

# **An Evaluation of a Youth Literacy Program**

**Includes:**

**Final Report**

**Sample of Interview Questions**

**Sample of Program Documents**

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**Department: International Development Studies**

**Course Code: IDST 422**

**Course Name: Assessment of Development Projects**

**Completion Date: April 2010**

**Project ID: 965**



Trent University International Development Studies

Trent Centre for Community Based Education

Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough

# Evaluation of the Stay in School High School Program

For

The Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough

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IDST 422: Evaluation of Development Projects

Dr. Chris Beyers

April 12, 2010

We would like to thank the following individuals who were vital in this report:

Chris Beyers for his continued support, guidance and ideas;

Barb Woolner from the TCCBE for her constant enthusiasm and optimism;

Kristi McKay from the LDAP for finding time to constantly meet with us, answer our questions, schedule interviews, and so much more;

All of the tutors from the SISHS Program for their cooperation and advice; and

All the students for their candid responses and inspirational stories.

**Key Words:** Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough, learning disabilities, tutor, student, youth, high school, evaluation, attendance, relationships, LDAO, LDAP

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## **Executive Summary**

The Stay in School High School Program (SISHS Program) is a recent pilot project of the Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough. It is designed to offer youth that are struggling in high school with academic and/or social issues an alternative learning environment with personal one-to-one tutoring and support to achieve the student's academic goals. In conjunction with the Trent Centre for Community Based Education, Trent University, and the Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough, two Trent students performed an evaluation of the SISHS Program, guided by the following research questions:

1. To learn about the Program through one-to-one based tutoring with the high school students.
2. What do tutors, participants, parents and retention counsellors identify as strengths and challenges in the Program what are their suggestions for improvements?

The evaluation consisted of 18 interviews with a wide variety of individuals that were connected to the Program and weekly participant observation through volunteer tutoring in the Program. There were 4 significant themes that emerged, each including both successes and challenges.

Attendance was one major theme. While the Program has been successful in that students are attending who have not been to school in years, attendance is still fairly sporadic. Students were clear that incentives would not be an effective means to increase attendance and retention.

Tutor training was another significant theme. While all tutors had post-secondary education focused in social work or education, many tutors were not trained to work with youth with learning disabilities. Currently the Program offers no official training or orientation for tutors.

Thirdly the Program structure emerged as an issue. Students identified that they would like more time with the Program (more days per week) and we observed that there could be more students from the waiting list in the Program. However, the room is small and noisy which can be distracting for schoolwork.

Finally, student/tutor relationships are essential for Program success. The one-to-one support was unanimously agreed to be the most important of the Program. A good relationship between tutor and student can encourage attendance and retention.

Based on the evaluation, we present the following recommendation in hopes of improving and expanding this much needed Program.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **Immediate**

- Add at least 2 more students to the Program.
- Focus on building relationships between tutors and students as a primary form of retention; use incentives to further encourage attendance.
- Promote relationships/friendship between youth.
- Create a tutor manual that includes relevant information for working with youth with learning disabilities.
- Create an orientation for both tutors and participants.
- Create an initial meeting between the tutor and participant to facilitate conversations and friendship and to begin building rapport before tutoring sessions begin. Create a list of things that should be asked in the first meeting such as information tutors should try and gather about their student and their needs.
- Create a tracking sheet for goals.
- Foster better communication between tutors and coordinators.

#### **Long-Term Goals in terms of Growth of Program**

- Add more days and/or hours to the existing Program schedule.
- Utilize a larger room to accommodate more students and minimize distractions.
- Obtain staff exclusively committed to the SISHS Program.



## **Introduction**

Learning Disabilities are defined as “a variety of disorders that affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organisation, or use of verbal and/or no-verbal information” (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario website: Definitions of LDs). Learning disabilities are different from intellectual disabilities in that they only cause specific impairments in cognitive functions. Therefore, learning disabilities affect only certain essential learning processes such as reading, mathematics, and written or oral language. Approximately, 5-10 % of Canadians have some form of a learning disability; they can vary in levels of severity (LDAO website: Definition of LDs).

The Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough (the LDAP), a chapter of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, is a non-profit organization that strives to meet the needs of individuals and their families that are affected by learning disabilities. The LDAP has added a program to their services for high school students that are struggling with academics. The program offers one-to-one tutoring and support to work towards students’ academic and personal achievement. This Stay in School High School Program is a pilot project that began in the early months of 2009. It is within this context that the LDAP put forth a proposal for an evaluation of the program to discover its strengths, limitations, and if it is effective in meeting students’ needs.

This report, in conjunction with the LDAP and the Trent Centre for Community Based Education, attempts to explore the success and challenges of the SISHS Program through the following research questions:

1. To learn about the Program and its beneficiaries through participating in the provision of one-to-one tutoring with the high school students.
2. To determine what tutors, participants, parents, and retention counsellors identify as successes and challenges of the Program and what their suggestions for improvements are.

We hope this report will give the LDAP some insight and information about this important Program. Our hope is that the Program continues to grow and help many more struggling

students achieve their academic and personal goals. Though working with youth was an interest of ours before we started this evaluation, we have both become passionate about the Program and believe in its potential to meet the needs of many students that are in need of an alternative learning environment.

## **Background**

The Learning Disabilities Association is a Canadian charitable organization that has three separate levels – national, provincial, and local. There are 10 provincial and 2 territorial associations. There are approximately 10,000 members across Canada, 4800 in Ontario alone (Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough: History).

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario is the provincial chapter of the LDA. Its mission statement is “to provide leadership in learning disabilities advocacy, research, education and services and to advance the full participation of children, youth and adults with learning disabilities in today’s society.” (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario website: About LDAO) The LDAO offers current resources and online courses as well as supports ongoing research of learning disabilities.

The Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough is one of 21 local chapters of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario. The LDAP serves the city and county of Peterborough, the Municipality of Clarington, Northumberland County, and the city of Kwartha Lakes. Established in 1976 as a registered charitable organization, their mission statement is to be “...committed to the development of a community in which persons with learning disabilities in Peterborough and Area are enabled to realize their full potential” (Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough: About Us). The LDAP receives funding from the United Way, special program grants from organizations like the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and donations from private citizens. Located at 159 King Street in Peterborough, the LDAP serves over 4,000 individuals each year (Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough: History).

The LDAP offers services and programs for individuals and their families as well as all forms of service providers who might encounter, work with, or are affected by learning disabilities. For example, the Parenting a Child with Learning Disabilities or ADHD is a course “to assist parents’ understanding of their child’s learning challenges, rights and responsibilities, and parenting

strategies” while the Job Fit program is “a comprehensive preparedness program designed to address the needs and challenges of unemployed adults with suspected learning disabilities who are currently receiving Ontario Works or ODSP benefits” (Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough Informational Pamphlet).

The Stay in School High School Program is a pilot program of the LDAP. Established in February of 2009, it was created out of a need that was presented by a retention counsellor with the school board, Rick Heffner. The Program completed its third session during our evaluation. The Program is, “(f)or high school students struggling with academic, personal, and/or social difficulties. We provide an alternative learning environment with one-to-one tutoring support to work towards academic credit achievement, self-advocacy skills and fostering recognition of academic potential and personal goals,” (Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough Informational Pamphlet). Therefore, the Program accepts a wide variety of youth that may or may not be attending high school, that may or may not have a learning disability, and with a variety of academic, social, and personal issues. The Program currently operates Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon every week from 1 to 4 pm. All students receive a personal tutor to personally support them; students and tutors spend their time together working on the student’s academic goals, whether it is credit completion or simply working towards better reading comprehension. There have been approximately 12 students in the Program and there are currently five on the waiting list.

## **Methodology**

### **Methodological Approach**

Because the LDAP requested an evaluation of the pilot SISHS Program to discover its current strengths and challenges, our evaluation would be formative rather than summative (Stake, 2004, 17). A formative evaluation “is especially appropriate for developing, innovative, or changing programs where the focus is on program improvement, facilitating more effective implementation, and exploring a variety of effects on participants,” (Patton, 1991, 53).

The small and fairly novel nature of the Program created limitations in the types of data collection we considered when we first approached the subject. Any type of quantitative data appeared difficult to obtain. As the Program had only been in existence for 2 prior “sessions” of

3 to 4 months each before our evaluation began, statistics on past participant demographics, success, or challenges would be limited. Additionally, due to space and the fact it was still a pilot project, the Program had only a handful of participants, quantitative data collection methods such as questionnaires was thus effectively pointless. Therefore, qualitative data was our main source of information.

In a way, part of our methodology was pre-determined for us. As part of the proposal for an evaluation by the LDAP and the subsequent Placement Agreement between the LDAP and ourselves, we agreed to become tutors in the Program. Therefore participant observation was to be a primary method of data collection; our second form would then be interviews.

Our methodology also evolved as we began participating in the Program and realizing other factors and limitations. We quickly became conscious of the fact that restricting our interviews to only students would be too narrow and limiting in scope. First, because of the very small number of participants and secondly because we realized that other individuals may offer critical and essential insight into the Program and other aspects of the Program that participants might not consider or know about. Therefore, our scope of informants quickly broadened from participants to include tutors, parents, retention counsellors, and other community figures. This variety of informants all offered different viewpoints and engagement with the Program and helped to ensure that no crucial aspect, component, or analysis was overlooked.

The combination of participant observation and interviews complimented each other. We used the insight and familiarity of the Program through our participant observation to form insightful and relevant interview questions. Hence, our evaluation had an inductive approach; we noted specific observations that we explored and used them to derive general themes and patterns (Patton, 1999, 44). We also used interviews to verify or discount any observations, ideas, or feelings we had noticed during our participant observation. For example, if we found a frustrating aspect of the Program while tutoring, we would incorporate that observation in the interview questions with other tutors as a "check" to discover if the issue was relevant and common or simply a personal experience.

Finally, the further into our evaluation we got, the more we realized that an evaluation of the SISHS Program would have to take a holistic approach – “...the whole is understood as a complex system that is greater than the sum of its parts” (Patton, 49). We realized that many key themes and ideas we were discovering were inter-dependent; often, one could not be considered without the other. Therefore, we would not be able to simply focus on just one aspect or idea; we would have to consider everything.

### **Participant Observation**

As part of the Project Agreement, we volunteered as tutors for the SISHS Program. The Program ran every Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon from 1 to 4 pm. Amber tutored Tuesdays and Bethany on Wednesdays. Therefore, while it was only a combined total of 6 hours a week, we attempted to maximize all possible time as tutors to aid in our participant observation. Being on separate days also allowed us to note any differences between days (such as attendance, room atmosphere, etc...) and to confirm or discount any personal observations we had experienced individually.

Participant observation offers several advantages over data collection methods such as simply observing or literature reviews. Patton illustrates that actively participating in a program gives the evaluator a broader and more in-depth understanding of a program and its functions; an opportunity to discover things that may be overlooked by others, and to learn about things that are beyond the perceptions and topics of informants in interviews (Patton, 1999, 204-205).

We believe our participant observation in the Program by being tutors was crucial in our evaluation. As participants we gained first-hand experience in many aspects of the Program: orientation/training of tutors, tutor/students relationships, attendance, room atmosphere, new student intake, students leaving the program, etc...As mentioned above, this experience then allowed us to create relevant and insightful interview questions to gather opinions rather than simply using interviews to understand the logistics of the Program.

We spent the first two weeks of our evaluation simply participating as tutors so that we could learn and observe as much of the Program as possible. We also had many informal questions and interviews with tutors and students to understand any aspect of the Program we still

weren't familiar with. Themes, successes, and challenges quickly emerged from that short period of time. We drew from these observations while creating our interview questions.

Additionally, as the weeks progressed, small structural changes were introduced into the Program such as a communication binder for tutors or incentives for students to encourage attendance. Our participation as tutors allowed us to examine the introduction of these changes and measure their success or impact on the Program in the following weeks.

## **Interviews**

The second form of our data collection was through interviews. We conducted interviews with a variety of stakeholders, beneficiaries, and other individuals that were related or involved with the Program. In total, we conducted 18 interviews with the following individuals: 6 tutors, 4 students, 4 parents, 2 retention counsellors, the coordinator of the Program, and a community member. Most interviews were completed in person with either one or both of the interviewers present. However, two of the parent interviews were completed over the phone due to conflict of schedules. Our interviews were semi-structured; we had set questions and specific information we were interested in obtaining but as interviewers we also had the freedom to digress and probe beyond the standardized questions (Berg, 2001, 70.)

We used a strategic method in the planning, creation, and implementation of our interview process. First, we used our observations obtained through tutoring to create relevant questions. Therefore, what we noticed as trends were incorporated into our questions. However, we also used many open-ended questions to ensure we didn't limit informant responses to just our observations. Additionally, we incorporated new themes and ideas that arose from interviews in the early weeks into interview questions that we posed later in our data collection period. Thus, our interviews and participant observation served to verify any issues resulting from one method or the other.

Secondly, due to our wide variety of informants (tutors, students, parents, etc.), we create several personalized sets of interview questions; one set for each type of informant. Please see Appendix A to F for all interview questions. We attempted to use appropriate language for interview questions depending on the type of informant we were interviewing (Berg, 2001, 70). Therefore, the language and vocabulary in interview questions with students was very different

than that in the interview questions for retention counsellors. We also had the opportunity to test our questions for students on one participant before the others. This interview proved to be unproductive and uninformative because, we realized, the questions and structure were too formal. We thus altered our interviewing technique for the remaining students. We changed the format to make it much more informal; taking a more conversational approach. We also decided that, unlike some of the prior interviews, we would conduct the interview with only one interviewer present; usually the person who had been the student's tutor. Therefore, we used the relationship already established through tutoring to create an atmosphere of comfort, honesty, and safety for the student. Finally, we identified the major themes or issues we wanted to cover in an interview and then wrote subsequent questions. We organized the questions into an order that would trigger subsequent thoughts and flow from one topic to the next (Berg, 2001, 74).

Thirdly, we scheduled interviews with different informants depending on the stage of our data collection. For example, we interviewed tutors first because we had recently become tutors and were becoming fairly familiar with the tutor process and perspective. We started to interview students and parents as we became increasingly familiar with the program and were developing relationships and rapport with the students. We interviewed the Program Coordinator so we could learn her opinion on some of our primary findings. Also, we used the interviews to learn any basic information about the Program we hadn't yet discovered or didn't understand.

### **Limitations**

Our research sample presented many restrictions. Although we interviewed many individuals who were in contact with the Program, it still only amounted to 18 people. Furthermore, there were only a few individuals, if not only one, in each of the different groups we interviewed (parents, students, retention counsellors). This makes any type of generalization about these groups very difficult. Finally, we recognize that we were only able to interview the students that are currently attending the Program on a regular basis. All past participants that have stopped or left the Program for whatever reason may offer very different insight or opinions of the Program, its functions, and its effectiveness.

Methodologically, we also faced some restrictions. Due to the nature of the Program, interviewing the students and analyzing their responses was a sensitive process for two reasons. First, because most of the students are under 18 years of age, we had to obtain parental consent to interview them. Secondly, we made much effort to ensure that participants' identities were confidential and anonymous. Another issue was that due to limited space at the LDAP, we often did not have a private space/room to conduct the interviews. Depending on who was in proximity during the interview, this may have affected some of the answers we received. Furthermore, because any external interview was scheduled through the LDAP and not personally, there was often a conflict of schedules that resulted in only one interviewer able to be present. We were also only able to interview students and tutors during scheduled Program time which deducted from tutoring time and participant observation. Finally, while we appreciated and understood the reasons that our interview questions were to be reviewed by the LDAP before interviews, we felt that this sometimes deterred us from posing the questions and themes we were trying to ask, discover, and understand.

## **Findings-Discussion-Recommendations**

### **Introduction**

The following findings evolved out of interviews and participant observation. They answer the research question, "what do tutors, participants, teachers, parents and retention counsellors identify as the successes and challenges in the program and what are their suggestions for improvements?" In order to answer this question the findings are divided into four themes. Attendance, Tutor/Participant Relationships, Training and Structure, within each section there are findings related to the theme. Each Section also includes a discussion, recommendations and a re-cap of strengths and challenges.

### **Section 1: Attendance**

In a program such as this one, that targets students with, "academic, personal and/or social difficulties" (Learning Disability of Peterborough Informational Pamphlet) as well as many students who have had attendance issues at school, it is inevitable to run into problems with attendance. The following findings highlight the success in retaining some students as well as the struggle in retaining others. This section also provides suggestions for the retention of students, including incentives and building relationships.



## Strengths of Attendance

### *Students*

Three out of four of the students that are currently participating in the Program have not attended high school for up to three years. Students have been kicked out, could not function in school due to their learning disability, or had not attended/registered in school because of health issues due to their disability. One student said that if they were not enrolled in the SISHS Program, they would not be going to school at all. Another student said that the Program "is my last resort and I want to get my education". Students also said that they enjoyed coming to the program because it was different from high school and that they receive more help at the Program. Three out of four of the students are not attending high school at the moment but they are attending the Program on a regular basis. If they have not come it has been for legitimate reasons or related to their learning disability. It is a real accomplishment of this program to be successfully engaging three students that have not been in school or doing any form of education in recent previous years.

### Challenges with Attendance

Attendance of students over the last one and a half years that this program has been offered has been inconsistent and sporadic. Recently it has been improving, with four students consistently attending out of five, but the history of the program reveals a trend of irregular attendance. This was revealed through statistics provided by the Program as well as participant observation.

### *Statistics*

Referring to Appendix I, between the Winter and Fall 2009 sessions, 8 students were enrolled in the Program at one point. Only one of these students attended 100% of the time available. Two of the participants came to less than half of their sessions at the program; the rest of the students only attended 60% of the time. Information for the Winter 2010 session was unavailable but participant observation was useful in revealing the current trend.

### *Participant Observation*

There were many tutoring sessions throughout our time at the program where there was only one participant and at least three tutors in the room. At least three times during our evaluation we left early because we our students did not come. It was reported in Section 1 that 4 of the

current students had relatively steady attendance. Yet even within this steady group, often at least one was absent. This meant that there were usually more tutors in the room than students. This also meant that there was usually room for additional students from the waiting list that could have been participating in the program in each time slot.

### *Interviews*

5 of 6 tutors stated that attendance was a challenge of the Program. One tutor said that one of the greatest challenges of this Program is "getting and keeping the kids...there are so many factors that influence whether or not they come to the program". Another said, "attendance is bad and there are too many new people coming and going" while another commented that motivating the students to come is difficult. One tutor said that many do not attend high school on a regular basis so they have problems attending the program on a regular basis. She suggested that the laid back nature of the program may be helpful in retaining the students.

In our interview with Kristi McKay, the Program Coordinator, we asked about challenges of the Program. She stated that attendance in the past used to be a significant issue however attendance is much better with the current group of students.

During our interview with retention counselor Rick Heffner he stated that the biggest challenge is retention of participants and "managing numbers"; knowing how many students will be coming on a regular basis so that the program will be running at full capacity and as many students are benefitting from the Program as possible.

#### *Incentives as a suggestion to help with attendance*

Coordinator Kristi McKay has been working on methods to increase the attendance and retention of students in the Program, including incentives like gift certificates or paying for bus passes. She asked us to investigate whether or not incentives (like gift certificates) would factor into the students decision to attend the program. The result was unanimous that they are not a motivating factor in attending or retaining the students.

### *Students*

When asked about incentives as initiatives to attend the Program, one student said, "I would come anyways." Another student stated, "it would be a bonus but I am coming to learn." The two other students said it would be, "something to look forward to," yet neither of them said

that it would entice them to come more often. One continued that a mall certificate would be "OK". The overall reaction to this question was that incentives would be a bonus but would not be a reason for attending.

### *Participant Observation*

One student told us that they would not be able to come to the Program without the bus pass that the Program provides for him. Both retention counsellors also indicated that a lack of transportation is a hindrance to attendance as many of the students do not have cars or the money for a bus pass. The program has been providing bus passes to those who need it.

### *Relationships as a Form of Retention*

In our interviews with both retention counsellors and Carlo Rapponi (a youth worker at the Bridge Youth Centre, who has been working with youth of a similar demographic for 10 years), building a relationship with the participant was identified as fundamental to the retention of students in a program such as this. When asked what makes a tutor most effective, Rick Heffner (a retention counsellor) said to "build a relationship with them...know the student that you are working with, where they are coming from and what their emotional level is at." He said that, "building a relationship with the student makes them trust you...without a relationship it is really difficult to retain students". Another retention counsellor we interviewed said that often there is no support or encouragement at home and that this organization has the potential to fill that void. She suggested that calling earlier in the day to remind them to come might be a way to show that the program cares. She also said that creating a personal connection with students is important. There is a need to make them, "feel a part of something". Carlo Rapponi said, "relationships are key to retaining the youth...they will come because you asked them to...a caring person and a person that affirms them, this will make them want to come back but this is never a guarantee".

### *Discussion*

This program is working with a certain demographic of youth that have a multiplicity of problems. This fact is recognized within the description of the program. The description of the program indicated that they are not working solely with youth that are struggling academically but also with youth that are struggling with personal and/or social difficulties (see Appendix G). When asking the retention counsellors what common themes they find in the youth that are

dropping out of school, they listed very similar ones and also said that they interconnect and feed into one another:

- Learning disabilities
- Poverty
- Single parents
- Parenting skills
- Mental health
- Low self esteem
- Opposition to authority
- Dynamics in a classroom
- Bullying
- Enrolled in an academic level
- Substance abuse

In our interviews with the students, many of these factors were mentioned as reasons for dropping out of school. Since these are factors that contribute to truancy in high school, they will also be factors that contribute to insufficient attendance at the SISHS program. Therefore the Program should be prepared to adopt strategies that address these issues. The most effective way to help is to go deeper than just offering educational help; if educational help was all that they needed they would probably still be in school. Most of the students in the program need guidance, relationships, role models and mentors in their lives so not only can they get through high school but also achieve life goals beyond high school.

Current students in the program have a very strong drive to finish high school but not all students will have a similar drive when entering this program. Although there was not strong support for incentives by these three students, it does not mean that future students would or would not come because of incentives. However what these findings suggest is that incentives are only a part of encouraging students to attend. The foundation seems to be quality of relationship as these relationships create an environment that makes students want to come back.

In a study done on how to prevent high-risk youth from dropping out of school a recurrent theme in successful programs was to, "personalize the high school experience for at-risk students, with an expectation that increasing attachments to valued adults in the school" (Fashola and Slavin, 1998, 161) will be a factor in their return. The article goes on to suggest that mentoring and counselling relationships are effective in the prevention of dropping out as well (Fashola and Slavin, 1998, 161). Although the article is addressing preventions within the school, this is still very applicable to this Program as it is trying to prevent students dropping out of an academic program as well. Successful programs also; addressed the student's lack of problem solving skills and social skills, they provided bonding activities for the students and offered frequent teacher feedback to parents and students (Fashola and Slavin, 1998, 166).

One retention counsellor said that the SISHS Program may be a student's last resort. It may have happened that the student has failed other educational endeavours before arriving at the program and are on the verge of giving up. Retention counsellors said that the more times a student fails to succeed in an academic setting the more likely they are of giving up on education completely. The Program then has the responsibility to do everything that it can to engage these students. For the three students that are not attending high school, the SISH Program is doing just that. The Program is fulfilling the needs of the students that the schools were not able to fill. The program is providing one-to-one help and the students are comfortable coming to the Program but for other students that have been enrolled in the Program, the SISH Program has not been able to meet these needs and students have 'failed' another academic experience. It could be that the difference between youth that have stayed and youth that have not stayed is the amount of motivation. It may be wise for the program to identify what type of youth they are planning on having in the program so that a relevant retention strategy can be employed. Youth that are choosing to be at the Program strictly for extra tutoring and academic help will have different needs and the program can therefore focus on academics. But the way the program is progressing it must become more than an academic program to be fully successful. Attendance will likely continue to be a problem and the strategy to retain the students will have to be more holistically fashioned. Carlo explained that, "understanding the psychology of marginalized youth is important in understanding an

effective approach". The Program needs to ask what the psychology of the youth in this program is.

There are always going to be problems with attendance in this program as many youth will be working through issues of commitment but here are a few recommendations that might work to alleviate this problem:

**Build More Connected Relationships Between Students and Tutors:** Because the program is working with students in need of good mentors, the program should emphasise relationships as a form of retention over incentives. Incentives can be used but only as part of a larger strategy that uses relationship as a base.

**Encourage development of relationships between students:** Many of the students coming to the program do not have a lot of friends because they are not in school. This program could be a place that not only creates relationships between tutors and students but also between students. With the possible creation of healthy friendships at the Program, this may become a motivating factor in attendance. Students may be more likely to come if they have good friends there. The Program would have to be intentional about promoting friendships between participants. This could be a place where they can bond with other students with learning disabilities who are also working through similar issues. Kristi and the tutors have already witnessed the beginning of friendships between participants this session. It has been proven that students that participate in group discussions and have similar backgrounds are able to counsel, mentor and encourage one another effectively (Augustynaik et al., 2009, 327). A recommendation would be to facilitate a safe place that encourages students to talk about their learning disabilities, share common experiences, and encourage one another in order to create friendships between students.

A Practical issue with attendance is managing numbers. There was never a day when we attended the program that more than three out of six computers were in use. Given that there is a waiting list of 5 students, this issue could be addressed simply by adding a few more students to the program from the waiting list.

## Re-Cap Strengths

- Successful engagement and commitment of some students not attending high school

## Challenges

- Retention of students
- Managing Numbers

## Recommendations

- Add at least 2 more students to the Program
- Focus on building relationships between tutors and students as a form of retention; use incentives as encouragements.
- Promote relationships between youth.

## Section 2: Tutor/Participant Relationships

The next group of findings begins by identifying the unanimous agreement of all informants that one-to-one tutoring is a prominent strength of the program. The subsequent findings in this section evaluate the degrees to which tutors and students know one another.

### One-to-one tutoring

The major component that sets this Program apart from others is the one-to-one tutoring and support. As mentioned earlier, a main reason that many of the participants have left school is because of the lack of personal support from school. For many people with a learning disability, one-to-one support is crucial in their academic growth as well as self-esteem. All parents and students said the one-to-one support was the main strength of the Program. One student and two parents said the Program offers the type of support the student needed in high school, yet did not receive.

### Multiple Tutors for One Student

All tutors listed multiple students when asked who they tutor. Additionally, most students did not know who their primary tutor was; they listed multiple tutors. During the time period of our evaluation, this changed: all tutors were assigned one student they were to work with, possibly

two during two different time slots. When asked to describe their relationship with those they tutor, 4 of 6 tutors expressed a desire to, as one tutor put it: "build a personal relationship with the student so that they can access me." One tutor expressed the desire to "develop a relationship", and another said "I hope to build a relationship with him." Yet none of the students seemed to know their tutor beyond a superficial basis.

We both tutored almost every participant at one time or another. We often found it confusing, moving from one student to the next, all with very different needs. It is very difficult to work well and understand someone's learning disability when tutors are constantly changing. There was often not enough time to build a relationship with the participant. It can also be embarrassing for both students and tutors if tutors are unaware of a new student's needs, strengths, and skills that need improvement. For example, on one occasion, Amber let a student read out loud from a book that was beyond that student's reading level for almost 5 minutes before realizing the student was struggling and obviously embarrassed.

#### Learning Disabilities

When the tutors were asked whether or not they knew their students' learning disability, only 1 tutor said that they knew their student had ADHD and only knew this by reading the student's file. The rest of the tutors did not know much about their students other than what other tutors or the coordinator had told them. During our time as tutors, we never knew what learning disabilities our students had. We often needed 2 or 3 meetings with a student before we discovered the most effective way of helping them. In an interview, one parent strongly stressed that tutors need to know their students' learning disability in order to effectively help them.

#### Goals

We asked all of the students what they hoped to achieve during their time at the Program and each one was able to tell us their goals. Two of the students want to complete all of their credits in order to graduate. Since both of these students have not been in school for a few years, the number of credits that they need to complete is quite large. Another student had a specific goal of completing four credits while another had the simple goal of improving their reading skills. Although each one of the students had goals for themselves, it seemed as though they had never told anyone at the program what they were. One student explained that we



were the first to ask her what her goals were. When asked if they thought they would meet these goals, all students said yes.

As tutors in the program, it was never communicated that we should ask the goals of the students. All of the tutors were asked whether or not they thought the needs and goals of the participants were being met. The answers revealed that they did not know any specific goals of the students. A new tutor said, "I do not know the accomplishments or failures of my students so I have nothing to measure against." Another, who has been here longer, answered, "I do not know the goals of my students but I think we are meeting them." The rest of the responses were general and did not indicate whether or not they knew the participants' goals. It was also found that 5 out of the 6 tutors expressed at one point in the interview a desire to know the goals, strengths and weaknesses of the participants, further indicating that they were unfamiliar with this information.

It was also stated that this lack of knowledge has made tutoring more difficult. One tutor stated that, "we need to have bench marks to mark a students' progress." Another tutor articulated that an initial meeting between the participants and tutors to begin a relationship would be very helpful. Another expressed that she wants to know the, "strengths and weaknesses in order to know [the participants] better so we can know how to work with them better." And another tutor said, "I understand privacy issues but I want to know my students learning disability and information in general so I can better help my students."

### Discussion

The findings in this section highlights that everyone finds one-to-one tutoring to be strength of the program. One-to-one tutoring is able to address educational concerns due to learning disabilities. One-to-one tutors offer individualized help that is specific to every student which entails that tutors will be able to better help their students because they can teach in a manner that is most appropriate to the student. One-to-One is also vital in creating relationships. If the relationship is one of trust and friendship, it can also help students grow socially and personally, as they develop trust and gain encouragement and advice from their tutors. One-to-one tutoring addresses both the academic and psychological aspects of students and therefore helps students grow in both areas as well.

Although there is one to one in the program, this section identified many gaps within the program that are hindering some of the positive outcomes and impacts of one-to-one support.

The findings show that there is a disconnect between the tutor and the students. Interviews with both the students and the tutors revealed that there are not strong relationships built between particular tutors and students. Rather, tutors know many students on a “surface” level and vice versa. Students that had been there for a year still could not name their tutor. The change in the middle of this session to specific tutors with specific students has not been successful because many students were still not able to identify their tutors. This change illustrates that the Program recognizes that a constant steady tutor/student relationship is important.

Given the fact that there were not set student/tutor partners, it is not surprising that none of the tutors know the students’ learning disabilities. Although privacy issues were mentioned, it is not an excuse for tutors to not know their students learning disabilities. In order to fulfill the mandate of promoting self advocacy, time is needed for students and tutors to talk about how the student struggles in school and what form of help they need from a tutor. This time needs to be put right into the structure of the program and be part of the tutor’s duties. Students were very open and willing to talk during our interviews. Therefore, it is likely they would share this information to tutors if they were simply asked.

Lastly, goals are a very important part of the program and student success. The Program description includes student recognition and achievement of goals. However, our findings revealed that students knew their goals and believed that they could achieve them but that tutors often did not know what those goals were. This lack of knowledge is a serious hindrance to goals actually being met. Again, this problem could simply be remedied by tutors sitting down with the students and thinking together realistically of goals that both the tutor and the student believe are achievable and work towards them together. It could be as simple as creating a sheet that the tutors and students could fill in together, made a regular part of the tutors duties. Many students have had negative experiences at school and have not been able to have many academic achievements. If goals were defined and reached, this program could be the first place that many of these students feel successful – a possible moment of realization and power.

This section also revealed that although tutors did not know vital things about their students, most of them expressed a desire to know, and recognized that a relationship and knowledge of students' learning disabilities and their goals are of vital importance. This means that the real link that is missing is not the desire for tutors to get to know these students but the structure to encourage the exchange of knowledge between the student and tutor. Thankfully a simple and inexpensive way to mend this problem is available. We believe that an official meeting between the student and tutor and, laying aside the first session to be a meeting and a 'get to know' session for the students and tutors could officially begin that relationship. In that meeting tutors could find out ways that the students learn best as well as the participants' goals. Although a step in the right direction, the communication binder only tracks academic progress; there is no incorporation of how this progress relates to goal achievement.

#### Re-Cap

##### Strengths:

- One-to-one tutoring is a real strength of the program and needs to be protected and continued as a vital part of the program.
- Tutors express a desire to know their students better, their goals and their learning disabilities.
- Issues like the disorganization of students and tutors is being addressed through the communication binder and the making of a schedule to address the issue of multiple tutors per student

##### Weakness:

- Although there are changes being made and a desire by the tutors to get to know their students, the Program is lacking the structure to encourage these personal relationships
- Tutors do not know the learning disabilities of the students
- Tutors do not know the goals of the students

##### Recommendations

- Create an initial meeting between the tutor and participant to facilitate conversations and friendship and to begin building rapport before beginning academics. Create a list of

things about their student and their needs that should be asked by the tutors in the first meeting.

- Create a tracking sheet for student goals.

### Section 3: Training

#### *Participant Observation*

Our experience as tutors in the Program has enabled us to have personal insight into the training process that tutors receive. When we arrived, we were given a short description of the program and given some informational pamphlets about learning disabilities. We observed a tutoring session to gain insight into tutor roles and responsibilities. However, there was only one student present, making any real learning through observation difficult. Other than the pamphlets we received, we did not feel prepared to be working with youth with learning disabilities. We did not know the best methods of understanding someone's learning disabilities or even what was expected of us or of them. It was a very informal process and it felt very unorganized. Neither of us felt very prepared when we began our first day tutoring.

#### *Tutor Interviews*

When asked whether they received any orientation to the Program, four of the tutors who had worked or are still working at the CFLD program mentioned that their training was from the CFLD Program; "we did a walkthrough of the program, but I already knew the software." Another tutor said she was mentored by a Head Tutor at the CFLD program. One tutor said she had a very informal introduction to the Program, similar to ours. Yet another tutor said she had no orientation, it is more, "learn as we go". Jamie, a tutor, said, "tutors should know they are working with youth that do not have the same way of learning, tutors should know to slow down. They need to learn skills ...there needs to be a tutor binder." Although 4 out of 6 of the tutors said they received an orientation from CFLD program, all 4 also indicated that the training from the CFLD program was not relevant in the SISHS Program. A tutor in both programs said the high school program would, "not use the same strategies with CFLD..."; she suggested that we have a training manual specific to youth.

All of the tutors are university students wanting to become teachers or college students attaining a social work diploma. The tutors are educated and good candidates to work with

youth but their past experiences were not ideal in terms of providing relevant training. One had worked at Big Brother Big Sister, one at Children's Services. But the rest all had experience with children with disabilities, or in classrooms. The tutors thus demonstrated potential, but would provide better tutoring services if they had improved and expanded training.

#### Discussion

The CFLD has a focus on learning disabilities in children and using assistive software to compensate for learning disabilities. The description of CFLD is, "a year round program that aims to address the individual needs of the students in grades 1 to 10 struggling with reading and writing difficulties. One-to-one instruction and the use of and/or training in Assistive Technology software" (LDAP Informational Pamphlet). In contrast, the description of the SISHS Program focuses on working with youth that have personal and social issues as well as working with them on, "self-advocacy, fostering recognition of academic potential and personal goals" (LDAP Informational Pamphlet). Therefore the tutor binder of the CFLD may only be applicable in the SISHS Program in a section on learning disabilities. The Program also recognizes that there is a lack of training and thus have begun creating a tutor binder. The binder should include what the program's goals are and outline specifically the roles of the tutors and what is expected of them. There should also be a section that addresses youth with learning disabilities, and also addresses how to build rapport with your student.

It may be effective to couple the training manual with a group orientation to begin each year. This will make the process much more structured and will make the tutors feel involved and included. The findings also revealed that the head tutors felt more prepared and knew more about the program; the newer the tutor, the more disconnected they felt from what was happening. Increased communication between the head tutors and volunteer tutors may help the new tutors feel more orientated.

#### Re-Cap

##### Strengths:

- The start of the tutor manual.
- The great potential for more tutors from Trent and Fleming.

##### Challenges

- Lack of focused, structured training and orientation for tutors.

#### Recommendation

- Create a tutor manual that includes relevant information about working with youth, learning disabilities, building rapport, and tutor roles and responsibilities.
- Create an orientation for tutors to ensure they feel informed, engaged, and prepared to tutor youth with learning disabilities
- Foster better communication between tutors and coordinators

#### *A need in the community*

The SISHS Program was created out of a need that retention counsellor, Rick Heffner, presented to Kristi at the LDAP: he had a handful of students that had no success with other programs in Peterborough. Supporting this, multiple informants expressed that the SISHS Program is a needed part of the community. Many parents and students illustrated that the school system was not accommodating of their learning disabilities and the Program was a welcome alternative.

#### *Students*

Three of the students that are currently not attending high school all have similar stories about their disappointment with the way they were treated in high school.

For the one student, school was a very stressful place due to its social settings. The school environment was not a place that the student could succeed so they began not attending school. It was a year before the school responded with an alternative.

Another student said that they were treated like, “trash” because of the part of the city they were from. The student said that they were continually kicked out of school and so decided they did not want go back. At one point in elementary school, the student had an Educational Assistant (EA) which aided with the student’s learning disability. However, when they entered high school, they were not provided with an EA. Between loss of an EA and social stressors, the student left high school.

The final student said that they had left school because of lack of accommodation to their learning disability. The student could not take notes fast enough and often became frustrated.

The only solution the school offered was to let them take one less course and for the last class each day, they placed him in special-education. The student expressed to us that this was a humiliating experience and it contributed to their decision to leave school.

All of these students were unable to fit into a typical school setting because of social and/or learning disabilities. In all cases, the schools were not accommodating and it often took years before the student found a successful learning alternative.

### *Parents*

All four of the parents referred to high school as a difficult place to deal with for their child. They felt the schools were uncooperative with their children and their learning disability. Most of the parents wished there had been earlier contact between the schools and the program. In fact, a suggestion to the Program by one parent was to have increased communication with the school board; they wished there had been more immediate action by the school and that they had heard about the program sooner. One parent said that the high school was judgmental and is really hard for some students and that there are not enough educational assistants. Another parent expressed that when trying to get help for her child and their disability, she was very disappointed in the school board because they were not getting the support that was needed. She also stated that, "this program is a wonderful resource...it is so lacking everywhere else...this program is so needed." Another parent said that the school did not understand her child's needs. All of the parents mentioned how thankful they were for this alternative.

Currently, the program has five students enrolled and another five on the waiting list. Information will continue to spread about the SISHS Program throughout the Peterborough community. Kristi mentioned in our interview that recently at a meeting where many different members of the community attended, there was an overwhelming positive response for the SISHS Program.

### **Section 4: Structural**

#### **Suggestion for More Days and Hours a Week**

Taking into account the growing interest in the Program, we have observed that the resources and time currently available to it are not enough to make it grow and succeed. Along with the overwhelmingly positive feedback for the program, there was also a request from all of the

parents and students for more days and hours a week of tutor help. One parent said that their child is not able to work as well at home as at the Program. More training time would also help meet the goals of each one of the students in a more timely manner. Two of the participants are 18 years old and they both expressed desires to graduate as soon as possible so that they can find jobs or possibly move on to future education. With only two days a week, three hours a day; their goals will not be realized very quickly. For students who depend solely on this program for their education, expanding times and days a week should be a consideration of the LDAP. In our interview, Kristi expressed a desire for this to happen but lack of resources presents a challenge.

#### Time Commitment

A lack of time commitment to the program was seen as hindrance to the Programs growth.

#### *Participant observation and interview with Kristi*

Kristi McKay is not only running the pilot project for the Stay in School High School Program but is also running her original project which she has worked very hard to improve and grow. The CFLD program has at least 60 participants as well as a large summer program. Kristi is solely in charge of recruiting tutors, enrolling participants, doing the reviews, and creating reports for funding. Now she is responsible for these tasks for both Programs. For an employee that is not full time, this could present a difficult challenge. The head tutors who have paid positions are also splitting their time between the two programs. We both observed that tutors who work in both the SISHS Program and CFLD would often work on their CFLD materials during SISHS scheduled time.

#### Money

As in every non-governmental organization money is a major inhibitor to the growth of the Program. Due to the lack of constant and reliable funding the Program is always unsure about how long they will be able to offer their services.

#### Room Size

During our interviews, two students complained that the room was too noisy and that it was very difficult to concentrate and read. Three tutors in our interviews also recognized this. When asked about challenges of the Programs, one tutor mentioned that the noise level was too loud. Another tutor said that, "it was a hard room to be in because it is noisy...it must be hard to



concentrate for students with ADHD". Retention Counsellor Rick Heffner mentioned space as a constraint in the program. Participant observation, especially on Tuesdays, showed that the last hour of the program when tutors were preparing for the CFLD program the noise increases substantially. Half way through the Winter 2010 session, Kristi recognized this problem and instituted a rule that only the head tutor and those tutoring the students were allowed in the room. Before this rule was created, many tutors were in the room preparing for the CFLD program and talking amongst themselves. The room is very small and it is hard not to listen to other people's conversations. Although there has been a slight change in the noise level in the room, it is still distracting with tutors joking around with the students. The noise level of the room is already distracting with only three tutors in the room. If all six of the computers were full then the room may become way too distracting because of how small it is.

#### Organization and Communication

Both retention counsellors commented in their interviews how happy they were with Kristi's communication with them about student progress. Two parents also commented on how helpful and supportive Kristi is. One parent said that Kristi really tries to understand her child and work with his learning disability. Her organization and communication is also illustrated through her intake package (see Appendix H). Every 7 weeks, Kristi also reviews the student's attendance and progress. If need be, she communicates with the retention counsellors and parents.

#### Discussion

These findings beg the question, is there enough time and energy available to make this program grow and become what the community needs it to be? There are many minor improvements that could have already occurred but haven't due to a lack of resources, time, and personnel.

Considering the fact that this program is in high need and with further advertisement the demand will grow; there are a few structural problems that need to be taken into consideration. There is already a demand from three of the current participants for more days and hours. This is completely understandable as many of the students have large goals that would need more time for completion beyond coming to the program only twice a week for 2 hours. There is a wide range of the youth that have very different needs that are requesting and

needing this Program. Although this is an accommodating structure, if the Program continues to grow, it may be beneficial to review what the greatest need is in the community and specialize in that. Once specialized, it would be easier to determine the future of the Program. For example, differentiating between being an after-school tutoring program or an alternative school for students would allow the Program to better meet students' needs. Therefore, if the Program continues to grow, it would need more resources and a larger room. The Program also needs to be autonomous from CFLD Program; tutors, time, and focus. One definite strength of the Program as identified through parents and retention counsellors was the level of communication and commitment from Kristi. However, because Kristi and the head tutors have many other responsibilities, the development, infrastructure and organization of the everyday functioning of the program is not as developed as it could be. If the Program is to become more effective and continue to grow, there needs to be more staff that are focused solely on the Stay in School High School Program.

#### Re-Cap

#### Strengths:

- Communication between Kristi, parents and retention counselors.
- Students and parents are requesting more time with the Program (days and hours).
- The Program is highly needed in the community.

#### Challenges:

- The lack of space, money and time available to the program.
- Insufficient personnel to develop the Program

#### Recommendations:

- Add more days and/or hours to the existing Program schedule.
- Utilize a larger room to accommodate more students and minimize distractions
- Obtain staff exclusively committed to the SISHS Program.
- Better communication between tutors and coordinators

## **Conclusion**

There is a vital need for this Program in the Peterborough community. While the LDAP should be commended for rising to the challenge of meeting this need, there are many areas in which the Program could grow to better support these students. The Program has the ability to grow and help students thrive in academics yet lacks the funding and resources to do so. The question then becomes why is an NGO with limited resources taking on the responsibility of the school system to work with the students that have learning disabilities and thus different needs? It is the school system, not the LDAP that needs to be creative and think "outside the box" to ensure success for every single student. However, until the school board acts on its responsibility to these students Peterborough should be grateful for the vital service that the Stay in School High School Program offers.

## Strengths and Challenges

### Attendance

#### Strengths

- Successful engagement and commitment of some students not attending high school

#### Challenges

- Retention of students
- Managing Numbers

### Tutor/Participant Relationships

#### Strengths:

- One-to-one tutoring is a real strength of the program and needs to be protected and continued as a vital part of the program.
- Tutors express a desire to know their students better, their goals and their learning disabilities.
- Issues like the disorganization of students and tutors is being addressed through the communication binder and the making of a schedule to address the issue of multiple tutors per student

#### Challenges:

- Although there are changes being made and a desire by the tutors to get to know their students, the Program is lacking the structure to encourage these personal relationships
- Tutors do not know the learning disabilities of the students
- Tutors do not know the goals of the students

### Training

#### Strengths:

- The start of the tutor manual.
- The great potential for more tutors from Trent and Fleming.

#### Challenges:

- Lack of focused, structured training and orientation for tutors.

### Structure

#### Strengths:

- Communication between Kristi, parents and retention counselors.
- Students and parents are requesting more time with the Program (days and hours).
- The Program is highly needed in the community.

#### Challenges:

- The lack of space, money and time available to the program.
- Insufficient personnel to develop the Program

## **Recommendations**

### **Immediate**

- Add at least 2 more students to the Program
- Focus on building relationships between tutors and students as a form of retention; use incentives as encouragements.
- Promote relationships between youth.
- Create a tutor manual that includes relevant information about working with youth, learning disabilities, building rapport, and tutor roles and responsibilities.
- Create an orientation for tutors to ensure they feel informed, engaged, and prepared to tutor youth with learning disabilities
- Create an initial meeting between the tutor and participant to facilitate conversations and friendship and to begin building rapport before beginning academics. Create a list of things about their student and their needs that should be asked by the tutors in the first meeting.
- Foster better communication between tutors and coordinators
- Create a tracking sheet for student goals.

### **Long-Term Goals with Growth of Program**

- Add more days and/or hours to the existing Program schedule.
- Utilize a larger room to accommodate more students and minimize distractions
- Obtain staff exclusively committed to the SISHS Program.

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# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A – TUTOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### 1. Preliminary Questions:

- a) Name (if desired)
- b) Age
- c) How long have you been involved with the Stay in School High School Program?
- d) Do you also tutor with the Computers for Literacy Program?
- e) Have you, or are you completing a Diploma or Degree? Please describe
- f) What volunteer and/or employment experience do you have that has helped you in the role as tutor in this Program?
- g) Is this a paid or volunteer position?
- h) Why did you choose this agency? Program?

### 2. Training

- a) Did you receive an orientation?
- b) What type of orientation did you receive?
- c) What type of information did you receive on learning disabilities?

### 3. Interaction with Participants

- a) How many high school student participants are you tutoring?
- b) Do you know what their learning disability is?
- c) If yes, how did you find out?
- d) Did you feel prepared to tutor your student on the first day?
- e) Why or why not?
- f) Describe your relationship with those that you tutor
- g) What successes/breakthroughs have you had with your student(s)?
- h) What has been the biggest challenge with your student(s)?
- i) Do you think the needs and goals of students are being met?
- j) Could they be better met?



4. \*For tutors that have yes to tutoring in the Computers for Literacy Program.

a) Are there aspects of the Computers for Literacy Program that could be beneficial to the High School Program? Example – tutor training binder, resources, scheduling, etc...

5. Please consider all components of the Program for the following question (atmosphere, content, schedule, tutor interactions with students, number of people, etc...)

a) What do you identify as successes or positive attributes of the High School Program?

b) Can you suggest/identify areas for Program improvement?

c) Have you ever voiced these suggestions?

6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

#### APPENDIX B – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CARLO RAPPONI

1. Name

2. What is your position at The Bridge?

3. How long have you been working with youth in Peterborough?

4. Have you received any formal training or education in this type of work?

5. From your many years experience, what do you deem as the most effective way to engage youth in a program?

6. Attendance is a problem at the Stay in School High School Program. What things/methods/ideas would you suggest in order to retain these students?

7. From your experience, what do you believe is the most important thing tutors should understand when working with youth/

8. Do you have any other suggestions, advice, or comments?

## **APPENDIX C – STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GUIDE**

- 1. Age**
- 2. How did you find out about the SISHS Program?**
- 3. Why did you come to the SISHS Program? (looking for background information)**
- 4. What do you hope to achieve during your time here?**
- 5. Do you feel you will meet your goals while you are at the Program?**
- 6. Do you like coming to the Program? Why/Why not?**
- 7. Have you been able to make it out to the Program on a regular basis?**
  - a.) If not, what are some of the reasons why?**
- 8. Do you like your tutor? (looking for relationships factors)**
- 9. What parts of the program are most helpful for you? Why?**
- 10. What part of the program could be better?**
- 11. Ask about incentives: Would they work? What kinds of incentives would you like? Why?**

## **APPENDIX D- PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- 1. How did you become aware of the Stay in School High School Program?**
- 2. Has the Program helped your child? Why?**
- 3. Have you noticed any changes/improvements in your child since they have started the Program?**
- 4. What are some of the strengths of the SISHS Program?**
- 5. What do you identify as challenges/areas for improvement?**
- 6. Do you have any other comments?**

## **APPENDIX E- RETENTION COUNCELOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **1. Preliminary Questions**

- a) Name**
- b) Area/District you serve**
- c) How many students are on your course load?**
- d) How did you learn about the Stay in School High School Program?**

### **2. Information Gathering Questions**

- a) On average per year, how many registered students do not attend high school?**
- b) Of these students, how many eventually complete their high school diploma?**
- c) Could you identify any reasons, causes or issues that may impact a student on choosing/not wanting to attend high school?**
- d) What options do students have in Peterborough if they do not attend high school?**

**Example – work, programs, adult education, etc...**

- e) From your personal experience, are any of these options successful/helpful to students? Why?**

### **3. SISHS Program**

- a) What do you see as strengths of the Stay in School High School Program? Please explain.**
- b) What progress have you identified in students that have or are enrolled in the Program? Please explain.**
- c) Attendance is a challenge for some of the participating students. Could you provide any suggestions to encourage regular student attendance?**
- d) Based on your experience with the SISHS Program, what do you perceive as potential challenges for the Program? Please explain.**

**APPENDIX F – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR KRISTI MCKAY, COORDINATOR OF THE SISHS PROGRAM**

1. How old is SISHS Program? How/Why did it begin?
2. Could you describe in your own words what the purpose of the SISHS Program is?
  - a) How does this program differ from other youth education programs in Peterborough?
3. Could you please tell us about the intake process for students.
  - a) How do you choose students?
  - b) Do you have a waiting list? How long is it?
  - c) After further advertisement of the Program, how much of a further demand for the Program do you anticipate?
  - d) Do you think the Program will be able to meet the new demand?
4. Could you please describe how this SISHS Program is funded?
  - a) Are finances ever a barrier for a student to attend the Program?
5. Attendance has been a problem for many past participants. What is your policy concerning attendance?
  - a) What are some strategies you are using to combat the attendance problem?
6. You are the Coordinator of both the Stay in School High School Program and the Computers for Literacy Program.
  - a) How much time do you devote to each Program?
  - b) Do you ever feel overwhelmed? Please explain.
7. There have been some structural changes to the Program during this last session (tutor communication binder, number of tutors in the room, new laptops).
  - a) How do you think those changes are working?
  - b) What further changes do you see in the future of the Program?
8. What are your goals for this Program in the future?
9. What do you feel currently are the strengths of the Program?
10. What do you feel needs to be improved?

## What Are Learning Disabilities?

Learning Disabilities (LD) are life-long information processing disorders affecting one or more of the following: thinking, listening, talking, reading, writing, spelling, math or social skills. Individuals with Learning Disabilities have average to above average intelligence. With help and resources one can successfully cope with the challenges of Learning Disabilities.

## What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a medical condition characterized by difficulty in paying attention, impulsivity and hyperactivity. A diagnosis indicates symptoms are present before the age of seven (7). Learning Disabilities and ADHD can occur together.

## Common Signs Associated With Learning Difficulties and Attention Problems

- Frequent anxiety, frustration or anger due to coping problems in school, work or in social situations.
- Restlessness, hyperactivity, short attention span.
- Difficulty with time management
- Lack of organization.
- Poor or inappropriate social skills.
- Negative self-esteem.
- Trouble with auditory and/or visual memory.
- Difficulty or failure in reading, writing, spelling or arithmetic.
- Poor motor co-ordination and spatial orientation.
- Verbal skills more developed than writing skills.



A United Way Member Agency



Clarington

## Idap • Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough

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## What Do We Do?

We serve Peterborough City and County, Municipality of Clarington, Northumberland County and The City of Kawartha Lakes.

Our services are available to children, youth, adults and their families, and employers, educators, and health and service providers of individuals coping with Learning Disabilities and/or ADHD.

### Resource Library

- A comprehensive choice of books, DVDs, journals, and articles on LD and ADHD are available for loan.

### Resource Facilitation

- Our Resource Facilitators will assist individuals and families with information relating to LD and ADHD, including rights and responsibilities, and coping strategies on issues of academic achievement, behaviour, self-esteem, parenting, advocacy and self-advocacy, stress management, time management and social skills.

### Computers for Literacy Development Program\*\*

- A year round tutoring program that aims to address the individual needs of students in grades 1 to 10 struggling with reading and writing difficulties. One-to-one instruction and the use of and/or training in Assistive Technology software.

### SoAR: Some Assembly Required

- For grade 7 to 9 students preparing for the choices and challenges in high school. SoAR encourages self-awareness, how to express ideas and follow directions, and becoming a self-advocate in decision making and the learning process.

### Stay in School High School Program

- For high school students struggling with academic, personal and/or social difficulties. We provide an alternate learning environment with one-to-one tutoring support to work towards academic credit achievement, self-advocacy skills and fostering recognition of academic potential and personal goals.

### Job Fit

- A comprehensive employment preparedness program designed to address the needs and challenges of unemployed adults with suspected Learning Disabilities who are currently receiving Ontario Works or ODSP benefits.

### Education Seminars and Workshops

- Programs available throughout the year in our various locations. Check our website for details. [www.idapbo.com](http://www.idapbo.com)

### Advocacy/Self-Advocacy Training

- Group sessions for students and individuals dealing with LD and/or ADHD.

### Parenting a Child with Learning Disabilities or ADHD

- A course to assist parents' understanding of their child's learning challenges, rights and responsibilities, and parenting strategies.

### Newsletter

- A quarterly newsletter of current events, research, tips and programs available.

We are committed to the development of a community in which persons with LD and/or ADHD are enabled to reach their potential.

2008 United Way for the City of Kawartha Lakes Community Spirit Award—The Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough-City of Kawartha Lakes Services  
Tritium Foundation 25th Anniversary Award (2007)—a leader in the not-for-profit or charitable sector by consistently delivering Foundation's granting priorities.  
2006 Northumberland United Way Agency of the Year—The Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough-Northumberland Services  
\*\*2005 Showcase-Ontario—ITAC Voluntary Sector Merit Award—for improving accessibility, effectiveness and outreach.

# Appendix H: Intake Package for new student in the SISHS Program



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## The Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough Stay in School High School Program (SIS)

### CONFIRMING REGISTRATION

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**IS REGISTERED IN THE SIS PROGRAM:**

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**THE FOLLOWING IS THE STUDENT'S SCHEDULE FOR THE DURATION OF THIS SESSION.**

Tutoring Day/s	Tutoring Time	
	Start	End

<b>Tutoring Fee:</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>Fee Paid:</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>Date Paid:</b>	<b>\$</b>
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Full payment or post-dated cheques is much appreciated and is required at time of registration.  
 All SIS tutoring lessons are pre-paid and non-refundable.

**Please note:**

• **Student Assessment -**

Every 7 weeks an evaluation will be completed focusing on student achievement, attendance and program attitude. Should there be concerns regarding a student's continuance with the SIS Program a meeting will be booked with the student, parent, school board representative and coordinator to determine students' appropriateness for the SIS Program

• **Cancellation due to inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances -**

Should the Program Coordinator determine the need to cancel a scheduled lesson, all efforts will be made to reschedule the lesson, if not possible, a credit voucher for the value of the lesson cancelled will be issued towards the cost of registration to the next planned SIS Program

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 CFLD Staff Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 School Board Representative Signature

The Stay In School High School Program is a program of The Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough



**The Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough  
Stay In School High School Program**

**STUDENT REGISTRATION**

<b>STUDENT NAME</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>DOB</b>
<b>PARENT / GUARDIAN</b>	<b>Parent Home #</b>		
	<b>Student Home#</b>		
<b>Parent Address</b>	<b>Parent Work #</b>		
	<b>Student Work #</b>		
<b>Student Address</b>	<b>Parent Cell #</b>		
	<b>Student Cell #</b>		
<b>School</b>	<b>Marking Teacher</b>		
<b>Phone #</b>	<b>Phone #</b>		

**STUDENT PROFILE**

**STUDENT/PARENT/SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE INPUT**

**STRENGTHS:**

**ACADEMIC NEEDS:**

**READING:**  
**WRITING:**  
**COMPREHENSION:**  
**SELF ADVOCACY:**  
**RESUME DEVELOPMENT:**  
**CO-OP/PLACEMENT:**  
**COMPUTER/ASSISTIVE TECH TRAINING:**

**SUBJECTS/LEVEL:**

**IS AN IEP AVAILABLE?**  Yes  No      **A PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT?**  Yes  No

**RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES:**

**Known Accommodations/Modifications:**

**HEALTH CONCERNS/MEDICATION/BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGES**

For administrative use only	Documents included in file
<input type="checkbox"/> Last Report Card	<input type="checkbox"/> Information Exchange Consent Form
<input type="checkbox"/> Psycho-educational Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Input
<input type="checkbox"/> IEP	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Notes







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## The Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough Stay in School High School Program

### Student Profile

STUDENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

The above student is registered in the Stay in School High School Program. The information you provide will help the coordinator/tutor prepare an individualized learning plan to help and support this student in meeting his/her learning goals.  
**Your input is most valued. Thank You!**

#### Student's strengths and interests

Please check areas/comment with which the student primarily requires additional instruction and support

- Reading/Grade level \_\_\_\_\_
- Comprehension \_\_\_\_\_
- Writing/Grade level \_\_\_\_\_
- Study Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- Independent Work \_\_\_\_\_
- Resume Building \_\_\_\_\_
- Computer Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- Key Boarding \_\_\_\_\_
- Self Advocacy \_\_\_\_\_
- Social Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- Assistive Software Training/What Programs \_\_\_\_\_

Are you aware if this student has been diagnosed with a Learning Disability/AD(H)D?

- Yes \_\_\_\_\_
- No \_\_\_\_\_

Has this student achieved any High School Credits?

- Yes \_\_\_\_\_
- No \_\_\_\_\_

What subjects would you recommend this student work on while in the Stay in School Program?

What Level?

- Academic
- Applied
- Locally Developed



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**Please add other information to be considered to support the student achieve his/her learning goals?**

Appendix I - SISHS Program Statistics Fall+Winter Session 2009

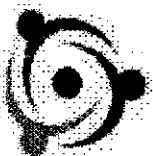


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**STAY IN SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM**  
Winter 2009 – Fall 2009

Student	School	Entry Date	Total Hours Available	Total Hours Attended	Subject	Completed
Male, Grade 9	PCVS	February 10, 2009	46	30	English 1-L Locally Developed	Unit 1 Lesson 1-5 Unit 2 Lesson 6
Male, Grade 9	PCVS	February 24, 2009	60	24	English 1-L Locally Developed	Unit 1 Lessons 1-4
Female, Grade 10	TASS	March 9, 2009	56	32	CHC 2P Applied	Unit 1 Lesson 1-6
Female, Grade 10	Holy Cross	March 9, 2009	17	14	MFM 2D Applied	Unit 1 Lessons 1-5 Unit 2 Lessons 6-10 Unit 3 Lessons 11-15 Unit 4 Lessons 16-20 Unit 5 Lessons 21-25 <b>Credit Achieved</b>
Grade 11					MCF3M College/University	Unit 1 Lessons 1-5 Unit 2 Lessons 6-10 Unit 3 Lessons 11-15 Unit 4 Lessons 16-20 Unit 5 Lessons 21-25 <b>Credit Achieved</b>



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**STAY IN SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM  
Winter 2009 – Fall 2009**

\* Student is continuing with program currently

Student	School	Entry Date	Total Hours Available	Total Hours Attended	Subject	Completed
*Female, Grade 11	Kenner	March 3, 2009	21	21	ENG 3C1 Applied	Units 1-6 Credit Achieved
*Female, Grade 11	SFYM	March 25, 2009	32	14	Literacy Prep for Grade 12 Eng Literacy Skill Development	Units 1-5
Grade 12	Kenner					
*Male, Grade 11	TASS	March 27, 2009	12	10	CHC 2P Applied	Unit 1 Lesson 1-3 Unit 2 Lessons Unit 3 Lessons
Grade 12					EMS30	
					GWL30	
*Male, Grade 11	Kenner	November 10, 2009	22	14	ENG2L	Unit 1 Lessons 1-5 Unit 2 Lessons 1-8
Female, Grade 12	TASS	November 11, 2009				Withdraw from program November 18, 2009