Ready or Not: Investigating an Early Years Readiness Program at a Victorian Primary School

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Mahshid Semnani-Jazani
B.A, M.Ed

School of Education
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University

June 2015
**Declaration**

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis/project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Mahshid Semnani-Jazani

15 June 2015
CONTENTS

DECLARATION..................................................................................................................... I

CONTENTS.......................................................................................................................... II

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ................................................................................................... V

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................... VI

LIST OF CHARTS ................................................................................................................... VIII

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .......................................................................................................... IX

ABSTRACT .............................................................................................................................. 1

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................... 2
  1.1. Research Context .......................................................................................................... 4
  1.2. About the School ........................................................................................................ 6
  1.3. Research Aims and Questions .................................................................................... 8
  1.3. Methodology ............................................................................................................... 9
  1.4. Outline of the Thesis .................................................................................................. 10
  1.5. Summary .................................................................................................................... 11

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................... 12
  2.1. Theoretical Framework: Readiness for School and Learning........................................ 13
  2.2. Starting Age for School .............................................................................................. 19
  2.3. Children at Risk of Not Having Successful Educational Experiences ......................... 21
  2.4. Language Impairment ............................................................................................... 23
  2.5. The Effect of Family Socio-Economic Status (SES) on Children’s Achievement .............. 25
  2.6. Importance of Preschool ........................................................................................... 28
  2.7. Play-Based Learning ................................................................................................. 30
  2.8. Absenteeism ............................................................................................................. 35
  2.9. Summary .................................................................................................................... 36

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN ...................................................................................... 38
  3.1. Research Methodology ............................................................................................. 38
  3.2. Research Methods for This Study ............................................................................. 41
    3.2.1. Data Sources ....................................................................................................... 41
    3.2.1.1. Interviews ....................................................................................................... 41
    3.2.1.2. Analysis of Documents .................................................................................. 43
CHAPTER 6: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION – RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

6.1. Research Question Three


6.1.1.1. Teachers’ Reports (2014) – Children at the End of Year One

6.1.1.2. End of Year AusVELS Report (2014) – Children in Year One

6.1.2. Teachers’ Interviews

6.1.2.1. Teachers’ Interviews (2014) – Children in Year One

6.2. Discussion of Findings

6.3. Summary

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Summary of the Study

7.2. Reflection on Theoretical Framework and Significance of the Study

7.3. Recommendations

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX F

LIST OF REFERENCES
# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEDI</td>
<td>Australian Early Development Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIHW</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AusVELS</td>
<td>Australian Curriculum in Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHEAN</td>
<td>College Human Ethics Advisory Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEECD</td>
<td>Department of Education and Early Childhood Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAL</td>
<td>English as an Additional Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGREA</td>
<td>English Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGSPL</td>
<td>English Spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGWRI</td>
<td>English Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EYRP</td>
<td>Early Years Readiness Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSEA</td>
<td>Index of Community Socio-Economic Advantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LI</td>
<td>Language Impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATMCD</td>
<td>Maths Measurement Chance and Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATMGE</td>
<td>Maths Measurement and Geometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATNUM</td>
<td>Maths Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATSPA</td>
<td>Maths Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATSTP</td>
<td>Maths Statistics and Probability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATWMA</td>
<td>Maths Working Mathematically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPLAN</td>
<td>National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Socio-Economic status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR</td>
<td>School Readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBPS</td>
<td>Sunny Bank Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCE</td>
<td>Victorian Certificate of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VELS</td>
<td>Victorian Essential Learning Standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Proportion of developmentally vulnerable children in Australia, Victoria, Whittlesea and Mill Park 2009 (AEDI) .......................................................... 4
Table 1.2: Proportion of developmentally vulnerable children in Australia, Victoria, Whittlesea and Mill Park 2012 (AEDI) .......................................................... 5
Table 1.3: NAPLAN results (2012); comparison for schools in the Mill Park area .......... 8

Table 2.1: School entry dates for each State and Territory ........................................... 20

Table 3.1: EYRP children’s age, gender, and language background .......................... 47
Table 3.2: Teacher participants, their roles and allocated codes ................................. 48
Table 3.3: Teachers’ codes and the year of interviews ................................................. 48
Table 3.4: Children’s and Parents’ allocated codes ...................................................... 48

Table 4.1: Children’s ‘Observation Form for Transition’ report ................................... 56
Table 4.2: June report 2012 (Literacy) ........................................................................... 59
Table 4.3: June report 2012 (Numeracy) ....................................................................... 60
Table 4.4: Analysis of ST03’s improvement (2012) ..................................................... 62
Table 4.5: Children’s skills, based on their Kindergarten attendance ........................... 64
Table 4.6: Teachers’ comments about the effect of EYRP on children’s school readiness (2012-2014) ........................................................................................................... 74
Table 4.7: Parents’ comments about the effect of EYRP on children’s school readiness (2012) ......................................................................................................................... 78
Table 4.8: Age and its effect on social, emotional and fine motor skills ....................... 80
Table 4.9: Effect of language impairment on children’s school readiness ....................... 82

Table 5.1: Converted AusVELS scores to numerical scores ........................................... 88
Table 5.2: End of year reports of the EYRP children (2013) ........................................... 89
Table 5.3: Teachers’ comments about the effect of EYRP on children’s development (2012 and 2013) ........................................................................................................... 99
Table 5.4: Comparison of the age at start of school ....................................................... 104
Table 5.5: Literacy and Numeracy scores of the EYRP children (2012) ......................... 105
Table 5.6: Literacy and Numeracy scores of the EYRP children based on AusVELS scores (2013) ................................................................................................................................. 109
Table 5.7: Literacy and Numeracy scores of the EYRP children based on numerical scores (2013) ................................................................................................................................. 110
Table 5.8: Children’s absences and their AusVELS results ................................................................. 113

Table 6.1: End of year reports of the EYRP children (2014) ................................................................. 118
Table 6.2: Literacy and Numeracy scores of the EYRP children based on AusVELS scores (2014) ................................................................................................................................. 125
Table 6.3: Literacy and Numeracy scores of the EYRP children based on numerical scores (2014) ................................................................................................................................. 126
Table 6.4: Teachers’ comments on academic developments of children (2014) ......................... 129
LIST OF CHARTS

Chart 5.1: Age and its effect on children’s achievement in Literacy (2012-2014)........ 107
Chart 5.2: Age and its effect on children’s achievement in Numeracy (2012-2014) ...... 108
Chart 5.3: Comparison of the AusVELS results of Non-EYRP children (2012) with the EYRP children (2013).................................................................................................................................................. 111

Chart 6.1: Comparison of the AusVELS results of the EYRP (2014) with Non-EYRP (2013)........................................................................................................................................................................................................ 127
Chart 6.2: Comparison of the AusVELS results of the EYRP (2014) with Non-EYRP (2014)........................................................................................................................................................................................................ 128
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Professor Annette Gough, for the continuous support of my study and research. I appreciate her patience, understanding, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. Her guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis.

I would like to thank my second supervisor Dr. Richard Johnson for his encouragement, insightful comments, and taking time out to serve as my second reader.

I would also like to thank my parents, for always supporting me and encouraging me, and in particular, I must acknowledge my husband and best friend, Reza, without whose love, and inspiration, I would not have finished this research.
ABSTRACT

This research study investigated the impact of a two-year Foundation program on children’s social, emotional and academic readiness and their achievements at Sunny Bank Primary School (SBPS) in Melbourne’s northern suburbs in the City of Whittlesea. The study followed one cohort of children who commenced in the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) at SBPS in 2012 through to their completion of Year 1 in 2014. The participants in this study were the teachers, children and their parents in the EYRP at SBPS. The academic results in the form of AusVELS scores and end of year reports of the EYRP children were compared with those of their peers who were in the “normal Foundation” groups in 2012 and 2013, and their Grade 1 peers in 2014. The questions which guided this research were:

- Does the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) help the children to be more ready to learn? If so how?
- Does the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) help the children to strengthen their academic ability? If so how?
- Is there any difference between AusVELS results at the end of Year One for the children who participated in the EYRP and their peers who entered through the normal Foundation group?

In order to respond to these questions, data were collected about the social, emotional and academic readiness and progress of the children who were participants in the study. The parents and teachers who participated in this research provided information about their responses to the program and its impact on the children through face to face interviews and focus groups. In addition, a range of documents were analysed to find out more about the impact of this program on children’s achievements.

The results of this study indicated that, in spite of different weaknesses that EYRP children had in their social, emotional and academic readiness for starting school, this program has benefited the children, and helped them to improve and build their confidence, maturity and abilities in different areas such as social, emotional and academic skills, and their preparedness for the normal years of schooling.
CHAPTER 1: Introduction

What does it mean for a child to be ready for school? There is much research that has focussed on addressing this question. For example, according to Heriot and Beale (2004, p. 1), “School readiness is the extent to which children are prepared to learn what is taught in schools”. Ackerman and Barnett (2005), similarly argued that children’s future academic success depends on their learning readiness and participation in a successful Kindergarten experience, and research by Marjanovic Umek, Kranjc, Fekonja, and Bajc (2008), found that children’s school readiness is highly correlated with their language skills as well as their academic abilities. In addition, children bring their prior achievements (from preschool, home and social experiences) to school and these achievements can impact on the outcomes of schooling (Hattie, 2013).

Whitebread and Bingham (2011) critically reviewed issues related to school readiness and found that the combination of attributes and skills that a child arrives at primary school with are not at all predictable or uniform, and that there is no consensus in the meaning of “school readiness”.

While “all children, at all ages, are ready to learn” (Whitebread & Bingham, 2011, p. 1) in a context of a child making positive transition to full-time primary school, readiness for learning and readiness for school, are frequently seen as predictors of future school success. Readiness to learn refers to a child’s readiness to undertake the specific learning and readiness for school refers to the level of development which a child needs to fulfil schooling requirements (AIHW, 2011). Different studies have shown that the readiness of children to learn on the first day of school influences how well they do at school (Heriot & Beale, 2004). Prior, Bavin, and Ong (2011), also found that school readiness has an influence on children’s success in the early years of their learning, and it can be a predictor of children’s academic achievements.

According to, Barnett and Hustedt (2005), an early years readiness program has positive benefits for school readiness and research on the US Head Start and similar programs, has established significant long term benefits in educational achievement. These programs could decrease grade retention, and increase high school graduation rates. In this regard Whitebread and Bingham (2011, p. 2) noted that, “International research shows that early intervention contributes significantly to putting children from low-income families on the route to development and achievement in life”. Heckman and Masterov (2007) mentioned that improving the early years
education of the children will increase the productivity of the school. Similarly, Easton and Gee (2012), suggested that investing earlier in early years of children, can have great benefits for children and it could be more cost effective for government.

Learning readiness can be affected by children’s language ability and pre-literacy skills, including: letter knowledge and phoneme awareness. Whitebread and Bingham (2011, p. 3) suggested that “specialised support in preschools, particularly for language and pre-reading skills, can benefit children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language”.

While school readiness is a contested term for many researches, it is a practical consideration for primary schools when enrolling children for the first time at the age of eligibility for schooling. For the school that is the focus of this research, whether age ready children are socially and emotionally ready to learn in a conventional classroom was a practical problem that was addressed by introducing a two year Foundation program for some of the children.

As noted above, there are many studies that focus on the children’s school readiness, but there has been little investigation of the impact of a two-year Foundation (preparatory) program on children’s academic development. Currie (2001), reviewed some projects in this category but I was not able to find any other research reports. Given this paucity of research, particularly in contexts which are complicated by factors such as developmentally vulnerable children, it is important to investigate how a specific intervention program can help children, and what are the key factors that can improve their academic abilities (children’s abilities in literacy and numeracy). Thus, the focus of this research study was the academic development of children in the two-year Foundation program at Sunny Bank Primary School (SBPS) in Melbourne’s northern suburbs in the City of Whittlesea. It was a longitudinal study investigating the impact of the two-year Foundation program on children’s academic, emotional and social readiness and achievements during their first three years of schooling.
1.1. Research Context

School readiness involves children being socially, emotionally, academically and linguistically ready. The Australian Early Development Census (formerly the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)) measured these factors in children in their first year of school in 2009 (AEDI, 2009) and 2012 (AEDI, 2012) (See Tables 1.1 and Table 1.2).

*Table 1.1: Proportion of developmentally vulnerable children in Australia, Victoria, Whittlesea and Mill Park 2009 (AEDI)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of children surveyed</th>
<th>Physical health and wellbeing</th>
<th>Social competence</th>
<th>Emotional maturity</th>
<th>Language and cognitive skills (school-based)</th>
<th>Communication skills and general knowledge</th>
<th>Vulnerable on one or more domains of the AEDI</th>
<th>Vulnerable on two or more domains of the AEDI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>261,147</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>61,186</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whittlesea community</td>
<td>2,061</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill Park area</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2012 data (Table 1.2) indicated that children in the Mill Park area (which is the location of this research) were more developmentally vulnerable on two or more of the domains of the AEDI than the average of children in Australia, Victoria and Whittlesea. These domains were, emotional maturity, language, cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge; thus not all children who are ‘age ready’ for starting school in Mill Park area are emotionally, academically and/or language ready for starting school, and it is this group which is the focus of the research.
Table 1.2: Proportion of developmentally vulnerable children in Australia, Victoria, Whittlesea and Mill Park 2012 (AEDI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of children surveyed</th>
<th>Physical health and wellbeing</th>
<th>Social competence</th>
<th>Emotional maturity</th>
<th>Language and cognitive skills (school-based)</th>
<th>Communication skills and general knowledge</th>
<th>Vulnerable on one or more domains of the AEDI</th>
<th>Vulnerable on two or more domains of the AEDI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>289,973</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>67,931</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whittlesea community</td>
<td>2,410</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill Park area</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2011, Sunny Bank Primary School (SBPS) in Mill Park area introduced a two-year Foundation (the first year of primary school) program for children who, according to their Kindergarten reports, were ‘age ready’ but socially and emotionally immature and so ‘at risk’ of not having successful experiences of schooling. This program provided an extra year of Foundation to help children get ready for normal schooling. The alternative for these children was to repeat a Kindergarten year or start a normal Foundation program at school with a likelihood of negative experiences and possible failure.

This was the first such program in a Victorian Government primary school. The two-year Foundation program (EYRP) focused on building the children’s social and emotional maturity in the first year through a play-based learning approach that also developed their literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills. In the second year of the EYRP the children joined the “normal” Foundation classes (they were distributed amongst the new Foundation classes rather than being kept as a separate group) and followed the standard Foundation curriculum. In the following year the EYRP children moved with the Foundation group to Year One.
As this school is in the local area for my university this innovation caught my attention, and prompted me to question whether a two-year Foundation program could make a difference for these children. In particular, as such an initiative is against Victorian Department of Education policy, which funds children for seven years of primary schooling, I felt it was important to investigate whether this was a precedent worth continuing and implementing elsewhere or an aberration in one area that had no wider benefits.

The focus of this study is to evaluate the data from and about the children who commenced the two-year EYRP in 2012, to better understand their academic readiness and academic development in comparison with their “normal entry” peers. This information will help the school to assist parents in making the decision whether to enrol their child in the EYRP or normal Foundation. In addition, the findings from this research regarding academic achievement differences between children who are participating in the EYRP and those who are in the normal Foundation classes, will help the school and other educators to have a better understand of the outcomes of the EYRP.

### 1.2. About the School

This study was conducted at Sunny Bank Primary School (SBPS) in Melbourne’s northern suburbs in the City of Whittlesea. This school was designed for 430 children, but in 2013 there were 998 children enrolled, which is well above the expected enrolment for this school. As a multicultural community the school has enrolled children from fifty one different cultures and there are a number of economically disadvantaged children among them with the Educational Maintenance Allowance going to 35% of the school’s families in 2012.

The leadership team at SBPS were keen to provide the age ready children, who were not yet socially and emotionally ready for school, a supportive environment for learning. The school goal was to develop the children’s learning skills and encouraged parents to participate in their children’s educational development. To achieve these objectives, the school team worked with the AusVELS (Australian Curriculum in Victoria) Curriculum and the Principles of Learning and Teaching. The school placed the Early Years Literacy and Numeracy Programs as their main priority and directed a high level of resources towards literacy, numeracy and learning intervention programs.
In 2011, SBPS introduced a two-year Foundation program for children who were ‘age ready’ to start school but were not socially or emotionally ready, according to their Kindergarten reports. These children could repeat a Kindergarten year or start a normal Foundation program at school with a likelihood of negative experiences and failure. This was the first such program in a Victorian Government primary school. The EYRP was seen as a strategy that would enable the school team to give the children positive experiences of schooling, a ‘head start’, where the selected children could benefit from extra time and help which can be provided by such a program.

This response was consistent with the Australian Early Development Index [AEDI] (2009) data which showed that a higher than average number of children in the Mill Park community were developmentally vulnerable and this number had increased in 2012 (See Table 1.1 and 1.2). In 2012 8.9% of five years old children were vulnerable in their language and cognitive skills and 11.5% were vulnerable in their communication skills and general knowledge. It is these children that were entering the Foundation year in 2012, some of whom became the focus for the EYRP which was the focus of this research study.

In 2012 the school enrolled 36 children into the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP), but by the end of 2014 only 19 complete sets of data were available, and this group was the focus cohort for this research study.

The school was justified in being to be concerned about the literacy and numeracy skills of children, as the NAPLAN (National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy) results in 2012 illustrated that SBPS children achieved lower results compared with other schools in the area (See Table 1.3).
The two-year Foundation program (EYRP) focused on building the children’s social and emotional maturity in the first year through a play-based learning approach that also developed the literacy and numeracy knowledge of children. In the second year of the EYRP the children joined the “normal” Foundation classes (they were distributed amongst the new Foundation classes rather than being kept as a separate group) and followed the standard Foundation curriculum. In the following year the EYRP children moved with the Foundation group to Year One.

For SBPS, the EYRP is in many ways an investment in the future by intervening with the children who are not socially and emotionally ready for school and providing them with positive learning experiences. It is also intended that participation in the EYRP will reduce the children’s need to be involved in the Reading Recovery Program (whose funding is being reduced), as well as providing a sound base for improving the school’s NAPLAN results. Although this aspect is beyond the scope of this study, it could be the focus for a future research project.

1.3. Research Aims and Questions

As this program is a unique innovation in a Victorian Government primary school, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the EYRP, by analysing the progress of participants as they move through their years of primary schooling. This will allow the school to make better informed decisions about the future of the program. It will also give parents more detailed information on which to make informed decisions as to whether or not to participate in the
program. However, due to the limitations for this research I could follow one cohort of children who commenced in the EYRP at the school in 2012 to the end of Year One of their schooling in 2014, when their academic progress data was able to be compared with other peers using the end of year level reports of all children, based upon AusVELS results.

In particular, the aims of this research study were:

- To track the academic outcomes of a cohort of children who entered the EYRP in 2012 through to their Year One AusVELS results in 2014.

- To compare the performance in 2014 of children from the EYRP with non-EYRP children using their AusVELS results.

- To investigate what were the influential factors in the children’s academic development.

- To investigate the benefits of the program for the school and its community.

The research questions which addressed these aims were:

- Does the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) help the children to be more ready to learn? If so how?

- Does the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) help the children to strengthen their academic ability? If so how?

- Is there any difference between AusVELS results at the end of Year One for the children who participated in the EYRP and their peers who entered through the normal Foundation group?

1.3. Methodology

This longitudinal investigation (2012-2014) was an interpretive case study of the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) at Sunny Bank Primary School. A qualitative research approach to data production and analysis was adopted as being the most appropriate for this study. This
method of data production helped to develop awareness of the purpose of this study, to develop understanding of the situation and interpret and analyses of the data.

The participants in this study were the teachers, children and their parents in the EYRP at Sunny Bank Primary School. The primary participants were the children whose academic development was analysed. In 2012 the school enrolled 36 children into the EYRP, but by the end of 2014 only 19 complete sets of data were available, and this group was the focus cohort for this research study.

Qualitative methods of data production, including: interviews with teachers and parents to track the children’s developments were used. In addition, the children’s academic data and teachers’ reports were coded and analysed.

1.4. Outline of the Thesis

This thesis includes seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the two-year Foundation program for children who were ‘age ready’ but were not socially, emotionally and academically ready to start school. The rest of the chapter one outlines the research context, aims and questions, methodology and structure of the thesis.

Chapter two reviews the relevant literature for this study. This is related to children’s readiness for school and their academic development and achievements, including: starting age for school, children at risk of not having successful educational experiences, language impairment, the effect of family socio-economic status on children’s achievement, the importance of preschool, play based learning, and absenteeism.

Chapter three details the research plan, including the methodology and procedures applied in this study. This chapter describes the research design, data collection and analysis, demographic information of participants, validity and reliability approach of the research, ethical issues, and limitations to the research.
Chapter four provides the qualitative analysis and discussion of the data from the 2012 EYRP cohort by addressing the first research question to determine whether the EYRP has helped the children to be more ready to learn, and how.

Chapter five addresses the second research question. In that chapter the AusVELS results of the EYRP children discussed and compared with children who did not participate in the EYRP and were enrolled in normal Foundation classes. The end of year reports of the children, AusVELS results of the children, transcribed teachers’ interviews and parent interviews/focus groups were also reviewed and analysed.

Chapter six addresses the third research question, and compares the performance in 2014 of children from the EYRP with non-EYRP children using their AusVELS results. Data analysis was based on the academic progress of the children in the EYRP. Transcribed teachers’ interviews, the year level reports of the EYRP children and the AusVELS results of the EYRP cohort and non-EYRP children were also reviewed and analysed.

Chapter seven includes two sections. The first is summary of the study in terms of the background of the problem, the purpose of the study and research methodology. The second section reflects on the theoretical framework of the study and the significance of the findings and concludes with recommendations for future research.

1.5. Summary

This chapter has introduced the research focus for this study – the impact of a two-year Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) on the children who commenced it in 2012 at Sunny Bank Primary School – as an example of a response to concerns about what school readiness can mean in a particular context. The EYRP was introduced as a unique innovation in a Victorian Government primary school in 2011 as a response to concerns that children who were not emotionally or socially ready but ‘age ready’ were enrolling at the school. Data were collected from and about the children between 2012 and 2014 in order to evaluate the impact of the program as an interpretive case study of the experiences of the children, parents and teachers involved. This chapter has also outlined the methodology for the research and the structure of the thesis.
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

There is currently much discussion about the importance of children’s readiness for school and learning, the important role that teachers have in early learning, the appropriate age to start school, the importance of play-based learning, and children at risk of not having successful educational experiences, to name just a few themes encompassed by the focus of this study.

The children identified by Sunny Bank Primary School (SBPS) as being appropriate for inclusion in the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP), rather than enrolling in a one year Foundation program are already acknowledged as being at risk because of their social, emotional, and academic un-readiness, even though they are ‘age ready’ for school. This is controversial because Government primary schools are not overtly funded to provide eight years of primary schooling, even though they may do so if a child is later identified as needing to repeat a year level. This type of intervention can be too late in terms of providing a child with a positive experience of schooling – by the time they are identified as needing to repeat a year level they have already had some (or many) negative experiences of schooling. The EYRP is seen as an early intervention in this process – to provide the children with a positive introduction to schooling where they develop the basic knowledge and skills for later successful experiences and avoiding the need of remediation once they enter Year One and beyond.

Because the children entering the EYRP are not seen as ready for the usual entry pathway of one year in Foundation, this study investigated the factors that are influential in ensuring that the children in the EYRP are developing and achieving academically at the same or better rate than their peers because they have been scaffolded at a key point of their engagement with schooling, i.e. their transition from home/preschool to school.

The children in the catchment of the school have been identified as being particularly developmentally vulnerable in the categories, such as, emotional maturity, language, cognitive skills, communication skills, and general knowledge in the 2012 AEDI assessment (See Table 1.2). It is therefore important to investigate strategies for addressing these deficiencies; so the children can have more positive experiences of schooling. By investigating the academic development of the children in the EYRP, this study contributes new knowledge about how children can be supported to succeed educationally in a disadvantaged multicultural area.
The key themes and relevant literature for this study relate to children’s readiness for school and their academic development and achievements, are:

- Starting age for school,
- Children at risk of not having successful educational experiences,
- Language impairment,
- The effect of family Socio-Economic Status (SES) on children’s achievement,
- Importance of preschool,
- Play based learning,
- Absenteeism.

2.1. Theoretical Framework: Readiness for School and Learning

The leadership team at SBPS were keen to provide the age ready children, who were not yet socially and emotionally ready for school, a supportive environment for learning. The EYRP was seen as a strategy that would enable them to give the children positive experiences of schooling, a ‘head start’, where the selected children could benefit from extra time and help which can be provided by such a program. This notion of ‘head start’ is both similar to and different from the well-known US ‘Head Start’ Program which is also aimed at disadvantaged children but it provides early learning experiences in a preschool context rather than being within school program. Barnett and Hustedt (2005), for example, concluded that ‘Head Start’ and other similar programs have significant long term benefits in the educational achievement of children. Similarly, Barnett (1995), found that early childhood programs have persistent effects on children’s school achievements, grade retention, and placement in special education.

Whitebread and Bingham (2011, p. 1) argued that, “There is no agreement upon a definition of
the term ‘school readiness’ or ‘readiness for school’ and its use because there is no agreement upon what young children should be prepared for; in essence, the disagreement about terminology and definition encapsulates a fundamental difference in conception of the purpose of early years education”. They also stated that Piagetian theory of development was seen to determine learning, is imperfect as later research showed that children’s social interaction and language had a greater influence in regard to learning than first estimated.

Whitebread and Bingham (2011, p. 2) noted about the Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism, that “learning determines development and that all learning is social in origin”. They suggested that when children faced with any task or problem, they can work at one level on their own which can be defined as their “level of actual development”; or “level of proximal development” which is when children supported by an adult or more experience peer, therefore their learning can improve. So this, points to the importance of preschool and early primary programs, emphasising social and language development that is driven by the child’s needs.

Whitebread and Bingham (2011) emphasised socio-educational programs, which can be helpful for children at risk, and they noted that, these programs can improve children’s cognitive and social functioning. They also found that play-based learning could benefit children; hence free play and guided play are linked to social and academic development of children. Both of these aspects are part of the EYRP at SBPS, which is the focus of this study.

Whitebread and Bingham (2011) also argued that government attempted to raise the standards of the schools, by encouraging the introduction of formal programs at early stage in school. They also emphasised that this attempt is misguided as subsequent research showed that long term success is underpinned by early social and emotional development. They stated that the notion of readiness is not about being able to display skills in literacy and numeracy and classroom procedures but allowing a school environment where autonomy, competence and relatedness are able to develop. Again this is the focus of the EYRP, which is being investigated in this research.

The theoretical framework for this research study is developed from a range of research into social, emotional, and cognitive development, and also school readiness of the children by W. Steven Barnett (1995), Kay Margetts (2002, 2004), Martha Abbott-Shim, Richard Lambert and Frances McCarty (2003), Debra J. Ackerman and W. Steven Barnett (2005), and Margot Prior, Edith Bavin, and Ben Ong (2011).
Barnett (1995), for example, investigated long-term effects of early childhood programs on cognitive and school outcomes. The main focus of his study was on the long-term effects of early childhood programs on children’s school achievement, grade retention, social adjustment, and placement in special program.

Barnett (1995) found that a good quality early childhood education can positively affect the long-term development and social and academic progress of disadvantaged children. He also argued “preschool programs can mean the difference between failing and passing, regular or special education, or staying out of trouble”. (p.43). Findings from his study provided significant evidence that early childhood programs can “produce sizable improvements in school success” (Barnett, 1995, p. 40).

Margetts (2002) investigated complexity and diversity in the transition to school. The main focus of her study was children’s transition to the first year of school and their adjustment in that environment. She concluded that, when planning transition program, early childhood professionals need to be aware of factors that can impact children’s adjustment to school. Margetts (2002, p. 104) also argued that “transition programmes should create an appropriate degree of continuity between preschool and school experiences and develop strategies to help children adjust to school”. She emphasised the setting of the school and its influence on the children’s learning, and how it is important to provide a familiar setting for children, as in that setting children can use their skills, knowledge, and past experiences to understand of the task that they need to do.

Margetts (2002) also argued transition to school and children’s adjustment is easier, when children know about their new situation, parents have enough knowledge about the new school, and teachers have enough information about children's previous experiences and improvements: “As a result, effective transition programmes can be developed that ensure the gradual preparation of children and parents; continuity of peers; continuity of expectations between settings, including teacher and child behaviours; continuity of programming for children's learning; and ongoing communication between staff from school and preschool settings, including child care services” (Margetts, 2002, p. 113).
Abbott-Shim, Lambert, and McCarty (2003), compared school readiness outcomes for children randomly assigned to a Head Start program and to the program’s wait list. In that research study their main focus was on the children’s academic and social improvement. They argued that the program can improve children’s vocabulary and social skills; it also leads to improve their word knowledge, letter recognition, writing skills, and maths skills. In addition they (2003, p. 193) found that “Early Head Start children have larger vocabularies, use more grammatically complex sentences, and have lower levels of aggressive behaviour than the control children as reported by the parents”, and concluded that Head Start children, had better performance on cognitive measures; they achieved higher scores on reading, language skills, and social adaptive behaviour than other children.

Margetts (2004), investigated supporting behaviours associated with co-operation, assertion and self-control in young children starting school. Her main focus was on children’s adjustment in the school environment and the ways that school can reduce the tension for children who are transitioning to the new situation.

According to Margetts (2004), starting school is a major challenge for children, and this transition is an important factor for their adjustment to the school rules and routines which are new to them and it can determine their future success at school. Based on Margetts (2004) study, when children commence to school they need to cope with possible tensions, uncertainties, and respond appropriately to those requirements; so to be successful they need a range of social and emotional skills to cooperate with other children and adults. In particular she noted that, “when children exhibit a range of social skills associated with cooperation, assertion, and self-control they are more likely to adjust easily to school. Taken together with the discontinuities or challenges facing children as they commence school it is important that children at preschool are encouraged and supported to interact with their peers and adults in positive ways” (p. 82) and concluded that, “The identification of a range of relevant social skills that support children starting school can provide a focus for observation and planning for individuals and groups of children prior to and in the early stages of schooling, and also in identifying the likelihood of children having difficulty adjusting to school”. (p. 83).

Prior et al. (2011) investigated predictors of school readiness in five-to-six year-old children from an Australian longitudinal community sample. Their main focus was on children’s language, pre-literacy, and behavioural development. They argued that language and pre-literacy
are important predictors of school readiness. In particular, they (2011, p. 7) proposed several hypotheses for their study:

“(1) Children from lower SES backgrounds would have lower levels of School Readiness (SR);
(2) Child communication and pre-literacy factors would be predominant in prediction equations with family variables contributing less;
(3) Boys would be less school ready than girls; and
(4) Children with Language Impairment (LI) would be at greater risk for poor SR”.

According to the findings from Prior et al. (2011), children with language impairment were considerably lower on school readiness, and they emphasised that those children were of lower socio economic backgrounds. Furthermore, they recommended that children need to be prepared for school by improving their language and pre-literacy before school entry, and stressed that children who are at risk (those who are coming from socio-economic disadvantage or those who have delayed and impaired early language development), have to work systematically on phonemic awareness and letter knowledge before starting school. They concluded that this readiness can have a positive effect into children’s schooling and can prevent them from negative experiences or school failure.

Prior et al. (2011) also acknowledged that pre-school teachers and families are important factors in improving children’s learning readiness, and noted that teachers have to be aware to “accommodate the evidence underpinning early intervention/prevention principles and should be trained in the concept of SR as an important factor in pre-school teaching” (p. 14).

Ackerman and Barnett (2005) also investigated children’s readiness for learning based on their educational experiences. They focused on what people know about children’s readiness and how it is possible to improve this readiness for school. Ackerman and Barnett (2005) acknowledged that children come from different educational background and experiences, with different levels of development. Children enter Kindergarten with widely variable skills and knowledge and show different levels of preparedness, and they found that parents and teachers have different opinions and expectations about children’s skills and knowledge. According to Ackerman and Barnett (2005), cognitive skills are more important factors for parents, whereas teachers lean toward social-emotional development of children as being equally important to their academic development.
Ackerman and Barnett (2005, p. 1) also argued that, “school readiness is influenced by family and other environmental factors, and can be enhanced through effective preschool education”. They also discussed readiness and its risk factors. They proposed that readiness can be affected by different factors such as families’ socio-economic status (SES), parents’ educational levels, and children’s health and living environment. Ackerman and Barnett (2005, p. 11), concluded that “although none of these risk factors guarantee that children will not be ready for Kindergarten, children from low-income or less-educated families are less likely to have the supports necessary for healthy growth and development, resulting in lower abilities at school entry”. They also proposed that readiness can be defined by age, formal readiness assessment, parents’ and children’s definitions of readiness, and teachers’ conceptions of readiness. They concluded that good quality preschool education can be useful to improve school readiness, and children’s expectations for achieving greater academic attainment.

As noted before, there are many studies that focus on the children’s learning readiness and school readiness; hence there are different debates about the key factors that can improve children’s readiness for learning and school. Given the specific nature of this research, particularly in contexts which are complicated by factors such as developmentally vulnerable children, it is important to investigate how a specific intervention program can help children, and what are the key factors that can improve their academic abilities. Therefore to investigate more about those key factors, the conclusions and recommendations from the research of Prior et al. (2011), Ackerman and Barnett (2005), Margetts (2002, 2004) and Abbott-Shim et al. (2003), into children’s transition to school and readiness for school and learning as important factors in their later success at school is chosen to provide a theoretical framework for this research study. The themes identified in these studies that are investigated in this research are:

- Social, emotional and fine motor skills and their effects on children’s school readiness;

- Children in head start programs can perform better on cognitive measures; they can achieve higher scores in reading, language and social skills than other children;

- Children’s school readiness and its effect on their success in the early years of schooling;

- Age and its effect on children’s school readiness;
The impact of age on children’s achievements;

The effect of children’s absences on their school achievements;

The impact of the head start programs on improvement of the children in different areas of their learning;

Children with Language impairment (LI) would be at greater risk for poor school readiness.

Themes from this literature that were beyond the scope of this research were:

Children from lower SES backgrounds would have lower levels of School Readiness (SR);

The effect of gender on school readiness;

Child communication and pre-literacy factors would be predominant in prediction equations with family variables contributing less;

Children with LI would have lower SES backgrounds;

Parents believe cognitive factors are more important in school readiness.

2.2. Starting Age for School

Children’s age and learning readiness have been discussed in different studies. The age of school entry is determined by Governments, and it differs from country to country and within countries (Murray & Harrison, 2011a). Each State and Territory in Australia has a different minimum age for starting the first year of school, but in most States and Territories eligibility to enrol in Foundation begins at the age of five either before enrolling or while children are in the
Foundation program. However, Foundation cut-off dates range from the first of January to the 31st of July, with the most popular cut-off dates falling between April and June (See Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: School entry dates for each State and Territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Program before Year One</th>
<th>Cut-off date for enrolment</th>
<th>Starting school age</th>
<th>Compulsory age for schooling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>30 April</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>31 July</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>30 June</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>6 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Pre-primary</td>
<td>30 June</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>Reception</td>
<td>5th birthday (from 2014 all children start school on the first day of term one in that year if they turn five).</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>1 January</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>30 April</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>30 June</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Murray and Harrison (2011a), when children reach a certain age they are considered to be ready for school. In Victoria the cut-off date for starting school is April 30th. Several studies have shown that there is positive relationship between age and achievement for normal age children. According to Grissom (2004), there is a positive relationship between age and achievement for age normal (6 years old) children. Grissom (2004) also argues that children’s successes (academically, socially and emotionally) are greater when they are older at school entry. Furthermore, when initially older children progress through grade levels, they perform better academically than their younger classmates. Crone and Whitehurst (1999) similarly noted that when children are older, they are more prepared for learning so they can benefit more from the curriculum demands of school, and Cunningham and Carroll (2010) found that older children have higher levels of skills than younger children.

However, Grissom (2004), also argued that despite the positive relationship between age and achievement, the difference between oldest and youngest children’s average scores is not great, and by the time they reach Year 10 this relationship has disappeared. Langer, Kalk, and Searls
similarly noted that achievement differences between younger and older children in the same grade are reduced as the year level increases. Crone and Whitehurst (1999) also argued that the influence of the age on children’s achievements decreases by increasing the year level of children. According to Grissom (2004), the possibility of dropping out from school and having less schooling years is higher for children who are older than their peers. He furthermore emphasised that policies and practices which make children older than their peers, increase the possibility that those children leave school earlier than others.

Crone and Whitehurst (1999), argued that there is significant difference between the scores of the oldest and youngest children at the end of the Foundation, but by the end of Year One, the youngest children have caught up to the older peers on measures of reading ability. Furthermore they noted that the reading skills of the youngest children continued to be at the same level as the oldest children through to the end of Year Two.

Age can influence achievement to a point, but beyond that point it can have negative effects. According to Grissom (2004), children who are older than their peers because they have been retained at home for any reason, on average, do not achieve superior results and academic advantages over other children.

The children in the EYRP had an age range difference of up to seven months, and the impact of age on their academic development and achievements is an aspect to be analysed in this study.

2.3. Children at Risk of Not Having Successful Educational Experiences

Karoly, Kilburn, and Cannon (2005) argued that children from birth to the age of five can experience a lack of emotional support, logical motivation, or access to resources because of low parental income or lack of health care, which could hinder their development to their fullest potential. Improving children’s level of social and emotional skills is an important foundation for their later achievements and well-being (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). Barblett and Maloney (2010, p. 17) also emphasised that, “developing strong social and emotional competence is essential for children's everyday wellbeing, as well as for engagement and learning in school and beyond”. According to Eide, Showalter, and Goldhaber (2010), children’s bad health conditions
can have negative effects on their maths and reading achievements, and are negatively correlated with their educational progress.

In general children from disadvantaged family backgrounds complete fewer years of schooling than children from more advantage backgrounds, which can impact their economic and social outcomes (AIHW, 2011). As Heckman and Masterov (2007, p. 447) argued, “Early disadvantage, if left untreated, leads to academic and social difficulties in later years”. Similarly, Karoly et al. (2005) noted that children from more disadvantaged background have lower level of the knowledge and social skills which is important for school success. They further argued that these measures indicate that children from more enriched environments are better prepared, so this gap between children may be even wider as they progress through school.

According to Abbott-Shim et al. (2003), children who participated in ‘Head Start’ type programs, have better outcomes on cognitive, language, social, and health measures. Marjanovic Umek et al. (2008) suggested that high quality pre-school education can have a positive effect on the progress of the reading skills of the children from disadvantage family backgrounds. So providing high quality early intervention services for children at risk, prior to school entry can improve long term educational and social opportunities (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2012).

According to Banks (2006), language is the factor that can influence the academic achievements of children; but there are other factors such as learning characteristics, motivation and social background of people that can impact their academic achievements; therefore just language approach to the educational problems is not enough to solve the problems.

Gniewosz and Eccles (cited in Hattie & Anderman, 2013) noted that parental background can have a different impact on children’s achievements, but the most important characteristic of the family is their socio-economic background, and it has a significant role in children’s academic achievements. Similarly, Han, Lee, and Waldfogel (2012) emphasised that family socio economic status (family income, parents’ education, and occupation) and English skills are important factors in children’s school readiness; and Banks (2006) argued that children from low-income families experiencing different social and academic problems than other children.
Grolnick, Raftery-Helmer, and Flamm (cited in Hattie & Anderman, 2013), emphasised that parents’ education and income can predict the level of their involvement with school. DeBaryshe and Goreck (cited in Maynard & Martini, 2005, p. 180) argued that “low SES children are less likely than middle class children to receive consistent frequent home interactions and activities of the type that promote academic skills”.

Banks (2006), also argued that children with low-income parents do not achieve well because of their family poverty and disorganization; “Poor parents are restricted in their choice of neighbourhoods, and are therefore more likely to live in areas characterized by social disorganization and limited resources for child development” (Bumgarner & Brooks-Gunn, cited in Hattie & Anderman, 2013, p. 92). Furthermore, “if the parents have to work two jobs to support their family, the stress level can be increased and the time available to support the children becomes limited, both stressors are linked to a less supportive home environment” (Gniewosz & Eccles, cited in Hattie & Anderman, 2013, p. 89).

2.4. Language Impairment

According to Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2011), children’s learning and development are essential part of their overall health and well-being; furthermore they emphasised that children’s development also is integral to the future productive capacity of society. Pentimonti, Justice, and Kaderavek (2014) emphasised, school readiness is the foundation for children’s academic success. They noted that there are different theories and evidences which show that children with language impairment (LI) - who enter Kindergarten lacking the social, emotional and academic readiness - will need those skills for a successful transition to formal schooling.

Different studies demonstrated that children with LI are at risk of encountering social problems in school (Fujiki, Brinton, Isaacson, & Summers, 2001). According to Tomblin, Records, Buckwalter, and Zhang (1997), children with language problems are also at risk of having difficulties in reading and certain behaviour disorders. Studies by Botting and Conti-Ramsden (2000) also found that there is a relationship between LI and emotional behavioral difficulties of children in school. Furthermore they emphasised that the speed of language and academic achievement of each child can help to identify the level of LI, and Pentimonti et al. (2014),
concluded that, in addition to the emotional and behavioral difficulties which can be caused by LI; literacy and numeracy skill of children also can be affected by language impairment. LI can cause social difficulties for children. Studies by Botting and Conti-Ramsden (2000), found that children with LI have more social difficulties with peers than other children. Fujiki et al. (2001) emphasised the social competence of children with LI and concluded, children with LI, lack social competence and are not able to take advantage of social activities in school to join and bond with other children, hence these activities may be just another context for their exclusion.

Deming (2009) mentioned that the ‘Head Start’ program promotes children’s school readiness and focuses on social, emotional, cognitive and health development of children participated in the program. Morgan et al. (2012) suggested that high quality early intervention services before starting school can help children at risk with delays or disabilities to improve their long term educational and societal opportunities. Creating positive interaction between children with LI and their peers in school can be beneficial too, hence this context can help to accept other children and friendship formation; this opportunity provides more interaction with peers who can help as excellent language models (Fujiki et al., 2001). Kindergartens and primary schools which included language or speech therapy in addition to their pedagogy and curriculum can provide better psycho-social and academic opportunities, hence these opportunities can improve development and academic outcomes of children with LI (Ullrich, Ullrich, & Marten, 2014).

Thus, specific interventions which are designed to improve the children’s understanding of social opportunities, and abilities to access and participate in these contexts are beneficial for children with LI. In addition to the interventions, adult structuring of activities to guide children through activities is important and can be beneficial for children with LI and include them in all activities (Fujiki et al., 2001). The results of studies by Pentimonti et al. (2014) suggested that high quality classroom experiences can be important to ensure that children with LI are ready to learn.

Another important factor to consider for children with LI is their families. According to Terry and Irving (2010, p. 118), “Educators must also be mindful of the families of children diagnosed with disabilities. It is difficult for any family to accept and adjust to having a child with special needs, the family’s attitude toward disabilities and their resultant behaviour can be a major factor in the identification of the disorder and the implementation of an intervention program”.

CHAPTER TWO
In this study there were a number of children who had difficulties with their speech and language compared to other children, so this warranted further investigation to see if the school readiness, social, emotional, and academic development of these children could be affected by this problem.

2.5. The Effect of Family Socio-Economic Status (SES) on Children’s Achievement

A family’s socio-economic status (SES) can also affect young children’s achievement at school. Different studies have shown that there is a link between children’s cognitive abilities and their family socio-economic background. For example Heckman and Masterov (2007) found that parental environment plays an important role in shaping children’s lives, and Berthelsen and Walker (2008) reported that ethnicity, maternal education, and family income influence children’s competence. Han et al. (2012) also studied family resources and family process, and found that children’s school readiness could be affected by these two factors. According to Han et al. (2012), family socio-economic status (family income), parental education and parental occupation, can be considered as family resources. Hence parental behaviour and parental decisions are related to family process. Hartas (2010) also argued that socio-economic disadvantage and maternal educational are important factors that influence children’s abilities at the start of the school. Children, who are growing in disadvantaged family, seem to have cognitive and behavioral problem which lead them to poor teenage and adult social and economic outcomes (Heckman & Masterov, 2007).

Nonoyama-Tarumi (2007) included wealth as an important factor that can affect children’s achievements; where she defined “wealth” as the family assets and structural characteristics of the children’s home, which reflect the earning power of the parents and the economic environment in which children developed. She found that wealth has a direct impact on a family’s economic well-being as it shows the level of educational resources and cultural capital which is available for children at home. The main goal of cultural capital theory is that family lifestyles and cultural resources create “the intellectual environment for children’s educational aspiration, motivation to achieve and performance in schools” (Nonoyama-Tarumi, 2007, p. 62), so differences in cultural capital can explain the differences in the quality of home environment.
of high and low status families. Therefore the cultural capital could be a predictor of the child educational outcome. Nonoyama-Tarumi (2007), called for new policies which provide additional learning opportunities and out of school tutoring to help disadvantaged children in their homes and communities. Regular adequate income is another important factor in determining the economic situation of the families. According to Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2011), children who are living in families with inadequate income are at risk of poor health, low educational outcome and self-esteem. Heckman and Masterov (2007), argued that disadvantaged families have an important role in the education and motivation of their children; children who growing in disadvantaged family are less educated and more disposed to participate in crime.

Different studies have promoted parental involvement or family school partnerships. There are different policies concerning such involvement, but, as Nonoyama-Tarumi (2007) argued, there is a need for educational policies around family and school partnerships, to involve all parents with the school community and prevent any inequality amongst families. Berthelsen and Walker (2008), reported that families with higher incomes are more likely to be engaged with different activities in schools than lower income families; and Hartas (2010, p. 907) found that, “Despite the involvement of a high percentage of parents from diverse socio-economic groups with activities directly related to school (e.g. learning the alphabet, writing), children’s literacy and social outcomes at the end of the first school year were differentiated by parents’ socio-economic status”.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW2011, p. 86), “Children who are economically disadvantaged are not necessarily the most disadvantaged children. Close family relationships; particularly closeness to at least one parent, appear to protect children from the worst effects of economic disadvantage”. However Hartas (2010), concluded that children who are living in poverty and have mothers with no educational qualifications, do less well in literacy and social development, in comparison with other children who are living in families with high levels of socio-economic status. In addition to the effects of having a mother without any educational qualification, there are other factors which influence children’s outcome. For example Heckman and Masterov (2007, p. 460) argued that “absence of a father, low levels of financial resources, low parental education and ability, a lack of cognitive and emotional stimulation, and poor parenting skills” are also important factors which can affect children’s educational outcomes.
Researchers in different studies have argued that the gaps in children’s abilities and skills can be related to their parental environment and parenting practices. Heckman and Masterov (2007) suggested that early interventions can be one of the solutions to help reduce this problem, and emphasised that later interventions in children’s lives can be less effective. Winter and Kelley (2012), discussed the association between poverty and school readiness and concluded that “poverty is a pervasive condition that has long been associated with unfavorable social, health, and educational outcomes for children” (p. 264). They also suggested that school readiness programs are a good investment for communities, and if children from low income families enroll in high quality early intervention programs and get full family support services, they can achieve better results in their studies. Abbott-Shim et al. (2003) emphasised, ‘Head Start’ program is beneficial for disadvantage children, and it can improve children’s vocabulary and writing skills. Heckman and Masterov (2007, p. 480) had similar findings and mentioned: “studies of interventions for children from low-income families find that participants experienced higher achievement test scores, decreased grade retention, reduced time in special education, less crime and delinquency, and increased high school graduation”. Currie (2001), emphasised about the short- and medium-term benefits of the ‘Head Start’ programs for children, and she mentioned that the effects of these programs are often greater for disadvantaged children. According to Heckman and Masterov (2007), intervention programs are more beneficial for disadvantage children during the early years of their schooling, and if it left untreated it can cause more problem in later years of their schooling. Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, and Mann (2001) concluded that, involvement in an intervention program for low income children can help them to achieve better educational and social outcomes. Heckman and Masterov (2007, p. 35) also argued, “Studies of interventions for children from low-income families find that participants experienced higher achievement test scores, decreased grade retention, reduced time in special education, less crime and delinquency, and increased high school graduation. The gains vary with quality and age at which, the program is started”.

Although directly examining the children and their families’ socio-economic status was beyond the scope of this study it does still need to be acknowledged as an important factor in school readiness and it could be the focus for a future research study at SBPS.
2.6. Importance of Preschool

Studies have shown that the first year of school is a critically important time in children’s lives, and pre-school experiences can influence the later academic achievement of children at school (Murray & Harrison, 2011a). Heriot and Beale (2004, p. Vii), emphasised, “all parents know that children go to school to learn, but what some do not know is that what children manage to learn at school depends a lot on what they learn at home in the preschool years; most children who are well prepared in the preschool years do well at school”. Prior et al. (2011, p. 4) similarly argued, “The pre-school period is highly significant for the acquisition of social and pre-literacy skills which in turn underpin success in reading as well as in overall social adjustment”. Murray and Harrison (2011a), also noted that children have better literacy and numeracy skills when they have attended at pre-school program. Barnett and Hustedt (2005) also emphasised, ‘Head Start’ programs have strong short-term effect on children’s achievements; for example children who participated in these programs grow faster in vocabulary and phonemic awareness.

In Victoria “Preschool” is the term used to refer to early childhood education programs which occur in non-school settings: “Preschool consists of non-compulsory educational and developmental programs for children in the year prior to commencing full-time primary education, and may be delivered in Government or privately funded stand-alone facilities, or within schools or childcare centres” (AIHW, 2011, p. 60).

Having early educational interventions during the pre-school years is an effective way to avoid learning difficulties and achieve a healthy development for children (Reynolds et al., 2001). Early childhood programs have an important role to provide opportunities for children to develop and extend their skills before they go to school (Murray & Harrison, 2011a). Reynolds et al. (2001, p. 2346), also argued that “public investments in early educational programs in the first decade of life can contribute positively to children’s later success”. Children’s experiences prior to school (preschool attendance, participation in transition activities, and social support) provide opportunities for them to develop confidence in seeking challenges and working independently: “The knowledge children bring with them to school and the dispositions they show towards learning are important predictors of their subsequent achievement in literacy and numeracy in their first year of formal schooling” (Murray & Harrison, 2011a, p. 542). There are many opportunities throughout school to influence children’s learning outcomes such as: the
willingness to engage in learning, reputation that they can gain from being engaged in learning and the raising of positive attitudes towards learning (Hattie, 2013).

Prior et al. (2011) recommended that preparation for school, which involves improvement of language and pre-literacy of children before school entry is necessary for all children, especially for those who are coming from socio-economic disadvantage background and those with impaired early language development.

Kelley and Winter (2008) emphasised the importance of the role of pre-school in children’s development. Furthermore they added, children who have been in centre-based preschools have more academic success than children who have been in less formal preschool. Ackerman and Barnett (2005) concluded that children who were enrolled in a pre-school program have faster rates of growth in vocabulary, phoneme awareness and pre-literacy skills than children who were not enrolled in any program. According to Stipek (2012), to increase academic success of children, it is necessary to get them into educational contexts. Stuber and Patrick (2010) conducted a three years study to investigate the skills and assets, which children can bring to Kindergarten, and what they learn while they are there. They found that early learning practices in the home or school are very important and have long term effects on children’s academic skills and development. Other research studies also support the importance of preschool programs. Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, and Barnett (2010, p. 602) reviewed 120 studies of cognitive outcomes carried out over five decades, and found even greater weight for the argument that “preschool intervention programs provide a real and enduring benefit to children”. Crone and Whitehurst (1999), argued that reading skill differences between children may be attributable to the preschool literacy experience of children before they start the school and first grade reading instruction.

Barnett and Hustedt (2005, p. 21) mentioned, “research on Head Start and similar programs has found substantial long-term benefits in educational achievement and attainment, employment, and social behaviour”. Reynolds et al. (2001) emphasised that participating in preschool programs is associated with a higher rate of school completion, lower rates of juvenile arrest, lower rates of special education, lower rates of grade retention and lower rates of dropping out from school. They also mentioned that established public programs can have a positive impact through early adulthood.
Gill, Winters, and Friedman (2006, p. 213) argued, “For all children, the transition to formal schooling is a noteworthy milestone with far-reaching consequences and it initiates a critical period of adjustment in children’s lives”. So the duration of pre-school years as an important factor which could affect the school readiness and academic development of the EYRP children in their later years of schooling is an important consideration for this study.

2.7. Play-Based Learning

Play exist in all societies; it is not important where the children live or what language they speak, what important is that they spend time in playful activities. Different cultures have different concepts about play, and they react differently to children’s play. No matter what the culture or place in which children are raised, common interests bring children together to play (Smith, 2010). According to Shipley (2008, p. 19), “Play is an absorbing, satisfying, and often joyful experience for children”, and it has important role on children’s social, emotional and cognitive developments (Smith, 2010). Creativity of the children can be improved by play, through play they also can learn how to compete and cooperate with others (Hastings & Hayes, 1981).

Play is vital for young children’s development, and it is an essential way for them to learn (Smith, 2010). Shipley (2008) argued that, play can reduce stress in children, and make them successful and happier learners. Briggs and Hansen (2012, p. 4), found that play can be a “vehicle for learning whether that be the therapeutic, practising of existing skills or developing symbolic thinking”. When children play, they explore new things and extract information about their environment (Shipley, 2008); and by providing suitable resources, parents and teachers can develop children’s play (Smith, 2010). It is widely accepted that play has an important role in young children’s learning, and as they grow, there is a change in focus given to play and activities for older children to be more engaged in the learning process (Briggs & Hansen, 2012).

Hattie (2013), argued that parental expectations can be critical to the children’s success when they go to school. Berthelsen and Walker (2008) also found that the expectations’ of parents have an important role on future achievements of children. Furthermore they emphasised that if parents expect more from their child, the child is more likely to show positive attitudes toward school and learning. Parents in the 21st century have become more concerned about how children will be successful in school, and this increases the demand of traditional academic work within
the preschool curriculum. So it is vital that parents understand the role of play in learning during the early years of children’s lives (Shipley, 2008). It is argued by early years practitioners that play inspire children to be “independent and autonomous learners” (Briggs & Hansen, 2012, p. 16). In order to feel like autonomous learners, children need to feel they have opportunities to make their choices about the learning; with these opportunities they feel more responsible and motivated to be engaged and focused on their learning (Briggs & Hansen, 2012). Early learning through a play-based approach is an important foundation for later learning (Shipley, 2008). Providing children with time, space and necessary resources, with initial questions to begin the process of exploring can help them to start the experience and develop on learning process (Briggs & Hansen, 2012).

Lynch (2011) found, teachers play a pivotal role on children’s learning and can compensate social disadvantage in many circumstances. A caring and responsive teacher can create a good learning environment which can affect the emotional, social and other aspects of children’s cognitive development; this type of environment can bring safety and security for children and help them to experiment and try new things and freely express their ideas (Isbell & Exelby, 2001). Curby et al. (2009), argued that better academic development of children in pre-school or Year One of schooling is linked to the level of a teacher’s instructional support. As play has a significant role in the developmental processes of children’s learning, it is parents’ and teachers’ responsibility to encourage and structure children’s play (Smith, 2010). Briggs and Hansen (2012, p. 63), similarly argued that “Teachers and other adults have numerous roles in different types of play-based learning”. They furthermore mentioned that any intervention in children’s play should be matched and appropriate, to provide successful play-based learning experiences (Briggs & Hansen, 2012).

Different studies have shown that teachers can introduce different subjects through play-based programs; in this way they can inspire and motivate children more than just offering subjects by rote learning. For example, (Shipley, 2008, p. 29) mentioned, “research has shown that play promotes conceptual understanding and transfer of learning from one context to another, instead of rote learning, and, when play is purposefully planned to challenge children in all developmental domains, it also fosters divergent thinking and creative development”.

Play is part of a process of creating a new knowledge and makes a connection between different subject domains (Briggs & Hansen, 2012). Shipley (2008, p. 12) emphasised, “Planned play
experiences are an important link between learning, the environment, and development in all areas of children’s growth: physical, social, emotional, and cognitive”. So play can be useful for children, as it can bring the opportunities to practise skills that they learnt in structured lessons (Briggs & Hansen, 2012). According to Shipley (2008), it is important to design or plan the play activities, to challenge children to develop specific skills or help them to learn different concepts. Structuring of a play by adults improves the play for children, and it can help them to improve different aspect of their learning (Smith, 2010). Therefore “planned activities should be systematic and regular, they should follow a curriculum framework that ensures children make steady progress” (Shipley, 2008, p. 141).

Sanders (2012) argues that children are responsible for laying the foundation of their future learning, so it is necessary to encourage them to learn, and inspire them to step out of their comfort zones while being supported by the teachers. To do this, teachers need to provide an environment which helps children to develop their abilities and cognitive skill. According to Briggs and Hansen (2012, p. 78), “A play-based approach to learning is flexible and therefore addresses children’s needs and builds on their strengths”. So it is important for educators to have a clear understanding of the types and styles of play, and know how play can develop children’s learning. Briggs and Hansen (2012) concluded that, by involving children in developing their own learning plan, teachers can increase children’s motivation for learning and help them to improve their behaviour. This knowledge is useful for teachers, as it can help them to design the curriculum, plan activities, and record children’s improvement as they play (Shipley, 2008).

Smith (2010, p. 216), argued that “play is one way in which children get a lot of experience about the world – the physical world and the social world”, and so they learn different things by doing play. Many aspects of children’s developments can be identified through play, including: distinguish of children’s knowledge of language, their problem solving skills, their ability to work with other children, their physical skills, and their emotional self-control (Shipley, 2008).

Different types of play can be employed by teachers to improve learning in the primary school, and also invoke a more enjoyable learning experience for the children. These include: Artistic or design play, controlled imaginary play/social dramatic play, exploratory paly, game play, replication play, fantasy or pretend play, and role play.

- **Artistic or design play:** This type of play inspires children to “carefully plan and logically systemise the steps they will take to achieve their (or their teacher’s) desired
outcome” (Briggs & Hansen, 2012, p. 32). The important part of artistic or design play is the “process the participant goes through to learn something about themselves or the concept they are exploring” (Briggs & Hansen, 2012, p. 32).

- **Controlled imaginary play/social dramatic play:** This type of play emphasises the social aspect of the children’s learning. It brings opportunities for children to think, speak, listen, solve the problem, negotiate and deal with disagreements, and it can lead them developing their social and emotional understanding (Briggs & Hansen, 2012).

- **Exploratory play:** In this type of play, children play as an explorer or investigator. It involves simple activities and exploring the outcomes of those activities. This can help children to develop new ideas, solve the problems and improve their skills in other areas. Exploratory play can promote many learning opportunities (Briggs & Hansen, 2012).

- **Game play:** Game is a key type of play, as it can develop cognitive skills, physical, emotional and behavioural health of children. In this type of play children can work as a team, develop different strategies, evaluate and improve their performance (Briggs & Hansen, 2012).

- **Recreation play:** This play provides an opportunity for children to re-enact stories and try out different roles in society. It helps children to use their imagination, and develop their creativity. In addition their social and emotional skills will develop, as they play with each other (Briggs & Hansen, 2012).

- **Fantasy or pretend play:** This play allows children to pretend that they are another person, animal or an object. In this play children use their imagination, and as they play they develop their imagination, creativity and narrative, cognitive, social and emotional skills (Smith, 2010).

- **Role play:** In this type of play children explore different roles of different people which they may or may not undertake in their real life. This play boosts and develops the creativity, cognitive, social and emotional skills of children (Briggs & Hansen, 2012).
According to Hattie (2013), to have high expectations and share a common conception of progress with children, teachers need to be concerned about the nature of their relationships with children. Curby et al. (2009, p. 366) also noted that “higher quality teacher-child interactions are associated with higher student achievement”, and they argued that teachers need to identify classroom practices and pedagogies which support children’s learning. By understanding the children’s different learning styles, teachers can become more aware of the best way of teaching (Terry & Irving, 2010). According to Lockwood (2008), teachers need to know that children learn through physical activities and their five senses. So it is important for teachers to understand that children learn in different styles and different levels. Furthermore she suggested that the learning environment should concentrate on individual children and their needs rather than concentrating on the subjects, to help children to be independent learners. Children with different needs can be supported by play-based curriculum. Sometimes children with language impairment or English as a second language have difficulties with their learning; for these children a play-based approach provides an opportunity to be engaged in different ways and for teachers to be able to listen more carefully to these children and help them to improve in their learning (Briggs & Hansen, 2012). According to Hotam and Hadar (2013), the pedagogy of each teacher is connected to the children’s learning experiences and it can improve the outcomes of learning. Effective pedagogical practice can promote the well-being of children and the school community. Curby et al. (2009) emphasised the importance of engagement of children by providing different materials throughout the class time, they mentioned by doing that “teachers help students’ awareness, exploration, inquiry and utilization of class materials” (p. 6). It is also important to plan a range of learning activities for children; in this way teachers make strong and complete curriculum decisions, which can improve children’s learning (English & Wilson, 2004).

At Sunny Bank Primary School, the EYRP teachers have adopted play-based learning as a pedagogical approach for children to develop their thinking skills, and to better participate in their everyday life. The teachers believed that by using a play-based approach they could provide opportunities for children in the Foundation year, to help them explore and investigate the environment through their senses, while developing their social, emotional and academic skills, with their peers.
2.8. Absenteeism

According to Stuber and Patrick (2010), it is not only teachers who can affect children’s development in school, parents also have an important impact. The transition from Kindergarten to formal schooling is an important time of adjustment in children’s lives (Gill et al., 2006), and families have a central role in providing opportunities for children to develop their skills and language before they start the school (Murray & Harrison, 2011a).

Parents’ attitudes, beliefs and values have important roles on children’s academic achievements within the home environment (Gniewosz & Eccles, cited in Hattie & Anderman, 2013). As Heckman and Masterov (2007, p. 448) argued, “The family is a major producer of the skills and motivation required for producing successful students and workers”.

Children gain academic and social skills by attending school regularly, and these skills are essential for their academic and social achievements (Daraganova, 2012). Children who do not attend school regularly may lose opportunities for learning the material and that can affect their future academic success (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). As Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) argued, children’s absence in Kindergarten affects their academic performance in Year One by disrupting continuity of learning.

Absences can influence the learning of the curriculum and general achievement of children (Schmitt, Balles, & Venesky, 2013), hence poor attendance in school may have a negative result for children and schools’ achievements (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). Similarly, Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) found that those children who did not have chronic absences during Kindergarten period, achieve better results in literacy and numeracy in the first year of school. Hancock, Shepherd, Lawrence, and Zubrick (2013, p. 258) emphasised, “if attendance rates can be improved from pre-school and Year One, then greater benefits will likely accrue”.

Daraganova (2012) found a positive relationship between the numbers of days that children attend school and their academic success across all age groups. School attendance is an important element of educational success, because missing school throws children off track in the learning process (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012), and continuity is required to develop more
complex learning outcomes. According to Epstein and Sheldon (2002), children’s school attendance not only affects them, but also could affect the school and their learning environment.

Several children from the EYRP cohort have experienced significant absences from school which can affect their academic development and achievements. The impact of children’s absences on their academic development is an aspect to be analysed in this study.

2.9. Summary

In this chapter I have reviewed a range of research studies which were related to theories and issues about children’s learning and school readiness and factors that can affect their readiness for learning and school. I explained the theoretical framework for this study which is developed from research by Barnett, (1995), Abbott-Shim, Lambert and McCarty (2003), Barnett and Hustedt, (2005), Ackerman and Barnett (2005), Camilli, Vargas, Ryan and Barnett (2010), and Prior, Bavin, and Ong (2011), into social, emotional and cognitive development and also school readiness of children, respectively.

From my review of different research studies regarding the school readiness of children, it is apparent that school readiness can be affected by a range of different factors including: age, language impairment, the quality of pre-school activities, families’ socio-economic backgrounds, and children’s absenteeism. In addition, positive transition from preschool/home to school can have positive influence on children’s readiness for school.

Parental expectations and attitudes are also important in affecting the child’s success at school. So providing positive belief and value can increase educational success, while absenteeism, can disturb the scaffolding of learning. Teachers also play a critical role in children’s success in school. The teachers’ position is very critical, because by providing a strong organizational classroom structure and supportive learning environment, they can promote risk taking in learning, help children to understand the learning styles, create an excellent rapport with individual children and show high levels of expectations from children. To achieve the best result in developing children’s social and emotional skills and to improve children’s educational success; adopting play-based learning can be useful. Play-based learning is critical in promoting flexibility in practising existing skills, developing thinking and social skills and helping to
promote contextual understandings and an ability to transfer learning in different situations. Many of these aspects, as they relate to the 2012 EYRP cohort are investigated in this research study.
CHAPTER 3: Research Design

This chapter describes the research design and the data collection and analysis methods which are used in this study. The different stages of the data collection process are described, and an overview of data analysis methods is provided.

The focus of this research study was the social, emotional and academic development of the children in the two-year Foundation program at a Victorian Government primary school. This longitudinal research study followed a cohort of 19 children and their families which were enrolled in the EYRP (Early Years Readiness Program) in 2012 through to their completion of Year One in 2014.

The aims of this research study were:

- To track the academic outcomes of a cohort of children who entered the EYRP in 2012 through to their Year One AusVELS (Australian Curriculum in Victoria) results in 2014;
- To compare the performance on AusVELS results in 2014 of children from the two-year program with that of their peers;
- To investigate what were the influential factors in the children’s academic development;
- To investigate the benefits of the program for the school and its community.

3.1. Research Methodology

This research study was conducted, using a qualitative, interpretive, case study approach. Punch (2006), defined qualitative research as an empirical research, where the data are not in the form of numbers. As a philosophy of understanding (McMillan & Wergin, 2006), qualitative studies are undertaken by researchers who are looking for the meaning of the social or human problems (Creswell, 2009). The main goal of qualitative research is to develop awareness about the concept of the study; it describes the realities, grounded theory and develops understanding about the situation of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In qualitative research, researchers are the most responsible people for interpretation of the situation, they make observations when they are in the field, and
exercise judgment of the subjective; the next step of their research goes to analysing and synthesizing of data (Stake, 1995).

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 43), in qualitative studies “researchers understand human behaviour as too complex …….., and see the search for cause and prediction as undermining their ability to grasp the basic interpretive nature of human behaviour and the human experience”; therefore the main goal of qualitative researchers is to better understand the behaviour and experience of people in the study. Stake (1995), emphasised the importance of the interpretation of the situation, he believed that research is totally depends on interpretation of the event. According to McMillan and Wergin (2006), qualitative methods usually involve producing data from people, through observation or interviews. They also argued that qualitative methods are designed to interpret the meaning that people give to different situations or other people. Such a research methodology enables the reader to understand “who was involved in research, what information was collected and how the information was analyzed” (Stringer, 2007, p. 177).

For this research study, which focused on children in the EYRP and their academic progress, qualitative methods of data production, including, interviews with teachers and parents to track the children’s developments, and analysis of academic data were the most suitable approach, as I was seeking to understand the context and experiences of the children and teachers in the EYRP 2012 cohort. In particular I sought to develop an interpretive case study which uncovered the meanings and significances of actions “in relation to the understandings, purposes and intentions of the actor, and the actor’s interpretations of the significance of the context of the action” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 92). Bogdan and Biklen (2007), emphasised the importance of the meaning that people give to their experiences, and the process of their interpretation. Furthermore they argued that “to understand behavior, we must understand definitions and the processes by which they are manufactured” (p. 27). An interpretive methodology is the way that such meanings can be captured. Walsham (1995), argued about the ways that interpretive researchers report their findings and how they establish the credibility of their findings. In particular, he argued that, interpretive researchers do not report about the facts, instead, “they are reporting their interpretations of other people’s interpretations” (p. 78), and to establish the credibility of their report, they describe all details of their research for readers to support their results.
Walsham (2006, p. 321), also argued that in interpretive case study research there is a close involvement between researchers and the participants; this is “good for in-depth access to people, issues, and data”. This involvement enables researchers to observe participants in action. In interpretive case study, researchers use the theory in the early stage of research to generate preliminary theoretical framework for their study, and this theories can provide a valuable guide for their research study. This theoretical framework which is created from previous knowledge enables educators to build theoretical bases for their empirical work (Walsham, 1995). The theoretical framework for this research was discussed in chapter two. This evolved from the preliminary research at the school and throughout the study.

Developing an interpretive case study allowed me to gain an understanding of the school readiness of the EYRP children by investigating the situation in their natural setting; it involved building an in-depth analysis of the children’s academic development at school. Case study is an examination of a subject, setting, particular event, or document (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). According to Yin (1994), case study is the preferred strategy of investigation when the study happens in natural setting, “how” and “why” questions are being posed, and researcher has little control of the situation. “In brief, the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 1994, p. 3). Case study is also a precise examination of a single or multiple issues, and the attention of whole study is on specific set of issues rather than general (Burton, Brundrett, & Jones, 2008). The focus of a case study therefore is on depth rather than breadth. In-depth case study is a vehicle for interpretive investigations, and it involves regular visits to the place of research over an extended period of time (Walsham, 1995). Case study therefore is an appropriate approach for this study as it facilitates an in-depth investigation of individual children in the EYRP.
3.2. Research Methods for This Study

3.2.1. Data Sources

The term “data” refers to the raw materials, which researchers collect from the field that they are studying, and data is the basis for their analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Data collected for case studies may come from different sources, including: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical objects (Yin, 1994). Data sources used for this research study were interviews with teachers, focus groups with parents, teachers’ reports, written documents and AusVEL reports related to the participating children.

3.2.1.1. Interviews

The interview was one of the important methods of data collection for this study. An interview is a conversation between two people which can be more purposeful than normal conversation. In qualitative studies, interviews can be conducted in two ways; “they may be the dominant strategy for data collection, or they may be employed in conjunction with participant observation, document analysis, or other techniques” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 103). However “interviews are also essential sources of case study information” (Yin, 1994, p. 84). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) mentioned, researchers can employ different types of interviews such as structured or unstructured in their studies. Yin (1994, p. 84) stated, “most commonly, case study interviews are of an open-ended nature, in which you can ask key respondents of the facts of a matter as well as for the respondents’ opinions about events”.

This study used interviews to capture the views of the parents and teachers about the EYRP project and its effect on the children. Interviews were face to face and structured, with open ended questions which focused around the academic, social and emotional improvement of the children in the EYRP. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) emphasised that researchers need to explain about the purpose of the interview and assure the interviewee about the confidentiality of the interview. In each interview, the purpose of the interview was clearly stated (in the Plain Language Statement, the Consent Form, and verbally), and the interviewees (teachers and parents) were assured that the interview will be confidential. Stake (1995) emphasised, it is important to keep the record of an interview after the
interview is finished, and the researcher should prepare a written document with the key ideas and episodes captured during the interview.

One of the important aims of this study was to have productive interviews. As such interviews could help to achieve a better understanding of the improvement of children in the EYRP. In order to have a productive interview, the following guidelines were adopted:

1. Planned in-depth (open-ended) teachers’ interviews, which took about 30 minutes long with each teacher (Appendix A). Before the interview, each teacher was reminded of the purpose of the interview and the confidentiality of what was said;

2. Teachers had individual interviews, and not in groups;

3. The teachers’ interviews were conducted in the conference room in SBPS, to prevent any distractions or interruptions;

4. Interviews recorded on an audio recorder to have an accurate record of conversations, but before the interview started, permission was obtained from participants in using the audio recorder. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), some participants do not mind if you record the interview but some others may ask you, what you intend to do with the records, so it is important to get the permission before starting the interviews;

5. In each interview, brief notes were also taken;

6. All interviews were conducted during the school time;

7. Planned in-depth (open-ended) parents’ focus groups, to hear the voice of the parents and learn their perception about the project and their children (Appendix C);

8. Parents were invited to participate in focus groups by sending an invitation (Appendix B);

9. Parents’ focus groups were conducted after school hours;
10. For data recording and confidentiality of participants, their names were coded, and those codes were used throughout the study;

11. Teachers of the first year of Foundation coded from T01 to T02;

12. Teachers of the second year of Foundation coded from T03 to T07;

13. Teachers of the Year One coded from T08 to T12;

14. Parents of children coded from P01 to P19;

15. Children participating in this study coded from ST01 to ST19;

3.2.1.2 Analysis of Documents

Another important source of evidence for any study is documents (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Indeed, every study needs to examine different types of documents; so the school improvement plan or an achievement test report can be sources or measures for the study (Stake, 1995). According to Bell (1999) it is important to select appropriate documents for the study, and make the research replicable and valid for a future research study. Documents collected by a researcher can be public documents such as, newspaper, minutes of meetings, official reports; or private documents such as, personal journals, diaries, letters and emails (Creswell, 2009).

The secondary method of data collection employed for this study was analysis of different documents including:

- Reviewing of written documents:
  - ‘Observation Form for Transition’ which is done at the beginning of the year,
  - Term planner which records the children’s developments over time,
  - The EYRP individual learning plan which focus on social, emotional and academic development of each child.
• Children work samples:
  o Profile book of each child.

• Reviewing the teachers’ reports:
  o ‘On Entry Comments’ of teachers on children’s personal, social, emotional and academic skills,
  o June reports of all children for each year,
  o The year level reports of all children for each year,
  o The end of year AusVELS results of all children for each year, to compare the results to normal Foundation group.

3.2.2. Data Analysis

Data analysis means, “the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to enable you to come up with findings” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 159). According to Patton (2002), in qualitative studies analysis of data transforms the data into findings and helps make sense of the data. Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 159), similarly noted that “analysis involves working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns”. There are useful and important steps, which researchers can use to put the data in order for the actual analysis, some examples of the steps include:

1) Organize and prepare the data,
2) Researchers need to read through all data to gain a sense of the information and to mirror on its overall meaning,
3) Start the coding process to do the analysis,
4) Using the coded data to make a description,
5) Using narrative passage to represent the findings of the analysis,
6) Making an interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2009).

The data used in this study comes from the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP), and its analysis is intended to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the role of two-year Foundation in the academic development of children in the Sunny Bank Primary School (SBPS). This study followed 19 children
(3 girls and 16 boys) and their families which were enrolled in the EYRP and subsequent year levels from 2012 to the end of 2014. The hard copies of the above listed documents (‘Observation Form for Transition’, ‘On Entry Comments’, June reports, the year level reports, the end of year AusVELS results), and transcribed interviews/focus groups were analysed for evidence of the academic, social and emotional readiness and progress of children in the EYRP. According to Ackerman and Barnett (2005), and Prior et al. (2011), children’s school readiness is strongly influenced by different factors like; age, gender, family and language spoken at home. The purpose of this analysis was to examine the role of children’s age, health or language problem, families, early childhood program, school readiness, and their school attendance in their academic development.

The codes used in this study to analyse the data were:

- The social, emotional and fine motor skills of the children, based on the “Observation Form for Transition” used to find about the level of their school readiness;

- AusVELS scores of all children from each year used as a measure of children’s developments;

- The average scores of the literacy and numeracy of all children from each year used to measure the level of children’s improvement against progression point (2012 = 0.50, 2013 = 1.00 and 2014 = 1.50);

- The average literacy scores of children in 2012, 2013, and 2014 were obtained through the use of the scores of ENGREA (English Reading), ENGWRI (English Writing), and ENGSPL (English Spelling);

- The average numeracy scores of children in 2012 were also obtained through the use of the scores of MATNUM (Maths Number), MATWMA (Maths Working Mathematically), MATSPA (Maths Space), and MATMCD (Maths Measurement Chance and Data);

- The average numeracy scores for each child in 2013 and 2014 were obtained through the use of the scores of MATNUM (Maths Number and Algebra), MATMGE (Maths Measurement and Geometry), and MATSTP (Maths Statistics and Probability).
3.3. Demographic Information of Participants

The participants in this study were the teachers, children and their parents in the EYRP at Sunny Bank Primary School (SBPS). The primary participants were the children who commenced the EYRP at SBPS in 2012 for whom parents gave permission for their participation in this study and who completed Year One of their schooling in 2014, when their academic progress data could be compared with their peers (See Table 3.1).
Table 3.1: EYRP children’s age, gender, and language background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Date of birth</th>
<th>Age when starting school</th>
<th>Language background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>05/04/2007</td>
<td>5y 25d</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25/01/2007</td>
<td>5y 4m 5d</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 3d</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19/11/2006</td>
<td>5y 5m 11d</td>
<td>English, Macedonian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>07/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 23d</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST06</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21/12/2006</td>
<td>5y 4m 9d</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST07</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23/01/2007</td>
<td>5y 4m 7d</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST08</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>03/10/2006</td>
<td>5y 6m 27d</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST09</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>07/04/2007</td>
<td>5y 23d</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31/12/2006</td>
<td>5y 4m</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 12d</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST12</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 15d</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST13</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>03/10/2006</td>
<td>5y 6m 27d</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST14</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>02/02/2007</td>
<td>5y 2m 28d</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST15</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28/11/2006</td>
<td>5y 5m 2d</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST16</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 7d</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST17</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19/09/2006</td>
<td>5y 7m 11d</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21/11/2006</td>
<td>5y 5m 9d</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST19</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>05/12/2006</td>
<td>5y 4m 25d</td>
<td>Punjabi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2012 the school enrolled 36 children into the EYRP; four children did not participate in the program, as the school did not receive signed consent form from their families. By the end of 2013, nine children had transferred out of the school and the number of the EYRP cohort decreased to 23 children. By 2014, four more children also transferred from the school, and at the end of the study, 19 complete sets of data (3 girls and 16 boys) were available and this group was the focus cohort for this research study.
To ensure the well-being of all participants and comply with ethical guidelines, all participants were identified with codes. These codes are used throughout the study to keep all participants anonymous. The following tables show the codes for participants:

**Table 3.2: Teacher participants, their roles and allocated codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ Codes</th>
<th>Teachers’ Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T01 to T02</td>
<td>Foundation first year teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T03 to T07</td>
<td>Foundation second year teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T08 to T12</td>
<td>Year One teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.3: Teachers’ codes and the year of interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ Codes</th>
<th>The Year of Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T01 to T02</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T03 to T07</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T08 to T12</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.4: Children’s and Parents’ allocated codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s Codes</th>
<th>Parents’ Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01 to ST019</td>
<td>P01 to P19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.4. Validity and Reliability

Reliability is a concept, when the test or procedures in the study produce similar response under continuous situations on all occasions (Bell, 1999). Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 274), defined the reliability of a research as “consistency between the data you collect and report, and the empirical world you are studying”. Similarly, Boudah (2011), argued that reliability of research can refer to the consistency in which a certain study can be repeated several times and ultimately attaining the same or mirroring outcomes. Therefore if a researcher cannot assure the reader that the same conclusions would be reached by repeating the study, the reader cannot be confident that the results are meaningful. Creswell (2009) emphasised, by using detailed, rich and thick description, anyone
interested in transferability, will have a solid framework for comparison. Yin (1994) stated, the main goal of the reliability in a research is to reduce the mistakes and biases in the study. In conclusion reliability of a study refers more to the accuracy of description, rather than the interpretation of the findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Validity is a complex concept, which “tells us whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe” (Bell, 1999 p. 104). The validity of research usually is concerned with the accuracy or truthfulness of an account (Stake, 1995), and also it is concern about the interpretation judgment of the findings (Bell, 1999).

According to Creswell (2009), researchers need to employ certain procedures to check the accuracy of the findings. For example, triangulation of data can help researchers to check the accuracy of the findings. For this study triangulation was attained through using different sources of data about the children. For example to be confident about the effect of the EYRP on children’s achievement, different sources of data including, AusVELS reports, end of year reports, June reports, parents’ focus groups, and teachers’ interviews were collected.

To ensure the validity and reliability of this research, records were kept of the time, place, notes of interviews, and documents were provided by the school; and the research methodology adopted for addressing the research questions was as discussed previously – a qualitative interpretive case study.

### 3.5. Ethical Issues

One of the most important considerations that each researcher needs to keep in mind is ethical issues. Hesse-Bieber and Leavy (2006) emphasised, it is important to consider the ethical dilemmas that may happen during the study and describe them in the proposal. Similarly Creswell (2009), motioned that researchers need to anticipate any issues and address them in their plan.

Researchers collect data from and about the participants (Punch, 2005), and to develop a culture of trust with their participants, they need to protect the data (Isreal & Hey, 2006). It is important to respect the participants, the sites for the study and do not put them at risk (Creswell, 2009). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) similarly emphasised about the well-being of the participants in a research.
study. However the main goal of this research is to find authentic answers to research questions, and this will only be possible by ensuring the well-being of the participants in the study.

According to Creswell (2009), researchers need to have their research plans reviewed by an Ethics Committee. At RMIT the College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN) assesses the potential risk for participants, such as physical, psychological, social, economic, or legal harm during the study. Ethics approval for this project has been obtained from the RMIT University Human Ethics Committee (July 2012) and when I joined the project an amendment letter (April 2013) was sent to the CHEAN to add my name to the proposed study (the approved amendment is provided in Appendix E).

Stringer (2007) emphasised the importance of obtaining consent from participants, which allow us to share information with other researchers. It is important that the consent forms be signed by participants before they engage in the research, to acknowledge their rights during the study (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore participants need to be ensured that they can withdraw from the study at any time (Punch, 2006). To meet these requirements, written consent to participate in the research was obtained from the teachers before the study was started, and parents were asked to sign a consent form to give permission for their child to participate in this research. It was clearly spelt out that there is no obligation to participate and that there will not be a judgement for their decision, also it was mentioned that they can withdraw from this project at any time that they want (Appendix D). This research did not impact on the classroom teaching program.

Stringer (2007), and Punch (2006), both emphasised the importance of suitable storage for confidential information and maintaining the confidentiality of all participants. Based on the requirements of the ethics committee, raw data including, the end of year reports of the EYRP children, AusVELS results of the EYRP and non-EYRP children, transcribed teachers’ interviews and transcribed parents’ focus groups are stored as confidential information on RMIT University Network Systems for the appropriate period of time (5 years).
3.6. Limitations to the Research

This study was conducted at a single school. It was the SBPS’s decision to offer the EYRP program, and the school set the parameters rather than being a widely offered alternative in all schools where guidelines are set to identify participants and the depth and scope of the curriculum. So there was no comparison to similar programs. Teachers in the SBPS identified children who were ‘age ready’ to start school but were not socially or emotionally ready as being good candidates for this program. Parents needed to give permission for inclusion in this program, however, not all parents gave permission and these children were enrolled in the normal Foundation group. Not all parents attended in the organised focus group meetings, so comments were from those parents who attended the meetings, rather than all the parents. Formal information regarding parental backgrounds, socio economic status, family situations, health and well-being was not collected from parents, as it was beyond the scope of this study. There were no student observations to verify teachers’ comments. Teacher education and experience was not examined in regard to early childhood education and school decisions regarding staffing were already in place. The available data including; interviews, AusVELS scores and teachers’ comments was used to inform this research.

3.7. Summary

This research study used qualitative methods of data collection, to collect data about the effects of a two-year Foundation program for nominated children at Sunny Bank Primary School. The aim of this research study was to keep track of a group of 19 children who participated in the EYRP and compare their social, emotional and academic development with their peers who did not participate in this program and were enrolled in the normal Foundation classes.

The methodology of this research study was a qualitative method of data production. This method of data production helped to develop awareness of the purpose of this study, to develop understanding of the situation and interpret and analyses of the data. The teachers’ interviews, parents’ focus groups, ‘Observation Form for Transition, June reports of all children for each year, the year level reports of all children and the AusVELS results were the main sources of data for this research study.
An in-depth investigation was developed by interviewing teachers and parents over a three year period. School planning documents, AusVELS reports and student reports were included in the analysis.

Interviews were conducted to capture parents and teachers observations and opinions. During the interviews, structured and open-ended questions were asked and identifying coding was established. Documents that were examined were school reports, learning plans, planning documents and work samples.

The data were analysed by organising and coding the data, creating a narrative and then providing an interpretation and analysis. Validity was established by using data from different sources, and using sources that can be duplicated. Ethical issues were addressed by obtaining permission from families and the school and ensuring the confidentiality of all participants. The research study was also conducted with approval of the RMIT CHEAN, and appropriate procedures were followed.
CHAPTER 4: Results and Discussion – Research Question One

This study investigated the effect of the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) on the academic, social and emotional development of children at Sunny Bank Primary School (SBPS). The purpose of this study was to determine if the EYRP can improve the academic abilities of the children and if it has made any quantifiable difference between academic results of the EYRP children and their peers who did not participate in this program.

In particular, the aims of this research study were to track the EYRP children through to their completion of Year One, to compare their performances on AusVELS results with their peers who enrolled in normal Foundation, to investigate the influential factors in the children’s academic achievements, and to investigate the benefits of the EYRP for the school and parents.

Data were collected from SBPS about the EYRP children, to provide evaluation of the role of two-year Foundation in the social, emotional and academic development of children who participated in this program. Teachers and parents engaged in interviews and focus groups, regarding their views on the effectiveness of the EYRP, then all transcribed interviews and focus groups were analysed. The hard copy of all documents such as: ‘Observation Form for Transition, ‘On Entry Comments’, June reports, the year level reports of children, and the AusVELS results, from 2012 to 2014; also were analysed. Data analysis was based on the social, emotional and academic progress of children in the EYRP.

This and next two chapters address the research questions by using the results from document analysis, parents’ focus group, and teachers’ interviews. The research questions of this study were:

- Does the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) help the children to be more ready to learn? If so how? (Discussed in Chapter Four)

- Does the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) help the children to strengthen their academic ability? If so how? (Discussed in Chapter Five)

- Is there any difference between AusVELS results in Year One for the children who participated in the EYRP and their peers in the normal Foundation group? (Discussed in Chapter Six)
4.1. Research Question One

Does the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) help the children to be more ready to learn? If so how?

To answer the first question of this research study, the impact of different factors on the children’s learning readiness and school readiness were investigated; and different data were analysed to see if this program, which gave children an extra year of schooling, could improve the social, emotional and academic weaknesses of the EYRP children and help them to be more ready for learning and normal schooling.

While “All children, at all ages, are ‘ready to learn’” (Whitebread & Bingham, 2011), according to Ackerman and Barnett (2005) children’s future academic success can be affected by their readiness for learning. Murray and Harrison (2011b) also emphasised on the importance of the children’s learning readiness, and confirmed that when children starting school, they have to be ready to learn. Whitebread and Bingham (2011, p. 1) argued that, “There is no agreement upon a definition of the term ‘school readiness’ or ‘readiness for school’ and its use because there is no agreement upon what young children should be prepared for; in essence, the disagreement about terminology and definition encapsulates a fundamental difference in conception of the purpose of early years education”.

Ackerman and Barnett (2005) found that learning readiness of the children is depending on different factors such as: the Kindergarten’s demands of the children, the support which they provide for them, and the skills and knowledge of the children. Murray and Harrison (2011b) noted that the literacy and numeracy scores of the children at the end of the first year of school are the strong predictor of their learning readiness at the school entry. Whitebread and Bingham (2011, p. 2) argued that “numerous indicators highlight the substantial differences in early childhood experiences across children, differences that affect their initial development and which persist as children age, influencing dispositions towards learning as well as the range of skills they will be ready to employ upon arrival in school”. Therefore, “learning readiness encompasses non-cognitive areas, including dispositions, social abilities and behavioural skills, as well as other broad areas of cognitive competence such as following directions, communicating needs and organising belongings”(Murray & Harrison, 2011b, p. 530).
4.1.1. Children’s Readiness for learning and school

Different studies have shown that teachers have an important role in predicting children’s school readiness. According to Ackerman and Barnett (2005), teachers’ awareness of school demands can play an important role in defining whether a child is ready to start formal schooling. In this study all children were in the normal range of school commencing age; although all of the children were ‘age ready’ for school, the data from the ‘Observation Form for Transition’ (which was completed at an initial interview before starting school) indicated that there were some children who had speech issues ranging from immaturity in speech patterns, poor enunciation and issues stemming from English being the second language spoken. Social issues were also noted amongst the children ranging from aggression to anxiety. The ‘Observation Form for Transition’ also showed that there were some children who exhibited poor fine motor skills. Although teachers used an initial interview to determine if the children would benefit from the program, but their observations and predictions were generally confirmed whether the children required the two-year Foundation (See Table 4.1).

Teachers’ reports from June 2012, also indicated, in addition to the weaknesses in the social, emotional, speech, and motor skills that the children had when they started the program, some of the children had weaknesses in different areas of the literacy (could not write their name confidently, write any words on their own, or read any words) and numeracy (could not write the numbers to ten consistently, or had trouble in ordering numbers beyond ten); this confirmed that these children were not ready to start normal Foundation classes, and the SBPS teachers’ prediction of children’s readiness for starting school was correlated with the June academic results of the children (See Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Fine Motor Skills</th>
<th>Social Skills</th>
<th>Emotional Skills</th>
<th>SBPS teachers’ comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ST01 Male       | 5y 25d | Pencil grip was good but other skills were poor | Poor          | Poor             | • EYRP was recommended  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Only been at Kindergarten for two months and not ready  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • ESL was recommended  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Spoke broken English |
| ST02 Male       | 5y 4m 5d | Observed          | Observed      | Observed         | • Quiet but had lots to say when talking  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Calling out and wanted to be part of things  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Wanted to get others reactions |
| ST03 Male       | 5y 1m 3d | Poor              | Poor          | Performed well   | • EYRP was recommended  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Seemed very immature  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • ESL was recommended  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Limited English  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Punching other children during mat time |
| ST04 Male       | 5y 5m 11d | Performed well    | Observed      | Performed well   | • ESL was recommended  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Typical mixed up grammar and word order |
| ST05 Male       | 5y 1m 23d | Poor              | Poor          | Poor             | • Nervous/shy  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Second year of Kindergarten recommended  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Separation issues |
| ST06 Male       | 5y 4m 9d | Performed well    | Performed well | Performed well   | • Co-operative  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Understood instructions  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Speech was a concern  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • When communicating using sounds and not verbally eg. hands and actions, no word |
| ST07 Male       | 5y 4m 7d | Poor              | Performed well | Performed well   | • EYRP recommended  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Appears to be immature  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Not interested in conversation  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Only wanted to do what he wants |
| ST08 Male       | 5y 6m 27d | Observed          | Observed      | Observed         | • Independent of his twin sister  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Speech problem, sometimes hard to understand  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • A bit teary initially but settled well and was comfortable |
| ST09 Male       | 5y 23d | Observed          | Observed      | Observed         | • Very happy and chatty child |
| ST10 Male       | 5y 4m | Observed          | Performed well | Performed well   | • Poor concentration  
|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Speech very hard to understand  
<p>|                 |      |                   |               |                  | • Immature |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Attached</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>5y 1m 12d</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Performed well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST12</td>
<td>5y 1m 15d</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>No ‘Observation Form for Transition’</td>
<td>No ‘Observation Form for Transition’</td>
<td>No comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST13</td>
<td>5y 6m 27d</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Performed well</td>
<td>Performed well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST14</td>
<td>5y 2m 28d</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Write his name but other motor skills were poor</td>
<td>Performed well</td>
<td>Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST15</td>
<td>5y 5m 2d</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Performed well</td>
<td>Performed well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST16</td>
<td>5y 1m 7d</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Performed well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST17</td>
<td>5y 7m 11d</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Performed well</td>
<td>Performed well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST18</td>
<td>5y 5m 9d</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST19</td>
<td>5y 4m 25d</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Performed well</td>
<td>Performed well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The analysis of the ‘Observation Form for Transition’ of the EYRP children (Table 4.1), indicated that seven children (ST04, ST06, ST08, ST10, ST13, ST15, and ST19), had speech issues ranging from immaturity in speech patterns, poor enunciation and issues stemming from English being the second language spoken. Social issues were also noted amongst the children ranging from aggression to anxiety (ST03, and ST05), and four of them showed weaknesses in their social skills (ST01, ST03, ST05, and ST11). There were nine children who also exhibited poor fine motor skills (ST01, ST03, ST05, ST07, ST11, ST14, ST17, ST18, and ST19), which could hinder their future learning when writing with a pencil or handling other equipment. Although teachers used an initial interview to determine if the children would benefit from the program, but their observations and predictions were generally confirmed whether the children required the two-year Foundation (See Table 4.1).

Teachers’ reports from June 2012, also indicated that, in addition to the weaknesses in the social, emotional and motor skills that the children had, when they started the program, 11 children had weaknesses in different areas of the literacy (ST01, ST02, ST03, ST05, ST06, ST07, ST10, ST13, ST17, ST18, and ST19) and nine children also showed some problems in the numeracy skills (ST01, ST02, ST03, ST05, ST06, ST07, ST16, ST18, and ST19), and this confirmed that these children were not ready to start normal Foundation classes (See Tables 4.2 and 4.3). Hence there were some children amongst the EYRP children, who did not have academic problems, but they had different issues in their social, emotional, or motor skills (ST08, ST11, and ST13) and based on the teachers’ comments or parents’ decision were enrolled in this program.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s name</th>
<th>Distinguishes differences between letters and words</th>
<th>Read some familiar words</th>
<th>Writing name</th>
<th>Writing some words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Still working on it</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Working on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes + surname</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>Still working on</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST06</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST07</td>
<td>Still working on</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST08</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST09</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>All of words in his book</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST13</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST14</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST15</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST16</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST17</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST18</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST19</td>
<td>Knows some letter</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Just recognise it</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3: June report 2012 (Numeracy)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s name</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Order numbers</th>
<th>Count to 10</th>
<th>Patterns with 3 elements</th>
<th>2D shapes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>Write to 5</td>
<td>Able to recognise to 6 and order from smallest to largest.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>Needs to work on writing 1-5</td>
<td>Able to recognize to 10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Good recollection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>Write to 5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>No, pattern with 2 elements</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>Write to 10</td>
<td>To 20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes + pentagon and hexagon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>Write to 5</td>
<td>To 29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST06</td>
<td>Write to 5</td>
<td>To 12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No, pattern with 2 elements</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST07</td>
<td>Write to 5</td>
<td>To 5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>No, pattern with 2 elements</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST08</td>
<td>Write to 10</td>
<td>To 20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST09</td>
<td>Write to 20</td>
<td>To 20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST10</td>
<td>Write to 10</td>
<td>To 10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>Write three digit numbers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Three digit numbers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST12</td>
<td>Write to 20</td>
<td>To 30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes + pentagon, hexagon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST13</td>
<td>Write to 10</td>
<td>To 11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST14</td>
<td>Write to 25</td>
<td>To 30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes + pentagon and hexagon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST15</td>
<td>Write to 15</td>
<td>To 20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST16</td>
<td>Write to 5</td>
<td>To 5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST17</td>
<td>Write to 10</td>
<td>To 10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST18</td>
<td>Trace to 5 with help</td>
<td>To 5</td>
<td>To 5 with help</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST19</td>
<td>Working to write to 10</td>
<td>To 10</td>
<td>To 5 with help</td>
<td>No, up to 2 elements</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 4.2 and 4.3 many of the children were performing below expectations in June. About six children (ST01, ST05, ST06, ST07, ST18 and ST19) could not yet write their name confidently and eleven children (ST01, ST02, ST03, ST05, ST06, ST07, ST10, ST13, ST17, ST18 and ST19) were not writing any words on their own. Four children (ST05, ST07, ST18 and ST19)
were yet to recognise the conceptual difference between letters and words and seven children (ST03, ST05, ST06, ST07, ST13, ST18 and ST19) could not read any words. In numeracy nine children (ST01, ST02, ST03, ST05, ST06, ST07, ST16, ST18 and ST19) could not yet write the numbers to ten consistently and nine children (ST01, ST02, ST03, ST07, ST10, ST16, ST17, ST18 and ST19) still had trouble ordering numbers beyond ten. These basic skills were still the foundation of lessons in the middle of the year pointing to these concepts needing to be repeated, revisited and built upon in small frequent steps. So the extra time in this pre Foundation year will provide an opportunity for these concepts to be mastered by the children (See Tables 4.2 and 4.3).

In one case (ST03), I found that the parents disagreed with the teacher’s comments in the ‘Observation Form for Transition’; but an analysis of ST03’s achievements at the middle and at the end of 2012 confirmed that he was not ready to participate in the normal Foundation program as he had problems in different areas, so this program could help him to improve socially and academically (See Table 4.4).
Table 4.4: Analysis of ST03’s improvement (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Student “ST03”</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **‘Observation Form for Transition’** | • Teacher considered him for EYRP.  
• Kindergarten (Four-year-old) was his first experience in a group setting.  
• He spoke Arabic and has very little English.  
• ST03’s dad wanted him to go to normal Foundation. |
| **‘On Entry Comments’** | ST03 enters the classroom with confidence. He is still settling into the classroom routine and expectations. He chooses to work independently alongside other children. He is still developing his strategies to cooperate with others, and to follow teacher directions. Staff have been modelling and using visual aids to encourage ST03 to express his feelings and actions in an appropriate manner. |
| **June 2012 report (Literacy)** | ST03’s speaking and listening skills have improved throughout this semester, however as English is his second language, he needs to continue working on these skills effectively. ST03 can recognise his name and identify the first initial letter. For example, when he is browsing his take home books, he saw the word ‘box’, and said, “It is in my name”, identifying the letter ‘b’. ST03 can recognise several letters learnt during this semester, such as: ‘b’, ‘p’ and ‘s’. ST03 is beginning to form recognisable letters, so to write his name. He is developing the correct pencil grip, and has been practising anti-clockwise and clockwise formations. ST03 is still developing the concept of left to right directionality in both reading and writing. He has made good progress with his English, and is beginning to ask and respond to simple questions. |
| **June 2012 report (Numeracy)** | ST03 is making good progress in mathematics and can confidently count up to ten. This was illustrated when he counted a set of ten toy teddy bears, and was able to indicate how many teddy bears altogether. He is beginning to recognise and record numbers up to five, and is encouraged to develop this skill when working with numbers up to ten. ST03 can use measurement language in real life contexts. For example, when he was building a tower, he described it as a ‘big tower’. He is continuing to develop his understanding about the concept of a ‘pattern’. He can re-create two element patterns using Unifix cubes and sponge shape painting with adult guidance. This was demonstrated when he used the shape sponge paints, to create a ‘pink’ and ‘yellow’ pattern. ST03 can recognise all 2D shapes learnt during this semester, and can identify these shapes in his environment. For example, when children went on a ‘shape hunt’, he recognised the shape of a basketball hoop as a circle and a window as a square. |
| **AusVELS 2012 report (Average)** | 0.50 |
The ‘Observation Form for Transition’ for ST03 (Table 4.4), indicated he had issues stemming from English being the second language spoken; he could speak Arabic and had very little English. Social and poor fine motor skills issues were also noted which could hinder his future learning.

The ‘On Entry Comments’ form also indicated ST03 had problems with settling into the classroom routine and expectations. He could not work with other children and preferred to work alone. Because of his language barrier the teachers had to use modelling and visual aids to encourage him to express his feelings and actions in an appropriate manner.

Analysis of ST03’s achievements at the middle of 2012 supported the SBPS teachers’ beliefs that he needed two years in the Foundation class. ST03 exhibited behaviours where he did not know how to interact with other children (aggressive behaviour such as punching other children) or respond to instructions from the teachers. Based on the June 2012 reports, ST03 could not read any words and he could just recognise his name and identify the first initial letter. He could recognise several letters learnt during that semester. He developed the correct pencil grip, and displaying very early reading behaviours, such as the directionality of a book. In numeracy ST03 could not yet write the numbers to ten consistently and had trouble ordering numbers beyond ten. He had difficulties in simple pattern making in numeracy, which still needed to be guided by a teacher. Adding to the difficulties of English being his second language, he was performing below expectations in the June report. From the various reports it seemed likely that ST03 could benefit from additional time to further his skills in English and his pre-literacy knowledge and concepts in numeracy; however his parents expected him to cope and thrive in the one-year Foundation class (See Table 4.4).

Murray and Harrison (2011a) found that learning readiness at school entry is defined by the ability of the children to work independently and being interested in looking for challenges at school. These factors are also strong predictors of the literacy and numeracy scores of children at the end of the year. Data from the EYRP cohort showed that the children started school with different educational experiences. Some of the children had participated in Three-year-old and Four-year-old Kindergarten programs (ST08, ST13, ST15, ST16), most of them had just experienced Four-year-old Kindergarten, and one of the EYRP children (ST01) participated for just two months in Four-year-old Kindergarten. However, the ‘On Entry Comments’ forms, which were completed by the EYRP teachers at the beginning of the EYRP school year, illustrated that children started school with different skills and knowledge. Some were able to identify letters, numbers, shapes, and pack their bags, while others
still needed to improve their ability to work independently. All of these children were chronologically eligible (age ready) for school, but they showed different levels of social, emotional and academic maturity and confidence in the classroom (See Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Children’s skills, based on their Kindergarten attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s name</th>
<th>Kindergarten attendance</th>
<th>‘On Entry Comments’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>Two months</td>
<td>ST01 enjoys role playing with the real world farm and loves playing with the cars and buses. He has made some friends in the classroom and is developing a rapport with the teachers. He usually cooperates with the other children and is becoming more responsible for his own learning. ST01 follows most classroom rules and expectations. He needs to continue to work on putting up his hand when he wants to share his ideas on the carpet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>Four-year-old Kindergarten</td>
<td>ST02 loves playing with the train sets and cars but needs to work on sharing with the other children when they want to play with them as well. ST02 enjoys listening to stories on the carpet and puts his hand up to share his ideas. He is willing to try new activities with some teacher support. He understands the routines of the day and follows most of the classroom rules with only a few reminders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>Four-year-old Kindergarten</td>
<td>ST03 enters the classroom with confidence. He is still settling into the classroom routine and expectations. He chooses to work independently alongside other children. ST03 enjoys playing cars and ball games outdoors. He is still developing his strategies to cooperate with others, and to follow teacher directions. Staff have been modeling and using visual aids to encourage ST03 to express his feelings and actions in an appropriate manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>Four-year-old Kindergarten</td>
<td>ST04 loves playing with the cars and trains and he also enjoys spending time in the home corner using his imagination. ST04 is still learning to complete a task before moving on to the next. ST04 becomes frustrated very easily between transition periods. He needs to develop his ability to come and seek teacher assistance when he needs help solving a problem or when he feels overwhelmed. ST04 also need to start using more oral language when he is frustrated to help him work through his problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>Four-year-old Kindergarten</td>
<td>ST05 enjoys playing in the home corner with other children and taking on various roles. He is a responsible student who can follow most classroom rules and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>Four-year-old Kindergarten</td>
<td>ST05 enjoys listening to stories on the carpet and listens to other children when they are sharing their ideas. ST05 needs to develop more confidence as a learner by offering to share his ideas on the carpet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST06</td>
<td>Four-year-old Kindergarten</td>
<td>ST06 is a valued member of the classroom who is beginning to learn the routines of the day. He enjoys playing with construction materials and made a car out of mobile by following a design from a picture. ST06 also likes exploring numeracy activities in the classroom such as creating 2D shapes on the geoboard. He uses small gestures to communicate some of his wants and needs to the teacher. ST06 is beginning to learn that he needs to follow classroom rules. ST06 needs to follow the teacher’s instructions without having to be repeated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST07</td>
<td>Four-year-old Kindergarten</td>
<td>ST07 attempts most activities in the classroom. He enjoys learning experiences about the natural environment, and likes sharing his knowledge amongst other children and adults. ST07 is still developing his skills to listen to teacher directions and questions. Staff have been encouraging and modelling ‘whole body listening’ with ST07, to ensure his attention is focused on the person who is speaking to him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST08</td>
<td>Three-year-old program and Four-year-old kindergarten</td>
<td>ST08 is a quiet and friendly member of the class. He is still developing the confidence to initially settle into the classroom morning routine, however, once he has conquered this hurdle, he attempts the learning activities in the classroom. ST08 follows teacher directions and can sustain his attention for a long period of time. Through encouragement, ST08 is developing the confidence to problem solve challenging learning experiences independently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST09</td>
<td>Four-year-old Kindergarten</td>
<td>ST09 is a cooperative student who has settled very well into the classroom. He is inquisitive and can sustain his attention at an activity for an extended period of time. He enjoys numeracy and literacy based learning experiences. ST09 enjoys working independently and playing alongside others. He is beginning to develop strategies to negotiate the play agenda with others. ST09 follows teacher directions, and is very attentive during carpet sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST10</td>
<td>Four-year-old Kindergarten</td>
<td>ST10 is confident to enter the classroom with ease and enjoyment. He enjoys playing alongside others, and following their play agenda. He is developing the skills to make better choices to ensure he is displaying appropriate behaviour. ST10 is working on following teacher directions and to listen attentively during carpet sessions. Staff have encouraged ST10 to demonstrate ‘whole body listening’ to develop his listening skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>Four-year-old</td>
<td>ST11 is an eager learner who listens attentively to the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kindergarten responses of others on the carpet. He usually follows directions and classroom rules and sets a great example for the other children. He is a well-liked child who has developed a few positive relationships in the classroom. ST11 needs to continue to work staying within the boundaries area when playing with the other children.

ST12

Four-year-old Kindergarten

ST12 is a very enthusiastic student who enjoys participating in classroom activities. He has developed a few relationships with other children and he is beginning to become more confident in himself as a learner. ST12 enjoys playing with the cars and the train set and he is also beginning to understand the routines of the day. He is working on becoming more responsible for his belongings such as making sure that his bag and lunch box are in his locker throughout the day. ST12 needs to start using his words more frequently when he becomes frustrated.

ST13

Three-year-old program and Four-year-old Kindergarten

ST13 has settled into the classroom nicely. She understands routines of the day and follows classroom rules most of the time. ST13 has developed some great friendships and enjoys taking on a variety of roles with them in the home corner. She is an active participant in classroom discussions and listens attentively to the responses of others. ST13 becomes very pleased when she receives teacher praise when working in small groups or one on one.

ST14

Four-year-old Kindergarten

It has been lovely to see ST14 settle into school this year. He has shown he is able to commit himself to an activity until it is complete and is always willing to work with the teacher on new tasks. ST14 has developed a few friendships in the classroom and mixes well with the other children. He enjoys exploring new activities and is confident to work without requiring continual adult approval, reassurance or praise. He adheres to classroom rules, follows instructions and is beginning to understand the routines of the day.

ST15

Three-year-old program and Four-year-old kindergarten

ST15 has settled well into the classroom. He enjoys outdoor sport activities with his peers. Staff have been encouraging ST15 to persevere on challenging tasks to develop his confidence. He enjoys working alongside others, and is developing strategies to cooperate and negotiate the play agenda. Staff have been modelling and encouraging ‘good listening’ with ST15 to aid his social and emotional development.

ST16

Three-year-old program and Four-year-old kindergarten

ST16 is a cooperative member of the classroom. She has settled very well into the classroom routine, and enjoys playing alongside her peers, especially in the home corner. ST16 is a responsible member of the class, and is beginning to display empathy towards children who need
to develop their confidence. She follows teacher
directions at all times, and helps her peers who need
extra assistance. ST16 is still developing her confidence
to attempt challenging learning activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ST17 | Four-year-old | Kindergarten | ST17 has settled very well into the classroom. He is
developing friendships with the children in the class. He
has the confidence to work independently and to play
alongside others. ST17 enjoys construction based
activities, whilst playing with other children. He is
developing strategies to negotiate his play agenda with
others. ST17 is a helpful member of the class who is
beginning to follow teacher directions. |
| ST18 | Four-year-old | Kindergarten | ST18 confidently chooses classroom activities and
attempts new activities independently. ST18 enjoys role
playing in the doll’s house and home corner with other
children. She usually enjoys coming to the carpet for
learning time and is beginning to raise her hand when
she has something to share with the class. ST18 needs to
realise the importance of following teacher instruction
especially during transition times from outside play to
inside play. |
| ST19 | Four-year-old | Kindergarten | ST19 enjoys playing alongside others to help him
understand how to attempt activities in the classroom.
ST19 is still developing his listening skills and
understanding classroom routines. He is developing the
skills to make better choices, to ensure he is playing
cooperatively and following classroom rules. Staff have
been using visual aids and short phrases to help enrich
his language and development in this area of learning. |

When reading through the teachers’ comments about the children’s behaviour and skills, it is difficult
to discern which child had the experiences of the two year Kindergarten or one year Kindergarten.
The comments indicated different skills and behaviours such as ability to work independently, make
friendships, follow classroom rules and routines, share with others, or needing to be taught how to
listen, how to sit, how to focus on one task, and how to co-operate with other children. While the
children entering EYRP are “age ready” for school, their ‘On Entry Comments’ (above comments
from the EYRP teachers) indicates that they have a wide diversity of social, emotional, and academic
maturity. For example, ST01, ST02, ST05, ST06, ST09 and ST12 are all ready to participate in
classroom activities and follow teacher instructions. However ST03, ST04 and ST07 are not
exhibiting the social and emotional maturity needed to engage in shared classroom experiences. Also,
although ST08, ST13, ST15 and ST16 had two years of Kindergarten experiences (compared with
the others having one year of Kindergarten), this did not seem to give them a head start either
academically or with their social and emotional maturity, with the exception of ST16 (See Table 4.5).
4.1.2. Teachers’ Interviews

In each year of this research, the teachers of the EYRP were interviewed, to ascertain their perspectives on the effect of the EYRP on improvements in the children’s learning. The interviews were conducted face to face, using open ended questions, which focused on the children’s school readiness and how the EYRP helped improve their abilities. Table 3.3 shows the codes for teacher participants and the year of interviews:

4.1.2.1. The Teachers’ Interviews (2012) – Children in the First Year of the EYRP

In the teachers’ interviews held in 2012, we discussed different factors that could influence children’s school readiness. There were two teacher participants (T01 and T02) in this interview.

The impact of social, emotional and cognitive skills on children

Teachers emphasised the effect of personal, social, emotional and cognitive skills on children’s school readiness. According to teachers, at the beginning of the year, many children had difficulty coping with the things they needed to do in the classroom. For example, T02 said, “There were many children who would come in crying in the morning and it would continue throughout the day”. According to teachers, children’s problems ranged from things such as separation anxiety from their parents, having to do things on their own like pack their bag, eat their lunch, cooperating, clean up after themselves and it was challenging and overwhelming for a lot of them to handle all of these changes and experiences. T02 said, “Now they are so much more confident, resilient, and cooperative and are able to learn more because of this program”.

Improvement of the social and emotional skills of the EYRP children since term one of their schooling

So to improve the children’s skills teachers mentioned that they had to spend every day focusing on how to get along, share, and be resilient, how to speak to other children, how to react in different situations, what to say when something does not go their way, how to work productively in the classroom; and teaching them the classroom routines and school rules. T01, said, “From term one, the
teachers’ major focus was on the personal, social and emotional progress of children”. So by the end of term one, they all improved with their personal, social and emotional skills. So by using the above strategies, children started term two more confident, and they were able to start independently solving their own problems and doing things on their own, which was the sign of the readiness for learning. T01 said, “Once term two started, children were more ready to start to learn and engage in teacher focused activities. Some of the children also had difficulty following directions from the teacher and would not listen and would just do what they wanted, but now they mostly listen”.

Furthermore, to improve the social skills of children, T01 said, “We had to supervise children at lunch time to help them with their social issues and teach them how they can be faced with any issues”.

The ways that teachers could help EYRP children to develop their physical and fine motor skills

Another important factor, which was stated in the teachers’ interviews, was the physical development of children and its effects on the fine motor skills of the children. According to the teachers, at the beginning of the year the children had difficulty in sitting upright as they had not developed the strength to do so yet. They had to slump or find a position that would help them to focus better. They also were very inexperienced with climbing and using the playground equipment. So to build the children’s physical strength, teachers supervised the children’s play in the playground every lunch and recess. T02 said, “Children’s constant practice and play at the playground equipment made a huge difference in their gross motor skill development”.

Some of the children in the EYRP also came with poor fine motor skills such as not being able to hold a pencil correctly. They had difficulty in using scissors and cutting on the line, trouble ripping paper or doing their own buttons up. T01 said, “Every day in the classroom we make sure that we set up activities that help strengthen these skills such as play dough, Lego, twisting pipe cleaners, clay, using spray bottles, playing with pegs, dressing babies, using peg boards, and writing”. The teachers mentioned that all of those activities have helped children to increase their fine motor strength.

Overall, from the teachers’ interviews in 2012, it seems that in term one of the 2012, the teachers’ major focus was on the personal, social and emotional progress of children. Teachers believed that it was challenging and overwhelming for a lot of children to handle new changes, but at the end of term one, they all improved with their personal, social, emotional and fine motor skills, and when term
two started, they were able to start independently solving their own problems and doing things on their own. They became so much more confident, resilient, and cooperative and were able to learn more because of the EYRP.

4.1.2.2. The Teachers’ Interviews (2013) – Children in the Second Year of the EYRP

Five teacher participants (T03, T04, T05, T06 and T07) were asked about the emotional and social skills of the children and if the EYRP could help them improve those skills.

How the EYRP could help children to improve their social and emotional skills?

Analysis of the teachers’ interviews in 2013, illustrated that the children’s strong social and emotional skills are the basis for their improvements, and if they do not develop in these areas, their future academic skills will decline or be comprised. T06 said, “There is a correlation between these skills”. She believed that if a child is not happy going to the classroom, it means that teachers could not complete their job. So teachers need to know about the children’s needs, and also have a positive relationship with parents. T06 said, “It is a reciprocal message, children need to first build the confidence and self-esteem and then achieve academic skills”. She believed that this program builds the children’s self-esteem, and gives them extra time to build other skills.

The social and emotional aspects of the EYRP were very helpful for the EYRP children. Teachers believed that children who needed help benefited from the EYRP. They mentioned that social and emotional skills, influence children’s academic achievement. In this regard T03 said, “First, social and emotional skills of children have to improve, and then, this improvement would affect and help to improve academic skills”. Data analysis showed that listening, looking, sitting are vital social skills that help children to learn. T03 said: “If the child is happy in the classroom, can listen, sit down, look at the teachers and other children, they can talk to other children. This means that they have settled socially and emotionally very well and now they can learn”.

Data analysis showed that the teachers also believed, this program builds the children’s self-esteem, and gives them an extra time and a foundation to build other skills. Extra time helps children to be mature and confident and this can also improve their academic abilities. According to teachers, this program helped some of the EYRP children to improve their leadership skills. T03 said,
“Now they put their hands up to do different roles in the classroom and are happy to take things on”. T04 said, “This program gave extra time and a foundation to children who have special needs. Extra time to help them to be mature and confident and this can improve their academic abilities”.

The teachers saw this program being beneficial for the EYRP children. The children were well settled and happy to help other children and improved their leadership skills. T05 mentioned that this program helped children be settled very easily this year. She said that this year, none of her children had any issues. She could use her EYRP children as monitors to help other children in the classroom, and T04 said, “They are ready to help other children and that is because of this program. The EYRP children made significant improvement”. So based on the teachers comments, the EYRP children were more prepared for normal schooling, even some of them went above other children socially and academically, and this program benefited lots of children.

Regarding the social and emotional issues of some of the EYRP children, teachers talked specifically about ST12 and ST06. They believed that those children have improved and had less issue compared with when they started school. T05 said, “ST12 had lots of issues like; he would not share and not get along with others last year. He still has his little moments this year, but he uses the strategies and is playing with more children, he has learnt social, emotional maturity from other children and he has benefited very well from this program”. T05 also discussed ST06 and said, “ST06 was very aggressive at the start of last year and he would not sit at all, would not listen or even cooperate, and he had speech problems. At the start his speech was blare, you could not understand what was he saying, but this year his speech is improving and he has formed words, you can hear lots of sounds, and now he is confident”. T05 mentioned that during 2013 she has not seen any of the problems that ST06 had exhibited in 2012 and he is very settled. T05 attributed ST06’s positive progress to the EYRP.

Analysis of the teachers’ interviews indicated that the teachers believed that the EYRP gives children exposure to routines, as well as the social emotional and academic aspects of their learning, and they did not see much difference between the EYRP cohort and other children in the Foundation classes. They agreed that EYRP group had needed extra time for their improvement and this program worked well for them. T04 said, “I cannot see much difference between EYRP children and their peers; they look much the same now. Some of the EYRP children went above other children socially and academically. This program benefited lots of children, and there is value in play based learning”.

CHAPTER FOUR
T05 said, “This program was beneficial for the EYRP children. Now they are well settled and happy to help other children and she has not seen differences between the EYRP children and non-EYRP children. In fact they are more prepared”. T07 also said, “The EYRP children could go to normal Foundation, but they were not ready for learning. This program has given extra time, confidence and self-esteem to these children to improve their skills”.

It therefore seems that this program had made a difference in terms of learning readiness and maturity for the EYRP children. T06 said, “She had a lot of parents who said that their children had lots of separation anxiety and were not coping very well with the new environment initially, but these two years helped children to improve”. Therefore this program helped children to develop, grow, and learn strategies and skills. So academically, they are now at the normal level. Furthermore, T06 said, “I should promote this program, because children need the consistent practice to build their social and emotional development and this program helps them to do that”. Based on the teachers’ comments, the EYRP would seem to help the children establish their social and emotional skills and the teacher’s intimate knowledge about the needs of the children could help them to put children into the right program and improve their overall abilities.

4.1.2.3. The Teachers’ Interviews (2014) – Children in Year One

Five teachers (T08, T09, T10, T11 and T12) participated in the teachers’ interviews in 2014, and they were asked about the social and emotional improvements of the EYRP children and the benefits of this program.

*Did the EYRP help children to improve their social and emotional skills? And if so how?*

Teacher participants in the interview all agreed that an extra year, helped children to improve their social, emotional and motor skills and be more comfortable in the classroom. Teachers mentioned that children had progressed very well; and were settled in the classroom; they were more confident, more independent and had a lot of friends. With the help of the EYRP, children could improve their concentration and silly behaviour was less prominent. In this regard T08 said, “ST05 has improved socially and emotionally, now he is more confident and he has more friends. The EYRP helped him to concentrate better than before”. Furthermore T08 said, “ST06 is more independent and has a lot of friends”.
Analysis of the teachers’ interviews showed that social and emotional skills of the EYRP children had improved and they had benefited from the EYRP. Teachers mentioned that the EYRP made a big difference in the social and emotional skills of the children and T10 said, “ST03 missed a lot during the Foundation because his family went overseas. Socially he does not have many friends, because he gets into fights with them. He is more compassionate this year, than he was before. He says sorry if he accidentally knocks someone”. So based on T10’s comments and considering the fact that ST03 came from a non-English speaking background, he seems to have made a lot of progress.

T11 also said she was happy with the children’s improvement: “ST13 is a brilliant student, her social skills are amazing, but she sometimes gets teary if something does not go her way”. She mentioned that an extra year has helped her to improve her social and emotional skills. Now she feels more comfortable in small groups, she has some monitor roles in the class and displays all the school values. However, according to T11, “ST12 has some issues with his speech. He muddles words up or repeats himself, nothing of a main concern for him except concentration and listening to instructions, which is his main issue”. She believed that the EYRP has helped him to make him less shy and more social, and without the EYRP, his concentration might have been worse. T08 also talked about the social and emotional improvements of the children and said, “ST14 is very confident, he always playing sport, very responsible and at the top end of the class”. T08 believed that the EYRP challenged ST14 and made him more responsible, he could have done a year at prep and been on level, but now he is ahead of his level.

Children’s fine motor skills and their improvements discussed in the teachers’ interviews, and teachers believed that the EYRP has helped children to improve motor skills. T12 talked about ST19, “The EYRP has helped him to improve his motor skills and he has no more language issues”. Regarding ST18, T10 said: “ST18 is participating in the fine motor program. Her progress is with support, but socially she can get along with friends, and she still has concentration issues”. T10 believed that the EYRP had made a big difference for ST18, because an extra year of learning helped her to learn her letters and sounds.
Summary of the Teachers’ Interviews (2012-2014)

Table 4.6 shows the benefits of the EYRP on children’s school readiness based on the teachers’ interviews in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

Table 4.6: Teachers’ comments about the effect of EYRP on children’s school readiness (2012-2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Social/Emotional</th>
<th>Academic/Formal</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|      | ● No more crying in the morning  
      | ● No more separation anxiety from parents  
      | ● Pack their bag  
      | ● Eat their lunch  
      | ● Cooperating with others  
      | ● Clean up after themselves  
      | ● Observation of anger issues  
      | ● Coping with classroom and school rules  
      | ● How to work productively  
      | ● Solving problems  
      | ● Getting along with other children  | ● Following directions  
      | ● How to listen  
      | ● Teacher focused activities  | ● Improve fine motor skills  
      | | ● How to sit  
      | | ● Climb and how to use the playground equipment  
      | | ● Strengthening activities  
      | | ● Physical development  | ● Improve confidence and self-esteem  
      | | ● Improvement in speech difficulties  | ● Familiar with routines  
      | | | ● Long absences from school hinder development  | ● Academic improvement  
      | | | ● No difference in progress between EYRP children and others  | ● Improvement in concentration  
      | | | | ● Language issues are less  |

By the end of 2012 the EYRP children were displaying appropriate social and emotional skills. There were no separation anxiety and children were able to pack their own bag without help. The children were showing developing social skills such as cooperating with each other in structured and unstructured activities and were observing and coping with school rules. Their initial reluctance to
interact with other children was minimal and their anger issues declined as the year progressed. Their physical development showed a marked improvement in their fine motor skills and their growing ability to use the playground equipment. Most importantly, they showed much progress in listening to the teacher and following directions from the teacher.

In 2013 the EYRP children happily settled into the normal Foundation class with their new peers. They adapted quickly to routines and were in fact, monitors and mentors to the new pupils in how the school operated. The EYRP children made friends easily and previous aggressive behaviour were minimized. It was observed that noted speech difficulties were improving and that there was a general atmosphere of confidence and positive self-esteem emanating from the children. One child was absent for long periods due to family holidays and his lack of progress were marked, compared to the other children.

Upon entering Year One in 2014 the EYRP children were observed to be confident, compassionate and more responsible. They were able to focus in group and individual activities and any initial language issues with individuals were becoming minimal. There was pleasing academic improvement in the children with slightly higher average scores than normal children and it was difficult to discern the EYRP cohort from non-EYRP children.

4.1.3. Parents’ focus group

The first parents’ focus group held in August 2012 and five parents participated in that focus group.

4.1.3.1. Parents’ focus group (2012) – Children in the First Year of the EYRP

To determine the benefits of the EYRP for children, a parents’ focus group was conducted in 2012. The aim of that focus group was to document the parents’ stories about their children experiences.

Why did parents enrol their children in the EYRP program?

The parents gave a variety of responses which indicated that they understood the purposes of the EYRP. During the parents’ focus group they showed that they were aware in various degrees that their children were not completely ready for the rigours of formal schooling. When the option of two
years was offered to them they were generally very positive. As P3 said, “Socially and emotionally my son was not ready. We knew he was not ready and he was a younger student too. We did not want him to be youngest in his class; and he has difficulties with his speech”. She also believed that both kindergarten and two-year Foundation are so helpful for children with needs. P4 agreed and said, “I feel the same as P3, my son was not socially and emotionally ready too. That is why I chose this program. Socially he is better now and he can play with other kids”. She also added she chose the school first and then she heard about the program and she was happy that she put her son in this program. P1 also commented, “I wanted my son to improve on his learning skills like: reading writing and speaking”. And P2 said, “Because I felt my son was not socially ready for Foundation, although kindergarten would not help if he did a second year”. In that regards P5 provided further details and said, “My son was lacking socially, he could not form strong friendships in, Three–and-Four–year-old Kindergarten; and his kindergarten recommended this program for him”. P5 mentioned that she was a bit sceptical at the first; because she believed that her son was very bright academically and she did not want him held back. She continued that, teachers assured her that they would keep up with him and challenge him. She also added, “Last year (in Kindergarten) he did not play with others at all, but this year he is playing very well”.

**The good features of the EYRP**

Parents were initially unaware of the type of activities that can be implemented, that extend preschool activities and prepare children for formal learning in Foundation. The parents were learning about play-based learning and discovery activities and this was overwhelmingly positive. They were pleased to see how the independence of their children progressed throughout the first year and increasingly how this would benefit the child in subsequent school years. For example, P2 commented, “Discovery learning is like a light goes on for them, it is a world at their fingertips and for their minds, and they do not get that at home. We do not have those facilities at home and we cannot go from one activity to another one. Teachers have different plans for every day, and children are coming home with greater vocabulary. There is a lot going there”. P3 agreed: “This program helped children to become more independent, getting my son to share with other children, understanding what “no” means and how get along with others. These are things that he learnt from this program”. P5 said that she was happy with all processes of the program, as was P4: “Everything about this program is good and we do not want to change anything about it”.
The positive physical development in the EYRP children

In general, parents were supportive of the physical aspects of the program. Much of the social immaturity that the children had displayed initially was observed through their fear to try activities. Their fine motor coordination was commented on as they improved their pencil and scissor skills. Parents comments indicated that they tried to encourage their children to be more confident and wanted them do their own work. They believed that they learnt these lessons from this program. Different comments of the parents indicated that they were also being educated on the importance of activities outside of school and that growing independence was a parental responsibility as well.

P2 mentioned that they also do some physical activities on Saturday morning, and her son is not fearful of different things and it has improved his fine motor skills. She commented that “I have noticed that my son changed a lot” and that “this program helps children to interact with other children”. P3 noted that “my son benefited more from this program than Kindergarten”. She also added that the academic side of this program is important too and she wanted to see how her son can improve academically. According to parents, this program helped children to improve their confidence; P4 said, “The fear factors were important for children and they have improved their confidence”.

The parental expectations of the EYRP

Parents were positive and supportive of the program. It was evident that their trust in the school’s assessment of their child was being fulfilled. For example, P4 commented, “I expected that my son would be helped more and would learn new ways to communicate and also build new friendships with children” and P3 said, “My son has improved a lot and he is happy”. P2 added that her son was happy too, he likes the school now and he wants to go back to school because he loves his teacher and knows that school cares for him. P4 was impressed by her son’s academic development. She said, “He knows the numbers now” and P3 commented that, “Being in this program is a privilege”. P2 had expected that the program would help her son to be ready for formal school and to help him being an independent learner.
Summary of the Parents’ focus group (2012)

Table 4.7: Parents’ comments about the effect of EYRP on children’s school readiness (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Why parents chose this program</th>
<th>Good feature of this program</th>
<th>Positive development</th>
<th>Parents’ expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2012 | • Children were not socially and emotionally ready to start formal schooling  
      • Speech problem  
      • Youngest in the classroom  
      • Children were not socially and emotionally ready to start formal schooling  
      • Speech problem  
      • Youngest in the classroom | • Play-based learning  
      • Having different plans for every day  
      • Children become more independent  
      • Learned how to share  
      • Play-based learning  
      • Having different plans for every day  
      • Children become more independent  
      • Learned how to share | • Improvement of fine motor skills  
      • Improving social maturity  
      • No fear to try activities  
      • Confidence improved  
      • Interacting with other children  
      • Learn through play  
      • Improvement of fine motor skills  
      • Improving social maturity  
      • No fear to try activities  
      • Confidence improved  
      • Interacting with other children  
      • Learn through play | • Academic development  
      • Children love school  
      • Children are happy  
      • Making friends  
      • New ways to communicate with others  
      • Ready for formal schooling  
      • Independent learner | • Academic development  
      • Children love school  
      • Children are happy  
      • Making friends  
      • New ways to communicate with others  
      • Ready for formal schooling  
      • Independent learner |

Overall, the parents’ focus group showed that parents were happy with their children’s improvements. They believed that their children have improved socially emotionally, and academically, and they are no longer afraid to participate in conversations, class discussions, and small group interactions so they were ready to start formal schooling. They were able to socialise better than before and their speech problems tend to be reduce because of this program. All parents expressed that their children were developing better general knowledge and displayed increasing vocabularies, they believed that their children are more confident, more independent, and made friends. Parents also talked about the good features of this program, they agreed that play-based learning, having different plans for every day, and teaching children how to share and be more independent are the good features of this program. Parents also talked about the academic improvements of the children, and said that their children have learnt to read and write a bit, which fulfilled their initial expectations from this program (See Table 4.7).
4.1.4. Age and school Readiness

An analysis of the relationship between age and school readiness of the EYRP cohort of children from their ‘Observation Form for Transition’ reports (See Table 4.1) indicated that it is possible that children’s readiness for school had been influenced by their age. To determine if the chronological age had an effect on children’s readiness; the level of the children’s fine motor skills, social and emotional skills were compared with their age. The results indicated that on average children with small age differences showed a range of different social, emotional and fine motor skills. Although there was a maximum of seven months age difference between the oldest and youngest child, but they had more varying in the three areas of skill development. For example some of the youngest children had poor fine motor skills, some had difficulties in their social skills and some of them had issues in emotional skills in compare with the older children.

It is important to mention that there were also slightly older children, who received poor scores in fine motor skills but the results showed that on average, older children had a slightly higher level of social, emotional and fine motor skills. So it is possible that age difference could be a factor to influence the children’s school readiness (See Table 4.8).
Table 4.8: Age and its effect on social, emotional and fine motor skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s Name</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
<th>Age at 30/04/2012</th>
<th>Fine Motor Skills</th>
<th>Social Skills</th>
<th>Emotional Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>05/04/2007</td>
<td>5y 25d</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>25/01/2007</td>
<td>5y 4m 5d</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>27/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 3d</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>19/11/2006</td>
<td>5y 5m 11d</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>07/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST06</td>
<td>21/12/2006</td>
<td>5y 4m 9d</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST07</td>
<td>23/01/2007</td>
<td>5y 4m 7d</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST08</td>
<td>03/10/2006</td>
<td>5y 6m 27d</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST09</td>
<td>07/04/2007</td>
<td>5y 23d</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST10</td>
<td>31/12/2006</td>
<td>5y 4m</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>18/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 12d</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST12</td>
<td>15/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 15d</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST13</td>
<td>03/10/2006</td>
<td>5y 6m 27d</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST14</td>
<td>02/02/2007</td>
<td>5y 2m 28d</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST15</td>
<td>28/11/2006</td>
<td>5y 5m 2d</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST16</td>
<td>23/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 7d</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST17</td>
<td>19/09/2006</td>
<td>5y 7m 11d</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST18</td>
<td>21/11/2006</td>
<td>5y 5m 9d</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST19</td>
<td>05/12/2006</td>
<td>5y 4m 25d</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0= Poor</td>
<td>1= Observed</td>
<td>2= Well performed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in Table 4.8 indicate that children with small age differences showed a range of different social, emotional and fine motor skills. Although there was a maximum of seven months age difference between the oldest and youngest child, but they had more varying in the three areas of skill development. Four of youngest children (ST03, ST05, ST11 and ST14) had poor fine motor skills and four of the younger children (ST01, ST03, ST05 and ST11) had difficulties in their social skills. Two of younger children (ST01 and ST05) also had poor emotional skills. So in total five different
younger children had difficulties in different areas such as social, emotional and fine motor skills, in compare with the older children.

There were also slightly older children, who received poor scores. Four older children (ST07, ST17, ST18 and ST19) had poor fine motor skills, although the EYRP cohort is very small but the results showed that on average, older children had a slightly higher level of skills than their younger peers, for example ST02, ST04, ST06, ST08, ST10, ST12, ST14, ST15 were slightly older than their peers and showed better social, emotional and fine motor skills. So age difference could be a factor to influence the children’s school readiness (See Table 4.8).

4.1.5. Language Impairment and School Readiness

As discussed in the literature review, language impairment is another factor which could affect the development of children in the school. Based on the enrolment forms, seven of the EYRP children had difficulties with their speech and were seen by different speech pathologists. So I analysed the ‘Observation Form for Transition’ reports to investigate if the children with language impairment had lower school readiness indicators.

Data showed that seven children (ST04, ST06, ST08, ST10, ST13, ST15 and ST19) in the EYRP had speech issues ranging from immaturity in speech patterns and poor enunciation to issues stemming from English being the second language spoken. A comparison of the social, emotional and fine motor skills of these children with the rest of the group indicated that the children with speech issues had similar levels of social, emotional and fine motor skills to their peers (See Table 4.9). For example, ST01, ST03 ST05 and ST11 did not have any issues with their speech but comparing their social skills with ST04, ST06, ST08, ST10, ST13, ST15 and ST19 shows that they had lower social skills at the start of their schooling. Additionally, comparing the fine motor skills of ST03, ST05, ST07, ST11, ST14, ST17 and ST18 with children with language impairment shows that children with language impairment had better fine motor skills. Thus language impairment does not seem to be a factor affecting the school readiness of the EYRP children (See Table 4.9).
Table 4.9: Effect of language impairment on children’s school readiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s Name</th>
<th>Fine Motor Skills</th>
<th>Social Skill</th>
<th>Emotional Skill</th>
<th>Language Impairment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Speech therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST06</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Speech therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST07</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST08</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Speech therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Speech therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Speech therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Speech therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Speech therapy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0= Poor 1= Observed 2= Well performed

4.2. Discussion of Findings

The main goal of ‘Head Start’ and similar programs is to make children prepared for the school and to improve the conditions for their success in later school and life (Thompson, 2011). The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the effect of Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) on academic, social and emotional development of children at Sunny Bank Primary School (SBPS) and see if this program has made any difference and could improve learning readiness of the children who participated in this study compared to their peers who did not. The participants in this study were 19 children (16 boys and 3 girls) who started school in 2012, and because of their weaknesses in various areas such as, social, emotional, academic, and motor skills were recommended to participate in the EYRP.
According to Currie (2001), early childhood education programs have major short and medium term benefits for children, and Sutherland (2009), similarly emphasised, participation of the children in early childhood programs is the key factor for their later achievements in school. So it was important to find out if the EYRP has helped children to be more ready to learn. The first research question was used to examine the effect of the EYRP on social and emotional and fine motor skills development of children at SBPS. The result is discussed below:

To answer Research Question One: “Does the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) help the children to be more ready to learn?”; different documents such as: ‘Observation Form for Transition’ reports, ‘On Entry Comments’ reports, teachers’ interviews, parents’ focus group, and teachers’ reports were analysed to see if the EYRP helped children to be more ready to learn. Ackerman and Barnett (2005) stated that children’s academic achievement can be affected by their learning readiness and participation in a successful educational experience. Findings from the data analysis indicate that the children started school with different skills and knowledge. Based on the children’s ‘Observation Form for Transition’ some children showed weaknesses in different areas such as motor skills, social, emotional and cognitive maturity. These children were recommended to participate in the EYRP. Social issue is an important factor which could affect children’s achievements. The EYRP, by placing these children in a less academically demanding classroom with particular emphasis on teaching and building social and emotional skills such as cooperation, friendliness, negotiating, having conversations and playing fairly, helped children to improve their learning readiness. Barnett (1995) emphasised that the early childhood care and education programs can produce significant improvement in school success, and if these programs are offered earlier to the children, greater effects can be observed. So offering the two-year-Foundation program to children with specific activities, focused on developing social, emotional, and motor skills, gave children time to catch up during the EYRP years, and helped them to improve their skills, and it can prevent the need for recovery programs in the later years. These programs can be less effective and more costly to the school in later primary years.

Grissom (2004) mentioned that there is a positive relationship between children’s age and their achievement. The relationship between age and school readiness of the EYRP children were analysed and the findings indicated that all of the children who participated in this research study were ‘age ready’ to start the school, but some of them were younger than their peers (the age difference was a maximum of seven months). Cunningham and Carroll (2010) suggested that older children can have higher levels of skills than younger children. The findings showed that on average, older children had
a higher level of skills in different areas, such as social, emotional and motor skills than their younger peers so they were more ready to start formal schooling.

Different studies demonstrated that children with LI (language impairment) are at risk of encountering social problems in school (Fujiki et al., 2001). Analysing the data from EYRP group showed that seven of the children in this group had speech issues ranging from immaturity in speech patterns, poor enunciation and issues stemming from English being the second language spoken. According to Tomblin et al. (1997), children with language problems are at risk of having difficulties in reading and certain behaviour disorders. So it was important to find out if language impairment as a factor can affect children’s school readiness and their behaviour. Findings from the data analysis indicated that language impairment does not seem to be a factor affecting the school readiness of the EYRP children, and they were at similar levels of social, emotional and fine motor skills as their peers.

Morgan et al. (2012) suggested that high quality early intervention services can help children at risk with delays or disabilities to improve their long term educational and societal opportunities. Another findings from the data analysis indicated that speech difficulties of the EYRP children tend to be reduced with opportunities to talk and socialise within a structured environment such as a play-based Foundation class. Thus by giving the EYRP children time to mature with their language issues, they could benefit from this program. Thus, specific interventions which are designed to improve the children’s understanding of social opportunities, and abilities to access and participate in these contexts are beneficial for children with LI (Fujiki et al., 2001).

Play is vital for young children’s development, and it is an essential way for them to learn (Smith, 2010). A play-based learning program had been developed by the teachers to help the children to develop their skills. Shipley (2008) argued that play can reduce stress in children, and make them successful and happier learners. Interviews were held with the teachers to find out their perceptions of this program; they believed that an extra year was valuable in building the social, emotional and academic skills of the EYRP children. Parents were interviewed and they were also positive about the program. Findings from parents’ focus group showed that parents were happy with their children’s improvement, and their expectations from this program were fulfilled. They believed this program helped their children to improve in different areas such as: working independently, social, emotional
and cognitive skills; so they are more ready to learn. They also supported the play-based learning as a good feature of the EYRP.

(Barnett, 1995) emphasised that the early childhood care and education programs can produce significant improvement in school success, and if these programs are offered earlier to the children, greater effects can be observed. Findings from this study confirmed that the EYRP helped children to become more confident, independent, resilient, and cooperative. This program built the children’s self-esteem and gave them extra time and a foundation to build other skills. The extra time helped children to be more mature and confident and this also improved their academic abilities. Children in the EYRP needed help to facilitate their improvement and this program worked well for them, as individual progress through any skill development can vary widely amongst children. So identifying children, who need more time to develop important skills, means that this program made a difference in terms of learning readiness, and maturity for the EYRP children. It helped them to develop, grow, and learn strategies and skills to facilitate positive learning experiences. So because of this program, the EYRP children are more ready to learn and prepared for normal schooling.

4.3. Summary

In this chapter the findings from the data analysis related to the Research Question One to determine whether the EYRP has benefited the children and how. Teachers conducted initial interviews with children prior to starting school to determine their social, emotional and cognitive skills. Pre-school information provided by Kindergarten or childcare centres was also studied by teachers to decide whether the child was going to participate in the EYRP or attend the normal Foundation program. When all the information was analysed, teachers determined the normal Foundation participants, mainly on their social and emotional maturity, which influenced their curiosity for learning and independence. Weaknesses in various areas such as motor skills, personal, social, emotional and cognitive maturity including language impairment were identified and these children were recommended to participate in the EYRP.

Teachers developed a play-based learning program that developed the children’s skills rather than concentrating on the traditional program focusing on literacy and numeracy. Interviews with the teachers to investigate their perception of the success of the initial year indicated that their general view was that the extra year was valuable in building the social, emotional and learning skills of the
children. Parents were interviewed and they were also positive about the program. In summary, The results of the findings illustrated that despite the different weaknesses that EYRP group had in their social, and emotional readiness for starting school; the program by offering an extra time, has benefited and built the children’s confidence, maturity and abilities, so they can be ready to learn and prepared for normal years of schooling.

In the next chapter (Chapter Five), Research Question Two will be addressed and the findings discussed.
CHAPTER 5: Results and Discussion – Research Question Two

In this chapter I discuss the findings from the research related to Research Question Two: Does the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) help children to strengthen their academic ability? If so how? in order to determine if the EYRP could help children to strengthen their academic ability. Data were collected from SBPS about the EYRP children. The transcribed teachers’ interviews and parents’ focus group were analysed to determine their perspectives on the effectiveness of the EYRP. The hard copy of the year level reports of the EYRP children and the AusVELS results also were analysed. The data analysis investigated the academic progress of the children in the EYRP.

5.1. AusVELS and VELS Scores

During the course of the study (2012-2014), the curriculum used in Government Schools was changed from VELS (Victorian Essential Learning Standards) to AusVELS (Australian Curriculum in Victoria); because the VELS was superseded by its amalgamation with the AusVELS. This study used data from the teachers’ reports, based on AusVELS progression points to compare results and to find out if there were any differences between the EYRP children and their peers.

The AusVELS scores indicate the expected level of achievement of each child at the middle and end of each year. In the first year which is named “Foundation”, these scores (named progression points) start at “0.00” and in the middle of the year children should be exhibiting skills and behaviours to achieve “0.50”. At the end of the Foundation year, they have to demonstrate skills for “F” score (meaning Foundation), indicating that they have exhibited skills which are indicative of completing the Foundation year of school. By the end of first semester in Year One, it is expected that children demonstrate skills to achieve “F.5” (Foundation plus half a year) scores, and by the end of that year the expected score is “1.00”. By the end of first semester in Year Two children have to achieve “1.50” scores, and at the end of Year Two, they should reach a “2.00” scores (See Appendix F). All progression points are based on the teacher judgements.

"F” scores in the AusVELS reports showed the achievement of the Foundation year, and the contents of the progression points were essentially the same as the VELS scores. Therefore to simplify the comparison of the scores and achieve an accurate result, I changed the AusVELS scores to a single
numerical range (See Table 5.1) so I could determine the average scores of each child and compare their results with their peers.

Table 5.1: Converted AusVELS scores to numerical scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>AusVELS Scores</th>
<th>Numerical Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semester one Foundation Year</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester two Foundation year</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester one Year One</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester two Year One</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester one Year Two</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester two Year Two</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2. Research Question Two

Does the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) help children to strengthen their academic ability? If so how?

In this section different factors that can influence academic ability of children were reviewed and analysed. The aim of this analysis was to determine if the EYRP is of assistance in reducing the effect of any negative factors, which inhibit improving children’s academic ability; so that in the future children can be at the similar level with their peers, and they do not need any extra intervention.
5.2.1. Changes in Children’s Academic Development – Children at the End of the Second Year of the EYRP (2013)

The end of Foundation year (2013) reports of all EYRP children were reviewed and analysed to determine if the EYRP has helped children improve their social, emotional and academic skills (See Table 5.2). The findings illustrated that children achieved excellent results in both literacy and numeracy; their achievements were similar to the normal Foundation children and teachers were positive about their progress.

Table 5.2: End of year reports of the EYRP children (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s name</th>
<th>Teachers’ comments on children’s achievements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ST01            | ST01 is a happy and confident member of the class who enjoys school and tries his best. In Maths he is able to:  
|                 | • Use materials to model addition by grouping together objects,  
|                 | • Match the correct number to a collection of objects,  
|                 | • Recognise numbers 11 to 20. |
| ST02            | ST02 has an impressive bank of general knowledge. He is able to make complex connections between previous knowledge and new learning, sharing his insights with the group. He is now more able to restrain his enthusiasm to share ideas and wait his turn patiently. In Literacy he can:  
|                 | • Read and write all the words from the first three MIOOW word lists,  
|                 | • Use two fingers spaces to separate the words he writes,  
|                 | • He can retell a story he has heard or read,  
|                 | • Speak with confidence and clarity when making short oral presentations.  
|                 | In Maths he can:  
|                 | • Count by 1’s from 0-100+ and 20-0,  
|                 | • Skip count by 5's and 10's to 100 and by 2's to 14,  
|                 | • Order numbers to 100  
|                 | • Copy, continue and create patterns with objects and drawings,  
|                 | • Describe and compare aspects of length, capacity, mass and area,  
|                 | • Read, write and order 2 digit numbers, using correct place value,  
|                 | • Solve simple addition and subtraction problems. |
| ST03            | Since returning from an extended trip abroad ST03 has struggled to settle back into school life. His academic progress took an enormous backslide especially in literacy and hence his overall progress this semester has been slow. It has also proved difficult for him to reinstate friendships with his classmates who formed a firmly established group in his absence. At times he has found it hard to focus during whole class discussions; verbally or physically distracting his classmates. In Maths he can: |
- Recognise the number of objects in a small group without counting each item, numbers 0-10,
- Recognise, write and order two digit numbers,
- Count by 1's from 0-100+ backwards from 10-0,
- Skip count by 10's to 90,
- Say the numbers before and after any number to 100.

ST04 continues to settle into a consistent classroom routine. His listening skills have made steady improvement this semester.
In English:
ST04 has made good progress in his reading and writing this semester. He can read most familiar words and apply this knowledge in his reading and writing. He can re-read a sentence to understand the text. He is beginning to express requests in full sentences.
In Numeracy he can:
- Count by 1's and 10's beyond 100 starting from various start points,
- Order number to 100,
- Name the number that comes before or after any given number to 100,
- Order 2 digit numbers using the correct place value,
- Use a range of practical strategies for adding small groups of numbers, such as concrete materials,
- Solve simple addition and subtraction problems.

ST05 has worked hard to improve his skills in all areas of the curriculum.
When reading, he is able to:
- Make predictions about the text before and during reading to assist with comprehension,
- Use punctuation (full stops, commas, exclamation marks) to read texts with fluency,
- Use adjective words
- Re-read a sentence to understand the text.
In his writing he can:
- Build word families using onset and rime, for example, h/ot, g/ot, n/ot,
In Maths he is able to:
- Read, write, and order 2 digit numbers,
- Solve simple addition problems using the 'count on' strategy.
- Recognise, model, read, write and order numbers to 100 and locate them on a number line.

ST06 has improved his confidence when speaking in front of the class. He demonstrates a positive attitude towards learning.
When reading, he is able to:
- Recognise the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they make,
- Use the strategy of chunking and blending the sounds in a word when prompted,
In his writing, he can:
- Use some finger spaces between words,
- Construct simple sentences and use conjunctions (joining words) to extend his ideas,
In Maths, he is able to:
- Compare and order items of like and unlike characteristics using the words
‘more’, ‘less’, ‘same as’ and ‘not the same as’ and giving reasons for these answers,
- Use a range of practical strategies for adding small groups of numbers,
- Identify the days of the week and months of the year.

ST07’s speaking and listening skills have improved immensely.
In English:
- He has shown steady improvement in his reading,
- Beginning to independently read and responds to texts that include familiar ideas with moderate illustrations,
- He is beginning to write detailed and sequential recounts about familiar topics of several sentences,
- He displayed confidence and spoke clearly to the class when he spoke about his holiday,
- He understand the punctuation,
- He can makes predictions about the text.
In Numeracy he can:
- Count by 1's and 10's beyond 100 starting from various points,
- Name the number that comes before or after any given number to 100,
- Order numbers to 100,
- Order 2 digit numbers using the correct place value.

ST08 has become a confident and co-operative member of the class. He has settled into a consistent classroom routine.
In English he can:
- He has shown steady improvement in his reading this semester,
- Beginning to independently read and responds to texts that include familiar ideas with moderate illustrations,
- Construct simple sentences and use conjunctions words,
- Use punctuation (full stops, commas, exclamation marks) to read texts with fluency.
In Maths he can:
- Count by 1's and 10's beyond 100 starting from various start points,
- Name the number that comes before or after any given number to 100,
- Order 2 digit numbers using the correct place value,
- Use a range of practical strategies for adding small groups of numbers.

ST09 is kind, friendly and is continuing to work towards building his confidence in social situations. He has excelled in all areas of the curriculum.
In Literacy he:
- Discusses characters and events and makes links to personal experiences,
- Can name some words with the same rimes, for example, ‘c/at, h/at’,
- Works cooperatively in small groups, taking turns and allowing others to contribute,
In Numeracy he:
- Understands that numbers are said in a particular order and there are patterns in the way we say them,
- Uses practical strategies to model addition and sharing,
- Can sort, describe and name familiar two dimensional shapes and three dimensional objects in the environment.

ST10 has developed socially and emotionally over the past year. A second year
in Foundation has really benefited ST10 in the academic setting.

In Literacy ST10:
- Can recognise that sentences are ways of expressing ideas,
- Can explain the directionality of print, return sweep and spaces between words,
- He can retell a story that he has heard or read.

In Numeracy he:
- Has established an understanding of the language and processes of counting by naming numbers in sequence, initially to and from 20, beginning from any number,
- Can connect days of the week to familiar events and actions,
- Interprets the everyday language of location and direction, such as ‘between’, ‘near’, ‘next to’, ‘forwards’, ‘towards’.

ST11 has made huge progress this year.

In Literacy he:
- Is developing phrasing and fluency when reading,
- Is developing comprehension strategies, building literal and inferred meaning, and he locates key information within simple texts,
- Notices that some words belong to the same word family, for example, play, played, playing and he uses these correctly in his writing,
- Re-read sentence to understand the text,
- Demonstrates active listening behaviour and responds to what others say in pair, group and class discussions.

In Numeracy he can:
- Recognise, model, read, write and order numbers to 100 and beyond and locate them on a number line,
- He understands that two digit numbers are made up of groups of tens and ones,
- Uses the mental strategies of counting on and partitioning to solve simple addition problems,
- Order numbers to 100,
- Solve simple addition and subtraction problems,
- Read the time on an analogue or digital clock to the o'clock,
- Describe duration of time in terms of days or weeks.

ST12 is a friendly and helpful student who is always willing to lend a helping hand. He listens carefully and always tries his best.

When reading, he is able to:
- Independently use the strategy of chunking and blending sounds to work out unfamiliar words,
- Make predictions about the text,
- Retell the events of a story in detail.

In his writing he can:
- Construct simple sentences and use conjunctions (joining words) to extend his ideas,
- Use adjectives and voice in his writing to make it more interesting,
- Use full stops and capital letters in his writing.

In Maths he is able to:
- Use the 'count on' strategy to solve simple addition problems,
- Order numbers to 100,
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|   | • Solve simple addition and subtraction problems,  
|   | • Read, write, and order 2 digit numbers.  
| ST13 | ST13 has achieved some excellent results this year.  
|   | In Literacy she can:  
|   | • Independently reads and responds to texts that include familiar ideas, several lines of text per page, longer sentences and illustrations that provide a moderate level of support,  
|   | • Retell a story she has heard or read.  
|   | • Uses letter/sound knowledge and word chunking to assist in identifying unfamiliar words.  
| In Numeracy she can: |  
|   | • Recognise, model, read, write and order numbers to 100 and locate them on a number line,  
|   | • Order numbers to 100,  
|   | • Solve simple addition and subtraction problems,  
|   | • She understands that two digit numbers are made up of groups of tens and ones,  
|   | • Uses the mental strategies of counting on and partitioning to solve simple addition problems,  
|   | • Identifies patterns in numbers formed by skip counting or patterns with objects.  
| ST14 | ST14 is a friendly, confident and conscientious student who strives for success in all areas of the curriculum. The leadership skills he has presented when working with peers is something I know he will make use of in the future.  
|   | When reading, he is able to:  
|   | • Use punctuation (full stops, commas, exclamation marks) to read texts with fluency,  
| In writing, he can: |  
|   | • Build word families using onset and rime, for example, h/ot, g/ot, n/ot, sh/ot, sp/ot,  
|   | • Understand that punctuation is a feature of written text different from letters,  
|   | • Use adjectives in his writing to make it more interesting.  
| In Maths, he can: |  
|   | • Read, write, and order 3 digit numbers, solve simple addition problems using the 'count on' strategy,  
|   | • Order numbers to 100,  
|   | • Use concrete materials to model some number combinations that add up to 10.  
| ST15 | ST15 has achieved some excellent results this year.  
| In Literacy he can: |  
|   | • Independently reads and responds to texts that include familiar ideas,  
|   | • Uses letter/sound knowledge and word chunking to assist in identifying unfamiliar words.  
| In Numeracy he can: |  
|   | • Recognise, model, read, write and order numbers to 100 and locate them on a number line,  
|   | • He understands that two digit numbers are made up of groups of tens and ones,  
|   | • Uses the mental strategies of counting on and partitioning to solve simple addition problems and he can share a collection of objects into two equal
| ST16 | Portions,  
|      | - Identifies patterns in numbers formed by skip counting or patterns with objects.  
|      | ST16 has come a long way this year.  
|      | In Literacy she can:  
|      | - Read aloud simple print that includes some frequently used words,  
|      | - Recognise how sounds are represented alphabetically and can identify some sound-letter relationships.  
|      | In writing:  
|      | - She knows that spoken words are written down by listening to the sounds heard in the word and then writing letters to represent those sounds,  
|      | - She participates in informal situations, for example, play based experiences which involve the imaginative use of spoken language.  
|      | In Maths:  
|      | - She understands that numbers are said in a particular order and there are patterns in the way we say them,  
|      | - She can connect number names, numerals and quantities, including zero, initially up to 10 and then beyond,  
|      | - She uses a range of practical strategies for adding small groups of numbers.  
| ST17 | It has been amazing to see the ST17 grow into a friendly and mindful student. A second year in Foundation has been invaluable for his social and emotional development. It is amazing to see ST17 play within a group, taking turns and resolving and issues that may arise. ST17 has worked hard this year to manage his impulses and this can be seen in how he reacts to constructive feedback. He is willing to admit when he is wrong and has shown the value of Honesty and Trust in the classroom.  
|      | In Literacy he:  
|      | - Is able to share experiences of different texts and discuss some differences,  
|      | - Can make predictions about the text,  
|      | - Can explain the directionality of print, return sweep and spaces between words.  
|      | In Numeracy he:  
|      | - Understands that each object must be counted only once, that the arrangement of objects does not affect how many there are, and that the last number counted answers the ‘how many’ question,  
|      | - Uses practical strategies to model addition and sharing.  
| ST18 | ST18 is a lovely student to work with and demonstrates a great eagerness to help others. In most formal learning situations ST18 finds it difficult to concentrate, often wandering away from the group. She needs to hear instructions a number of times and finds it hard to listen attentively.  
|      | In English:  
|      | - During reading she can talk about the pictures in a book and at times can recognise and read some of the Golden Words. When writing she has shown she can make marks on a page with some strings of letters. She loves to draw pictures with her writing which does not always represent the subject of her writing. ST18 has verbally contributed to a mini animal report in which she collaboratively used her ICT skills with her peers to research the animal to help write the report.  
|      | In Maths:
She can rote count the number sequence to 20 most times. She can count small collections. She uses one-to-one correspondence to count the size of small groups using the numbers from 0 to 10. She is able to recognize numbers to 10 and some number to 20. She can count backwards from 10-1. She can recognise first and last in a group of objects. She knows some days of the week and some months of the year related to familiar events in her life. She is beginning to recognize, name and draw some shapes with assistance.

ST19 continues to adhere to the school values. He is a cooperative and friendly class member towards his peers.

In English:
- He has shown steady improvement in his reading this semester,
- He is beginning to independently read,
- He can read most high frequency words and uses sound-letter knowledge to read unfamiliar words,
- He is beginning to write sequential recounts about familiar topics of several sentences,
- Occasionally, he uses simple punctuation in his writing,
- He is beginning to form lower case letters correctly using the appropriate pencil grip.

In his Numeracy:
- He can count by 1's and 10's beyond 100 starting from various start points,
- He is able to name the number that comes before or after any given number to 100,
- He can order 2 digit numbers using the correct place value,
- He uses a range of practical strategies for adding small groups of numbers, such as concrete materials.

During the children’s second year of Foundation, teachers were very positive about the learning and progress of the children. The majority of the children were observed to be happy, settled and confident with their learning. They shared when working in groups, took turns when participating in discussions; and some of them (ST01, ST05, ST06, ST09, ST12 and ST14) formed positive friendships with other children (See Table 5.2).

Children’s (ST04, ST06, ST08, ST10, ST13, ST15 and ST19) speech and vocabulary was found to be confident and typical of normal Foundation children. When commenting on the literacy skills of the children, their achievements were based on their progress in their verbal abilities. For example, ST05, ST06, ST07, ST12, ST 14 and ST17, were able to make predictions about texts, make connections with their words and things that they have learnt and most were steadily mastering sounds and words.

Children (ST 02, ST10 and ST13) could retell a story that they have heard or read, some of them (ST04, ST05, ST06 and ST11) were able to re-read the sentence for better understanding the text, and some of them (ST05, ST07, ST12 and ST17) could make predictions about the text. Children (ST05, ST07, ST08, ST09, ST12 and ST14) could understand the punctuation in the text and some of them
(ST05, ST12 and ST14) were able to use adjective words. Children were also confident in their writings (See Table 5.2).

In numeracy the children displayed skills that were typical of Foundation children. They were able to use appropriate maths vocabulary, which again points to their thorough grounding of speaking and listening skills in their first year of the program. Children (ST02, ST04, ST07, ST08, ST12, ST13, ST14 and ST15) were able to show initial signs of understanding formal processes, two-digit place value and basic mental strategies; and they (ST 02, ST04, ST05, ST11, ST12, ST13, ST15 and ST19) were able to solve simple addition or subtraction problems. Children (ST02, ST04, ST05, ST07, ST08, ST11, ST12, ST13, ST14, ST15 and ST19) were also confident to order numbers to 100 (See Table 5.2).

One child (ST03) unfortunately had an extended absence with an extended stay overseas with family. When he returned it was evident that he was having trouble settling back into routines and re-establishing friendships as well as making any substantial academic progress.

In general based on teachers’ reports the EYRP children have improved very well, and their progress and achievements were similar to other children. As the children were deemed to be not ready for school initially, their second year was very positive, as it was not obvious that there were substantial problems in the beginning of the previous year. The children achieved excellent results in both literacy and numeracy.

5.2.2. Teachers’ Interviews

In order to represent the view of the teachers about the EYRP and its effect on children; the recording and transcripts of the face to face interviews with the teachers, which focused around the academic, developments of children in the EYRP were analysed.

5.2.2.1. Teachers’ Interviews (2012) – Children in the First Year of the EYRP

In the teachers’ interviews held in 2012, teacher participants were also asked about the effect of EYRP on the academic development of children. They emphasised that the EYRP will reduce the number of children who would attend reading recovery and intervention programs in the future.
Teachers mentioned that children in this program, developed their main skills (social, emotional and academic skill), so when they start normal Foundation, they would be ready to learn. As T01 said, “Once the children came to this program, they developed the main skills in reading, writing, maths, social and emotional skills. So that way, when they get to normal Foundation, they would be ready to fly with their learning and take it to the next level”.

The main aim of the teachers was to teach AusVELS curriculum and expect that children would get to level “F” by the end of the Foundation year (See Appendix F). For example, T01 said, “They would also look at the individual children to see if they have additional needs that might play a factor in whether they may need reading recovery or any other intervention later on”.

The main goal of the EYRP teachers were to help children to improve their social, emotional, and academic skills; and to gain those objectives, they planned lots of lessons, lots of modelling, focus groups, and different activities to strengthen those areas. The whole point of the children being in the EYRP program was that they were socially, emotionally and academically not ready for formal schooling and some of them were also younger than their peers. So the main focus of this program was social, emotional and academic development of the children. To gain these objectives T01 said, “They planned lots of lessons, lots of modelling, focus groups and set out activities which helped to strengthen those areas”.

Furthermore T01 mentioned, “Children needed to excel in their personality, and their social, emotional abilities and by the end of the year children need to be:

- Competent in various social situations,
- Regulate their own emotions,
- Be strong at conflict resolution,
- Be more resilient,
- Confident,
- Good in group work situations,
- Good concentration and listening skills,
- Be persistent,
- Share and negotiate,
- Be able to sit and do an activity for a sustained period of time”.

CHAPTER FIVE
The EYRP teachers also emphasised the importance of cognitive skills. They aimed to introduce the basic literacy and numeracy concepts to children. They also discussed the type of activities that they had planned for the children. Due to their need to socialise, learn to play and adjust to the expectations of sitting and listening and focussing on the teacher as well as being comfortable with rules and routines, the lessons were structured to teach these skills. Play-based activities were developed to encourage this development so when the children entered their second year of Foundation they were ready to learn rather than concentrating on learning how to learn.

5.2.2.2. Teachers’ Interviews (2013) – Children in the Second Year of the EYRP

Teacher participants were asked about the academic development of the children and if the EYRP had helped them improve those skills.

Teachers emphasised about the importance of the play-based learning. They believed play-based learning helped children to choose what they want to do and lead them to discovery learning. They mentioned that having the play-based learning could help the EYRP children to have their hands on problem solving in real life and not just give them, worksheets to work on. In this regard T03 said, “This program gives children an opportunity to improve their oral language. They get the opportunity to observe other children and interact with them and their activities. Play-based learning can help children to think more”. T04 also said, “Play-based learning helps children to choose what they want to do”.

Teachers mentioned that EYRP gave a head start on children’s learning. Children with speech problems were benefited from the EYRP because they have been given a bit of a head start on alphabet knowledge. T04 emphasised, “for children who have speech issues having that knowledge and structure are more helpful”. Teachers believed, because of the EYRP, there is not much difference between EYRP children and their normal peers, and even some of the EYRP children went above their normal peers. The EYRP gave children an extra time and helped them to reduce the need for reading recovery program. T04 also said, “This head start can help children in their writing; they know lots of words, which new children have not learnt yet”.

During the interview teachers emphasised that this program helped children to reduce the gaps in their learning, and one of the aims of this program was to reduce the demand for reading recovery
program. T06 mentioned that because of this program the EYRP children did not need to go for reading recovery: “This program is beneficial for children who needed extra time and help”. T06 also emphasised, “This program is very valuable. We are getting lots of children with very poor oral language, social and emotional skills and this program help them to develop those skills. So they can be ready for reading and writing and fitting into the school system”.

Teachers believed that the EYRP program gives children exposure to routines, social, emotional and academic aspects of the learning. T07 said, “I cannot see much difference between the EYRP children and their peers; they look much the same now”. Teachers mentioned that some of the EYRP children went above other children socially and academically. So this program benefited lots of children, and there was a value in play based learning.

**Summary of the Teachers’ Interviews (2012 and 2013)**

*Table 5.3: Teachers’ comments about the effect of EYRP on children’s development (2012 and 2013)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Social/Emotional</th>
<th>Academic/Formal</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2012 | • Children developed their social and emotional skills | • In future reduce the need for intervention programs  
• Children developed the main skills in reading, writing, and maths  
• Children are more ready to learn  
• Helped strengthen their academic abilities  
• Introducing basic literacy and numeracy concepts helped children to be more prepared for next year | • Helped the younger children to improve their skills |
| 2013 | • Opportunity to observe other children  
• Interacting with other children  
• Exposure to social, emotional and academic aspects of the learning | • The importance of the play-based learning  
• Head start for children’s learning  
• Children benefited from an extra time  
• Head start helped children on their writing, they know lots of words  
• Reduce the gaps in children’s learning  
• No need for intervention programs  
• Ready for normal schooling | • Children who had speech problem benefited from head start on alphabet knowledge  
• Exposure to routines  
• Opportunity to improve children’s oral language |
The main aim in 2012 was to develop the children’s social skills. All activities had an underlying purpose of making sure that social interaction and oral language development was paramount. Academic skills were taught such as writing, reading and number concepts although it was really about how to work in a group, how to listen and speak to others, sharing with others and being able to cooperate. With the various weaknesses that the children showed initially in language and social skills, it was not vital that the whole curriculum be covered in the first year. It was more important that the children learnt how to learn the various non-academic skills and "catch up" with non-EYRP children.

In 2013 it was evident that the head start for the children had been beneficial. The teachers were able to observe settled children who were familiar with school routines and able to interact positively in the initial play based learning. As the year progressed, it was observed that the gaps in the children’s learning were decreased compared with what had been observed at the beginning of the previous year. Basic knowledge in numeracy and literacy helped confidence and children were able to interact and learn fully alongside the normal 2013 entry Foundation children.

5.2.3. Parents’ focus group

5.2.3.1. Parents’ focus group (2013) – Children in the Second Year of the EYRP

There was another focus group/interview with parents in May 2013, and 14 parents participated in that focus group. The focus group aimed to evaluate the benefits of the EYRP for the school and children, and to find out the parents’ opinion about the program and how children were progressing socially, emotionally and academically.

The progress of the EYRP children and the ways they interact with the program

Parents were happy with the progress of their children in the second year of the Foundation (2013). Their comments about their children’s maturity and general independence were frequent and there seemed to be an understanding that social and emotional skills underpin academic progress. In that regards P6 expressed her feeling about the program, and said, “Overall the program is fantastic”. Her
child was more mature this year, and his social, emotional, and academic skills have improved since last year. She credited all of her son’s improvement to the EYRP. P6 added, “This program has made a difference on my son”. P17 also noted that, “this year’s curriculum is more structured than last year”, while, P16 said that the EYRP children can sit and listen to their teacher and they are able to help other children.

Just one parent did say her son was bored in the second year of Foundation due to perceived repetition, but other parents were happy with the EYRP. For example, P9 commented, “The repetition of this program made my son bored, and this caused me to work more with him at home to keep him up”. However, other parents did not find this program boring. P10 said, “Children are different” and she added that she did not see any repetition in this program. She believed that children learn new things.

The happiness of the children was commented upon by many parents and linked to their child’s interest in learning. Parents also approved the children’s transition to the mixed group (normal Foundation group), P7 said, “The transition to the mixed group was good for my son, and he is happy”. She believed that it was a positive sign for her as a parent that he was happy and he could show that he learnt something at school. She added, because of this program her son knew the alphabet, he was more mature, he has improved academically so well and he was interested to learn more.

Parents mentioned that their children were more confident and more focused in this year and their reading and writing skills were improved. However, P11 was happy that she put her son in this program, but she expressed her concern about her son and she wanted to know if her son is at the level that he needs to be. P14 was happy that her son participated in this program and she said that her child was happy to go to school this year. She believed that her son is more focused in this year and he has progressed in his reading and writing skills. P15 (parent of twins) believed that her children are more confident because of this program. She said, “They are more independent and more mature in this year”. Then she added that one of her children was interacting more with his friends than the other one. In terms of socialisation this program made a big difference to them. Her son is not depending on his sister any more. She was happy that she put her children in this program.
Parents also discussed about the social skills of their children, they believed that the communication skills of the children increased a lot, and the EYRP was beneficial for children who had speech problems. They mentioned that this program helped them to improve their speaking. For example, P8 commented, “At first he had speech problems, he could just say a couple of words, but now he can say much more. He loved school and loved being part of the classroom and his talking had improved a lot. Overall I am happy with the program”.

**Did the play based learning respond to the children’s needs?**

Parents generally understood the importance of play-based learning and how their child responded well to the activities presented. For example P9 said, “At one point play was enough, but now is different. It is more academic based now”. P12 also mentioned that her child is interested in play based learning. So parents were also aware when the activities became more academically based, and their child’s interest was still strong and positive. They mentioned that play was important in the first year, but this year is like a key to the program.

**What have the children learnt from the EYRP program?**

Parents agreed that their children had learnt how to write on the lines, that their academic abilities have improved, and because of this program they had learnt how to work independently. Parents discussed their children’s ability to concentrate, and they were agreed that their children had improved as a result of the program. For example P8 said, “My son had learnt how to write on the lines and he has improved very well”. P9 mentioned that the biggest improvement for her son was that he could get dressed by himself, she said, “Last year he could not put on his socks but now he can get dressed easily”. Parents believed that their children improved their academic skills and they are doing well. P19 commented that, “My son can count very well, and he has improved his skills”. All the parents agreed that their children’s concentration has improved too and they were happy about that.

**Social and emotional development of the EYRP children and their communication with others**

All parents agreed that their children are emotionally linked together now and that this program had helped them a lot in terms of being more independent. Parents also mentioned that their children have
improved socially and emotionally, and they were happy. For example, P8 noted that “It has been a massive improvement with those skills for my son”. She was happy with the program and she believed that her child improved in his learning abilities. Parents mentioned that their children were much better socially, they could read, and write some words. P10 was also happy with the program and she believed that this program was the best thing that happened to her son. P16 emphasised that most of the EYRP children have grown up a lot and now they want to be independent. P19 also said, “Eighteen months ago my son would not talk to anybody, but now he has time for everyone” and P18 mentioned that her son was not ready to go to Year One, and she said, “now he is doing well”, she also mentioned because of this program he has improved very well and he is very independent now: “He does not want me to come into the school”.

Then parents talked about the issues around this program. Some parents thought that the children felt like they are repeating a class and they know they are older than their peers, so this could affect their socialisation. P9, P11 and P19 all expressed their concerns and mentioned that it is hard for the EYRP children to see their friends that have gone to the next grade when they are still in Foundation. The social aspects would be a big issue for them. P9 also added, “Her son is not happy because he cannot be with his friends”.

**Summary of the Parent Focus (2013)**

At the end of that focus group all parents agreed that their children have been given an opportunity which their peers did not have, and that the EYRP had worked well for them. Parents were aware of the importance of play-based learning and how their children responded well to the activities presented. They believed that the EYRP children were the leaders of their class rooms, and that they could accept responsibilities. This program has improved children’s social, emotional and academic skills, and helped them to be more mature, more confident, and more independent. Parents mentioned, because of this program their children were more focused and improved their reading and writing skills. For those who had speech problem this program helped them to improve their speech.
5.2.4. The Impact of Age on Children’s Achievement

There have been many studies regarding the best age for children to start school. This part of the data analysis focused on the effect of the two-year Foundation on children to see if an extra year helped the younger children to improve their academic skills. Based on the Victorian school starting age cut-off date (See Table 2.1), analysis of data showed that all children were ‘age ready’ to start the school, but there was an age range of seven months between the children (See Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Comparison of the age at start of school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Age at Start of School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>05/04/2007</td>
<td>5y 25d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>25/01/2007</td>
<td>5y 4m 5d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>27/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 3d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>19/11/2006</td>
<td>5y 5m 11d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>07/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST06</td>
<td>21/12/2006</td>
<td>5y 4m 9d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST07</td>
<td>23/01/2007</td>
<td>5y 4m 7d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST08</td>
<td>03/10/2006</td>
<td>5y 6m 27d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST09</td>
<td>07/04/2007</td>
<td>5y 23d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST10</td>
<td>31/12/2006</td>
<td>5y 4m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>18/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 12d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST12</td>
<td>15/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 15d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST13</td>
<td>03/10/2006</td>
<td>5y 6m 27d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST14</td>
<td>02/02/2007</td>
<td>5y 2m 28d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST15</td>
<td>28/11/2006</td>
<td>5y 5m 2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST16</td>
<td>23/03/2007</td>
<td>5y 1m 7d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST17</td>
<td>19/09/2006</td>
<td>5y 7m 11d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST18</td>
<td>21/11/2006</td>
<td>5y 5m 9d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST19</td>
<td>05/12/2006</td>
<td>5y 4m 25d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The age difference between the EYRP children was a maximum of seven months. Based on the teachers’ reports in June 2012, the children’s scores in maths and English were not noticeably affected, by their age; indeed, in some cases the scores of younger children were higher than some of the older ones. To support the teachers’ reports, the AusVELS scores of the EYRP children in 2012 were compared together. Findings indicated that children were in similar range of scores (See Table 5.5). So it is likely to say that the small age difference did not impact on children’s academic achievements (See Charts 5.1 and 5.2).

Table 5.5: Literacy and Numeracy scores of the EYRP children (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children's Name</th>
<th>ENGREA</th>
<th>ENGWRI</th>
<th>ENGSPL</th>
<th>Average English</th>
<th>MATNUM</th>
<th>MATSPA</th>
<th>MATMCD</th>
<th>MATWMA</th>
<th>Average Maths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.50 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.50 0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.50 0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST06</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST07</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST08</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST09</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST10</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST12</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST13</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST14</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST15</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST16</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST17</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST18</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST19</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50 0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table indicated that the small age difference did not affect the children’s academic results. Despite there being a maximum of seven months age difference between the oldest and the youngest child, a similar range of scores in the literacy and numeracy results were observed. For example, ST09, ST12, ST14, ST15, ST13 and ST17 were three younger and three older children, respectively in this group, who obtained results of ‘0.83’, ‘0.67’, ‘1.00’, ‘0.83’, ‘0.83’, ‘0.50’ in literacy and ‘1.00’, ‘0.50’, ‘1.00’, ‘1.00’, ‘0.50’, ‘0.50’ in numeracy, respectively. This range of results indicates that an age difference of seven months had little or no effect on the results of the EYRP children.
To achieve an accurate result for academic development of the EYRP children, the average scores of numeracy and literacy of all children were separately calculated. The average literacy scores of children in 2012, 2013, and 2014 were obtained through the use of the scores of ENGREA (English Reading), ENGWRI (English Writing), and ENGSPL (English Spelling). The average numeracy scores of children in 2012 were also obtained through the use of the scores of MATNUM (Maths Number), MATWMA (Maths Working Mathematically), MATSPA (Maths Space), and MATMCD (Maths Measurement Chance and Data) (See Table 5.5).

Another aspect of age which can be important, is the relationship between the average results of the youngest and the oldest child, to see if the differences between their scores are increased or decreased as they progress throughout the year levels, and to establish if age at initiation of formal schooling could be a key factor for achieving better results for children (See Charts 5.1 and 5.2).
Chart 5.1 shows the average scores in English for the children participating in the EYRP. The average scores were obtained through the use of the scores for reading, writing and speaking progression point scores (2012= 0.50, 2013= 1.00 and 2014= 1.50). The age range between the youngest and oldest child in the EYRP cohort was about seven months, and the children are organised in this graph from the youngest to the oldest. It was expected that older children would achieve higher scores than younger children, but the results shows that they are in the similar range of scores, and in some cases some of the younger children achieved higher scores. However there were other factors that influenced the teachers’ decision for inclusion of children in the program, particularly social and emotional maturity as judged in the initial interviews. The small number of children, as well as the small difference in their ages indicates that there is not much influence of age on their achievements and progress in English.
In chart 5.2 the same EYRP children are shown with average scores in Mathematics. The average Maths scores were calculated by combining the numbers, measurements and statistics progression point scores (2012= 0.50, 2013= 1.00 and 2014= 1.50). The age range between the youngest and oldest student in the EYRP cohort was about seven months and the children are organised in this graph from the youngest to the oldest. As with their English scores, it was expected that older children would achieve higher scores than the younger children, but their maths scores also showed that age did not influence the children’s results. So the small difference in their ages did not influence their achievements and progress in maths.

Another important factor which was analysed in this study was the impact of a second year of Foundation on the development of literacy and numeracy of children in this program, particularly to
see if an extra year of preparation had helped them improve in different parts of their learning, which can remove the need for any extra intervention in later years (See Tables 5.6 and 5.7).

**Table 5.6: Literacy and Numeracy scores of the EYRP children based on AusVELS scores (2013)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children's Name</th>
<th>ENGREA</th>
<th>ENGWRI</th>
<th>ENGSPL</th>
<th>MATNUM</th>
<th>MATMGE</th>
<th>MATSTP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST06</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST07</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST08</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST09</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST13</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST14</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST15</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST16</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST17</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST18</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST19</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An explanation with regards to the ‘F’ scores which are part of the AusVELS progression points can be seen in table 5.1.

Two children (ST01 and ST03) in the EYRP group came from a non-English speaking background, and had problems with their English language. To help improve their English, the school placed them in the EAL (English as an Additional Language) group. EAL children had to follow a pathway of development in learning English, which was different from children for whom English was their first language. In Sunny Bank Primary School, EAL children are placed in one of three broad bands: A stages (Years Prep–2), B stages (Years 3–6) and S stages (Years 7–10); hence, the scores of these two children in Tables 5.6, 5.7, 6.2 and 6.3 show their improvement based on the stage that they were placed in, thus they were not compared with the other children, by their English scores, as they came from non-English speaking backgrounds.
To achieve an accurate result for academic development of the EYRP children, the average scores of numeracy and literacy of all children were calculated. The average literacy scores for each child were obtained through the use of the scores of ENGREA (English Reading), ENGWRI (English Writing), and ENGSPL (English Spelling). The average numeracy scores for each child in 2013 and 2014 were obtained through the use of the scores of MATNUM (Maths Number and Algebra), MATMGE (Maths Measurement and Geometry), and MATSTP (Maths Statistics and Probability).

**Table 5.7: Literacy and Numeracy scores of the EYRP children based on numerical scores (2013)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children's Name</th>
<th>ENGREA</th>
<th>ENGWRI</th>
<th>ENGSPL</th>
<th>English Average</th>
<th>MATNUM</th>
<th>MATMGE</th>
<th>MATSTP</th>
<th>Maths Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST06</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST07</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST08</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST09</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST10</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST12</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST13</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST14</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST15</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST16</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST17</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST18</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST19</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 5.3: Comparison of the AusVELS results of Non-EYRP children (2012) with the EYRP children (2013) (End of Foundation year)

In Chart 5.3, the AusVELS result of the EYRP group and non-EYRP children, who were in the same age group, is compared. These children entered school at the same time, one group enrolled in the EYRP, and the other group (non-EYRP), enrolled in the normal Foundation classes. Comparing the 2013 AusVELS results of the EYRP group, with the 2012 AusVELS results of non-EYRP children at the end of their respective Foundation year/s showed that even after 2 years of Foundation, the EYRP children are still not at the same AusVELS level, as their school entry peers.

At the start of the Foundation year (2012), the EYRP children were identified as not ready for formal schooling, because they had weaknesses in their social, emotional and academic skills. The EYRP aimed to improve the children’s abilities in different areas of their learning and help them to be in the same level as their peers. Now after two years of Foundation the EYRP children still have achieved lower scores compare to their school entry peers, but this does not mean that the EYRP did not help those children. Based on the teachers’ reports and parents’ comments, the EYRP children showed
significant improvements in different parts of their learning. So it could be possible if the EYRP children had enrolled in the normal Foundation, there were a significant number of children who would achieve lower scores in AusVELS and the above average scores were much lower.

5.2.5. Children’s Absence

Children’s absences during the school year, is a possible influencing factor on their academic performance (See Table 5.8). Epstein and Sheldon (2002), argued that reducing the rates of children’s absenteeism in school has been a goal of many schools and education systems. Findings from different studies indicated that the attendance rate in school is an important factor in children’s success, and it is more likely that children achieve better results academically when they attend school consistently. Daraganova (2012) emphasised, regular school attendance, have positive outcomes for children.

The other benefit of school attendance is that, just by being at school, children can participate in school community activities and learn valuable social skills. Different studies have shown that missing the school have disadvantages for children. As Hancock et al. (2013, p. 259) emphasised, “educators need to encourage all parents to be aware of the importance of [the school attendance]. Many parents hold the belief that children will not be adversely affected by missing school. Parents and caregivers would benefit from understanding what normal attendance looks like, and to hear the message that every day that their child misses school will have consequence for their learning and achievement”.

Also according to Hancock et al. (2013, p. 251), “children who missed more than 10% of school days are at risk of poorer academic achievement, and students who missed less than ten days of school per term would be able to catch up on the missed schooling fairly readily. Beyond this point, the amount of school missed would be beyond the resources of a student and their family and teachers to catch up on and achievement would be impacted”.

Children’s absenteeism identified by the teachers as a factor which could affect their academic performance. The data from this study showed that there were some children in the EYRP group who did not attend school regularly; in fact five of them did not attend school for 28 to 44 days during the school year (See Table 5.8). For example, ST01, ST03, ST05, ST06 and ST07 were absent between
28 to 44 days in 2013 but they achieved the expected results for AusVELS literacy and numeracy at the end of 2013.

Absenteism was identified by the teachers as a possible influencing factor on the children’s academic performances and missing school days has also been identified in the literature (for example, Epstein and Sheldon (2002), Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) and Hancock (2013)) as affecting children’s academic performance. However, as indicated in Table 5.6, the academic performance of

### Table 5.8: Children’s absences and their AusVELS results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>44d</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>3d</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>12d</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>8d</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>28d</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>11d</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>12d</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7d</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>29d</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>27d</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST06</td>
<td>40d</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>27d</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST07</td>
<td>32d</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>12d</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST08</td>
<td>8d</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7d</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST09</td>
<td>7.5d</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.5d</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST10</td>
<td>11.5d</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.5d</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>9.5d</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>41d</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST12</td>
<td>4.5d</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>6d</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST13</td>
<td>5.5d</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>3d</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST14</td>
<td>18.5d</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>15d</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST15</td>
<td>13.5d</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>6d</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST16</td>
<td>1.5d</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>10d</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST17</td>
<td>4.5d</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.5d</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST18</td>
<td>5.5d</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>30d</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST19</td>
<td>2d</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the EYRP children does not seem to have been affected by absences from school. For example, ST11 was absent 41 days in 2014 but obtained the equal highest results for AusVELS numeracy and literacy (1.75) at the end of 2014 and ST07 who was only away for 12 days over the year, obtained less than the expected ‘1.50’ AusVELS scores in both literacy and numeracy, after having attained ‘1.00’ scores in 2013 (with 32 days absences). Thus, while absenteeism did initially appear to be a contributing factor to some children’s lower academic performance the findings from this research do not support absenteeism as a factor for these children.

In Tables 5.8, 6.2 and 6.3, the AusVELS scores of ST18 in 2014 have been assigned N/A (Not Available); because the primary focus for improvement was her emotional and social development, rather than academic. This attribute can be explained by the child’s delayed cognitive development, which in essence prevents the comparison of her academic development to other children. In addition, in Tables 5.8, 6.2 and 6.3, N/A has been assigned for the numeracy result of ST03 in 2014 as the result was not provided by the school.

5.3. Discussion of Findings

This chapter aimed to investigate the influential factors on academic development of children at Sunny Bank Primary School (SBPS) to determine if this program could improve children’s academic abilities in comparison with their peers who did not participate in this program, and address Research Question Two: Does the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) help children to strengthen their academic ability?. Different document including teachers’ reports from 2013, the AusVELS reports from 2013, parent interviews, and teachers’ interviews were analysed to find out if the EYRP could help children to strengthen their academic ability.

Age as an influencing factor was also examined to see if it affected the academic achievements of children as they progress throughout the year level. All children participated in the EYRP were ‘age ready’ for school, but younger children displayed weaknesses in their school readiness compared with the older children. Findings from the June reports in 2012 showed that literacy and numeracy scores of children were not affected by their age. According to Grissom (2004) age can influence achievement to a point, but beyond that point it can have negative effects. So The relationship between the average results of youngest and oldest child were examined at the end of 2012, 2013, and 2014 to see if the differences between their scores are increased or decreased as they progress
through the year levels. The findings illustrated that small differences in the age of children did not influence their achievements and progress in different areas of their learning. It was expected that older children would achieve higher scores, but the results showed that children in the EYRP were in the similar range of scores, even some of the younger children achieved higher scores than older one and small age difference did not affect their results.

Another findings from results at the end of Foundation year (2013) showed, although the EYRP children have improved socially, emotionally and academically, but when their AusVELS results were compared with the school entry peers (non-EYRP children of 2012), the EYRP children were still behind slightly in their literacy and numeracy scores. Barnett and Hustedt (2005, p. 21) mentioned, “Head Start and similar programs has substantial long-term benefits in educational achievement and attainment, and social behaviour”. However findings from teachers’ interviews and parents’ comments revealed that the EYRP children displayed good learning and leadership skills and had benefited from extra year at school, otherwise they might have achieved much lower scores in comparison with their peers. Findings from parents’ interviews indicated that parents agreed that their children were settled and did benefit from the previous year program.

School attendance is a part of children’s learning. Studies by Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) into the academic achievements of children from kindergarten toward high school graduation, found that academic achievements are highly correlated to the children’s absences throughout the school years. Daraganova (2012) found a positive relationship between the numbers of days that children attend school and their academic success across all age groups. Data from teachers’ interviews and other documents showed that some children in the EYRP did not participate in school regularly, but findings from data analysis illustrated that those children at the end of school year achieved expected scores in literacy and numeracy, so the findings from this study did not support absenteeism as an influencing factor on the children’s academic achievement.

5.4. Summary

In this chapter the findings from the data analysis were to address Research Question Two and determine whether the EYRP has benefited the children and if it could improve children’s academic ability. The impact of age on academic achievement was examined. All children in the program were ‘age ready’ for formal schooling, but some of them were seven months younger than their peers. The
examination of the children’s age illustrated that some of them displayed deficiencies in development but the deficiencies were not indicative of their age differences. At the end of the Foundation year when results of the literacy and numeracy of the EYRP children were compared to non-EYRP children (enrolled in the normal Foundation in 2012), the EYRP children were still behind slightly in their achievement scores. Teachers’ interviews revealed however that the EYRP children displayed good learning and leadership skills. Parents’ interviews indicated that their children were settled and had benefited from the EYRP. Absenteeism was a concern for some children, as there was indication from the teachers and the literature that absenteeism influenced children’s achievements. However, findings from this research did not support absenteeism as an influencing factor on the children’s academic achievement.

In the following chapter (Chapter Six), Research Question Three will be addressed and the findings discussed.
CHAPTER 6: Results and Discussion – Research Question Three

This chapter addresses Research Question Three: Is there any difference between AusVELS results at the end of year one for children who participated in the EYRP and their peers who entered through the normal foundation group? and compares the performance in 2014 of children from the EYRP with non-EYRP children using their AusVELS results. The transcribed teachers’ interviews from 2014 were analysed to determine the teachers’ perspectives on the academic development of the EYRP children. Documents such as the year level reports of the EYRP children and the AusVELS results of the EYRP cohort and non-EYRP children were also analysed. The data analysis was based on the academic progress of the children in the EYRP.

6.1. Research Question Three

Is There any Difference Between AusVELS Results at the End of Year One for Children Who Participated in the EYRP and Their Peers Who Entered Through the Normal Foundation Group?

Barnett and Hustedt (2005) noted that ‘Head Start’ or similar programs, has significant long term benefits in educational achievement of the children. So to address the third question of this research and determine if the EYRP helped children improve their academic ability, different documents including teachers’ reports, AusVELS results and transcribed teachers’ interviews were reviewed and analysed.


A number of documents were reviewed and analysed to address the third question of this study and determine if the EYRP has benefited this group of children.

6.1.1.1. Teachers’ Reports (2014) – Children at the End of Year One

The end of year teachers’ reports from 2014 were analysed to investigate the effect of the two-year Foundation program on children’s academic improvements. Findings from teachers’ reports illustrated that the EYRP children have blended successfully into the mainstream classes, and shown equal skills and abilities to the non-EYRP children (See Table 6.1).
Table 6.1: End of year reports of the EYRP children (2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s name</th>
<th>Teachers’ comments on children’s achievements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>ST01 is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Beginning to develop confidence in counting by ones with number sequences to 100,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Able to identify Australian coins according to their value,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Able to sort and classify familiar objects and explain the basis for these classifications,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Able to continue and create patterns with objects and drawings,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Able to sort and describe squares, circles, triangles, rectangles, spheres and cubes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>ST02 is a co-operative and enthusiastic classmate. He has great general knowledge and is a very capable student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LITERACY:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can read high frequency words,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He compares characters and events in texts to his own experiences,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He has a growing bank of commonly used words which he can spell confidently in his writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NUMERACY:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He is able to solve addition and subtraction problems using strategies such as 'counting on', 'counting back' and knowledge of doubles,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He is able to order Australian coins according to value and can make equivalent amounts using a variety of coins,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He is able to identify 2D and 3D shapes and can tell time to o'clock and half past on an analogue and digital clock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>ST03 has learnt how to show appropriate behaviour and does not over-react to situations. He understands that his actions can affect others and tries to look at the other person's point of view and understands that it may be different to his own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NUMERACY:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He is now able to confidently count backwards from any starting point from 100,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He can now order 2-digit numbers from smallest to largest and can identify the number before and after any given number to 100,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He has learnt how to skip count by 5s and can identify 10 more and 10 less than any 2-digit number,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He is able to use a variety of mental strategies for solving addition and subtraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He can also identify, describe and order Australian coins according to their worth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>ST04 is friendly and helpful and this makes him popular with his classmates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LITERACY:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He reads aloud with excellent fluency and expression,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He uses his broad knowledge of letters and sounds to help him decipher new words,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He can write basic information reports, procedures and recounts,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He writes most common words correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NUMERACY:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He has developed confidence with number sequences to and from 100 by ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ST05    | His concentration has greatly improved over the past semester, he has become a hardworking student who knows when to knuckle down and focus on his learning.  
**LITERACY:**  
- He uses a variety of effective reading strategies,  
- He has started to produce more detailed, well-sequenced writing, with a capital letter at the beginning of each sentence and a full stop at the end.  
**NUMERACY:**  
- He can now use effective mental strategies to solve simple addition and subtraction problems such as, count on from larger, count back and use doubles facts,  
- He can use materials to problem solve and come up with a range of solutions to an open-ended question,  
- He can order Australian Coins according to their value. |
| ST06    | ST06 is a committed and proud learner, who thrives on praise and encouragement. He has come a long way this year, both socially and academically  
**LITERACY:**  
- He has worked hard to build a bank of familiar words that he is able to recognise in a variety of different contexts,  
- He is able to use effective reading strategies such as stretching out the sounds in words and using context clues, to decode unfamiliar words,  
- In writing, he has worked hard to build his fine motor skills and improve his letter formation,  
- His is now writing most letters correctly within the dotted thirds,  
- He can spell a growing number of commonly used words,  
- He has started to more regularly make eye contact with others when he is speaking to them.  
**NUMERACY:**  
- He is now able to use effective mental strategies to solve simple addition and subtraction problems such as, use doubles facts, count on from larger and count back,  
- He can use materials to problem solve and come up with a range of solutions to an open-ended question,  
- He can confidently measure length and capacity using informal units. |
| ST07    | ST07 has been a kind and friendly member of our class this year. His improving focus has seen him make some good progress in all areas of his learning this semester.  
**LITERACY:**  
- He knows that what he reads must make sense and can reread to self-correct some errors,  
- He is able to read a growing bank of commonly used words,  
- In writing, he uses capital letters and full stops correctly most of the time and is able to write many common words correctly,  
- When listening to others he finds it difficult to focus,  
- He is learning to ask relevant questions and responds to others in whole |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST08</th>
<th>ST09</th>
<th>ST10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **NUMERACY:**  
- He is developing confidence with number sequences to 100 counting by ones from any starting point,  
- He is developing the ability to count backwards and by 2s,  
- He can recognise compare and describe simple 2D shapes.  
**ST08** is a kind, honest and caring student who can always be relied upon to complete tasks to the best of his ability and do the right thing.  
**LITERACY:**  
- He has worked hard to develop his reading skills this year,  
- He can read many high frequency words without hesitation,  
- He retells what he has read,  
- He can write many of the common words correctly,  
**NUMERACY:**  
- He has grown in confidence in maths this semester,  
- He can solve simple addition and subtraction problems,  
- He can describe and identify Australian coins and can order some of them according to value,  
- He can identify features of 2D and 3D shapes.  
**ST09** is a happy, co-operative and caring classmate. It has been a pleasure watching him grow in confidence this year. He has great general knowledge and is a very capable student.  
**LITERACY:**  
- ST09 independently reads a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts,  
- He spells most words in his writing correctly and has great attempts at spelling unknown words,  
- He correctly uses simple punctuation and rereads his work to check for this.  
**NUMERACY:**  
- He can mentally solve simple addition and subtraction problems using a variety of strategies such as 'counting on' and 'counting back', 'tens facts' and 'doubles',  
- He is able to identify and order Australian coins according to value and can make totals to $1.00 with a variety of coin combinations,  
- He is able to identify 2D and 3D shapes,  
- He can tell time to o'clock and half past using analogue and digital clocks.  
**ST10** has a happy, bubbly personality which makes him a popular member of our class. He particularly enjoys group work and loves to work collaboratively with his classmates.  
**LITERACY:**  
- He is able to read texts at his level with growing independence,  
- He can read many common words,  
- In writing, he has shown great improvements,  
- He can spell many common words correctly,  
- He knows common blends such as 'sh', 'th' and 'ch' and uses these consistently.  
**NUMERACY:**  
- He is able to solve addition and subtraction problems involving 2 digit numbers using concrete materials and some simple strategies such as counting on, counting back and doubles,  
- He is able identify and describe Australian coins and is starting to develop skills
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ST11    | He is a trustworthy classroom monitor and is very capable in all areas of his learning.  
LITERACY:  
- He independently reads a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts,  
- He spells most words in his writing correctly and has great attempts at unknown words,  
- He accurately uses simple punctuation and rereads his work to check for this,  
NUMERACY:  
- He can mentally solve simple addition and subtraction problems using a variety of strategies such as 'counting on' and 'counting back', 'tens facts' and 'doubles',  
- He is able to identify and order Australian coins according to their value and can make totals to $1.00 with a variety of coin combinations,  
- He is able to identify 2D and 3D shapes,  
- He can tell o'clock and half past times on both analogue and digital clocks. |
| ST12    | ST12 has an inquisitive nature, often asking open ended questions using his schema to provide answers and information. He sat closer to the front this semester and was often asked to repeat instructions to ensure he knew what was expected.  
LITERACY:  
- He has excellent literal and inferential comprehension skills,  
- He uses appropriate vocabulary including adjectives in narratives and action verbs in procedures,  
- He should be commended on his handwriting and letter formation skills.  
NUMERACY:  
- He has developed his skip counting by 2s, 5s, and 10s from odd starting and his addition and subtraction strategies, making links between the two operations,  
- He can find equivalent coins to make up the same amount working with cents or dollars ($1 and $2). |
| ST13    | ST13 has continued to be a hard-working and responsible student, completing a great semester. She always demonstrates self-control when listening and working in teams, and she responds sensitively to the feelings of others.  
LITERACY:  
- She identifies the purpose of simple texts,  
- She reads with increasing fluency,  
- She is beginning to edit her work, making some changes to punctuation,  
- She can now spell the majority of the 100 Magic words.  
NUMERACY:  
- She can read, write and order some 3 digit numbers, this being evident during games such as Place Value Paths and Traffic Lights,  
- She is improving her ability to solve addition and subtraction problems using strategies including counting on, counting back, doubles and counting down to/up from,  
- She measures and compares the lengths and capacities of objects using uniform informal units. |
| ST14    | ST14 has continued to shine socially and academically this semester - his confidence being his greatest asset. This has helped him to build and maintain strong friendships. |
| ST15 | ST15 is a happy, enthusiastic student who enjoys social interactions with his friends. **LITERACY:**  
- He independently reads a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts,  
- He can spell many of the commonly used words correctly and makes great attempts at spelling unknown words,  
- He uses punctuation and capital letters correctly most of the time,  
- His letter formation and presentation skills are steadily improving. **NUMERACY:**  
- He can mentally solve simple addition and subtraction problems using a variety of strategies such as 'counting on' and 'counting back', 'tens facts' and 'doubles',  
- He is able to identify and order Australian coins according to value and can make totals to $1.00 with a variety of coin combinations,  
- He is able to identify 2D and 3D shapes,  
- He can tell o'clock and half past time using analogue and digital clocks. |
| ST16 | ST16 is a happy and co-operative student. She gets along well with others and is developing more confidence in herself as a learner. **LITERACY:**  
- She is able to read a growing bank of commonly used words,  
- She is able to retell the main events in simple stories,  
- When writing, she can write some commonly used words correctly,  
- Her handwriting is slowly improving and she is now leaving appropriate spaces between words. **NUMERACY:**  
- She can now independently count forwards and backwards to and from 100,  
- She can count by 5s and 10s and can now solve addition and subtraction problems using the strategies of 'counting on' and 'counting back',  
- She can also use materials to model addition and subtraction by grouping together and moving apart objects,  
- She can identify most 2D and 3D shapes,  
- She can identify Australian coins according to their value. |
| ST17 | ST17 can be a keen and interested student who loves to contribute to class discussions on a wide range of topics. **LITERACY:**  
- He has continued to make gradual and steady progress in reading,  
- He is able to use effective strategies to decode unfamiliar words,  
- He is also able to make inferences about the things that are implied, but are not directly stated, in the text. **NUMERACY:** |
- He represents and solves simple addition and subtraction problems using a range of strategies including counting on, counting back, doubles, near doubles and tens facts,
- He recognises and describes one half as one of two equal parts of a whole,
- He describes the value and features of coins that make it possible to identify them,
- He is able to describe the duration of time using months, weeks, days and hours,
- He is able to compare objects directly, by placing one object against another.

| ST18 | ST18 is a caring and energetic student who has strived to achieve her personal best in all curriculum areas. She is able to make decisions for herself regardless of what others might think and has shown that she is open to taking new risks and trying new things.
|      | **LITERACY:**
|      | - She has shown steady improvement with regards to her letter and sound knowledge and can recognise 35 of the 52 upper and lower case letters without visual support or assistance,
|      | - She can now read most of the Golden M100W words and can transfer some of this knowledge to her writing e.g independently writing the, and, to, is, a, I,
|      | - When she reads, she is now maintaining 1:1 correspondence and no longer creates her own version of the text,
|      | - She uses simple strategies (such as; looking at the picture) to decode an unknown word in the text and uses what she knows about the story to make a prediction about what the word may be,
|      | - In Writing, she is beginning to commence her work with more confidence,
|      | - With support, she can hear sounds in words and can independently record the appropriate letter for each sound heard,
|      | - She also independently uses spaces between words.
|      | **NUMERACY:**
|      | - She has learnt how to count with 1:1 correspondence and can count to 100 only requiring support with the names of the decade numbers (30,40,50, etc),
|      | - She uses strategies such as counting on/back to solve addition and subtraction problems,
|      | - She has learnt how to identify and order coins according to value.

| ST19 | ST19 is a happy, co-operative and caring classmate.
|      | **LITERACY:**
|      | - He has made steady progress with his reading,
|      | - He is now able to read longer books at his level,
|      | - He can read a growing bank of commonly used words and is able to work out unknown words using letter/sounds to help him to predict,
|      | - He writes many common words correctly and writes unknown words by listening for sounds and recording what he hears.
|      | **NUMERACY:**
|      | He can solve addition and subtraction problems using a variety of strategies such as 'counting on', 'counting back' and using his knowledge of 'doubles facts',
|      | He can recognise, describe and order Australian coins according to their value,
|      | He is able to identify the names and features of 2D and 3D shapes,
|      | He is able to tell time to o'clock and half past on an analogue and digital clock.
The children from the EYRP program have now completed Year One. The teachers’ reports have been overwhelmingly positive about the children’s progress and learning. Frequent comments about children (ST02, ST04, ST07, ST08, ST09, ST10, ST15, ST16, ST18 and ST19) being kind, honest, happy and willing to have a go, are seen throughout the teachers’ reports. The children were indistinguishable from typical Year One children. Skills that were listed in literacy are indicative of behaviours and skills of Year One (See Table 6.1).

According to the teachers’ reports children were displaying word recognition skills and effective reading strategies such as blending sounds, inferring and accurate retelling. Most of the children (ST02, ST04, ST05, ST06, ST07, ST08, ST09, ST10, ST11, ST12, ST14, ST16 and ST19) were able to read high frequency words and some of them (ST02, ST04, ST05, ST11, ST12 and ST15) could read aloud with excellent fluency. Children (ST02, ST04, ST05, ST06, ST08, ST09, ST10, ST11, ST13, ST14, ST16 and ST19) were also able to write commonly used words and had generally good handwriting. One child (ST06) who had fine motor co-ordination issues still had small issues with their handwriting, which was being addressed in a skill focus group (See Table 6.1).

In numeracy the children (ST02, ST03, ST04, ST05, ST06, ST09, ST10, ST11, ST13, ST14, ST15, ST16, ST17 and ST19) displayed skills such as an increasing recognition and understanding of bigger numbers, solving addition and subtraction problems using different strategies. Children (ST01, ST02, ST03, ST04, ST05, ST08, ST09, ST10, ST11, ST14, ST15, ST16, ST17 and ST19) could describe and identify Australian coins and could order some of them according to value. Some of the children (ST02, ST08, ST09, ST10, ST11, ST15, ST16 and ST19) were able to identify 2D and 3D shapes and some of them (ST02, ST09, ST11, ST15 and ST19) were also able to tell the time on analogue or digital clock (See Table 6.1).

The children from the EYRP have blended successfully into the mainstream classes and have shown skills that are equal to the children who did not participate in this program. Their need for time to learn how to learn and socialise was fundamental for their success and now they are ready to continue to build on these solid foundations.
6.1.1.2. End of Year AusVELS Report (2014) – Children in Year One

The end of Year One AusVELS reports of the EYRP children were analysed and the results were compared to different groups of non-EYRP children. The findings illustrated that despite the indications of learning problems that the children had when they started school, now they are improved academically and they have benefited from the two-year Foundation (See Tables 6.2 and 6.3). Whitebread and Bingham (2011, p. 3), mentioned that “specialised support in preschools, particularly for language and pre-reading skills, can benefit children”.

Table 6.2: Literacy and Numeracy scores of the EYRP children based on AusVELS scores (2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s Name</th>
<th>ENGREA</th>
<th>ENGWRI</th>
<th>ENGSPL</th>
<th>MATNUM</th>
<th>MATMGE</th>
<th>MATSTP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST06</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST07</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST08</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST09</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST10</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST12</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST13</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST14</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST15</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST16</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST17</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST18</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST19</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>F.5</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.3: Literacy and Numeracy scores of the EYRP children based on numerical scores (2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children's Name</th>
<th>ENGREA</th>
<th>ENGWRI</th>
<th>ENGSPL</th>
<th>Average English</th>
<th>MATNUM</th>
<th>MATMGE</th>
<th>MATSTP</th>
<th>Average Maths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST06</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST07</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST08</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST09</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST10</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST12</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST13</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST14</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST15</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST16</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST17</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST18</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST19</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final results of the EYRP children were compared with two different groups of children who did not participate in the EYRP. The first group, were children who were in the same age of the EYRP group and entered school in the same year (2012), but they were enrolled in the normal Foundation classes and finished Year One in 2013. The second group were children who also did not participate in the EYRP and enrolled in the normal Foundation and started school in 2013. This group of children were one year younger than the EYRP group, but they were in the same grade and finished Year One in the same year as the EYRP children (2014).

A comparison of the data from the EYRP group with children who enrolled in normal Foundation and entered school in the same year (2012) as the EYRP children showed that, at the end of Foundation year, the EYRP children still had lower results (See Chart 5.3), but at the end of Year One the data showed that the EYRP children had higher scores in literacy and numeracy and achieved better results than the same age peers (See Chart 6.1).

The above chart (Chart 6.1) compares the AusVELS scores at the end of Year One for the EYRP group with children who were in the same age as the EYRP cohort and enrolled in the Foundation classes in 2012. In chart 4.4 the EYRP children were compared with their respective scores at the end of Foundation year/s. In the above chart (Chart 6.1) the same children are compared at the end of Year One. Although the differences in the scores are small, it seems that the EYRP children who were first identified as having possible difficulties in the early years of school have improved and been able to overcome those initial problems. If the predictions for intervention were not realised, it is likely that these results would reflect a generally lower average score.

Data from the EYRP children was also compared with the non-EYRP children who started school in 2013 (one year younger than the EYRP children). The result of this comparison illustrated that the EYRP children had achieved higher scores in literacy and numeracy (See Chart 6.2). This achievement can be attributed to their age difference and the EYRP which helped them to improve their maturity and their skills in different areas of their learning.
The chart 6.2 displays scores of the EYRP children at the end of Year One, compared to the children in the same grade who were enrolled in the normal Foundation in 2013 and did not participate in the EYRP and were also one year younger than the EYRP children. In general, the EYRP children have achieved higher scores, more so in Numeracy than Literacy. Their higher scores are possibly attributed to their better ability to focus and their social, emotional and academic development.

6.1.2. Teachers’ Interviews

6.1.2.1. Teachers’ Interviews (2014) – Children in Year One

The following question was asked of the teachers to determine about the impact of the EYRP on children’s academic ability and their improvement.

“How is each student progressing academically?”

T12, T13, T14, T15 and T16 discussed the academic development of children as follow:
Table 6.4: Teachers’ comments on academic developments of children (2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ name</th>
<th>Children’ name</th>
<th>Teachers’ comments in 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T09</td>
<td>ST01</td>
<td>His maths is at level, and he is in no intervention group, but he is still in the English as an Additional Language (EAL) group. He is in level 8 in reading, but all children should be in level 15 by the end of the year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T12</td>
<td>ST02</td>
<td>He is at level. In maths he is strong, in reading and writing he is slightly weaker. He is very interested in animals, science and humanities related subjects. Academically, he is in the middle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T10</td>
<td>ST03</td>
<td>He missed a lot of Foundation because his family went overseas. Academically, he was behind the class, and we put him in a special program for maths. He did well with that, and so we moved him from that group. At the end of Foundation he was at level 2 for his reading, which he should have been at level 5, but now he is in level 8, which is not bad for English as Second Language (ESL) student. He learnt how to write on the lines and to use lower case letters. His spelling is at average with other kids, and he is progressing well. The EYRP has helped him to improve his different skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T12</td>
<td>ST04</td>
<td>He is on the spectrum, and his parents have been spoken to have a test for autism and parents refuse to acknowledge it. He has improved and has fewer outbreaks. He needs things to be concrete and he cannot adapt to change. He can count very well because of the repetitive/coding nature of it, same goes with spelling but, he cannot use the numbers if he needs to. He reads well, but the deeper understanding of characters is not there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T08</td>
<td>ST05</td>
<td>He is progressing well. He is more confident and has a lot of friends, but he still needs to work on his concentration. EYRP helped him to improve his concentration, and silly behaviour is less prominent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T08</td>
<td>ST06</td>
<td>Because of the EYRP he has been very independent and he has got friends. At the beginning he would not talk to anyone but now he asks questions and he does his work. He still does not make eye contact and looks down a lot but he is much better than before. EYRP helped him to settle. In the first year the teachers had to barricade the door, and he took that year to adjust to the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T12</td>
<td>ST07</td>
<td>He had a large chunk of last term dealing with his grandmother’s death. He is not doing his homework or his home reading. He has definitely improved lately, but he is still behind the class. After the testing done, he does come up on the lower part of the middle band.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T12</td>
<td>ST08</td>
<td>Academically, he is at level, but his writing is a bit on the weak side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T12</td>
<td>ST09</td>
<td>Academically, he is six months ahead in everything and the program has helped him to improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T12</td>
<td>ST10</td>
<td>He is an average student. He has improved a lot and has moved from low average to high average. EYRP has helped him to grow up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T12</td>
<td>ST11</td>
<td>He is quite ahead of the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T11</td>
<td>ST12</td>
<td>He has a few issues with his language, and he has joined a group that is going to help him with his language issues, but academically he is doing well. He just needs to listen to instructions. His reading skills are quite high, and his maths skills are quite strong.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
She is doing really well academically. She is six months ahead of where she should be in literacy, and in maths she is at level.

He is very confident, always playing sport, very responsible and at the top end of the class. EYRP challenged ST14 and made him more responsible, he could have done a year at prep and been on level, but now he is ahead of his level.

Academically he is at level.

She is currently six months below in maths, reading and writing. She does not form her letters correctly but she is improving her handwriting and tries hard.

His maths is at level, his writing is very low, and his reading is just average. He has poor spelling and he is a very reluctant learner. The two years of Foundation did not help him as such.

She has issues with her memory, which explains why she is behind academically than other children. She needs constant support. She knows her letters and sounds and now needs to put them into work. She is participated in a fine motor skills program, which did not have much impact on her. Overall the EYRP has made a big difference to her.

His reading is a little low, but he tries hard. His maths is taking off, and there are no more language issues for him.

Teachers commented that twelve of the EYRP children (ST01, ST02, ST03, ST08, ST09, ST11, ST12, ST13, ST14, ST15, ST17 and ST19) were at (or above) level in terms of reading and maths, which they attributed to them having experienced the EYRP (See Table 6.4). Initial testing at school entry showed that these children were very low in skills to initiate academic learning. Children with English as a second language (ST01 and ST03) were still behind in literacy but their progress was being supported by participating in the special programs. According to the teachers, children who were still behind academically were exhibiting issues such as prolonged absences (ST01, ST03 and ST11) and observations of autistic behaviours (ST18). Children were more independent and confident, they could made friends, and the skills were observed frequently which enhanced learning and progress. One child (ST17) was observed as a reluctant learner and was still behind in all areas. His reluctance was still to be investigated further and may point to their needing to be a more holistic approach involving his parents.

One of the teachers mentioned that the EYRP has helped children who were academically lower, but for those who were in the middle/average; it is hard to tell how much it has helped. However children who exhibited average academic skills but had initially poor social and emotional skills could actually be more behind if they were less willing to learn and interact than the teachers are now observing in grade one (ST04,ST05, ST06, ST07,ST16 and ST18).
6.2. Discussion of Findings

This chapter compares the AusVELS results of the EYRP cohort with non-EYRP children at Sunny Bank Primary School (SBPS) to determine if this program could improve children’s academic skills and address Research Question Three: 

**Is there any difference between AusVELS results at the end of Year One for children who participated in the EYRP and their peers who entered through the normal Foundation group?**. The AusVELS results of the non-EYRP children from 2013 and 2014, the AusVELS results of the EYRP children, and the end of year reports of the EYRP children and transcribed teachers’ interviews were analysed.

The AusVELS scores of the EYRP children were compared with those of non-EYRP children, who were in the same age as the EYRP group (enrolled in normal Foundation in 2012), and the children who entered Foundation in 2013 (one year younger than EYRP children) and did not participate in this program. The findings from these analyses showed that EYRP children who had early indications of learning impairment did benefit from the EYRP. Although their progress was slower (at the end of Foundation year), compared to the school entry peers, the findings indicated that the program gave them extra time to improve their social, emotional and academic abilities. These findings are consistent with the research by Morgan et al. (2012) who found that providing high quality early intervention services for children at risk, prior to school entry can improve long term educational and social opportunities.

By the end of Year One, the academic results of the EYRP children showed that they achieved higher scores in literacy and numeracy compared to their normal peers, and were generally exhibiting expected levels of social and emotional maturity. According to their respective teachers, the growth in the children’s achievements can be attributed to the EYRP. These findings are consistent with the research by Abbott-Shim et al. (2003) who found that the ‘Head Start’ or similar programs can improve children’s vocabulary and social skills; it also leads to improve their word knowledge, letter recognition, writing skills, and maths skills.

Easton and Gee (2012) suggested that investing earlier in early years of children, can have great benefits for children and it could be more cost effective for government. Additional findings, which support the benefits of the EYRP for the children who participate in it, are the children’s academic results in literacy and numeracy at the end of Year One, when compared with the results of the non-
EYRP children (2013 school entry). The results illustrate that the EYRP group achieved higher scores in literacy and numeracy compared with their normal peers. This improvement could be related to the children’s age differences, or extra time that the EYRP provided for them. Whitebread and Bingham (2011, p. 2) noted that, “International research shows that early intervention contributes significantly to putting children from low-income families on the route to development and achievement in life”. So the EYRP was beneficial for children with special needs, and helped them improve their maturity and their skills in different areas of the learning.

6.3. Summary

In this chapter different documents were reviewed and analysed to determine if there are any differences between academic results of the EYRP and non-EYRP children at the end of Year One.

Teachers were interviewed and they emphasised that the children were at level in terms of literacy and numeracy, and they attributed this to their EYRP experiences. Children with English as a second language were still behind in literacy but their progress was being supported by participating in the special programs. Whitebread and Bingham (2011, p. 3) suggested that “specialised support in preschools, particularly for language and pre-reading skills, can benefit children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language”. Teachers believed that children were more independent and confident, and children who were still behind academically were exhibiting issues such as prolonged absences and observations of autistic behaviours.

The teachers’ reports were analysed and they were overwhelmingly positive about the progress and learning that the EYRP children had made. Frequent comments about being kind, honest, happy and willing to have a go, are seen throughout the teachers’ reports (Table 6.4). They mentioned that the children were displaying appropriate levels of word recognition skills and effective reading strategies such as blending sounds, re-reading to gain understanding, inferring and accurate retelling. The children were able to write commonly used words and displayed skills such as an increasing recognition and understanding of bigger numbers, solving simple addition and subtraction. Thus, based on the teachers’ reports, there is evidence that the children from the EYRP have blended successfully into the mainstream classes and shown skills which were equal to the children who did not participate in this program.
At the end of Year One, the scores of the EYRP children, compared to the non-EYRP children, who were enrolled in normal Foundation in 2012 and 2013, and did not participate in this program. The result showed that the EYRP children who had early indications of learning impairment achieved higher scores in literacy and numeracy compared to their normal peers. This provides evidence that children did benefit from the EYRP and the extra year which was given to them to develop their social and emotional maturity, confidence levels and academic abilities.
CHAPTER 7: Summary and Recommendations

This chapter is in two sections. The first section reflects on the study in terms of the background of the problem, the purpose of the study and research methodology adopted for the research. The second section reflects on the theoretical framework of the study and the significance of the findings and concludes with recommendations for future research.

7.1. Summary of the Study

This research was a longitudinal study investigating the impact of a two-year Foundation program on children’s academic, emotional and social readiness and achievements in a Victorian Government primary school. The study was conducted at Sunny Bank Primary School (SBPS) in Melbourne’s northern suburbs in the City of Whittlesea, the first Government primary school in Victoria to introduce such a program. The primary participants were 19 children who commenced in the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) at SBPS in 2012, their parents and their teachers.

In 2011 SBPS introduced a two-year Foundation program for children who were ‘age ready’ to start school but were not emotionally or socially ready according to their Kindergarten reports. These children could repeat a Kindergarten year or start a normal Foundation program at school with a likelihood of negative experiences of schooling and possible failure (which could mean repeating a grade).

The response from SBPS to introduce the two-year Foundation program was consistent with the Australian Early Development Index (2009) data which showed that a higher than average number of children in the Mill Park community were developmentally vulnerable and this number had increased in 2012 (See Tables 1.1 and 1.2). According to AEDI (2012) data, 8.9% of five years olds were vulnerable in their communication and cognitive skills and 11.5% were vulnerable in their communication skills and general knowledge. It was these children who entered the Foundation year at SBPS in 2012, and some of them became the focus for the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP), which was the focus of this research study.

According to Alexander, Entwisle, Blyth, and McAdoo (1988, p. 5), “For elementary school children, one of the most important consequences of schooling is success in mastering the basic skills, how
well and how quickly the child learns to read and to do simple mathematics”. There are many studies that focus on the children’s learning readiness and, according to Sutherland (2009), giving children the right educational start can greatly enhance their opportunities to succeed. This focus provided an impetus to investigate how a specific program like the EYRP, could help children, and the key factors that could improve their academic abilities. The focus of this research study was the academic development of children from their first enrolment in the two-year Foundation program to the end of Year One, at a Victorian Government primary school.

This study evaluated data from and about the children who were participating in the EYRP to provide better understanding of their academic readiness and academic development in comparison with their peers who did not participate. This information can also give parents more detailed information to inform their decision as to whether enrol their children in the EYRP or normal Foundation.

The research methodology for this study was a longitudinal investigation (2012-2014) in the form of an interpretive case study of the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) at Sunny Bank Primary School. A qualitative research approach to data production and analysis was adopted as being the most appropriate for this study. The data production methods included interviews with teachers and parents to track the children’s developments, coding and analysis of the children’s academic data and teachers’ reports.

The primary methods of data collection used for this research study were analysis of different documents including: ‘Observation Form for Transition’, ‘On Entry Comments’, the mid and end of year teachers’ reports and end of year AusVELS reports of children, to examine the role of the children’s age, language impairment, families, and their school attendance in their academic developments, and the effect of the EYRP on children’s improvement. Other methods of data collection employed for this study were face to face interviews with teachers, and focus groups with parents to obtain their perception about the effect of EYRP on children’s social, emotional and academic developments. All data and transcribed interviews were reviewed and analysed and findings sorted to obtain the final outcomes about the effect of the EYRP on children.

The data from this research study indicated that some of the children who were being enrolled at SBPS to start school in 2012 had weaknesses in different areas such as motor skills, social, emotional and cognitive maturity, and these children were identified as not ready to start normal schooling and
the SBPS teachers recommended that they participate in the EYRP. This program seems to have benefited the children, and helped them to improve and build their confidence, maturity and abilities in different areas such as social, emotional and academic skills, and their preparedness for the normal years of schooling. However, it is important to keep in mind that the data on which this research is based comes from 19 children who participated in the EYRP whose parents gave permission for their children to be part of this research. Therefore, while the conclusions and recommendations are grounded in the findings of the study, this is a limited sample which may not necessarily be representative of the children entering Foundation year programs.

If the SBPS is going to improve the academic results of the children and school, by offering the EYRP, then parents need to be encouraged to enrol their children in this program, for exposure to better social, emotional and academic skills.

7.2. Reflection on Theoretical Framework and Significance of the Study

This study makes a significant contribution to understandings of school readiness. Based on the findings from this research study and the literature that informed it, school readiness is an important factor which can affect the children’s academic success in later school years. According to Ackerman and Barnett (2005), Prior et al. (2011), and Margetts (2002, 2004) among others, children’s school readiness is strongly influenced by different factors including age, gender, family and language spoken at home, as well as language impairment, social, emotional and fine motor skills. The EYRP program at SBPS provided children with extra time to improve their abilities in different areas of their learning. Such a program not only improved the social, emotional, and academic skills of the children, but it also helped them to be better prepared for normal schooling and future success.

Prior et al. (2011) argued that language and pre-literacy together with behaviour are important predictors of school readiness. They proposed several hypotheses: “(1) children from lower SES backgrounds would have lower levels of School Readiness (SR); (2) child communication and pre-literacy factors would be predominant in prediction equations with family variables contributing less; (3) boys would be less school ready than girls; and (4) children with Language Impairment (LI) would be at greater risk for poor SR” (2011, p. 7). Although this study did not investigate the SES backgrounds or gender effect of the EYRP children, but the effect of the Language Impairment was investigated. Seven of the EYRP children had speech issues, so it was important to find out if
language impairment was a factor affecting the children’s school readiness. Other studies have demonstrated that children with LI are at risk of encountering social problems in school (Fujiki et al., 2001). According to Tomblin et al. (1997), children with language problems are also at risk of having difficulties in reading and certain behaviour disorders. Findings from this study indicated that language impairment does not seem to be a factor affecting the school readiness of the EYRP children, and they were at similar levels of social, emotional and fine motor skills as their peers. But the EYRP gave a head start on children’s learning with special needs. Children with speech problems benefited from the EYRP because they had an opportunity to spend more time developing their alphabet knowledge, and for children with speech issues having that knowledge can be more helpful”.

Cunningham and Carroll (2010) found that older children have higher levels of skills than younger children. In this study, the relationship between age and school readiness of the EYRP children was examined. The data indicated that all of the children who participated in this research study were ‘age ready’ to start the school, but some of them were younger than their peers (the age difference was a maximum of seven months). Grissom (2004) argued that children’s successes (academically, socially and emotionally) are greater when they are older at school entry. The findings from this study showed that on average, older children had a higher level of skills in different areas, such as social, emotional and motor skills than their younger peers; therefore they were more ready to start formal schooling. Thus, the age can be a factor influencing school readiness of the children – however there were individual exceptions.

Age as an influencing factor was also examined to see if it affected the academic achievement of children as they progress throughout the year level. Langer et al. (1984) noted that achievement differences between younger and older children in the same grade are reduced as the year level increases. The findings illustrated that small differences in the age did not influence the academic achievement and progress of the children in this study. It was expected that older children would achieve higher scores, but the results indicated that children in the EYRP were in the similar range of scores; even some of the younger children achieved higher scores than older one, so small age difference did not affect the results of the EYRP children.

Prior et al. (2011), found that school readiness has an influence on children’s success in the early years of their learning, and it can be a predictor of children’s academic achievements. So the EYRP,
by placing children in a less academically demanding classroom with particular emphasis on teaching and building social and emotional skills such as cooperation, friendliness, negotiating, having conversations and playing fairly, helped the children to be more ready to learn.

Social maturity is an important factor that can affect children’s achievements and their learning readiness. The EYRP helped children to develop their social, emotional and academic skills, so when they started Foundation year of schooling they would be ready to learn. This program taught children how to learn the various social and emotional skills and then helped them to improve their academic abilities.

The EYRP program is very valuable for the school and its community, as there are lots of children with very poor oral language, social and emotional skills; so this program can help them to develop those skills; therefore children can be ready for reading and writing and fitting into the school system.

Data from the EYRP group indicated that the children started school with different educational experiences. Murray and Harrison (2011a) found that learning readiness at school entry is defined by the ability of the children to work independently and being interested in looking for challenges at school. These factors are also strong predictors of the literacy and numeracy scores of children at the end of the year. In this study, some of the children had participated in Three-year-old and Four-year-old Kindergarten programs, most of them had just experienced of Four-year-old Kindergarten and one of the EYRP children participated for just two months in Four-year-old Kindergarten. All of these children were chronologically eligible (age ready) for school, but they showed different levels of social, emotional and academic maturity and confidence in the classroom. They also started school with different skills and knowledge. Some were able to identify letters, numbers, shapes, and pack their bags, while others still needed to improve their ability to work independently. Some of them were ready to participate in classroom activities and follow teacher instructions, but some, were not exhibiting the social and emotional maturity needed to engage in shared classroom experiences. With the exception of one child, the children who had two years of Kindergarten experiences (compared with the others having one year of Kindergarten) did not illustrate better social and emotional readiness and maturity.

Children gain academic and social skills by attending school regularly, and these skills are essential for their academic and social achievements (Daraganova, 2012). Children who do not attend school
regularly may lose opportunities for learning the material and that can affect their future academic success (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). Absenteeism was seen by the teachers as a concern for some children, as there was indication from the teachers that absenteeism had influenced children’s achievements. School attendance is a part of children’s learning. Studies by Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) into the academic achievements of children from Kindergarten toward high school graduation, found that academic achievements are highly correlated to the children’s absences throughout the school years. Data from teachers’ interviews and other documents showed that some children in the EYRP did not participate in school regularly, but findings from data analysis illustrated that those children at the end of school year achieved expected scores in literacy and numeracy, so the findings from this study did not support absenteeism as an influencing factor on the children’s academic achievement.

As a principle for success emerging from this study it could be mentioned that this program by offering the two-year-Foundation to children with specific activities, focused on developing social, emotional, and motor skills gave children time to mature during the EYRP year, which helped them to improve their skills, and this can prevent the need for recovery programs in the later years of schooling. Hence such a program can be less effective and more costly to the school in later primary years. Barnett (1995) emphasised that the early childhood care and education programs can produce significant improvement in school success, and if these programs are offered earlier to the children, greater effects can be observed. The results from this study illustrated that despite the different weaknesses that the EYRP children had in their social, and emotional readiness for starting school; by offering extra time to acquire these skills, the program has benefited and built the children’s confidence, maturity and abilities, so they can be prepared for normal years of schooling.

Another findings which supports the benefits of the EYRP for the children who participate in this program, is the children’s academic results at the end of Year One, when compared with the results of the non-EYRP children. The academic results indicate that the EYRP group achieved higher scores in literacy and numeracy compared with their normal peers. This improvement could be related to the extra time that the EYRP provided for them.

The EYRP children with speech problems also demonstrated improvements. The findings indicate that the speech difficulties of the EYRP children tend to be reduced with opportunities to talk and
socialise within a structured environment such as a play-based Foundation class. Thus by giving the EYRP children time to mature with their language issues, they could benefit from this program.

By identifying children who needed more time to develop important skills means that the EYRP program made a difference in terms of school readiness and maturity for the participating children. It helped them to develop, grow, and learn strategies and skills to facilitate positive learning experiences. So because of this program, the EYRP children are better prepared for normal schooling.

Children with English as a second language were still behind in literacy but their progress was being supported by participating in the school’s special programs. These children were more independent and confident, and those who were still behind academically were supported by intervention programs.

Murray and Harrison (2011a), noted that children have better literacy and numeracy skills when they have attended at pre-school program. Having early educational interventions during the pre-school years is an effective way to avoid learning difficulties and achieve a healthy development for children (Reynolds et al., 2001). Findings from this study illustrated that the EYRP children who had early indications of learning impairment achieved high scores in literacy and numeracy. This is indicating that children did benefit from the EYRP and the extra year which was given to them to develop their social and emotional maturity, confidence levels and academic abilities.

Finally, this study is important because the findings will be shared with SBPS to help the school modify their programs to support the enhancement of their curriculum and improve teaching programs. Also, the results of this study may better inform parents to make a right decision for their child, in terms of whether to participate in the EYRP or start normal Foundation.

7.3. Recommendations

The findings from this study indicate the need for additional research in order to better understand the conduct and effectiveness of the EYRP. Further research could investigate with a view to refining the criteria for recommending children’s participation in the two-year Foundation program. This may include working more closely with related pre-schools.
Another research direction is to follow the EYRP children and non-EYRP children (the same age entry) through their subsequent school years (to Year Six) and compare their results to find out if the effect of EYRP would still be present throughout the primary years.

Further research could also be conducted to compare achievements of the EYRP children and non-EYRP children, who entered school in 2013 (one year younger than EYRP children) to their subsequent school years and determine if the age difference is an important issue for their academic achievement.

This study did not investigate the influence of family cultural and socio-economic background on children’s social, emotional and academic development. SBPS is in a low SES area with a diverse multicultural population and low Index of Community Socio-Economic Advantage (ICSEA) ratings and high AEDI domain vulnerabilities. The impact of these factors on the children’s academic development requires further investigation to better contextualise the children’s progress and outcomes.

Another research focus could be based on the results of this study to conduct longitudinal research on the EYRP children, to track them through to their first and second NAPLAN (National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy) results in Year Three and Year Five, to determine if the EYRP was beneficial, and whether it has helped children achieve good results in NAPLAN tests.

A further research direction would be to investigate the financial sustainability of the EYRP for the school, including the cost effectiveness of this program, to determine if there is a future need for remediation for the EYRP children, and the operation of the overall program.
APPENDIX A:

Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP)

Teachers’ Interviews

Does the program make a difference to the children’s later need for reading recovery or other intervention?

What is the basis for deciding if a child moves to Grade 1 after one year of their schooling?

How are the children progressing emotionally and socially, physically and cognitively?

What are your expectations and understandings of the program?

Are your expectations being met?
APPENDIX B:

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EYRP RESEARCH PROJECT

Project Title: Researching the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) at Sunny Bank Primary School

Dear Parents,

You are invited to participate in Researching the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP). Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask one of the investigators.

Researching the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) is a partnership project between the School of Education, RMIT University and Sunny Bank Primary School. The research investigators are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor Annette Gough</td>
<td>9925 6580</td>
<td><a href="mailto:annette.gough@rmit.edu.au">annette.gough@rmit.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of School, School of Education, RMIT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Richard Johnson</td>
<td>99257820</td>
<td><a href="mailto:richard.johnson@rmit.edu.au">richard.johnson@rmit.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Lecturer, School of Education, RMIT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Mashid Semnani-Jazani</td>
<td>992557427</td>
<td><a href="mailto:s3253045@student.rmit.edu.au">s3253045@student.rmit.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s student, RMIT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal, Sunny Bank P.S.</td>
<td>999999999</td>
<td>Sunny <a href="mailto:Bank.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au">Bank.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal, Sunny Bank P.S.</td>
<td>999999999</td>
<td>Sunny Bank.ps @edumail.vic.gov.au</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading Teacher, Sunny Bank P.S.</td>
<td>999999999</td>
<td>Sunny Bank.ps @edumail.vic.gov.au</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This Prep (EYRP) program has been a significant development for the school and for education nationally and internationally. We plan to review the children’s social/ emotional, physical and cognitive readiness for the program and how they develop in those areas. We want to find out what aspects of the program are working, and what is not, and which aspects of the program are cost effective according to the School’s Resource
Package. We intend to work with the whole school community. Through our interviews, we would like to include the voices of parents, children, teachers, the Northern Metropolitan Region and the Whittlesea Community Council. Accordingly, regular reports will be presented to the whole school community via the School Council.

We would like to interview you for about half an hour (once) and your child for ten minutes, three times during the course of this year. Your answers to our questions will be noted. The research investigators would also like to examine the Prep entry assessment data and the kindergarten transition reports for your child from the records held by the school. We will write a report and show it to you. If you are happy with the way we have used the information you have given us in your interview, we will present our final report to the School Council.

Please note:
If you choose to be interviewed and give us permission to interview your child, please sign the consent form below. If you choose not to be interviewed, you will not be disadvantaged in any way.
You will not be identified by name or in any other way in our report. We will use pseudonyms in reporting of results.
You can be interviewed and then decide to pull out of the research and upon informing us, we will not use information from your report.
Recordings from interviews will be kept in a secured steel cabinet at RMIT University, Bundoora and will not be able to be used by anyone other than the research investigators.

The following is a guide to the questions we will ask:

**Children:**
Are you enjoying school? What are you learning?
What is the best thing about what you do in your classroom?
Tell me about school.

**Parents:**
Why did you choose this program for your child?
What were your expectations?
Are your expectations being fulfilled?
How is your child progressing emotionally and socially, physically and cognitively?
What are your expectations and understandings of the program?
What is your response to the school’s selection process for entry into the program?
What is your response to the overall program?

We look forward to your support of the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP).
Yours sincerely,

Professor Annette Gough
Dr Richard Johnson
Mashid Semnani-Jazani
P.B
D.C
G.F

If you have any complaints about the conduct of this research project you may contact the Executive Officer, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, or contact the Principal of Sunny Bank Primary School.
APPENDIX C:

Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) Research Project

Parent Questionnaire

Q1. Why did you choose this program for your child?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Q2. What were your expectations?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Q3. Are your expectations being fulfilled? Please elaborate.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Q4. How is your child progressing emotionally, socially, physically and cognitively?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Q5. What is your response to the school’s selection process for entry into the program?

Q6. What is your response to the overall program?

Q7. Any further comments?

Please return in the provided reply paid envelope.

Many thanks!
APPENDIX D:

EARLY YEARS READINESS PROGRAM (EYRP) RESEARCH PROJECT CONSENT

1. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet

2. I agree to participate in the research project as described

3. I agree: to be interviewed

4. I acknowledge that:

   (a) My participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied (unless follow-up is needed for safety).

   (b) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.

   (c) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.

   (d) The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to ............... (researcher to specify). Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Participants Consent;

Name of Parent: 

_____________________________  (in block letters)

Name of student: 

_____________________________
I consent to the participation of ________________________________ in the above project.

Signature: (1) (2) Date: 

___________________________
(Signatures of parents or guardians)
APPENDIX E:

2012_001550

Professor Annette Gough
School of Education
RMIT University
PO Box 71
BUNDOORA 3083

Dear Professor Gough

Thank you for your application of 2 May 2012 in which you request permission to conduct research in Victorian government schools and/or early childhood settings titled Researching the Early Years Reading Program (EYRP) at [School Name] Primary School.

I am pleased to advise that on the basis of the information you have provided your research proposal is approved in principle subject to the conditions detailed below.

1. The research is conducted in accordance with the final documentation you provided to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

2. Separate approval for the research needs to be sought from school principals and/or centre directors. This is to be supported by the DEECD approved documentation and, if applicable, the letter of approval from a relevant and formally constituted Human Research Ethics Committee.

3. The project is commenced within 12 months of this approval letter and any extensions or variations to your study, including those requested by an ethics committee must be submitted to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for its consideration before you proceed.

4. As a matter of courtesy, you advise the relevant Regional Director of the schools or governing body of the early childhood settings that you intend to approach. An outline of your research and a copy of this letter should be provided to the Regional Director or governing body.

5. You acknowledge the support of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in any publications arising from the research.

6. The Research Agreement conditions, which include the reporting requirements at the conclusion of your study, are upheld. A reminder will be sent for reports not submitted by the study’s indicative completion date.

7. If DEECD has commissioned you to undertake this research, the responsible Branch/Division will need to approve any material you provide for publication on the Department’s Research Register.
I wish you well with your research study. Should you have further enquiries on this matter, please contact Kathleen Nolan, Research Officer, Research and Evaluation Branch, by telephone on (03) 9637 3244 or by email at nolan.kathleen.1@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Research and Evaluation Branch
10/05/2012

enc
Dear Annette,

Ethics Clearance
Project title: Researching the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) at Green Bank Primary School
Applicant(s): Prof. Annette Gough, Dr. Richard Johnson, Dr. Lyn Longaretti, Ms Naomi Wilks-Smith, Ms Karen Cornelle, Ms D. (redacted) Ms M. (redacted)
Ethics register number: CHEAN-A-200677-04/12
Ethics clearance expires on: 26 July 2015

Your amended ethics application has been reviewed and approved by the Deputy Chair of the Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN). Your application has been approved at a Low Risk classification and will be reported to the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee for noting.

Data storage
Please note that all research data should be stored on University Network systems. These systems provide high levels of manageable security and data integrity, can provide secure remote access, are backed on a regular basis and can provide Disaster Recover processes should a large scale incident occur. The use of portable devices such as CDs and memory sticks is valid for archiving, data transport where necessary and some works in progress. The authoritative copy of all current data should reside on appropriate network systems and the Principal Investigator is responsible for the retention and storage of the original data pertaining to the project for a minimum period of five years.

Annual/Final report
You are reminded that an Annual/Final report is mandatory and should be forwarded to the Ethics Officer in December 2012. This report is available at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/governance/committees/hec

Amendments
If you need to make any amendments to your project please submit an amendment form to the Ethics Officer. This form is available at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/governance/committees/hec

Should you need any further information please contact the Ethics Officer, Lisa Mann on (03) 9925 2974 or email to lisa.mann@rmit.edu.au

On behalf of the DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network I wish you well in your research.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN)
Request for Amendment/Extension of Human Research Ethics project

Note: This form is intended to be completed as an electronic document and is set up as a series of tables. The table will enlarge to the size you require as you type or press the Enter key. For check boxes, double click on the left mouse button and a 'check boxes form field' dialog box will appear: choose 'checked' and 'ok'. If you want to uncheck it, double click on left mouse button and a 'check boxes form field' dialog box will appear: choose 'not checked' and 'ok'.

All changes to a project must be approved before they are implemented. If data collection continues beyond the date for which the project was approved then the project is considered to be not approved and data collected will be un-useable.

Project No. | Project title
---|---
CHECK A-2000/67-04/12 | Researching the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) at Sunnybank Primary School

Project approved until: 26 July 2015

Project being undertaken for award of degree:
- [ ] Honours
- [ ] Masters
- [ ] PhD
- [x] Not applicable

Principal Investigator: Prof. Annette Gough
Email: annette.gough@rmit.edu.au
Address: School of Education
Name of Supervisor (if applicable): N/A

Project summary
Summarise the original project. Assume when preparing your summary that the reader does not have a copy of the original application so this summary needs to 'stand alone'.

Researching the Early Years Readiness Program (EYRP) is a partnership project between the School of Education, RMIT University and Sunnybank Primary School. This two-year Prep (EYRP) program is for children who are age appropriate, but socially or emotionally not ready for school, has been a significant development for the school and for education nationally and internationally. It is our joint belief that the program needs to be evaluated over a period of five years as recommended to the Principal by the Northern Metropolitan Region.

We plan to review the children's social/emotional, physical and cognitive readiness for the program and how they develop in those areas. We want to find out what aspects of the program are working and what is not and which aspects of the program are cost effective according to the School's Resource Package. We intend to work with the whole school community. Through our interviews, we would like to include the voices of parents, students, teachers, school administrators, the Northern Metropolitan Region and the Whittlesea Community Council. Accordingly, regular reports will be presented to the whole school community via the School Council.

SECTION 1 – Amendments

RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, November 2010
Ethics Amendment #6
Page 1 of 2
1. List those aspects of the project that you would like to amend. Make sure to include a rationale and background for each of the amendments. Cite any references where appropriate.

Investigator Ms Naomi Wilks-Smith was unable to be involved due to commencing her PhD study. In her place is Dr Narelle Lemon who is a senior lecturer within the School of Education.

A new Masters by Research candidate, Mahshid Semnani-Jazani, who has plans to transfer to a PhD, has joined the RMIT team in 2013. She wishes to examine the student assessment data.

Mrs M... has retired and in her place is Mrs M... also of... University.

Furthermore, we wish to revise the answer to the question regarding Participant identification from non-identifiable/anonymous to Potentially identifiable (coded). This was necessary due to site visits involving student observations.

2. Explain how the requested amendments will alter the original approved project.

Remember to revise any documents associated with the approved application (e.g. plain language statement, questionnaire) that will be altered if the amendment is approved

- If appropriate attach copies of documents that will be changed by the amendment
  (use 'track changes')
- If appropriate attach a table comparing the amendment details with what is approved
  in the current application.

Personnel changes will not alter the original approved project.

Site visits involving student observations are a strength to the project as they capture the student voice, and add richness to the data being collected. Please note that contact with students was included in the approved RMIT ethics application and DEECD research project application.

Signed: ___________________________ Date: ______________________

Student No: _______________________

If applicable)

Signed: ___________________________ Date: ______________________

(Supervisor – if applicable)

RMIT HREC or College Human Ethics Advisory Network:

Approved On: ____________________

Signed: ___________________________

issu ed: ___________________________

Date: ____________________________
DSC CHEAN A Project 2000677-04/12, Professor Annette Gough - A... (3)

Sent from my iPhone

On 17 Sep 2014, at 11:30 am, Suzana Kovacevic <suzana.kovacevic@rmit.edu.au> wrote:

Dear Professor Gough,

I am pleased to advise that the addition of Mahshid Semnani-Jazan and Mrs Y. B as personnel and revision of the response to the question regarding Participant identification from non-identifiable/anonymous to Potentially identifiable (coded) has been granted ethics approval by the Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network as a sub-committee of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

In any future correspondence please quote the project number and project title.

On behalf of the DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network I wish you well in your research.

Regards,

Suzana Kovacevic
Research and Ethics Officer

College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University
Building 101, Level 2
171 La Trobe Street, Melbourne, 3000

Ph: 03 9925 2974
Email: suzana.kovacevic@rmit.edu.au
Website: www.rmit.edu.au/dsc
Co-convenor, Victoria/Tasmania Chapter Executive Committee. Australasian Research Management Society
Member, Australasian Ethics Network (Victorian/Tasmania Chapter)
Member, INORMS 2016 Planning Committee

<Gough, A CHEAN A 2000677-04-12.pdf>
**VELS vs AusVELS progression points**

The table below lists the VELS progression points and their equivalent AusVELS progression points. It also indicates the expected level of achievement for a student to receive a high C in each report, i.e., at the middle or end of the year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Level Expectation</th>
<th>Middle or End of Year</th>
<th>VELS Scores</th>
<th>AusVELS Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beyond Year 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>11.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>10.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>End</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 9</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>9.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 8</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>8.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prep</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Semaphore Consulting Pty Ltd ABN 79 007 089 661
List of References:


PLEASE SCROLL


