

Enhancing educational opportunities for students with Specific Learning Difficulties



Ludmila (Lucy) Liga

2011 Higher Education and Skills Group Overseas Fellowship

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i. Executive Summary

The Education sector in Australia is grossly deficient in the way it supports and provides education for student with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) in particular those who experience language based processing disorders that hinder reading, writing spelling and speaking. According to current research 10-15 percent of the population have a SpLD.¹ Recent statistics suggest that two to three students in every classroom have SpLD. Australia is falling behind current best practice used in the UK, Ireland, Scotland, Canada and the USA when educating students with learning difficulties. It is not delivering appropriate and suitable education to all students. The Federal and State governments should fund and support all students' education including students with SpLD and other Learning Difficulties.

With the introduction and continuation of the Gonski Report / Better Schools Initiative it is crucial that policy and funding models are established around diagnosis, support structures and funding allocations for students with LDs, to aid in clarity, understanding and optimum success. Australia's inclusive education policy should be modelled on the UK's Inclusive Education policy, which includes specific provisions for students with LDs. Once the student has a Statement of Educational Needs the school must legally provide the services set out in the document. Funding is provided and given to the local councils to administer.²

The Gonski / Better schools funding allocation must extend into the TAFE sector which provides a vibrant vocational and alternative education setting for students aged 16-21 with Learning Difficulties. This funding needs to be specifically targeted for students within the Community and Transitional Education Department and assist students transitioning from the CATE department to other mainstream courses within the TAFE, modelled on the UK's 'Post 16 provisions' discussed in this report.

One school the Fellow visited had five Australian children, whose families moved to Shapwick, England from Australia to attend the school, highlighting the lack of appropriate education opportunities available in Australia. Other deficiencies reported are in the areas of student diagnosis, training, expertise and research in the area of LDs.

The schools and colleges visited all addressed reading, spelling and language based difficulties, social cognition and executive function difficulties with well trained expert staff and well researched evidence based programs. Extensive therapy intervention is provided in both individual and group sessions. Literacy and numeracy classes are ability streamed, composed of four to five students and delivered daily using systematic, multisensory programs.

In the formative years spelling, reading and writing was targeted using good phonic or grapheme phoneme programs and complemented with multisensory programs and resources. This intense remedial work undertaken in the lower years sets the student up for the academic challenges required in the senior years to achieve national curriculum benchmarks.

"It is generally agreed that between 12 and 16 percent of children in the early years of school experience learning difficulties".³ Using the above statistics 50 to 60 students in each average sized primary school have SpLDs that are unaddressed. These students currently progress through the school system with little or no intervention, struggling at school, becoming disengaged, having associated psychological and mental health issues and occasionally dropping out of school. They become adults who are unable to read or write with many reliant on government financial assistance due to their limited Literacy and employment prospects. Research conducted in Australia found that 60 percent of prison inmates have literacy problems.⁴

Yet all research suggests with early targeted, evidence based intervention the reading and language difficulties can be addressed and remedied. This will decrease the long term financial burden for the Federal and State Governments as well as improve educational and employment opportunities, improve well being and future prospects for individuals.

1 British Dyslexia & The Dyslexia Research Institute

2 bdadyslexia.org

3 2003 NSW Parliament Enquiry into Early Years Intervention into students with LD's, Appendix 1

4 E.Baldry, The Booming Industry: Australian Prisons, Appendix 2

i. Executive Summary

The Gonski Report / Better Schools Initiative could potentially provide appropriate policy and funding to support not only students with SpLD but all students with LDs to achieve success.

'When we look back 50 years from now at how our educational systems treated students who learn differently, we will feel the same shame that we do now when we consider the way we treated students of colour or other minorities in the 50's'

"Understanding LD, ADHD and ASD: A Critical Thinking Approach" ,

Speaker - MacLean Gander - 7th September 2013

(Part of the "Bridging the Gap" Intensive lecture at Landmark college).

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ii. Abbreviations/Acronyms

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
CATE	Community and Transition Education
DCAS	Drake Centre for Academic Support
LD	Learning difficulties
LIC	Language Intensive Curriculum
MALS	Myself as a Learner
OT	Occupational Therapists
PSHE	Personal Social Health Education
SCAEP	Social Communications Abilities Enhancement
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
TAFE	Tertiary and Further education
TOWRE	Test of Word Reading Efficiency
YARC	York Assessment for Reading and Comprehension

iii. Definitions

Considerable confusion occurs locally and internationally with the use of different terminology covering definitions. For this report the terms Learning Difficulties and Specific Learning Difficulties are used consistently as they are the terms most used in all the countries the Fellow visited.

Learning Difficulties (LD)

Is a neurological condition that interferes with a person's ability to store, process, or produce information. Learning difficulties can affect one's ability to read, write, speak, spell, compute math, reason and also affect a person's attention, memory, coordination, social skills and emotional maturity.¹

Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that mainly affects reading and spelling. Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties in processing sounds and by weakness in short term memory; its effects may be seen in spoken language as well as written language. Many dyslexic people learn to read, but have difficulties with spelling, writing, memory and organisation.²

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are lifelong developmental disabilities characterised by marked difficulties in social interaction, impaired communication, restricted and repetitive interests and behaviours and sensory sensitivities. The word 'spectrum' is used because the range and severity of the difficulties people with an ASD experience can vary widely. ASDs include autistic disorder, Aspergers disorder and pervasive developmental disorder – not otherwise specified, which is also known as atypical autism. Sometimes the word 'autism' is used to refer to all ASDs.³

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Is a behavioural condition that makes focusing on everyday requests and routines challenging. People with ADHD typically have trouble getting organised, staying focused, making realistic plans and thinking before acting. They may be fidgety, noisy and unable to adapt to changing situations.⁴

1 http://www.ldanatl.org/new_to_ld/defining.asp

2 www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk

3 <http://www.autismspectrum.org.au/a2i1i12371113/what-is-autism.htm>

4 <http://www.apa.org/topics/adhd/>

1. Acknowledgements

Ludmila Liga would like to thank the following individuals and organisations who gave generously of their time and their expertise to assist, advise and guide her throughout the Fellowship program.

Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

The International Specialised Skills Institute Inc is an independent, national organisation that for over two decades has worked with Australian governments, industry and education institutions to enable individuals to gain enhanced skills and experience in traditional trades, professions and leading-edge technologies.

At the heart of the ISS Institute are our Fellows. Under the **Overseas Applied Research Fellowship Program** the Fellows travel overseas. Upon their return, they are required to pass on what they have learnt by:

1. Preparing a detailed report for distribution to government departments, industry and educational institutions
2. Recommending improvements to accredited educational courses
3. Delivering training activities including workshops, conferences and forums.

Over 200 Australians have received Fellowships, across many industry sectors. In addition, recognised experts from overseas conduct training activities and events. To date, 22 leaders in their field have shared their expertise in Australia.

According to Skills Australia's 'Australian Workforce Futures: A National Workforce Development Strategy 2010':

Australia requires a highly skilled population to maintain and improve our economic position in the face of increasing global competition, and to have the skills to adapt to the introduction of new technology and rapid change.

International and Australian research indicates we need a deeper level of skills than currently exists in the Australian labour market to lift productivity. We need a workforce in which more people have skills, but also multiple and higher level skills and qualifications. Deepening skills across all occupations is crucial to achieving long-term productivity growth. It also reflects the recent trend for jobs to become more complex and the consequent increased demand for higher level skills. This trend is projected to continue regardless of whether we experience strong or weak economic growth in the future. Future environmental challenges will also create demand for more sustainability related skills across a range of industries and occupations.

In this context, the ISS Institute works with Fellows, industry and government to identify specific skills in Australia that require enhancing, where accredited courses are not available through Australian higher education institutions or other Registered Training Organisations. The Fellows' overseas experience sees them broadening and deepening their own professional practice, which they then share with their peers, industry and government upon their return. This is the focus of the ISS Institute's work.

For further information on our Fellows and our work see <http://www.issinstitute.org.au>.

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1. Acknowledgements

Fellowship Sponsor

The Victorian Government, Higher Education and Skills Group (HESG) formerly Skills Victoria, is responsible for the administration and the coordination of programs for the provision of training and further education, adult community education and employment services in Victoria, and is a valued sponsor of the ISS Institute. The Fellow would like to thank them for providing funding support for this Fellowship.

Supporters

- » Yvette Bockisch, Manager Language Studies, Kangan Institute of TAFE
- » Nola Firth, Honorary Research Fellow, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Victoria
- » Ann Jeans, Manager, and Stuart Hunter, Community and Transitional Education Department, Holmesglen Institute of TAFE, Victoria
- » Michele Semmen, CEO and Jennifer Finemore, SPELD Victoria Inc., Victoria
- » Mike Timms, Director, Assessment and Psychometric Research, Australian Council for Educational Research. Victoria
- » Adrienne Major, Jill Hickney, and staff, Landmark College, Vermont, USA
- » Jon Whittlock, Martin Lee and staff, Shapwick School, Sommerset, UK
- » Claire Staveley, Exeter College, Devon, UK
- » Joanna Burgess and staff, Blossom House School, Wimbledon, UK

Employer Support

- Holmesglen Institute of TAFE has generously supported this Fellowship by providing time, support and mentoring for the Fellow.

Organisations Impacted by the Fellowship

Government:

- Higher Education and Skills Group
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- National Disability Coordination Officers

Professional associations:

- SPELD Australia and Victoria
- Australian Council for Education Research
- Murdoch Childrens Institute
- VCAL Special Schools Network
- Australian Tertiary Education Networks on Disability
- Statewide Advisory Group (Certificate I in Work Ed/ Certificate I in Transition Education)
- Bayside, Glen Eira, Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network

1. Acknowledgements

- Gateway Local Learning and Employment Network
- Outer Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network
- Learning Difficulties Australia
- Learning Difficulty Network
- The Australian Association of Audiologists in Private Practice (AAAPP) www.aaapp.org.au
- The Australian Psychological Society
- Speech Pathology Australia www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au
- Southern Disability Careers Network

Education and Training

All Tertiary and Further Education providers including:

- » Holmesglen Institute of TAFE
- » Gippsland TAFE
- » Chisholm Institute of TAFE
- » Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE
- » Box Hill Institute of TAFE
- » Kangan Institute of TAFE
- » Victoria University TAFE
- Disability Employment Network Providers
- Council of Adult Education
- Adult Community education Providers
- Community VCAL Providers
- Secondary schools and Special schools teaching students with SpLD

2. About the Fellow

Ludmila (Lucy) Liga started her teaching career by teaching music to pre-school children, which prompted her to complete her Post Graduate Diploma in Education. Following this she taught in a Primary School setting where her interest in teaching students with learning difficulties developed. This led to her work in the Community and Transitional Education (CATE) department at Holmesglen Institute of TAFE where she has now taught for over five years. The CATE department caters predominately for students with learning disorders, between the ages of 16 to 19.

Liga is a passionate teacher who teaches in two courses within the department, and is responsible for subjects such as Literacy, Current Affairs, Performance and Drama. In 2012 she was involved in teaching and directing the CATE Moorabbin Transition play, which married her performance background with her love of teaching. She has a keen interest in addressing SpLDs and in improving the academic and well being outcomes for students with SpLD, and feels this is an area that needs to be further explored and continual advances made.

After devoting many years to raising a family she feels this is an opportunity to concentrate on her career, increase her expertise and use this newfound knowledge and experience to make a difference.

Qualifications

- » Bachelor of Music, Melba Conservatorium of Music/Victoria University, 2000
- » Post Graduate Diploma of Education, Monash University, 2003
- » Diploma of Hospitality Management, Victoria University 2010
- » TAE40110 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, LIV Training 2012

Professional Development

- » “Ensuring Success for the Dyslexic Learner” SPELD Victoria 2013
- » “Autism Spectrum disorder” AMAZE Autism Victoria 2013
- » “Intensive support for students with Dyslexia” ,Neil Mackay 2012
- » “Evidence-Based Instruction for Students Struggling with Reading, Writing and/or Mathematics”, Nancy Mather 2011
- » “Dyslexia in Brief”, SPELD, Daryl Greaves, 2011
- » “Success and Dyslexia”, DSGW, Nola Firth, 2011
- » “Engage and Empower-Transitions for Students with a Disability”, NPCO, 2011

Professional Associations

- » Victorian Institute of Teaching
- » SPELD Victoria

3. Aims of the Fellowship Program

- Investigate how SpLD specific schools/colleges in England and America are set up to provide and cater for students with SpLD. In particular identify and record the similarities and differences between the structures of the three different schools. This will give three varied examples of best practice that education providers and educators can utilise and model in Australia.
- To explore and investigate current teaching methodologies, practice and classroom strategies used in the three education models at the Shapwick and Blossom schools in England and at Landmark College in America, with the aim to replicate some of this in an Australian teaching setting.
- To understand how student outcomes are monitored and assessed with regard to wellbeing and academic success in all three educational models. This will enable Australian educators to understand and adopt worldwide current assessment tools to show student success.

4. The Australian Context

SpLD encompasses a range of language based processing difficulties that affects the process of reading, spelling and mathematics. Dyslexia is one such classification. Dyslexic learners may also experience difficulties in short-term memory, sequencing and the speed at which information is processed. Dyslexia is a neurological language based problem independent of IQ. It is considered a life-long disability that can affect learning, confidence and self-esteem.

SpLD students do not respond to evidence-based classroom teaching methods taught in Australian mainstream schools. There is usually a discrepancy between students' verbal understanding and reasoning and their reading, spelling and writing skills. Dyslexic students demonstrate clear understanding and thinking processes with their verbal responses but struggle to demonstrate this in their reading, spelling and written work.

Dyslexia is very difficult to diagnose as it needs specialist assessment. Students who experience SpLD struggle at school and can develop issues with self-esteem, confidence and in some instances develop behavioural problems. This can potentially have a huge impact on their education, employment opportunities and self-fulfilment.

"I love anemal I use it bread guieapigs by myself and sale them to make money my my hole family are artist including me I wont to do skolpers I have a lot of graetidrs but I haven't got the space and I don't have guineapigs any more so I don't hve money to spend on my idears I but I know in the future that what ill do and I'm also skild in my paint (I've been told) and I would love to do biger peces."

The preceding paragraph is a written example of the work from a 16 year old student with SpLD.

Education for students with SpLD in Australia is currently lagging behind world best practice, especially for young adults. This is mainly because SpLDs have limited recognition, both in Government policy and National Disability Law. SpLDs have not been categorised as a disability in Australia. Therefore funding and financial support both for educators and for the individual is not available at the level required to successfully address the situation. Expertise in the area of educating and supporting students who have SpLDs has not kept pace with other countries. Teachers lack the knowledge and skills to provide appropriate support because of inadequate training in this area. Australia struggles to match current Education models, teacher expertise and suitable teacher training which England, America and Canada have in place.

5. Identifying the Skills and Knowledge Enhancements Required

There are examples of areas in Australian industries and educational institutions where there are weaknesses in innovation, skills, knowledge, experience, policies and/or formal organisational structures to support the ongoing successful development and recognition of individuals and the particular sector.

The focus of all ISS Institute Fellowships is on applied research and investigation overseas by Australians. The main objective is to enable enhancement and improvement in skills, knowledge and practice not currently available or implemented in Australia and the subsequent dissemination and sharing of those skills and recommendations throughout the relevant Australian industry, education, government bodies and the community.

The application for this Fellowship was initiated because of Liga's belief that there is a huge gap in education for students with SpLD between what is currently provided in Australia compared to international current best practice. This Fellowship will have a direct impact on teaching models, approaches and assessment within the CATE Department and across the TAFE and State Education sector, which potentially could influence advancement in recognition, policy and support.

1. The Fellow will immerse, observe and compare the three teaching models to provide education providers with examples of structure used in best practice. Identifying and documenting the framework of education models, listing similarities and differences, analyse strengths and weaknesses of each model and evaluate benefits to students and provide recommendations for implementation.

In each education model the Fellow will identify and record:

- Class sizes and staff support numbers
- Specialist teacher training requirements
- Assistive technologies used and costs involved
- Frequency and structure of literacy classes delivered
- Extra psychological, social and Literacy support given.

2. The Fellow will explore and investigate current teaching methodologies, practice and classroom strategies used in the three Education models to maximise student learning, improving student literacy outcomes, confidence, resilience and develop long term memory and further strategies to support SPLD students throughout their TAFE experience.

In each education model the fellow will identify and record:

- Learning styles and approaches used
- Teaching strategies and their use
- Practical teaching methods used in classes and where necessary research further and develop
- Resources used and needed for the implementation and success of the program
- Record behaviour management strategies if necessary.

5. Identifying the Skills and Knowledge Enhancements Required

3. Record, compare and develop an understanding of assessments used to monitor student outcomes both well being and academic in all three models with the aim to implementing current, researched assessment and monitoring techniques to develop clearer and more specific outcome results in academic achievement, student wellbeing and confidence. This will enable educators to monitor and improve engagement, truancy, behaviour and incidence of bullying.

In each education model the Fellow will identify and record:

- The assessment tools used to understand and monitor student academic outcomes
- The assessment tools used to assess and understand outcomes in student wellbeing
- Methods used to monitor and improve student truancy, behaviour and decreased bullying.

6. The International Experience

General Note: A number of sound recordings of activities and interviews are included in the following section. In each case, permission to include these recordings has been granted by the people concerned. They are for personal use as part of this report and not to be used for commercial purposes or gain.

Destination - Shapwick School

Somerset, UK

Contacts

- Jon Whittlock- Headmaster
- Mr Martin Lee - Deputy Headmaster



Shapwick School

6. The International Experience

Objectives

To understand how Shapwick School supports students with SpLD from the early years to sixth form, paying attention to curriculum, class structure, methods, support services, programs and assessment.

Shapwick School is a specialist provision boarding school for students between the ages of eight to nineteen, set on two campuses that provide education for students with Specific Learning Difficulties. All students must have a diagnosis of Dyslexia or a Specific Learning Difficulty. Most students have a provisions statement and their place funded by the local council.

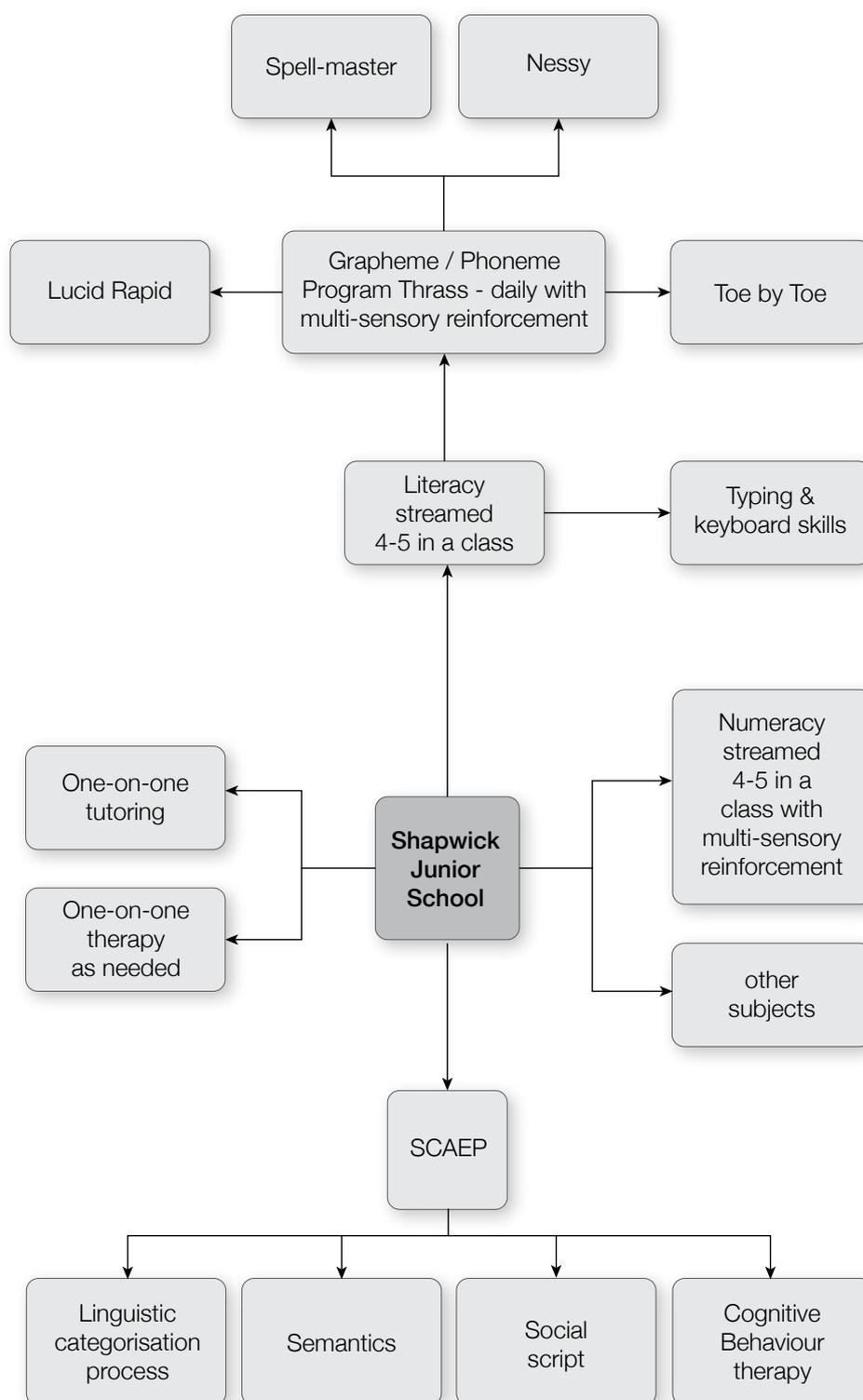
All teaching staff are qualified and are encouraged to get SpLD certificate or diploma qualifications. All tutors and literacy teachers have these qualifications. Shapwick School has an extensive team of Speech and Language, Occupational, and Physiotherapy professionals who provide individual and small group therapy on a daily basis, but also deliver integrated curriculum throughout the school at all levels.

The Fellow initially intended to spend her time in the senior school and in the Sixth Form program. Due to the timing of the visit, the senior students had completed or were completing exams and an opportunity arose to spend time in the junior school. It quickly became apparent that the remedial work conducted in the primary years was fundamental to the students' success in the upper years, therefore the analysis includes the junior school.



6. The International Experience

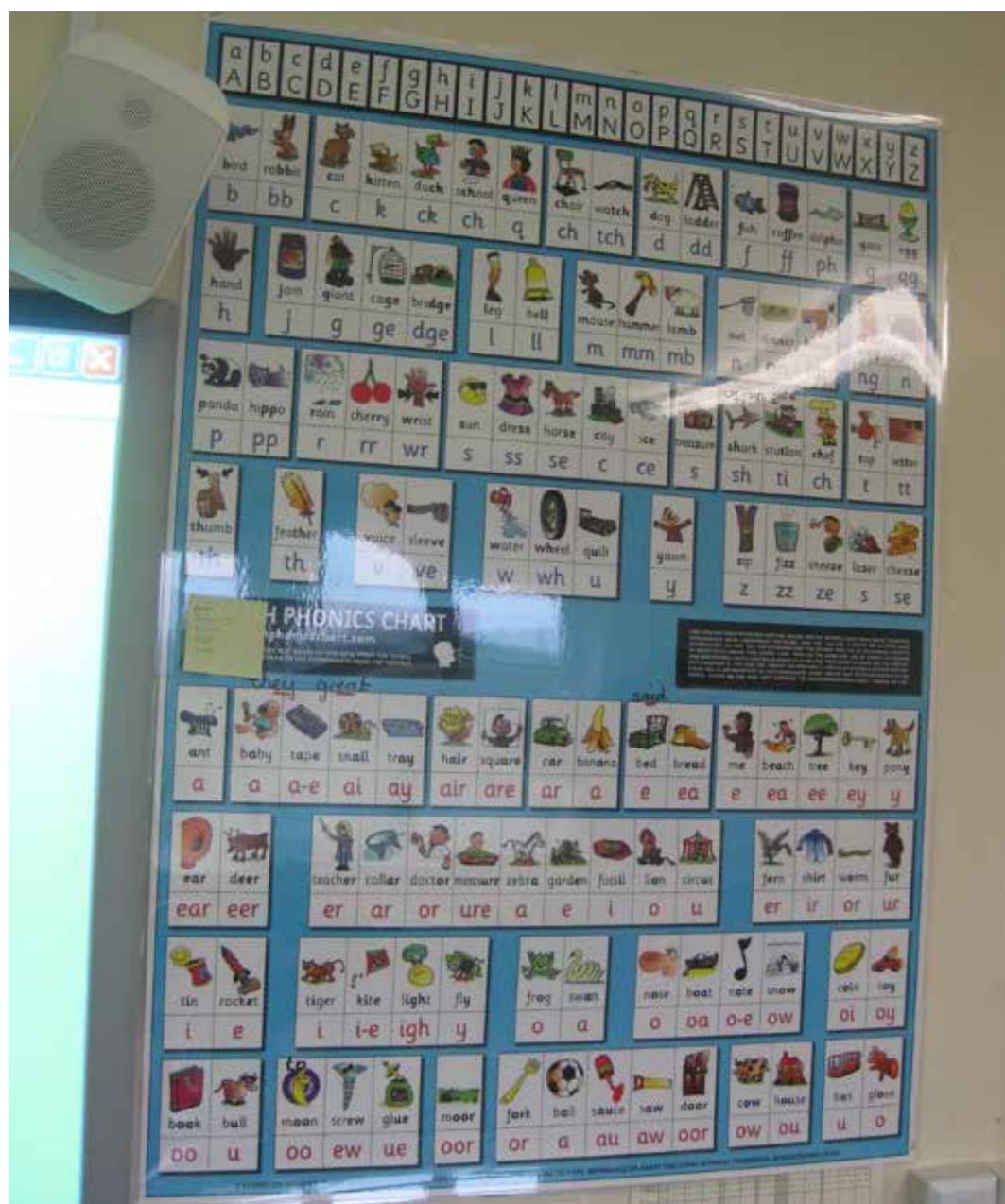
Junior School



6. The International Experience

Students start in the Junior school when they are eight or nine years old. Years 5, 6 and 7 are held at the Junior school campus. There are four to eight students in each class and they are streamed. The subjects the students take are English, Maths, Science, Art and Design, Design and Technology, Humanities, IT and PE. There is a strong focus on developing and improving literacy and numeracy skills whilst developing strategies to improve memory, sequencing and developing social communication.

Literacy and Numeracy classes are conducted daily, ability streamed, consisting of four to five students.



Thrass Chart

6. The International Experience

The junior classes start the morning with a strong focus on Literacy. The classes are streamed averaging five in a class. There is a strong emphasis on grapheme phoneme awareness using the evidence based multi-sensory Thrass system (A grapheme-phoneme system that explicitly teaches students the various relationships between speech sounds (phonemes) and spelling choices (graphemes). Thrass explicitly teaches the speech sounds represented by different letter combinations').

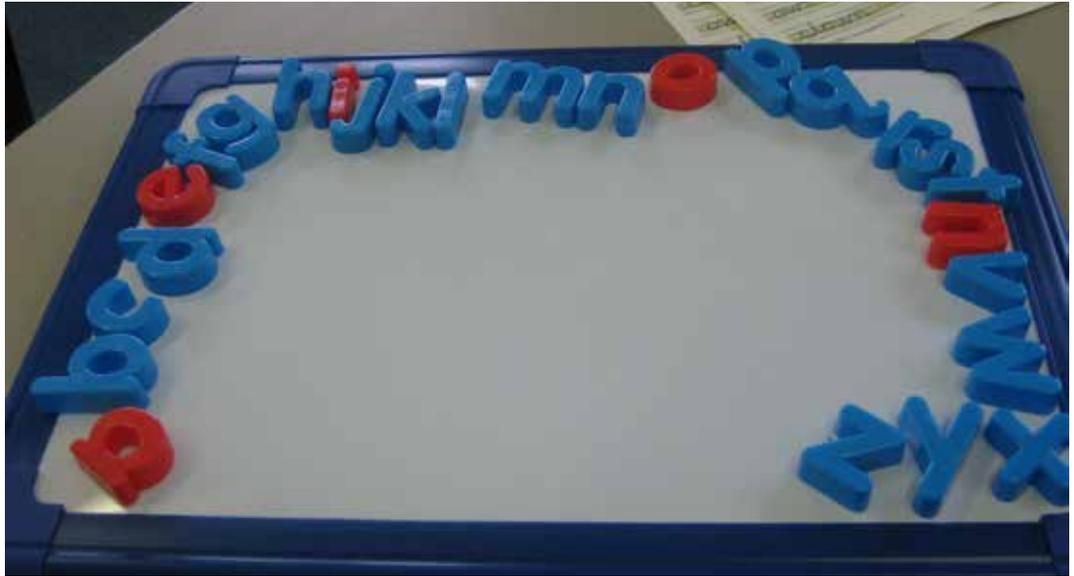
This is supported by other programs including Nessy, Lucid Rapid and Toe-by-Toe. The class room has many multi sensory resources, word lists, alphabet boards, sand pits and easy to read coloured clocks. All students were able to tell the time using these clocks as the font was large, colour coded and the hands were longer.



Most resources were colour coded to assist in sequencing, organisation and memory.

¹ ThrassInformation Brochure. For teaching English as a first or other Language Appendix 3

6. The International Experience



Magnetic boards



Multisensory sandboard

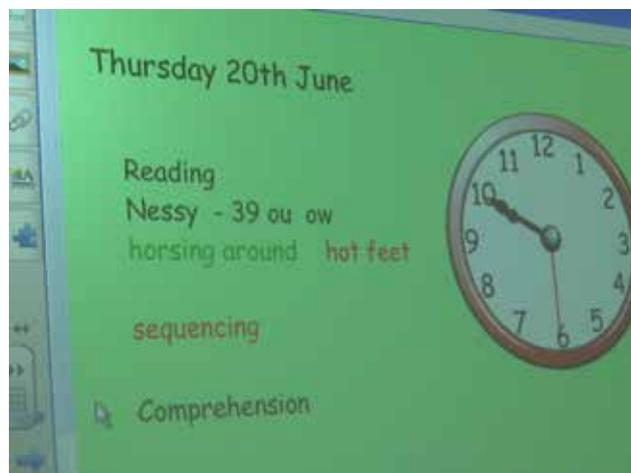
6. The International Experience

Classes had a set structured routine that was adhered to on a daily basis. Reading, spelling, handwriting and typewriting were practiced daily. In a Literacy class the teacher had several student workstations. One student was reading with the teacher, whilst another one was on the computer using the Nessy program. (Nessy has a different approach to learning that is ideal for those who have fallen behind and lost confidence.²)



Colour-coded keyboard

Another student was on a colour-coded typewriter using a program called 'English Type' and the other two students working on worksheets from the Thrass program. They worked on the featured grapheme sound for the week. For example "ow - ou". The class concluded with a spelling test of five words.



Literacy ow ou



Listen to Audio File 01 (available on disk from the ISS Institute).

² www.nessy.com

6. The International Experience

In other literacy classes strong emphasis was put on developing visual discrimination and sequencing skills by using picture/story combinations before reading text. Students were also tapping into prior knowledge and making links to the task.

In the junior school instructions were written on the board. The teacher read these out and students were asked to repeat instructions for clarification. The students used the visual prompts. When asked what was different about Shapwick the students responded "that they actually got it", they could ask questions and did not feel like they were stupid.



Maths classroom

The students tackled maths in a multi-sensory way. In a Grade 6 class the lesson was about developing awareness around money. The students were developing counting strategies and practiced counting money using numerous resources. The students were prompted to use a one to 100 number chart.

6. The International Experience

They also had money to count out, following this they wrote the sums in their books, then self-checked their answers. There were four in the class and the students worked independently through the work, with the teacher facilitating.

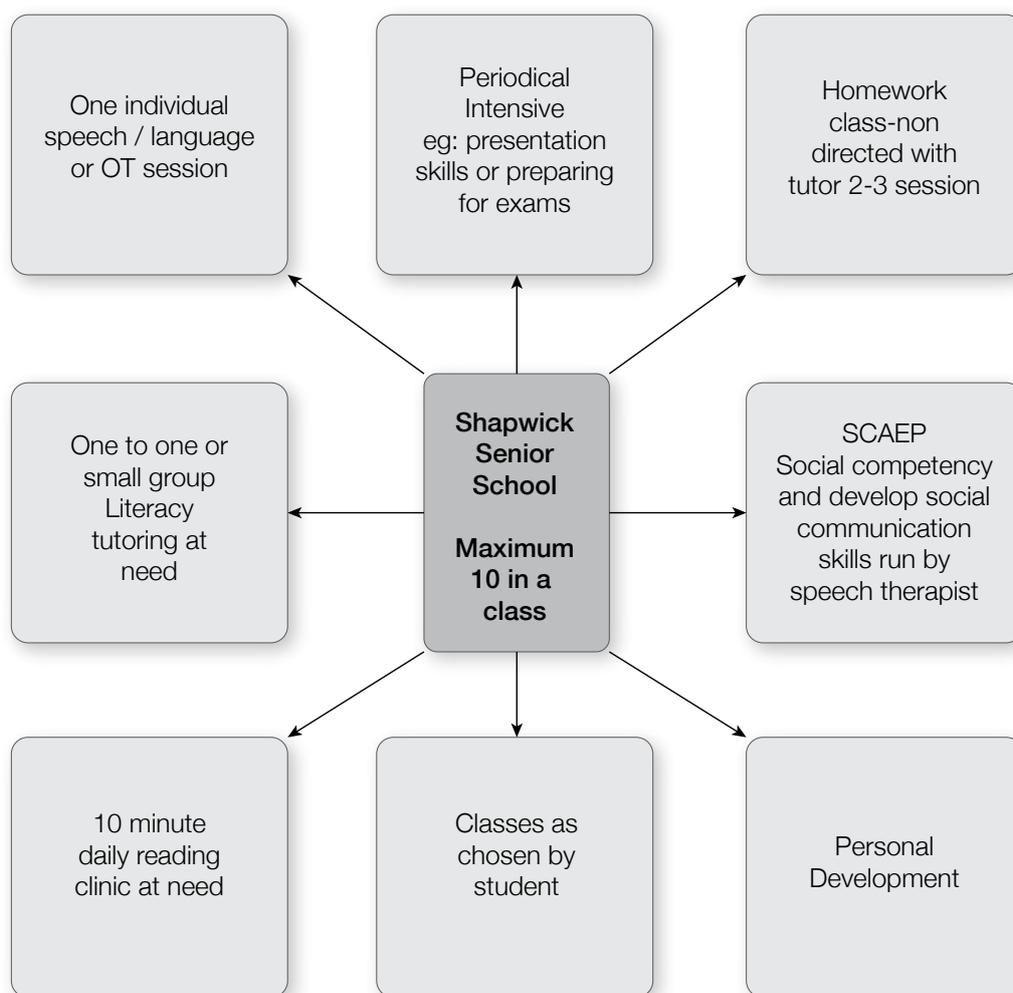
An important addition run by the speech therapists was the Social Communications Abilities Enhancement class. This was delivered once a week focusing on developing self-awareness and sensory processing. The class the Fellow watched was delivered outside using games that focused on pupils' auditory and listening/ following instructions skills. The program was started after the Speech Therapy team recognised that over 70 per cent of students had semantic, speech and language disorders that could be tackled not only individually but in a holistic way with their peers in the classroom.



Number chart

6. The International Experience

Senior School



The same support structures and systems that are in place through the junior school are continued in the senior school. There are usually new students entering at this point. These students might need to be assessed or other students re-assessed. The school uses various tests such as the YARC (York Assessment for Reading and Comprehension) and the TOWRE 2 test (for word reading efficiency) are two quick tests conducted to gauge the students' level. These tests are conducted by SpLD trained tutors. An educational psychologist is only used if other assessments are needed. Motor skills and language are also tested by the PT, OT and speech and language team and the relative support mechanisms put into place.

If a student is found to be behind in his/her reading, an intensive tutor reading program will be put into place where the student has one-on-one reading for ten minutes four times a week as long as needed on top of the tutoring and therapies given. The Thrass system is not continued in the senior school.

Due to the timing of the visit the Year 11 students were in exams and the Year 10 students were on camp.

6. The International Experience

In the senior school the class sizes increase to eight to ten students and curriculum was focused on requirements in the General Certificate of Secondary Education curriculum. The students attend classes from 9 am to 5.30 pm then went to their boarding houses. They had homework time with their tutor, where the staff can provide support with understanding, time management, writing skills as well as preparing the student for self directed studies. The students also attend Saturday morning classes.

The Fellow was able to observe numerous sessions, literacy personal development, drama, history and, maths. In all these classes the text was broken down and scaffolding put into place. The Fellow watched a history class where the focus was on exam planning as well as the curriculum. The teacher taught the students to break up and understand what the question was asking and prepared them to plan out the time needed to complete the question.

All the teachers used multi sensory approaches. Material was presented aurally, visually and in written format. Mind/memory games were played at the start of the class. Visual scaffolding was used to assist students. By this stage most of the students were working at appropriate academic year levels with support and scaffolding.



Visual scaffolds

to support the student. Students had access to one individual one hour therapy session a week, sometimes short intensive tutoring was given at need. If extra sessions were recommended the parents would need to pay.

The assessments used for reporting were the EDI Goal assessments which give a thorough assessment of word recognition and structure, spelling, understanding and responding and shaping text, sentence

The emphasis was placed on developing structures, improving time and exam planning and developing and supporting study skills. Students were encouraged to write but also used assistive technologies; the school used the program 'Read Write Gold'. ('Read Write Gold' is an easy to use toolbar which sits discreetly on top of any open Windows application. Users are given the opportunity to work in an inclusive manner with their peers by offering additional support when reading or composing text by providing text-to-speech facilities throughout the software program, making it an ideal solution for literacy difficulties, people who have dyslexia or for those learning English as a second language.³)

In exam conditions students qualified for a scribe, some a reader, and/or text to speech software dependent on exam level being sat.

All students had a detailed education plan written up by the school and therapy department highlighting how the school will assist the student and what therapies/provisions the school will implement

3 dyslexic.com

6. The International Experience

structure, punctuation and presentation. This was done every six months and discusses what the students can do and gives recommendations and suggestions as to what the student can work on. Teachers then use this data to plan classes for their students' needs.

Example of EDI Goal Assessment Program is included as Appendix 4.

In the junior school the self-assessment tool called 'Myself-as-a-Learner-Scale' (MALS) is used. (This assessment gives insights from the pattern of a person's responses as to whether they are confident in their ability to succeed on learning tasks, whether they are optimistic or pessimistic about themselves as learners, and whether they see success or failure in learning as in their personal control.⁴)

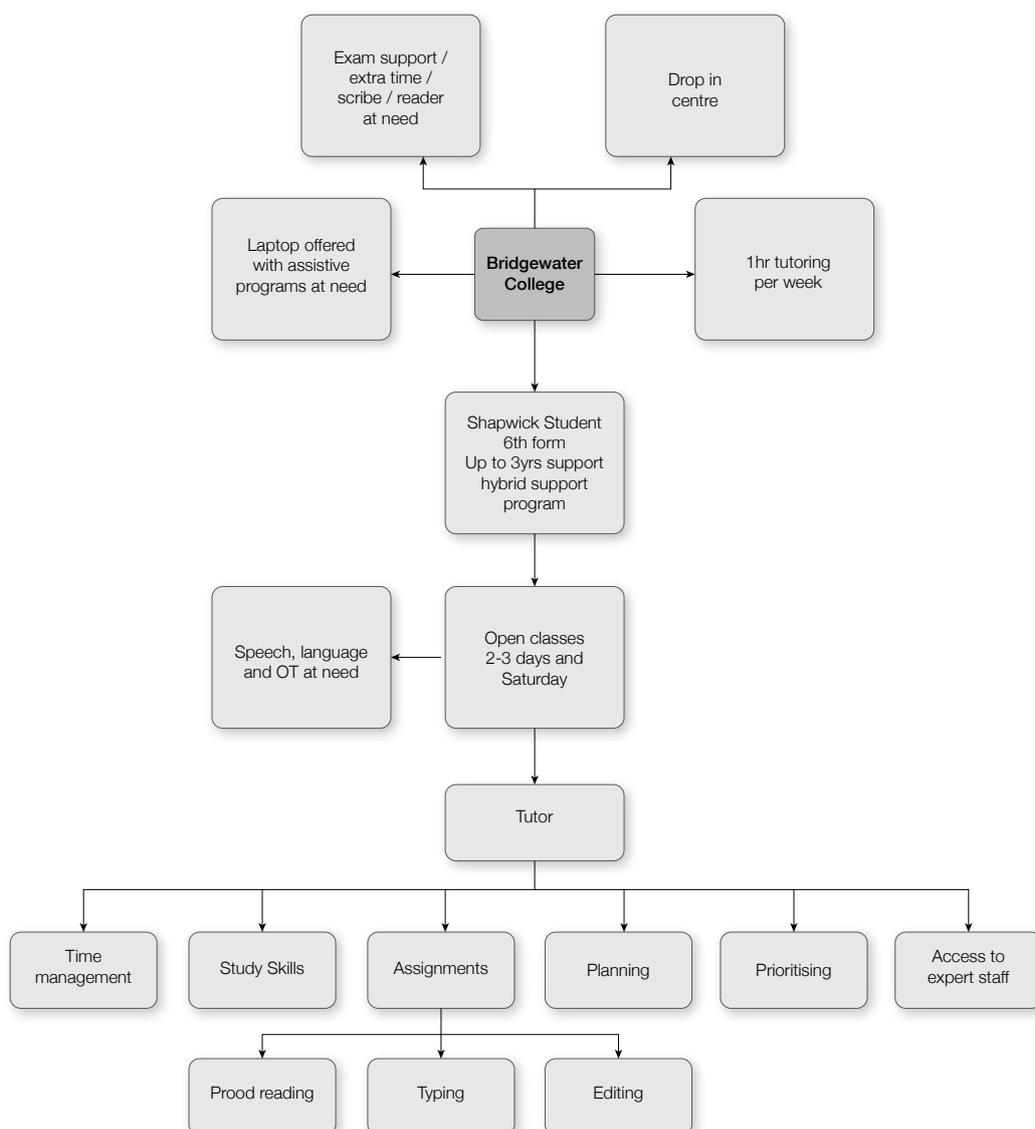
Another student well being assessment tool that is used to a lesser extent is The B.G stream.

In the senior school students academic standards were at national curriculum benchmarks. They worked towards completing assessments and tests geared to passing the General Certificate of Secondary Education Levels. They had access arrangement provisions in place, such as being given extra time for exams or a reader or scribe.

⁴ B, Burden Ability alone is not enough: How we think about ourselves matters too. An introduction to the Myself-As-a-Learner Scale (MALS)

6. The International Experience

Sixth Form



The school recognised that the students were well supported during their time at Shapwick but some struggled to cope with college demands.

This is a hybrid model where all the students attend a course at Bridgewater College and when the students are not in lectures they come to Shapwick where they work on their assignments and the staff support them to complete the tasks or plan their study schedule. Staff offer students strategies when needed and Shapwick staff liaise with college tutors to ensure student success. At Bridgewater College individual tutoring is offered weekly. Bridgewater College also gives the student assistive technologies to use as needed.

6. The International Experience

At Shapwick the students attend open classes when not at College where a tutor is present to provide individual support with coursework, to assist the students with understanding assignment requirements, time management, proof reading, planning, typing and liaising with the college staff if needed. The students still have access to all school support structures and staff. They can continue to access therapies if needed.



Listen to Audio File 02 (available on disk from the ISS Institute).

Outcomes and Learnings

- Excellent daily Grapheme Phoneme program which produces outstanding results
- Many strategies used to improve working memory including colour coding
- Colour coded and visual resources used to improve sequencing, organisation and memory
- Small class sizes, streamed in literacy and numeracy
- Promote teacher training in SpLD increases expertise
- Rich stimulating curriculum using multisensory resources
- Extensive and thorough early intervention program
- Extensive testing and reporting including Myself as a Learner Scale
- SCAEP program improves spatial, communication and sensory awareness
- Sixth form develops and promotes study independence, self monitoring and awareness with support structures in place
- Individual therapy sessions
- Supported homework program improves student motivation and independence
- Saturday classes reinforces learning and independence
- Dedicated and passionate staff
- Use EDI Goal Assessment program

Concluding Remarks

Shapwick school primarily caters for students with SpLD. It has an outstanding early years literacy and numeracy program, which improves outcomes and is supported by colour coded and multi sensory resources that aid in memory and organisation. This is an exemplary model that Australia should consider and replicate.

Shapwick school promotes independence and confidence as well as excellence in learning. The staff were passionate and supportive and invested this energy into the classes and students. Students felt comfortable and expressed their enjoyment, increased understanding and academic improvement. In the junior school there was a solid investment in intensive remedial lessons in literacy and numeracy. There were small class sizes, evidence-based programs and multi-sensory recourses aimed at increasing and improving skills to enable the student to reach their full potential.

6. The International Experience

In the senior school the students are offered a variety of subjects, social and personal development was taught and independence and self-advocacy encouraged. Classes were scaffolded and exam and essay writing skills taught to age-appropriate academic benchmarks.

At sixth form students were supported to succeed at college with assistance in planning, time management, and study skills with the aim of developing these skills independently. This sixth form model will work exceptionally well in the Australian TAFE sector, where students with LDs are transitioning from the CATE department or from external schools into the TAFE sector.

6. The International Experience

Destination : Blossom House School

Wimbledon, London, UK

Contacts

- Joanna Burgess, Principal
- Sarah Lynch, Office Manager (organised timetables for class visits)

Objectives

To understand how Blossom House School supports students with Language and Learning difficulties from the early years to sixth form, paying attention to curriculum, class structure, methods, support services, programs and assessment.



Blossom classrooms

Blossom House School is a specialist provision day school in London which provides education for pupils aged three to nineteen years of age with speech, language and communication difficulties. It has a nursery, junior and senior school and recently established provisions for a sixth form.

The principal, Joanna Burgess has a background in speech and language and had kindly accommodated the Fellows visit and any requests.

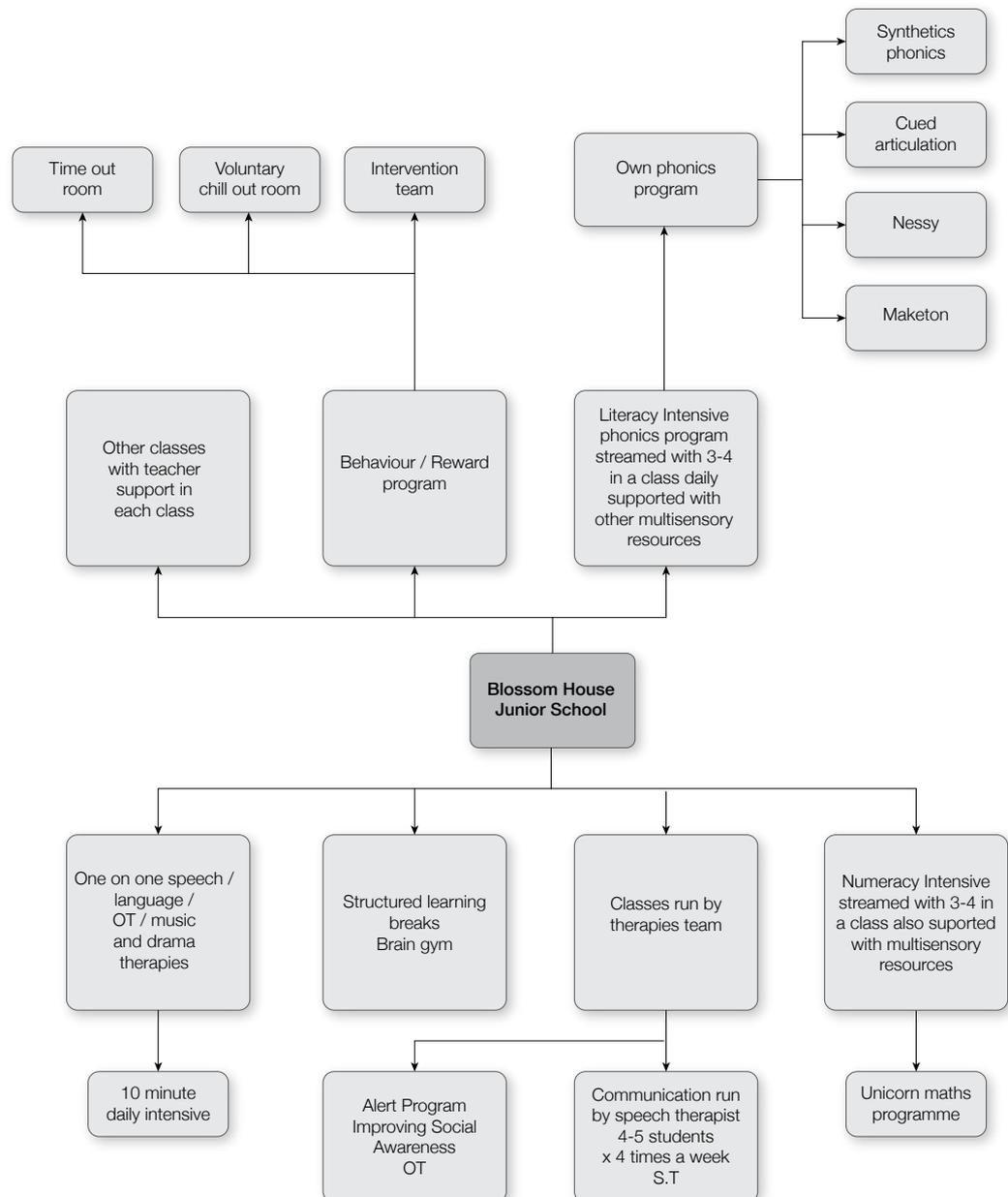
6. The International Experience

All students at Blossom House School have a statement of special education needs and are funded by the local councils with the majority of students being male.

As well as being qualified teachers, most literacy and English teachers have OCR Level 5 SpLD or diploma qualifications as well as being qualified in Unicorn Maths which is accredited by the British Dyslexia Association.

Blossom House School has an extensive team of therapists including speech and language, occupational, physiotherapy, music and drama therapists that provide individual and small group therapy on a daily basis, but also deliver integrated curriculum throughout the school at all levels.

Junior School



6. The International Experience

In the foundation stage there is a strong focus on developing phonemic awareness, reading, writing and communication skills. Most classes have four to five students in a class and are streamed. Blossom House has devised its own picture/phonics system which is used extensively throughout the lower years to develop phonemic awareness.



Phonic picture cards



Picture words

Students in the lower junior years were learning Maketon signs to assist in their communication. Cued articulation is also used. (It is a set of hand cues for teaching the individual sounds in a word. The hand movements are logical, each hand movement represents one sound and gives clues as to how and where the sound is produced.⁵)

The phonic lessons are daily, sequential and systematic, using phonic letter/picture symbols with cued articulation reinforcement, which the students grasped easily and were able to use to develop speech and communication skills. Students also used other multisensory resources to reinforce learning, including material story boards, foam letters and magnetic letters.



Magnetic boards

⁵ www.soundsforliteracy.com.au

6. The International Experience



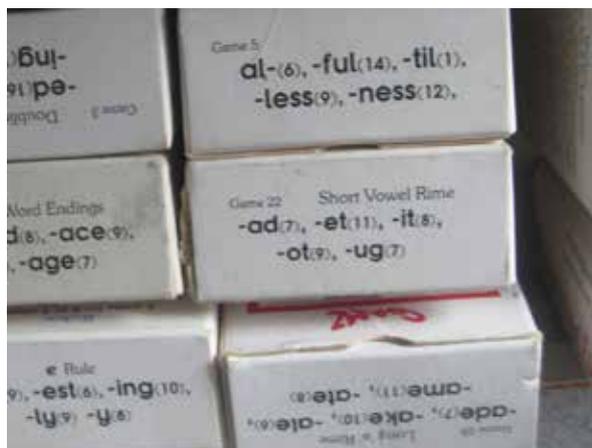
Blossom multisensory



Listen to Audio File 03
(available on disk from
the ISS Institute).

The targeted focus on Literacy and developing Communication and Language skills is followed through in the middle and upper levels of the junior school where the students continue to have daily Literacy sessions. Students in the upper primary explored text, writing styles and plays, which they act out. This reinforced the learning and reading development through multisensory approaches incorporating movement and acting.

Students still developed their phonics awareness and spelling strategies but it was done in a fun way. At the end of the phonics class students played SNAP using the phonics swap cards. All students enjoyed this activity and expressed that learning using these cards was fun. The cards were interactive and reinforced spelling rules. Word Shark was also used to target spelling strategies.



Spelling swap cards



Spelling swap cards

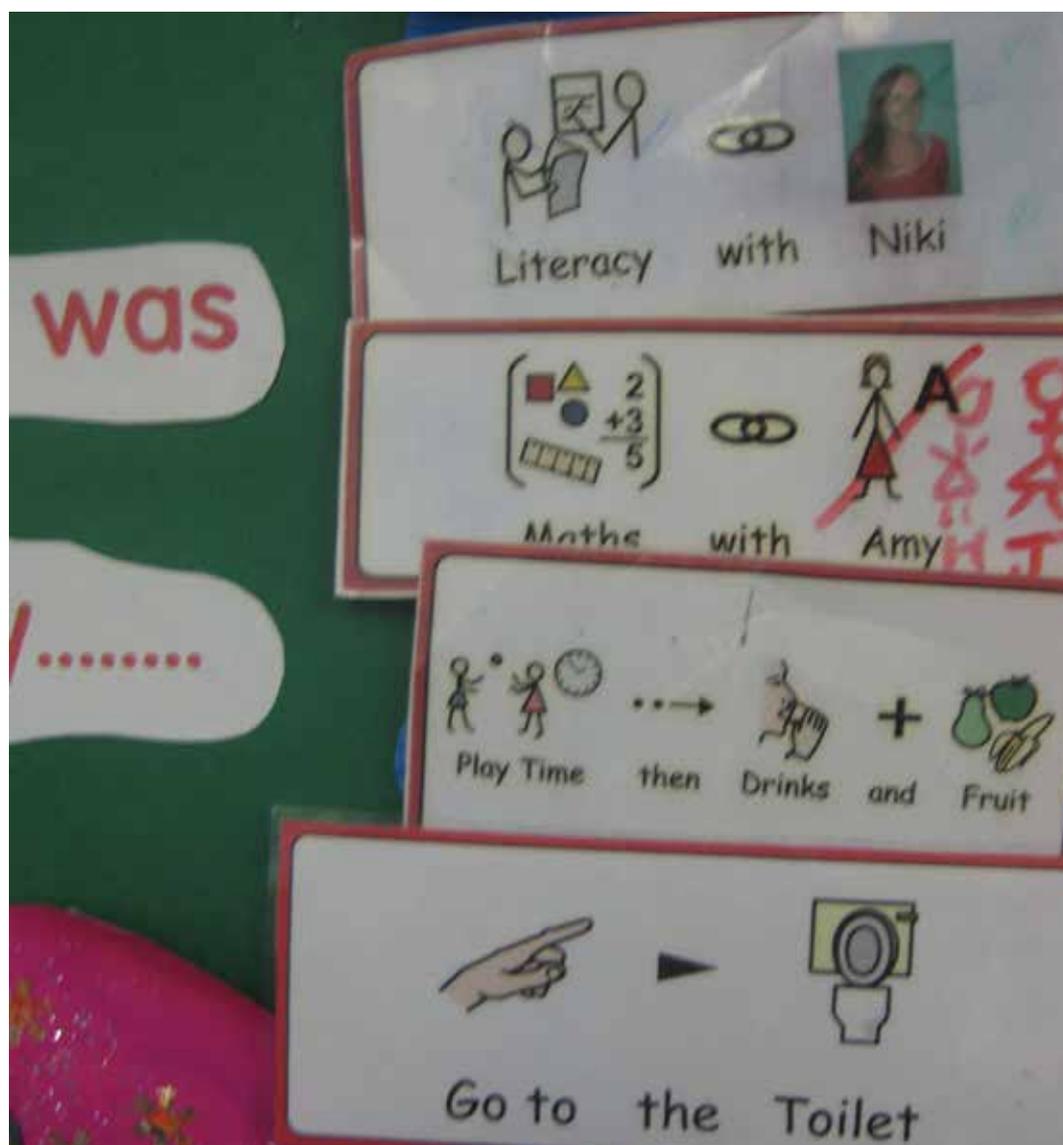
6. The International Experience

Numeracy was also taught daily using a program called Unicorn Maths (a program that is specifically written and recommended for students with SpLD).

Student also had individual therapy. Blossom House School has an extensive and impressive therapies team and tailored the program specifically to the students need. Blossom House was able to offer the student several one-on-one therapy sessions or daily ten minute sessions if needed or flagged.

The school was unique in that a class teacher and therapist were assigned to each class during registration to maximise staff communication and to target flagged issues or student needs on a daily basis. Registration was for half an hour in the morning and at the end of the school day.

Daily prompts were used to explain daily structure and prepare the students for the daily activities.



Daily prompts

6. The International Experience

Students also had four to five, 45 minutes per week speech and language sessions, where students learned to develop understanding and use of language skills, developing pragmatic language abilities and functional language skills to support the student to access the National Curriculum. There is also a considerable focus on social skills, enabling the pupils to develop their friendships and to learn to interact appropriately with each other. This assisted students with Social Communication difficulties.



Visual prompts - social cognition

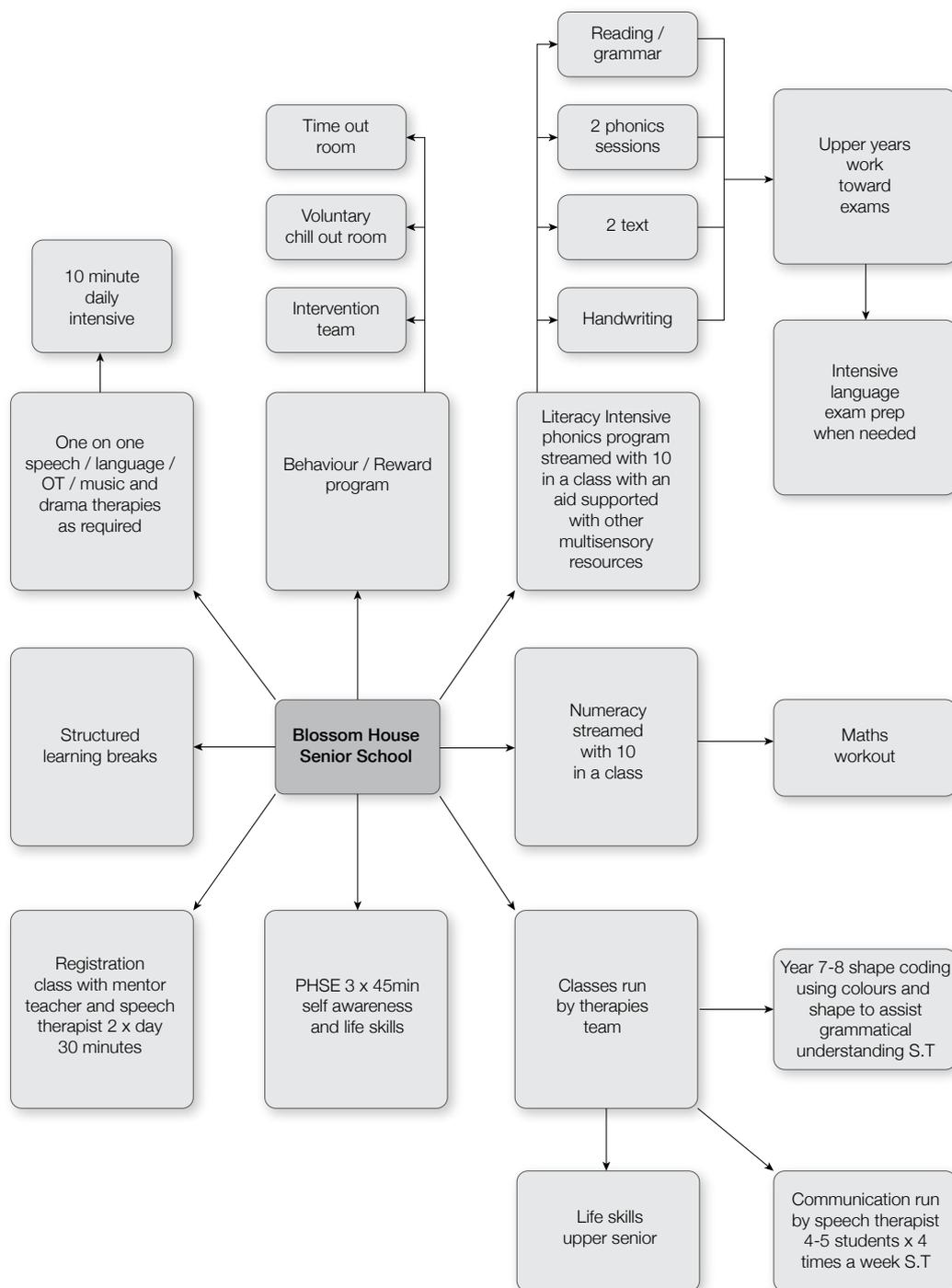
A program the school was using was called The Alert Program aimed at teaching self regulation and awareness. The classes were run by the occupational therapists. Part of the class was conducted in a regular classroom, the rest in a purpose built room where students were given physical and spatial awareness activities to complete.

Information technology, science, art and design, history, geography, drama, physical education, design and technology, food technology, citizenship and music are also taught.

In the junior school there is a strong emphasis on recognising and encouraging success and achievement academically, socially and behaviourally. Student of the class, star of the day and weekly reward systems are used.

6. The International Experience

Senior School



The Fellow was limited in the classes available to visit. The year 11 students were in exams and many Year 10 students were on excursions.

6. The International Experience

The same systems and structures in place in the junior school continued through the senior school including class structures, timetables, behaviour, reward management systems and 20 minute Structured Learning breaks where the Brain Gym System (the Physiotherapy and occupational therapy team devised short physical exercises to stimulate the brain practiced every 20 minutes of class work). This gave the student not only a physical but a mental break; the student was also able to quickly refocus on the task at hand.

Many of the students coming from the junior school have had systematic and daily remedial speech, language and phonic intervention. This intensely focused remedial intervention improves student literacy and Numeracy standards to those of current curriculum benchmarks.

New students entering the senior school are offered intense remedial language and therapy programs in addition to the school curriculum as per student need.

Most classes have eight to ten students in the class with an assistant present. Each day the registration class has a teacher and speech therapist in attendance.

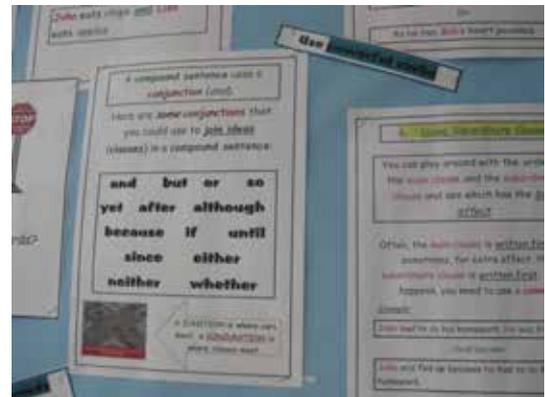
The focus in literacy changes slightly, the students get five literacy sessions a week, two focusing on phonics, one on handwriting and two text classes as well as typing and written language intensives. As the students progress through the senior school more focus is given to developing written and language skills and strategies to sit exams. This same approach is used all other classes.



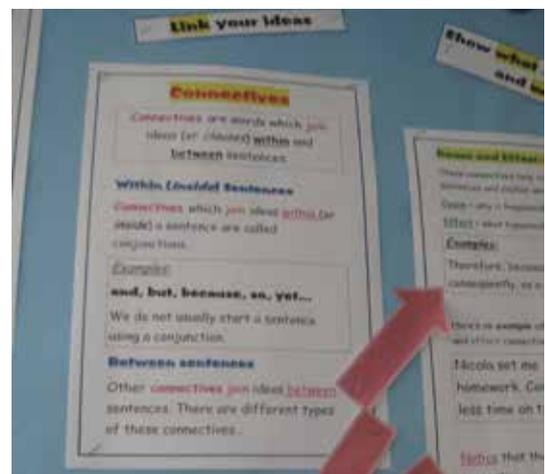
PHSE



Listen to Audio File 04 (available on disk from the ISS Institute).



Blossom visual aids



Blossom literacy connectives

6. The International Experience

The speech and language team run communication classes as well as personal, social and health education classes focused on self and social awareness, developing language and communication skills. The Alert program is also continued in the senior school.



Listen to Audio File 05 (available on disk from the ISS Institute).

A new program being trialled in the senior school is shape coding which is the use of shapes and colours to assist understanding of grammar. (The Shape Coding system was designed to teach grammatical rules to school-aged children with SpLD's. It aims to use the visual strengths of many children with SpLD by using a visual coding system to represent grammatical features of English. The system includes use of colours (parts of speech), arrows (tense and aspect) and shapes (syntactic and argument structure)⁶.

At Blossom House school all classes are all structured in the same way. They begin the class with an agenda, which is delivered in a written and verbal format, stating aims of the class, timed activities that will be delivered and learning breaks. This provides structure and predictability and develops understanding and purposes and provides links to memory.

The school has also developed a voluntary 'chill out' room where the student can take him/herself to when they recognise the need to refocus or calm down. There is also a time out room where the teacher or assistant send the student when needed. The school has policies and intervention plans in place if students get aggressive and violent which are clear and systematic. These behaviour management systems are extremely effective and empower the student to make the right choices. Procedures are consistent and encourage the student to make good progress in developing their social skills and managing their behaviour.

Blossom House School has well developed behaviour/rewards programs and strategies in place. If there are behavioural issues in the class they are discretely dealt with by the assistant, so the teacher does not need to stop the class. This is consistent through the school.

The school has developed a reward and token system which the students enjoy using and encourages positive behaviour. The senior students trade these tokens in for vouchers to retail or music shops, which give them relevant and age appropriate rewards to promote not only good behaviour but peer support and encouragement. By introducing positive rewards and trade in token systems students develop cooperation and social skills in lessons and frequently provide support and encouragement to each other. They make a positive contribution to school life completing tasks and encouraging and supporting others.

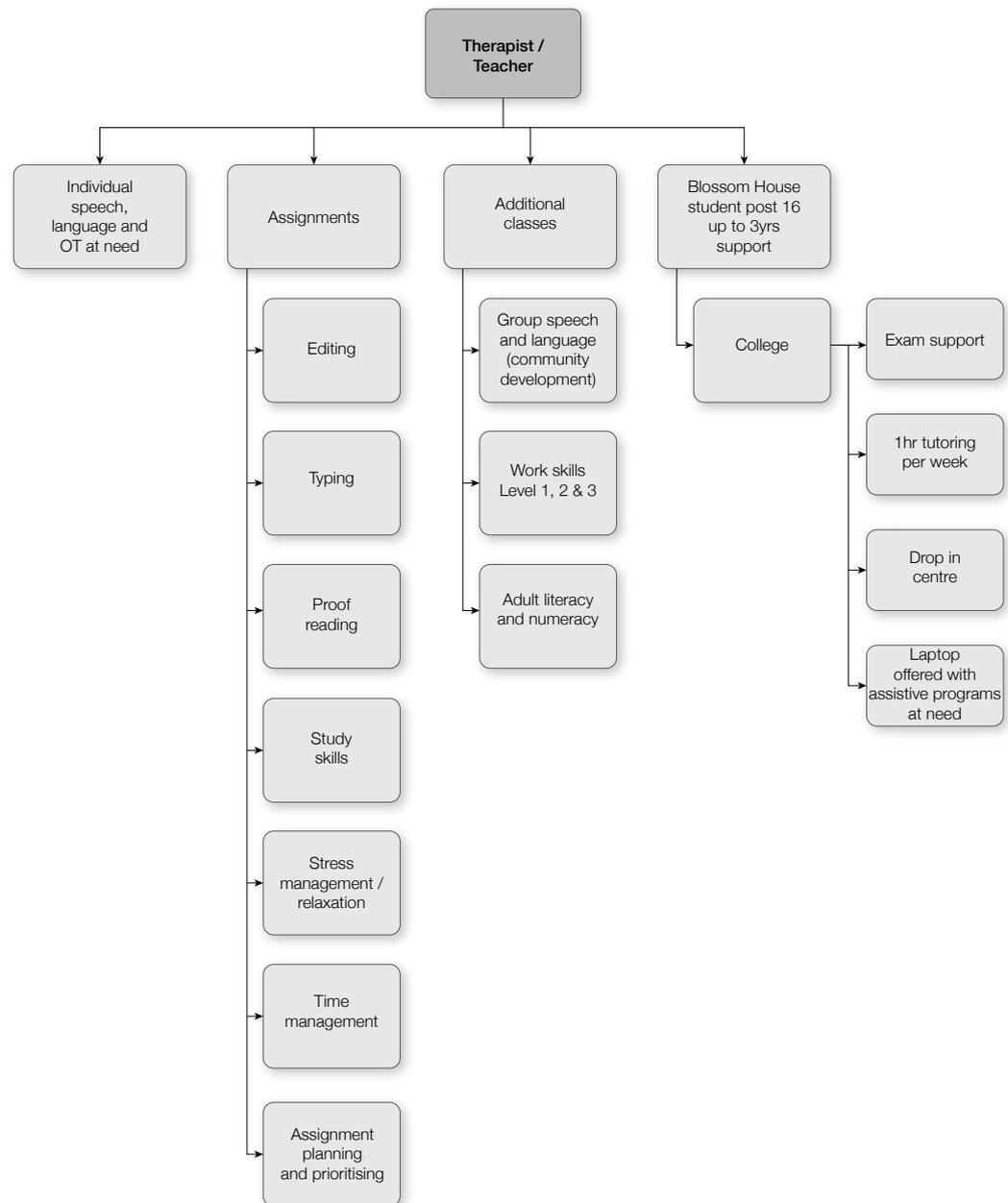
Assistive technologies are mainly used in the upper primary and senior years. Text Help Read & Write 10 Gold is the Text to Speech program used in the senior school. Unicorn maths and Maths Workout are the Maths program used and supported by Number Shark 4. Nessy, Clicker 5 and Lucid memory are programs used in addition to the regular classroom program at need.

All students are assessed regularly by the therapists and teachers. All students have an extensive learning plan which lists their provisions and how the school will work to accommodate the provisions. There is also regular reporting to parents and authorities. Because of the small class sizes staff communicate with each other about individual student needs and come up with strategies to assist each issue effectively as it arises, with a high level of pastoral care and support.

⁶ www.moorhouse.surrey.sch.uk

6. The International Experience

Post 16 Provisions



Blossom House School has just introduced a post 16 provision, recognising that the students were well supported during their time the school but some struggled to cope with the college demands still needing social and emotional support during the transition to college.

To be eligible for the Post 16 program students must attend a college for at least half their school week and attend the Blossom House school when they are not at college. This further develops their independence, academic writing skills, social and communication skills.

Staff support students with understanding college requirements, assignments and assessments,

6. The International Experience

in addition there are structured literacy and numeracy classes and other vocational classes offered. Students focus on developing work, social and independent living skills. Students have access to the therapies if needed.

Outcomes and Learnings

- Rich stimulating curriculum using multi-sensory and colour coded resources
- Visual scaffolds used to aid memory
- Well prepared and presented lessons increases student involvement and understanding
- Multi sensory/ phonics system delivered daily improves reading/spelling and language
- High number of SpLD trained staff increases expertise
- Staff also trained in Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Cued Articulation – another strategy to improve speech and reading
- Excellent Reward systems in place improves behaviour and motivation
- Good behaviour strategies used and behaviour management systems in place
- Strong speech and language based classroom curriculum assists all students develop language skills
- Targeted social awareness programs to develop social skills
- Broad range of therapies offered
- Individual therapies
- Brain Gym used which improves concentration
- Universal design classroom used
- Classroom teacher and speech therapist together during registration time
- An assistant in most classes keeps students focused, motivated and assists with behaviour issues.

Concluding Remarks

Blossom house School is an exemplary model for Australia to study and replicate. It has outstanding student success and outcomes. It caters for a variety of Language and Communication difficulties with varying diagnostic labels from SpLD to Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The school is highly organised, with excellent programs and structures in place. Teacher training in SpLD and other learning differences is encouraged. It has a vibrant and positive school environment. Many new and exciting programs are being used or trialled. Students seem to thrive, are confident and successful.

There is a strong link between teaching staff and therapists to produce the best outcome for students. The therapists not only have individual sessions but run classroom programs and attend registration sessions daily.

There is strong, structured and well thought out set of programs and procedures, which provide holistic approach to achieve well round student success.

6. The International Experience

There are strong, structured and well thought out programs and procedures which provide a holistic approach to achieving well rounded student success. The students learning is scaffolded and supported.

The behaviour programs and procedures, which were highly effective at Blossom House School can easily be utilised and copied in Australia.

6. The International Experience

Destination-Landmark College

Vermont , USA

Contacts

- Adrienne Major, Academic Dean
- Jill Hickney Assistant Dean of Academics (both assisted in the initial facilitation, itinerary and daily program and classroom visits)

Objectives

To understand how Landmark supports students with not only SpLD but other LD's including ASD and ADHD, paying attention to curriculum, class structure, methods, support services, programs and assessment.



Landmark College

Landmark College is a residential college in Vermont set up to support students with Learning Disabilities including Specific Learning Disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

6. The International Experience

Landmark College runs a diverse range of courses including bachelor, associate, certificate programs and various other transition and summer programs for high school students, college students. They also run courses and Professional Development for educators.

There are around 500 students enrolled in the full time courses and many more in the summer Intensives.

Students when entering the two year undergraduate degree are streamed in three ways as credit, partial credit and non credit in the first year.

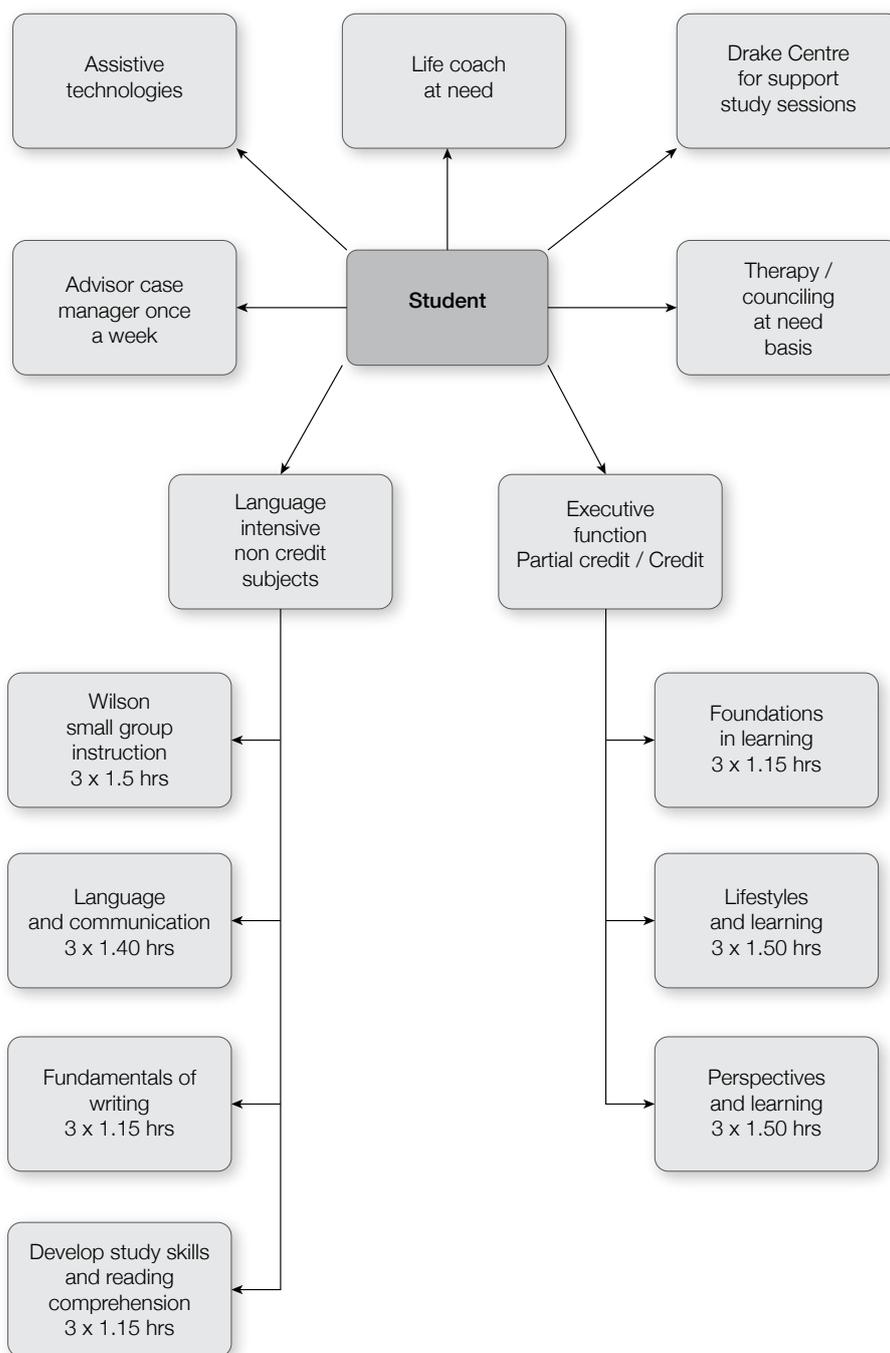
1. Credit is for students deemed ready to start college. Students will still be streamed in a reading comprehension and fluency focus stream taking Composition and Rhetoric developing reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. Or an academic self-management focus where students take Perspectives in Learning, which helps develop study skills in conjunction with learning about the brain, behaviour and cognition.
2. Partial-Credit is for students whose reading and writing skills are not at the college levels. The program provides an intensive semester of skill and strategy instruction developed to improve and increase skills and academic standards. Assistive technology is encouraged and supported as a tool. Students take two non-credit, compulsory developmental courses to improve writing and study including:
 - » Foundations in Learning-introduces students to habits and skills needed for successful transition to college
 - » Developmental Writing-which prepares students for credit-level composition work, focusing on development of independent writing process and strategies and on practicing and integrating patterns of organization in essays.
3. Language Intensive Curriculum (LIC) is a non-credit, one- or two-semester intensive program for students with significant difficulties who are reading and writing well below college level. The LIC emphasizes the use of assistive technology such as the required Kurzweil text reader and Dragon dictation software to help students develop skills and abilities that will be required in college. Students take three developmental courses, Developing Study Skills & Reading Comprehension, Fundamentals in Writing and Language and Communication, all students must take a reading decoding classes using the Wilson Reading System.⁷

Unfortunately due to the timing of the visit the Fellow was unable attend during the academic year but was able to sit in on the high School Summer Program and the Bridging the Gap Summer intensive program for college students.

⁷ www.landmark.edu

6. The International Experience

Landmark- student support and curriculum streams



6. The International Experience

The college differed greatly from the schools previously visited. Having over 500 students the first day was spent talking to relevant department heads, taking part in a campus tour and orientation that assisted in understanding the programs, departments and roles within the college.

There was strong focus not only on academic achievement but social success and empowering the student to understand their learning differences and use the resources and support structures in place to make the most out of the course in order to become independent, self motivated and organised learners. To also understand what it takes to be successful and to be able to self-advocate.

The school supported a Universal Design teaching approach (the design of products and environments to be useable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design').⁸ Part of this was having universal classroom routines throughout the college, having all texts and materials in electronic format and available to the students before commencement of the course, giving course maps/units in advance and employing multisensory techniques. Staff also had to provide connectors from lesson to lesson and from topic to topic.

**Appendix 6 Universal Design Powerpoint*

Students are assigned an advisor and have weekly meetings to discuss issues and concerns. The advisor liaises with college teachers and staff who flagged issues as they arose. This decreases misunderstanding, truancy and any behavioural issues that occur in class and on campus. Student health and wellbeing are discussed and strategies put into place if needed. Students can also have one on one writing/reading and study skills support as needed by appointment. Life coaching and counselling are also offered at need. Social activities and outings are organised and offered to students on campus.

Landmark had a Research and Training department which conducts research, trains staff internally and participates and runs seminars and conferences externally, accessing and utilising the expertise and knowledge of staff and programs developed. The R & T department also have external and online courses in LDs and Universal Design and publish texts, course materials and books onsite.

Bridging the Gap program



Click the icon to the left to watch to the video file (you will be taken to YouTube).

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=80okkMgyTU8&t=0

Students were explicitly taught about their 'learning differences'. Professor Maclean Gander ran a hour and a half lecture and a further 45 minutes of question time. The title of his lecture was Understanding LD (reading and language), ADHD and ASD: A critical Thinking Approach, where he systematically discussed the above learning differences, the historical context, diagnosis, development and understanding, medical model or diagnosis verses the scientific model. He discussed the strengths and weaknesses of each learning difficulty and developing self-success through understanding, efficacy and advocacy. This was followed by a lively voluntary question and answer session, which more than three quarters of the students stayed and participated in.



Listen to Audio File 06 (available on disk from the ISS Institute).

⁸ S Strothman, Promoting Academic Success for Students with Learning disabilities

6. The International Experience

Students that were flagged as needing language and literacy intensive undertook a one and/or two semester Wilson Instruction Intensive. The Wilson Reading System is a multisensory, phonics-based program developed specifically for adults, who have difficulty with decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling) through a carefully planned program.⁹ A, Shamim, Teaching Reading and Spelling to Adult Learners: The Multisensory Structured Language Approach.

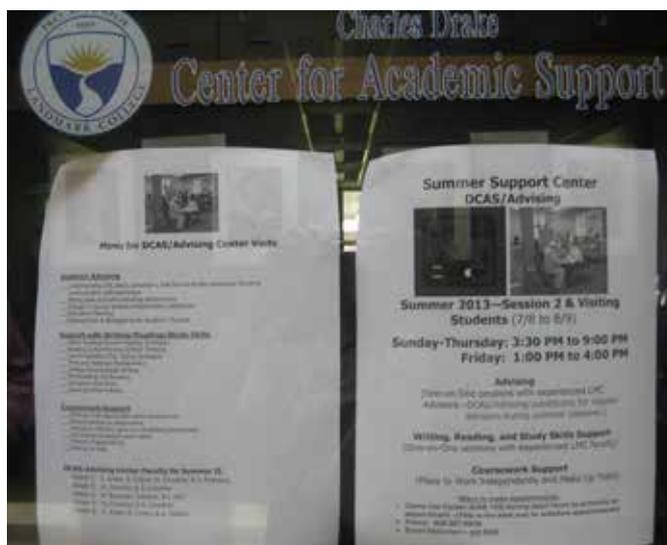


Listen to Audio File 07 (available on disk from the ISS Institute).

The students were streamed; all have three, one and a quarter hour sessions per week in small groups of three to four.

**Appendix 7 Landmark College Powerpoint about Wilson and Assistive technologies*

Language remediation was used in conjunction with Assistive Technologies. The college had a dedicated librarian to investigate and research technologies and their use in the class and by the individual student. Classes were conducted for the students as a whole group and individual instruction. Professional Development was also run for staff. Programs currently used include Kurzweil 3000, DragonNaturally Speaking and Inspiration Mind Mapping. Some free programs include: Orato, Natural Reader, Webnotes, Diigo, Readability, Test Prep and Online Dictionaries. All staff were given professional development in using Moodle and use Moodle with students, all assessments and material are accessed through Moodle.



Drake centre

Watch Video File 01

(available on disk from the ISS Institute).



Students were taught explicit writing, reading and study skills. In the DCAS Centre the Fellow met with Chris Arietta who was tutoring a student about scanning texts for information. The students were taught to preview before reading the text and to use visual prompts, paying attention to headings and words in bold font or words with larger text size. This gives the reader key information, concepts and understanding before reading

9 A, Shamim, Teaching Reading and Spelling to Adult Learners: The Multisensory Structured Language Approach 2012

6. The International Experience

the text. Scanning text for information was also discussed, with strategies to remember key ideas including highlighting and writing down the key ideas numbering the key points.

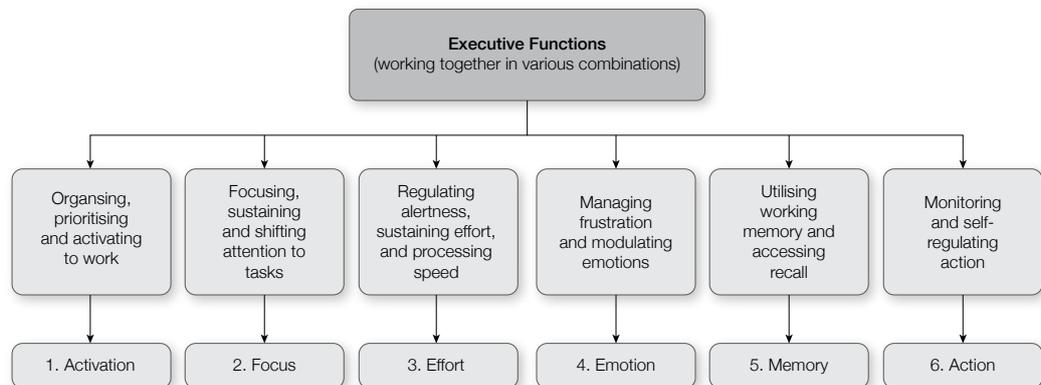
Chris re-established the importance of the 2 column note system. (Students record the main ideas on the left and supporting details on the right).



Listen to Audio File 08 (available on disk from the ISS Institute).

As part of the curriculum students were taught about Executive Functions (a term used to describe a set of mental processes that helps us connect past experience with present action. Executive functions are used when performing such activities as planning, organizing, strategizing and paying attention to and remembering details.¹⁰ Students attending this class had deficiencies in this area. Some of the topics covered in the unit include understanding of self, self identification, understanding learning styles and strategies, planning, prioritising and organisation and self management including sleep, anxiety, managing stress and emotions and self advocacy.

Executive Functions Impaired in ADD/ADHD



(TE Brown 2005)

¹¹Appendix 9

¹⁰ L Meltzer, Promoting Executive Function in the classroom, Guilford Press 2010

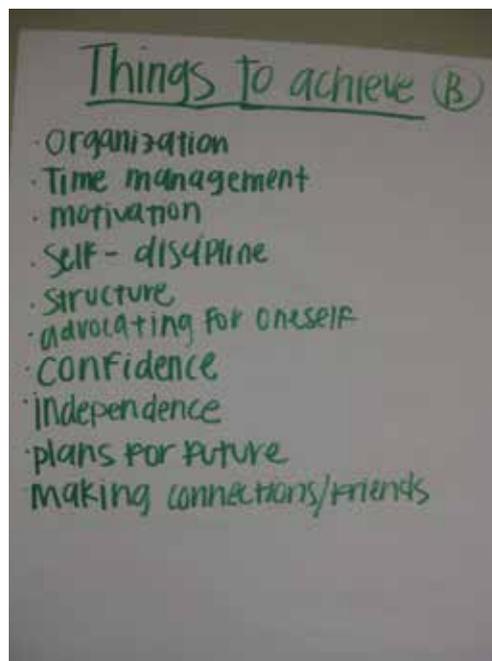
¹¹ T. Brown Executive Describing Six aspects of a complex system

6. The International Experience

The Fellow sat in on a tutorial by Kathy D'Alessio where the challenges of having an LD might have on executive functioning were discussed. She reviewed the previous session and asked concise 'take away' ideas or thoughts on the class. Students then discussed LD's and the problems they face. The theory 'Stages of Change' was introduced and the model discussed. Examples were given and strategies and tools discussed to assist students making a lifestyle/study change. All the students had to find something they wanted to change.



Listen to Audio File 9 (available on disk from the ISS Institute).



In the following session 'The Predictors of Success for the student with LD's', LD's were introduced and discussed. Students had to discuss and define difficulties they face and as a group create an action plan. All seemed to have difficulties with procrastination and executive function: including goal setting, focus, motivation, organisation, prioritising and memory. Students came up with a plan of action to tackle these difficulties including routines, support structures and strategies. They had to have a partner or partners to meet with and be accountable to. This led into a 'Goal Setting' class. Due to the knowledge gained in previous classes students achieved greater self awareness and understanding to goals setting that enabled and motivated the student to make and set goals with appropriate strategies needed for success.

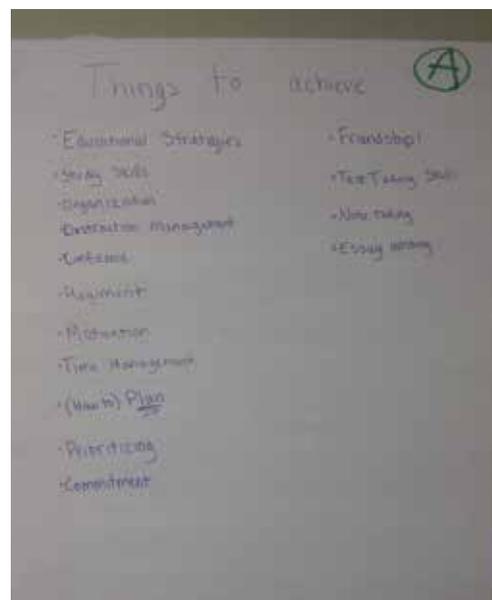
Using lists



Listen to Audio File 10 (available on disk from the ISS Institute).

Again students were encouraged to use the two-note system. (This is part of the Master Note system, see Appendix 10). At the end of the class the notes were checked and sharing and discussing of notes were encouraged.

Explicit writing skills were taught to students with executive function difficulties in a class called "Writing, Cognition and Executive function". In the class the writing and planning processes were discussed and the importance of structure and organisation as tools to improve executive function



6. The International Experience

issues. Students had to complete a visual mind map of their writing history/experience and then complete a “Shitty 1st draft.” Writers block and strategies to start tasks was discussed and individual plans put in place to facilitate writing. Templates of writing structures were introduced to be used in following lessons.



Listen to Audio File 11 (available on disk from the ISS Institute).

As this was a college, most of the assessment was academic essays and assignments.

Outcomes and Learnings

- Universal Design used which assists all students with LDs
- Agenda used in daily classes with links to previous classes, assist in accessing working Memory and providing structure
- Curriculum streamed to tackle Language deficiencies, improve literacy standards in Young Adults using The Wilson Program
- Small class sizes
- Individualised support structures in place improves motivation, decreased truancy and behaviour issues
- Learning differences taught as a class improves understanding, efficacy and advocacy
- Executive function taught which improves planning, prioritising, emotion, working memory, impulse control motivation and understanding
- Writing skills for students with LD explicitly taught
- Weekly advising session decreases truancy, improves independence and liaises with college staff
- Counselling/ Life coach offered at need improve well being
- Drake tutoring improves study skills in writing and reading skills
- Assistive technologies used to develop independence

Concluding remarks

Landmark is one of the only colleges that cater for students with LD in the USA. This is a model not in existence in Australia. It was an impressive college using evidence based approaches which have been thoroughly researched; a cutting edge college backed by a research team and staff members who are expert in their specialised field/s. The students were well supported in all areas of their learning including a curriculum that addresses language/spelling and reading deficiencies and executive function issues that were prominent in all learning differences. Universal design approaches were used throughout the college. The students had access to counselling, life coaches, study support tutors and social programs that addressed many emotional, social, behaviour or truancy issues. The College aimed to prepare the students for academic success whilst developing social and self-awareness skills.

Educational institutions in Australia could use the universal design approach as it would benefit not only students with SpLD, but all students. Students can also be explicitly taught about the strengths and

6. The International Experience

weaknesses of their disability, enabling the student to understand, manage and advocate for themselves. Executive functioning strategies could also be taught to students that will assist all students to improve their skills in this area. Language and Reading intensives could also be introduced for adults using the Wilson Program.



Click the icon to the left to watch the video file (you will be taken to YouTube).

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=kTj178Fzi9s&t=5

6. The International Experience

Destination - Exeter College

Exeter, UK

Contact

Claire Staveley, Learning Support

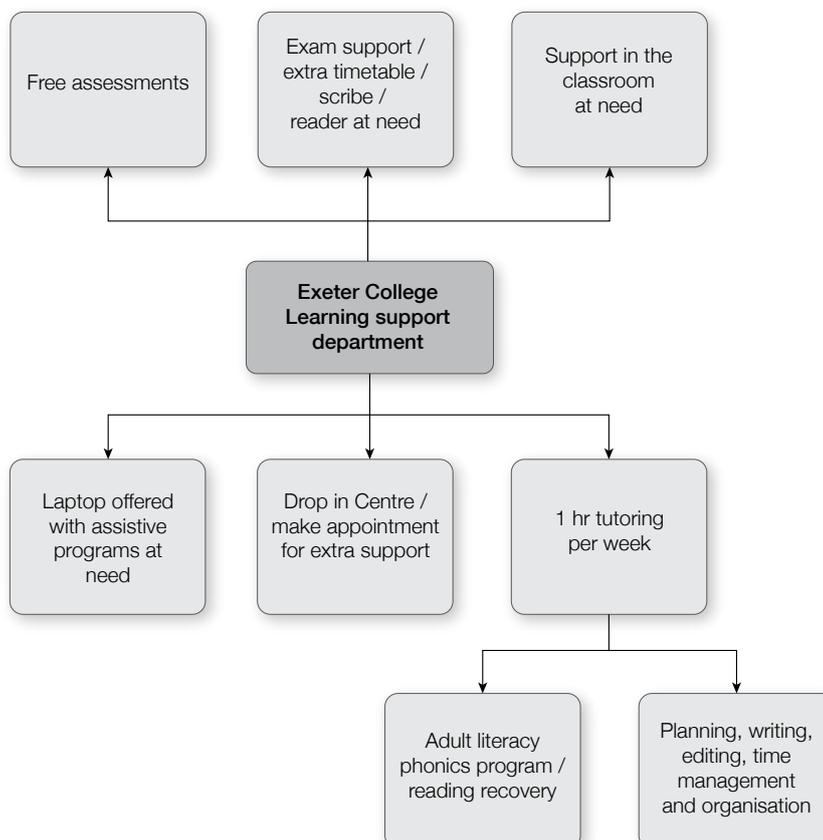
Objectives

To understand how Exeter College supports students with SpLD and other difficulties.



Exeter College

Learning support Department at Exeter College.

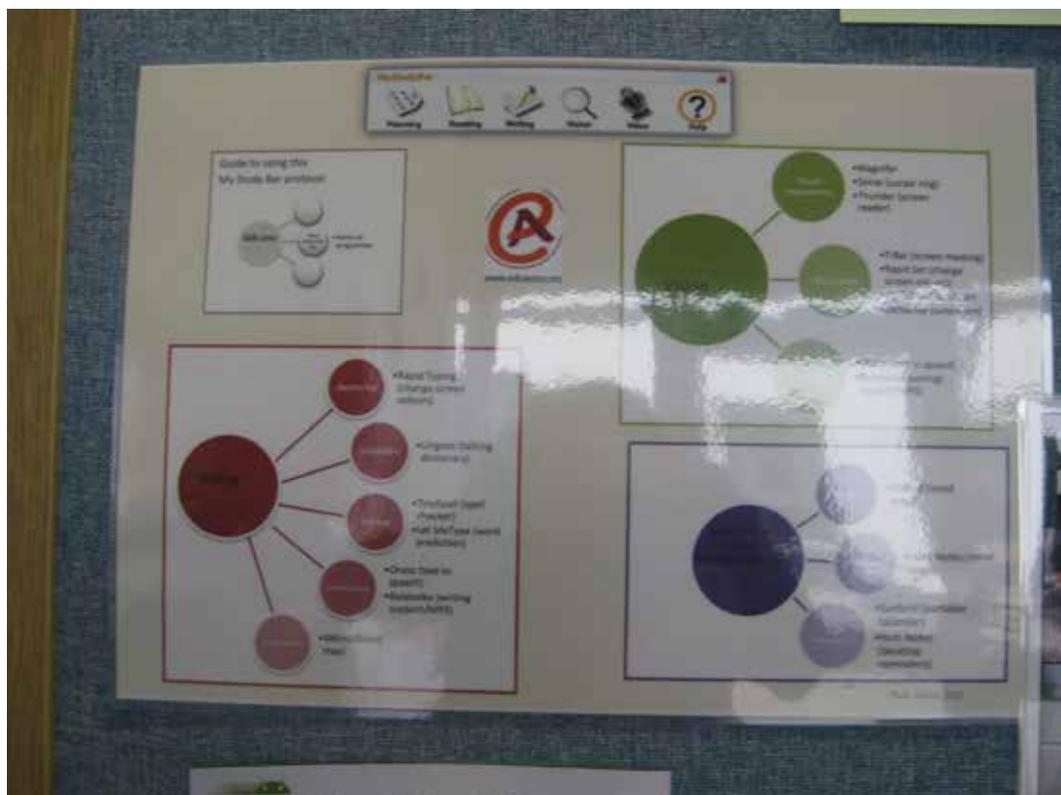


6. The International Experience

This department has 37 enablers or teaching assistants and 17 support staff trained in SpLD, Autism and a Speech and Language person.

The department interview prospective students who have declared their LDs to the College, including what support they have had in the past and what they might need. The staff liaise with the student's previous school to get relevant information and assessments. This information is then loaded up on a system so that teachers and learning support staff can access it when needed.

Students have enabling or learning support in the classroom as well as one hour a week of individual tutoring. In the Foundation Department students have more classroom support and additional weekly tutoring due to the extra needs of the student. There is also access to a Speech Therapist if needed.



Strategy Maps

Writing, planning and editing support is also offered. Most students will also need assistance with organisation and time management. The Reading Recovery Program is used for mild reading issues. ALPS-British Dyslexia-adult Learning program (a free program in UK) designed for adults with dyslexia is used as the preferred program.

At the beginning of the year a program called 'Headstart' is offered to students that have been flagged with LD's. This is a half-day introduction to the Learning Centre and Information as to what support can be provided. It is also an opportunity for the students to meet centre staff and other students.

Students are re-assessed every two years. Joint Councils Qualifications board give access arrangements, reasonable adjustment and Special Consideration for Students with SpLDs.

Trained assessors perform Dyslexia and Dyspraxia assessments and refer other assessments to the

6. The International Experience

Educational Psychologist. Exeter College offer an assessment in DSO-Post 16 diagnostic report to assist in the university system. The assessments are free.

Students can get free laptops and software if needed. A scribe, reader or extra time is given during exams. Computer Screen readers were recently introduced and allowed in exams if reading ability was low.

Exeter College has a Staff Training program where Learning support staff run professional development sessions to teach other staff to recognise LD's. Exeter College funded staff to do additional training as it is seen to be an asset to the college to have staff trained in LD's.



Study aids

Technology Used

'Read Write Gold' and 'My Study Bar' are free application with over 15 applications designed to support study, planning and structure that can be put on a computer or memory stick. ¹²

Outcomes and Learnings

- Classroom support offered and individual tuition for one hour a week
- Adult Reading & Decoding Learning Program and Reading Recovery used
- Free Assessment
- Free laptops and software offered
- Staff training in LD's supported and Professional Development offered in SpLD recognition
- Exam assistance given.

¹² eduaps.org

6. The International Experience

Concluding remarks

Although Exeter College was not one of the proposed colleges that the Fellow had intended to visit, an opportunity arose for the Fellow to spend a morning at Exeter College. This was a valuable opportunity as this was a good example of a Government funded college similar to our TAFE Colleges. The Fellow got a clear and thorough understanding of the support available to students in this area. Exeter used numerous free programs like 'My Study Bar' and the 'Adult Reading and Learning Program' that could be accessed in Australia.



Listen to Audio File 12 (available on disk from the ISS Institute).

7. Knowledge Transfer: Applying the Outcomes

The Outcomes will be presented in report format and through dissemination sessions. The Fellow will send the report out to relevant MPs, Key industry and Government bodies and any organisation on the report list. The Fellow will be requesting a meeting with the sponsor of this Fellowship to report back on key findings and recommendations.

Liga will also be seeking expressions of interest / looking for opportunities to conduct public dissemination sessions.

8. Recommendations

Federal government

- Co-funding required to set up Specialist Schools (as has been done for Autism) for students with Specific Learning Difficulties using the models discussed above in consultation with peak industry bodies like SPELD. These specialist schools should be from Primary through to TAFE/University.
- To include small class sizes of four to five students, in literacy and numeracy and a maximum often in other subjects.
- SpLD trained staff.
- Training of staff in a phoneme/grapheme program like Thrass to be conducted daily.
- Funding for multisensory resources.
- Funding for extensive assessments with strategies.
- Individual tutoring.
- Involvement of Speech and Language, Physio and Occupational therapies in individual and group treatment.
- Social enhancement and cognition taught e.g. SCAEP.
- Executive function taught.
- Assistive technologies used.
- Funding given to research.

State Government

- An increase of funds to the TAFE sector required, specifically into the Community and Transition Education Department that cater for students with LDs. This will enable the CATE Department to train staff in LDs; model school structures discussed in the report; and provide funding for extra teaching staff, tutors and therapists to provide evidence based education programs using multisensory resources and interactive technologies.
- Additional funds required to create a transition program modelled on the 'Post 16 Provisions program' where students with LD are supported with their transition from the Community and Transition Department into mainstream courses or from school into the TAFE sector with the support given through the CATE Department.
- Reinvestment of funding into disability support for students with LD in the TAFE system so that students are able to access literacy programs, tutoring and assistive technologies similar to the Landmark or Exeter model.
- Invest in teacher training in all sectors of education from Primary to the TAFE sector. A minimum requirement be completing SpLD teacher training run through organisations like SPELD Victoria to improve understanding, diagnosis, strategies, programs and implementation by teachers.
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Higher Education and Skills Group) should provide free online training in LDs, not only for school staff but for TAFE to include programs like 'Inclusion on Line'.

Professional Associations

Investment required in creating links with education providers including TAFE to investigate, inform and collaborate on current practice, knowledge and research.

8. Recommendations

TAFE

It must be noted that many of the class structures, systems, programs and assessment discussed in the report require extra funding to appropriately and successfully implement and support the students with SpLD, including daily intensive evidence based phoneme programs, streamed small class sized, tutoring, therapies and counselling.

Under current funding conditions these programs although vital and essential sadly cannot be provided without the injection of extra funding.

Based on her Fellowship findings, outcomes and learnings, this Fellow recommends the following strategies and programs, which can be introduced without extra funding:

- Continue to be members of professional associations and create partnerships, communication and sharing of expertise and understanding
- Use the Universal Design principles streamlined throughout all courses including having an Agenda in place, having all materials used converted to electronic format and using multisensory approaches and resources. Also encouraging flexible assessment formats
- When dealing with students with LD, the curriculum to include a component teaching students about Executive Function (as these affect all students with LDs), and include strategies aimed at remedying deficiencies such as organisation, time management and planning
- Invest in understanding and using assistive technologies where possible to include; Text to Speech technology, like 'Read Write Gold', 'My Study Bar' (free), digital recorders and individual speech to text converters. Other free programs include 'Natural Reader' and 'Readability'
- Students should be taught about LDs, the inherent strengths and weaknesses of each and strategies to assist with the differences. Enabling student to self understand, manage and advocate
- In Literacy and Numeracy students should be streamed and have smaller class sizes where possible
- Train staff in SpLD or train in a phoneme program like 'Thrass' and then disseminate to others. Also to train a staff member to conduct informal assessments into SpLD
- Encourage the use of a free phonics program like the British Dyslexia Adult Learning Program (but noting that this program needs to be administered daily for optimum effectiveness it is important for staff to understand the process involved)
- Devise and use a behaviour management plan and strategies modelled on Blossom House with a possible inclusion of a chill out and time out room
- Use reward system to assist with behaviour, e.g. Blossom House
- In classes where there is a teacher's aid, use the aid where possible to discipline the students allowing the teacher to continue teaching uninterrupted
- Incorporate 20 minute learning breaks to include 'Brain Gym' to break up the class and improve concentration
- Staff to provide visual scaffolding, visual prompts and colour coded resources at all times
- Staff should be encouraged to incorporate multi-sensory techniques and resources where possible.

9. References

Web Site Articles

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British Dyslexia Association www.bdadyslexia.org

Learning disabilities association of America www.ldanatl.org/new_to_ld/defining.asp

Dyslexia Action Organisation www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk

Autism Spectrum Australia www.autismspectrum.org.au/a2i1i12371113/what-is-autism.htm

American psychological Association- www.apa.org/topics/adhd/

Thrass Australia <http://www.thrass.com.au/>

(Thrass information Brochure. For teaching English as a first or other Language)

Nessy Learning www.nessy.com

Shapwick School <http://www.shapwickschool.com/>

Blossom House-<http://www.blossomhouseschool.co.uk/>

Exeter College-<http://www.exe-coll.ac.uk/>

Landmark College-<http://www.landmark.edu/>

Assistive Technology for disabilities dyslexic.com Read Write Gold

Sounds for Literacy-cued Articulation www.soundsforliteracy.com.au

Cued Articulation

Moor House School, Shape coding www.moorhouse.surrey.sch.uk

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Articles/Reports

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Burden, B 2010, Ability alone is not enough: How we think about ourselves matters too. An introduction to the Myself-As-a-Learner Scale (MALS)

Shamim, A 2012, Teaching Reading and Spelling to Adult Learners: The Multisensory Structured Language Approach

Brown, T 2008, Executive Describing Six aspects of a complex system

Books

Strothman, S 2001 Promoting Academic Success for Students with Learning disabilities

L Meltzer, Promoting Executive Function in the classroom, Guilford Press 2010

10. Appendices

- Appendix 1** 2003 NSW Parliament Enquiry into Early Years Intervention into students with LDs (Master Copy final Report PDF)
- Appendix 2** Baldry, E 2008 The Booming Industry: Australian Prisons (Baldry-Debate PDF)
- Appendix 3** Thrass Information Brochure. For teaching English as a first or other Language
- Appendix 4** EDI Goal Assessment Example
- Appendix 5** B, Burden Ability alone is not enough: How we think about ourselves matters too. An introduction to the Myself-As-a-Learner Scale (MALS) (Assessing-the learning-self concept –PDF)
- Appendix 6** Universal Design for Information Literacy Powerpoint UDIL-Info-Literacy
- Appendix 7** Shamim, A Teaching Reading and Spelling to Adult Learners: The Multisensory Structured Language Approach 2012 (15265-47650-1-SM PDF)
- Appendix 8** Literacy and the Wilson Program at landmark (LAANE Powerpoint PDF)
- Appendix 9** Executive function- Executive Describing Six aspects of a complex system PDF
- Appendix 10** Master filing system PDF