stress.

4 Inter-Intrapersonal factor: staff relationships and stress.
During a mediation meeting executive staff acknowledged the relevant educational issues that caused conflict between Natasha and I, but were concerned about heated discussions occurring in the proximity of students. They shared experiences of their working lives when they had been counselled in private sector employment due to staff disagreements. Examples cited included differences of opinion over directives to lunch with senior management, and advice on how to avoid equal opportunity legislation which they explained, “protects gays or blacks from getting the sack”. The executive staff counselled Natasha and I separately, and we agreed disagreements needed to be resolved in a proper forum\(^4\). With this staff relationship issue addressed school life continued.

The roll records revealed Margo had an eighty-three percent attendance rate. Reasons given included babysitting, caring for her uncle, and medical problems\(^2\).

After Asofa read a passage during his follow-up session, I wrote his incorrectly pronounced words on the board, demonstrated syllable breaks and correct pronunciation, then asked him to repeat the words\(^1\). He was focused, responsive and willing to learn. After practising these words, Asofa re-read passages accurately. However, retention of reading skills requires regular revisiting. Repetition, Revisiting and Revision (RRR) is accepted as an effective learning strategy, but is fundamental to the learning needs of students with an intellectual impairment, like Asofa and Cathy\(^1\). I recalled working with an employment agency for people with an intellectual disability where routine and repetition was essential for successful job training. A disadvantage was that boredom, lack of interest and disengagement resulted from an inadequate variety of tasks. The complexity and quantity of program material delivered briskly in specific time frames with minimal RRR limits

\(^4\) Inter-Intrapersonal factor: conflict resolution and staff counseling.

\(^2\) Performance factor: absenteeism.

\(^1\) Methodology factor: strategies to develop text decoding skills – syllables, repetition.

\(^1\) Methodology factor: strategies for teaching students with mild intellectual impairment.
opportunities for consolidation of learning in a mainstream school. A differentiated curriculum with modifications and adjustments within an inclusive education environment can assist address this issue. Teaching and learning of students with learning difficulties in an integrated mainstream secondary education setting is challenging, and the range of issues relating to educational placements for special education students in context of Vygotskian theory require extensive consideration (Hick, Kershner, Farrell, 2009).

To assist David complete his homework booklet I explained the features of syllables and compound words to him. It was the last period of a warm day and David became restless, so I used a CD audio book to focus his attention. He sat awkwardly with his head propped up by his arms which rested on the desk and his body stretched sideways. David listened intently, as he looked at the colourful pictures in the accompanying book, and enjoyed the complete story. Secondary students with learning difficulties find independent reading a struggle, therefore, often do not successfully finish or enjoy whole books to gain meaning from them1. The bell rang so there was no time for discussion.

Findings of a report commissioned by the Federal Government claimed teachers needed a literacy assessment before being employed. It seemed an odd recommendation with the many quality control checkpoints en route to a teaching career8.

As the end of year approached, most tutees and tutors indicated they wanted to return to DEAR roll call next year. They viewed the PTRRCP as having served its purpose of improving students’ reading skills.

While I was providing in-class support to a Year 7 mixed ability Mathematics class6, students’ yearly examination papers were returned. Results ranged from 22 to over 90 percent. The teacher released a results graph for all Year 7 classes. One student commented

1 Methodology factor: strategies to develop text decoding, fluency and meaning - explicit instruction and assistive technology.
8 Personnel factor: teacher quality.
6 Organisation factor: mixed ability classes.
the “dumb class,” or the learning support class, had the lowest results\(^6\). Although student
comments were made in a light, humorous manner of acceptance, the social stigma attached
to low examination results was apparent\(^4\).

While waiting at the bus stop I had a conversation about socio-cultural bias in
literacy and numeracy assessment instruments with an ESL teacher of Eastern European
descent. She inhaled upon a cigarette as I cited an example of a widely used literacy
assessment instrument about an English blood sport where horse riders released foxes to be
hunted by hounds. Many students from Indigenous and non-English backgrounds would be
significantly culturally disadvantaged trying to understand the passage\(^9\). I also referred to
state-wide literacy and numeracy assessments that favoured English speaking middle class
students. Tests with questions relating to overseas holidays, international currency exchange
and purchasing property held little relevance to students from low income families living on
shoestring budgets in housing commission rental flats. The availability of texts with relevant
cultural contextualisation was limited for some students. We shared our teaching
experiences of students with emotional and behavioural issues referred to Special Purpose
Schools (SPSs). With limited exposure to positive role models at SPSs there was scope for
peer tutors or mentors to support these students in reintegration programs.

November the eleventh is a significant day in Australia’s history. Remembrance Day
marks the end of World War I in 1918. It is also when a legendary bushranger was hanged in
1880, and a Labor Prime Minister was dismissed by the Governor-General in 1972. There
was a whole school assembly, with a British influence throughout the ceremony, to
remember those persons who died in both world wars and other conflicts. Students wore
symbolic red cardboard poppies as an army representative played the *Last Post* on a bugle.

---

\(^6\) Organisation factor: learning support classes.
\(^4\) Inter-Intrapersonal factor: peer social status.
\(^9\) Cultural and Family factor: socio-cultural bias.
A traditional minute’s silence was observed at the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month\textsuperscript{9}.

To address students’ learning difficulties I purchased several multimedia rich CDs but complained to the computing head teacher about the long computer maintenance response times. Maintenance delays were often due to vandalism with processors, bulbs and mouse balls regularly removed from computers by students. Frequent disruption also occurred when students changed configuration settings. Eventually the school upgraded security with settings protection software, optical mouses, a computer room booking and maintenance reporting system. Even though internet connection remained slow and online video quality poor, social media and cyber bullying awareness dialogue had commenced\textsuperscript{5}. Teachers were expected to maintain vigilant supervision of students and participate in software training sessions\textsuperscript{7}.

The station master’s wife told me that railway employees were often on alert for terrorist activity. Australian mass media reported that the Federal Police had arrested many Muslim Arabs in Sydney and Melbourne thought to be planning an attack. With concern about the negative impact upon Muslim youth and Arab communities in Australia, Muslim leaders criticised the accompanying political commentary and recent anti-terrorist legislation\textsuperscript{4}. A high concentration of Arabs lived in particular suburbs and tensions increased between the Muslim and wider Australian community\textsuperscript{9}. A significant number of students from Arab backgrounds attended the school and a Middle Eastern food stall was organised during the biannual Multicultural Day.

\textsuperscript{9} Cultural and Family factor: public ceremony and acknowledgement of culturally relevant historical events.

\textsuperscript{5} Environmental factor: computer equipment, vandalism and maintenance, cyber bullying.

\textsuperscript{7} Program factor: ICT professional learning.

\textsuperscript{4} Inter-Intrapersonal factor: self-concept, self-esteem.

\textsuperscript{9} Cultural and Family factor: geopolitical events and community attitudes to Arab Muslims.
Due to the frequency of displacement of PTRRCP students from the library during roll call for other events I expressed my concerns to Ken. These disruptions unsettled students’ daily reading routine and devalued the program. As space was limited in the school I received a dismissive response “… that’s life in a large school”.

Ken held qualifications in Christian education, arranged for scripture to be introduced for both Christians and Muslims, and permitted an American-based evangelical church to conduct personal development programs for students.

Initiatives and events to promote social inclusion were evident in the school, however, it appeared paradoxical when male school executives made fun of gay men by mock-kissing each other during whole staff presentations on three separate occasions. Such public mocking of people’s sexual preference, gender, religious, cultural or racial origin is contrary to social-educational policies relating to equal opportunity and could lead to an Anti-Discrimination Board complaint.

Brock and his sisters, Cathy and Beth, were moving to a country town. The school counsellor knew the family history well, and a welfare consultant declared a parenting license would not be issued, if such existed. I felt both disappointed and relieved to see these students with whom I had worked with for several years leave the school.

Robert returned to the country, while a former tutee with behavioural issues, Shaun, was placed at a SPS. Integration support funding fluctuated according to student mobility and impacted upon job security for teacher aides. An ASD outreach teacher conducted a

---

5 Environmental factor: availability of learning facilities.
6 Personnel factor: staff background and qualifications.
3 Attitude factor: staff attitudes and discrimination.
9 Cultural and Family factor: parenting.
9 Cultural and Family factor: family mobility.
7 Program factor: behaviour support.
8 Personnel factor: employment security.
series of transition orientation sessions for a Year 6 student commencing next year\textsuperscript{7}. Changes can precipitate peculiar or anti-social behaviours, and advanced social preparation was a major management strategy for students with ASD\textsuperscript{10}. Due to this student’s constant fidgeting, worry beads, a squash ball or wrist bracelet were suggested options.

Before school the Aboriginal tutor was being comforted by \textit{Prue} because her child had been hospitalised suffering from dehydration\textsuperscript{8}. Meanwhile the library staff and I shared our experiences as passengers on Sydney’s public transport network. I told a commuting story about a scruffy woman with missing teeth who showed train passengers album photographs of her son with muscular dystrophy before asking for money. The life struggle faced by the woman to raise her son was a reminder of the socio-economic hardship experienced by many\textsuperscript{11}.

A selection of easy read and higher level novels for tutees to read without tutors were provided\textsuperscript{7}. However, to practise for DEAR the following year I advised students they could bring their own book to read independently.

In hot weather I turned the fans to slow or off to hear students pronounce sounds clearly during individual reading sessions. The buffering in my ears made it difficult to hear soft voices with clarity\textsuperscript{5}.

A recent diagnosis of ADHD provided a new perspective of Steven’s learning difficulties. He was issued with a classroom behaviour monitoring book and placed in the off-campus, personal development program\textsuperscript{10}.

\textsuperscript{7} Program factor: transition support programs.
\textsuperscript{10} Health and Learning Difficulties factor: ADHD diagnosis, medication and behaviour management.
\textsuperscript{8} Personnel factor: staff personal life issues.
\textsuperscript{11} Socio-economic-Technology factor: socio-economic inequity, expenses caring for children with special needs.
\textsuperscript{7} Program factor: age and ability appropriate reading material
\textsuperscript{5} Environmental factor: temperature and noise.
Students were not allowed to access messaging, chat, email, arcade games with violence, or other inappropriate websites while I was supervising them during another stop-work meeting\textsuperscript{11}. They eagerly shared their website experiences with each other.

New healthy school canteen guidelines stipulated low fat and low sugar products. Prior to these guidelines foods sold often contradicted the health curriculum taught in classrooms. Obesity among young people was on the political agenda and healthy eating habits were being promoted. In the morning at the station, students often consumed junk food\textsuperscript{10}. Simple logic finds a strong relationship between diet, health and effective learning.

After Silei displayed a temper tantrum I reprimanded her. Silei had stomped away when another student was using the computer she wanted. Clare cited a similar incident which occurred the previous day. At the commencement of the year, Silei was a quiet, shy and pleasant girl. Later I privately spoke with her to explain the need to share resources, work cooperatively, and negotiate to take turns with other students. For healthy social development it is important to follow up students’ inappropriate behaviours and provide them with guidance towards better alternatives\textsuperscript{1}.

Jamal claimed girls were a distraction to his studies and considered moving to a boys’ school for Years 11-12. I agreed that many senior students devoted more time to socialising than school work, and discussed the importance of sound study habits and time management\textsuperscript{4}. It was Jamal who pointed out Asin’s problem with “x” when decoding text, saying “ets” instead of “ex”. I spent a brief time providing Asin with pronunciation assistance by clarifying the formation of different sounds through demonstrating appropriate tongue, teeth and mouth movements\textsuperscript{1}.

\textsuperscript{11} Socio-economic-Technology factor: internet access and inappropriate websites.

\textsuperscript{10} Health and Learning Difficulties factor: diet, health and learning.

\textsuperscript{1} Methodology factor: social development guidance.

\textsuperscript{4} Inter-Intrapersonal factor: socialisation and study habits.

\textsuperscript{1} Methodology factor: sounds clarification.
To assist newly arrived African students a forum proposed settling-in and family support programs, health and police talks, parent and community meetings, art and drums projects, study skills and writing workshops, school to work information, a homework centre and mentoring. Existing community concerns included adolescents travelling without railway tickets, taking fruit from trees on private property, and driving motor vehicles without licenses. I raised concerns with the ESL adviser about the availability of culturally suitable readers for African students. It emerged that many African migrants had an aversion to attending post-school training college courses as students “smoked and swore”. New approaches were required to encourage their involvement. According to college staff Aboriginal students’ were also reluctant to attend courses with their participation often dependent upon the endorsement of tribal elders or local Aboriginal people, and provision of bus transport. Literacy and job skills courses were usually taught simultaneously to have relevance for participants’ daily lives.

I attended a workshop for teachers to analyse the school’s literacy test results using specifically designed software. The purpose was to develop realistic plans and implement teaching strategies that responded to students’ literacy needs.

The principal announced a reorganisation of learning support facilities with the Blue Room being converted to a support faculty staff room to accommodate an increase in ESL staff. Two library seminar rooms, one with several computers, were to be the new learning support rooms. Among staff there were different views and unresolved issues. I was uncomfortable with my reduced working area and impact upon the informal support network.

---

7 Program factor: community support programs.
7 Program factor: cultural relevance and community endorsement.
7 Program factor: professional learning, literacy assessment data and follow-up.
5 Environmental factor: facilities for learning support students.
for students with special needs. The ESL teachers were wary of the close association of their work to that of students with a wide range of other learning difficulties.

*David* completed a storyboard assignment task quite well with my assistance. We re-read the story then he illustrated and labelled various scenes. He enjoyed individualised support but needed sessions more than once a week to make significant improvements.

At the recent ceremony, *Bridget, Corey* and *Clara* had received school pride cards and associated entitlements which reinforced espoused school values.

*Bridget* claimed she regularly experienced headaches or dizzy spells when reading and needed to lie down so I suggested a visit to her doctor. Her difficulties with sound blends, and syllables in particular, were compounded as she often incorrectly inserted letter sounds. We practised words with common ending sounds like “gle” and “ble”. *Bridget* maintained she did not have time for homework which targeted these words. Error patterns included “blaffle” instead of “baffle” and “flable” became “fable”. It was frustratingly slow, taking a whole lesson to work through twenty words with further intense work required.

I prepared a booklet of great artists to schedule in future reading programs. The teacher aide, *Prue*, adorned the Blue Room with Christmas decorations for the festive season and I planned a year end party for students who visited regularly.

To assist in selecting thirty-three volunteer peer tutors for next year, I asked English teachers to rate the seventy applications received by considering reading ability, interpersonal skills and role model suitability. The application form requested language

---

1 Methodology factor: strategies to develop reading skills – re-reading, illustrating and labeling.

1 Methodology factor: individual instruction.

1 Methodology factor: reinforcement and acknowledgement of school values.

10 Health and Learning Difficulties factor: headaches, vision, hearing and language difficulties.

3 Attitude factor: homework and study habits.

1 Methodology factor: sound blends and individual remediation.

7 Program factor: relevant curriculum based resources.

7 Program factor: social learning activity.
background, training course willingness, why the applicant wanted to be a tutor, why the applicant would be a good tutor, and a teacher referee. One student pointed out that the term “Christian Name” on the form was racist, as it should be “First” or “Given Names”. Australia’s demographic composition now includes a wide range of religions and cultures, so terminology has adjusted accordingly.

At the annual presentation day, academic, community service and sports awards were presented at a formal assembly in the school hall, where walls were adorned with a display of students’ art work. Despite 34 degrees Celsius temperatures, I wore a suit and tie. I only wear suits at weddings, funerals, employment interviews and school ceremonies. Margo received an Indigenous Encouragement Award and Nick, with Asperger Syndrome, received a Principal’s Award. Two tutees received Year 7 class awards and several peer tutors won academic subject prizes. The principal and a guest speaker, an ex-student and well known local cricket player, gave traditional speeches. Four students received a state premier reading award as part of a whole school literacy initiative which the librarian and I facilitated. I noted a former tutee came first place in Rugby, a recently introduced subject that motivated some students who were previously not engaged in learning. The under 15 year old girls’ rugby team, which comprised mostly Pacific Islander and Maori girls, paraded following their state game victory. These curriculum and extra-curricula initiatives drew upon sport culture to involve students positively in learning. A luncheon followed for guests, parents and staff.

In preparation for next year I organised tutee-tutor folders to contain a pencil, reading record table, difficult word list and an SLA social story. Social stories written in the

---

6 Organisation factor: selection of quality tutors.
7 Cultural and Family factor: culturally biased terminology.
1 Methodology factor: recognition and acknowledgement.
7 Program factor: curriculum initiatives based on culture.
first person assist orientate and prepare students for an event. Such special needs education strategies are often beneficial to all students.

Senior students conducted tours of the school during Year 6 Orientation Day before new students and their parents were addressed by school personnel in the hall. I spoke briefly to an attentive audience about the SLA and SNA, parent reports and support for students experiencing learning difficulties.

Students like David and Asofa needed reading and scribing support to engage effectively with examinations. Although special examination provisions related to inclusive education, equal opportunity and equitable outcomes (Australian Government, 2011), I sensed some staff thought additional support was unfair and examination conditions should be the same for all students. The question of whether senior African students should receive special provisions during their Year 12 examinations was raised, however, an ESL background was not a criteria for examination support. To ascertain, without thorough assessment, whether students’ learning difficulties were an ESL issue or unconfirmed disability was difficult. A number of ESL Year 12 students, aged 18-21 years, had reading ages of 8.0 years, compounded by the effects of undernourishment, trauma and cultural upheaval. I recalled an anonymous quotation from a seminar I attended, “To be fair you have to treat people differently”. Students attended swim school and the summer holidays approached.

Summary. This final descriptive account of daily life during Term 4 of the school year further contextualised socio-cultural phenomena influencing the learning and social

1 Methodology factor: social stories.
9 Cultural and Family factor: parent involvement.
3 Attitude factor: examination support and perceptions of fairness.
10 Health-Learning Difficulties factor: learning difficulties assessment - ESL, disability or refugee health issue.
outcomes of students participating in the PTRRCP. Found in situ are program management and technical pedagogical matters related to the acquisition of literacy skills. Issues related to the learning of students with special needs continued to emerge from the narrative.
CHAPTER 8

Findings

This chapter enriches the preceding in situ descriptive ethnographic accounts by presenting the participants’ views, or what early ethnographers described as, the “natives’ point of view” (Fetterman, 2010). Whilst the narrative was sourced primarily from researcher participant observation notes and parent questionnaires, evaluation questionnaires and focus group interviews were used to probe the participants’ personal perspectives. Participants’ views were sought to further enhance understanding of the factors influencing learning and social outcomes for students with learning difficulties. The perspectives of participants provided insight to, and an opportunity to appreciate, the lived experiences of students (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As the chapter does not personally identity participants or their views, the findings are presented in a more depersonalised context than the in situ narrative accounts. Furthermore, the chapter does not quantify participants or their views throughout the dialogue, but attempts to descriptively indicate the trends, strengths, weaknesses, variations, complexities and contradictions of the findings. It is because of this that frequent use of terms like some, few, many, several, most and majority occurs. Wherever possible, participants’ views are categorically stated as being representative of those belonging to a particular group, i.e., tutors and tutees. Participants’ views have been sorted and presented in context of the research study’s eleven domains which then provide support for the discussion and conclusion chapters.

Participants’ Views

Methodology. Essential components of the PTRRCP were agreed by participants to be the development of readers’ text decoding and comprehension skills. During the probing of participants’ views it became evident tutors used mediation and scaffolding strategies promoted by Vygotskian ideas to foster tutees’ use of a wider range of cognitive tools.
(Kozulin et al., 2003, Vygotsky, 1978). Tutors believed they were skilled, and implemented good tutoring practice, because they clearly explained the reading or learning activities; regularly used the fundamental strategy pause, prompt and praise; broke words in to syllables for decoding; explained meanings of difficult words; kept readers focused on task; and offered them appropriate praise. Syllable based text decoding of unfamiliar words was accepted as a reliable strategy during the prompt stage and most students were familiar with breaking words into sections for sounding. Tutees confirmed they were assisted by tutors who physically covered parts of words to form sections or sound breaks, even writing words with breaks inserted. “They will put something in and break it up so we can read it,” one explained. Tutees learnt to apply the syllable strategy, but needed regular reminders, and experimented with varying degrees of success. However, whilst students used the syllable strategy generally well to decode text when reading aloud, there appeared to be limited transference of the skill to assist them with the spelling of words when writing. Tutors thought immediate correction was useful and found revisiting the compiled list of difficult words assisted development of students’ reading ability.

The prime strategies deployed by tutors to develop cognitive processes that focused tutees, promoted comprehension of texts and fostered meaning, were prediction, questioning, discussion and completion of scaffolded activity worksheets. Generally tutees considered tutors’ questions as appropriate, but thought insufficient encouraging positive comments were given. The least deployed strategies used during tutoring included pre-discussion of reading material; demonstration or model reading; encouragement of self-correction; questioning that related to labels, captions, tables and graphics; oral recounts; and comprehensive post reading discussion. Rarely did tutees ask clarifying questions of tutors to aid their understanding, and needed to be encouraged to ask questions.

Year 7 readers enjoyed the challenge of spelling tests when they had the opportunity to revise words beforehand and indicated competitive pride in their ability to spell specific
words. “Everybody got 3 and I got 5,” one proudly claimed. Another claimed they knew how to utilise the spell check function when using a word processor, “It goes all red under it, then you press check.”

Tutees were motivated to read by the age-appropriate, high interest, colour-illustrated novels and accompanying CD audio narrations. The visually stimulating, colour illustrations in the books attracted students’ attention, while the CD, used as assistive technology, replaced tutors’ modelled reading, and empowered students to independently read a whole novel successfully. Whilst assistive technology had a significant methodological role to play in developing literacy skills, it could not replace the human interaction element of learning. In this cited case, the CD technology did not provide questions or discussion to enhance context, clarify comprehension and develop meaning.

**Performance.** Tutors believed tutees’ reading, comprehension, grammar and spelling skills improved with their tutoring assistance. They particularly noted improvements in tutees’ fluency and comprehension. Readers developed self-correcting skills; awareness of different text types; increased confidence to read different subject texts; and learnt new material with tutors’ support. Tutors saw scope for further improvements through an increased focus on the use of clues as a text decoding strategy. They thought tutees’ English and subject class work performance were enhanced due to their tutoring. Punctuality, attendance, and motivation of some tutees were issues of concern for tutors.

There was general agreement among tutors that they had learnt and improved their tutoring skills throughout the program. “Before we started we didn’t know how to tutor someone, but now we do. We’ve got an idea,” one stated. They considered tutoring competency as important and suggested an extended post-school college training course with more practical work would be beneficial. Tutors’ views complemented the literature that considered continuous tutor training which promoted an understanding of learning and
tutoring processes, as well as interpersonal issues, as essential to quality tutoring (Fisher & Frey, 2003). Mandatory theory training, daily attendance to accrue a minimum number of practical tutoring hours and demonstration of appropriate practical tutoring skills according to specified criteria were fundamental requirements of the Volunteer Literacy Tutoring Certificate.

The theory component of the training outlined various factors influencing students’ reading performance, including a LBOTE, learning difficulties, learning disabilities, motivation, absenteeism, family mobility and disrupted education. Tutors noted several tutees had a slow reading rate, some were better at reading than others, while a number had difficulty focusing upon reading and did not improve very much. One tutor summarised, “Some people just find it hard to do stuff. Some people find it hard to ride a bike, some find it hard to read.”

Tutees acknowledged they generally found reading difficult, conceding they did not “get” the hard words. One acceptingly and openly declared, “I’ve got a disability”, when explaining why they found reading difficult. Another explained he did not like being in the program, “Cos it feels like you’re a baby”. The PTRRCP coordinator used SLA results as a convenient indicator of reading improvement to determine which students were moved into, and out of, the support program mid-year. Tutors anecdotal qualitative remarks regarding student engagement with reading were used to assist monitor student progress. A Year 7 reader, who thought he had definitely improved and expressed his desire to leave the program, was reminded the SLA results were used as the determining factor. Tutees were unable to recall their SLA results but one remembered she received a lot of help revising the previous year’s test papers in preparation. A proud tutee claimed he was now the best speller in his class and students all spontaneously commenced an impromptu spelling test of each other with words like “precipitation”, “encyclopedia” and “photosynthesis”. “Spell Encyclopedia,” one student challenged another. “E.. n.. c.. y.. c … oh I forgot. I done it
when I was in this classroom but I forgot,” was the disappointed reply. Others demonstrated their ability to spell the words “hippopotamus”, “pronunciation”, “transportation” and “nocturnal”.

Encouraging observations made by tutors were that their students now read more fluently and confidently, “… thinking the words out instead of waiting to be told”. They recalled negative experiences of trying to help when tutees appeared not to care, did not want to read or could not be bothered. A tutor was concerned his reader repeatedly pronounced “ex” as “ets”, despite his efforts. Another said her tutee could read properly, but at a very slow pace. Other tutors claimed they did not know why some students were in the program, because they appeared to be excellent readers and intelligent. Students perceived competent reading as relating only to the ability to decode text and answer direct questions, rather than the ability to process a variety of text types at higher levels of comprehension to derive meaning.

Tutors received recognition from teachers for being good students, helping out and doing the right thing. Although most became tutors for intrinsically rewarding and enriching opportunities, rather than for particular recognition or award, peer tutors believed the School Service Award and Volunteer Literacy Tutoring Certificate were valuable inclusions for their resume and education portfolio. Generally tutees supported School Service Awards for tutors. One thought his tutor deserved an award because she was “really nice.” Another challenged the whole idea of tutor recognition suggesting they should receive certificates, or awards, for improvements in reading. A tutor commented readers’ progress was gradual over a long time frame and therefore improvements were not always noticed. One Year 7 reported tutors who were not very good at reading and considered recognition as inappropriate. One tutor was an ex-tutee three years earlier. Acknowledgment of student participation and performance was an important motivational factor for both tutors and tutees. Tutors who were unfocused or poor student role models were removed from
PTRRCP. Engaged tutors claimed program involvement facilitated personal exploration opportunities through which they found out more about themselves.

The PTRRCP monitoring of student performance was focused primarily on ensuring student engagement with literacy tasks and appropriate social interaction occurred on a daily basis. Subjective assessments were continuously made by teachers and tutors about tutees’ engagement while verbal feedback assisted students self-reflect upon their performance. While quantitative measurement of literacy improvement was not incorporated as part of the PTRRCP, it remained the domain of state-wide tests and subject faculty assessment processes.

According to tutors, readers engaged more productively with reading in PTRRCP than the whole school DEAR program and would advance with better examination knowledge. Tutees generally considered tutors were of a good standard, and felt more comfortable about reading as their decoding skills improved, vocabulary developed and they gained a better understanding of content.

**Attitude.** The attitudes of students towards learning in the PTRRCP were overwhelmingly positive. They agreed reading was important, an integral part of learning and of long term benefit. Participants saw the program’s purpose was to help students learn and develop their reading, vocabulary and language skills for the future. Tutees considered reading as the aspect of their literacy which required most improvement, followed by spelling, writing and comprehension. Students acknowledged the PTRRCP provided opportunities to have fun experiences and socialise while learning which relates to the socio-cultural interactive nature of social constructivist approaches to education. Tutees commented the program provided an opportunity to read new interesting material, access computers, improve their literacy skills and learn. Both tutors and tutees saw good reading skills as necessary to compete and succeed at school. Reading was needed for classroom
work, studying, revising, passing tests, obtaining good marks, getting ahead of others and completing Year 12. Participants considered reading of factual documents and charts as necessary skills required for successful futures, while the ability to read newspapers, search advertisements, complete application forms and write letters was identified as essential to secure employment. Literacy skills were also recognised as necessary in employment training. Students acknowledged shopping, ordering, food preparation and cooking all entailed diverse literacy skills. They considered it important for teenagers to be able to read television program guides, magazines, letters, road rule manuals, driver’s license tests, internet websites and communicate using ICT. One Year 7 student considered reading necessary to learn to cook in case he could not get a girlfriend and had to cook for himself. These responses of participants are closely aligned with social constructivist theory which considers for productive learning to occur, and knowledge to be constructed, learning activities need to be relevant to students’ real world, holistic in approach, and simultaneously engaging of both academic and popular culture.

A range of feelings relating to participation in the literacy program, from excitement and enjoyment to frustration and boredom, were experienced by tutees. Some did not enjoy reading, missed DEAR roll call and commented that tutoring sessions involved too much work or were too long, especially as they could not choose their own reading material. A couple commented that their tutors were boring and demanding. Others doubted tutors’ genuine interest in their reading progress; one claimed they were left to work by themselves, while another said their tutor regularly talked with friends. Frustration resulted when in the middle of reading a book the bell rang for the end of the tutoring session.

Tutees claimed they tried hard during reading sessions and their literacy skills had improved with assistance from peer tutors. Several even believed they did not have reading difficulties, or had improved considerably, and did not need to continue in PTRRCP. Attitudes towards the reading material revealed a number of tutees wanted books that
presented a greater challenge, so they could reach a higher standard. Comments were made that some books in the program were too easy. Tutees were excited by new reading material and use of computers in the program, but did not always find topics interesting.

The majority of tutors intended to complete Year 12 and many borrowed books to read, or for school research assignments, from the school or local council libraries. They viewed post-school training college as a grown-up version of school, where they could party, having observed the student bar facilities during training. Most were pleased they volunteered, but a small number indicated they no longer enjoyed PTRRCP. Tutors considered they were always punctual and ready to start tutoring each day. Although they had mixed impressions about whether tutees viewed reading as important, they believed most were trying to improve. A number of tutors perceived tutees as not experiencing significant reading difficulties and only a quarter believed the readers enjoyed the program. Student’s criticism of PTRRCP was that it was too short with too many distractions, the same thing every day, boring for readers, and meant they missed out on DEAR roll call or being with other friends.

A number of tutees were not always motivated or cooperative and there were tutors’ claims that some faked reading by only appearing to read. Fluctuations in tutees’ daily moods were observed to affect their engagement in reading, depending on whether they were in a good or bad mood, and did or did not want to read. Tutors conceded that if readers did not like reading, or were not interested, it was difficult to continue caring about their progress. They believed some tutees did not want to improve or had decided they could not do it and had given up. A tutor commented, “If students are always behind they feel like it’s not doing anything for them.” Few students wanted to continue in the program for a second year, however, it was thought that several tutees needed individual tutoring from a professional teacher.
**Inter-Intrapersonal.** Tutees were generally positive about tutors, describing them as friendly and genuine in wanting to assist them with reading. They acknowledged tutors had good tutoring and interpersonal skills, believed good working rapport existed and viewed them as sound role models. Some conversed with their tutors in the playground. Most tutors had friends participating in PTRRCP and a few knew their tutee prior to participation, either from primary school or through siblings. This was seen as helpful in establishing a rapport and working tutor-tutee relationship. Interpersonal exchanges were generally friendly and tutors felt comfortable sitting next to tutees.

Tutors considered they were good role models and had a healthy rapport with Year 7 students who they thought admired, respected and spoke nicely to them. One tutee explained they did not talk about their problems with tutors, while less than a third talked about personal issues. Tutors expressed mixed feelings about a proposal to choose their own readers and preferred to work with the same tutee all year.

The role of reading tutor also provided social support for younger students in the school through friendship, socialising, mentoring and role modelling. Attendance, punctuality, organisation, on-task work patterns, conversational language, interpersonal skills, social behaviour and grooming were key role modelling considerations. Development of new friendships, opportunities to socialise, and exposure to different people were seen as positive social aspects of the program. One tutee claimed to have an older friend as a result of participation in the program, while another, new to the school mid-year, had not developed any friendships. The tutor-tutee bonding process was considered so important by tutors that they suggested a relationship bonding session once a week. “If you don’t have that bond, you won’t be able help them because they won’t listen,” explained one tutor. Another added, “If they’re not going to bond, they’re not going to listen to you or sit and read. They’re just going to walk off and talk to their friends.” Some tutors thought tutees should choose their tutor because, “If they don’t like them they won’t get on.” Opportunities
for students to become familiar with their roll call teachers were also seen as positive aspects of PTRRCP.

Both fun and frustration were experienced by tutees. They developed confidence and felt a sense of achievement with increased reading competency. Tutees were proud when their reading improved and satisfied when they gained better results than others. Tutors identified nervousness, frustration, discomfort, boredom and lack of confidence as negative feelings experienced by tutees when they did not appear to improve. However, they observed that tutees experienced feelings of happiness, confidence, motivation, competence and accomplishment when their text decoding skills developed. Feelings of annoyance or disappointment resulted when reading timed expired prior to completion of tasks. Tutors comforted tutees if they were teased by peers and commented that Year 7 students were “learning to be cool.”

Tutees’ perceptions of their reading program placement were at times associated with social stigma. A tutee commented she felt “dumb”, another said his tutor thought he was going to be “really dumb”. One defensively said, “I knew I was really good, but didn’t always feel like showing it.” PTRRCP tutees did not want to be perceived as less intelligent when other peers were in DEAR roll call. Tutors claimed tutees knew they were behind their peers with reading and one thought tutoring might make them feel even worse about having poor reading skills. Some readers did not always follow their tutors’ directions and adopted a “could not be bothered attitude”. Year 7 students felt put down and angry when tutors talked to their friends and ignored them. They thought if tutors talked to their friends, they should also be able to. Another said they just joined in tutors’ conversations. A tutee claimed his tutor became angry when they didn’t say words correctly, but most readers agreed tutors helped them with mistakes without raising their voice. Tutees remarked that most tutors did not usually get angry, go mad or yell at them if they made a mistake, whereas teachers often did.
Conversations between pairs covered a range of topics like who was going to win the football and what they did on the weekend. Tutees thought tutors talked too much about subject classes, school program, jobs and their parents. “They talk on and on and on like a broken record,” one remarked. One male tutor taunted others saying their football teams were going to lose.

A range of relationships between Year 7 and 10 students existed outside of the PTRRCP. A tutee explained how his tutor defended him in the school playground, “We say hello, and if I’m in trouble he will stick up for me and tell the guys to go away.” Another tutee greeted his tutor when he saw him out of roll call, but did not really consider him a friend. Some students offered a general greeting like, “What’s up man?” while others ignored each other. One pair shook hands, “When I walk past him I just shake his hand and he walks to his room.” Others said, “Hi” to each other but had no conversation when they met in the playground, at friends’ places or the shopping complex. A former tutee who moved from the program as a result of improvement, still said “Hello” to his ex-tutor. Some male tutors and tutees considered themselves good mates, which affected the way they related to each other. Tutors jokingly threatened to smack tutees around the head, have them bashed, and if they became cranky, either told them to “Shut up” or just let them “Chill out”.

The PTRCCP aimed to provide a socially supportive environment and program participants made little reference to harassment during discussions. Playful teasing and serious harassment among adolescents is not always easy to distinguish, teasing or sparring is common and needs monitoring. One tutee was reportedly physically and verbally intimidating to his peers, while another claimed his tutor once threatened to kill him. Another tutee said he was yelled at, but most had no experience of this negative type of interaction. It was not one student’s style to seek assistance from tutors in the playground if he was being bullied. Year 7 students seemed to have more vivid memories of past conflicts they had experienced in primary school: a near suspension because of recurring fights
involving racist taunts; insulting comments about mothers; after school scenes involving parents; threats of violence; frightening experiences; rock throwing at cars; attempts of pen stabbing; and police reports. “He kept being racist, saying stuff about me and wog nationality and stuff about my mum ..... I went psycho and whacked him a couple of times, got on my bike and rode off really fast with my friend,” one student explained. Another tutee recalled, “I almost got suspended.” This dramatic recall of concerning events reflected how incidents of this nature are remembered by students for a long time. For some, incidents of bullying, harassment or conflict can have long term effects on their welfare. Both proactive and reactive school programs are necessary to address underlying issues contributing to such incidents, and to effectively manage student well-being. A safe, secure and socially supportive learning environment is fundamental to the ontological security of students and staff.

**Environmental.** Students generally found the library a suitable, comfortable and quiet space for reading during roll call. Most PTRRCP participants thought teachers maintained good discipline, but some perceived scope for improvement. A distractibility factor caused by noise or movement was acknowledged, as it sometimes affected their ability to concentrate on tasks. The sources were identified as conversations between friends; teachers issuing directions; calling of the roll; reading of daily notices; distribution of materials; management of student behaviour; asking and answering of questions; late arrivals; and noise from neighbouring classes. Narrative examples of distractions during roll call include: Vicky’s late arrival; Margo’s wandering; Terry’s pulling of a student’s hair; Heath’s football; Donald’s incessant chatting; Suzanne’s lost electronic game; and Terry’s argument about a stool.
Organisation. Students valued a routine set time period for reading and agreed materials were readily available each morning to commence tutoring promptly, but found 10-15 minutes allowed insufficient time to complete tasks. Most tutors referred to the scheduled program, but less than half kept updated reading records.

Tutees were generally punctual with a few frequently absent, while tutors were normally on time and waiting. A couple of tutees, however, commented their tutors sometimes arrived late, or not at all, then sat and talked. Some student absence was due to school activities like camps, excursions, ski trips, overseas visits and off-campus programs. Absenteeism and roll changes unsettled students. Tutees reported that junior students truanted then went to the large shopping complex. They knew senior students used an electronic swipe card attendance system.

Many students were happy to leave tutor-tutee pairing to allocation and enjoy an element of surprise. Others made pairing suggestions to promote more constructive tutor-tutee relationships and improve performance. Sessions were proposed where participants played introductory games, displayed their interests, and formed pairs based on personal profiles. These options helped to facilitate preference pairing of students with a specific gender, language or cultural background, personality type, shared interest or individual request. Tutors suggested they be involved in conducting pre and post testing of tutees’ reading ability.

Program. A majority of students found that the programmed reading material covered interesting topics and related to subject class work. Tutors thought the reading material was age-ability appropriate, with quality content and presentation, while also exposing tutees to a cross-section of text types.

Tutors believed the in-school and college tutor training programs provided them with knowledge and good tutoring skills. They thought the PTRRCP helped tutees engage with
class work and improved their test performances. The associated language activities were found to keep students interested and assisted with their comprehension. Students considered *The Book of Records* and *The Sydney Daily Post* website as the most enjoyed reading material (Table 8), while the SLA test paper was thought to be the most helpful in regard to engagement with learning (Table 9).

The Year 7 PTRRCP included topics like water, energy, planets, Egypt, measurement, food, cooking and novels, as well as preparation for the SLA and SNA tests. Glossy coloured Science, History and cooking books, *The Book of Records, The Sydney Daily Post* and *Geographic World* websites were attractive, high stimulus resources used. Artistic and stimulating aspects of books students commented about included amazing pictures, creative illustrations and good graphics. Pictures in the Science books aided understanding and motivated students to read. “Stuff in the Science books boosts them to want to read more,” claimed a tutor. Another thought reading books with no pictures assisted creativity because readers had to use their imagination. A tutee commented *The Book of Records* included, “All this mad stuff like how fat people are and the smallest person being 57 centimetres high.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8: Most Enjoyed Reading Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tutees</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cookbooks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 9: Most Useful Reading Material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tutees</th>
<th>Tutors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. SLA test paper</td>
<td>1. SLA test paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ancient Egypt library books</td>
<td>3. Planet library books</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tutees linked some of the program reading material to their course work. One student thought it helped when they read about Egypt during roll call and studied the topic in History classes. It was the intention of PTRRCP to schedule subject based reading materials to develop their topic-related vocabulary, background knowledge and self-confidence to better engage in classroom learning. The cook books and creative menu writing task related to tutees’ food preparation classes. They thought the cookbooks contained different foods, which looked amazing but concluded, “Like you wouldn’t really eat it.” All students were not interested in all scheduled topics. Several boys did not like reading cookbooks, because they thought it was “girlie” and compared it to girls reading about mechanics.

Year 7 readers noted the reading material provided a challenge, others claimed materials were too easy and several wanted harder books to progress past their current level. One student who wanted to improve suggested books be rated levels 1, 2 and 3, meaning easy, middle range and really hard books.

Again, students commented it was frustrating when “Time’s up” and they moved to the next programmed activity, and hated when the bell interrupted a task. Students suggested an extended program schedule and a longer roll call period to allow more time to complete reading tasks.

The inclusion of magazines, comics, more computer activities, smaller and humorous books for future programmed material were suggested by tutees. An overwhelming number believed they should be able to choose books rather than read those provided. Allowing
student choice of reading material was also the tutors’ main suggestion for future programs, however, compliance with the program’s authentic curriculum guidelines would be required. They proposed a personal choice section of several weeks where students selected books from the library or bought their own, for the purpose of improved student interest and motivation.

Other ideas to motivate and engage readers included scheduled reward time to play sports, outside games or free choice computer time, subject to the completion of specified tasks. “It would make them work quicker,” claimed a tutor. Further suggestions included award certificates and prizes to acknowledge tutees’ efforts, like “Reader of the Week” and the “Most Improved”. An end of year roll call party was also proposed. Program improvement ideas included an Art Gallery excursion, after-school home work tutoring, subject assignment assistance, better behaviour management, use of Year 9 tutors, a work booklet with more comprehension exercises and interesting activities.

While tutees generally did not describe the PTRRCP as an enjoyable experience, both tutees and tutors thought the program was well organised and recommended it to new Year 7 students who needed assistance with reading, as well as Year 10 students who sought a valuable experience. An African refugee tutee commented “Yeh, if they couldn’t read they could go in to peer reading.”

**Personnel.** According to students’ perceptions, roll teachers were punctual, generally maintained good discipline and were available to answer questions. Tutors claimed they, and the coordinator, were interested in tutees’ reading progress. Whilst roll teachers were seen as having a controlling influence, tutees thought they were not particularly interested in their progress. One reader’s reference to unreasonableness related to a teacher’s insistence that students were not to talk. “She keeps telling me to shut up. What the heck!” and “She’s mean, she won’t even let us talk once.” Other students
commented on the lack of positive feedback from teachers, alleging the only directions were “Be quiet!” and “Stop doing that!” By contrast, the college head teacher expressed the opposite view about teachers’ behaviour management; she claimed good teachers were strict and maintained order. Some tutors disapproved of one roll teacher’s reading of the newspaper each morning, claiming the teacher was supposed to be supervising and handing out notices. Others defended the teacher as it was modelling of on task reading. Taking the completed roll book each day to the office was a job students disliked.

When regular roll teachers were absent, tutees were unsure of casual teachers’ names and identified these teachers by descriptions of age, physical characteristics, personality, teaching subject, cultural background, language accent and siblings’ or individual experiences. Examples included “an old guy with grey hair and glasses”, “the PE teacher”, “my sister’s teacher”, “an Irish man with a strong accent”, “the funny one” and “a weird lady visitor”.

**Cultural-Family.** Tutees and tutors preferred to work with students of the same gender as themselves, but expressed no distinct preference for working with those from the same country of origin, language or religious background. Tutors clearly indicated they would not like to work with readers of the same age. The findings of this study regarding preference for same-sex pairing appear consistent with those reported in the literature of recent research (Alvermann et al., 2002). Same sex pairing generated a more comfortable rapport, stimulated conversation and contributed to relationship building. However, social and educational issues associated with gender stereotype attitudes became evident during discussions. A male tutee commented, “You have more to talk about. Boys you can relate to because you’re a boy, and know them better than girls, ‘cos they like different things from boys, unless you’re gay.” Another male student supported these comments, “Sometimes girls talk about girls’ stuff and boys talk about boys’ stuff. Guys talk about cars. How would
it be, if a guy talked to a girl about cars and all that?” Additional focus group comments from a male student described females as being plastic, “You’re plastics. That’s what you call girlie girls, Barbie dolls, plastics. Yeah you look like a Barbie doll. Michael Jackson is a plastic.” Perhaps the student’s descriptions of female images are comparable to the librarian’s dubbing of the “supermodels”. Reportedly common conversation topics between females included hair colour and nails. Male tutors were preferred because “They don’t talk at all compared to females, who just chat, chat, chat, chat, chat and never stop.” Another commented about female tutors, “Welcome to my world. I do not shut up.” One female tutee claimed it was more supportive because her tutor was female. It was also revealed that a male tutee was “going out” with a female tutee.

Students’ comments about those with a LBOTE referred to the difficulties experienced trying to understand strong non-English accents and the associated teasing. “Asian, Chinese or whatever, I can’t understand them,” stated a student. “If someone comes from another country, a lot of people tease about the way they speak, which makes them feel bad,” another commented.

Pairing students with the same LBOTE in order to improve English learning outcomes, while attempting to facilitate a socially and culturally supportive environment, was difficult given variations in cultural affiliations, regional dialects, individuals’ competencies and attitudes. One tutee said they wanted to learn about other people’s backgrounds, another claimed he was not racist and would work with students from any culture. A tutor-tutee pair who spoke Turkish occasionally conversed about the Turkish Soccer League in their first language. “It was pretty good. Most of the time he knew what I was saying,” the tutee explained. A Hindi speaking pair had only conversed brief greetings in Hindi. They just read, conversation was limited, and the female tutee explained she did not usually talk to boys. A tutee from Iraq said his first language was limited and others could not really understand him. He did not care if he was paired with an Arabic speaking
tutor. Sudanese tutees explained they could not read Dinka and maintained they did not need a tutor who spoke their African language.

The discussion about people from different countries with a LOTE gave insight to students’ world view and perceptions of their social environment while informing each others’ understanding of Australia’s social history, and the multicultural society in which they now lived.

According to tutees, parents and caregivers were interested in and happy with their reading progress at school, however, while most had access to the internet at home to research assignments they claimed to receive limited assistance with school work. Few tutees had tutoring out of school hours, but one complained her mother insisted she attend after school reading tutoring groups. An African refugee student had previously received home reading tutor assistance as she had no caregivers in Australia able to listen to her read. Her carers were not able to visit during parent-teacher night as they had to work. Another Year 7 student said his mother had been to hospital for an operation and she would attend parent-teacher meetings next year. Caregivers of tutors were interested in their progress and several attended parent-teacher nights. Tutors received support with school work from family and friends but also assisted others at home.

At home tutors often read novels, newspapers and magazines. One identified himself as a “Telegraph man”, referring to his family’s preference for reading *The Morning Telegraph*. Some LBOTE students had access to non-English newspapers at home like a weekly Turkish publication and *The Fiji Times*.

Family, extended family and care-provider situations varied considerably among participants. One student did not like Sydney and wanted to relocate permanently to a regional country town where her extended family network of cousins lived. Another student explained his family was moving to a suburb closer to his father’s new employment and he
would be re-enrolling at a different school. Others were cared for by relatives or lived in youth shelters and foster-care homes.

A contrast between popular adolescent culture and traditional school life surfaced in regard to clothing, grooming and ornamental decoration. Hairstyles reflected creativity, some males put gel in their hair for a spiked effect. “Like a chainsaw or rooster,” explained one tutee. Students noted the teacher-librarian put blonde dye in her hair. One student wore a ring which symbolised her Celtic heritage. A couple of tutors wore distinctive nose, ear and lip jewellery. Discussion regarding piercings and decorative jewellery for fingers, ears, noses, lips, tongues and nipples revealed some students removed jewellery every few weeks and inserted new studs. A male student disclosed, “I’ve got my nipple done”. While participants did not openly associate piercings and jewellery with the “Goth” culture, they knew the cult met on Friday nights in a neighbouring suburb. An endless game of authoritarian control versus personal rights appeared to revolve around non-conformity to school uniform requirements.

**Health-Learning Difficulties.** Students believed family, health and behavioural issues affected reading progress. Some revealed they had contracted measles, experienced ear problems and missed over a year of school as a result of extended hospitalisation.

A student with dyslexia admitted he did not always wear his prescribed tinted glasses which several times over a six year period had been broken, lost or stolen. The glasses enabled him to see a whole page instead of only a small section while reading and assisted his handwriting legibility while use of a computer helped overcome poor handwriting.

One student referred to links between learning, hyperactivity and food items with high sugar content, which supported the healthy food canteen policy. Students commented they did not like healthy food canteens because there was no confectionery and suggested gym activities were a way to burn off excess calories consumed by eating chips, lollies and
cakes. Unashamedly lamingtons proved to be popular at the Australian food stall on Multicultural Day. “I love them. If you buy lamingtons, I’ll eat the whole lot,” said one tutee, while others discussed procedures for making them.

**Socio-economic-Technology.** Home study facilities are important for student learning. Nearly all tutors had their own desk and a quiet study place at home, while most tutees had a desk in their bedroom or shared one with a sibling. Many students had access to slow older model computers at home that were able to run basic word processing programs to complete assignments. Despite the progress of technology students claimed some teachers did not permit use of spell check functions and they were required to submit hand-written assignments. For students experiencing learning difficulties this practice appeared contrary to current literature which advocated the use of assistive technology (Westwood, 2003).

Not all students had internet connection at home while others had broadband services to research information. Multimedia rich applications and internet download speeds were the source of frustration for students who shared home computers with other family members. Students used computers for playing games and assignment research, but school work, rather than games, had priority in family sharing arrangements. One tutee admitted she used the computer mainly for games.

The digital revolution has transformed communication and learning. Hours of searching library shelves are replaced by remote finger tip catalogue or data base searches with immediate access to current, information-rich, on-line material housed in specialised internet websites, on-line journals and newspapers. The newspaper website reading activity scheduled as part of the PTRRCP exposed students to online text formats and assisted develop internet navigation skills required to locate information. Students commented about the internet, “It’s pretty cool using new technology,” and “Not just using your brains, you’re using the computers too.” In relation to internet newspapers, students remarked, “You can
just look at one bit.” Another observed that shopping had changed. “If you want to order something, you just click and say ‘Yes, I’ll take that’.” Tutors comically commented that tutees enjoyed using school computers, because they could sneak off onto other websites. Computer based activities students suggested for inclusion in the PTRRCP were typing skills, newspaper article writing, preparation of office documents and resumes.

Life, living and learning continued for participants of this research study following the data collection period, and brief after the study anecdotes (Appendix A) were recorded during the thesis write-up phase. These anecdotes attempt to embody the ongoing nature of the lived experience and socio-cultural phenomena explored throughout the study.

**Summary.** Consistent with an ethnographic methodological approach, the findings presented in this Chapter 8, together with those of the narrative in Chapters 5-7, provided rich descriptive data with researcher and participant perspectives in a socio-cultural context. A first level of data analysis commenced in situ throughout the narrative with domain-based footnoting of factors influencing student learning and social outcomes. Chapter 8 also used the study’s domains to begin data analysis of participants’ views. In Chapter 4 it was explained the domains were later to be collapsed, with findings re-categorised in terms of broader concepts as a second level of analysis, then organised into a lower, middle and higher order Hierarchical Concepts Model (Figure 2, p50) to facilitate higher levels of analysis. Development of a model demonstrated the search for understanding and meaning, while interpretation and discussion of relationships within the model assisted to answer the research questions (Murchison, 2010).

Chapter 9 provides a discussion of the study’s findings in context of the three research questions, academic literature, Hierarchical Concepts Model and five emerging key ideas.
CHAPTER 9

Discussion

The explorative nature of the research questions posed in Chapter 1 allowed an investigation of the readily comprehensible and phenomenologically interpretative factors influencing the learning and social outcomes of students with learning difficulties. Following analysis of the factors within the previous chapters, the study was well informed to contemplate related and relevant responses to these that may support student outcomes.

Although the initial focus of the research study was upon students in the context of their participation in a peer tutor reading support program, the in situ nature of the study resulted in the emergence of a significantly broader range of factors influencing outcomes for those students. To justly consider the scope of these data it was necessary to extend the realms of this discussion chapter beyond the peer tutor reading support program and include other facets of student learning support. Therefore, rather than containing the discussion to the research study questions, in Chapter 9 the findings are considered in context of five key ideas emerging from Chapters 5-8: ethnographic diversity, inclusive education, learning support culture, social constructivist pedagogy, and evolution of technology.

The five key ideas, which progressively evolved from this study, were embedded within the primary data sources. They therefore allowed key elements of the study’s findings to be discussed in context of the social phenomena from which they were sourced. The ideas are also housed within the study’s theoretical framework, the composition of Research Study Domains (Figure 1, p.49) and the Hierarchical Concepts Model (Figure 2, p.50).

An elevated level of abstraction and analysis was facilitated by these ideas which were selected for inclusion in the discussion chapter because: ethnographic diversity data was fundamental to the methodological nature of the research study; inclusive education was inherent to the study’s educational setting and principles of social inclusion; learning support culture embraced the total educational support environment for all students; social
constructivist pedagogy was integral to the epistemology adopted as part of the study’s theoretical framework; and the evolution of technology maintained a consistent, indisputable presence throughout the study.

**Ethnographic diversity**

This educational ethnographic research study took place in a suburb of Sydney to explore, identify, categorise, order, analyse and discuss factors influencing the learning and social outcomes of secondary high school students who participated in a daily reading peer tutor learning support program. Ethnographers consider cultural description as the initial stage of understanding the human species (Spradley, 1980). Therefore, inherent in the processes of this research study was a graphic portrayal of the ethnographic diversity of participants, gathered through qualitative methods. The diversity of participants was embodied by their racial, ancestral, cultural, social, lingual and educational backgrounds; physiological, psychological and intellectual characteristics; acquired values, attitudes, beliefs and aspirations; and the culmination of unique life experiences. It is this ethnographic diversity among school communities which inclusive education philosophy aspires to embrace (Rix et al., 2005), and which social constructivists believe provides the social context required for meaningful learning to be facilitated through an inclusive curriculum. Through the compilation of an unfolding daily school life narrative for participants in this study a diverse range of factors that influenced educational and social outcomes were revealed (Appendix B). To aid interpretation of the complexities, and assist in deriving meaning from the findings, this section is devoted to a reflection upon the rich tapestry of human characteristics woven by research study participants.

The ethnographic diversity of participants was reflected in their racial origin. Some had ancestors who had inhabited the land for 30,000 years, or who were descendants of European colonial settlers; some belonged to families who comprised the wave of the
twentieth century migrant intake, while others were recently arrived migrants or refugees. With the historical events, economic circumstances, social changes and developing technologies that had influenced them, the participants of this research study came to attend coeducational Stewart High School. The cultural diversity of the suburban population was evident in the account of the journey to school (Chapter 5), while a clear depiction of the school community’s multicultural nature was found in the narrative description of the morning scene at the bus interchange (pp.63-64). Other graphic cultural images portrayed included Multicultural Day (p.106) with traditional dancers, cultural dress and foods, while cultural symbols reflecting ethnographic diversity appeared throughout the narrative such as Aboriginal and Australian flags, Indigenous school house names, Remembrance Day red poppies, Ramadan fasting and classroom Christmas decorations.

Students’ family and social organisational living arrangements included nuclear, single parent, extended, de facto and welfare support agency settings. A variety of residential dwellings portrayed in the narrative reflected socio-economic diversity. Localised suburban and larger regional shopping centres provided the community with goods, services, entertainment facilities and employment opportunities. The study revealed these shopping centres were also a place where adolescents met to socialise. It was common knowledge among participants that some students discarded their school uniform for casual clothes, so as not to be easily identified, then truanted at shopping complexes during the day and congregated in the food courts after school. A wide range of sporting clubs and facilities within the community were also places for participants to socialise.

Another dimension of the ethnographic diversity evident within the school community was sporting culture: Christopher as a keen cricket player; Heath with his football as a constant companion; the choice of Margo to read a biography about an indigenous Australian Rules footballer; tutor-tutee conversations about soccer in Turkish; hastily organised rugby games at recess and lunch; a keynote address at the presentation day
assembly by a well known cricketer; cricket and golf scheduled activities for the Japanese schools’ visit; celebrated state competition successes of the predominantly Pacific Islander girls’ rugby team; inclusion of a rugby course in students’ curriculum choices; presentations of annual school sporting awards; tutors teasing tutees about football team losses; scheduled Physical Education lessons; and mandatory weekly afternoon sports.

Ethnographic diversity also embraced the educational, psychological, social and cultural characteristics of participants. With the focus of this research study upon a peer tutor reading support program, an expected characteristic of the tutees was standards of literacy below accepted levels for 12-13 year olds in Australian society. As unique as each individual, so were the range of factors contributing to their comparably poor standards of literacy: low self-concepts, limited or interrupted formal education, non English background, family mobility, cognitive impairment, mental health conditions (emotional, anxiety, attention, social-behavioural related disorders), disengagement from school, high absenteeism, truancy and dysfunctional family support. In contrast, most of the 15-16 year old tutors had high self-concepts, competent academic abilities and received positive teacher comments. The relationship between academic ability and self-concept, presented in Chapter 5, has implications for the social-emotional development and general well being of students experiencing learning difficulties. Given the societal emphasis placed on literacy and numeracy achievement and the low self-concepts of these students, supportive proactive strategies appear necessary to address both the educational and social-emotional developmental needs of this marginalised group.

A consideration of participants’ common attitudes and values, which are fundamental to an epistemology of social constructivism, highlighted the varied nature of characteristics which shape the learning and social outcomes of students. Most relevant to this study was the participants’ attitude of consensus regarding competent literacy skills, with both tutees and tutors considering these as essential for everyday living, success at
school and obtaining employment. Other common values included development of friendships, opportunities to socialise, attainment of financial security through employment, choice of reading materials and a well managed learning environment.

The synthesis of the diverse ethnographic characteristics of participants in this research study formed a vibrant human kaleidoscope which was well captured through use of an educational ethnography. With the unique descriptive nature of participant observation data, supplemented by that from biographic questionnaires and document analysis, an in situ graphic portrayal of the ethnographic diversity of participants and the reality of their social interactions through the study’s narrative was achieved. Furthermore, qualitative data gathered through evaluation questionnaires and focus groups enabled the participants’ range of views, attitudes and values to be more thoroughly explored.

**Inclusive education**

Inclusive education supports the position that all students engage in learning together, regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, cultural and economic factors (UNESCO, 2003). With the principle of inclusive education endorsed by the United Nations, many education bodies globally, including Australia, have adopted aligned policies (Mitchell, 2008). Social inclusion principles developed by the Australian Social Inclusion Board (Australian Government, 2011), are underpinned by the Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986, as well as Federal and State Anti-discrimination and Equal Opportunity legislation. Stemming from this legislative base, a range of social-education policies and strategic plans for Indigenous Australians, people with a disability, migrants, refugees, women and citizens with various cultural or religious beliefs have been developed by education authorities. Inclusion as a social-educational philosophy is supported by Vygotskian beliefs, which consider teaching the same content to all students in “non-special institutions” provides intellectual stimulation within meaningful social
contexts. Vygotsky believed an inclusive education environment better promoted cognitive growth and linguistic development, whilst addressing the problems of social isolation and devaluation he witnessed among institutionalised children with disabilities (Florian, 2007). Inclusive pedagogical methodologies such as peer tutoring and learning support programs like PTRRCP are therefore embraced by social constructivists to enhance students’ engagement with relevant socio-cultural learning experiences (Shunk, 2000). Inclusive education accommodates students from diverse backgrounds, in particular the socially marginalised, and supports the equitable foundations required for a socially cohesive society.

The in situ ethnographic narrative and probing exploration of participants’ views in this research study provided unique insight to the social and educational experience of students with learning difficulties, as well as issues associated with an inclusive education environment. In the Hierarchical Concepts Model developed in this study, inclusion encompassed an interconnected network of conceptually ordered and mutually supportive factors (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), which informed a discussion of issues influencing student learning and social outcomes. With a range of issues particularly relevant to inclusive education and societal cohesion, ontological security emerged from an analysis of this research study’s data as one of the most influential higher order factors. Ontological security involves a positive self and world view in which a stable emotional state is derived from a sense of order, continuity and meaning regarding the events in one's life (Bilton, Bonnett & Jones, 1996). Ontological security is inherent to the essence of human existence, and integral to the aspirations of inclusive education. However, for realisation of these ideals there are pragmatic management and curriculum issues to be addressed within a school learning environment. Revealed through the study, and to be discussed in this section, are several ontological security issues which have implications for student learning and social
outcomes: cultural identity; social bonding; engaged learning; security matters; as well as social attitudes and health.

Vygotsky, as the key exponent of social constructivism, believed students’ social, cultural, emotional and intellectual development was inherently linked to the socio-cultural contexts in which learning occurred (Vygotsky, 1978). Further to this, modern sociologists have agreed that schools are major socialisation agents for students, fulfilling an important role in shaping society’s future (Bilton et al., 1996). In light of these views it was particularly relevant to consider some of the study’s historical, social, cultural and economic data which influenced the development of students’ cultural identity, and contributed to the creation of meaning in their lives.

The influences of Aboriginal culture, British colonisation, two World Wars and multicultural migration policies evident within the school community reflected the generational transmission of historical-cultural-social significance. Ancient Indigenous tribal dances, war memorial ceremonies, international student exchange visits, religious festivals of Easter, Christmas and Ramadan as well as a day of multicultural celebration were representative of the broad socio-cultural context in which students’ cultural identity was assumed. For educators the diverse nature of Australia’s changing population, more than forty years on from the abandoned White Australia policy, which excluded non-white migration (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007), presents continuous challenges in development of students’ cultural identity and maintenance of a socially cohesive community.

Findings of this study generally reflected a harmonious school community environment, however, cultural identity and social cohesion issues remained, particularly for Indigenous Australians, African migrants and Arab Muslims. Indigenous Australian students were disproportionately represented in learning support and welfare programs, whilst their communities’ continued to be the most socially and economically disadvantaged in Australia.
In this study disadvantage was evident through ongoing welfare care issues (e.g. high absentee and truancy rates), participation in weekly personal development programs, and placement in residential welfare support programs.

Recently arrived African students, most with refugee or assisted migrant visa status, living in dislocated family units dependent upon government financial and community agency transition support, faced further challenges to learn English and adapt to a new society. Placement in the PTRRCP was due to limited reading skills determined from primary-high school transition data and the state-wide testing program results; however, involvement was impacted by limited availability of age appropriate and culturally suitable readers. Some older African students with reading ages of 8.0 years who faced Year 12 examinations were ineligible for support provisions and many developed aversion to attending training college courses. Interestingly, post-school training college and migrant resources staff claimed both Aboriginal and African students responded more favourably to relevant educational programs endorsed by their respective elders, for example, simultaneously taught literacy and job skills courses with direct relevance to participants’ daily lives were reported to be beneficial to students.

Influencing Australia’s emerging socio-cultural fabric at the time of this research study, and allegedly placing the learning and social outcomes of Arab Muslim students at risk, was a dominating community concern with terrorism. Australian media highlighted tensions between the public and Arab Muslim communities with high profile media coverage that publicly challenged the presence of Islamic groups in Australian society. Muslim community leaders, concerned about the negative impact upon Muslim youth and Arab communities in Australia, criticised the negative accompanying political commentary. This study did not specifically pursue these issues with participants and the only evidence in the narrative that may have reflected community division was an observation that, *Every morning a group of Arab boys sit in a bus shelter away from other students.*
These findings of embedded socio-cultural phenomena surrounding students’ daily lives served to raise educators’ awareness of the often complex issues faced by those who are socially marginalised. To address students’ needs stemming from these issues of cultural identity and social cohesion, educators in both developed and developing nations endorse inclusive education practices (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010).

Contemplation of the ontological security issues relating to cultural identity and social cohesion faced by these three socially marginalised groups emphasised the significance of the aspirations of inclusive education (UNESCO, 2003) and principles of social inclusion (Australian Government, 2011). Ontological security and social inclusion are inherently related. An inclusive curriculum, for example, should foster a whole school learning environment that promotes all students’ cultural identity, self-concept, self-esteem and sense of belonging to society (Dixon & Verenikina, 2007; Mittler, 2005; Rix et al., 2005). Accompanied by learning support program initiatives that sensitively respond to students’ educational and socio-cultural needs, like PTRCCP, the aspirations of inclusive education can move towards realisation.

At this point the study recognised the links between ontological security, social inclusion, inclusive education, social constructivism and peer tutoring. The use of peers in learning support programs was seen to be closely aligned to the maintenance of an ontologically secure learning environment as students participating in peer tutoring, mentoring, social support or leadership programs formed cooperative supportive relationships to address educational, social and cultural issues for enhanced outcomes. The importance of these relationships is evident in the findings where tutees described tutors as friendly and genuine; considered they possessed good tutoring and interpersonal skills; believed good working rapport existed; and viewed them as sound role models.

Social bonding emerged from this study as a significant issue in the context of ontological security and student learning outcomes. Peer tutoring literature has claimed
positive tutor-tutee relationships, based on mutual respect and belongingness, are a prerequisite to productive engagement with learning (Chandler-Olcott & Hinchman, 2005; Glasgow & Farrell, 2007; Thomas, 1993). The findings of this study go further by highlighting the importance of tutor-tutee bonding. Participating students considered positive bonding as an essential element of a successful tutoring experience and tutors suggested regular relationship bonding sessions. Tutors asserted it was unproductive if good rapport was not established. This was exemplified by one tutor, “If you don’t have that bond, you won’t be able help them because they won’t listen”. Social bonding between tutees and tutors lay at the heart of social inclusion and was fundamental to fostering of a socially cohesive school learning support culture. Tutees indicated a strong preference for bonding with tutors of the same gender which was consistent with the findings of other peer tutoring research (Deese-Roberts, 2000). While no such preferences were expressed for other socio-cultural characteristics like language, cultural and religious backgrounds, some tutees expressed an interest in exploring cultural diversity and learning about others’ backgrounds.

Students’ views that social engagement was a significant benefit of PTRRCP participation reflected the essence of social constructivism. While positive social bonding was regarded as essential to achieving the desired outcomes from tutoring experiences, it did not necessarily occur naturally among students. Tutor training, therefore should consider including theory and strategies that assist tutors cultivate desired interpersonal dynamics with tutees (Fisher & Frey, 2003). The facilitation of positive tutee-tutor relationships is addressed further in the social constructivist pedagogy section.

Social constructivist theory acknowledges that social interactions between teachers and students, as well as the relationships they forge, play a key role in promoting positive attitudes to learning and are integral in maintaining a conducive learning environment (Beck & Kosnick, 2009). From morning greetings, roll call, organisational matters, pedagogical instruction and behaviour management, the narrative and probe of participants’ views
provided in situ evidence of the wide range of teacher-student interactions. Praise, demonstrable interest in students’ progress, manner of addressing students and perceptions of fairness emerged as fundamental to sound teacher-student relationships as well as student engagement with learning. The study’s findings noted that Year 7 students responded well to teacher attention and that acknowledgment of student engagement with learning was an important motivational factor, *With tutor and teacher perseverance and encouragement throughout the year his on task reading improved*. According to the study, tutees with generally low rating self-concepts had expectations of greater teacher interest, praise, positive reinforcement and acknowledgement. This finding, which places significant student value upon feedback, supports claims feedback has a considerable influence upon student learning outcomes (Hattie & Temperley, 2007).

Occasional humorous teacher-student interchanges played an influential role in engendering constructive interpersonal relationships. Several narrative examples of humour, relating to absence, study habits, menu prices and preparedness for lessons acted as an agent of social cohesion. A tutor joked that his tutee had really been holidaying in Fiji rather than absent sick, the librarian sarcastically suggested a tutor was tired because of holiday studying, and the program coordinator joked with one student that their expensive garlic soup menu price meant it was destined for a posh restaurant. This study noted that exchanges of humour assisted in breaking down student-teacher barriers created by the formalities of daily routine, and humanised these relationships through shared laughter, which in turn contributed to a more socially harmonious learning environment. Similar claims that humour has the potential to create a positive classroom environment, reduce anxiety, maintain attention, promote comprehension, foster cognitive development and assist manage student behaviour are found in associated literature (Hayes, 2006). Related literature notes the important difference between the positive use of humour as opposed to sarcasm which can be used to reinforce power relations (Clough, Garner, Pardeck & Yuen, 2005).
High levels of student engagement reflect the ideals of inclusive education and social constructivist approaches to learning. The primary intention of PTRRCP was to enrich students’ literacy learning experience and enhance their engagement with the secondary education program through supportive tutors and the use of motivating reading materials. However, for meaningful learning to occur, the study found that fundamental pragmatic issues needed to be supported by consistently reinforced expectations regarding attendance, behaviour and participation. Punctuality, truancy, absenteeism, grooming, preparedness for school, and anti-social behaviours emerged as symptoms of other student educational, social, welfare or health issues which, as part of an inclusive education environment, required referral to intervention programs or support services as part of the whole school’s learning support culture. Examples of these symptoms in the narrative included chronic poor attendance by Rick and Kirsty and anti-social behaviours exhibited by Suzanne, Steven and Frank.

Another pragmatic issue impacting upon the students’ ontological security was property security. In this study the narrative mentioned aggravating issues of computer theft, graffiti, vandalism and stealing of students’ personal items, which undermined socio-cultural values and efforts to establish a socially supportive school learning environment. Related literature acknowledges that the monetary, social and psychological costs of school vandalism place significant burdens on school communities (Goldstein, 1996). A decision by public education authorities to erect security fences around school perimeters addressed many violations, leaving occasional occurrences of spray painted graffiti to be quickly cleaned by private graffiti cleaning contractors or the school caretaker, who claimed that swift removal deterred further incidents. Nevertheless, theft among students of personal items, such as iPods, MP3 players, mobile phones and calculators remained an issue of concern, and impacted negatively upon school community cohesion, group identity and interpersonal relationships. Apart from calculators, school authorities did not accept these
items as necessary and advised students not to bring valuables to school, but they still did. In reality these technological items formed an integral part of early twenty-first century adolescent culture and played a significant role in their communication-social support network. Loss or damage of these items, therefore, had potentially significant impact upon students’ sense of ontological security at school.

Social attitudes with racist, sexist, classist or moralistic overtones can transgress an ontologically secure school environment, which is reliant upon a sense of belonging and mutual respect. With such attitudes sometimes negatively expressed through teasing, harassment or bullying, more recent management approaches to such behaviours have endeavoured to categorise the underlying attitudinal reasons and address their generating factors (Dixon & Smith, 2011). Ideally inclusive schools have policies, processes and programs to manage such issues proactively. *Stewart High School* nominated an anti-racism officer from within the school staff; celebrated cultural diversity on Harmony Day; held annual multicultural days; and implemented peer support, equity peer leaders and peer tutoring program initiatives. While few concerning incidents were recorded among participants during this research study, negative attitudes towards homosexuality emerged several times throughout the study. Examples included an effeminate male student transferred from a boys’ school as a result of continual sexual harassment, repeated intimidation of a male staff member leading to a behavioural warning letter being issued to parents, and on three occasions executive staff ridiculing homosexual males in front of whole staff gatherings. During focus groups, one student aligned female interests with homosexual males, and despite anti-discrimination legislation, little was offered in the school curriculum that addressed issues relating to sexuality. Associated literature claims there is meagre evidence of sexuality related content, knowledgeable educators, or inclusive educational practices in secondary schools, whilst disproportionate incidents of fear, harassment and bullying of homosexual youth in educational environments have been linked
to substance abuse, mental health issues and higher risk of suicide (Sears, 2005). The findings of this study, consistent with other recent Australian educational research, which determined that secondary schools were an ominous environment for same sex attracted students (Mikulsky, 2006), suggest realisation of the ideals of inclusive and ontologically secure learning environments are subject to significant pressure from prevalent social attitudes. Furthermore, the findings highlight the relevance of equal opportunity legislation that executive staff claimed “protects gays or blacks from getting the sack”.

The final issue relating to ontological security to be discussed in this section is student health. Adequate nourishing food, sufficient sleep and regular exercise are necessary to maximise positive outcomes for students (Neinstein, 2008). Together with unsatisfactory diets, a lack of exercise impacts upon adolescents’ learning and social development by contributing to poor concentration, obesity and psycho-social health related conditions (Jelalian & Steele, 2008). In situ examples which highlighted the prevalence of student health issues include: students consuming hot chips and soft drinks before school; overweight students Terry, Travis, Lisa and Waylon; delayed ADHD diagnosis for Steven and David; Cannon House attendance of several students; and Suzanne threatening to kill herself. The ethnographic nature of the study’s data also facilitated phenomenological insight into students’ lives. Tutors acknowledged tutees’ intra and interpersonal states influenced their daily engagement with learning. Most students maintained a stable emotional state and the array of natural feelings experienced were appropriately self-managed with some adult guidance. However, the social and emotional difficulties faced by some students developed into ongoing, challenging behavioural issues. Students like Frank, Suzanne, Steven and David needed to participate in personal-social development support programs. Depression, anxiety and occasional instances of self-harm which occurred among students, and reports of anonymous railway line suicides in the community, were symptoms of troubling mental health issues within the socio-cultural fabric of this society.
Whilst students’ health issues undoubtedly influence their learning and social outcomes, participation in PTRRCP did not directly address these. Peer tutoring can, however, advance a supportive stable peer social network with positive role modelling, mentoring (Allen & Eby, 2010) and interpersonal relationships facilitating social bonding that enhances students’ sense of belonging, self-concept (Leung, 2007) as well as their self-esteem (Choo, 2008). Peer tutoring can therefore contribute to the creation of an ontologically secure learning and social environment for students which may assist them better self-manage health related issues in their lives.

The complex issues of ontological security relevant to the lives of students from diverse backgrounds, some of which have been discussed in this section, have significant implications for educators seeking to establish an inclusive and socially cohesive school environment.

**Learning support culture**

Through the major socialisation agents of families, peers, religion, mass media and schools, students develop socio-cultural values which give meaning to various aspects of their lives (Giddens, 2006). It is these socio-cultural values, together with social interaction, that social constructivists believe are the essence of the learning process (Shunk, 2000). As one of the most influential agents of socialisation, schools endeavour to establish, develop and foster the fundamental principles, values and mores of the society they serve. The PTRRCP, as the focus of this research study, provided the social-educational setting for a key school based learning support initiative that reflected societal expectations of high literacy standards. The significance of these socio-cultural values are indicated by the *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy* that advised literacy teaching be incorporated in all secondary teacher education courses (DEST, 2005), and through the government’s introduction of national literacy tests for all students. In this section, acquisition of proficient
literacy skills as a key societal value is discussed in the context of socio-cultural relevance, personal values and peer social status of participants, while the socio-educational concept of a school learning support culture is embraced as a foundation stone for the study findings.

Learning support to promote equitable curriculum access in twenty-first century Australian high schools is based upon egalitarian social, legislative and philosophical beliefs about learning and society. These are similar beliefs upon which Bell, Lancaster and Fowle based the use of peer tutoring in the 1800s (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989) to support the learning of socially disadvantaged students. Present-day school governance is guided by a complementary range of social-educational policies that are underpinned by these beliefs and that endorse equal opportunity, social inclusion and inclusive education. However, despite these policies, comprehensive mainstream public high schools like Stewart High are found wedged on a polarised spectrum, between public schools for students selected according to academic merit and expensive fee paying private schools at one end of the range, and special schools at the other. Even within the structure of this educational system general educators continue to struggle with an increasing diversity of students who challenge the prevailing common curriculum and ability grouping practices (Ferguson, Kozleski & Smith, 2005).

Successful implementation of learning support initiatives to cater for students’ diverse needs requires commitment of school management, teachers, parents, students and the wider community, together with adequate resourcing levels (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2007). Learning support policies, together with pro-active programs and inclusive classroom strategies to improve the outcomes for students experiencing learning difficulties, help nurture a school learning support culture.

An inclusive learning support culture, however, is often required to coexist with societal values that endorse traditionally competitive aspects of high school education. Students’ future pathway and social status are influenced by test marks, examination scores,
class rankings, report card grades and entry benchmarks for further or tertiary education. The policy and educational contexts, in which inclusive values and principles are to be enacted, are often hostile environments with competing values, multiple priorities, practical difficulties, and diverse interpersonal relationships (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). These competitive aspects of education can be a source of tension for students with learning difficulties and provide further challenges for the fostering of a positive school learning support culture.

A narrative example of social-emotional tension generated by this competitive ethos is found in the Mathematics classroom scene when a teacher returned examination papers and produced a graph of the yearly examination results for all classes. Peer social status was quickly assigned by students to others on the basis of their examination results, amid comments about the lowest results being from the learning support class, described as the “dumb class”. An example from focus group discussions highlighted adolescent peer acceptance or social status pressures, when Silei, Metin and Waylon perceived they were being considered as different, thought of as “dumb” or treated like “a baby”, and expressed their reluctance to engage in the PTRRCP. Inclusion literature claims that traditional principles of special education promote the exclusion of students from general education classrooms through provision of separate programs and services. It is asserted that exclusionary and categorical service delivery models poorly serve students from diverse backgrounds, while long-established strategies for referring, screening, identifying and placing students into specialised services or classrooms result in an increase in negative stereotypes based on disability labels (Ferguson, Kozleski & Smith, 2005).

For many students, whose literacy needs were influenced by their innate abilities, past as well as present educational experiences and social-cultural contexts, the PTRRCP was the first and most significant high school learning support program in which they participated. Designed to assist adolescents identified as experiencing learning difficulties
acquire the literacy skills necessary to access the curriculum, the PTRRCP aimed to engage students through peer tutor instruction using attractively presented, curriculum-based reading materials from a range of genres, suitable for various reading abilities.

Despite low self-concepts regarding academic criteria, as revealed by the Self Description Questionnaire (Marsh, 1990a), tutees generally considered participation in the PTRRCP as positive and beneficial for development of their reading skills. Nearly all tutees appreciated tutors’ reading support, as well as the opportunity to socialise and make new friends. Tutees’ level of engagement in the PTRRCP related to their perceptions of the importance of reading, how they rated their own reading ability, and what they thought would be the implications of participation upon their peer social status.

The social and emotional well-being of adolescents is associated with what they believe are others’ perceptions of them (Beamon, 2001). Adolescents’ preoccupation with what others think is referred to as the imaginary audience phenomenon (Elkind, 1981) and may become evident through overly sensitive or emotional reactions. The findings of this study suggest that in order to engage adolescents effectively with learning support initiatives, educators need to consider students’ sensitivity to their self-image, peer social status, perceptions of learning and themselves as learners. Consideration of these social phenomena during program development and student placement will limit counter-productive reactions or development of negative attitudes.

PTRRCP was, however, only one of a number of learning support initiatives, which enhanced student outcomes and assisted fashion the learning support culture. The diversity of student learning needs in mainstream high schools, together with their social and emotional development needs, requires a multifaceted range of inclusive learning support options, from whole school, entire class, targeted group and individualised programs on and off-campus or home based. Evident throughout the study was the need for a suite of learning support options to cater for a large number of students experiencing literacy difficulties and
who also had social-behavioural needs, like David, Frank, Kevin, Kirsty, Rick, Robert, Steven, Suzanne and Terry. The Fast Track program indicated how peer tutoring can be used effectively as part of an integrated and coordinated targeted group approach to addressing the diverse needs of students (Mayer, Van Acker, & Lochman, 2009).

At the heart of a whole school learning support culture are social constructivist beliefs that social-cultural interactions between students, teachers and parents contribute to the formation of values and construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Literacy, viewed by students as having a serviceable purpose, was deemed essential for self-survival in regard to learning, employment and successful functioning in society. Participants accepted that working life is a matter of economic necessity, and whilst aspirations of trade-based occupations prevailed, university education was rarely considered.

Accordingly, participation in the PTRRCP was generally accepted by students as a beneficial, practical, short-term, literacy learning support intervention, which supported socio-cultural values espoused by their school, family, local community and education authorities (DEST, 2005). The study found, however, that students did not necessarily perceive literacy as a means to access life enriching knowledge, comprehensive understanding or enlightened meaning. Ironically these findings suggest that students’ apparent working-middle class views of literacy may well be perpetuated and enculturated through the social-cultural interactions promoted by the theory surrounding social constructivism. Supporting this view is literature relating to student literacy outcomes and socio-economic status that claims poor achievement is an integral product of the sociological, political and economic conditions in which schools are organised (Lambirth, 2011). Within these findings lies a challenge for public school educators to facilitate learning experiences that broaden students’ perceptions of literacy beyond daily functional purposes. In doing so educators can assist in circumventing the perpetuation of social-class
aligned socio-cultural values; enrich students’ school education experience; diversify adolescents’ world view; and increase their positive contributions to society.

While societal values played a significant influential role in the initial engagement of students with the PTRRCP, reading materials with perceived socio-cultural relevance helped sustain student interest and motivation. The scheduled learning tasks enjoyed most by tutees (Table 8), notably reflected the social constructivist view that quality learning occurred when authentic tasks were presented in a meaningful socio-cultural context (Daniels, 2008). Popular PTRRCP reading materials covering of a wide range of student interests included: 
The Book of Records, The Sydney Daily Post website, and a selection of culturally diverse cookbooks. Both the newspaper website and cookbook menu learning activities presented relevant real-life tasks and generated a high level of engagement. Consistent with societal values towards literacy, the SLA test papers were considered by tutees and tutors as the most useful reading material in the PTRRCP (Table 9).

The issue of socio-cultural bias in programmed educational materials needs to be constantly addressed in an emerging multicultural community, as it can influence socially marginalised students’ perceptions of relevance, which impact upon their motivation and engagement. In this study bias was evident through the limited range of indigenous authored PTRRCP novels or those with cross-cultural characters, settings and plots, as well as the predominance of middle-upper class lifestyle values that infiltrated the content of SLA test materials (Covaleskie, 2002). Established gender role stereotypes were a relevance issue for several male tutees, who perceived cookbooks as being more appropriate to females and car websites as suitable for males only. Beyond the PTRRCP, and providing further evidence of the relationship between socio-cultural relevance and engagement in learning, the narrative cited examples where Aboriginal and African students engaged meaningfully in pragmatic educational programs, which were endorsed by community cultural elders.
Personal choice emerged from the research study findings as a closely held socio-cultural value of participants. This finding supported literature that claims incorporation of choice in learning and assessment tasks improves both student engagement and learning outcomes (Christenbury et al., 2009). Tutees in this study clearly expressed a preference for free choice of reading material over a scheduled program of curriculum based texts, and inferred it was integral to their personal rights to exercise freedom to choose reading material. PTRRCP tutors’ claims that tutees empowered with learning choices would be more highly motivated due to greater interest in the content are supported by adolescent literacy literature (Wood & Blanton, 2009). Participants’ suggestions that comics, magazines, humorous books and more computer activities be included in future reading support programs offered an alternative contemporary approach to literacy development.

While conventional definitions of literacy refer to the skills of reading, writing, speaking, viewing and listening in a range of contexts, 21st century definitions also include the use and production of traditional texts and new communications technologies via spoken language, print and multimedia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). Accompanied by tutors’ idea of scheduled free choice periods, these approaches would allow tutees personal freedom to choose reading materials and mediums of relevance or interest. Additionally, provision of a selection of programmed curriculum related material would empower students with the responsibility to make choices about their learning, and generate what the literature described as autonomy related motivation (Sweet & Snow, 2003). Provision of a selection of resources would allow students, who expressed desire for particular reading material, an opportunity to guide their own learning and literacy development during reading support programs.

Adolescent values also continually challenged school policies. Behind the school uniform image was a contemporary popular adolescent culture of personal choices reflected by ornamental jewellery, hairstyles, cosmetics, clothing, electronic devices, skateboards,
fast-food and romances. An endless daily effort required to reinforce the uniform policy was evident in the narrative, *Patrolling teachers issue students without correct uniform with parking inspector-style carbon copy tickets, which may result in a loss of privileges, such as attending school dances or excursions* (p.66). By contrast, it was apparent on casual clothing Mufti Day that … *they relished the personal freedoms it allowed* (p.104). Meanwhile, reinforcement of the electronic equipment policy was necessary, *Theft of mobile phones or iPods was considered “tough luck”, because they were not permitted at school* (pp.114-115). Student discontent was also evident in relation to policy promoting healthy eating … *they did not like healthy food canteens because there was no confectionery and suggested gym activities were a way to burn off excess calories ...* (pp.152-153). The disparities between adolescent culture and school corporate culture appeared to be the source of continuous low level conflicts between students and education authorities. Paradoxically for some marginalised students, particularly those with behavioural issues, enforcement of these conformity requirements resulted in exclusion from school activities and undermined their engagement with a supportive learning environment. The ongoing adolescent versus corporate cultural conflicts contrasted with the principles of inclusive education and social constructivism, which both emphasise the importance of culture in learning (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000).

Students’ participation in the PTRRCP, which assisted realisation of the socio-cultural values advocated by school, families and the wider community regarding literacy, was primarily intrinsically motivated. Both tutees and tutors acknowledged they valued involvement in the program. For tutees, the PTRRCP facilitated daily reading and social support, intensive individualised inter-personal engagement, immediate praise and encouraging commentary, recognition of their reading progress, and internalised satisfaction from improved reading skills. Contrastingly, tutors experienced personal fulfilment through helping others in the program, received recognition in the school newsletter, public
acknowledgment at award ceremonies, as well as formal accreditation through tutoring course certificates, semester reports, community service statements and school leaver references. Motivation as a process that aroused, sustained and regulated student behaviour appeared as a higher order factor in the study’s Hierarchical Concepts Model. It was the sharing of socio-cultural values inherent to social constructivist learning theory (Beck & Kosnik, 2006) that acted as a dynamic source of students’ intrinsic motivation throughout the PTRRCP.

An egalitarian high school learning support culture that reflects societal values should ideally be characterised by inclusive strategies and programs of socio-cultural relevance that assist all students equitably access the curriculum (Ainscow et al., 2006). In inclusive schools, support programs for specific groups come together through curriculum content, learning and assessment strategies that are valued by local communities and families (Ferguson, Kozleski & Smith, 2005). Central to ensuring an enriched learning support culture, and integral to Total Quality Management theory (Sallis, 2002), is the development of a coordinated operational plan that advances a common values framework through consensus of key stakeholders. Aligned to social-educational policy framework, a learning support operational plan should outline objectives, strategies, resources, performance indicators and evaluation processes as a component of a whole school organisational plan. Plans that reflect an inclusive social constructivist approach to learning support involve school personnel, families and community organisations in planning; advocate socio-cultural values; foster understanding of students’ support needs; and establish links to community facilities that help bridge socio-cultural-economic disadvantage. To fully realise an inclusive educational system, the work of traditional school districts, school bureaucracies and education professionals also needs to be contemplated (Ferguson, Kozleski & Smith, 2005).
Remaining at the core of an inclusive learning support culture, nevertheless, are social constructivist initiatives like PTRRCP, in which human relationships, social interactions, exchanges of socio-cultural values and intersubjectivity forms the basis of socially meaningful learning (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Kozulin et al., 2003; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000; Rogoff, 1990; Schwandt, 2001).

**Social constructivist pedagogy**

In this study, pedagogical methodology is positioned as a middle order concept in the Hierarchical Concepts Model, and therefore is a necessary component of any meaningful discussion of factors influencing student learning and social outcomes. This section discusses peer tutoring as a social constructivist pedagogical method in the context of relevant literature, previous research and the study’s findings.

Peer tutoring is a pedagogical strategy utilised from ancient times to provide instruction and develop knowledge (Kozulin et al., 2003), but has also been deployed throughout history to compensate for funding or teacher shortages (Ehly & Larsen, 1980), and to deliver additional learning assistance to greater numbers of students (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989). More recent literature recognises peer tutoring as a pedagogical strategy that contributes to a supportive peer social structure (Allen & Eby, 2010), while enhancing the learning and social development of both readers (Gordon, 2005), and tutors (Clemenz, 2002; Roberge, 1995). This ethnographic research study found that adolescent students considered socially interactive peer tutoring engagements as opportunities to improve essential literacy skills, develop friendships and socialise. Such socially relevant and supportive experiences, facilitated by the processes associated with peer tutoring, are fundamental to an epistemology of social constructivism with social interaction, interpersonal communication, mediated instruction, direct feedback and positive reinforcement from caring role models or mentors’ tutoring forming the basis of learning.
PTRRCP tutors used mediation and scaffolding methods integral to Vygotsky’s conceptual Zone of Proximal Development (Kozulin et al., 2003) to facilitate individual instruction and explicit teaching of literacy strategies. These included clear explanations of reading activities; use of the Pause, Prompt and Praise strategy; segmenting difficult words into syllables for text decoding; keeping readers focused; praising readers; using prediction, questioning and discussion of texts; and assisting tutees complete scaffolded activity worksheets. This methodological approach acknowledged that tutees experiencing difficulties needed to develop cognitive strategies to enhance the simultaneous acquisition of essential text decoding skills and comprehension strategies (O’Connor & Vadasy, 2011; Pearson, 2002).

The fundamental tutoring method used in the program for text decoding was PPP, a scaffolding strategy, which acknowledged students’ potential to learn with the application of metacognitive support processes. Cognitive mapping and guided learning activities, as recommended strategies to promote comprehension and meaningful discussion (Pearson, 2002), were the fundamental scaffold and mediation processes facilitated by tutors. The metacognitive processes used in PPP included pausing, to allow tutees extra processing time to decode text, prompting, to provide tutees with phonetic, semantic or contextual clues, and praising, to verbally reinforce tutees’ efforts and increase their motivation. Prompting often involved encouraging tutees to segment words as a text decoding strategy, in order to foster independent reading skills (Wheldall, 1995). More specifically, prompting to decode text required clarification of individual sounds, sound blends and syllables as word building strategies, or predictions based upon contextual clues. Accompanied by modelled reading, these prompts helped consolidate students’ text decoding ability. However, tutees who were not given explicit instruction that linked sound blends and syllable text decoding with spelling, did not appear to automatically adopt the strategy in their writing of words.
With feedback considered as one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement (Hattie & Temperley, 2007), praise was appropriately emphasised in the tutor training program. Use of praise and positive reinforcement is also supported by Vygotskian social constructivist learning theory as it reinforces shared socio-cultural values. During theory and role playing activities students readily adopted many traditional teacher-like sayings such as, “well done”, “good work” and “excellent”. Popular adolescent colloquial expressions like “mad”, “cool”, “keep it up”, “super” and “fantastic” were also used during the PTRRCP to reinforce tutees’ reading progress. The language used by peers to provide explanations promotes social relevance and enhance understanding for tutees (Wellington, 2006).

Tutors were encouraged to accompany their praise with an explanation to reinforce good practice (e.g. “Well done, you used syllables to decode the difficult words” or “Super, your eyes moved ahead of the text you are reading, which improved your fluency”). However, such reinforcement was not consistently applied. The use of thoughtful, explanatory praise was intended to encourage, motivate, and provide valuable feedback to students to reinforce sound reading practice. Praise, as promoted through tutor training and the PPP strategy, initially assisted tutors establish positive feelings and a good working rapport with tutees. Over time, however, as the tutor-tutee relationship relaxed, the frequency of tutor praise reduced and regular reminders were required. Personalised praise from tutors focused upon individual tutees and was inherent to the maintenance of positive tutee-tutor relationships. Teacher praise of students was also important to a productive learning environment, however, individualised praise was less frequent with general teacher comments more often directed to a larger group to reinforce work and behavioural expectations.

Questioning and discussion, to promote explicit understanding of the material being read, was an essential pedagogical method used by PTRRCP tutors. It also served as a
stimulus for social interaction between students. Increased opportunities for guided verbalisation, where texts read can be discussed and associated thoughts articulated, aid development of students’ language skills, enrich comprehension, assist in creating meaning and stimulate higher order thinking (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989; Lenski & Lewis, 2008; Pearson, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978). Oral tutor-tutee discussions position learning in a socially interactive context, allow progressive mediation of language and thoughts, and develop cognitive processes required to assist learning (Vygotsky, 1987). In a non threatening one-to-one instructional situation in which the opportunities to respond (OTR) are multiplied, the questioning and discussion method is particularly effective (Betts, Betts & Gerber-Eckland, 2007). The direct, applied and inferential questioning of texts read by tutees helps them develop a more comprehensive understanding (Klingner et al., 2007), while accompanying and follow-up discussions of socio-cultural relevance promote collaborative learning to further enhance meaning (Kozulin et al., 2003).

General observations throughout this research study found peer tutors most often used direct questions, and that tutees’ understanding was rarely challenged by the use of applied or inferential questioning. Also limited in frequency were tutee-tutor discussions of socio-cultural relevance that related to texts read. During focus group discussions, tutors acknowledged they rarely asked questions relating to labels, captions, tables and graphics or engaged in extended post reading discussion. Despite this, tutees thought tutors generally asked good questions, but conceded that they themselves asked few clarifying questions.

Interesting observations made during the study noted more focused tutee-tutor interactive discussion appeared to occur when students were engaged with numeracy based learning activities during practice for the SNA. Mathematics is generally considered more sequential and hierarchical in nature than other subjects. It is claimed that good numeracy teaching should be accompanied by considerable classroom discussion and opportunities for students to articulate numerical processes while solving problems (Westwood, 2000).
Although numeracy activities involved less text decoding, intensive tutee-tutor discussion was usually required to clarify comprehension and explain necessary numeric processes to assist problem solving.

The PTRRCP largely met the recommendations of recent research studies in relation to tutoring frequency, programmed material, tutor training and evaluation (Greene et al., 2001). This study’s findings that on-going tutor training and monitoring of skills were essential to maintain quality tutoring were supported by previous research (e.g. Gordon, 2005; Greene et al., 2001). Recruitment of motivated volunteer tutors with interpersonal qualities and the potential to develop sound tutoring skills by means of written application, teacher screening and social-learning commitment contracts, emerged as fundamental to the provision of quality tutoring. Due to the interpersonal intensity of tutor-tutee relationships, the selection, pairing and social bonding processes were vital factors in facilitating successful tutoring engagements.

Volunteer tutor training included theory sessions, simulated role playing, ongoing practical assessment and the compilation of a portfolio, as part of a registered course to equip tutors with the basic knowledge and skills of tutoring. While these theoretical and practical components of tutor training prepared tutors with the necessary knowledge about the reading process, as well as elementary tutoring skills, more advanced skilling appeared necessary to enable them to establish and stimulate tutees’ prior knowledge, facilitate relevant socio-cultural discussions and promote higher order thinking. Tutor training include the development of sound interpersonal skills, awareness of the learning issues faced by students with special needs, and more complex mediation-instructional techniques (Betts et al., 2007; Clemenz, 2002; Fisher & Frey, 2003; Greene et al., 2001, Heflin & Alaimo, 2007). Effective, socially aware tutors can assist tutees create meaning through socially contextualised questioning, as well as relevant, elevated dialogue. This study determined that to realistically expect tutors to competently execute a range of techniques that facilitated
higher levels of comprehension and depth of meaning for diverse learners, a more comprehensive training program would be required that included a focus upon higher order tutoring skills. This observation was supported by tutors who considered competency as important and suggested an extended training course with more practical work.

To better address pedagogical challenges associated with inclusive education and the needs of diverse learners, some researchers claim it is necessary to focus on learning styles and associated cognitive processes to improve students’ learning outcomes (Davis, 2009). This research study noted that PTRRCP students mostly enjoyed reading materials which included high visual content. Attractive, high stimulus reading materials aroused readers’ interest, and motivated students to engage with the accompanying socially and culturally relevant learning activities. Student engagement in learning was further supported through peer tutors’ adoption of scaffolded and mediated instruction, with personalised positive reinforcement (Kozulin et al., 2003; Vygotsky, 1978).

Emerging from the study as a successful pedagogical strategy in an inclusive education environment, particularly for students with a mild intellectual impairment and speech-language difficulties, was Repetition, Revisiting and Revision (RRR) in the context of socially relevant learning tasks. RRR not only supports text decoding instruction but assists students acquire other skills, processes and knowledge (Gargiulo, 2010). An in situ example of the effectiveness of this strategy was noted during the television news reporting activity, a social constructivist authentic learning task with a meaningful socio-cultural context (Daniels, 2008), where all students experiencing reading difficulties were able to master and confidently deliver their scripts.

Integral to successful pedagogical strategy and a harmonious social learning environment is sound behaviour management practice (Rogers, 2011). In a social constructivist learning environment, the communication of society’s socio-cultural values and the reinforcement of behavioural expectations are facilitated through interpersonal
relationships, social interactions and essential student-teacher dialogue (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). The socially supportive structure of the PTRRCP, which aimed to facilitate daily contact with positive role models, mentoring support and positive reinforcement for tutees, was inherent to positive behaviour management. Personal and working relationships that lay at the core of quality tutoring engagements required development. Social-educational activities designed to suitably introduce tutor-tutee pairs, foster rapport, enhance student bonding, enrich relationships and promote interpersonal reflection needed to be facilitated for successful program outcomes. The close relationship between students experiencing literacy difficulties and those with behavioural problems in this study emphasised the importance of establishing supportive tutee-tutor relationships for the maintenance of a productive learning environment (Crockett, Gerber & Landrum, 2007).

Consistent with Vygotsky’s ZPD theory, scaffolding and mediation strategies can be used to support students as they develop the skills required for self-regulated learning and social behaviour (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). Programs involving trained peer mentors or peer mediators are part of a whole school community behaviour management strategy that utilises cognitive behavioural approaches and contributes further to a socially supportive learning environment (Mayer, Van Acker, & Lochman, 2009). In such an environment, socially desirable behaviours that reflect society’s values, such as courtesy, care, cooperation, team work, problem solving and social interactions require constant communication and modelling by both peers and teachers.

Some of the pragmatic technical issues associated with the implementation of social constructivist pedagogy and quality peer tutoring programs have been discussed in this section. Further to this discussion, the next section focuses upon issues relating to emerging technologies in the context of social constructivism, peer tutoring and outcomes for students experiencing learning difficulties.
Evolution of technology

Technology will continue to play an increasingly significant role in the delivery of educational services to students in this digital age of the twenty-first century (Schrum & Levin, 2009). Evidence of the evolution of this technology appeared in situ throughout the research study’s narrative in three distinct contexts: corporate-organisational, pedagogical, and adolescent-culture, each of which played an integral role in the provision of education to students. In this section of the discussion chapter, examples of the evolution of technology are provided for each of these contexts, before consideration of the significant implications for students’ social and learning outcomes.

In this research study, the public education system, as a large administrative body of hundreds of thousands of students and employees, and the high school which managed over one thousand students and staff, both adopted technology for corporate-organisational purposes. In situ examples included the development of the school’s website; introduction of public education sector online portals for staff and students; the issuing of personalised email addresses; and the release of a downloadable results software package to aid the analysis of students’ literacy and numeracy test performances. Introduction of this technology for corporate-organisational purposes across the public education sector was primarily intended to facilitate more efficient administration, data management and communication with students, parents, staff, as well as the public.

The second distinct context was the evolution of technology for pedagogical purposes, which included the installation of internet cabling throughout the school; establishment of a new computer room; upgrading of computers for multimedia compatibility; inclusion of online educational resources in teaching programs; introduction of a mandatory on-line computer skills test for Year 10 students; use of computer drives with attached headsets for listening to audio-book CDs; and students’ use of word processing software on laptop computers. Technology has always been a part of pedagogical
practice, ranging from the sand trays used as cheap writing material by Andrew Bell in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, during the first recorded, systematic, peer tutorial learning project in the western world (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989), to the wireless internet connected laptop computers used by students in this study to read The Sydney Daily Post website in the twenty-first century. The evolution of digital age technology, however, has appeared to penetrate education and the broader society to such an extent that future historians may parallel the historical significance of this digital age to that of the agricultural and industrial revolutions (Miller, 2011).

In a cultural context, the evolution of technology was most evident in the narrative accompanying this research through adolescent participants’ personal use of pocket-size game machines for amusement; MP3 players for music entertainment; mobile telephones for communication; and computers for recreational pursuits. This evolving technology increasingly permeated the social, cultural and educational frameworks of adolescents’ lives and appeared an inescapable reality of their future. It is therefore important that an epistemology of social constructivism, through which Vygotsky considered knowledge to be socially and culturally constructed, adopt available technology in educational management, school communication, curriculum and pedagogical methodology. In this way education will sustain social, cultural and economic relevance for adolescents exposed to rapidly evolving technology and the “new literacies”.

Of particular relevance to this study is the ability of evolving assistive technology to engage socially marginalised students, reduce social disadvantage, and positively influence their learning and social outcomes. Evidence from this study suggested that appropriate use of emerging technology not only motivated students, but empowered students and enriched their learning opportunities through improved curriculum access. The use of technology increased students’ enjoyment of learning while developing necessary digital age skills. Observations noted that students were attracted to computer based learning activities, in
particular those where the interactive nature of computer resources stimulated student senses with a continuous display of colourful graphics, motion and sound. This stimulus appeared to increase students’ motivation and their ability to concentrate for extended periods of time. These observations add support to the Multimedia Learning Theory, developed by educational psychologist, Richard Mayer, and which acknowledges that simultaneous presentations of material involving visual and verbal sensory modalities optimises student learning (Mayer, 2001).

The in situ narrative described students as being attracted like magnets to computers when the library doors opened, of being particularly excited about using computers for learning activities, and demonstrating particular interest in website based learning tasks. These findings are supported by similar claims, based on case studies, where young people exhibit a higher level of engagement and more positive attitudes to learning when technology is incorporated. One case study cites a music teacher’s use of specific software with Year 9 students to compose music for the sound track of a film, as highly motivating and engaging (Sutherland, Robertson & John, 2009). This case also exemplifies a social constructivist approach, where adolescent learning is enhanced through a relevant meaningful socio-cultural context and authentic real-life learning experience (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Daniels, 2008).

New technologies can be considered as cognitive tools (Jonassen & Reeves, 1996), which provide the scaffolding and mediation required to bridge the performance gap (Kozulin et al., 2003). Computer software programs do not replace tutors but become intellectual partners in enhancing students’ learning experiences through the facilitation of critical thinking and higher order learning (Jonassen & Reeves, 1996). Vygotsky’s work from the 1930s, therefore, has remained relevant in the rapidly expanding digital age, with new technology able to contribute to the cognitive and pedagogical processes required to support student learning (Somekh, 2007). The ethnographic narrative referred to several
examples of the empowerment of students with learning difficulties through the use of assistive technology: David’s use of a word processor to produce an attractive piece of writing; Clara, Andrea, Kevin and David’s use of audio-book CDs as a substitute tutor to assist in the successful reading of entire novels; Margo’s use of the internet to access a culturally based website for a mass media assignment; and the PTRRCP’s programming of The Sydney Daily Post’s website, which taught students online newspaper navigation and information search skills.

New technologies with the potential to facilitate the scaffolding, mediation and motivation required to support tutees’ learning can be expected to play an increasingly supportive role for the work of peer tutors. Self-learning tutorial software programs can support or be a substitute for peer tutors’ instructions (Greenwood, Hou, Delquadri, Terry & Arreaga-Mayer, 2001). Peer tutors can also aid the development of students’ computing skills, and new technologies can be utilised to deliver online tutoring support (De Smet, 2008). In future years, as the evolution of technology continues, it is likely that cyber tutoring, previously conducted through keyboard text entry exchange, will become more personal and flexible with face to face video tutoring and colour animated instructions effected through light-weight, wireless mobile devices.

An advancement of digital technology was evident in the delivery of education, even during the relatively short period of this study. The internet was increasingly used as a source of diverse educational material in all subject areas, while students were more frequently required to use ICT to complete learning tasks, assignments, tests or examinations. At the same time, new technology improved the efficiency of a large education bureaucracy through online school administration, student management, marking of examination papers as well as the processing and analysis of results. These continuous developments in ICT, together with improved internet speeds, facilitated greater use of
motivating, multimedia rich, learning experiences, and enabled flexible delivery options for 
Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) (De Smet, 2008).

Online, twenty-four hours a day, curriculum delivery potentially opens a whole new 
avenue of learning support for students, with motivating resource materials, teacher video 
presentations, and interactive activities that supplement classroom programs (Bourne & 
Moore, 2003). For students experiencing learning difficulties, specific learning modules, 
such as literacy support programs, could be delivered using CSCL with the motivating 
features of high stimulus, multimedia technology. Interactive follow-up literacy or numeracy 
modules that deliver learning programs targeting specific areas of need identified by 
computer generated diagnoses of national test results, could be accessed online nationwide, 
at school or home, with peer tutor, teacher aide, teacher or parent assistance. Similar 
modules and discussion forums could deliver opportunities for development of higher order 
thinking (Bourne & Moore, 2003).

Software development to support students’ social development and enhance 
academic learning embraces online discussion forums, messaging, blogs, wikis, social 
networking websites, multiuser games and interactive virtual environments, which harness 
the collective intelligences of an internet connected community. New technology offers 
options for socialising and communicating that challenge traditional literacy practices. The 
“new literacies” require learners to generate, communicate and negotiate meaningful content 
through the medium of contextually encoded texts guided by online social codes and norms 
(Branch, Orey & Jones, 2010). Recent research involving students with ASD reported that 
emotionally expressive avatars have been used successfully in social skills intervention 
software programs (Konstantinidis et al., 2009). Students with ASD enjoyed interacting with 
computers, where the real-life complexities of social interactions were minimised, or 
replaced by virtual environments with 3-D humanoid characters. Social simulation 
technology could similarly be applied to students with other behavioural or self-management
issues who require cognitive scaffolding and practice in self-regulation of their social behaviours (Gibson, Aldrich & Prensky, 2007).

Whilst new technologies offer opportunities for students to improve their learning and social outcomes, technology as an ever evolving phenomenon has resulted in the emergence of a new set of generational, socio-economic, security, management and pedagogical issues. Adolescents in the study often appeared better adapted and more competent in the use of new technologies than the adults responsible for their education. During staff software training it was apparent that teachers’ comfort zones, adoption rates of new technology and ICT competency levels were significantly challenged. In particular, middle-aged teachers, who had taught for many years before the digital revolution, often had limited knowledge or skills regarding the educational application of computers and other electronic gadgetry. For students requiring learning support to fully benefit from available new technologies in education, teacher training and professional learning in the application of ICT for pedagogical purposes, as well as educational management, emerged as a necessary ongoing requirement to bridge the existing generational technology gap and to ensure teachers are well prepared for the future (Leask & Pachler, 2005).

Challenging the potential benefits of new technologies to the learning, social development and social-networking options of students were social media issues that required ongoing management by all school communities. Schools’ duty of care responsibilities meant concerns were raised about access to unsuitable website material, such as pornography or violence; potential predatory behaviour by internet users that groomed and solicited youth for immoral or illegal encounters (Davidson & Gottschalk, 2011); and prevalence of cyber bullying, defined as wilful harm inflicted through the use of computers, mobile telephones and other electronic devices (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Other issues arising from the study like costs, security, vandalism, maintenance, internet speeds, user competence, up to date hardware and software compatibility were seen as a source of
daily frustration. Gradually emerging solutions to these matters highlighted the evolutionary nature of the new technologies.

These social media issues threatened the establishment and maintenance of an ontologically secure learning environment, which was previously identified and discussed as a significant factor influencing outcomes for students. It is therefore important for all students, and particularly those who are socially marginalised, that these issues are addressed and action taken to facilitate their safe access to emerging technologies in the future.

In Australia, computers with internet access have rapidly becoming a standard, middle-class, household appliance (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Whilst these facilities are essential to maximise students’ educational opportunities, accessibility to current computer hardware, software and fast internet connection at home was limited for some students in this study due to their families’ socio-economic circumstances. The significant capital outlay for computers, software and printers, is accompanied by the ongoing costs of ink cartridges, paper, repairs and broadband internet connection. Whilst the impact of socio-economic disadvantage upon the learning and social outcomes for students was not necessarily insurmountable, such disadvantage seemed perpetual for many students with learning difficulties. Even though students had access to school or community library computers to compensate for absence of facilities at home, they often appeared to lack the knowledge, understanding, motivation, initiative and skill level to access alternatives, further highlighting the need for learning support to motivate, improve levels of literacy and foster positive engagement with learning.

Developing ICT has presented opportunities to improve the management of secondary schools. Relevant data can inform educators and enhance the educational outcomes of students with diverse needs. Emerging new technologies offer expedient methods of gathering, processing and communicating data to key stakeholders (Gregg,
The narrative noted a school Learning Support Team intranet site replaced previous paper documents to communicate more efficiently and store information to support teachers’ work. Advancing technology will increasingly be used in secondary education with remote access school intranet or internet websites functioning as administrative and pedagogical hubs (Leask & Pachler, 2005). New paradigms for teacher-student relationships, school-parent-community liaisons and social-cultural-educational networking that support Vygotskian social constructivist ideals will develop from societal acceptance of emerging technologies (Deubel, 2009).

Not only will students need to be competent with the “new literacies” associated with ICT for educational purposes, but engaged citizens will be required to adapt their practices to utilise evolving technologies in a wide range of social, recreational and business pursuits. With the continuing evolution of technology, the digital age offers society an exciting, but challenging future. This is especially relevant for educators, involved in inclusive secondary education, who have a responsibility to ensure all adolescents are well prepared for adulthood in the digital age.

**Conclusion.**

The inherently diverse and divergent nature of ethnographic methodology has been reflected in this discussion of the research study’s findings in the context of five key ideas emerging from the narrative and the theoretical framework of the thesis. In the following concluding chapter, the research study’s foremost findings are summarised, while the unique merits of educational ethnographic research are articulated and limitations acknowledged.
CHAPTER 10

Conclusion

In this ethnographic study tangible and abstract factors that influenced the learning and social outcomes of adolescents with literacy difficulties participating in a peer tutor reading support program were explored. This concluding chapter revisits the research questions, summarises the main findings and outlines limitations. The study’s findings show a clear relationship between the three research questions and the lower, middle and higher order levels of abstraction in the tri-level Hierarchical Concepts Model that was developed as part of the findings’ analysis (Figure 2, p. 50).

Research Question One: What are the observable, predictable and readily comprehensible factors influencing the learning and social outcomes of students with learning difficulties?

Findings related to question one identified tangible factors in the lower order level of the model: learning environment; tutoring methods; resources; tutor recruitment; and time, attendance, routines and uniform. Specific factors influencing outcomes for tutees included a learning environment with minimal distractions; regular tutor feedback, praise and acknowledgement of effort; attractive and graphic resources; chronological and reading age appropriate learning materials; comprehensive, quality and continuous tutor training; and regular attendance, established routines and reinforcement of on-task expectations. These tangible factors are essential to the successful engagement of students with learning because together they optimise the fundamental conditions required for the development of literacy skills through peer tutoring.

Research Question Two: What are the obscured, unforeseen, phenomenological and interpretative factors influencing the learning and social outcomes of students with learning difficulties?
Question two findings identified less tangible factors that were related mainly to the model’s middle order level: learning support culture; pedagogical methodologies and assistive technology; socio-cultural reinforcement; social and family support; and health and learning issues. The study found that the peer tutor reading support program was part of a broader learning support culture which included programs relating to students’ education, welfare, personal and social development. Peer tutoring was deemed to be a socially supportive pedagogical methodology that could improve student engagement with learning. The use of technology was observed to both motivate and engage students, while new technologies were proposed as being a feature of future peer tutoring programs. Students’ attitudes to literacy were underpinned by socio-cultural values and expectations that reinforced societal requirements of high literacy standards. Tutees valued opportunities to develop their literacy skills at school with the assistance of peer tutors, however, few had home tutoring support. Outcomes for students were also influenced by the available resources and skills of school personnel, health professionals and care providers to effectively respond to, and continue to manage, the health-learning and other issues that contributed to students’ literacy difficulties. These middle order factors hold the potential to enhance students’ engagement with learning and assist them attain desired outcomes.

Research Question Three: What responses to these factors may improve the learning and social outcomes of students with learning difficulties?

Responses to this third question address the inter-related factors of the higher order level of the model: perceptions; motivation; relevance; relationships; and ontological security. Collectively, these factors foster a culture of inclusion which is required if the outcomes for marginalised students with diverse needs are to be optimised (Florian, 2007). Following is a proposed response for each of these higher order categories.

Adolescents’ perceptions of learning support programs influenced their positive engagement. Responses to improve student engagement and outcomes need to address their
self-concepts, self-image and perceived peer social status. As student motivation to engage with learning was underpinned by society’s socio-cultural values and their future aspirations, to improve outcomes it is necessary to facilitate learning experiences that students can meaningfully associate with their lives. Furthermore, regular encouragement, constructive praise and acknowledgement of students’ learning progress are essential to sustain their motivation and engagement.

Supportive relationships that motivate students to engage in relevant educational programs are fundamental to Vygotsky’s social constructivist approaches to learning and peer tutoring (Florian, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). Strategies that develop positive tutee-tutor and teacher-student relationships are therefore considered necessary to improve outcomes for students. A study by McNally & Blake (2010) revealed how even a simple relationship building strategy, addressing students by their names, can assist develop positive relationships. That study also found reciprocal ontological security resulted as students’ sense of personal identity and perceptions of teachers were enhanced while teachers’ professional esteem was boosted.

An ontologically secure learning environment is necessary to enhance student outcomes. Strategies to help establish this environment include those that foster personal and cultural identity; promote social bonding and community spirit; and strengthen relationships within the school community (e.g. multicultural celebrations, peer support and pro-social personal development programs). Ontological insecurity is often associated with socially marginalised students who experience socio-economic disadvantage, poor physical and mental health, and associated behavioural issues (Jackson, 2010). It is therefore important that socially inclusive strategies to engage all students with meaningful learning are embedded in daily educational experiences.

To summarise, the study identified three main influences upon students’ learning and social outcomes. The first influence was the quality of tutee-tutor interpersonal relationships
in which social bonding and reinforcement through constructive feedback and praise contributed to productive peer tutoring learning experiences. As social constructivist theory considers knowledge as being created through the intersubjectivity resulting from social interactions, tutee-tutor relationships were central to the quality of tutoring and learning. A second influence was the empowerment, motivation and engagement of learners, resulting from the provision of a guided educational choice of materials with socio-cultural relevance in the delivery of learning support programs. Adolescents value choice which can be utilised to promote a self-responsible approach to learning. The third influence was that of new technologies, integral to adolescent popular culture of the twenty-first century, and their appropriate application to social constructivist pedagogical methodology. With new technologies continually being assimilated into the daily lifestyle of adolescents, it is imperative that educators integrate these into learning programs to facilitate relevant experiences and meaningful engagement. In particular, new e-learning technologies offer adolescents experiencing learning difficulties alternative, attractive and engaging modes for developing literacy skills.

The ethnographic nature of this study has revealed a socio-cultural perspective of learning that was not evident in the reviews of recent quantitative and qualitative research studies into peer tutoring (Chapter 2). Further research that builds upon the work in this study could relate to the topics of: ontological security, adolescent mental health and inclusive education practices; peer tutoring and emerging new technologies; and the development of a positive, high school learning support culture. These topics present an opportunity for researchers to address current and future challenges faced by educators in socially inclusive learning communities in which digital information communication technology plays an increasingly significant role.

Whilst the ethnographic research processes deployed in this study can be accredited with revealing the unique data leading to the findings, it is prudent to acknowledge their
limitations. Particular limitations of this study’s methodology relate to capturing participants’ perceptions of social reality; effective management of time, data diversity and quantity; and the scope for generalisation of the findings.

Despite the efforts of an immersed researcher to accurately record observations and interpret lived experiences, data gathered by an individual using participant observation are inherently subjective and vulnerable to a partial perception of the social reality (Bryman, 2012). Although the views of participants were explored by a variety of methods in this study, an alternative perspective of the social realities may have emerged from an embedded team of participant observers. Such a collaborative ethnographic approach could involve tutees, tutors, parents and other school personnel in all stages of the research process (Lassiter, 2005). This approach could address the age-generational differences and power relationships within the research environment where the participant researcher, a school teacher and authority figure, directly influenced other participants and the study’s findings.

Participant observation and recording of social interactions often can be a more time-consuming process than other research methods (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The long time frame in this study could be reduced to three or six months. This may facilitate more efficient gathering, management, processing and write up of data within specified word limits. Alternatively, a study with a more specific focus may minimise the necessity to manage unwieldy and superfluous data.

Scope for generalisation of the study’s findings was limited due to the specific sample of students in the educational setting to which the researcher had daily access. A similar study in another school and location with participants from different socio-cultural-economic backgrounds may yield different findings, e.g. public schools for students selected according to academic merit, expensive fee paying private schools and special schools. Whilst many researchers claim that generalisations from qualitative enquiry is inappropriate due to the specific sample of participants, it is argued that for those seeking improvements
and better understandings of education, theoretical generalisation of some form is necessary (Ercikan & Roth, 2009). This argument supports application of elements of the Hierarchical Concepts Model and key ideas from this study to a range of educational settings.

Fulfilling the role of a full-time high school teacher and part-time university researcher for the duration of this study proved daunting at times. The periodic sense of irrelevance, pointlessness, boredom and frustration was offset by revisiting qualitative research methodology literature for reassurance as well as inspiration. With the Angel of Knowledge and four angels holding Latin books of Ethica, Grammatica, Dialectica and Metaphysica as this study’s motto, I trust this thesis has contributed to a shared body of research, which collectively can enhance the educational outcomes of adolescents experiencing literacy and other learning difficulties.
References


Dueck, G. (1993). *Picture peer partner learning: Students learning from and with each other.* Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit.


Appendix A

After the study

- Two ESL teachers were appointed to the school due to an increasing number of migrants in the area, in particular African students, with significant numbers holding refugee status visas.

- With assistance of government funding grants the school received a significant upgrade of facilities. Dowdy toilets and change rooms were renovated; basketball and tennis courts resurfaced with bitumen; carpets and air conditioning fitted in all classrooms; and a minibus leased for school use.

- The public school sector introduced student and staff internet portals with filtering monitors to block inappropriate websites. All students and staff were assigned sector email addresses.

- Learning support information was distributed to school staff via email and an LST intranet site, rather than in printed form.

- Internal school SLA and SNA awards were introduced and presented to students for improvement and high achievement at a National Literacy and Numeracy Week assembly.

- A government program of national literacy and numeracy testing was introduced across Australia in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 to replace previous state-wide tests in primary and secondary schools.

- Funding for the post-school college tutor training course was reduced, but the school supplemented costs to continue the program.

- Incidents of superficial self-harm by adolescents with scissors or glider clips occurred occasionally.

- A part-time youth worker funded by a local church was employed at the school.
- Aboriginal literacy was targeted as a public education sector priority. Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs), which included educational and social goals accompanied by implementation strategies, were required for every Aboriginal student.

- Five senior citizens from a community service club’s international arm volunteered to be reading tutors for African students on a weekly basis and donated money to cover their excursion costs in case of need.

- A cross-age tutoring program was trialed between the high school and local primary school involving Year 7 tutors and Year 1 readers.

- To familiarise students with the local council library facilities and to complete practical consumer literacy activities in a large shopping complex a PTRRCP excursion was scheduled.

- Multicultural Day was renamed Heritage Day.

- Former peer tutors sought signature verification of their peer tutor role for inclusion on their school leavers’ references.

- Two former peer tutors were voted school captains in Year 12.

- Australia’s population reached 21 million, largely the result of immigration.

- For the first time, an Islamic high school was ranked in the top ten schools for Year 12 results, but a proposal to build another in an outer Sydney suburb was opposed by local residents and rejected by the council.

- A new railway timetable was introduced and the price of oil rose sharply, resulting in trains carrying more passengers.

- The blighted inner city suburb with a concentration of Aboriginal residents was significantly upgraded by the council in an urban renewal project with new footpaths, road surfaces, street and landscaping.
• An exhibition of works by gay artists from suburban Sydney and theatrical performances focusing on issues facing lesbians living in the region, were the first time events of an annual Sydney gay and lesbian festival were held within school’s local council district.
• The Federal Government implemented emergency measures and dispatched military, police, medical and welfare teams in response to an official government report of widespread alcohol, sexual and child abuse in outback Aboriginal communities.
• After eleven years the conservative Federal Liberal government was voted out of office and the Prime Minister lost his seat in parliament.
• A major program of upgrading digital education technology for schools was undertaken by the incoming Federal Labor government.
• During an official ceremony at Parliament House in Canberra, the new Australian government officially said “Sorry” to indigenous Australians for past injustices and made commitments to reduce infant mortality rates, provide proper health care for children, implement an effective housing strategy for remote communities and build future educational opportunities.
• Class sets of laptop computers were introduced to the PTRRCP for website reading tasks.
• A roll out of wireless internet connected laptop computers to all Year 9 students in Australian public high schools commenced.
• An Australian government website was launched that provided an individual profile of every school in Australia, including schools’ literacy and numeracy results in national tests. Critics alleged the mass media would create and publish school performance ranking tables based solely on national test results. It was claimed misleading perceptions about schools’ performances would be formed, resulting in potentially negative effects upon some school communities.
• As part of a restructure of learning support services in the public education sector it was proposed the role of STLA change to Learning and Support Teacher (p.67).
Appendix B

Summary of Footnote Factors and Concept Ordering

Following is a summary of footnote factors located in situ throughout the Findings Chapters 5-8 which were sorted into the study’s domain categories as a first level of data analysis. To assist with a higher level of data analysis these factors were subject to re-categorising into broader concepts and conceptually ordered. The order and categorising of these factors, which resulted in the Hierarchical Concepts Model (Figure1), are indicated in brackets.

1. Methodology factors

*Pedagogical strategies*

- Individual instruction [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Explicit teaching of literacy strategies [Middle order: Pedagogical methodologies]
- Individual sounds clarification [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Sound blends remediation [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Graphophonics [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Syllables and word building [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Picture browsing [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Prediction [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Pause, prompt, praise, PPP [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Correction and re-reading [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Repetition, reinforcement, revision [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Difficult word list [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Grammatical and contextual meaning [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Questioning techniques [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Verbalisation [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Interactive discussion and problem solving [Middle order: Pedagogical methodologies]
- Spelling quiz [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Model and shared reading [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Selective reading of easy words [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Illustrating and labeling [Middle order: Pedagogical methodologies]
- Visual mind maps [Middle order: Pedagogical methodologies]
- Peer feedback [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Assistive technology [Middle order: Assistive technology]
- Homework practice [Middle order: Pedagogical methodologies]
- Discussion, scribing, composition, rewriting [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Word processing [Middle order: Assistive technology]

**Behaviour management**

- Acknowledgement, recognition, reinforcement [Middle order: Pedagogical methodologies]
- Established reinforced behavioural expectations [Middle order: Pedagogical methodologies]
- Verbal praise [Lower order: Tutoring methods]
- Social and mentoring support [Middle order: Social support]
- Social development guidance [Middle order: Social support]
- Social stories [Middle order: Pedagogical methodologies]

2. Performance factors

- Absence - illness, injury, truancy or refusal [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
- Behaviour and suspension [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
- Literacy assessment data and follow-up programs [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- Tutor training and assessment [Lower order: Tutor recruitment]
- Quality of tutors [Lower order: Tutor recruitment]
- Professional qualifications and competence [Middle order: Learning support culture]
3. Attitude factors

- Characteristics of tutors and tutees [Lower order: Tutor recruitment]
- Student motivation [Higher order: Motivation]
- Denial and reluctance to participate [Higher order: Perceptions]
- Homework and study habits [Middle order: Social & family support]
- Career and employment aspirations [Middle order: Socio-cultural reinforcement]
- Graffiti expressions of youths [Middle order: Socio-cultural reinforcement]
- Examination support and perceptions of fairness [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- Staff views [Higher order: Perceptions]

4. Inter and Intra-personal factors

- Teacher and student relationships [Higher order: Relationships]
- Peer relationships [Higher order: Relationships]
- Peer social bonding [Higher order: Relationships]
- Socialisation [Inclusion]
- Peer social status [Higher order: Perceptions]
- Socially supportive environment [Middle order: Social & family support]
- Self-image and role modelling [Higher order: Perceptions]
- Feelings, self-perception, participation, willingness [Higher order: Perceptions]
- Emotions [Higher order: Perceptions]
- Self-concept, self-esteem and geopolitical events [Higher order: Perceptions]
- Teasing and bullying between students [Middle order: Social & family support]
- Harassment of students and employees [Higher order: Ontological security]
- Staff relationships [Higher order: Relationships]
- Stress [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
- Conflict resolution and staff counseling [Higher order: Relationships]

5. Environment factors

- Historical, geographic, architectural, technological, economic, demographic, cultural and social characteristics of participants’ urban habitat [Higher order: Ontological security]
- Community and national security [Higher order: Ontological security]
- School security [Lower order: Learning environment]
- Security of personal possessions [Lower order: Learning environment]
- Classroom learning facilities and environment [Lower order: Learning environment]
- Facilities for learning support students [Lower order: Learning environment]
- Computer equipment, vandalism and maintenance [Lower order: Learning environment]
- Temperature and noise [Lower order: Learning environment]

6. Organisation factors

- Educational placement of students with special needs [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- Selection of quality tutors [Lower order: Tutor recruitment]
- Program placement, tutee and tutor pairing [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- Entry routines, roll marking, material collection [Lower order: Time, attendance, routines]
- Punctuality [Lower order: Time, attendance, routines]
- Conformity to school uniform expectations [Lower order: Uniform]
- Seating arrangements [Lower order: Learning environment]
- Establishment and reinforcement of expectations [Lower order: Time, attendance, routines]
- Adequate time allocation for program [Lower order: Time, attendance, routines]
- Group dynamics [Higher order: Relationships]
- Inclusion of students with learning difficulties [Inclusion]
- Accommodations for special needs [Middle order: Pedagogical methodologies]
- Funding to support students with special needs [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- Learning support and mixed ability classes [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- Language assessments, follow-up literacy support [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- LST forum for professional discussion [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- Communication [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- Coordination of learning support programs [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- Networking and program evaluation [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- Transition support [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- Professional learning and employee training [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- Child protection [Higher order: Ontological security]

7. Program factors
- Tutor training and assessment of practical skills [Lower order: Tutor recruitment]
- Quality age-ability appropriate resources [Lower order: Resources]
- Attractive texts and choice of material [Lower order: Resources]
- Culturally and socially relevant reading material [Higher order: Relevance]
- Variety of text and information types [Lower order: Resources]
- Motivating reading material [Lower order: Resources]
- Multimedia language modules [Lower order: Resources]
- Mathematics literacy material [Lower order: Resources]
- Timing [Lower order: Time, attendance, routines]
- Literacy assessment data and follow-up support [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- Boys’ literacy programs [Middle order: Learning support culture]
 Completion of set homework  [Middle order: Social & family support]
 Social learning activities  [Middle order: Pedagogical methodologies]
 Social and personal development support programs [Middle order: Learning support culture]
 IEPs  [Middle order: Learning support culture]
 Behaviour support  [Middle order: Learning support culture]
 Transition support programs  [Middle order: Learning support culture]
 Cultural curriculum initiatives  [Middle order: Learning support culture]
 Cultural relevance and community endorsement  [Higher order: Relevance]
 Assistive technology  [Middle order: Learning support culture]
 ICT professional learning  [Middle order: Learning support culture]

8. Personnel factors
 Staff background and qualifications  [Middle order: Learning support culture]
 Teacher quality  [Middle order: Learning support culture]
 Staff personal life issues  [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
 Employment security  [Middle order: Learning support culture]
 Industrial relations  [Higher order: Relationships]
 Support staff funding for students with special needs  [Middle order: Learning support culture]

9. Cultural and Family factor

Cultural
 Multicultural society  [Higher order: Relationships]
 LBOTE  [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
 Community attitudes to Arab Muslims  [Middle order: Socio-cultural reinforcement]
 Cultural identity and peer bonding  [Middle order: Socio-cultural reinforcement]
 Religious affiliations  [Middle order: Socio-cultural reinforcement]
- Historical and cultural influences [Middle order: Socio-cultural reinforcement]
- Public ceremonial acknowledgement-recognition [Middle order: Socio-cultural reinforcement]
- Inclusive multicultural education [Higher order: Relevance]
- Socio-cultural bias and terminology [Middle order: Socio-cultural reinforcement]
- Influences of mass media [Middle order: Socio-cultural reinforcement]
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations [Higher order: Relationships]

**Family**

- Family educational values [Middle order: Socio-cultural reinforcement]
- Parental aspirations [Middle order: Social & family support]
- Supportive effective parenting [Middle order: Social & family support]
- Family mobility [Middle order: Social & family support]
- Personal life stress [Middle order: Social & family support]
- Sibling relationships [Middle order: Social & family support]
- Welfare issues [Middle order: Social & family support]
- Parent and teacher communication [Middle order: Learning support culture]
- Parent involvement [Middle order: Social & family support]

**10. Health and Learning Difficulties factors**

- ADHD diagnosis, medication and management [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
- Asperger Syndrome, ASD [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
- Anxiety [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
- Attendance [Lower order: Time, attendance, routines]
- Attention, behavioural and learning issues [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
- Community mental health [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
- Diet, health and learning [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
• Obesity and self-concept [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
• Healthy canteen policy [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
• Dyslexia and prescription glasses [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
• Headaches, vision, hearing, language difficulties [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
• Intellectual impairment [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
• Special examination provisions [Middle order: Learning support culture]
• Mental health and integration support [Middle order: Learning support culture]
• Anxiety, motor coordination and organisation skills [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
• Special needs assessments [Middle order: Learning support culture]
• ESL, disability or refugee health issues [Middle order: Health & learning issues]
• Welfare and health services [Middle order: Health & learning issues]

11. Socio-economic and Technology factors

  Soci-economic
  • Cultural ghettos, disadvantaged suburban areas [Middle order: Social & family support]
  • Socio-economic status of Aboriginal community [Middle order: Social & family support]
  • Educational expenses [Middle order: Social & family support]
  • Expenses caring for children with special needs [Middle order: Social & family support]
  • Employment and career aspirations [Middle order: Socio-cultural reinforcement]

  Technology
  • Internet access and inappropriate websites [Middle order: Assistive technology]
  • Motivation, empowerment and ICT [Middle order: Assistive technology]
  • Online reading resources [Lower order: Resources]
Appendix C

Data Collection Instruments

Parent Questionnaire - University of Sydney Research Study

Confidential information for educational study: “Effectiveness of peer tutoring programs in secondary schools”

To be completed by parent(s) and student then returned to Mr G.M. Burke at Stewart High School.

Date questionnaire completed: ____________  Please complete details and circle appropriate responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Biographic data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Student surname</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Student first name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Date of birth ___ / ___ / 199___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Age in years and whole months ___ Years ___ months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Country of birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Village, town, city of birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Years resident in Australia &lt; 1 1-2 2-3 4-5 6-7 7-8 8-9 10+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Religion Christian Muslim Buddhist Hindu Jewish Other:________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Language(s) spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.                                   2.                                  3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Language(s) spoken at home:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother 1.  2.  3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father 1.  2.  3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling 1 1.  2.  3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling 2 1.  2.  3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling 3 1.  2.  3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other significant member………………..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.                                   2.                                  3.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. Socioeconomic data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Family member occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Self-employed Unemployed Employed - full time Home duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed - part time/casual Student full time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Self-employed Unemployed Employed - full time Home duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed - part time/casual Student full time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Self-employed Unemployed Employed - full time Home duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed - part time/casual Student full time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling 1 Self-employed Unemployed Employed - full time Home duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed - part time/casual Student full time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling 2 Self-employed Unemployed Employed - full time Home duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed - part time/casual Student full time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling 3 Self-employed Unemployed Employed - full time Home duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed - part time/casual Student full time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other significant member Self-employed Unemployed Employed - full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time Home duties Employed - part time/casual Student full time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 12. Current residential suburb Suburb Postcode                       |
| 13. Previous 2 Australian residential suburbs 1. Suburb Postcode 2. Suburb Postcode |
| 14. Family home owned/buying                                        |
| 15. Computer/ printer at home for student use                       |
| 16. Internet access at home for student use                         |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C. Educational data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. No. of schools attended in Australia 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. No. of schools attended overseas 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Occupational aspirations 1.  2.  3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Personal/social aspirations 1.  2.  3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Daily newspaper (English) at home for student use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. School reference books (English) at home for student use (eg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encyclopedias, atlas, dictionary) Yes No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Additional information or comments (optional): ______________________
Peer Tutor Reading Roll Call

Reading assistance may be requested to complete this evaluation questionnaire.

Name: ______________________                      Date: _____

Please circle the number that best indicates your response.

SECTION A: Scaled responses

1 Methodology:
1. My tutor regularly praises me about my reading.
   1 Disagree  2 Undecided  3 Agree
2. My tutor has good tutoring skills.
   1 Disagree  2 Undecided  3 Agree

2 Performance:
3. My reading has improved with the assistance of my peer tutor.
   1 Disagree  2 Undecided  3 Agree
4. My reading comprehension and understanding has improved with the assistance of my peer tutor.
   1 Disagree  2 Undecided  3 Agree

3 Attitude:
5. I find reading difficult.
   1 Disagree  2 Undecided  3 Agree
6. Reading is important.
   1 Disagree  2 Undecided  3 Agree
7. I enjoy peer tutor reading roll call.
   1 Disagree  2 Undecided  3 Agree
8. I am trying hard to improve my reading.
   1 Disagree  2 Undecided  3 Agree

4 Interpersonal:
9. I have a good relationship and rapport with my tutor.
   1 Disagree  2 Undecided  3 Agree
10. I talk to my tutor in the playground.
    1 Disagree  2 Undecided  3 Agree
11. My tutor is a good role model.
    1 Disagree  2 Undecided  3 Agree

5 Environmental:
12. I am often distracted from reading by noise or movement made by students or teachers during roll call.
    1 Disagree  2 Undecided  3 Agree

6 Organisation:
13. My tutor and I keep the reading record in my folder up to date.
    1 Disagree  2 Undecided  3 Agree

7 Program:
14. The reading material and learning activities are related to my subject class work.
    1 Disagree  2 Undecided  3 Agree
15. The reading material provided covers interesting topics.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

16. My tutor and I should be able to choose the books to read rather read books provided.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

17. I recommend peer reading roll call for Year 7s in 20XX who need assistance with reading.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

8 Personnel:

18. My tutor is interested in my reading progress.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

19. The teachers maintain good discipline during roll call.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

9 Cultural:

20. I would prefer to work with a tutor of the same sex as me.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

21. I would prefer to work with a tutor from the same country of origin as me.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

22. I would prefer to work with a tutor whose first language is the same as me.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

23. I would prefer to work with a tutor from the same religious background as me.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

10 Family, health and socioeconomic:

24. My parents/caregivers are interested in my reading progress.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

25. My parents are happy with my progress at school.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

26. Family issues have affected my reading progress e.g. family break up, change of schools, move interstate.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

27. Health issues have affected my reading progress e.g. illness, vision, hearing, ADHD, dyslexia.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

28. Behavioural issues have affected my reading progress e.g. time outs, detentions, suspension.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

29. I use the internet at home to research for class assignments.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree

30. I have tutoring out of school hours.

1  Disagree
2  Undecided
3  Agree
### Evaluation Questionnaire-Tutors

#### Peer Tutor Reading Roll Call

Name: ______________________  
Date: _____

*Please circle the number that best indicates your response.*

### SECTION A: Scaled responses

#### 1 Methodology:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31. I discuss the reading material with my reader before I start reading.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. I regularly use Pause, Prompt, Praise strategy to assist my reader correctly read words.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. I regularly break difficult words into syllables to assist my reader correctly read words.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. I correct my reader immediately if I make a mistake.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. My reader and I make a list of difficult words and practice reading them.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. I regularly praise my reader about their reading.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. I explain the reading and learning tasks thoroughly.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. The associated language activities are an important part of understanding what we read.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. I regularly ask good questions which test my readers understanding of the reading material.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. My reader often asks me questions to clarify my understanding of the reading material.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. My reader and I often have discussions about what we read.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. I have good tutoring skills.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. My reader always follows my directions.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2 Performance:

44. My reader’s reading improved with my tutoring assistance.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

45. My reader’s comprehension and understanding improved with my tutoring assistance.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

46. My reader’s spelling improved with my tutoring assistance.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

47. The language learning activities assisted my reader’s language development.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

48. My reader’s reading needs further improvement.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

49. My reader’s comprehension needs further improvement.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

50. My reader’s spelling needs further improvement.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

3 Attitude:

51. Reading is important.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

52. I enjoy reading.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

53. I enjoy peer tutor reading roll call.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

54. I am pleased I was included in peer tutor reading roll call this year.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

55. My reader is trying hard to improve their reading.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

56. I would like to be in peer tutor roll call next year.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

57. I intend to complete year 10 at high school.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

58. I intend to complete year 12 at high school.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree

59. I borrow books to read from the school library at least once a term.
   1 Strongly disagree  2 Disagree  3 Undecided  4 Agree  5 Strongly agree
60. I borrow books from the council library at least once a term.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

61. I am always punctual to roll call and ready to start reading.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Interpersonal:

62. I knew my reader before starting peer reading roll call.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

63. I feel comfortable sitting close to my reader.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

64. My reader speaks nicely to me.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

65. My reader respects me.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

66. My reader talks to me about personal problems.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

67. My reader talks to me in the playground.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

68. I am a good role model for my reader.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

69. My reader admires me.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

70. I would prefer to have the same reader all year.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

71. I would prefer to change readers during the year.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

72. My reader regards me as a friend.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

73. I have friends in peer tutor roll call.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

74. I would prefer to choose my own reader.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Environmental:

75. The library is a suitable and comfortable room for Peer Tutor Reading Roll Call.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
76. The library is quiet with minimal distractions for reading during roll call.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

77. The teachers maintain good discipline during roll call.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

78. Other students often distract me from tutoring during roll call.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

6 Organisation:

79. 10-15 minutes peer reading roll call is sufficient time to practice reading with my reader.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

80. I am punctual to reading roll call.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

81. My reader is punctual to peer reading roll call.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

82. The teachers are punctual to peer reading roll call.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

83. My reader is mostly in attendance.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

84. My reader is often absent.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

85. My reader and I start reading straight away.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

86. Reading material and activities are always readily available.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

87. My reader has enough time to complete reading tasks.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

88. My reader has enough time to complete activities.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

89. My reader and I keep the reading record in my folder up to date.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

7 Program:

90. I often look at the reading program in my folder to see what we are going to read next.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

91. ELLA and SNAP test practice with my reader helped improve their test performance.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92. The reading material is suitable for my reader’s ability level.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93. The reading material is suitable for my reader’s age group and year level.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94. The reading material and learning activities are related to my reader’s subject class work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95. The reading material helps my reader with subject class work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96. The reading material provided covers interesting topics from different subjects.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97. The reading material provided was good quality.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98. The associated learning activities provided were good quality.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99. Keeping a list of difficult words helped my reader learn how to read them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100. The peer reading program was well organized and conducted efficiently.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101. I recommend peer reading roll call for new Year 7s in 20XX who need assistance with reading.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**8 Personnel:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>102. I am interested in my reader’s reading progress.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103. The roll call teacher is interested in my reader’s reading progress.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104. The peer tutor reading coordinator is interested in my reader’s reading progress.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**9 Cultural:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>105. I would prefer to work with a reader of the same sex as me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106. I would prefer to work with a reader who speaks the same non English language as me. (LBOTE students only, other students leave blank)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107. I would prefer to work with a reader from the same country of origin as me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
108. I prefer to work with a reader from the same religious background as me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 Family and socioeconomic:

109. My parents/caregivers are interested in my role as a tutor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

110. My parents/caregivers are interested in my progress at school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

111. My parents/caregivers help me with my school work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

112. I help other family members with reading or school work at home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

113. Other family members help me with my school work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

114. Friends help me with my school work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

115. My parents meet with my teachers to discuss my progress at school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

116. My parents discussed my last school semester report with me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

117. My parents are happy with my progress at school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

118. I often read books written in English at home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

119. I often read an English newspaper at home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

120. I often read English magazines at home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

121. I use the internet at home to research for class assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

122. I use a computer at home to word process my class assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

123. I use a spell checker on my written work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

124. I have a quiet place at home to read and do school work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
125. I have my own desk to complete my schoolwork.

   1  2  3  4  5
Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

126. I am pleased with my progress at school.

   1  2  3  4  5
Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

127. I have tutoring in other subjects out of school hours.

   1  2  3  4  5
Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree

SECTION B: Sequencing responses

1. Which parts of the peer reading tutor program did your reader enjoy most?

   Number 1-14 in order of enjoyment

   - ELLA magazine and test questions
   - Story novels and story maps
   - Multiplication tables booklet
   - SNAP magazine and test questions
   - Ancient Egypt books and wonder word
   - Guinness Book of Records and worksheet
   - Cookbooks and menu creation
   - Water books and wonder-word
   - Energy books and wonder word
   - Art books and worksheet
   - Planets and worksheet
   - Dreamtime stories and story writing
   - Sydney Morning Herald website and worksheet
   - National Geographic website and worksheet

2. Which parts of the peer reading tutor program helped your reader’s engagement and understanding of class subject work?

   Number 1-14 in order of helpfulness

   - ELLA magazine and test questions
   - Story novels and story maps
   - Multiplication tables booklet
   - SNAP magazine and test questions
   - Ancient Egypt books and wonder word
   - Guinness Book of Records and worksheet
   - Cookbooks and menu creation
   - Water books and wonder word
   - Energy books and wonder word
   - Art books and worksheet
   - Planets and worksheet
   - Dreamtime stories and story writing
   - Sydney Morning Herald website and worksheet
   - National Geographic website and worksheet

3. Which aspects of your reader’s literacy require further improvement?

   Number 1-4 in order of improvement required

   - Reading  - text decoding and pronunciation of words
   - Comprehension  - understanding what is read
   - Writing  - sentences and paragraphs with correct grammar and punctuation
   - Spelling  - correct spelling words
SECTION C: Written responses

Write a response for questions 1-4

1. Your suggestions for future program reading material

2. Suggestions for improvements to reading program

3. Comments about your reader

4. Comments about your reader’s reading progress

5. Any other comments

SECTION D: Lateral Thinking

Think about the peer tutor reading program and write 2 responses in each of the Thinking Hats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YELLOW HAT</th>
<th>WHITE HAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive or good aspects of the peer tutor reading program</td>
<td>Facts about the peer tutor reading program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RED HAT</th>
<th>BLACK HAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional aspects of the peer tutor reading program</td>
<td>Negative aspects of the peer tutor reading program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GREEN HAT</th>
<th>BLUE HAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative or artistic aspects of the peer tutor reading program</td>
<td>Past or reflective aspects of the peer tutor reading program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 April 20XX

Associate Professor D Evans
School of Development and Learning
Faculty of Education and Social Work
Education Building – A35
The University of Sydney

Dear Professor Evans

Title: Effectiveness of a peer tutoring program in one secondary school: an exploration and analysis of the variables affecting program outcomes
Ref No.: 11-2004/3/7747 – new number

The Executive Committee considered your request to modify the above protocol. The Executive Committee found that there were no ethical objections to the modifications and therefore recommends approval to proceed.

The following modifications were approved:

- Renewal of the project to 30 November 20XX.
- Time extension to 31 December 20XX. Please refer to the NEW Reference Number above.
- Inclusion of EdD student, Mr Geoffrey Burke to the list of authorised personnel.

Conditions of Approval Applicable to all Projects

(1) Reporting of Serious Adverse Events

Researchers should immediately report anything to the Human Research Ethics Committee which might warrant review of ethical approval of the protocol, including:
• Serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants;
• Proposed changes in the protocol or any other material given to the participants in the study must be known prior to being actioned, including participant information and consent forms; and
• Unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

(2) Modifications to the protocol cannot proceed until such approval is obtained in writing. (Refer to the website www.usyd.edu.au/ethics/human under ‘Forms and Guides’ for a Modification Form).

(3) The confidentiality and anonymity of all research subjects is maintained at all times, except as required by law.

(4) All research subjects are provided with a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee.

(5) The Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form are to be on University of Sydney letterhead and include the full title of the research project and telephone contacts for the researchers, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee.

(6) The following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Sheet. *Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811.*

(7) The standard University policy concerning storage of data and tapes should be followed. While temporary storage of data or tapes at the researcher’s home or an off-campus site is acceptable during the active transcription phase of the project, permanent storage should be at a secure, University controlled site for a minimum of seven years.

(8) A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the completion of the Project.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Associate Professor J D Watson
Chairman
Human Research Ethics Committee

Encl. Dear Principal letter and Consent Forms
       Dear Parent/Caregiver and Student letter & Consent Forms

Cc: Mr Geoffrey Burke, Faculty of Education and Social Work, Education Building – A35, The University of Sydney
Appendix E

Descriptive Characteristics: Staff

Balbir

Roll call teacher of Fiji-Indian descent was a gently spoken, middle-aged male Mathematics teacher. In subsequent years Balbir did not continue as a roll call teacher in PTRRCP.

Celia

Post-school training college head teacher, tutor training course lecturer, tinted red-brown hair, late forties age range, pleasant manner. Celia continued in role during subsequent years, travelled overseas during her long service leave.

Clare

Middle-aged teacher-librarian and roll call teacher and mother of three primary aged children. Commuted 45 minutes to school from a suburb located closer to the CBD. Clare, who had coloured tint in her long blonde hair, often wore floral wrap type skirts with a variety of t-shirts and blouses. Clare later took 3 months long service.

Janet

Roll call teacher, long light brown hair, slim, sprightly female physical education teacher and assistant Year Adviser, in early thirties age range with young child. Janet gave birth to another child and took extended parenting leave.

Julie

Julie was a trainee counsellor with a bright personality who fulfilled a temporary STLA-ESL placement. She completed a year of full time university study with a scholarship to qualify as a counsellor and was appointed to a primary school.

Ken

Deputy principal, late forties age range, who transferred from another school.
Loren

Maori background, mid twenties age range, undertook in-class literacy and numeracy tutor role for Aboriginal students. Loren was married to an Aboriginal male, gave birth to a second child, took parenting leave, and did not return to the tutor role.

Natasha

Roll call and support class teacher in late twenties age range. Natasha resigned and went to live in overseas with her boyfriend.

Prue

Fulfilled role of competent teacher aide-special for many years, was a local resident whose children formerly attended the high school. Prue left for permanent office-based employment at another high school.

Silvia

Deputy principal in early forties age range from a local Catholic family who spoke with a characteristic husky Sydney suburban drawl and aspired to be a principal. Silvia organised the off-campus personal-social development program and later obtained a principal position in an urban-rural fringe high school.
Appendix F

Descriptive Characteristics: Tutors

Ben

Wore ornamental jewellery, gloves, part peroxide blonde hair and left in Year 11.

Christopher

Reliable roll book monitor who was a former tutee in PTRRCP, questionable tutoring skills, played cricket, wore prescribed glasses, aspired to be a police officer. After Year 10 transferred to a senior secondary college.

Dahlia

Bosnian background, wore ornamental jewellery. Completed Year 12.

Jamal

Arabic background, considered moving to boys’ high school as concerned girls were distraction to his Year 12 studies.

Kylie

Conscientious and polite tutor. Daughter of Paula, a teacher aide at the school. Worked patiently with Cathy. Ambition was to be a primary teacher. Completed Year 12.

Michelle

Capable and argumentative. Bridget’s tutor, removed from program for poor role modelling and unsatisfactory engagement as a tutor. Completed Year 12.

Tarang

Indian background, spoke fluent Hindi. Able student academically, aspired to be a medical doctor. Achieved an average of 90 percent in Year 12 examinations and parents wrote a letter to thank school staff for their support.
Appendix G

Descriptive Characteristics: Tutees

Ajanta

Indian family background, Hindi speaking, lived in Australia 4 years, Aboriginal step mother. Quiet and pleasant mannered, Ajanta experienced language development issues relating language-cultural background, especially sound blending. Older sister at school also experienced learning difficulties.

Andrea

Tall and gangly, older sister was previously a tutee in PTRRCP. Significant language difficulties, slight speech impediment, borderline mild intellectual impairment. Later opted to undertake Life Skills subjects and an employment preparation course.

Asin

Kurdish-Muslim background, bright and friendly personality. Interpreter required for communication with father. Literacy issues relating to LBOTE, attention difficulties, keen to improve his reading, borrowed books regularly. Baby brother born at local hospital.

Brad

Shy, quiet, ADHD medication.

Bridget

Pleasant manner, attractive, aspired to be a beautician or model. Older brother Corey, and sister Lara, also at school. Mild intellectual impairment, significant language difficulties, sight and hearing tests advised.

Cathy

Aboriginal, quiet, withdrawn, sister of Brock and Beth. Mild intellectual impairment, reading fluency and comprehension exceptionally limited. Unable to complete most set learning tasks independently. Parents rejected support unit placement proposal. Did not complete Year 10 due to poor attendance.
Clara
Sudanese refugee, low reading ability.

David
Aboriginal, cousin of Margo. ADHD, mild epileptic seizures, welfare care issues, socially at risk, poor attendance, attended live-in respite care program for socially disadvantaged students, attended off-campus personal-social development program. Poor literacy and numeracy skills. David moved homes and left to attend an inner city high school.

Donald
Due to self-request was paired with older sister as tutor with whom he related well.

Frank
Italian background. Learning difficulties and behavioural issues, participated in off-campus personal–social development program. Left to attend a Christian school.

Heath
Bright, lively personality, experimented with thickly gelled spiked hair, older sister Jessica former tutee. Attention and reading difficulties.

Kevin
Moved from an interstate primary school. Likeable personality, unkempt appearance, experienced anxiety, restless, poor concentration skills, easily distracted from learning in classroom, poor coordination and organisational ability, high unexplained absentee rate, did not complete homework, ranked near the bottom of his Year 7 class in all subjects. Participated in off-campus personal-social development program. Left the school.

Kirsty
Socially confident, significant literacy and numeracy difficulties, behavioural issues. Left for another school as family moved house to another suburb.
Lusala

Sudanese refugee, low reading ability.

Margo

Aboriginal, friendly, pleasant natured, poor attendance. Reading difficulties relating to sound blending, attended live-in respite care program for socially disadvantaged students, attended off-campus personal-social development program. Became pregnant at 14 years old, left to live in a country town, returned to city and assumed responsibility for her daughter.

Rick

Chronic truant, his brother Mark was a former tutee two years earlier and had similar poor attendance. Reading difficulties, rarely attended, permanently on Attendance Officer list.

Robert

Transferred from country school. Placed in support class due to reading, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Later returned to country town.

Silei

Samoan background, older brother at school, objected to program placement and rejected learning support. Borderline mild intellectual impairment.

Steven

Dyslexia, behavioural issues, attended off-campus personal-social development program. ADHD diagnosis and prescribed medication. Left for another school.

Suzanne

Prescribed daily ADHD medication, received mental health integration funding for teacher aide support time. Her dyslexic mother required assistance to read and respond to school correspondence. ISTB support, attended off-campus personal-social development program and live-in respite care centre for socially disadvantaged students. Due to
continuing concerns Suzanne was placed at a Special Purpose School on the basis of emotional and behavioural disorders.

Terry

Reluctant reader with behavioural issues who was continuously disengaged from learning at school and left in Year 10 to attend an automotive trainee course.
Appendix H

Descriptive Characteristics: Others

Asofa

Year 8 tutee. Pacific Islander background, mild intellectual impairment, significant language difficulties, talent in art. His sister in Year 9 who also attended the school had a mild intellectual impairment, required speech pathology services and teacher aide support in previous years. Family moved to North America.

George

Year 8 tutee. Chronic truant, behavioural issues, attended live-in respite care program for socially disadvantaged students. Rarely attended, left the school in Year 10.

Hassin

Year 8 tutee. Lebanese background. Learning difficulties, behavioural issues. Left school at the end of Year 10 due to behaviour violations.

Shaheen

Year 8 tutee. Afghanistan background, Muslim. Significant language difficulties.

Brock

Year 9 student. Aboriginal, brother of Cathy and Beth. Protective of youngest sister, Cathy. Liked helping around school. Transferred from a boys’ high school due to sexual harassment. Previous teacher aide support funding for mental health issues discontinued. Tutored sister Cathy in Year 8 reading roll call group. Left school in Year 10.

Corey

Year 9 student, brother of Bridget, pleasant mannered former tutee. Mild intellectual impairment, language difficulties. Left school in Year 12 for a hospitality traineeship.
### Appendix I

**Development of Research Domains**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Inter-Intrapersonal</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral reading</td>
<td>Transition data</td>
<td>Disengaged</td>
<td>Teacher-student</td>
<td>Suburban Sydney</td>
<td>Timetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer tutoring</td>
<td>Screening test results</td>
<td>Motivated</td>
<td>relationships</td>
<td>Rail-bus interchange</td>
<td>Bell times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal support</td>
<td>Reading ages</td>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Sibling relationships</td>
<td>Mass media</td>
<td>Roll call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class support</td>
<td>School reports</td>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td>Tutor-tutees</td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>SLA and SNA results</td>
<td>Swearing</td>
<td>relationships</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>Primary-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>Literacy assessments</td>
<td>Aspirations</td>
<td>Student friendships</td>
<td>Fans</td>
<td>secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social stories</td>
<td>Attendance records</td>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>Teasing</td>
<td>Heating</td>
<td>transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Punctuality</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>Carpet</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllables</td>
<td>On task classroom behaviour</td>
<td>Concerned</td>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>Furniture</td>
<td>interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling quiz</td>
<td>Detention</td>
<td>Graffiti</td>
<td>Name calling</td>
<td>Blue room</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worksheets</td>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>Vandalism</td>
<td>Physical contact</td>
<td>School buildings and grounds</td>
<td>meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind mapping</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line activities</td>
<td>Reading records</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td></td>
<td>of tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual literacy</td>
<td>Teacher training and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instruction</td>
<td>professional learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Selection of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word processing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tutees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pairing of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tutors and tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School uniform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pencil cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Folders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assemblies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>teacher evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

250
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Cultural-Family</th>
<th>Health-Learning Difficulties</th>
<th>Socio-Economic &amp; Technology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Teacher aides, Roll call teachers, Office staff, STLA Librarian, Counsellor, ESL teachers, Primary teachers, Head teachers, Principal, Deputy principal, District personnel, Tutors, Welfare, Home School Liaison Officer</td>
<td>Aboriginal, LBOTE, Refugees, Migrants, Parents, Siblings, Religion, Multiculturalism, Single-parents, Foster care, Sport, Flags</td>
<td>STLA files, ADHD, IM, ASD, ODD, Dyslexia, Glasses, Anxiety, Stress, Mental health, Physical impairment, Special needs, Medication, Psychologist reports, Speech pathology reports, Illness, Accidents, Diet, Breakfast, Take-away food, Canteen menu, Welfare issues</td>
<td>Blighted suburbs, Low cost housing, Housing types, Gameboy devices, Mobile phones, Computers, Printers, Internet, ICT, CD Roms, Multimedia, Headsets, Video clips, Fund raising, Rail system, Industry, Business, Shops, Shopping centres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>