

***Provision of Services to Facilitate and Evaluate
Teachers' Professional Learning in Working
Towards Success for Boys***

Report prepared for the South Australian Department of
Education and Children's Services

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1. THE RESEARCH STUDY: A CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Introduction

This report details the findings of a research project – *Provision of services to facilitate and evaluate teachers' professional learning in working towards success for boys: A case study approach* – funded by the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) and undertaken by researchers from the School of Education, James Cook University.

This research project set out to facilitate and evaluate teachers' professional learning as they engaged with a suite of materials developed to improve boys' engagement and learning outcomes at school.

1.2 Success for Boys (S4B)

In 2005, the Federal Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) commissioned a team of researchers within the School of Education, James Cook University, to develop professional learning modules specifically targeted at improving teachers' understanding about working with boys, and improving boys' learning outcomes. Five professional learning modules were subsequently developed: *Planning Guide and Core, Boys and Literacy, Boys and ICT, Mentoring for Success and Indigenous Boys*.

In 2006, the *Success for Boys* modules (Alloway, Gilbert, Dalley-Trim, Herbert & McKeown, 2006) were rolled out to 800 schools across Australia. In 2007, there was a second-round roll out to another 800 schools.

1.3 Aims

The South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) had been proactive in supporting its teachers in the implementation stages of the *Success for Boys* Professional Learning. Following on from this, the Department sought to access documentation of the process of facilitation amongst teachers, and the outcomes of investment in teachers' learning for boys in their care. It was envisaged that this study of three South Australian schools (2 primary, 1 secondary) would serve to benefit the key stakeholders, namely school staff, students and DECS.

- Benefits to staff

The benefits to staff were palpably connected to the opportunities they would have from the outset to discuss their concerns and their proposed agendas at interview; to participate in online reflection on what they were doing, why they were doing it, and

what they were achieving; and to be able to discuss specific issues related to the professional learning program with JCU researchers as the lead writers of the *Success for Boys* materials.

- Benefits to students

Where staff benefit from a research-informed knowledge base and planning for defensible and transformative practice, students – boys and girls – stand as the principal beneficiaries.

- Benefits to DECS

DECS staff would be able to join in the proposed project as they saw fit and would have additional assistance in overseeing the implementation of the *Success for Boys* professional learning materials.

Working with the three case study schools, the project set out to:

1. Encourage teachers at each site to reflect on the program of professional learning, on changes in their thinking about boys' education and, more particularly, to consider where their efforts will best be invested to produce the greatest dividends in learning outcomes.
2. Help staff think about how their newly acquired knowledge can be transformed into defensible and transformative educational practice.
3. Help staff focus on the specificity of the context in which they work and to carefully examine the appropriateness of strategies that they plan to implement.
4. Help staff think about how they can gather baseline data from which they can evaluate success, or lack of it, over the period of the program grant and beyond.
5. Establish communities of learners within and across school sites where teachers share newly acquired insights and test their theories and plans with one another before enacting and trialling new strategies.
6. Encourage staff to be proactive in enlisting organisational support, for instance, by examining structural constraints that operate within schools that, if addressed, could redirect resources and effort where needed.
7. Encourage staff to identify how they can enlist wider community support for the innovations that they intend to implement.
8. Establish communities of practice wherein schools identify themselves through the principled enactment of practices that demonstrably add value to student learning outcomes.
9. Document what each of the schools does in introducing and implementing the professional learning.

10. Provide a case study report on what each of the schools achieve in relation to improving learning outcomes for boys in their schools.

1.4 Methodology

The project involved initial contact with three South Australian schools to facilitate the interviewing of key staff and a sample of students at each of the school sites. The Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) invited three schools to participate based on demographic considerations, namely, low SES categorisation. The schools selected were from those in South Australia that had been funded in 2007 to run the *Success for Boys* program. Schools were free to choose whether or not they wanted to be involved as a case study school.

The methodology involved semi-structured interviews at the beginning and end of the project. Some of the interviews were conducted individually but most were undertaken in focus group formations. The interviews at each school were planned and conducted with:

- Staff in leadership positions, for instance, the Principal and Deputy Principal and any other key personnel who had specific oversight of the delivery and implementation of the *Success for Boys* project
- Teaching staff who were participating in the *Success for Boys* program but did not have responsibility for its delivery
- A small sample of boys who were the target of new strategies to engage them more fully in learning at school
- A small sample of girls who were co-located with boys who were the focus of teacher attention (see Table 1 overleaf).

After the initial interviews and focus groups were conducted, contact between the researchers and participating teachers was to be facilitated through a blog site where teachers could record and share their thinking and their experiences and the researchers could respond (see Table 1 overleaf). Technical staff at JCU set up each school with a dedicated blog offering password-protected entry to each site. It was anticipated that staff at each school site would use the blog as frequently as they chose, over the period of the project, and that the JCU researchers would facilitate on-line learning via the blogs through questions and stimuli aimed at generating critically reflective dialogue. For instance, amongst other things – and depending on the leads that they offered – teachers may be asked about what they had learned from the program of professional learning; what new insights they had gained; the ways in which their ideas were beginning to shape; how their new insights challenge their ideas about boys, as well as their curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices; their plans for enacting new strategies; their

plans for working together as a team; the kinds of support that they need to be successful; the responses – positive and negative – anticipated and unanticipated – that they observed amongst their students; and the evidential-basis on which they planned to track students' learning outcomes.

Table 1: Research Schedule and Methodological Overview

Timeline	Method	Participants at each site
February 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews at the 3 case study schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and participating teaching staff • Sample of boys • Sample of girls
March-October 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of teachers' professional learning through the blogs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating teaching staff
October-November 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final interviews at the 3 case study schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and participating teaching staff • Sample of boys • Sample of girls

1.5 Participating Case Study Schools

Three schools participated in this project: Davoren Park Primary, Northfield Primary and Smithfield Plains High. The details of the three schools are described, as a means of contextualising these sites, in each of the Case Studies presented.

2. A CASE STUDY OF THREE SCHOOLS

This section documents the three case studies undertaken – one in each of the three schools involved in the project. A case study approach, as employed here, provides for a detailed contextualised view by way of focusing on the complexity of a case and offering ‘deep data’ or ‘thick description’ based on a particular context – in this instance, each school site (see Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). It accounts for and represents the actions and events played out in the context, and the ‘lived’ experiences and multiple ‘voices’ of the members of the context. As such, it provides for a richness of reflection by the school staff involved and offers a ‘personalised’ account of the experiences of each school’s participants to assist in this process. Through engagement with the very richness of the data it is anticipated that schools will be well placed to generate new ways of thinking; new ideas. While accounting for distinctiveness and the significance of the idiosyncratic in this way, a multiple case study approach, such as that undertaken here, also makes it possible to draw out commonalities across the school sites – and in this way serves as a useful method of illuminating issues that run across the various sites working on the *Success for Boys* program.

In constructing these case studies, data derived from interviews with school staff and students are analysed and emergent themes reported on. These interviews – these “conversations with a purpose” (Burgess, 1984, p. 102) – offer up insights into, and an understanding of, the participants’ views, beliefs, perceptions and experiences as they engaged with the *Success for Boys* program. They enable access to their ‘readings’ of their experiences as students, teachers and administrators – as ‘players’ in the ‘playing out’ of the program (see Arksey & Knight, 1999; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Data from the interviews conducted are presented throughout this report. A key to the transcription markers is provided below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Key: Interview Transcription Markers

Transcript Marker	Term of Reference
<i>MT</i>	Male Teacher / Male Administrator
<i>FT</i>	Female Teacher / Female Administrator
<i>MS</i>	Male Student
<i>FS</i>	Female Student
<i>INT</i>	Interviewer

Each of the case studies documented are presented in the following way:

- Firstly, key issues raised during the course of the preliminary round of interviews as conducted with school staff and students in February 2007 – at the time of the initial implementation of the *Success for Boys* program – are discussed.
- Secondly, details of the *Success for Boys* program as enacted at the school are discussed.
- Finally, key issues addressed during the course of the second round interviews with school staff and students in October/November of 2007 – following a period of engagement with the *Success for Boys* program – are detailed.

2.1 CASE STUDY ONE: DAVOREN PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

2.1.1 Context Statement – Davoren Park Primary School

Davoren Park Primary School is in the outer suburbs – 28 kilometres north of Adelaide. It is an established suburb that ranks highly on a number of indicators of disadvantage, including: number of persons with no post-school qualifications, number of unemployed persons, number of one parent families and the number of persons living in government owned rental housing. Davoren Park is part of a major regional redevelopment that involves relocation of the school to a new site and co-location with other schools.

The school has a diverse student population with 12% Aboriginal students and 7% of students who identify as having a Non-English-Speaking-Background. Under the Department's (i.e., DECS) Index of Educational Disadvantage, the school has a Category One ranking – indicating a very high proportion of students from low SES backgrounds. From 2005-2008, the percentage of students holding a School Card was 80%, with an enrolment of around 300 students. 20% of students were on a Negotiated Curriculum Plan.

There is a blend of experienced and newly appointed staff at Davoren Park Primary School. The school employs 30-35 staff that work as teachers or provide support services in a fulltime or part-time capacity. These include:

- A leadership team comprising the Principal, two Assistant Principals and School Counsellor.
- Specialist teachers including Physical Education, Science, English as a Second Language, Special Education, Speech Pathologist, Aboriginal Education and Teacher Librarian.
- School Service Officers (SSOs) who provide administration, financial and curriculum support.

Note: SSO's and their work are seen as an integral part of achieving successful learning outcomes for students.

The school has engaged with curriculum reform through participation in a number of DECS curriculum initiatives. The teachers work as part of one of three collaborative teaching teams: Early Years, Primary Years and Middle Years. *Success for Boys* was a major focus with the Middle Years Team.

Davoren Park is a member of the Peachey Cluster of Schools. This cluster has worked collaboratively to address a number of local issues including: teacher professional learning,

attendance, behaviour management, literacy and numeracy programs and improving outcomes for boys through *Success for Boys*.

School Performance Management processes are used to link teacher learning with site learning and improvement plans. There is a focus on improving staff skills in the use of ICTs – including the use of electronic whiteboards.

The school has a focus on continual improvement through the implementation of a Site Learning Plan. Curriculum features include:

- A focus on a supportive learning environment through the provision of a learning environment that is challenging and purposeful, harassment free, responsive to the needs of individuals and which attends to all areas of study.
- The use of democratic decision making processes to empower individuals and involve community. There is a focus on Student Voice with class meetings, student run assemblies and student involvement in negotiating the curriculum and setting learning goals. Student Action Teams are a part of the school decision making process.
- The celebration of special events: Children's Book Week, Aboriginal Cultural Week, Multicultural Week, Come Out and Choir Festival.
- A strong focus on Aboriginal Education including: implementation of Aboriginal Perspectives Across the Curriculum and the Aboriginal Action Plan.
- The school has implemented a two hour Literacy and Numeracy block that is supported by additional staff, both teaching and SSO.
- A planned approach to addressing the needs of both individual learners with special needs and groups of learners known to be at risk of not fully accessing the curriculum.

The school has a strong focus on both preventative and intervention programs that focus on social and emotional wellbeing including: Anti-Bullying, Conflict Resolution, Peer Relationships and Program Achieve.

2.1.2 The Beginnings of the *Success for Boys* Story

First round interviews with Davoren Park school management personnel, teaching staff involved in the *Success for Boys* program, as well as a sample of boys who were the target of the *Success for Boys* program and their female peers were conducted in February 2007. The following table – Table 2 – provides an overview of the key issues raised and discussed by the interviewees at the time of this initial interview round.

Table 2: Summary of Key Issues Addressed in Interview One: Davoren Park

Participants	Key Issues Addressed
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationale for involvement in S4B was to continue work in the area of Boys' Education as previously undertaken in the school • Teacher participants, while not actively involved in the grant application process, to be involved in the capacity of undertaking S4B Professional Development • Students' family viewed as a significant influence on students – with familial circumstances identified as having a negative impact upon boys • Attendance/truancy identified as a significant issue – and as connected to boys' learning capacities/difficulties and outcomes • Student violence – particularly as displayed by boys – named as a major issue facing teachers • Boys' inappropriate behaviours identified as a source of frustration by, and for, teachers • Students' – and in particular boys' – lack of coping and communication skills and lack of resilience and self-awareness noted as issues.
Boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying – as enacted largely by boys – identified as prevalent in the school and noted as an issue of concern for those boys who fell victim to it • Bullying could be 'read' to be connected with displays of masculinity and bravado – a form of punishment to be inflicted on those boys who did not 'measure up' for various reasons • Perception that school approach/response to bullying was ineffective • View that many boys were disengaged from and bored with the 'work' of school • Indicated the following as qualities of a 'good teacher': funny, fair, equitable, provider of 'hands on' work.
Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys identified as the primary perpetrators of bullying • Boys' misbehaviour and disengagement from school noted • Indicated the following as qualities of a 'good teacher': provider of fun work, 'hands on' work; user of technology as a tool for teaching/learning; one who establishes a safe and supportive classroom environment; one who has a sense of humour.

2.1.2.1 School Staff Speak

During the course of the initial interview, the Principal of Davoren Park outlined why the school had applied for the *Success for Boys* grant, and offered the following insights:

I thought it would be an excellent way for our teachers to actually work further on boys' programs. Last year, our Counsellor for example, he was working on – he didn't have a name for it other than the Boys' Program – with a couple of the junior primary classes where there were, well one of the teachers that was at our school at the time was quite new to our environment and there were quite a lot of boys in that classroom that weren't I guess fitting into that kind of regular structured program. So he was actually able to work with the boys in those classes in lots of hands-on type programs and he brought that class and that teacher... And so, to me, also the boys have a learning style that I think – well there's not exclusively the boys' learning style and a girls' learning style, but when we were looking at our behaviour data for instance, it was very, very heavily the male sector of our population and what we have done with that data in any event is to actually structure activities around what the data is showing us. And the data is showing us that lots of the issues that happen, happen at lunchtime and so the staff sat down together – we also looked at classroom time, times of the day – we were looking at improvement and we've had massive improvement over the course of the year, but we looked at lunchtimes – okay, these are some of the issues, these are some of our regular students that are getting into situations where they're not resolving issues in an appropriate way – so we had all staff on board to look at some lunchtime activities. They were structured around lunchtime activities where the students had options to join in with these activities, and it shows a reduction. And the credit really goes to the teachers because they have looked at what we need to do in terms of improvement ... their [i.e., the students] learning and relationships and getting along, and it seems as if it's paid dividends. So that was one program we had going, then we also had another program which we called a Leadership Program and at that Leadership Program, that was also structured around a group of boys that were working together through PE games or through other structured activities for a certain length of time and also a certain amount of talking was happening in amongst that. And we also had used that data to have the celebrations going on, Star Day every Friday in term, it's called Fantasy Friday where students actually celebrate their success and work on our next program. Students also, that haven't been quite as successful also work on a program, it's not punitive but they work on certain skills

in smaller groups. So, for all of those reasons, boys seems to be common so when you think of the Success for Boys program.

The teaching staff interviewed at Davoren Park, when asked about their involvement in the *Success for Boys* program, indicated that they had not been actively involved in the grant application process. While their knowledge of their involvement was somewhat unclear at this initial stage, it appeared that it was to take the form of their participation in the program as Professional Development and that their level of involvement was to vary from individual to individual.

INT: Okay, so how come you guys applied for the grant? Do you know? Were you involved in it at all?

FT: Not for the application, no [inaudible] and then said, 'You're it'.

INT: So are you four going to be involved in 'it', as in Professional Learning?

...

FT: Yeah, I'm doing stuff with J and, if need be, I was going to do the Success for Boys.

MT: But you're not doing the Success for Boys as such.

FT: No, not the one that you're doing.

FT: You're not doing the actual research.

FT: No, only if I'm needed to – because we were going to do, and we didn't know what children were in the case study until after it was done.

Addressing the nature of the school context and demographic profile, the staff at Davoren Park spoke in detail about the role of the family as an influence on the students in their classrooms. One interviewee, drawing upon his understandings of the school's demographic, suggested that:

MT: Many of our families very much come from a culture of generation-on-generation of unemployment and low socio-economic standing, and that probably doesn't help the kids when they go home and Mum and Dad don't understand the work to actually sit down and help them, and then the frustration just snowballs I guess.

Additionally, another claimed:

FT: You can actually see that quite a few of the parents have a lot of issues about how to raise children and, um, some of them lack the parental skills as adults. You know, and that impacts a lot on the boys often.

They indicated a belief that many of the parents, themselves, had had unrewarding educational experiences and that this influenced the ways in which they approached their children's education.

MT: [Parents] had such a bad education in many cases – for them, they didn't like it and that just transfers straight onto their kids.

...

FT: Yeah, when you speak to those parents, get them in for parent/teacher interviews, they're not really interested, they're not involved in how the child is doing, they're more interested in are they passing or not, or are they going to get through ...

MT: Or are they behaving?

FT: Or are they behaving.

INT: But that's not a bad thing though, is it?

For the boys in their classrooms, specifically, familial circumstance was seen by the teachers to have an all-too-often negative impact – as the following interview extract illustrates:

MT: Bad role modelling, too, for a lot of these kids, a lot of the boys here.

FT: There's not a lot of support at home for some of these boys and they're from dysfunctional, very dysfunctional, families and they don't have role models there, male role models.

MT: No, or otherwise the only role models they have are older brothers – already in trouble – or the kids down the street who are always in trouble, or they're just looking for trouble to keep up with them.

The staff also spoke about the learning outcomes and the learning difficulties of boys as tied to the issue of attendance/truancy, which they identified as a significant issue – “a big thing”. In view of this, they also identified the transient nature of the school population as an issue. They reported that the basis of such transience stemmed from, in their view, “cheap housing, [families being] moved around government wise, housing trust”. They suggested:

MT: I think the difficulties they have with their learning then reflects in their attendance and their punctuality. They're quite happy to rock up at 10 o'clock and then maybe spend the last part of the day in and out of trouble, so really, learning throughout the day might only happen over a two hour period.

INT: Why the concentration of learning difficulties?

MT: Why do we have so many i.e., [learning difficulties]? Probably based on attendance more than anything. Yeah, attendance is a big thing.

Further, the teachers identified the practice of excluding students from class/school as a result of inappropriate behaviour – one that clearly frustrated the teachers. The irony of such practice was not lost on the teachers, as is captured in their following comments:

FT: Yeah, and when they're here, they're in trouble – so they're up at the office, so they're not getting teacher attention.

MT: We send the kids out to the office who really need the help and so they never get up to speed – and so therefore they're always going to be the problem – that's the problem with it.

Like attendance, or lack thereof, the teachers identified violence as a major issue confronting them. In discussing this issue, the teachers offered the following comments and examples of violence as engaged in by some boys:

MT: Probably just reacting, reacting very quickly. Yeah, I guess just the eruptions that we see – particularly once they're left to their own devices... I think a fair bit of that actually comes out.

...

FT: Oh, well violence ... there's a lot of bullying and interactive stuff, in your face stuff and you know.

MT: Yeah, it is from a core group, and the violence is from that core group and, outside that core group, it's not so bad – but it is that core group, it is always a problem with violence.

FT: Usually, and you hear that a lot, 'They punched me so I punched them back'.

FT: ... the chair throwing, the book throwing.

In speaking of these inappropriate behaviours, and more specifically those of the “core group” of boys, the teachers’ comments again reflect frustration – the conflict they feel about ‘dealing with’ these boys while endeavouring to attend to their learning needs and the learning needs of other students in their classrooms. Such frustration and conflict are exemplified in the following interview extract:

MT: Um, I was just saying like when you're talking about boys you tend to have probably three groups, the group that does the right thing and understands their work and gets stressed out about their work and then you have, probably the two other groups of kids that find work really hard and they are almost withdrawn, then the kids that find work really hard and then act out on that and probably cause all the problems. And it's almost like the group that acts out tends to dominate

everyone including themselves, and heads down the wrong road all the time, whereas the group who probably withdraws themselves also finds the work hard and probably get bored because they're always withdrawing themselves – almost always caused by the group that's always acting out. And then you have the other group that's just cruising along and doing the right thing and, just good kids. FT: Yeah. And they're not getting the attention because you're having to give all your time to those kids who are acting out. You spend so much time with those others that the kids who need the attention don't get [it].

...

FT: But those particular kids, when they get to that stage, there's nothing you can say, there's nothing you can do – but if you lead them on, where you can't spend half an hour with them. If I could spend half an hour with them I could bring them back on board, but you don't have the time to do that.

MP: The issue is not whether you should send them [i.e., to the office], the issue is that once you do, they're winning, they've won.

Finally, students', and in particular boys', lack of coping skills, communication skills, resilience and self-awareness were also referred to by the teachers – as evidenced in the following discussion:

MT: ... it's the way they react, how quickly they react and how long it takes them to get back ...

FT: And they don't know how to express it, everything just makes them angry.

MT: Yeah. So communicating to them straight up is hard sometimes.

2.1.2.2 Boys Speak

The boys interviewed at Davoren Park spoke at length and in detail about the prevalence of bullying – suggesting that they “*get bullied a lot*”. They indicated, too, that bullying was largely undertaken by boys, and by boys to other boys. Such discussion, related to bullying, is illustrated in the following comments:

MS: ... there are some kids who shove other kids against the wall and push you around and back in the corner.

MS: I was chased ... I was tracked by someone a couple of years ago and then he came up to me ...

MS: ... the bullies always face up and there's not much you can do about it.

MS: ... they start hitting you and stuff and then you go and report it and then you come back and they start doing it again.

MS: They tease you about everything, they just don't like you so they start teasing you.

MS: I got locked in the toilet before and toilet paper thrown at me because I was in the toilet.

The boys interviewed offered up a range of explanations or reasons as to why bullies – male bullies – engaged in this behaviour. They made reference and/or alluded to, for example: bullying as linked to displays of masculinity and bravado, as a form of 'punishment' to be inflicted upon 'good students' and those who struggle academically, as a means of 'making fun' of appearances and interests, and of 'harassing' on the grounds of disability and ethnicity.

MS: The kids do it for fun.

INT: It's mostly boys? Usually boys.

MS: Usually boys that do it to make a good impression.

INT: And bullying makes a good impression?

MS: Yeah and [they] think they're good and they get puffed up.

MS: It happens randomly, it's just the way they are.

INT: Okay. So it's all about being cool?

MS: Yeah ... and act popular.

MS: ...because we've finished our work.

MS: Yeah, I can't write properly and, um, I can't read properly too.

MS: ... for the way I act and the way I dress and stuff ... people just tease me about stuff.

MS: They tease me about my hair a lot.

MS: He gets teased because he's got glasses.

MS: ... I get teased because of my hair, because of my triple crown.

MS: They tease me about the birth mark on my head.

MS: ... people tease him because he's in netball class.

MS: People used to tease him because he was in the cadets.

MS: Even if you like pink or purple, they still tease you...

MS: ... some people pick on them because they're brown, I've got brown skin so they tease me. They tease me because I've got brown friends.

INT: You've got Indigenous friends and they tease you?

MS: Yeah, because they're brown.

In discussing the school's approach to the management of bullying at Davoren Park, the boys' comments were marked out by what they saw as the ineffectiveness of the approach – as indicated in the following interview extracts:

MS: ... the teachers do nothing. They just say, 'Oh, go to the office'. And then they come back and keep on doing it, they don't even ...

MS: They go to the office then they come back and keep doing it until they're told [not] to do it again.

...

MS: The teachers say, 'Oh, just walk away', but when you do, then they do it again.

MS: Yeah, and some of the bullies have come back worse when they do it again.

MS: Yeah, and they start hitting you and stuff and then you go and report it and then you come back and they start doing it again.

In terms of boys and learning, the boys interviewed alluded to the notion that many boys were disengaged. They suggested: "A lot of them are bored with doing work and don't want to do it" and "they (i.e., boys) hate school". They also noted that this might be addressed by providing boys with opportunities to engage in "more hands on stuff ... they mightn't get so bored then" and by doing fewer worksheets. Furthermore, of the boys at Davoren Park, those interviewed suggested: "They don't know much" and that "it just comes in one ear and goes out the other".

Finally, when asked to comment on the qualities of a 'good' teacher, the boys offered the following:

MS: ... good teachers are funny.

MS: Fairness.

MS: Teachers that actually, like, muck around with you and stuff like that.

MS: Um, happiness and making sure that everyone's getting a fair amount of talking time and stuff.

MS: Um, more hands on stuff.

MS: ... let's me see things for myself.

2.1.2.3 Girls Speak

During the course of the initial interview with the girls at Daveron Park, they, like their male counterparts, commented on the issue of bullying. They also named boys as the primary perpetrators of bullying. In relation to this, they offered the following insights:

FS: They (i.e., the bullying boys) work in with their friends and, you know, try to show up people and, you know, make comments and stuff.

...

FS: Yeah, like to other boys and cause trouble in class, things like, just start a fight or something like that.

In discussing the school's approach to managing bullying, and behaviour more broadly, the girls' conversation focused on a school camp – and of good behaviour being a criterion for attendance at the camp. The following interview extract highlights their discussion of this and indicates that it was boys, on the whole, who misbehaved:

FS: And we have like a camp and that, and our teacher based the behaviour ... whether you're going or staying ...

...

FS: There's only a few boys that aren't going in my class.

FS: And we got a few boys that aren't going in our class too. All the girls in all classes are going.

...

FS: Yeah, and they've had like three chances – and it's serious behaviour, not like going silly in class but like going to the office, you know getting detentions and things like that.

Additionally, the girls interviewed spoke in detail about their overall perceptions or impressions of the boys at their school. As indicated in the following interview extracts – many of their comments are clearly focused upon boys' (mis)behaviour and disengagement with school:

FS: They cause trouble.

INT: Do they?

FS: They always show off, they're always showing off and we can't always concentrate ... they concentrate on swearing instead of their work.

FS: They work in with their friends and, you know, try to show up people and, you know, make comments and stuff.

FS: They fight with the boys in our class.

INT: Do they?

FS: Mm.

...

FS: Yeah, and they don't work and ...

...

FS: Girls are more mature than boys at a younger age and like they're very childish still. Some of them like, they fight over ridiculous things and things that really don't matter and we really don't think like that.

...

FS: Most of the boys muck around when we have relief teachers ...

FS: Like, they don't like, listen to the teacher. Like when they go in a spelling contest or something, they like just go off and just pick on someone ...

FS: [They] cause trouble in class, things like, just start a fight – or something like that.

FS: Yeah, they (i.e., boys) don't work.

FS: 50% of [the boys] muck around, like, they really don't care. They think, like, school isn't really for them, school's not really important, most boys think.

When asked to comment on the pedagogical practices of the teachers at Davoren Park, the girls, for the most part, praised the work of their teachers. In one interview, for example, a group of girls commented on their particular teacher's efforts to make learning “*fun*” and interesting for both girls and boys – and of “*hands on work*” and the use of “*technology*” being employed to do so.

FS: Our teacher makes most of our lessons fun – so you actually want to come to school. We don't do many sheets, we do a lot of hands on work and yeah.

FS: Technology.

FS: And stuff like that – but some things that boys and girls are both wanting to do.

The girls interviewed offered a range of insights into what ‘comes to count’ as a ‘good’ teacher. For example, they suggested that ‘good’ teachers “*make it fun*” and work in such a way as to “*(make) you want to actually want to learn*”. As indicated in the comments noted above – and below – the girls also associated ‘good’ teaching with hands on work and ‘bad’ teaching with the doing of worksheets.

FS: A lot of the boys in our class don't like sheets, nobody likes writing on sheets.

FS: None of the girls do either.

FS: No, nobody really likes it so our teachers have taken sheets away and it's now more learning based – like going outside to measure something on the school and stuff like that.

...

FS: And you got maybe a couple of sheets out for grammar and comprehension – and we have them less than that now.

INT: Okay. It seems that you were all nodding, that teachers are dropping these sheets and looking for more fun kinds of ways?

FS: Yes, definitely.

...

FS: Yeah, we've all had help too.

A ‘good’ teacher was also viewed to be one who could engage the students and who established a safe and supportive learning environment – as the following comments indicate:

FS: Um, they make sure that everyone's on task and that you're not – like any rude things going on, like anyone getting hurt or frustrated or anything like – the teacher comes and helps you with the work so you can get it done.

FS: To help you when you need help.

FS: Um, a teacher that cares about students.

FS: Um, a teacher that's funny and doesn't yell and helps the kids out when they need it.

Finally, and in line with their male counterparts, the girls identified a sense of humour and the capacity to have and create fun, as being qualities of a ‘good’ teacher – as illustrated in the following interview extract.

FS: Humour.

FS: Yes, my class teachers are very funny and we still learn a lot – like they can still make a joke but they can still get back to the classroom.

INT: Humour, very interesting.

FS: Everyone likes a teacher who you can muck around with and stuff like that but still have to get on with your work.

INT: Okay.

FS: That's what our teacher's like, you know if you have a joke, you've got to still get on with your work afterwards.

2.1.3 Success for Boys: The Enacted Program

It became apparent, by way of interview data, that Davoren Park was 'on message' with regard to the *Success for Boys* program – particularly as it came to be enacted in the school. Both the staff and students were able to articulate the details of the program; the meta-narrative was apparently available to all. For example, the staff and students could identify the rationale underpinning the program, and the students' knowledge was such that they could articulate details of the project in relation to it being government-funded and to the staff (and their roles) involved in the project. Overall, a clear direction and philosophy was evident in the school (as visually apparent by way of posters and other resources within and around the school) – and one that was an 'easy fit' with the *Success for Boys* program and its initiatives.

The 'intervention', for which *Success for Boys* was an impetus, involved the following: a move to whole school approaches to planning and staff collaboration – including the implementation of a whole-of-school approach to curriculum and an integrated curriculum; a change to the school's approach to behaviour management, such that it shifted to a more proactive, positive focus; and modification of the structure of the school day in an effort to maximise student learning. Mentoring – students as mentors, students mentoring students – was another key feature of the program as enacted at the school.

The *Success for Boys* program as enacted at Davoren Park, while adopting a whole of school approach, focused specifically on two key classes. So, too, it was inclusive in its approach – with both boys and girls included in the program initiatives. Training was also provided to Student Support Officers (SSOs) in an effort to make the program 'happen' – and as such, serves as testament to the school's commitment to ensuring the success of the program and its implementation. Additionally, the staff at Davoren Park endeavoured to track changes resulting from the program's implementation through their administration of a survey instrument. A final key feature of the program as enacted at this school was the commitment of/by students to journaling events as undertaken during the *Success for Boys* program.

2.1.4 The *Success for Boys* Story Continues

Following the implementation of the *Success for Boys* program, second round interviews were conducted with staff and students – both male and female – to gain insight into their views and experiences of the program. This round of interviews was conducted during the course of October through November 2007. Table 3 following provides an overview of the key issues raised and discussed by the interviewees at the time of this second interview round.

Table 3: Summary of Key Issues Addressed in Interview Two: Davoren Park

Participants	Key Issues Addressed
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Viewed the S4B program positively overall and the staff professional development opportunities it afforded them in particular Identified shifts in their own practice/school practice as a result of S4B: moves to whole school planning, collaboration and integrated curriculum; changes in whole school approach to behaviour management; modification of structure of school day Noted focus on ‘mentoring’ Identified shifts in boys’ engagement with the curriculum, boys’ attitude to learning; boys’ willingness to communicate and their resilience.
Boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated a sound understanding of the S4B program and offered a rationale for its implementation Suggested that there had been little change following the implementation of the S4B program in regard to: boys’ classroom behaviours, bullying and the school’s management of bullying.
Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated a sound understanding of the S4B program and offered a rationale for its implementation [as had their male counterparts] Identified perceived changes in boys – boys’ behaviour specifically – during the course of the S4B program’s implementation [unlike their male counterparts].

2.1.4.1 School Staff Reflect

The Davoren Park teachers’ overall perceptions of the *Success for Boys* program were positive. During the course of the second interview, the teachers suggested that it was “very interesting”, that they “enjoyed it” and that they “had a lot of fun” engaging with/in it. So, too, it was suggested that they “thought it was a good opportunity to try some new things”, that it was

“well worth doing”, and that the “program itself worked like a gem”. In terms of a key outcome of the program, one teacher suggested: “Well, I think one of the biggest things of the whole program was the rapport from students and teachers as well because it made them [i.e., the students] understand that we’re not fantastic at everything in the world”.

The teachers also spoke about the funding of the program and the ways in which the attached funding was utilised. While identifying the expense involved, they acknowledged the benefit of having funding available and the opportunity to train staff and to attain resources, which would remain of long-term use in the school.

INT: So, you’re pleased that you did it [i.e., Success for Boys]?

FT: Oh yes.

MT: It was probably just a little bit expensive, that’s the only thing.

FT: Oh yeah, but having the support in there – and we bought some stuff that we didn’t have, that we’ve now got that we don’t have to re-buy.

...

MT: The SSOs [i.e., Student Support Officer] time is the big one.

...

FT: Um, we spent, we needed to spend at least 80% of the money on PD time and working with the SSOs etc. So we spent about 19 hundred dollars on equipment and whatever, so that was ours, and then we sort of went over and got some more – but you know, this is stuff we’re actually going to keep.

...

MT: The SSO time was probably a bit expensive, but that’s the biggest expense.

In terms of Professional Development, the teachers spoke of working with key personnel and of doing *“a couple of sessions”*. They also noted that they *“did the Mentoring Module”* and then *“ran a PD with our SSOs so that we could train them up on what to say, how to work with the kids”*. The teachers spoke of the Mentoring Module – which was a focus of the staff’s Professional Learning at Davoren Park – in a positive vane and suggested that it had a direct effect upon their practice.

INT: I know you said you did the PD on the mentoring and it appears in a lot of the stuff you’ve done, but was there a direct – did you take out that directly?

MT: Yeah. There was a direct correlation from what we’d learnt through into our activity base. Yeah, absolutely.

...

MT: ... that’s where that mentoring stuff is good.

INT: Was that helpful?

MT: Yeah ... it did give me other avenues and options to have a look at. So, yeah, it was worthwhile and I really enjoyed the program.

In relation to mentoring, and in particular the implementation of a student-as-mentor strategy, the teachers spoke of their intention to “give some responsibility to the kids”, of the success of the strategy, and of it having a major impact, when interviewed:

MT: [It was about] trying to give some responsibility to the kids, give it back to the kids to make a difference to their school. And they're mentoring younger kids in how to play, and it's branched right out from initially just being out there to help to run activities, to taking lessons with little kids, to taking them through the process and phases ...

INT: It seems to be very effective, because the one thing that they [i.e., the students] came up with when I said 'Has anything changed from last time I was here speaking to you?' and they said that this [i.e., mentoring] is a really good program that's helping with behaviour issues. And those that were in it seemed to be very proud of it.

FT: Yes.

MT: They've taken complete ownership of it, which is really good.

FT: ... being a mentor and having a badge is what's important. And because the kids actually run an Assembly and they give out awards for the outstanding Mentors or for outstanding students in the yard – and they have complete control over that, that's not ...

MT: Yeah, they choose all of that.

FT: Yeah, and that's not with [a] teacher.

MT: And they run that part of Assembly now without any teacher help as well.

...

FT: It was good to see, um, the kids seeing themselves as mentors in the groups – which is what happened in my group.

MT: Yeah, and we actually did base it so that we had kids with high ability with kids with lower ability in the same group so that they could actually help them through that and the exercise.

...

FT: It was interesting, in my core group of boys, academically they're all over the place. I don't think there was anybody in that group that was, you know – they were either very low or they were below average with their reading and their writing skills – but it was interesting to see them as mentors.

...

MT: ...kids work with kids ... they work with kids so, therefore, they're learning the tool of being able to explain and go through procedures themselves, but the other kids are actually getting another role model in the yard and in the school which they can look at as well.

FT: Those kids that are doing the mentoring are actually learning what we have to go through and they're appreciating more what we have to go through.

The staff at Davoren Park identified a number of changes that they perceived to have occurred at the school as a result of the *Success for Boys* program: a move to whole school approaches to planning and staff collaboration with an accompanying shift to whole school approaches to curriculum and the implementation on an integrated curriculum, a change in whole school approaches to behaviour management, and modification to structures of the school day.

During the course of interview, the teachers spoke of operating in different ways – of planning and working collaboratively across curriculum areas and across class groupings.

FT: We ended up setting up some activities for the kids across both classes. We trained up six SSOs to support the kids in small groups – there was one SSO per small group. We had a maximum of six kids that we had assigned to the groups, it could have been between six and eight ...

...

MT: So yeah, it was good. It gave us an opportunity to access different curriculum areas as well that we probably weren't touching on enough.

...

MT: [We did] mainly integrated activities – so we did sewing, PE, Golf, painting and ...

FT: Chemistry and electricity, and we tried to do something else with the kids – and Design Technology, making models.

In terms of behaviour management, the teachers spoke of the introduction of a “Rewards System” – one adopted at the whole school level. In discussing this initiative, the teachers contested the notion of ‘behaviour management’ and focused their attention on what they referred to as the “*opposite*” of behaviour management, as a “*pro-active approach*” (see the final teacher comment noted below). The teachers discussed the initiative and shift in approach in the following way:

FT: We just actually stirred it up again by introducing the Rewards Room ... with some Play Station games and Wii games, do you know what I mean?

INT: I do now, they [i.e., the students] told me.

FT: Oh, there you go. And the kids enjoy that ...

INT: Uh huh. Would you say that your approach is strongly marked by, like, a behaviour management approach?

MT: I would, more like, to say a pro-active approach I think. I think we try to get in there before the behaviour's bad, it's more the opposite, trying – a bit of rewarding ...

The teachers told of changes to the structure of the school day – and the influence of their Professional Development undertakings in bringing about such change.

FT: ... we've realised that they [i.e., the students] can't work all the time, that they do have to have some break time, and so we've tried to cut back, especially in the afternoons.

...

MT: What it [i.e., the professional development] did show us was that, during the morning, it probably is better to have those activities that kids can go and do, to break up their mornings – and I think that's what it is, we get more out of what we could do early in the day [than] by doing those things later in the day. I think that was probably a pretty important thing for us.

In relation to boys, specifically, the teachers spoke of witnessing changes and improvements in, for example, boys' engagement with the curriculum, their attitude to learning, their willingness to communicate and their resilience. So, too, did they speak of improved relationships between the boys at their school and themselves. In terms of an improvement in boys' engagement and approach to learning, one teacher claimed: *"Boy, am I getting some work from these kids – it's phenomenal, it really is"*. Another suggested: *"Oh, just the fact that the kids started to see that there was a purpose to their learning, that was one big difference"*. Noting boys' increased willingness to communicate more openly, one teacher stated: *"What I realise and, sitting down, they were more willing to talk to me about their problems"*. The change in the relationships between the teachers and boys and the increased resilience among boys was, in their view, considerable – as reported by one teacher:

MT: One of the biggest things of the whole program was the rapport from students and teachers as well, because it made them understand that we're not fantastic at everything in the world. ... they saw that I failed just as many times as they did but not to give in, to keep going. And I think that was probably the bonus of the whole thing – and their resilience was a real thing.

Finally, the teachers spoke of implementing the *Success for Boys* program and of preparing the report for submission to Curriculum Corporation in the following ways:

INT: ... Have you written up a document have you?

MT: Yes

FT: We have, yes.

...

INT: Yeah. What did they actually ask you to report on? What did you actually have to do?

MT: We had to write what our outcomes were going to be and how we came about organising the project in the first place, and why we chose what we chose.

FT: Yes. We had to look at taking data, doing some survey work, looking at the data that was collected ...

INT: And did you do that?

MT: Yeah.

INT: What kind of data did you get?

MT: We did a survey at both the start and the finish so we took a survey from the kids. We took a survey of the kids, what they thought about school, what they thought about lessons, how they felt about the afternoons, all those sort of things.

FT: How they felt about each other and how they felt about the teacher...

MT: We managed to get some good information out of it and then we did it again at the end and just saw what differences there were and there was quite a difference.

2.1.4.2 Boys Reflect

The boys at Davoren Park appeared to have a sound understanding of the *Success for Boys* program as it came to be implemented in their school, particularly in relation to the activities in which they were involved and the fact that it came about as the result of a government grant. They articulated their insights in the following way during the course of interview:

MS: We had that Success for Boys thing.

INT: Yeah. Tell me about that – Success for Boys – how did that work? Who as involved in that?

MS: We all were, everyone was.

MS: The name was sort of weird because, um, like everyone did it – even the girls.

MS: It was only them, two classes.

INT: You thought the name was weird because the girls were involved too?

MS: Yeah.

MS: Everyone was involved, but it was Success for Boys.

MS: The teachers took like the people who said, 'We can't do this'.

...

MS: We got to go to golf, we got to go bowling, we got to build billy carts.

...

MS: And then all the SSOs which took groups, which did cooking, sewing.

...

MS: ... there's other groups that the SSOs took, but the two teachers that were involved took the people that said that they cannot do it, the bad kids.

...

MS: You had like, I don't know, five SSOs or something.

INT: What's an SSO?

MS: Student Support Officer.

MS: And they had a group of about six people and they did, it was like every Friday or Thursday, we went out and did an activity.

...

MS: Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

MS: Yeah, and we went out and did an activity, and then like, all the groups went out to different activities.

MS: And the teachers had a group each.

MS: We had golf, bowling, cooking.

INT: Right. And why did you get this?

MS: Because we're special.

INT: But on what condition did you get it? You wouldn't just get it for ...

MS: Because Mr. W and Miss K wanted to run it, it wasn't just at our school, it was at other schools as well.

INT: Yeah, it was indeed. But what I'm asking is how did you get to access it?

MS: Like the government gave our school six thousand dollars to supply all the equipment, and originally it was meant for the boys but because we got so much money and a lot of equipment, the teachers decided to include the girls.

Additionally, they spoke of Student Mentors, Yard Mentors, Cool Cards and the Rewards Room – and did so in essentially positive ways.

When asked to discuss their understanding of why the *Success for Boys* program was implemented in their school, it was suggested that, "I think it was to make us get along". In

regard to this perceived rationale, the boys had mixed views – as might be expected – as to the success of the program, suggesting:

MS: It's not working [in helping us to get along].

INT: It's not working?

MS: No, it didn't work.

...

MS: I thought it worked.

...

MS: Yeah, I think it worked.

INT: Okay. Tell me what parts of it do you think worked.

MS: Like when we all went together, it was like the thing you looked forward to and, um, like if you didn't do well, you got put into a different group or you missed out.

In elaborating upon the outcomes of – and thus the success of – the program, it was suggested that there had been little change in terms of boys' classroom behaviour, the incidents of bullying/violence as engaged in by boys and the management by school staff of such behaviours. With regard to boys' classroom behaviour, the boys interviewed suggested that:

MS: [It's the] same behaviour.

...

MS: Same behaviour as before.

INT: Same behaviour? You're not seeing any marked improvement?

MS: Kids are getting told off just the same ...

INT: Oh, is that right?

...

MS: Lots of swearing with regards to work.

...

MS: Violence – things got smashed, people pushing different people and people weren't listening to the teacher.

...

MS: A lot of yelling and screaming.

...

MS: Um, there's people refusing to do their work.

MS: A lot of yelling and screaming.

In terms of bullying/violence, more specifically, and of staff responses to such behaviours, the boys offered the following insights and examples:

MS: A lot of nitpicking, swearing, um no, people don't pick nits, it means they fight. Arguing, they're just violent and stuff ... and they all pick on me ...

INT: Why?

MS: He's small.

MS: Because they reckon that I'm a little fairy, that me and J are fairies because we were playing a game of dodge ball and I threw a ball and it didn't hit anyone so that's how they got my name [] they keep on calling me 'fairy', the call me 'ugly bitch', um 'princess' and stuff, because – all over a dodge ball game.

...

INT: So, if you have, what do you do in that circumstance? When somebody does that to you.

MS: Um, we usually tell teachers but the teachers don't do much things – and I've had a ruler whipped across my face before.

...

MS: [They] throw sharpeners at your head.

...

MS: And rubber bands and pieces of eraser.

Finally, while the boys appeared to enjoy the activities they undertook as part of *Success for Boys*, when asked what they did not like about the program they spoke of the requirement to record written accounts of the activities. Of this, they said:

MS: And every week you would write it in your Log Book that we had.

MS: That's what we didn't like.

MS: Yeah, we didn't like writing it.

INT: You wrote it in your Log Book? What kind of things did you write in your Log Book?

MS: Um, an account of the activities we did.

2.1.4.3 Girls Reflect

The girls, like their male counterparts, were also able to provide details of the activities undertaken in the *Success for Boys* program as it was implemented at Davoren Park – thus demonstrating an awareness and understanding of the initiative.

INT: Okay. Are you aware – what have your teachers been doing to focus – have they been doing anything to focus on boys?

FS: Yeah, we have a program, Success for Boys, and there's a few troublemakers, I think there's a group of them, and they did a certain thing, they did some activities and we all did different activities.

INT: Now this is very interesting – how do you know it's called 'Success for Boys'?

FS: That's what they [i.e., the teachers] called it, and we have a journal that we have to write down every day.

...

FS: We all have, like, a journal.

INT: Now, start from the beginning, that it's about success for boys ...

FS: Um, Miss K and Mr W, our teachers ... And we started a program called 'Success for Boys', well the girls are involved as well with that, and to see if their [i.e., the boys] behaviour changed then they're rewarded for it, for good behaviour and stuff. And we all had a journal each to write down everything, every activity we did – we were all split up into different groups, we did cooking, sewing, golf, chemistry, different activities and stuff.

INT: How did these activities work? These were not part of your every day program?

FS: No, we just did it like one ...

FS: Tuesdays and Wednesdays for an hour, from two 'til three I think.

In terms of understanding why *Success for Boys* was implemented, the girls suggested that it was aimed at “*the boys that behaved the least out of all the boys in the classes*” with a view to “*just [] get them to look at the good things in life*”. They suggested:

FS: ... it included, you know, all the people who were constantly getting into trouble ... but if they [i.e., the boys] got into trouble, as a consequence they weren't allowed to do it that week and they really, really enjoyed doing that because they were like sawing and nailing and hammering stuff.

...

INT: Okay. So the idea was that there was something that the boys could join in on if they ...

FS: Behaved themselves.

FS: Otherwise they just sit there and watch them [i.e., other students] do it.

So, too, the girls offered the following view of what they perceived to be the rationale underpinning the program:

FS: ... to see if their [i.e., misbehaving boys] behaviour changed then they're rewarded for it, for good behaviour and stuff.

FS: More like a bribe for behaviour.

Finally, and unlike their male counterparts, the girls identified what they perceived to be a change in the boys as a result of their involvement in the *Success for Boys* program – a change in boys' behaviours specifically. That noted, they spoke of this change as being apparently temporary, and of boys returning to 'old' behaviours upon the completion of the program.

FS: Yeah, they [i.e., the boys] changed a bit.

...

FS: Um, some boys in our class kind of stopped being as naughty in class so they could join in and do it and the others have just gone back to being naughty again.

*FS: Yeah, it [i.e., *Success for Boys*] finished a while back, last term I think.*

...

FS: Yes [the boys were better behaved when the project was running].

2.2 CASE STUDY TWO: NORTHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

2.2.1 Context Statement – Northfield Primary School

Northfield Primary School is located nine kilometres north-east of Adelaide. The school has a very diverse student population with relatively high numbers of Aboriginal students and students who are English-as-Second Language learners. Under the Department's Index of Educational Disadvantage the school has a Category Two ranking – indicating a high proportion of students from low SES backgrounds. The area is changing with government owned homes being redeveloped by private construction companies. Land and home prices have significantly increased as development has progressed.

Northfield Primary School employs approximately 35 staff who work as teachers or provide support services in a fulltime or part-time capacity. These include:

- A leadership team comprising the Principal, Deputy Principal and School Counsellor
- Specialist teachers including: Art, Physical Education, Reading Recovery, English as a Second Language, Special Education, Aboriginal Education, Literacy Co-ordinator, Teacher Librarian
- School Service Officers (SSOs) who provide administration, financial, curriculum, early childhood and bilingual support.

Staff demographics range from beginning teachers who have recently completed university courses to teachers with over 30 years experience. The school culture is warm and friendly, with staff enjoying a supportive team environment. Northfield has a significant involvement in teacher training practicum in partnership with local tertiary institutions. The school has been a keen participant in a range of recent DECS curriculum initiatives including *Success for Boys*, Maths for Learning Inclusion and Learning to Learn.

In undertaking the *Success for Boys* Professional Learning, Northfield integrated the content of the modules into existing professional learning foci – e.g. neuroscience and learning, planning and programming with SACSA.

The school has a focus on continual improvement through the use of quality principles and tools. The following are features of the curriculum:

- Literacy Blocks are conducted R-7, four days a week, with SSOs in all classes supporting small group learning. Students have individual folders with learning and assessment information in Literacy.

- Junior Primary classes use Guided Reading with all readers levelled by Reading Recovery Levels.
- Primary classes use the Accelerated Reading Program with students levelled by the Star Reading Test.
- Extensive intervention is undertaken – as coordinated by a specialist teacher – to cater for the diverse needs of Second Language learners, those with learning difficulties and disabilities (including speech) and Aboriginal students.
- All staff have undertaken professional development in First Steps in Number in 2006; ESL Literacy and Learning in 2008.
- All primary students have Maths Tool Kits to increase the use of hands-on learning to assist conceptual understanding.
- Classes participate in daily fitness and there is a focus on Healthy Lifestyles.

The National Safe Schools Framework and Pathways to Peace program have been implemented – with students and teachers using the Peace Code regularly. The school is a Global Peace school with all students being introduced to The Rights of Children annually.

2.2.2 The Beginnings of the *Success for Boys* Story

As with Davoren Park, first round interviews with school management, teaching staff and a sample of boys and girls involved in the *Success for Boys* program were conducted in February 2007. A summary of the key issues raised and discussed by the interviewees during the initial interviews is presented in Table 4 following.

Table 4: Summary of Key Issues Addressed in Interview One: Northfield

Participants	Key Issues Addressed
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressed some uncertainty as to their involvement in the S4B program at this initial point • Rationale for involvement in S4B focused on boys' capacity to function, their learning and achievement, and discipline issues relating to boys • Family/student transience – as linked to attendance – was identified as a key issue for the school and its students • The influence of family background – particularly as it related to male students – was identified as an issue • Boys' inappropriate behaviours – and their attention-seeking behaviours specifically – were named as concerns and a source

	<p>of teacher frustration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boys' varying academic capabilities/outcomes was referred to School/classroom architecture was identified as having potential implications for pedagogy – in particular, pedagogy perceived to be 'desirable' when working with boys.
Boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boys as learners were characterised as being: off-task, easily distracted, bored and lacking in concentration Boys' learning behaviours – and related misbehaviours – were identified as stemming from boys' perception that school was a laugh and a space in which they could show off, be cool etc Bullying was identified as an issue in the school An awareness of the school's approach to behaviour management was evident and explicitly named Suggested that while some work was boring, many teachers were trying to facilitate more interesting work Indicated the following as qualities of a 'good teacher': helpful; not strict; offered adequate explanations; provided organised, modelled and scaffolded learning experiences and linked learning to 'real' life.
Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boys – and their behaviours – were identified as: mucking around, not listening, fidgeting, being silly, getting into fights, bullying and showing off Identified boys as being less mature than themselves Perceived boys to be less interested in doing well at school than themselves and of not taking school seriously Suggested that there was 'value' in single sexed classes and of male teachers teaching boys Indicated the following as qualities of a 'good teacher': gets along with and knows how to deal with kids, makes use of games in learning, smiles and is nice, is fair, respects 'difference' in students and is not too strict.

2.2.2.1 School Staff Speak

When asked during the course of interview to discuss their school's rationale for applying for the *Success for Boys* program grant, the staff deferred to Sharon (a key person in the school's implementation of the program) before going on to offer their suggestions – suggestions which

focused on their boys' capacity to function, their learning and achievement, and discipline issues as relating to boys.

INT: So how, why did you guys go in for the grant, the Success for Boys grant that brings \$10,000 to this school?

FT: Oh, I think you'll have to speak to Sharon.

MT: I suppose that, yes, the class I had was particularly, um, dysfunctional in terms of the boys operating – they were not learning, they were not happy and the reasons for that are multi-fold. But it was those sorts of issues that needed to be addressed because ...

...

MT: ... we had to make some sort of intervention, somehow we had to change what was happening ... It's all about groupings and children, it's all about their vision of school, it's all about their achievement in school – so it's a whole gamut of things, but it was pretty clear that we'd have to do something.

INT: Okay. Well there's a firm statement. Anybody else who's involved in this who has really noticed the situation for boys in the class?

MT: Well, it's often said that, I think, about 80% of the time in the office is spent on boys and discipline issues and things like that – it's not just our school, but it's certainly noticeable in our school that they want to turn that around.

INT: Okay. Is that noticeable at your school?

MT: Yes.

At this initial point in the program's implementation, the teachers spoke of being – and of the school's leaders being – a little uncertain about the direction it would take and their involvement in it. As one female interviewee suggested, for example: *"I'm just not sure if the Leadership's chosen anything else that we're supposed to be doing because – I think they're a little bit in the dark as to what we're supposed to be doing as well"*. The staff members also claimed to have *"no idea"* as to whether or not they would be utilising the services of an outside source for delivery of the professional learning or engaging in the undertaking of the modules themselves. While a little uncertain about the direction of the program – and the features of the five modules – one male teacher spoke of having completed the *Indigenous Boys* module and other courses such as a *"one day training session to do with the success of boys"* which presented *"some different ideas as well"*.

When interviewed, the staff at Northfield Primary identified family/student transience – as linked to attendance – as key issues for their school and its students. They suggested that such transience was most often associated with *"people on school card[s]"*, *"dysfunctional*

families” and “low income” earners. The staff also commented on these issues in specific relation to boys’, and to Indigenous boys’, engagement with schooling and their attainment of learning outcomes.

FT: ... they’re often not here. Um, you know, I have one little Aboriginal boy – I haven’t seen him for a while, then he’ll just pop up one day and we won’t see him again for another two or three days. You know, it’s like how do you get them to school to start with, and then you can address the learning.

MT: With the Indigenous boys, their attendance is such a huge issue.

FT: It’s not just the Indigenous boys – there’s kind of, yeah, high absenteeism.

...

MT: Is attendance at school related to whether they enjoy knowledge at school here or whether they’re engaged or not engaged, I don’t know whether it’s ...

...

FT: They sleep in and by the time they get up it’s not worth coming so they stay.

MT: ... they’re moving, but it’s just that their growth is so slow that next year.

They’ll be here and then here and, so by the time they finish school, they’re about there but they should be there. They do grow, but they don’t grow at the rate that we expect them to.

That noted, the teachers also displayed an awareness of the cultural factors underpinning such absenteeism – as evident in one female teacher’s comment that: “*They (i.e., the Indigenous students) have responsibilities with their families and that’s more important than school*”.

In line with the preceding comment, the teachers spoke of the influence of family background upon the students, and specifically the male students. In addition to the transient nature of the school population, the teachers stated that families were “*disadvantaged*” and that “*a lot of our students are school card holders*”. So, too, they identified that the school population comprised of “*a lot of dysfunctional families*”, and spoke of “*a lot of single parents moving when relationships wind down*”. The teachers’ discussion of the influence of family background, and what they perceived to be a lack of nurturing on the part of families in particular, is evident in the following interview extracts:

FT: X was very socially challenged I suppose, which was based on his dysfunctional family.

FT: Y’s got a whole lot of other things, like socially and economically. He’s got, everything that goes wrong at home ... and then he comes to school and all he wants is a bit of love.

FT: Because a lot of them are missing that love at home, or missing that touch that they get at home, they're trying to get it when they're at school.

The teachers also offered comment on the nature of the behaviours exhibited by boys in their school. They suggested, for example, “80% of the time in the office is spent on boys and discipline issues”. They spoke, too, of particular boys who engaged in “power play(s)” in order to gain “control” and to assume positions of “dominance” in the classroom, and of others who would endeavour to “monopolise” classroom resources and space. In relation to this, the social skills of the boys, or rather the lack of, was also noted by the teachers who suggested that, for example: “The boys still stand out in terms of poor social skills”; “They don't have the social skills”. Much of their conversation around this issue pertained to boys' attention-seeking behaviours – as linked to an apparent lack of nurturing at home, as flagged previously. So did their conversation highlight the tension and “frustration” they experience in attempting to provide such attention to particular boys while at the same time ensuring attention was paid to all students in the classroom.

FT: ... X comes to school and all he wants is a bit of love. ... That's what I've found with a lot of the boys, for the Reception, that because a lot of them are missing that love at home, or missing that touch that they get at home, they're trying to get it when they're at school, a lot of the kids. Because, especially with me, I find a lot of the boys want to stay with me in the classroom as well, whereas the girls will go off and do their work, but the boys are trying to get that attention from me because they know they don't get it at home.

...

FT: I guess it's more about catering for that need as well. Instead of just saying, 'OK, let's sit down and do a little activity, just go off and do a sheet or a little activity by yourself', it's trying to get them actually involved in the activities that you do. It's that one-on-one, or that hands-on activity that they really thrive with.

FT: I find a lot of the boys in my room need validation, that they're doing it right or it's good enough to continue on with. Like, they're constantly showing me this and I'm trying to teach them to do it for themselves, not for me, and they're learning what I want. ... Yeah, very much validation – 'Is this right?', 'Is this good enough?'

INT: Mm. Do the rest of you agree with that? Are boys looking for that kind of validation?

FT: Less confident, yeah, I reckon.

MT: It's that nurturing and they don't have that nurturing.

FT: But they want it, they desperately seek it from you. But on the other hand you've got the girls, it's almost like the girls will get on and do something and the boys will be by you asking for assistance or something. You fully know that they can get on and do it, but it's just that little bit of attention which is quite lovely, but on the other hand, you've got to try and spread your time evenly between everyone else as well.

...

FT: They're looking for attention, they're making lots of noise and using all the space compared to the girls.

In addressing the issue of boys' academic capabilities/outcomes specifically, the teachers spoke in the following ways:

FT: It's never the case that it's all boys that are doing badly and all girls are just doing brilliantly – and that's the kind of statistic that you know when you do it, it turns out to be significant, is that nine of the 13 are boys who are puddling around at the bottom.

MT: Yeah. Yeah, they're moving but it's just that their growth is so slow ...

MT: In terms of skill levels, if I was to look at the kids in my class and what they need, it would be writing.

MT: ... some of the boys in my class are the highest achievers at numeracy, that doesn't translate across to literacy, and girls who are the highest achievers in literacy happen to be the highest achievers in numeracy as well.

Finally, the teachers identified the 'architecture' of the school and classrooms as having potential implications for their pedagogy – and in particular, pedagogy which they perceived to be 'desirable' when working with boys.

FT: You're talking about a difficult space, at the school here, most teachers have larger space, larger classrooms which I think possibly impacts on – they used to.

...

INT: So the architecture's important to you, E?

FT: In our space you have to spread out and do more physical activities within the classroom, on the floor, doing Maths activities or just having the space to be able to – for behaviour as well as group work – and if they're disruptive behaviours then they can be moved to another area and the boys can get up and

walk around and move around, obviously the girls can too, but I think in particular for boys.

...

INT: Okay. So space is particularly important to you – I think everybody's nodding on that one.

...

MT: You see that's the problem, if you're asked to do activity-based Maths or activity-based language, you need to work in groups, but they don't provide the space that allows that to happen. ... If you start moving around, you have conflict because they're bumping into each other and getting in each other's way.

MT: That's an issue with boys more so than girls...

...

MT: Yeah. But if you expect us to teach in this particular way which actually caters for boys, there's more hands on and less activity basements, you're not spending as long on each activity and you've got to get through a series of things – that's all great but please know we had the space to do it.

...

INT: So space becomes a tool, it is for pedagogy? Yeah? Great, terrific, I don't think people have been talking about that too much.

2.2.2.2 Boys Speak

The boys interviewed at Northfield Primary spoke in detail about the types of learning behaviour(s) exhibited by boys in the school. Many expressed the view that boys are often off-task, easily distracted and bored, and lack concentration – with some going so far as to suggest such qualities were innately male, biological.

MS: That's because boys lose their concentration really easy.

INT: Do they? What happens? What happens? Tell me about that.

MS: Distraction [happens].

MS: Yeah, someone says something funny in class and all the boys laughed.

MS: And we forget what we're doing.

MS: And then we start mucking around and all that.

MS: We get bored a lot easier [i.e., than do girls].

MS: It comes from the brain.

INT: Okay. Girls listen more – yeah, everybody's nodding at that

one ...

MS: *Yeah. In my class, the girls always listen.*

...

INT: *And what are the boys doing?*

MS: *Play with rulers and pens and laughing.*

MS: *Easily distracted.*

MS: *I reckon it's something in the genes or something.*

The boys also suggested that such learning behaviours – and related (mis)behaviour – stemmed from the perception that school was “a laugh” and that they were there “just to have fun”. School was seen to be a space in which they could “show off”, “be cool”, “be funny”, and “make people laugh”. Such views are exemplified in the following interview snapshots:

MS: *I think that the majority of boys probably think that school's a laugh and they're just there to have fun.*

INT: *Tell me about that.*

MS: *Because girls are always concentrating and the boys are always having a laugh about stuff. Sometimes it's just good to have a good laugh.*

...

INT: *Can I ask you, where do you think these attitudes come from? ...*

MS: *Yeah, we want to be like cool like the TV [i.e., like the people on TV].*

INT: *... How do you show off?*

MS: *Oh, we just make people laugh, do stuff.*

...

MS: *Try and be funny.*

...

MS: *Sometimes it's [i.e., showing off] fun.*

MS: *Yeah, sometimes it's fun, but it depends on what you're doing.*

MS: *Sometimes it's fun to get all the attention.*

MS: *I love attention. It's like, something you get ...*

In discussing the topic of bullying, the boys at Northfield suggested that it took the form of “picking on kids” and “harass[ing] people, like sexual harassment”. In terms of providing explanations for the bullying that occurs, the boys suggested the following:

MS: *Well, it all depends. It depends on who you are, what you look like ...*

...

MS: I reckon it's just because of, sometimes people reckon, like, if they do too well in something you get less popular and stuff.

MS: Yeah, sometimes.

...

MS: Well sometimes like, I sometimes have seen people get picked on because they're like smarter and stuff.

...

MS: ... I don't know, I reckon they're jealous.

When asked about the school's approach to behaviour management, the boys offered the following comments during the course of interview:

MS: Well they introduced the Peace Code late last year – which is seven things to help with the peace.

...

MS: ... we've got a Peace Code Rap, which Y, one of the teachers, made up.

...

MS: But I don't really follow the Peace Code, I really just follow ... like 'Keys to Success' and stuff ... we've got them here as well, they're all here.

...

MS: [The Peace Code is] be safe or be brave, find help, be kind, turn things around, and one more, be a peacemaker.

INT: Now, do teachers actively teach you that, X?

MS: Yeah.

INT: Now, if you've been in trouble, do they refer to the Peace Code?

MS: Sometimes.

MS: Sometimes but you just get a Yellow Card or a Green Card and go to the Office [if you've been in trouble].

INT: When you get in trouble, you get a card and you go to the office?

MS: And they just talk to you down there.

In terms of pedagogical practice, while some boys identified the work undertaken in class as “boring”, others suggested that “the teachers were trying” and that the teachers were endeavouring to “making it more exciting”. They spoke of the use of “games” as a learning resource and the provision of extension activities as being beneficial to their learning. By way of suggested ‘improvement’ to teaching and learning, they referred to – as illustrated in the extract below – the use of reward/monitoring systems, the integration of games into curriculum areas and of the need for explicit teacher explanation and modelling.

MS: Get more, like games, in like Maths and stuff.

MS: Easier Maths.

MS: Just like charts – if you get like 10 dots at the end of week, you don't get to go to Soccer or whatever.

MS: Anyway, I reckon if like, you get like, every time you finish something in the time that you're given, I reckon like you should get these points and like when a class reaches or a school reaches a thousand or something, you get like free reward play.

...

MS: Make it kind of easier for us to learn and I don't know.

INT: Do you know how they'd do that?

MS: I don't know.

MS: They could give us easier work.

INT: You want easier work – no, no, no, that's not what I'm asking. I'm asking, to do hard work – how do they make it easier?

MS: Explain it.

MS: Well, they could like explain it and then do some of it for us.

In discussing the qualities of a 'good' teacher – and in doing so the practices that they perceived to constitute effective pedagogy – the boys offered the following insights during the course of interview:

INT: Okay. What makes a good teacher?

MS: A teacher who is helpful.

MS: Not as strict.

...

MS: When they explain it to you, like.

...

MS: Mr. C is a good teacher because before we do everything, he does it first, like shows us like an example – so the example makes it a lot easier and he leaves it up on the board so you know what to do and it gives you ideas.

INT: So he organises the learning for you? ...

MS: Same as me, like, if I don't get what a teacher is saying, I'll call him and he'll explain what you have to do and then he's saying what to do and I do it straight away. And then, mmm, he show us new things what we've got to do when we grow up.

...

MS: I've learnt a lot from J. She explains everything like, yeah, she gives us examples of stuff and she makes the work easier. And when we're doing like grammar, all we have to do is, she writes stuff on the board and we just have to copy it down so it's pretty easy.

MS: Well I love a teacher who explains it more clearly, because some teachers they just say, 'Okay, do this', and it's like – What am I doing? What do I have to do? Especially when you walk in late, it's hard to try and find someone when you're trying to be quiet, to explain it to you and the teacher's doing other stuff. So it helps when – some teachers are good for that and some aren't.

Evidently, for the boys at Northfield Primary, a 'good' teacher is one who scaffolds and models learning, offers adequate explanations of tasks, is helpful and links learning to future life experiences.

2.2.2.3 Girls Speak

The girls spoke in detail about the behaviour(s) exhibited by the boys in their school – behaviour(s) which are marked out by the boys' disruption of the 'good student' subject position. And as evident in the following interview snapshots, much of what they had to say sits in alignment with their male counterparts' comments about the same issue.

FS: Sometimes boys muck around a lot ...

...

FS: Yeah. They never listen to the teacher, but some girls do that as well.

...

FS: Um, girls are usually paying more attention than boys because boys tend to, you know, want to talk and muck around silly.

FS: Mmm, and fidget too.

FS: But girls do chat sometimes.

...

FS: Yeah, sometimes they fidget. When they're really bored, they do this and they stare.

FS: Yeah, they play around with pencils and stuff.

FS: And try and make jokes during class.

FS: Yeah, so they can get out of like work and stuff like that.

FS: I suppose there's more fights, yeah more fights, trying to be cool, showing off.

FS: ... they just muck around and then they start fights with people and then they're bullies.

In terms of “bullying” behaviours displayed by the boys – as ‘picked up’ in the final comment above – the girls spoke of physical acts, of their ideas and talk being dismissed and ignored, and of being mocked. For example:

FS: There's one boy in our class, like he's pretty smart but he annoys. He's just really annoying and he tries to start fights with the girls and that, and steps on your feet and that.

...

FS: ... when we talk to you [i.e., the interviewer], the boys won't, you know, get offended or start laughing at us for our ideas.

...

FS: Like now, if there was boys here, they would muck around and won't listen to us – but if it's their turn, we'll listen, but when it's ours they would just muck around and don't listen.

In offering explanations for the boys' behaviours, the girls suggested that the boys “show off in front of the girls”, “maybe have a shorter attention span”, are lacking in appropriate “role model(s)”, and that their behaviour could be attributed to “the way that they're brought up at home”. In elaborating upon their general perceptions of boys, by way of comparison with girls, the girls at Northfield made numerous claims. These claims ‘tapped into’ notions of girls' advanced maturity, of girls doing more than simply ‘biding one's time’, and of the desire of girls to do well at school as a means of ‘suring up’ a promising future.

FS: They [i.e., girls] stay out of trouble.

FS: Girls mature faster than boys.

FS: Because the boys are just waiting until school finishes to go and play Game Boy or something like that.

...

FS: The girls just want to be more clever than the guys and that.

FS: They just want to get a good job and boys don't – they think more about like doing music and all this.

...

FS: ... they don't want to go to school but they just have to go.

...

FS: I think that girls want to grow up and be really smart and have a good job so they can afford like a nice house themselves, but I think boys ... they don't really care about school.

When asked to comment on boys and their learning specifically, the girls offered the following insights – with one, interestingly in light of *Success for Boys*, suggesting there was a lack of focus on boys' learning at the school:

FS: Yeah, it's like they don't really take it seriously. Maybe guys have like a shorter brain memory or something – I don't know.

...

FS: Maybe guys don't like to go to school ... and ... they don't feel they want to go back home because they've got homework to do. And most of the guys in our class hate doing homework and when it's the test time for homework, they don't know all the words and stuff and sometimes they get two out of 10 so they don't work hard to get the good scores and stuff.

...

FS: ... I think it's because they don't want to go to school and they don't want to do school, and they just don't want to go home...

FS: We don't really have a focus on boys, it's kind of focusing on both boys and girls so we get like, they [i.e., teachers] try to make us like equal learning.

When asked to offer ideas about getting boys to learn in school, the girls focused on the idea of having single sexed classes and of male teachers teaching male students. The following interview extracts detail their conversation in regard to this:

FS: Maybe like one day a week or something, like maybe they could split the class up between girls and boys. Like two classes pal up so you've got two teachers, one group of boys and one group of girls, and you could do like stuff that they would be more interested in and girls might not be interested in.

...

FS: Well when you get a groups of boys that are not very achieving in Maths or Literacy, but get them together for an hour or so and work with them to see what they don't understand about them, something like that. And the girls can just, like, do like what they would normally do on a school day.

INT: Mm.

FS: ... if we separate the boys and girls, maybe like the boys can have a boy teacher and the girls can have a girl teacher like so they, the boys, can have more focus to learn because they can shout at them and stuff like that.

INT: Shout at them? Do you think that would be a good idea?

FS: Or like, just to make them scared – to get a Yellow Card or something.

...

FS: I like my idea that I said before, like the flexible, like you split the boys from the girls.

INT: Yeah, that was interesting.

FS: So, like, you can like, boys can learn like more stuff that they'll be interested about.

FS: ... Like, my brother has, like, a male teacher – I think that will help him a bit more instead of having a female teacher.

FS: And that's why all boys schools are good for some boys as well because they have male teachers and it might make them feel more comfortable.

Finally, in discussing the qualities of a 'good' teacher and effective pedagogy, the girls offered the following insights during the course of interview:

FS: They have to get along with children – absolutely, like, yeah.

...

FS: I think if you have more games and stuff, like play Maths into games and Spelling into games and make it fun ... If you make it fun, it's not as hard as when you make it boring – [when] you have to write everything in your book and stuff.

FS: ... And if you had a very good teacher, then they would know how to like deal with the kids when it's time and stuff like that, and know how to make learning fun.

...

FS: Smiling and um, also body language, and the way that they dress and stuff like that.

...

FS: Someone that's nice and is fair to people and like doesn't single people out ... [one teacher] would single people out and the rest of us would feel bad because he would single people out and like the rest of us are getting into trouble but they're not ... it was pretty much always the same people that got singled out for being good, that didn't get into trouble.

...

FS: Well, I think, like, usually a teacher that dresses nicely and, like, in style, and smiles and is happy and when you do something really good in work, they don't just go 'Mmm, good job', they like go, 'Oh, you can have free time, that's great work' ... and when all the class is like being really good for one day and they're like, 'Oh, you can go outside and play some sports', because I know boys, well they like playing sports.

...

FS: I think a good teacher is someone who doesn't, I suppose, like, single out people, like[s] everyone. Like everyone's different and they respect that, they don't like tell you that you have to be like that person.

INT: Mm. So, respect?

FS: Yes, definitely, respect.

...

FS: Um, sometimes it's not about the teacher, sometimes it's about the kids. The kids annoy the other kids ...

As evident here, the girls associate 'good' teaching with the provision of "fun" learning tasks, and 'bad' teaching with tasks such as note-taking – which they hold to be "boring" and unengaging work. 'Good' teachers are those who are "get along with children", are not too "strict", "know how to deal with kids" and "know how to make learning fun". So, too, a 'good' teacher is "nice", "fair to people – doesn't single people out" and "respects" students and their differences.

2.2.3 Success for Boys: The Enacted Program

Northfield Primary School – like Davoren Park – presented as 'on song', with a clear direction and philosophy. Such was the school's philosophy that it sat as an 'easy fit' with the *Success for Boys* program. Again, like Davoren Park, this school's philosophy was visibly displayed in and across the school site by way of posters and other materials. So, too, like Davoren Park, this school implemented the *Success for Boys* program initiatives in such a way as to 'fit with' and enhance existing school programs – for example, their whole school approach to behaviour management (as characterised by the "Peace Code") and their mentoring program.

In terms of points of 'intervention' associated with the implementation of *Success for Boys*, Northfield Primary trialled single-sexed classes wherein older students mentored younger students, and focused upon the use of technology with Years 1-2 students. Additionally, the staff devoted time and attention to particular boys and engaged in the "negotiation" of expectations – and in particular 'work' expectations – with these boys. Finally, the school

undertook data collection around student academic performance and utilised this data to inform approaches focusing upon those students identified as not achieving to their full potential.

2.2.4 The *Success for Boys* Story Continues

Following the implementation of the *Success for Boys* program, interviews were again conducted with staff and students – both male and female – to gain insight into their views and experiences of the program. This second round of interviews was conducted during the months of October through November 2007. Table 5 following provides an overview of the key issues addressed by the interviewees at the time of this interview round.

Table 5: Summary of Key Issues Addressed in Interview Two: Northfield

Participants	Key Issues Addressed
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted professional development undertaking and perceived aim of the S4B professional learning as being an instrument of change – that is, change in teacher practice • Identified shifts in their own practice/school practice as a result of S4B – specifically, a move to single-sexed lessons and the integration of technology in specific classes • Identified improvements in student morale and staff collegiality in response to the implementation of the S4B program • Identified teacher work load and availability of time as obstacles to the implementation of the S4B program.
Boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified some improvement in relation to bullying and the school's management of this issue – having spoken of the 'problem' of bullying and the school's handling of this issue in the initial interview • Indicated that positive relationships existed between teachers and students, and between students and students • Discussed, in a positive vane, the school context generally and acknowledged the ways in which school practices, as enacted by staff, facilitated such an environment • Spoke in a positive way about a number of the school's programs – e.g. the mentoring program, the Indigenous program, the behaviour management (Peace Code) program, SENSO and Wakakirri.
Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered conflicting views (as would arguably be expected) of

	<p>perceived changes to student-student relationships – and to the ways in which boys treated girls specifically</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted significant improvements in the behaviours and engagement in school by boys generally – and subsequent changes to the school as a whole – during the course of the implementation the S4B program • Identified perceived shift in the ways in which teachers worked with boys during the course of the implementation the S4B program – i.e., a shift marked out by teachers’ increased time and attention dedicated to particular boys and of the negotiation of work for/with boys by teachers • Spoke [as had their male peers] in a positive way about the school mentoring program and the Peace Code initiative.
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2.2.4.1 School Staff Reflect

When asked in the second interview to comment on the rationale underpinning their decision to apply for the *Success for Boys* grant, the school leadership team offered the following comments:

FT: ... We applied last year because we were concerned that there are differences in the boys’ learning outcomes to the girls’ outcomes and also when we look at our data around the behaviour incident book, the major of the incidence are very much with boys.

INT: Is it mostly behavioural stuff or learning outcomes as well?

FT: No, it’s learning as well. We’ve done a fair bit with data collection, we’ve been involved in a couple of projects that clearly gives us good data. I mean teachers are putting the data in but we’re getting graphs and support in terms of interpreting the data. And because we’ve got that, we can see very clearly and because we’ve spent a fair bit of time around that stuff – say for example, boys and girls, our boys were outperformed by the girls in Years 3 and 5 in State testing however in Year 7 both the girls and the boys were above State average, the girls and the boys performed at about the same level, significantly very little difference. And, at the other end of the school, we’ve got data for our Junior Primary children from a project that we do across the six schools and our data there shows that our boys are doing as well as the girls but that we didn’t have that critical bit of data when we first applied for it last year. And I guess it’s one of

those things that there was money available, we thought we needed to look at and we thought it could be something to add to what we're doing.

INT: Okay.

MT: One of the – oh sorry the cohort that we've identified is representative of a number of different groups in the school, they're not high level interventions and they're not disabilities, they're that second layer of students who seem to be engaged but don't seem to be achieving their full potential in terms of leadership, in terms of student voice and in terms of their learning. So we wanted to actually focus on the cohort of that group and actually put some time into those but the pedagogy from the Success for Boys seemed to lend itself to that.

The teachers at Northfield Primary School, commenting on their overall perceptions of the *Success for Boys* program, spoke of what they viewed to be the focus of it – namely, the disruption of current pedagogical practice and the implementation of new practices. In relation to this, it was suggested by a staff member: *"I think that was the focus of the program, not so you continually teach the same work and style as before and so that you can focus on those other things"*. In terms of implementing 'new' practice, they spoke specifically of undertaking lessons in a single sexed context – having divided the students into male and female class groupings, and of undertaking Technology lessons with Year 1-2 students.

At the time of the second interview, the teachers spoke of the Professional Development they had undertaken/were undertaking:

MT: I would say we're really getting into it at this stage. We've done some Professional Development – but I have to say it's just at the early stages.

INT: Okay. What kind of Professional Development have you had?

FT: We've got the 'Brains of Boys versus Girls'.

INT: Can I ask you where that's going? Where are you going with that?

FT: I don't think we're going anywhere.

...

FT: We had another staff meeting a few weeks after that with someone in house about this program, and I agree with what she said, that there's a lot of contradictory evidence about the functions of the brain and how that affects ...

...

MT: I was at a conference in January about literacy and numeracy and boys, Aboriginal boys that is ... I found that very useful [i.e., the Success for Boys Indigenous Module].

The teachers also spoke of overall changes at the school – identifying, specifically, improvements in student morale and collegiality amongst teaching staff, and of altered pedagogical and curriculum approaches. Of the first change noted, improvement in student morale, one staff member suggested:

FT: ... I think the kids have a sense of ownership of the school in that they, you know, if it's stable – like the school is the only stable part of their lives and they're going through a period where they really want to be a part of it, and I think, you know, when you talk about the kids being here at 8 o'clock and quarter to 8 just because they want to be here and they won't leave ...

In relation to improvement in collegiality amongst teaching staff, it was suggested: “*Um, it's almost like a team sort of environment as well – where everyone's sort of working together and the staff is pretty close I reckon*”.

The changes noted in regard to pedagogy and curriculum focused upon the trailing of single-sexed classes – as signalled previously. The teachers interviewed explained this modification to practice in the following way:

FT: ... we looked at it more as mentoring – the boys having positive role models as well as the girls. So, the older kids really took the younger kids under their wing and fostered really good relationships and we found that socially it was good and it worked, and we were looking at all the different learning styles and we found it didn't really matter that we had all the boys together or the girls together, it was more about what the activity was. They really enjoyed that.

...

FT: [We made changes to] the activities we did. We swapped them (i.e., the students) over – so one week the girls would be doing this activity and the boys would be doing another activity and then they would swap over after, and the following lesson we'd [have] the girls doing the activity that the boys were doing.

Discussions with the staff at Northfield Primary School signalled – although did not make explicit – that *Success for Boys* had been employed in such a way as to enhance existing programs in the school, such as their whole school approach to behaviour management and their mentoring program. Further, the teachers spoke of other initiatives such as the Inclusion Project, Waikikiri Rock Eisteddfod and Social Sports.

Finally, when asked about the implementation of the *Success for Boys* program, and more specifically obstacles to its implementation, the school leadership team offered the following comments:

INT: ... Can you see any obstacles to you getting this up and running in terms of Professional Learning and motivating your teachers?

FT: Not until we start. Our only obstacle, I guess, is that we're always very busy and we take on lots and that we need to balance it – and that's why we want to put it in with some of the other things that we're doing. So we won't be to the stage where we've completed two modules by the end of this year and I don't want to rush teachers into it because I don't want that pressure cooker type of thing. I'd much prefer to have it evolve as it goes through and not finish the project until probably the end of next year.

MT: We've also got some young teachers on our staff who are just brilliant, they're so passionate. They look towards not just us but the other staff for leadership as well. If we were to say, 'We're going to go and do this', they'd be 100% supportive, but also, you have to balance ... and we want to keep that passion and energy that they've got.

FT: We've also got really high levels of trust with them so we're not beating our heads against the wall to get people to change their practice, we've got people who are influenced because they trust us.

FT: But I think as well, I think it works better, I don't like doing things in isolation. It's not isolated is it? So if it's linked to something, if you're looking at engagement, and they are, they're obviously going to be looking at the boys aren't they? And I think it's like the District stuff where you draw out you know the relevant bits – I would choose to do it that way rather than a straight through.

2.2.4.2 Boys Reflect

During the course of the second interview – having spoken of the 'problem' with regard to bullying and the school's management of the issue during the course of the first interview – the boys suggested, with an indication of some apparent improvement, the following:

MS: Well, there's not much bullying going around.

...

MS: Not much bullying.

INT: Not much bullying?

MS: No because they've got rid of the bullies.

INT: They got rid of the bullies? How did they do that?

MS: Oh they just exclude bullies from school.

INT: Okay. Is that good for you guys?

MS: Yeah.

MS: Yeah, and if like at school you bully someone, you get suspended straight away.

In terms of boys' misbehaviour more generally, the boys indicated that there were consequences in place for such actions, for example: *"When the boys play up, if they get angry, they get the football taken off of them and that"; "Yeah, I got in trouble when I didn't do my work"*.

The boys also spoke in a positive vane about the student relationships that existed in the school. They spoke about students being tolerant and accepting of each gender and of all races/ethnic groups, and of how school practices facilitated this. For example:

MS: Yeah, like our class, it doesn't matter what colour you are, and the girls are all nice, but still our class get along – it doesn't matter if you're a girl or a boy.

...

MS: Yeah, it's very much a multi-cultural school and everyone just gets along well.

MS: We have three flags.

MS: Yeah, South Australian, Australian and Indigenous.

...

MS: We've got four flags, we've got the Torres Strait Island, we've got the Aboriginal, we've got the South Australian and we've got the Australian.

MS: Well our teacher, she put us like for a week, girl/boy, girl/boy, instead of all boys.

...

MS: Yeah, and also anybody could talk to like anybody ... I mean, I've got like, there's sometimes when kids like come up to me and say, 'Oh, can you help me, this and that?'

...

MS: ... you all get a chance at like netball and stuff like, because some boys like netball and some boys don't.

MS: And also you wouldn't be able to, um, [you] get used to probably later in life when you'd be talking to more girls.

MS: Yeah, you might be scared of them.

MS: We have a friend – I have a friend who is a girl.

Similarly, the boys at Northfield spoke in a positive manner about the relationships between teachers and students, and of the school context more generally. In relation to teacher-student

relationships, and of the ways in which teachers fostered positive relationships with students via their actions more specifically, they suggested the following during the course of interview:

MS: Um, they try and teach us as much as they can, and our teacher just asks us what have we done and like tells us like if she's grumpy or something and like talks to us and – not just like a normal teacher would just say, 'Oh sit down, do work' – she just, like, does games with us and stuff.

...

MS: Yeah, and also, and lots of times the teachers let us do stuff that we want to do, like he gives us the choice and stuff, so it's up to ourselves to go and do this or this.

...

MS: Yeah, well sometimes, when you finish work the teacher says, 'Well done and stuff'.

The boys spoke of feeling safe and supported and of being provided with opportunities and choice. They suggested the following to be the case at Northfield:

MS: I've got some teachers who help me.

MS: Yeah, and we're given the options, like they're giving us choices to do what we want to do.

Finally, the boys also spoke about initiatives such as SENSO, Wakakirri, the Indigenous program, the Peace Code and the school Mentoring program. Of the Peace Code, for example, they suggested that it had had a positive influence on the behaviour of students in the school. And, they spoke of the Mentoring program as providing students with a support mechanism, a point of contact:

MS: ... they [i.e., the mentors] just like talk about stuff, like to help you, like have a chat – like if you can't like chat to your parents or your teacher, you can chat to them because they make you feel good.

...

MS: A mentor? Um, it's someone who talks to you about stuff.

MS: Yeah, about how you're work's going and stuff.

MS: Yeah, and if you feel like worried about something, you can talk to them and you just like – they don't really, they just keep it to themselves and stuff.

...

MS: ... they just try and connect to us and talk to us while we're playing our games, like they just sit on the mats and talk.

2.2.4.3 Girls Reflect

During the course of the second interview, the girls discussed their perceptions of the ways in which student-student relationships had changed – or not – at Northfield. And it was the case that there were, as one might expect, conflicting views. In speaking about the interactions between students, some girls suggested that nothing had changed, and that the boys still treated them as they had always done. For example:

FS: ... but still, the boys in like my class, they harass the girls and, they like harass them and things.

...

FS: Some of the boys in our class, like, try not to include us for some reason, I don't know what.

FS: Yeah, like compare – they never kick the soccer ball to us. Because we're doing soccer at the moment, they never kick the ball to us. They kick it to the best players and if a girl's their best player, they'd be very lucky to get the ball kicked to them.

FS: That's the thing that we have the problem with in our class.

INT: Yeah. Tell me about that, what happens?

FS: Um, we just don't get included in guy stuff you know. Just because we're girls ...

FS: Yeah, and maybe the boys think they're better than us.

Others, however, suggested that changes had occurred in terms of the ways boys and girls interacted. For example:

MS: ... the boys are saying, 'Hey girls', more often and starting to mix, yeah.

...

MS: And sometimes we ask the guys if they want to join us and stuff, and they ask us and stuff, and so we're more including them too so that they will get more confident.

The girls spoke of improvements in the behaviour and subsequent engagement in school of boys generally, and in terms of their behaviour to one another more specifically – as evident in the following interview extracts.

FS: I think things have sort of improved a tiny bit. Not hugely, just like a bit.

INT: Tell us about that X.

FS: Well in Maths, how we have to like work out the answer to this, mostly boys put their hands up. Usually it was always the girls but it's now more the boys.

INT: So they're participating more in class?

FS: *Uh huh.*

...

FS: *[The boys are] improving.*

FS: *Mm.*

INT: *Yeah, okay. Tell me why you think it's improving. Why they're getting better.*

FS: *Maybe they just had a wake up call after this, you know.*

FS: *Yeah, and they used to chat more than they do now, so like half the time, all day they used to talk the whole time and now only about half of the time they talk.*

...

FS: *I think the teachers have got the boys more improved ...*

...

FS: *Even the guys that we have in our class who used to always start fights – but they're really like good to each other, they never fight, never.*

FS: *Um, I think that the boys have improved a lot because, in my class, boys used to always fight each other.*

In line with this, they also indicated their belief that the school, on the whole, had changed as a result of the modified behaviour of the boys, with one girl suggesting, for example: *"I reckon the place has changed, it really has"*.

The girls also commented on what they perceived to be a change in the ways in which teachers worked with the boys in their classes – a change marked out by increased time and attention dedicated to particular boys, and of 'negotiation' of 'work' expectations. Of this, they suggested:

FS: *The only thing that I would notice – where a teacher is helping the boys, is [giving] more help.*

FS: *Yeah, showing a bit more attention to the guys.*

FS: *There are two boys in my class that always have to have help from Mr. X, my teacher, so like he spends all our literacy and maths time with them, not even the rest of the boys.*

...

FS: *Um, they may like miss out on doing things and like J [i.e., the teacher], she's a real softie – like she lets them do half of it because she doesn't want them completely missing out.*

FS: *Yeah, and I think that's why maybe the boys have improved – because J gives them a chance.*

...

FS: Some people [i.e., teachers] don't give, like, people chances with that sort of stuff.

FS: Yeah, but I think it is a good idea.

FS: That's the secret, because she's giving them a chance so that they improve, that's her secret lesson.

...

FS: Um, maybe the teachers are doing more things that the boys like and that the girls like so that they're both happy.

Finally, the girls – like their male peers – spoke in a positive light when discussing the Mentoring program and the Peace Code initiative. Firstly, they suggested that the mentors “*do really good stuff ... do a lot of different things*”. Secondly, of the Peace Code program, it was stated that this initiative had “*helped*” and “*changed*” the tone of the school.

2.3 CASE STUDY THREE: SMITHFIELD PLAINS HIGH SCHOOL

2.3.1 Context Statement – Smithfield Plains High School

Smithfield Plains High is in the outer suburbs, 31 kilometres north of Adelaide. The area immediately surrounding the school consists of a high proportion of low cost rental and emergency housing. Within the school zone – as part of more recent developments – private, Housing Trust, and low cost homes are available for purchase. Smithfield Plains is part of a major regional redevelopment that involves relocation of the school to a new site and co-location with other schools. Key contextual factors for the school include high levels of poverty, generational and youth unemployment and high levels of student transience. There are a large number of single parent and blended families, as well as many students ‘at risk’ living independently.

The school has a diverse student population with 13% Aboriginal students and 18 % of students who are English-as-Second-Language learners or of Non-English-Speaking-Background. Under the Department’s Index of Educational Disadvantage, the school has a Category One ranking – indicating a very a high proportion of students from low SES backgrounds. From 2005-2007, the percentage of students holding a School Card was 55%, with an enrolment of around 400 students. 25% of students are on a Negotiated Education Plan, indicating the school to have students with disability status, including students in two area special classes.

Smithfield Plains High employs 55-60 staff that work as teachers or provide support services in a full or part-time capacity. These include:

- A leadership team comprising the Principal (Senior School responsibilities), a Deputy Principal (Middle School responsibilities), two Assistant Principals (Middle School and Behaviour Management responsibilities), eight Coordinators and a School Counsellor.
- Specialist teachers including: Special Education, English as a Second Language, Aboriginal Education, and Teacher Librarian.
- A student services team that includes a Career Transitions Coordinator, Christian Pastoral Support Worker, Aboriginal Community Education Officer and Aboriginal Education Teacher.
- A ‘Program Achieve’ Co-ordinator and Futures Connect Deputy Principal – shared with the Peachy Cluster of schools – who provide training and development and assist with the development of Middle School programs.

Note: It is within this cluster arrangement that *Success for Boys* was implemented.

- School Service Officers (SSOs) who provide administration and financial support.

The school's staff age profile is relatively young, with a number of staff in their first few years of teaching. All staff in permanent or year-long positions are appointed through the Local Selection Process. All staff have applied to work at the school and there is a balance of female and male staff.

School improvement is a priority for the school and the school has a School Improvement Team that develops the Site Learning Plan and develops strategic priorities. Features of the curriculum include:

- A Middle School program that develops the knowledge, skills and understandings as described by SACSA across the eight learning areas. This is supported by ESL and Accelerated Literacy programs for all Year 8 and 9 students.
- A Senior School program with accredited SACE courses and a range of flexible provisions to support students' success. Year 12 students interested in applying for university can participate in the University Portfolio Entrance Scheme.
- Pastoral Care programs and class structures are designed to support the development of positive relationships between students and their home group teacher.
- Vertical grouping operates within Middle School classes (Years 8-9) and Senior School classes (Years 10-12).
- Programs to meet individual needs as well as intensive support for students with challenging behaviours and learning difficulties are in place.
- Increased use of Information and Communication technologies across the school.
- Round table assessment for all Year 9 students transitioning to Year 10.
- Opportunities for students to gain SACE accreditation for their part-time work and participation in community activities e.g. The Duke of Edinburgh Award.
- Delivery of regional Vocational Education and Training as part of a secondary school alliance.

The Student Representative Council meets regularly to discuss issues and organise activities and events. The SRC has a high profile at school functions and assemblies.

A range of support services is based on site and includes: the Smith Family Northern Office, Northern Enterprise Centre and the Regional Skills Centre for Printing and Graphic Arts. There is a range of mentoring and advocacy programs within the school, including Itrack funded by the Smith Family and Youth Pathways funded by Anglicare.

2.3.2 The Beginnings of the *Success for Boys* Story

First round interviews were conducted at Smithfield Plains High School in February 2007 – as they were at the 2 primary school case study sites. As at the primary schools, school management personnel, teaching staff involved in the *Success for Boys* program, as well as a sample of boys who were the target of the *Success for Boys* program and their female peers were interviewed. Table 6 below provides an overview of the key issues raised and discussed by the interviewees during these initial interviews.

Table 6: Summary of Key Issues Addressed in Interview One: Smithfield Plains

Participants	Key Issues Addressed
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified their school as being the only High school in the cluster to be involved in the S4B program • Rationale for involvement in the program identified as its focus on boys – issues concerning boys (as opposed to girls) • Suggested focus would be upon literacy • Noted delivery of staff professional development would take the form of key staff being inserviced and then inservicing other school staff • Student attendance identified as a significant ‘problem’ • Student familial contexts, along with limited opportunities and access to experiences, identified as key factors • Student (mis)behaviour noted as a significant issue – with boys identified as the major behaviour problems • Boys as learners perceived to be disengaged, defiant, lacking in motivation, and as failing to see value and relevance in school work • Noted the broad range of students’ varying academic capabilities/ outcomes – as pertaining to literacy in particular – and of the strategies employed to address this • Spoke of the limitations on flexibility and the overcrowded curriculum as impacting on their pedagogical practice • Discussed, in a positive vane, the nature of teacher-student relationships.
Boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested that boys’ behaviour and learning was influenced by the particular teacher and subject, and the type of work to be undertaken

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified characteristics of a ‘good teacher’ in the following way: strict – but not too strict, funny, humorous, made learning fun, helped students, ‘managed’ behaviour • Noted that boys’ learning at the school would be enhanced by: the provision of more equipment, pastoral care.
Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In relation to boys’ learning and behaviour, it was noted that boys were off-task and disengaged, lazy, and chose not to learn • Suggested that boys’ approach to school learning and behaviour was influenced by their immaturity and their view that they were too cool to learn.

2.3.2.1 School Staff Speak

During the course of the first interview, the staff at Smithfield Plains deferred to Sandie (a key figure in the implementation of the program at the school) when asked to discuss why the school had applied for the *Success for Boys* grant. Identifying Smithfield Plains as the “*only High School in the cluster that’s doing it*”, one teacher spoke of their engagement in the *Success for Boys* program – up to this initial point – in the following way:

MT: From a teaching point of view this thing came up at the end of last year and it was just offered for me to go along to the training so that was at district level, in our cluster ... So we’ve done the core module at a cluster group level.

In terms of providing a context for the ‘take up’ of the program, he went on to offer the following comment:

MT: I think the cluster got involved because it’s about boys and 10 years ago it was about girls and now it’s about boys isn’t it? So you know they’re the sort of concerns where it’s all about the boys type of thing and so that’s how the cluster got involved.

The teachers also suggested the following in relation to how they perceived the program would be implemented in the school:

MT: Well, the idea we were talking to Sandie about, we’ll work through ourselves – we’ll get these guys [i.e., the school’s nominated teachers] to do the training and they can present it to the cluster – they’ll present to our staff first and then hold a Presentation Day and get the whole cluster – well that’s the idea. We’d like the knowledge inside rather than an external person coming in and flying out, so that’s how we are at the moment.

INT: Yeah, and you’ll know that too from the materials – and when we designed them it could be external or internal and you can actually use some of your money

to appoint someone to skill up and to do the delivery for yourselves, there's ample resources there for you to do it.

MT: Sandie said, [in terms of] developing the major project, she wants at least six teachers involved in that and she said they'll consist of some coordinator Heads. And she mentioned numeracy specifically – and I think the other staff would be told later and we'd have a focus group.

MP: As far as literacy – because I've been working on this on an ad hoc basis – but we're thinking of developing two and three across, well, at least Middle School, but we'll see if we can advance further. Literacy/Comprehension focus, I mentioned about text, you know two or three different types of text and we need to collect data – I think that's something that we haven't really implemented at our own level so we're going to do some data collection, rotating tasks amongst the whole spectrum like from Maths through to Science and everything in between and, um, just seeing, you know, where our strengths and weaknesses are. ... And I think that's basically what we will be doing next term – so we'll be building our resources between now and then to implement there in Term 3 and you know looking at the Success for Boys one, it will be interesting to see what figures we can get. You know just to see the breakdown between Years 8 and 9s, between boys and girls, and see where they're heading and then basically we will use that information to plan for the boys that are there.

Invited to comment on existing 'issues' in the school, the staff at Smithfield Plains identified student attendance as a “big problem” and the uncertainty of attendance as a concern. As one teacher suggested: “You don't even know when they're going to turn up, they could turn up or not”. In discussing this issue of attendance, the teachers spoke of the students' familial context – of family related absences. For example:

MT: What's surprising, I find, is that so many of the reasons for being away are family related, you know, it's not just straightforward, some say a cold or the flu, it's like why were you away? Family issues, family issues, family issues – so that's quite a worry that these kids are away because of bashings, causing assault ...

INT: Do you mean you just get a blanket explanation?

MT: Oh yeah, I mean look, you ask for a note in the diary and one will come to me and say, 'Joe was not at school because of a family matter', you know, and that's quite a worry. I mean I've got one student who's Mum's got a new boyfriend and he's got three brothers and sisters and it's turned up that her new partner has got four and they all live in the same house and he's sharing a bed

now with three other kids. So he went from his own bed in his own room to like sharing with three others, so, it's like – what kind of life is that? It's like those kind of life changes that these kids have to deal with, they can be left to fend and they're given new responsibilities at home like having to look after the little ones – and then we question them as to why they're not at school? Well, that's understandable.

MT: ... one kid, who, everyday he had to stay home and look after his brother because his dad couldn't do it, and he had to wash the dishes and all that stuff. So what are you going to do with them?

MT: Yeah, so in that respect, they're probably more adult than some of the others by virtue of the fact that a lot of them have to go shopping for themselves and there's kids from other areas [who] are not street wise in that sort of way, they're not as experienced as these kids are.

INT: Okay. So it's interesting to see the skills that they do have, isn't it?

In further discussing the familial contexts in which their students live, the teachers spoke of the limited opportunities and experiences such circumstances provided. It was suggested that “a lot of our children never go out of this area [i.e., geographical area]” and, resultantly, “this world here, that is all they know and all they ever think that there is and they just don't really get out of it”. This teacher elaborated upon her view by way of discussing class/school excursions: “If we do take some of them on excursions, they're always sort of like, looking out at the streets and going up and down in the lifts as though they'd never [done so] – and these are kids that are 14 or 15 [i.e., years of age]”.

The teachers also identified and discussed the issue of student (mis)behaviour. Identifying boys as the major “behaviour problems”, they spoke of the impact of boys' behaviour upon their own teaching practice and upon the girls in their charge.

MT: The boys are the majority of the behaviour problems.

MT: Sometimes you get four and they start feeding off each other, so it sort of becomes like a shark feeding frenzy. And we spend so much of our time on behaviour management that we spend 10% of our time teaching. And, until MONSA really get a hold of that then we're really restricted on how successful any program, no matter how good it is in other schools – we'll need to get that right first.

MT: ... I guess the problem in terms of behaviour is that the boys are out there and the girls are more withdrawn because that's where the boys play up – so that accounts for the behaviour issues. Because the boys always play up and the girls are more withdrawn and isolated, and some are non-offenders, and the boys just come in and they play the game and play up.

A male staff member suggested: *“It's hard for females to work in class because the boys are constantly stressing them”*. Additionally, the staff expressed the view that boys' perceive there to be *“no issue”* in relation to their behaviour; that they *“don't see that they've got a problem”*. Furthermore, it was suggested that strategies in place within the school to address misbehaviour were inadequate – as one teacher stated: *“Focus room's a joke, behaviour is a joke, they need greater consequences – the boys get away with everything”*.

In relation to learning, broadly, the teachers suggested that the boys at Smithfield Plains: *“Don't see any value and relevance in it”*; are *“disengaged, defiant”*; *“generally lacking motivation”*; *“disengaged and basically choose what they want to learn.”* One teacher suggested that *“the skill levels of the boys”* leads to a *“lack of confidence and motivation”*. It was also suggested that *“the boys are a very under performing group”*. With regard to boys' literacy learning and capabilities more specifically, the teachers – while acknowledging the *“broad range”* of the cohort from *“those groups of children both boys and girls who are virtually verging on the illiterate”* to the *“high achievers as well who are extremely motivated and very good at what they do”* – stated the following:

MT: ... boys who are virtually verging on the illiterate ... So that's the range we're teaching, the bottom 20% seriously need help and the majority of that bottom 20% are boys.

FT: ... I find that a lot of them have problems – actually even writing, forming letters and things like that. They won't write. If you get them on a computer they'll do some work, but if you ask them to sort of, ask them to do some work on a piece of paper, they get very hesitant, they seem to almost be embarrassed in some ways that they don't have the skills.

Given these capabilities, the teachers suggested that teaching – endeavouring to cater for these boys – was *“challenging at times”*. It was the case for these teachers, as one suggested, that: *“You've [i.e., teachers] got to work from kids that can't string a sentence together to kids who you can set a task and off they go and you can catch up with them at the end of the lesson”*.

In light of the boys' literacy capacities, the teachers spoke of employing the following kinds of pedagogical practices:

MT: ... with the boys here, we are taking on a very much scaffolding, developing skills along the way sort of, process. And I find my class' best results come from getting everybody to start at a level that they're capable of, layering the skill level on top and working towards the finished product – and some of the boys, they respond best when they see what their goal is.

MT: Yeah. They see what the finished product should look like.

MT: So they're not guessing and stabbing so much, I guess.

While employing such practice, the teachers also noted the limitations on flexibility and the overcrowded nature of the curriculum as impacting upon their work and, subsequently, student learning opportunities:

MT: The curriculum is always a problem... We lock ourselves into the curriculum, and flexibility might be something that we can consider later on but we're locked into the curriculum at the moment. They [i.e., teachers] get locked into the way the curriculum runs and there's no flexibility for individual kids.

Finally, the teachers spoke of positive teacher-student relationships – relationships that appear important given the familial contexts in which their students live. In regard to this, one teacher suggested the following:

MT: In school and in relationships, you know, on the real positive side of the relationships they make, teachers might become a very safe alternative. And teachers are the one, I used to hear this when I first started teaching, that teachers are the one constant in their life. It's true you know, it's really true and I think the real positive side to being here are some of the relationships you do form, because they confide in you and they see you as a trusted person and you can use that bond to get the best results out of them.

2.3.2.2 Boys Speak

In discussing the issues of boys' behaviour and boys' learning at Smithfield Plains, the male students interviewed suggested that much hinged upon “*what teacher*” they had, “*what subject*” was being taught and “*what work [they] do*”. They spoke of working and achieving “*better*” when taught by “*a strict teacher*”, and of doing so in subjects such as “*Technology*” and “*HPE*”. With regard to boys' learning specifically, they made connection to teacher practice as an influence, suggesting:

MS: Sometimes we don't get teachers and what they're saying.

MS: Some teachers miss opportunities.

They also spoke of their own and other students' behaviour as influences upon learning, with one boy speaking of his need to "concentrate more" and another suggesting that "people talking around me [stops me concentrating]".

When asked to discuss the characteristics of a 'good' teacher, the boys offered the following comments during the course of the interview:

INT: What makes a good teacher?

MS: Strict.

MS: Oh, not too strict, but fairly strict, and they help you with what you're doing.

MS: Funny.

Finally, in commenting on what would further assist boys to learn in school, the boys from Smithfield Plains suggested "more equipment" and "Pastoral Care". With regard to teacher practice specifically, they offered the following suggestions – some more 'tongue in cheek' than others:

MS: [Be] strict, give them [i.e., students] lollies.

INT: Pardon?

MS: Give them lollies.

INT: Being strict, give them lollies.

MS: Bring some alcohol along, get them drunk.

...

MS: Make it fun.

...

MS: Let them work to what they want so they can do it.

INT: Help them.

MS: What they want.

INT: Just explain a little bit on that X – what they want...

MS: Just help them like do whatever they want to learn – just help them to learn, but just make sure that they do the work.

...

MS: Um, if they ask, you would give easier work.

INT: Mm, okay. And how do you get them to do the hard work that's going to get them some good jobs?

MS: That's when they'd be good at it. You would get work out of them like that – building it up after they start with easier work.

...

MS: You would get work out of them like that.

...

MS: Get them to pull their head in, so like, if they're not doing their work and if you say it to them like twice or three times, send them out to a split class or something.

...

MS: If they do their work and they're stuck, give them a push along.

MS: Yeah, humour, I like humour.

Given these comments, one can garner that the boys view the provision of adequate resources and supportive contexts, strict yet fun and humorous teachers, and fun and scaffolded learning experiences to be key in assisting boys' learning at school.

2.3.2.3 Girls Speak

Two key and inter-related themes came to dominate the interview with the girls at Smithfield Plains High School: boys' learning and boys' behaviour. And the girls spoke at length and in detail about the two key issues and those related to these.

In speaking about boys' learning and behaviour, the girls suggested that the boys were "lazy" and that they "choose not to learn". They alluded to the idea that the boys are, generally, off-task and disengaged. The girls also held the view that much of the boys' behaviour stemmed from their immaturity. So, too, they expressed their belief that the boys "try to impress the girls more than they learn" and that boys thought they were "too cool to learn". In relation to the previous point, they signalled what they perceived to be a point of tension for boys, that is, the risk of being labelled a "nerd" if boys take up the 'good student' position and engage in school learning practices. The following interview extract documents the girls' comments in relation to these issues – those of boys' approaches to learning and boys' behaviour. And it is suggested here – if the girls' perceptions and comments in relation to their observation of boys are 'on the mark' – that for many boys, much of the 'doing'/not 'doing' of school focuses upon the 'work', the 'performance', of dominant forms of masculinity.

FS: Boys are lazy and they usually know the girls are going to do the work.

INT: Oh, they're lazy?

FS: And, a lot of the time in class, they just keep getting up and doing other stuff instead of sitting down and doing their work.

FS: Because a lot of boys are immature.

FS: Most of them are.

...

FS: I just think boys don't want to work in class, but girls ... we're here to learn.

INT: The girls are here to learn? Do you think so?

FS: No, um, the boys are here – everyone is at a school to learn, but the boys just choose not to learn.

FS: They try to impress girls more than they learn.

...

FS: Yeah. Well all the boys choose not to learn because they think – I don't know how to explain it but ...

FS: They think that they're too cool to learn.

INT: Too cool to learn. Okay. Can you tell me, can you give me a better idea of what that means?

FS: Otherwise, if the boys do work or something they'll get called 'nerds'.

INT: Oh. Is that right? Is that what happens here?

ALL FS: Yeah.

...

FS: Yeah, the boys think it's cool and they think that they are cool not to do work.

...

INT: Oh, okay. Now what about this notion of being a nerd if you're doing well.

Does that sound right?

FS: Well say, like this kid in my class, he got all As or something and then he'd go around saying, 'Oh, I got As' and stuff and everyone goes, 'You're a nerd, you do your work'.

FS: Yeah, it's just like more on the popular side.

...

FS: Well like, there's this boy – oh, I don't know, but there's this guy in class and he knows there's chicks after him so he pretends to be funny and everything instead of working so the girls help him work, but then on other occasions, he doesn't do anything and he like swears at the teachers and stuff just to get the girls' attention.

...

FS: They've got to have girlfriends always, and if they don't, they're naughty until they get one.

2.3.3 *Success for Boys*: The Enacted Program

At Smithfield Plains, the *Success for Boys* grant served as a source for the provision of staff professional development. The *Success for Boys* program – as an instrument of ‘intervention’– was also primarily ‘taken up’ by the school in this manner. The key focus at Smithfield Plains was the professional development of staff, with a view to target teacher’s curriculum design and delivery – particularly in terms of literacy and numeracy. So, too, staff professional development, under the ‘banner’ of *Success for Boys*, was to serve as an impetus for increased staff collaboration, for bringing about change in staff mind sets and their approach to their work as teachers.

The *Success for Boys* program was – as reported by school staff members during the course of interview – seen to provide ways in which to focus attention on student attendance and behaviour, and on facilitating increases in student literacy and numeracy levels. The staff also reported implementing the program in such a way as to be inclusive of both male and female students. While the staff at the school made such reports, it appears that their efforts were ‘lost’ on their students. Seemingly, unlike the students of the primary schools involved in this project, the students of Smithfield Plains did not note the work undertaken in the name of *Success for Boys*. It was the case that the students – both male and female – reported being unaware of any particular focus on boys being enacted in the school, and of not being told about the *Success for Boys* initiative.

2.3.4 The *Success for Boys* Story Continues

A second round of interviews was undertaken at Smithfield Plains during October through November 2007. These interviews were again conducted with staff, and both male and female students, to gain insight into their views and experiences of the *Success for Boys* program following its implementation. Table 7 following provides an overview of the key issues raised and explored by the interviewees at the time of this interview round.

Table 7: Summary of Key Issues Addressed in Interview Two: Smithfield Plains

Participants	Key Issues Addressed
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Viewed the S4B program in a highly positive manner overall and the staff professional development opportunities it afforded them were seen to be of major benefit• Reiterated their approach to the delivery of the Professional Development and spoke of the effectiveness of the approach• Identified shifts in relation to staff views and staff/school practices

	<p>as a result of S4B – noting: willingness of staff to engage in/with the program, changes to leadership/teaching staff mind sets, increase in capacity of teachers to facilitate improved learning outcomes for all students and boys in particular, heightened school focus on and improvement in the area of attendance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified boys’ increased engagement with the curriculum and schooling generally, and noted positive changes in boys’ understandings of self and behaviours • Spoke of future plans in light of S4B and more broadly – noting: ways in which funding might be used, the desire to engage in collaborative staff work and of possible changes to the timetable.
Boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harrassment of girls and violence noted by some as issues in school while others suggested there were no issues of concern • Claimed that they had never been told about the S4B program • While reportedly not explicitly aware of S4B – noted small improvement in boys’ engagement and focus on work as well as teachers’ adoption of a stricter approach (as occurring during the time of the program’s implementation).
Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reported that they were not aware of any specific focus on boys [like their male peers] • Claimed that boys’ (mis)behaviours remained an issue of concern – such that these behaviours had become a taken-for-granted feature of school and the girls’ experience of schooling • Signalled that boys’ behaviours were often indicative of ‘macho’ acts • View that teachers were unable to address the (mis)behaviours of boys • [In a similar vane to their male counterparts during the course of the first interview] girls noted that boys’ (mis)behaviour was linked to teacher capacity to engage students and teacher expectations of students, and the curriculum area and its level of difficulty/interest • [With some exceptions] noted positive relations between staff and students.

2.3.4.1 School Staff Reflect

The teachers of Smithfield Plains spoke in a highly positive manner when discussing their overall perceptions of the *Success for Boys* program during the course of the second interview. In doing so, they addressed specific issues relating to its implementation and its benefits for staff – including professional development opportunities and resourcing. Serving as testament to the effectiveness of the program, one teacher suggested:

MT: ... clearly, that we're no longer what was considered a school in crisis, that over this year, the improvements that have been made have been by any standards enormous compared to say a couple of years ago where things were a lot different.

The staff suggested that *Success for Boys* functioned effectively, at a broad level, as “a general program for all learners” – not only boys.

MT: It's more general – what we've done is, we have always known that basically we need to engage our boys in literacy, for all students. So when we were given the opportunity, we didn't have the resources to allow us to do that, so when the Success for Boys funding came along it was a way that we could look, you know, allow us to do what we wanted to do and engage boys, engage all students and increase literacy and numeracy.

In terms of the implementation of the program, staff commented that: “*This year's the trial period, developing really for next year, so all of our work this year has been developing stuff that will help us next year in the classroom*”. It was stated that: “*Well, we've done a lot of Professional Development, we used the funding available for a lot of Professional Development and teacher learning. We had a few after school sessions in which teachers have been given a really comprehensive study focused on literacy, scaffolding, student engagement*”. They spoke of undertaking the *Core* and *Literacy* modules. It was also noted that the program promoted, and allowed for, the “*releasing of individual teachers to work on curriculum*” and that “*the teachers have benefited from [this], particularly new teachers*”.

This capacity to provide teacher release for Professional Development purposes was seen to be a major benefit for staff at the school. Of this, the staff suggested:

MT: ... getting release time for them [i.e., teachers] to work on curriculum, and focusing on Sose, Maths, Science and English – the areas that they get released for has been particularly useful and some units have come out of it that have been beneficial not only to students and boys learning, with a focus on boys' learning,

but also beneficial to the staff that now want to move on with that type of thing and get more opportunities.

MT: So the funding has allowed us to get training development and be specific to these things and, like was mentioned earlier, it allows us the release time and allows us time at the end of term to work together and make sure we've got a curriculum and methodology that's going engage our students and improve literacy and numeracy standards.

MT: That's what we used it for this year [i.e., release time to support these kinds of practices] – sending teachers out for T& D and then staff sharing.

The staff at Smithfield Plains also spoke of their adoption of a particular 'model' of Professional Development delivery – one which they perceived to be an effective model. They explained this 'model', and its link to the use of funds – in the following ways:

MT: ... one thing we really do well here is our own in-service, because the three of us here, we've actually done a session each and I think that that's when you get – rather than having someone unknown who comes in and tells us what to do, you know we guide our PD from within.

...

MT: The funding would be for release time to support these kinds of practices. ... More support time, release cover for personal training and development for teachers – so that it filters across the whole staff and working together.

INT: Okay. So you're very comfortable with the model where a teacher goes out and the teacher brings back in and works with you guys rather than flying somebody unknown in?

MT: ... every time I've sent someone out for T & D, it's been on the premise that you'll come back and be expected to share that information in some way – whether that's in a report or a staff meeting, or what actually turns into an afternoon session – so then we share in the knowledge base. ... It gets too expensive – we'd rather train our teachers than fly someone over for one off days, so, what's the old saying – 'Rather than someone catch the fish', we want someone to teach us, we want to teach ourselves how to fish so we can sustain ourselves, so rather than give someone a fishing rod ...

INT: Yes. Give someone a fish and they eat for a day.

MT: Give them a fishing rod and they'll eat for the rest of their lives – yes.

The staff interviewed spoke of what they saw to be a range of changes now evident in the school following the implementation of *Success for Boys*. Specifically, they spoke of changes relating to the teaching staff and of their willingness to engage in/with the program, changes to leadership and staff mind-sets, and of changes in teachers' increased capacity to teach in ways that facilitate improved literacy outcomes for all students – but for boys in particular. In regard to boys specifically, they spoke of a heightened school focus on attendance and of improvements in this area, of positive changes in boys' understandings of self and their behaviours, and of boys' increased engagement with schooling practices generally and the curriculum more specifically.

In terms of changes relating to the teaching staff, those interviewed spoke of “*a new and enthusiastic, motivated staff that are willing to learn, that are willing to do anything*”. One teacher told of how she, and “*probably 90%*” of her colleagues, attended Professional Development sessions held on a Thursday night, stating: “*I love to go and listen ... I always find I get something from it and if there's any, you know, Professional Reading handed out, I'll have a good look through that*”. It is to be acknowledged here that while a high quality program has the ‘potential’ to be effective – such as the interviewees at Smithfield Plains High deemed *Success for Boys* to be – the effectiveness of any such program lay in its ‘take up’ by school staff. And it was the case, as one interviewee reported, that the staff at Smithfield Plains had embraced the *Success for Boys* program and ‘run with’ it – thus ensuring its success in this context:

MT: In the years gone by, you'd ask your staff members, I'd ask the staff members to come to something like this or put your hand up to be part of something, and the resistance was huge and you don't get things done. This year, teachers just put their hand up for anything.

The staff spoke of leadership change and of changes in staff members' mind-sets that had occurred within the school. It was suggested, “*the leadership has [] changed, as the staff have changed, to give a better direction as well*”. Changes in staff attitudes or mind-sets were spoken of, by way of providing an example in relation to ‘teaching-free periods’:

MT: Now the difference with that, to what would have happened in the past, is that teachers at this school when I got here, we used to call them ‘frees’ – ‘This is my free time’. ... A whole heap of people around here would clearly see it as non-instruction time – there's no such thing as a ‘free’.

MT: Yeah, you still have to make yourself available to support your colleagues, and that's how the attitude and the perceptions have changed over the year so.

The staff interviewed also discussed the changes made in order to address the needs of boys in the school. In terms of boys' literacy learning needs, and as quoted previously, it was perceived to be the case that: *"Any teacher who went to the Literacy Module has got a grounding now to improve the outcome of their boys"*. The staff spoke, too, of there being a concerted effort actioned to focus upon and improve the attendance rates of students, and in particular, the attendance rates of what they identified as being the *"hard core group"* of boys: *"Before we can engage them, we've got to get them here, so attendance has been part of our focus as well and we've all been working hard on making sure that all the attendances have always gone up and that hard core group"*. The interviewees suggested that there had been an identifiable change in boys' understandings of the need for self-reliance, claiming: *"You don't always have to lean over their shoulder [now] and tell them what to do, it's all self guided and that sort of thing"*. The teachers interviewed also reported improved engagement by boys, both generally and in terms of the curriculum more specifically, and spoke of their plans for continuing action in regards to this issue. Of this, they said:

MT: I think that all this kind of stuff must have made some impact because boys are getting quite [inaudible], and I know like, when Z introduced the visual learning back to me, it was like a whole new world I didn't know was there, and I know my boys in my class have been much more focused by doing more IT sort of stuff as well.

MT: Through the Student Behaviour Education Committee – [they] are engaging those boys in a different way than they (i.e., the boys) were 12 months ago in school.

MT: I've got my boys engaged doing poetry at the moment. I can't believe how much poetry they're doing.

While acknowledging the difficulty in drawing a direct causal effect of *Success for Boys* upon improvements in boys' behaviour, the staff nonetheless spoke of improvements here – and of improvements in girls' behaviour as well. Addressing this issue during the course of interview, they said:

MT: ... our critical behaviour incidents have dropped, and I think that all this kind of stuff must have made some impact.

MT: Yes, that's true ... we can't link it directly, but it's clear that it's getting a lot better – high level but even the low level stuff is dropping now, so we're doing something right.

INT: You must be very pleased with that regardless of whether it's associated with PD or not ... So you can actually track that, that there's a decrease in the ...

MT: Yeah ... the severity of incidents have decreased dramatically and the number of incidents have decreased dramatically from Term 1 to Term 4 this year.

MT: And we have a hard core group of boys that are involved in a lot of the critical incident groups.

...

MT: It really is across the board and not just for boys.

Finally, the staff at Smithfield Plains High School spoke of future plans in light of their undertaking of *Success for Boys*, and of their suggestions for prospective further action more broadly. Here, they spoke of the ways in which they might utilise funding, their desire to promote collaboration amongst staff (and other schools) and of envisaged changes to school timetabling structures that might facilitate such collaboration. In addition to indicating a desire to have greater “*interaction with other schools*”, with regard to the promotion of collaboration amongst teachers, those interviewed spoke in the following ways:

MT: ... cooperation between teachers is extremely important, knowing how other teachers are going about teaching their subject and being able to share is extremely important.

MT: ... we'll swap, you take mine for a week, I'll take yours – kids don't need to see the same teacher every day, you know, they need to get good learning and I think if you can demonstrate a unit of work that works pretty well – I've got my boys engaged doing poetry at the moment, I can't believe how much poetry they're doing, but I'd love next year to maybe do that with someone else.

It was with a view to facilitate staff collaboration and cooperation that the teachers suggested changes be made to the structure of the school day. Ideas about such changes are represented in the interview extract following:

MT: Somehow to organise the school day ... and it sounds perhaps a bit extreme but, for the first two hours, your teachers are altogether for lessons, or [discuss] 'How this is to be presented?' or 'How you're going to do that?' ... I think being able to organise together, that maybe the first two hours every day or at least three days a week, you know with your Faculty.

MT: ... let's say once a fortnight – they'd [i.e., the teachers] have a specific target in mind, like a specific focus – so let's say it would be, okay, 'How can we improve our reading comprehension?' for example. And that would be their goal and then what they'd do is they'd do things like observe each other's lessons and then give feedback. So they'd meet over coffee one morning, provide the feedback like, 'I

think this is really good, why don't you try this?' ... So that's something that is easily manageable, but it just needs, you know, a little bit of time to do it.

2.3.4.2 Boys Reflect

The boys at Smithfield Plains expressed mixed views – as might be expected – when asked to identify and discuss current issues of concern at the school during the course of the second interview. When asked, initially, to identify pertinent issues, the boys suggested the following:

MS: [There are] no [issues of concern].

MS: Yeah, sometimes [there are issues].

MS: Um, harassment [would concern the girls].

MS: ... I think things are easy.

As the interview progressed, the boys made reference to the issue of violence in the school – again with mixed perceptions of the prevalence and impact of this.

INT: About the issues – so let's just go one last time – any kinds of issues here that are a concern for you as young men in the school? No?

MS: I can't think.

...

MS: Violence.

INT: Is violence an issue here?

MS: Occasionally.

INT: Occasionally but not generally?

MS: How can you say occasionally? There's a nearly a fight every day – there's a fight nearly every day.

Finally – and of particular relevance here – when the boys were asked about their overall perceptions of the *Success for Boys* program as it had been implemented in their school, they claimed that: “*We've never been told about it*”. And while this may well have been their perception, when asked to discuss any improvements that had become apparent, the boys spoke of identifiable improvements in the behaviour and engagement of boys and of the school's behaviour management approach – as occurring within and following the timeframe of the program's implementation – in the following manner:

INT: ... So I wanted to check with you to see if ... if you can see any improvements since I was last here?

MS: *Yeah, a little bit.*

INT: *A little bit?*

MS: *Yeah, people are focusing on their tasks now.*

INT: *People are? Okay. Do you know why they might be focusing on their tasks more?*

MS: *Because it's strict now.*

INT: *Stricter? Does that work?*

MS: *Yep.*

INT: *Does stricter work here?*

MS: *Not all the time.*

2.3.4.3 Girls Reflect

Like their male counterparts, when asked about their overall perceptions of the *Success for Boys* program, the girls at Smithfield Plains indicated that they were “*not really [aware of any focus on boys]*”. That noted they spoke in relation to a range of issues – as occurring within and following the timeframe of the program’s implementation – during the course of the second interview.

It appeared, from the girls’ perspective, that the boys’ (mis)behaviours remained a point of issue. And, as evident in the interview extract below, many of the behaviours related to boys’ ‘macho’ posturing.

FS: *Yeah, the boys are still like idiots and stuff.*

FS: *Sometimes they might walk around in gangs and think they’re cool and stuff like that.*

FS: *Like 20 or 15 people will walk around the school trying to act tough.*

FS: *They show off.*

FS: *Yeah, a lot like, say if we’re like at PE or something and there’s boys in the room, they act normal – but if girls come into the room they just like show off, take their tops off and ...*

FS: *And run around being stupid and other things, they go to the teacher and try and act tough.*

FS: *Because they think it’s cool.*

INT: *They think it’s cool?*

FS: *... they’ll tease them [i.e., other boys] and then they’ll get really angry about it ... and it will put off the whole class because they are just arguing in the classroom.*

FS: Like, when they're all together, they're like – oh, there's girls – we'll show off.

Additionally, this posturing, according to the girls interviewed, was often played out at the expense of other, 'good', boys:

FS: And then sometimes there's some boys that don't think there's other boys in the class that are cool, they'll pick on them. See, they're not like them and they will do their work and

FS: Be good and stuff.

FS: Yeah, but they think they're like geeks or something and then they pick on them.

Furthermore, it seemed that misbehaving boys, boys' (mis)behaviour, had come to be part of the 'landscape' of the school – an unmistakable feature of it:

FS: If you get one boy on their own they're all right, but if you get seven boys together, they will just muck around and won't listen.

FS: Yeah exactly, well that's how it works in this school basically.

So, too, it seemed – from the girls' perspective – that there was a sense among the teachers that little could be done to address these (mis)behaviours displayed by the boys of the school.

In discussing this, the girls suggested:

FS: I think, like, some of the teachers like J, he thinks like a girl would be mucking around and he would get them back on the track, but if it was a boy that he ...

FS: He's just let them [i.e., the boys] run, he doesn't get anything from them.

FS: Yeah, but he just knows – he can see it in them that they don't want to learn and they don't want to ...

Bearing resemblance to the comments made by their male counterparts during their initial interview, the girls linked boys' (mis)behaviour with the teachers' capacity to engage students, with the curriculum area being taught and its perceived degree of difficulty/interest, and with teachers' expectations of students. For example, one student suggested: *"Sometimes people will play up and it's because they're bored with what they're doing"*. They spoke of a Music teacher at Smithfield Plains in the following way:

FS: Oh, she's our Music Teacher – but nobody mucks around with her because she has like fun lessons.

FS: Yeah, she's a good Music teacher, she's really nice and good.

FS: Yeah, she's good – everyone listens to her.

FS: I think it's because she'll just sit there and wait until everyone finishes.

FS: I think because it's a fun lesson, like because it's Music, but like if it was something like Maths where you actually have to use your brain and do things.

Additionally, they spoke of another teacher's approach – one they deemed to be successful – in the following manner:

FS: And he [i.e., the teacher] said, 'If you don't want to work, leave my classroom and, if you want to work, pay attention', or something like that.

FS: And sometimes he says, 'If you don't want to learn, just go to sleep now and I'll probably fail you'. Like, if you don't try it and work out what you're doing.

INT: Okay. So is that the attitude that most take? Is that why there's not an issue?

...

INT: Like, if you don't want to pay attention, you don't pay attention and he's only there to support those who want to support themselves?

FS: Yep.

FS: He just wants to see the ones who want to learn.

FS: He's not there to waste the time on the people that don't want to listen.

INT: That's interesting, isn't it? Does it work as a strategy?

FS: Mm.

FS: Yeah, really good.

FS: Sometimes when he says that – um, like, there's a few boys in our class – if he does that to them then they'll be quiet and then they'll probably start doing what they're told.

FS: Because it sort of makes them feel bad, the boys.

FS: And then they start to learn.

FS: And then they start to, like – Oh, we can do this – so they do it eventually.

FS: Yeah.

FS: Because they're just sitting in like their seat and, then they'd get bored with sitting there, so they'd start working.

INT: Mm. So it works as a strategy?

FS: Yep.

Finally, while the girls made note of exceptions, they spoke of the existence of positive relationships between staff and students overall. For example, as one student explained:

FS: Yeah, most teachers at this school try and get to know the students, like each and every one of them and then they know how they work and then they know how to like support them and stuff like that.

3. EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This report has detailed the findings of the research project – *Provision of services to facilitate and evaluate teachers' professional learning in working towards success for boys: A case study approach* – as funded by the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) and undertaken by researchers from the School of Education, James Cook University. Specifically, it has attended to the following – as in line with the research project's goals:

- Provided case studies of what each of the three schools (Davoren Park Primary, Northfield Primary and Smithfield High) involved in the project did by way of introducing and implementing the professional learning. In doing so, this report offers insight into the ways in which these schools worked towards improving learning outcomes for boys – and in some instances, for girls.
- * It is to be noted that what the schools “achieve(d)” in regards to this is a matter for on-going consideration and long(er) term examination.

In undertaking this project, the researchers from James Cook University organised the set up of – in each school site – a dedicated blog with the view that staff at each school site would use the blog and that the researchers would facilitate on-line learning via the blogs through questions and stimuli aimed at generating critically reflective dialogue over the course of the project. However, while this blog was established in the three schools, and despite a number of entries (inclusive of prompts for staff to participate) being posted by the JCU researchers during the initial phase of the project, staff at the schools did not actively engage with it. And while this had some impact on the ways in which the researchers could work with staff, that is to encourage and assist staff in an on-going capacity, opportunities to facilitate and direct staff engagement were optimised during on-site school visits conducted by the chief researcher at the time of undertaking interviews.

While the reports composed by the schools and submitted to DEST were not available to the JCU researchers at the time of writing this project report – and in this way serves as a limitation – the data gathered during the course of interviews with school staff and students nonetheless suggest that staff were able to ‘pick up and run with’ the project and, in doing so, ensure the project's goals were, in essence, met. As demonstrated in the interview data – and in line with what the project set out to do – the following became evident (albeit in varying ways and degrees within and across the different school sites):

- Staff at each site reflected on the program of professional learning and on changes in their thinking about boys' education. So, too, they considered where their efforts would

best be invested to produce the greatest dividends in learning outcomes and took steps towards enacting such plans. In doing so, they transformed newly acquired knowledge into educational practice.

- Staff gave consideration to the specificity of the context in which they worked and the appropriateness of strategies that they sought to implement – particularly in light of the academic and socio-emotional needs of the boys (and girls) in their respective schools.
- Staff considered and undertook the process of gathering baseline data from which to evaluate ‘success’ over the period of the program.
- Staff established communities of learners within, and in some instances across, school sites. They worked collaboratively in teams – sharing newly acquired insights, planning actions (particularly as regarding curriculum development) and trialling new plans and strategies.
- Staff proactively examined organisational structures – for example, the constraints of timetabling and an ‘over-crowded’ curriculum in the high school context and session times in the primary context. So, too, in the primary context, they harnessed human resources by way of in-servicing SSOs, for example, thus enhancing their capacity to work effectively with students.

While acknowledging the success of both this research project and the *Success for Boys* professional learning program in meeting intended aims – as is seemingly evident in the interview data collected and analysed – attention should be turned to the limitations of a short term, ‘one shot’, approach. It is argued here that a sustained effort is needed to ensure the further success of the initiatives undertaken as part of the *Success for Boys* program thus far. In view of this, and in concluding this report, one is reminded of a particularly telling comment made by a female student at Davoren Park Primary school: “*Yeah, it [i.e., Success for Boys] finished a while back, last term I think*”.

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