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EVALUATION OF YACHAD
ACCELERATED LEARNING PROJECT

Deakin University
Faculty of Arts and Education
School of Education

FINAL REPORT

12 December 2011
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Evaluation of the Yachad Accelerated Learning Project (YALP)

FINAL REPORT

1. Introduction

The Yachad Accelerated Learning Project (YALP) is a targeted tutoring system to improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes for students in primary and secondary schools who have been identified as at-risk.

YALP is based on practices developed in Israel, where issues of immigration, disparate ethnic communities and limited budgets have resulted in the development of innovative approaches to education (www.yalp.org.au). YACHAD in Hebrew means together, which reflects the importance the project places on the achievements possible when working in partnership.

In Australia YALP is aimed at achieving improved literacy and numeracy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations in Australia. Ms Helene Teichmann, a Melbourne businesswoman and Professor Marcia Langton AM (University of Melbourne) introduced the concept of YALP to Australia in 2003. Working with Professor Elite Olsh tin (NCIW Research Institute for Innovation in Education, the Hebrew University, Jerusalem http://nciw-res.msc.h.huji.ac.il/default_e.asp) and a team of Israeli and Australian Educators, they introduced the YALP (Israeli) approach and methodologies to educators at six schools and communities: Halls Creek (WA), Aurukun (QLD) and Shepparton (VIC), focussing primarily on literacy. YALP’s Tutoring Model – the Ten Minute System (10MS) – was introduced in one identified network. YALP has since developed into a systematic intervention project, currently operating in 15 schools in an identified region and also supporting the Academy of Sport Health and Education (ASHE).

The YALP organisation consists of Project Convener, Helene Teichmann; General Manager, Anthony Rose (Israel); Academic and Pedagogical Coordinator, Dr Judy Yaron (Israel); IT Manager, Nathan Lokanathan; Administrator, Nikki Dawson; YALP Literacy Trainers Jenny Robbins and Ross Robbins; and YALP Numeracy Trainer, Kylie Glover.

A distinctive feature of YALP is that it delivers a one-on-one ‘ten minute system’ (10MS) three to five times a week to at-risk students. Each 10MS integrates previously learnt material (i.e. content and skills) with new material and aims to bridge gaps in student understanding, while supporting their individual learning styles.

As is stated on the YALP website:

The YALP approach to accelerated learning is based on small chunks of focussed, structured, and constructed learning experiences. This is particularly important for students who may often feel lost in a multipurpose, multi-skill approach. Each learning activity has clearly defined goals, topics and tasks that are shared with the student. The learning activities are aimed at teaching students how to integrate new knowledge into existing structures and expand their knowledge. At the same time the learning activities are suitably flexible to meet the educational needs of each student.

The program is designed to be implemented by paraprofessionals who have been trained by YALP. Part of the YALP methodology incorporates the identification of learning gaps and the development of individual learning programs for the students.

YALP was piloted in schools across a number of outback settings in 2005-2007, when its focus was primarily on dealing with the significant gap between the learning outcomes of Indigenous students and those of other young people in other parts of Australia. No strong conclusions were drawn about its impact on student learning outcomes, although there were signs of a positive impact on student engagement in schooling – for an account of this phase of YALP’s implementation in Australia see the YALP Pilot Final report to DEEWR (YALP, 2008).

At this time, YALP was also being implemented in a small number of schools in urbanised settings, most notably schools in the one of identified networks that is the focus of this Evaluation.

Note: the names of schools and people involved in the YALP program at a school level have been omitted. Sometimes pseudonyms have been used for the sake of the fluency of the text. We have also felt obliged to delete all references to the geographical region in Victoria where these schools are located. We hope that we have respected the values and perspectives of all those people who agreed to be interviewed, and that we have represented their views accurately.
2. Focus of the Evaluation

Since 2005, YALP has had a presence in schools in the identified networks. In 2007, the YALP methodology was reported as being 'successfully embedded' in High School A and Primary School A (PhillipsKPA, 2007, p.46), and these schools continue to participate in the program. A relationship with six schools in one network was formalized in 2008, and YALP is continuing to work with schools in the network area, as well as expanding to include other schools in the identified Region, including two schools in another network that are also part of the focus for this evaluation. A significant development has been the setting up of a working relationship with an English Language Centre (ELC), signaling YALP's expanded focus on new arrivals in Australia from countries like Afghanistan and Iraq in addition to Indigenous students and other students with learning needs.

The schools that are the focus of, and have participated in, this evaluation are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Anonymised list of the schools that are the focus of this evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First network</th>
<th>Second network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary School A</td>
<td>Primary School E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School B</td>
<td>Primary School F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School C</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Primary School D</td>
<td></td>
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<td>High School A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School B</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This report does not engage directly with the claims and counterclaims made in previous evaluations of YALP or with the history of YALP's implementation in various regions around Australia. Details about this history can be found in the reports to which reference has already been made. It is perhaps worth noting that, in a report that was otherwise critical of YALP's implementation in remote settlements, Primary School A and High School A are described as providing 'fertile ground' for YALP (PhillipsKPA, 2007, p.34), and these schools are presented as exemplifying 'critical success factors'. These factors included a high level of interaction between the schools and the YALP organisation, as well as factors internal to the schools, such as a strong commitment on the part of the school leadership, teachers and paraprofessional staff to the implementation of the program (Ibid, p.33).

We mention this positive evaluation of YALP in the First network district in order to emphasize that our evaluation is limited in its scope. Our focus is on the various ways in which YALP has been implemented in the schools listed, and on the success or otherwise of this initiative in 2011. We can hardly do justice to the history of what appears to have been a very interesting example of a strategic intervention at a whole school level at both High School A and Primary School A. There is no doubt much to learn from whole school change of this sort. Nor is there any doubt about the commitment of everyone who has been involved in this initiative over the past 5-6 years, at both High School A and Primary School A, as well as the other schools in the First network Region that have been part of this evaluation. The challenge here has been to find a way to identify and evaluate what may have been achieved at these schools through YALP.
3. **Evaluation Methodology**

The key question of the evaluation (as agreed with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) is:

> What growth did students participating in YALP show against English and/or Mathematics Victorian Essential Learning Standards levels based on the starting position of the YALP students?

Our aim has been to conduct an evaluation of YALP that would identify both its successes and possible limitations. This also means identifying the intended and unintended consequences of the implementation of YALP in each school. As Linda Darling-Hammond has remarked (2004), any attempt at school reform must reckon with both intended and unintended consequences. This acknowledges the importance of unintended consequences in the implementation of YALP in the form of providing students with emotional support through one-to-one attention and school networking (PhillipsKPA, 2007, p.36). We have likewise sought to be responsive to the full dimensions of YALP as a whole school intervention. To achieve this aim, both qualitative and quantitative measures have been employed.

The evaluation tries to capture the impact of the program in 2011, including:

- the context for the selection of students for participation in the YALP program (as will be seen in section 5, this differs from school to school);
- the number of students involved and identification of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students;
- the length of time each student has participated in YALP;
- quantitative analysis of the student achievement data in relation to expected outcomes;
- qualitative analysis of the impact of YALP on learning outcomes involving interviews with principals, teachers, YALP tutors, students and parents (where possible); and
- analysis of student, tutor and principals’ perceptions of the effectiveness of YALP including the impact of the YALP training on the paraprofessional and un-expected impact on each school’s environment.

More questions were asked that were concerned with the implementation of YALP, including:

- the content focus of the YALP10 Minute Sessions as observed at each school;
- the diagnostic tests and activities used in the YALP10MS; and
- the professional development of teachers and paraprofessionals in participating schools in accelerated learning approaches.

**Ethics Approval**

Ethics approval was obtained from the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (DUHREC). Permission was also obtained from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to conduct research in schools.
4. **Sources of Data and Their Analysis**

The following data sources were used in the evaluation.

**Relevant Documentation**

YALP reports and other key documents were collected to identify factors that have contributed to, or detracted from, the successful implementation of YALP.

**School Site Visits**

Members of the Deakin University YALP Evaluation Team visited each of the eight schools in the identified networks conducting YALP programs, in order to engage with people who were involved in participating in and implementing YALP, and to learn from their experiences. Team members spent one whole day at each school, with schools taking responsibility to schedule the program of observations and interviews described below. Deakin staff were made to feel very welcome at all schools. Responses by all people involved were positive about YALP – especially about the pastoral care aspects and the one-to-one, regular interactions with students.

At each school, two or more 10 Minute Sessions were observed for each of at least two YALP tutors. Field notes were taken using an Observation Schedule (see Appendix 1), and other materials (such as worksheets, learning plans for students, and pre-tests) were collected.

At each school, interviews were held with:

- The Principal
- The YALP School Coordinator
- The YALP Tutors who were observed
- Students who were observed
- (Wherever possible) the class teacher from whose class the students came
- (Wherever possible) a small focus group of parents whose children participated in YALP.

Interviews were also held with the three YALP trainers.

Interviews were semi-structured, with interviewees encouraged to capture their experiences of YALP. Prompts varied, depending on the specific role that the interviewee played in the program, and were used in a flexible, conversational way, ensuring however that all points were covered. A sample interview schedule for YALP School Coordinators can be found in Appendix 2, and one for the Student Group interviews in Appendix 3.

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed.

In addition, each team member produced a written summary of their visits. The interview data (including interview data from the three YALP trainers), observation notes, and summaries were jointly reviewed by the members of the evaluation team.

Analysis of the interview and observation data included the production of ‘thumbnail sketches’ of the implementation of YALP at the eight schools in the identified networks involved in YALP in 2011, including a description of the specific context for the implementation of YALP in each school. These sketches form the basis for Table 2 in section 5 of this report.

A number of themes and issues, which emerged from this analysis, are also identified and discussed in section 5.
The challenge, as with any evaluation of this kind, has been to try to go beyond what stakeholders say about the success or otherwise of the program. It seems fair to say that nearly everyone we have interviewed has given a positive account of YALP, often affirming dimensions of the program that do not easily lend themselves to measurement against accepted benchmarks, such as the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) outcomes – this is something that we anticipated at the very start of this project. We have endeavored to respect their views, to acknowledge good intentions, and in many instances to recognize what they have accomplished in the form of whole school implementation of a strategy designed to support young people in need, while nonetheless seeking to place what they say in perspective.

Quantitative Data Sets

Deakin prepared a spreadsheet for each school’s YALP Coordinator to complete in order to give information about which students participated in YALP during each of Terms 1, 2 and 3 in 2011, and which of Literacy, Numeracy (or both) was the focus for the 10 Minute Sessions.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development provided Deakin with whole school March 2011 data for Year 3 – 10 students for the following student assessments:

- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) On Demand Testing (Adaptive) for Mathematics – Number (Year 3 – 10 students);
- VCAA On Demand Testing (Adaptive) for English – Reading (Year 3 – 10 students);
- Mathematics Online Interview (Year 2 students).

Schools were also asked to give whole school data for:

- September VCAA On Demand Testing for Mathematics – Number (Year 3 – 10 students);
- September VCAA On Demand Testing for English – Reading (Year 3 – 10 students);
- End-of-Term 2 Teacher judgments against VELS in Mathematics and English;
- NAPLAN data (for appropriate year levels);
- September Mathematics Online Interview (Prep – Year 2 students);
- March and September English Online Interview (Prep – Year 2 students), where available.

Schools have individual oversight of their student performance data and each school in the sample gave a different level of detail in their data, using different formats.

As agreed with the Department, September 2011 raw data was also provided by YALP for Years 3–10 VCAA On Demand testing for Mathematics – Number, and English – Reading, as well as NAPLAN results and mid-year teacher reports against VELS, for students participating in YALP. However, as is usually the case when gathering and analyzing multiple sets of data, there were discrepancies when data from various sources were compared. Wherever possible, whole-school data provided by the Department and schools was used for comparison of March and September results for Years 3–10.

March and September 2011 data for YALP participants from the Years 3–10 VCAA On Demand testing for Number and English – Reading were analysed for information on growth in Mathematics and English based on the starting position of the YALP students. As explained in section 5 of this report, VCAA standardized scores from the On Demand testing undergo a series of transformations to give an approximation of VELS levels. March and
September On Demand data for both Literacy and Mathematics were used to compare YALP and non-YALP students, as well as YALP students based on the extent of their participation in YALP during Terms 1, 2 and 3 in 2011, and which of Numeracy, Literacy (or both) was the focus for the 10 Minute Sessions.

March 2011 data for YALP participants from the Years 3–10 VCAA On Demand testing for Number and English – Reading has been compared with the whole-school data supplied by the Department to help in the analysis of the selection of students for participation in YALP.

It was not possible to analyse growth between March and September 2011 for students in Years Prep to 2 as only March data were available from the Mathematics and Reading Online Interviews, with no data available for September 2011. Moreover, the data supplied for these year levels came in many different forms and varied greatly from school to school. So while it had been intended to compare data for YALP students with those for non-YALP students at these year levels to investigate selection processes, this analysis was not carried out.

It had also been intended to use NAPLAN data and mid-year teacher reports against VELS to give a more comprehensive profile of student achievement. Again these data were too patchy to be reliable for this purpose. A brief examination of what data was available suggested that in most cases there was a reasonable alignment, but there were some anomalies. A more detailed analysis of this aspect is beyond the scope of this report.

Further details of the analysis of the quantitative data are in section 5 of this report.

#
5. **Evaluation Results**

Each of the schools we have visited might form the basis for a case study. We all gained insights into the operations of very complex organisations, each managed very skillfully by a school leadership team committed to enhancing the educational opportunities and academic opportunities of the young people in their care.

Describing ‘the art and science of portraiture’, by which she attempts to do justice to the complexity of life in schools, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot writes:

> The portrait ... creates a narrative that is at once complex, provocative, and inviting, that attempts to be holistic, revealing the dynamic interaction of values, personality, structure, and history. And the narrative documents human behaviour and experience in context. In fact, the portraitist insists that the only way to interpret people’s actions, perspectives, and talk is to see them in context.

The interviews we conducted with various people involved in YALP, as well as the observation notes we took on the days of our visits, comprise many rich narratives that evoke the specific contexts that form the everyday life of these schools: stories about the ways Indigenous youth have responded to the care shown for them, when they have arrived at school to enjoy a cup of Milo before commencing the school day; stories about young people from Afghanistan who until coming to Australia had never been to school and who are now hungry to learn English and to make a place for themselves in their new country; stories about young children for whom the only adult able to be present at school assembly when they receive an award is their YALP tutor; stories by school leaders about juggling funds and managing budgets and making choices in order to give support for young people who for a variety of reasons are experiencing difficulty meeting the demands of mainstream schooling; stories about young children with previous bad attendance records who get their parents to bring them to school half an hour early so that they can have their YALP 10M$ before school in order not to miss any class time; stories by Indigenous women about the struggles their people have experienced in this region in trying to engage in schooling in order to gain meaningful employment (as one elderly woman put it: ‘Our people can only get education through the backdoor’, when they typically drop out of school, only to turn to the TAFE sector in order to get some kind of qualification).

We cannot, however, do justice to all these richly evocative accounts of schooling. Nor are we in a position, on the basis of simply one visit to each of the schools involved in YALP, to attempt the kind of ‘portraiture’ that Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot describes. What we shall try to do is to briefly sketch the specific context for the implementation of YALP in each school, and then identify issues that have emerged as we have jointly reviewed the interview data and observation notes that we have taken.

**Implementation of YALP**

Although all the schools listed below are part of the YALP network, it is not as though YALP is the same thing in each place. Each school was targeting different groups of students as likely to benefit from the one-to-one#attention of the 10 Minute Sessions. Sometimes these students were Indigenous, sometimes not. At High School A, for example, Indigenous students were receiving support through the Wannik Tutorial Assistance Program, and so the school had decided to use the 10 Minute Sessions to target other students with learning needs. Some of those students were Indigenous, but this was not the primary reason for their inclusion in the program. A similar situation exists at Primary School B and Primary School A, where Indigenous students are involved in the Wannik Tutorial Assistance Program.
rather than YALP because of funding arrangements: funding given through the Wannik strategy cannot be used to help non-Indigenous students, whereas YALP can be used for any students who need support. At all schools, YALP was part of a suite of initiatives being taken to support the needs of disadvantaged students, and considered judgments are made as to which program might best serve the needs of individual students, given the limited resources available.

Table 2 gives a thumbnail sketch of how YALP is being implemented at each school.
Table 2: Thumbnail sketches of operation of YALP in the identified networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools implementing YALP</th>
<th>How YALP is being implemented</th>
<th>Type of students involved</th>
<th>How students are selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary School A</td>
<td>YALP is implemented through the employment of staff who also work at the school as Integration Aides. Some YALP tutors were changed this year because the Principal deemed one of them not sufficiently skilled for this task.</td>
<td>23 students working with 2 YALP tutors who are also Integration Aides: Literacy 15 students, Numeracy 8 students. Most Indigenous students in the Wannik Tutorial Assistance Program rather than YALP due to funding issues.</td>
<td>A range of data is used when selecting students in Year 3 and Years 4–5. The focus on these years is due to school’s desire to improve their NAPLAN results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School B</td>
<td>YALP is well supported by the employment of two retired teachers, one of whom is the YALP Literacy Tutor and the other who is the YALP Numeracy tutor. Literacy Intervention Coordinator also runs another literacy intervention program based on John Munro’s work with Years 3 to 5 in Terms 1 &amp; 2 and Years 2 and 4 in Term 3. So some students come off YALP literacy, and then join this other group.</td>
<td>Targeting the lowest performing students for the most part. Focus on students who are 6 months or more behind in literacy or numeracy. Students who are 6 months or less behind, whom the school deems would be able to make progress with some extra support, are put into the alternative Literacy intervention program run by the Literacy Intervention Coordinator, who is also the YALP Coordinator.</td>
<td>Selection of students is based on data and is data driven. YALP has been implemented for 3 years with students from Years 2 – 6.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools implementing YALP</td>
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<td>Primary School C</td>
<td>Focus is mainly on junior years, specifically Year 1, with the YALP Coordinator working closely with the Assistant Principal and Reading Recovery Teacher to give individualised attention to students in need. YALP Coordinator works with YALP tutors to ensure targeted delivery of the program in both literacy and numeracy. AP’s active role in taking oversight of the program includes tutoring two students.</td>
<td>A decision has been made to focus on children in the junior school because it is felt that the identification and remediation of literacy and numeracy learning difficulties at this stage will put the children on a good footing for the rest of their education. Judgments are also made about students’ readiness to learn before bringing them into the program.</td>
<td>A range of tests is used for both literacy and numeracy, with continual monitoring of students’ progress once they are in the program. Teacher judgment is also a crucial factor. The aim is to get children in and out of the program as quickly as possible. The YALP Coordinator constantly talks to the Reading Recovery Teacher, and together they make decisions as to which program would be of most benefit to the students concerned.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary School D</td>
<td>First year of involvement in YALP, which is seen as complementing other interventions – e.g. Reading Recovery. Retired teacher as YALP Coordinator and tutor for large number of students. He has use of large space shared with librarian and has a large collection of resources made available to other tutors. Helps them select appropriate resources.</td>
<td>School includes many Indigenous and ESL students, one of whom, a Romanian girl, was observed in her 10MS. Reading Recovery unit has determined that although many children are fluent readers they have poor comprehension skills. Thus the focus for YALP is on those who can read, but lack good comprehension.</td>
<td>Head of the Language (Reading Recovery) Unit within the school determines which students are to be selected for YALP, based on language assessments conducted by her team. Classroom teachers and YALP tutors are not consulted. Students tend to move in and out of YALP and Reading Recovery.</td>
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<tr>
<td>High School B</td>
<td>YALP part of a whole school strategy for improving literacy and numeracy that includes the provision of extra classes in English and Maths for those students in need (9 periods a week as opposed to 5), Reading Recovery for students needing intensive reading instruction, and the Wannik Tutorial Assistance Program.</td>
<td>Targeting students who are just below expected level for whom YALP might make a difference. Also using YALP as a ‘bridge’ into mainstream schooling for students from the ELC, many of whom have had limited experience of schooling.</td>
<td>VCAA On Demand testing, NAPLAN results (when available) and teacher judgment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools implementing YALP</td>
<td>How YALP is being implemented</td>
<td>Type of students involved</td>
<td>How students are selected</td>
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<td>High School A</td>
<td>YALP part of a whole school literacy and numeracy strategy, including literacy across the curriculum and an ESL program, with considerable emphasis being placed on the value of one-to-one interaction with a caring adult.</td>
<td>For literacy, targeting Year 7 students who are two years or more below expected level, not simply Indigenous students (whose needs are being dealt with by the Wannik Tutorial Assistance Program). 24 students involved in the program, involving 2 tutors. For numeracy, employing 4 tutors who work with students in Years 7–9, 24 students at Year 7, 12 at Year 8 &amp; 12 at Year 9.</td>
<td>Examining data provided by the primary school, NAPLAN results, VCAA On Demand testing and teacher judgment at the start of the year. For numeracy also involves appraisal at start of Year 8 &amp; Year 9.</td>
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<td>Primary School E</td>
<td>YALP has run without financial support for previous 3 years. Twenty-eight parents (from 100 families) were trained as YALP tutors. YALP funding used to release a teacher who co-ordinates all intervention programs and handles assessment. Volunteer parents act as YALP tutors – now only a handful.</td>
<td>Targeting students just below average expectations, not those who were in more profound need. YALP seen as able to bring selected students ‘up to speed’, while more needy students need specialist assistance.</td>
<td>Selection of students done by YALP Coordinator in consultation with classroom teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School F</td>
<td>First year of involvement in YALP, at Principal’s instigation. She would like to see YALP operating in all network schools. Currently has four parents as YALP tutors, one of whom is YALP Coordinator. Had two other tutors, but one left for position with more hours and other filling temporary office position. Biggest issue is finding tutors.</td>
<td>Very few ESL or Indigenous students in the school – just one in YALP. Students seen as coming from impoverished backgrounds, with YALP tutors sometimes being seen as the only people with an obvious interest in their education. Vastly improved attendance and more interaction in class frequently mentioned.</td>
<td>Students selected by teachers, based on keeping the lowest group who need most teacher instruction in the class and looking to see who in the ‘next group’ would benefit most in terms of work habits, etc. Long waiting list for YALP. One ESL girl selected possibly on basis of language difficulties.</td>
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Themes and Issues Arising from the Qualitative Data Analysis

This section is organized around aspects of YALP that the Evaluation Team identified in the course of their observations, as well as through their analysis of interviews with people involved in YALP at each school. We have referred to these aspects as themes and issues, although people at each school have responded in various ways, depending on their perceived needs within their specific communities. The common characteristic that all these schools share is the presence of a significant number of young people who for various reasons are struggling with schooling, in response to which these schools have taken a range of strategies, of which YALP is one. Many similarities can be drawn between the approaches that these schools have taken towards YALP, but YALP is not the same thing at each school, and the comments that follow attempt to acknowledge these differences. We have also endeavoured to combine interviewees’ voices with our analysis, not simply for illustrative purposes, but out of respect for the perspectives they bring to the questions with which we are concerned. We can say without any qualification that everyone we interviewed was committed to the welfare of the young people in their care and to providing them with an education that improves their academic opportunities.

Effective integration of YALP within a whole school plan

Interviews with school leaders at all schools indicate that they have each been operating in strategic ways to ensure that they can offer the best support available to students who are experiencing difficulties. This is within an environment where insufficient resources are available to cater for every student. As the Assistant Principal with special responsibility for Teaching and Learning at High School B put it:

You have to prioritise, and if something’s off the list, it’s not because it isn’t important. It’s just that you haven’t got enough money.

In all the schools, YALP is part of a bigger picture, and careful decisions have been made as to which students might benefit most from the 10 Minute Session, as distinct from other support that might be available. It should also be noted that paraprofessional staff at several schools who are working as YALP tutors are being employed in other capacities. This makes it difficult to isolate a YALP ‘effect’ or ‘value add’, when it is being integrated with other support. Yet the efforts by these school leaders to promote a whole school culture devoted to supporting all students is something that should be affirmed, and there is no doubt that YALP contributes to sustaining such a culture, leaving aside the value of the YALP methodology.

The way in which YALP is integrated with other support can conveniently be illustrated by focussing on the two secondary schools in the YALP network.

The Assistant Principal at High School B gave a very full account of her efforts to provide a whole school program that would support those students with literacy and numeracy difficulties, including a change to the school timetable that allowed students in need of literacy support to do nine periods of English a week rather than five. YALP tutors at the school were also employed as part of the Wannik Tutorial Assistance Program: their work encompassed not only tutoring in literacy and numeracy but ensuring that Indigenous students attended school and providing them with breakfast when they arrived. Another YALP tutor, a retired primary school teacher, was devoting her time to supporting young people from Afghanistan who were making the transition from the English Language Centre to mainstream schooling, guiding them in their reading of picture story books at their instructional level. YALP funding allowed this Assistant Principal to employ the two YALP tutors with special responsibility for Indigenous students for five days a week rather than
four. One of these was himself Indigenous and thus was an excellent role model to the young Indigenous people with whom he was working.

The Principal of High School A oversees a similar range of initiatives directed at giving support to students who are experiencing difficulties with their schooling. The student population at High School A comprises 34 different nationalities, and so there is a focus on ESL, literacy across the curriculum (emphasizing that all teachers are teachers of literacy), the implementation of ‘high literacy’ teaching practices and the deployment of a literacy coach at Year 7 (a regional initiative), as well as support for Indigenous students through the Wannik Tutorial Assistance Program. YALP is targeted at students ‘who are well below the expected levels’, though the school has also taken steps to deploy YALP tutors within mainstream classrooms from which YALP students are withdrawn, thus promoting a whole school culture focussed on improving the literacy and numeracy levels of students, as well as enabling the YALP tutors to gain a better sense of how their work connects with what is going on in classrooms. These YALP tutors attend these classes from the start of the year before students are selected for the program. As this Principal remarked, however:

It’s not the tutoring, it’s … a key significant adult that takes an interest in what they do … somebody sees them everyday, connects with them everyday and they develop a really good relationship by that… I mean whether its literacy or a numeracy focus… a lot of these kids who are struggling along these lines where school hasn’t been valued, this is one person who is actually taking an interest and cares about me.

The school’s commitment to this one-to-one support in the form of the YALP 10 Minute Session is shown by the fact that this Principal gave resources for the employment of tutors above and beyond the number he could employ simply with YALP funds.

Similar stories can be told about the ways in which YALP is integrated within programs at the primary schools we visited, involving the same kind of effort to distribute limited resources most effectively. This is captured by comments made by the YALP Coordinator at Primary School B:

We have Wannik, which is the Koori Educational program; we have Literacy Intervention, which I run with small groups. We have Reading Recovery, we have Literacy Lessons, which is similar to Reading Recovery, but with children who are not in Year 1. We have Numeracy Support, and then we have Numeracy Extension, we have the ELC which is our English Language Support Centre, and that’s about it …. They’ve all got value and merit of their own, and standalone, they are all very different. So I couldn’t pinpoint one is more valuable than another, especially when I run the literacy intervention, I suppose that will be pretty tough to say I think, mines the best. So they’re all very different, they all have very different components.

As we have indicated, the fact that none of these schools is treating YALP as a magic bullet, but that they are integrating the one-to-one support given by the 10 Minute Session within a suite of strategies designed to help students, reflects the sound professional judgment of everyone involved.

Selection of students for participation in YALP

Schools use a variety of data available to them in order to identify students who might benefit from YALP. At High School A this means VCAA On Demand Mathematics and Reading testing and extensive classroom observation before students are identified as requiring extra assistance. Those students who engage in resistant behaviours are taken out of the program.
in order to allow other students to participate. As the Numeracy Coordinator at this school observed:

Because resources are limited, we only have 4 tutors, I mean we really want kids on the program who are keen and want to have that opportunity and work well. So you know we certainly, if there are kids who just want to waste time, we just give them a couple of chances but then say ‘Well there are other kids that want this opportunity.’

Sometimes students who were originally identified as being two years below the expected level show that they can produce work of a satisfactory standard and YALP support is then directed at other students who are identified as struggling.

Although YALP at High School A was originally directed primarily at Indigenous students, the advent of the Wannik strategy has meant that those students receiving support through the Wannik Tutorial Assistance Program do not typically participate in YALP. High School B follows a slightly different approach from High School A with respect to the literacy and numeracy levels of students who participate in YALP, targeting students who are just below expected levels, as well as young people from the English Language Centre who are making the transition into mainstream schooling.

Interviews with people at the primary schools involved in YALP indicate a similar shift in focus away from Indigenous young people to other students. The selection of students for participation in YALP was determined by how YALP was located within the structures that had been put in place to support students. At Primary School C, for example, the focus was on children in the early years, and much effort was put into exploring how Reading Recovery and YALP might be used separately and in tandem, using YALP to give students who had been in Reading Recovery continuing support in order to handle the whole-classroom situations. At every school, a considerable amount of care was invested into targeting students and providing them with support that best suited their individual needs, with reliance not simply on diagnostic testing but careful classroom observation and professional judgment by teachers as to whether students would benefit from the 10 Minute Session. It should also be noted that considerable effort was being put into enabling students to return to the classroom without the need of support, moving them in and out of YALP as quickly as possible.

Other factors were also taken into consideration. For example, at Primary School F, where the teachers did the selection, one teacher explained as follows:

We looked at it across our unit so we looked at all of our kids at risk in literacy and we took into consideration also the kids ... we’d wanted our lowest kids who ... needed explicit teacher instruction, we wanted them in the room all the time so we could work with them. So then we looked at those next kids who were below but probably wouldn’t take as much to push to the level they needed to be. And also we looked at the kids I suppose, their work habits and whether or not they would respond to being one-on-one with an adult and how they would manage their time without a teacher looking over their shoulder and all those things. But we basically wanted to choose kids who needed it and who would make the most of the sessions.

**Role of paraprofessionals as YALP tutors**

The kind of people involved in YALP tutoring, and the skills they bring to the 10 Minute Sessions vary from school to school. Some are ex-teachers who are able to draw on an immense amount of experience in their capacity to identify students’ needs and to exploit
the 10 Minute Session effectively. At Primary School B, for example, both the YALP literacy tutor and the YALP numeracy tutors are retired teachers who bring a wealth of experience to their tutoring. One is also a trained Reading Recovery teacher. This means that they are capable of selecting and preparing appropriate resources for the tutoring sessions, using their own materials rather than relying only on YALP resources.

Other YALP tutors are part of a growing trend on the part of schools to employ paraprofessional staff without teaching qualifications in order to deal with the diverse needs of students. Several of the YALP tutors interviewed have been employed in other capacities at other schools, sometimes as Integration Aides, sometimes as literacy support, sometimes for the purposes of speech therapy. Our interviews with these paraprofessionals revealed that they had each developed a range of knowledge and skills to support students within the program. The quality of the conversation they had to offer us with respect to identifying and addressing the learning needs of students varied: sometimes they were drawing on what they knew as parents, sometimes they were able to draw on knowledge they had gained through TAFE programs and other types of training. YALP gives professional development sessions, and several spoke very positively about these. Some tutors did not always show a very strong awareness of how the teaching and learning that occurs in the YALP 10 Minute Session might be located in a developmental learning continuum, while others evinced a surprisingly refined sense of the individual learning needs of children and their cognitive development.

Since 2005, High School A has employed GAP year students, as well as people from other walks of life. Structures are in place that allow the YALP tutors to familiarise themselves with what is happening in the students’ mainstream classes, in order to ensure that what they are doing in the 10 Minute Session supports what students are doing in whole class settings. YALP tutors participate in classes, both at the beginning of the year, before YALP students are identified, and in the course of the year, giving support to teachers by taking responsibility for small groups of students. Weekly meetings are also held between YALP Coordinators and YALP tutors. Extra support is supplied by the YALP tutors who operate at a regional level, visiting the school in order to share teaching strategies for the 10 Minute Session. At High School A, the tutors meet on a weekly basis with the numeracy Coordinator and the English Coordinator, who also has responsibility for literacy across the curriculum.

At Primary School E, a large group of parents (28 from a total school of 100 families) were trained to be volunteer YALP tutors. Although only a handful of them are actually tutoring at the school, many others are continuing the work of YALP at home with their children. However, the voluntary nature of the tutoring has meant that students usually have two different YALP tutors for their 10 Minute Sessions.

At Primary School F, which is in its first year of YALP, finding tutors has proved to be a major issue. One highly regarded male GAP student, who was working with the upper primary boys, left because another school could offer him more work. The Principal, commented:

> Paul (a pseudonym) was an absolute catch, our 18 year old, just finished year 12, and I’m gutted that we lost him because our big boys listened to him and he was a great, positive role model for them. And he really valued their education, these boys. And he would pull them up and say – he’d go out and play football with them, but he’s say ‘I’m not playing if you’re all swearing. That’s not what we do’. Now I can say that till I’m blue in the face, Paul said it and they all shut their mouths and didn’t swear.

Another of their tutors took over a temporary position in the school office. As a result of not being able to find suitable replacements, there are about eight fewer students participating in YALP than at the start of the year.
Professional development and support

The three YALP Trainers, Jenny and Ross Robins (Literacy) and Kylie Glover (Mathematics) are all experienced teachers, with Jenny and Ross having many years of teaching as well as experience as educational consultants in New York. Moreover, Jenny is a trained Reading Recovery teacher and, before going to New York, was the YALP Coordinator at another primary school in 2005 when YALP first started. Both Ross and Jenny work full-time in YALP, although they now work with six more schools in a new cluster where YALP is self-funded by these schools. Kylie is a secondary mathematics teacher from High School A who is on family leave, working part-time in YALP. She is passionate about mathematics teaching and also about YALP. She says that when she started teaching at High School A she found that students in her weakest (and most challenging) class could not work from the textbook. She began preparing her own materials, with considerable success, and as a result she saw this class as her most rewarding one. She wants to share her work and is confident in her role as a trainer. She speaks of filing cabinets full of resource materials, particularly at High School A.

Ross describes the initial 2 to 3 hour PD module for Literacy as introducing the ten YALP guiding principles and the structure of the 10 Minute Sessions. After this, they work through the mechanics of reading – fluency and automaticity – and comprehension; and the use of assessment tasks to isolate child’s specific needs.

They support tutors in planning for lessons to help to isolate children’s needs through testing using the same five tests across all levels, but only going as far as the students can go. The first test asks students to identify the name and sound of letters. Ross says that even some Year 5 students have gaps where they do not know the sounds of maybe three letters. After this simple test, the next asks students to read three letter words, and then four letter words ending in ‘e’. Other tests (often commercially available ones) are used for other areas such as comprehension.

In terms of training, tutors get maybe 10 to 12 hours over six months. The sessions are very well received and very rewarding for all concerned. This was echoed by many of the tutors interviewed, especially those without any teaching-related qualifications.

The YALP Trainers also give support in schools – including planning with the tutors and also observing 10 Minute Sessions and debriefing. They go to each school about once a fortnight and observe 10 Minute Sessions about once a month.

In terms of resources, the trainers provide notes that go with sessions, as well as support materials in regards to reading materials. YALP has developed an Activity Bank. However there are huge resources in schools and YALP is not a resource bank. Instead they try to alert tutors to what is already in the school and to share resources. According to Ross, tutors are very receptive to developing a professional role for themselves. Again this was echoed in our interviews with tutors.

Jenny Robbins spoke of the difference between tutors who have been teachers and those who have not and the need to give the latter confidence. She also spoke about the important role played by the YALP Coordinator and the need for them to have a strong connection to the school – it being best if they are teachers at the school.

A compelling example of the ways in which schools are ensuring that their paraprofessional tutors are given adequate support and professional learning is provided by Primary School C, where under the coordination of the Assistant Principal, teachers participate as YALP tutors, working alongside tutors without any teaching qualifications. The quality of the conversation with the YALP tutors was excellent, reflecting the professional support they receive from the Assistant Principal and the YALP Coordinator at the school. The Assistant Principal is very
conscious of the abilities and interests that the paraprofessional staff bring to their roles as YALP tutors, matching tutors with individual children, and also giving tutors an opportunity to extend their knowledge and skills in areas of interest to them (providing funding, for example, for one of these tutors to attend professional learning sessions on speech therapy, the other area in which this particular tutor gave support to children at Primary School C). She was committed, in short, to providing paraprofessional staff with support to engage in professional learning and to follow their personal career pathways.

A similar point of view about providing professional support to YALP tutors is held by the Principal of Primary School D who commented:

I know that the model that we’re using is slightly different to other schools in the network. The 10 Minute System is the same; that’s how it’s delivered and you’ve got to kind of make it work the best that you can in your own environment, depending on the staff that you’ve got and the people that you’ve got to work with, so we didn’t have much success with parents because parent engagement in a very diverse community like this is really hard so we invested in education support and trained teachers and I think that the trained teacher is very, very successful, the trained teacher is a great mentor for the EES support and the advice I would give is to really think about the role of the Coordinator because the Coordinator for example in my school is very self sufficient, self starting, has got a very deep understanding of student learning and attainment levels and really good communication skills, and so is able to bring others on board, help train and support them and continue to run a really effective program. Trained teacher is a really important part of it yeah … if I had more money I’d have more trained teachers doing the job; I would, but I can’t make it go that far. I’m making it work as best as I can, so that I can support as many kids as I can and still deliver a program of value, because if you spread it thinner, so you’ve got to look at what the best model is for where you think you’re going and it is a little bit of a balancing act.

The 10 Minute Session

The YALP Ten Minute System works according to a recurring cycle, which consists of five activities:

- warm welcome;
- review (which includes a diagnostic activity or pre-test);
- focussed learning;
- continuing assessment (post-test); and
- sum-up – reflection and feedback on performance.

An account of an observation of a 10 Minute Session is included as Appendix 1, while a written account of a 10 Minutes Session conducted at Primary School C is below.

After hellos, Pat Thompson (a pseudonym), YALP Coordinator, tutor and teacher, begins by asking David (a pseudonym) to recall the numeracy problem they tackled last time. The initial challenge today involves counting in 5s from 37, and recognizing the pattern that emerges. David starts off by using concrete aids that Pat has given, including a 100s chart on a board and tokens to mark where each count of five should fall. David’s learning is being scaffolded by a very experienced teacher, who quietly takes him through a sequence of
activities that become progressively more complex. Pat withdraws the tokens, encouraging David to recognise the patterns without using them: 54, 59, 64, 69, 74, 79, etc. David is finally doing the exercise without the help of either the rings or the board, and concludes with a skip counting game on the computer. David is really into it now, trying to go more quickly in order to get bonus points. ‘A pretty tricky game, isn’t it?’ Pat remarks. Then she concludes the session by inviting David to review what he has done and by giving a recap.

Not all the 10 Minute Sessions that we observed were conducted with this degree of skill, but everyone who was interviewed held the view that short, focussed interactions of this type were very beneficial to students. Here are some comments by people from the schools we visited:

> It’s important to, for the student to feel happy in what they’re doing, that they feel success, that the one-on-one is so that they’re not distracted by other students, so it’s not having a small group or two together, it’s working one-on-one. Yeah, so it’s working from the knowledge that they have and building up to something new so we’re not, you’re not wasting time.

Numeracy Coordinator, High School A

> The reason why it’s only 10 minutes is because we don’t want to take too long. We want to do something in that one 10 minute span that the student can get, so we’re not going over and over all different things. We’re concentrating on one thing and that’s why it’s short and sharp.’

YALP tutor, High School B

> I’d already sort of not invented it myself. The year before I’d had a group of six really difficult children that I had for an extended period of time, and I’d said to their teacher, ‘I can’t do anything with them, they’re just – they’re just reacting off each other’. I’m reading – my expertise is in reading recovery and assistance – I couldn’t do anything with them, they were just rolling around the floor, just not wanting to learn. But – and I said to the teacher – ‘If I had each of them for 10 minutes I think I could do much more,’ and so, I’d actually started to trial that myself, which was a much better option, because they were focussed and you were able to focus them and actually move them along. So, when I saw this 10 Minute System and the ideals that went behind it, like it doesn’t really impact too much on the classroom because they’re in and out fairly quickly, they’re not gone for an hour, the classroom teachers are happy, generally happier about that.

YALP Coordinator, Primary School B

The 10 Minute Sessions seem to give tutors sufficient one-to-one time for tutors to reinforce, practise and rote learn basic skills such as word identification and tables. Given the short length of each session they seem to be more appropriate for this purpose rather than developing higher order thinking skills, although some tutors who are experienced retired teachers also try to build in development of understanding of how and when to use certain strategies in maths and reading sessions. Tutors also indicated that they sometimes go over time. The YALP tutors at Primary School B mentioned that they go up to 20 minutes when they are able, while some sessions at Primary School F also went for over 20 minutes. All those interviewed at Primary School B and at Primary School A thought that the students would get restless if the sessions went over 20 minutes.

Despite many 10 Minute Sessions running for much longer, all three YALP Trainers expressed concern that YALP tutors do not always include all five segments of the 10 Minute Session –
especially the closing summary/student reflection on learning, which is one of the key elements in making the difference between the 10 Minute Session being just an enjoyable experience for students and real learning taking place.

**Role of the classroom teachers**

The question of how YALP 10 Minute Sessions dovetail with what happens in the classroom was explored in the interviews. Different schools and different teachers at the same school often adopted different practices. One secondary teacher commented that she usually had a bit of a chat with the YALP tutor at the end of the lesson, adding that

> I’m assuming – which is a very dangerous thing to do – but I am assuming that what is coming out of the 10 minute program has to do with what they're doing in class.

   Secondary teacher

She went on to add that

> It seems to be working a lot better this year than what it did last year. I had a few kids last year involved in YALP that didn’t seem to make as quick progression as what they are this year. And I don’t know whether that’s because [the YALP tutor] and I seem to work better together.

   Secondary teacher

As discussed earlier, High School A had structures in place to allow the YALP tutors to familiarise themselves with what is happening in the students’ mainstream classes, with YALP tutors participating in classes at the beginning of the year, before YALP students are identified, and during the course of the year.

At one of the primary schools, one of the teachers prepared detailed YALP plans for the students from her class who were receiving YALP tutoring in Literacy. These plans included detailed individual reading and writing/spelling goals, with 5 or 6 dot points and a VELS level that the students were working towards for each of these aspects. Each of these then had between 6 and 12 suggested activities to help achieve these goals, as well as space for notes on progress. The teacher often gave copies of classroom work that could be modified by the YALP tutor for use in the 10 Minutes Sessions. This assistance was highly valued by the YALP tutor, who had very little experience and had earlier in the year, when working with students from a different class, had problems. She commented that:

> The girls’ teacher has given me a rundown of what area the girls are having trouble in and then she’s given me some suggestions as to what activities I can do and then I usually go and find stuff that relates to that ... between the teacher and myself we’ve been sort of finding things to do because the ones I had originally I couldn’t find things to do because there was no one to help me do it. ... The teacher actually came up with a little booklet for me because I was having trouble. She’s given me a breakdown of the suggested activities and everyday and what their weaknesses [are]. ... The teachers now come back to me and said they are so much more focussed in the classroom and just think obviously it’s working because I was sort of thinking ‘I hope I’m not wasting anybody’s time here’ – because I’m not teacher background and I’m just picking all this up myself and I’m learning and they’re learning but it seems to be – we seem to be getting along all right and it all seems to be coming into place and they seem to be going really well and they’re getting student of the week and improving in most areas so it’s good.
The teacher emphasized the importance, in her opinion, of providing this link with what was happening in the classroom.

[The YALP tutor] came in mid-stream with my 2 girls and probably we didn’t get a chance to sit down and set ourselves up properly and we went along for a few weeks and then [she] said to me ‘Where are we going?’ And we found the time to sit down. And I think as a teacher I assumed that [she] had this program that she was just picking up and I didn’t support her enough to start with. So once we sat down and went through what the girls were doing … [it] was giving me an insight into how the girls were learning … So it was good for us to just sit down and touch base and that’s how we came up with the idea for the plan. And I thought as a teacher I needed to give her more direction. I couldn’t just assume that she would know exactly what the girls needed. And I know she’d done her own testing but from the classroom, because we spend so much time with the kids, we probably had some insight that she needed to have as well. So we developed the plan and [she] felt like that was helping her keep a bit more directed instruction.

Primary Teacher

This teacher saw her role as giving the tutor direction, making sure she was not ‘re-inventing the wheel all the time’, adding:

The impression they were doing all this training, which they were, and they would come in and just pick up and go. … I think maybe we needed that extra reminder that we did have a pretty significant role in helping them get started.

Primary Teacher

Pastoral care

Often the presence of paraprofessionals in the school is seen as serving purposes beyond their work in the YALP program.

At all schools YALP was seen as playing an important role in providing individual students with the emotional support they need, and some of the YALP tutors related poignant stories about the trust they feel had been invested in them by particular students, when they became privy to details about a student’s home life. As the YALP literacy tutor at High School A remarked:

A lot of the kids have got a lot of issues, family issues and horrible home lives … So a lot of them I think, I think they like having someone take them out and pay them one-on-one attention. … I just say ‘Oh what’s been happening, what have you been up to?’ And sometimes they’ll tell you things you really don’t want to know, but a lot of the time it’s just average boring stuff … You sort of think about their behavior and think well maybe that’s where that’s coming from, so it gives you a bit of an insight just why they might be behaving the way they are.

The YALP Coordinator and Tutor at Primary School F commented:

I’m often here at Monday morning assembly, we have an assembly 9 am on a Monday morning, which means that we can’t get started on YALP straight away – but I’d come to the assembly – don’t get paid for it or anything – I come because I want to see what they’re doing, and if the kids get an award,
I’m there for them. Because most of these children their parent would never be there to see those special moments, and I think they need somebody there for them.

An especially compelling example of the ways in which YALP combines with pastoral care was provided by Bev Smith and Noel Giles (pseudonyms), who are employed at High School B as both YALP and Wannik tutors. Noel, as we have noted elsewhere in this report, is Indigenous, and thus gives a strong role model to the young people with whom he works. Bev spoke about the time that she and Noel invest, as part of their role within the Wannik program, in ‘bonding’ with students and ‘getting those kids to schools’. Without that effort ‘that one on one with YALP, that’s not going to happen’, though she saw YALP’s emphasis on ‘one-on-one’ as a crucial element in this support: ‘It’s a one-on-one bond with those students to get them to come to school. Without the one-on-one attention most of these kids wouldn’t even roll up to school anymore.’ Bev evinced a finely tuned awareness of what YALP specifically had to offer, showing a relatively refined understanding of the complexities of diagnosing students’ literacy difficulties and devising strategies to support them. It can also be argued that the pastoral care offered by YALP affects students’ learning through their increased attendance at school.

Indigenous and other community perspectives

Although ethics committee approval was obtained to interview parents and young people involved in the YALP program, it was not easy for schools to arrange for such interviews to take place, especially with parents. Originally the idea had been to hold focus group discussions, in the two identified networks, after school. However, on the advice of Principals, these were held at each school, usually with only about two parents at a time. Some parents had little idea about YALP, while others were strongly supportive, although again at the same time they did not necessarily know very much about its operation. However, they were often able to report that their children seemed to like it.

With the young people who were participating in YALP, it can generally be said that they all seemed well-disposed to their tutors and the ritual of the 10 Minute Session. As indicated in the previous section, we were able to observe several 10 Minute Sessions, when it became apparent that good rapport existed between the YALP tutors and the young people involved. These observations were usually followed by interviews with the students. Most primary children interviewed were very positive about their 10 Minute Sessions, with one of the children observed during her 10 Minute Session announcing that she didn’t like YALP – she LOVED IT! Other students, often from the secondary schools, made fairly cursory or cryptic comments – it would take a long time to develop an atmosphere of trust that might generate more complex insights into how these young people are experiencing school, and what they feel about being withdrawn from classes in order to participate in the 10 Minute Session.

According to Ross Robins, students love YALP and it is very appropriate for Indigenous students – one-to-one, warm welcome, all five segments of 10 Minute Sessions focusing on one skill. It is appropriate for all students, as it is based on motivation and success. Tutors use pre- and post-tests in order to know where students are and start there, so students experience success. Jenny Robbins reiterated these points, saying that the warm welcome, whose importance is often overlooked, is one of the most important parts for Indigenous students.

Given that YALP’s history in Australia has primarily focussed on improving the learning outcomes of young people from Indigenous communities, it seems appropriate to conclude this section of the report with the perspectives given by an Aboriginal woman who has
grown up and spent her life in this region. The interview with this woman was wide ranging, going beyond the question of the effectiveness or otherwise of YALP as such. She was an elderly lady, who agreed to be interviewed in her capacity as the grandmother of two boys involved in YALP.

This elderly Aboriginal woman spoke from a deeply felt standpoint, reflecting her experience of a range of initiatives that have been taken in this region to meet the needs of her community, and specifically the education of local Aboriginal youth and their future. She described education as ‘middle class’, suggesting (without wanting to sound like a ‘moaner’) that teachers struggle to transcend their middle class standpoint. She spoke of one of her grandchildren as a ‘survivor’:

He’s gonna survive ... I just don’t know what will happen to him ... I know that he’s not gonna do well at school work ... he’s got a computer, listens to music, goes on facebook ... if he could use the slang they use on facebook he would be fine ... I just need to find somewhere where he’ll fit ... like a job that will suit him ... something that catches his attention other than football or basketball.

We began by noting the challenge of capturing the complexity of each of the schools involved in the YALP program. This challenge becomes even greater when we consider the history of the ways in which Aboriginal people in this region have been affected by European settlement. This history continues to mediate their engagement in schooling, as this elderly woman’s reflections make clear. The schools themselves have responded by taking a range of measures, but she usefully reminds us of the larger contexts that are relevant here, which cannot be shut out when the classroom door is closed:

The cross cultural stuff done ... years ago they used to have cross cultural stuff done to explain about the different lifestyles and different ways ... the classroom teachers haven’t improved ... it’s still aimed at middle class Australians ... not all people come from the same background ... they act according to the community to which they belong ... when they’re in schools ... they try to meet that expectation that’s set for them ... and they get frustrated and drop out and leave school early ... it’s not that they can’t cope ... I’d like to see education more for different cultures ... you need to ensure that your kids are comfortable in learning ... we go and try something hippie – but we still come back to that mainstream setting again ... I don’t know the answers ... as long as they’re surviving ... they love coming to school ... they’re told that they’re doing well ... they love sport, they’re involved in camps and whatever ... I just worry about the future ... in the school years you can protect them ... you can’t just go from one course to another course ... TAFE courses ... I like TAFE ... kids go to TAFE when they drop out of school ... they realise they can’t survive so they go to TAFE ... a backdoor into education for aboriginal people ... we can’t get them through the front door ... so TAFE are good for our children ... and when they get jobs they have to further their education ... most jobs are linked to a TAFE courses or some sort of training they get ... adult education ... that mainstream education is not there for aboriginal children ... that’s just my opinion.

Another perspective on the challenges of enabling Indigenous students to overcome the difficulties they have experienced within mainstream educational settings is given by Bev Smith (pseudonym), YALP and Wannik tutor at High School B:

They have to like us, we’re bringing these kids in everyday so they’re a permanent part of every morning, we see these kids but with some of the
children the importance of education to the families isn’t that important. So we have to concentrate on changing the child’s view of coming to school and we saw that the parents are now understanding that education, that we do need an education now … And if we can get any one one-on-one attention to get these kids to school, they wouldn’t be coming to school … because it’s a bond … some of them haven’t had breakfast, we give them milo and toast in the morning. We pull them in for the morning, I’ll know that they haven’t had breakfast, so while we’re starting our YALP I’ll have the toast and milo made and they’ll be sitting there having the toast and milo while we’re doing some YALP work.

There is considerable anecdotal evidence of improved engagement with school and school attendance. According to Jenny Robbins, High School B had been very successful in improving attendance rates with a significant rise over three years:

We’ve been in that school for about three years – over three years and the first and second years we work with just the indigenous students there … We trained up the tutors – one of them is an indigenous tutor … He does numeracy and we’ve had a stable tutor there for the last couple of years, and one of our aims there was … to get these kids to stay at school till year 9 and year 10. Well in our first two or three years, every year we built up and built up and we had tremendous results. The kids were staying on till year 9 and year 10. This year funding didn’t come through until late so what they did – they decided that they were doing Wannik and Wannik is an hour so they just do an hour. It wasn’t every day or anything. It was just seeing these students once a week or whatever and I was talking to the tutor yesterday and she said they’re having big troubles this year with getting the kids to come to school and even stay at school, so it’s really declined in the actual attendance rates. So I was really really disappointed with what’s been happening up there because we really had something really special happening there and the year I think was year 9 students – Indigenous students – they actually won an award. Well their results in the Hume region in their On Demand was one of the highest in all of the region, and these are kids that have been on YALP for two years, and I don’t know what’s happened to them but it’s a bit disappointing but we’re working on it … but when you see the attendance rates it’s really disheartening. You know, kids away for two weeks at a time, so their learning is just not happening. It’s really quite sad, but we have had really significant results with children coming to school.

**Affirming the value of YALP**

Our aim in the foregoing section has partly been to show the complexity of reaching a judgment about the effectiveness of an intervention strategy like YALP. Standardized testing, such as NAPLAN, can be used to construct a ‘performance story’ (Fraser, Glover, Craig, 2011, p.127) at a whole school level, as well as with respect to the learning of individual students. None of the school leaders and teachers who were interviewed deny the importance of this kind of evidence when it comes to evaluating the success of YALP – all the schools have taken on board the performance culture promoted by the Hume region, such as the strategies for literacy improvement systematized by John Munro (High School A, for example, has been applying Munro’s ‘High-Reliability Literacy Teaching Procedures’ at Year 7 [see Munro, 2011, p.67]). The language of all the school leaders, Coordinators, teachers and tutors whom we interviewed was replete with vocabulary of this kind, and it would be fair to
say that collectively they subscribe to the Region’s vision of educational improvement. How could they do otherwise? Yet we also found them using language that stresses other dimensions of their work with young people that cannot be captured by such measures. These dimensions relate to the personal situations and histories of the students who are participating in the YALP program. They relate to the specific cultures of the local settings that these teachers and students encounter everyday – specificities that necessarily escapes the generalizing language of system-wide curriculum reform.

Margaret Moore (pseudonym), Assistant Principal at Primary School C, gave an eloquent account of her role in overseeing YALP and the other programs that she administers. As we have noted, Pat Thompson (pseudonym), the YALP Coordinator at Primary School C benefits from having Margaret (pseudonym) as her mentor with respect to YALP and other support programs at their school. This involves expert diagnosis of the needs of individual students, and continuing discussion about the best program (e.g. YALP or Reading Recovery) in which to place particular children. Margaret has close familiarity with the learning needs of every child who has been involved in the program. As a Maths consultant in the Education Department Region who has been trained in Early Years Numeracy and First Steps, she has considerable knowledge and experience (not to mention an abiding passion) about Mathematics education, and YALP at Primary School C is very strong because of her input. Margaret not only takes an active role in the coordination of YALP, but also acts as a YALP tutor. In order to fit this into her busy schedule as an AP, she arranges to see children at the start of the day, before the bell goes. As a result, Margaret’s conversation ranges from reflecting on the complexities of implementing support programs at a whole school level to anecdotes about how particular children have benefited from YALP. This is what she had to say about the ‘layers’ of support that her school gives to children who are struggling with aspects of schooling, and how the effectiveness of that support might be gauged:

Sometimes I think data’s good, but you don’t get the interpretation of the other things that kids learn, such as the fact that they can now sit and focus for more than a minute, they can actually sit and focus for the 10 minutes. But the children’s attitude to learning has changed because someone’s interested in them, and they’re confident, and it also develops their oral language, because you’re in this conversation mode and the tutors will not accept any children grunting, so they have to actually speak properly and give the right answers, they have to give the right greetings. That’s all the hidden stuff that people don’t realise … Because oral language is really important and we make sure that people try and model very good oral language for kids. So they’re all the layers, and I often think, yeah the data, yeah we can collect the data, but you don’t get the stories with it …

So look, you know … parents are quite supportive … they’ll give the permission and they really want their kids to do the work, but they don’t necessarily have the skills to help their own children, and so, but they value the fact that the children are in the program, and they will, lots of parents will come and ask, can their kids be put into the program. And sometimes we – sort of have a bit of a waiting list according to need, and sometimes we can accommodate that, and sometimes we say ‘Well you might have to wait till next term because we know there’s a kid coming off and we’ll be able to get some more in’.

Yes and with confidence kids will have more of a go and they’re more relaxed, because sometimes when kids first start YALP if they don’t know, they’re a bit tense, and they get a bit stressed, so the whole aim is to try and get them to relax because they work so much better when they’re relaxed.
and then they really want to please the person, like we had a boy he's in a bit of trouble this year, but he's always had a bit of difficulty and Pat worked with him on his reading and he got it, and he was so excited, I was walking down the passage way and he's seen me coming, and he's yelled out 'I can read Zach Powers – I love it, I want to read you this bit', and you know this kid’s got a little bit of a sad background and he can be very unhappy, he was so excited, and just from that moment, when he realised he’d got it, and he loved working with Pat, just his reading back in the classroom, just really zoomed, and it’s just that attitude and needed to connect, but he's a kid that can cause a lot of trouble with a lot of people, but not with the people that he's got a relationship with.

It just, it makes a difference the relationship building, without that I think you could become a bit too functional in what you did and almost like, oh yeah, I've had you now, I'm onto the next one. That’s not what it’s about, because a lot of our kids who don’t succeed, they don’t think they’re learners, they feel that they’re failures. And what we want them to try and do is be happier with themselves. See David with the maths, I started with him, but I went on leave, so Kathy continued with him. When he first came in he actually thought he was really hopeless at maths, and there are a few things that he just had, the totally wrong idea about, which they weren’t the things that I was teaching, one was the use of the decimal point, he'd write numbers down and put a point where people used to put commas after every 3 and I said to him ‘Do you know – what are you doing and do you know what the decimal point is?’ and he never had that lesson, so very quickly we got rid of the points, we had the quick lesson on what a decimal point is, and then, because I was working on writing numbers and dictation of numbers and just the fact, I said ‘Have you learnt anything today?’ ‘Yeah I've learnt about decimal points’ he was rapt. And he’s a really quiet kid, and he has an ill health, he has a health issue... he has a few days he misses, but he's actually got really good strategies, but he's not suited to classroom lessons because he needs lots of time to do his maths, and he needs to think and work around it, but if you just presented maths or a test to him, he’d crumble and he just wouldn’t do so well. But he actually has a lot going for him, if you can present it in a way, because he's practical’.

The Principal of Primary School D, likewise affirms the value of YALP, while acknowledging that this is hard to measure:

It’s really hard to say that YALP on its own has made the difference. We know that it has but we have a lot of interventions in place, we've got Reading Recovery we've got ESL transition programs. I've always been a strong advocate for YALP because I see the difference it makes in the way the kids want to learn, how they're engaged in their learning the relationship between and even the turn around in confidence and just their way of being it comes down to behaviour, it comes down to attendance, it comes down to all the positive inputs that go into a student to make them feel like they're a good learner. You can't measure those things sometimes and I think that’s been the difficulty for YALP where it's hard to gather evidence on those qualities... you can’t say YALP is totally responsible for this because we know that it's never just one thing, that a good improvement strategy has got a whole bunch of things working in its favour and YALP is part of that pie for us yeah.

Other people we interviewed were able to tell similar stories about how individual students had benefited from the one-to-one attention they received in the YALP 10 Minute Session.
**Measuring Growth in Literacy and Mathematics**

Schools were requested to provide assessment data and YALP participation details for their students. Data was supplied for students from Preparatory to Year 10.

Where raw data was given in various formats, some rearrangement and cleaning occurred before analysis could begin.

**Participation in YALP**

Schools were asked to complete the spreadsheet provided by Deakin, showing which students in which year levels participated in YALP during each of Terms 1, 2 and 3 in 2011, and which of Literacy, Mathematics (or both) was the focus for the 10 Minute Sessions. Extra data indicated students’ sex, whether or not they were Indigenous, ESL or classified as Integration, their class teacher and their YALP tutor for Literacy or Mathematics.

Table 3 shows the distribution of students participating in YALP from the data supplied by the schools.

Table 3: Distribution of students in YALP by year level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Ind</th>
<th>Wan</th>
<th>ESL</th>
<th>Integ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prep</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>41</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>13</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 7</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 8</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 U – Sex not stated
2 Ind – Indigenous
3 Wan – Wannik
4 Int – Integration

As can be seen in Table 3, a greater percentage of males than females participated in the 2011 YALP intervention program (56% identified as males, compared to 42% females). A similar predominance of males was evident in each of the Literacy and the Numeracy YALP programs.

Two things appear to stand out here. One is that NAPLAN testing in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 appears to have a significant effect on the number of students participating in YALP, with very few primary students participating in Year 6, compared to Years 1 to 5, and Years 7 and 8. The other is the apparent need for assistance at the beginning of secondary school, shown in the Years 7 and 8 use of YALP. It should be noted that the secondary school intake is not
drawn only from schools with literacy and mathematics intervention programs, such as YALP, and a large number of students coming into secondary schools are deemed to be below expected standards. This clearly needs further investigation.

It can also be seen from Table 3 that, while YALP has its Australian origins working with significant numbers of Indigenous students, fewer than 11% of the students in YALP in the two identified network schools, the focus of this evaluation, were identified as Indigenous (this includes all students participating in the Wannik Tutorial Assistance Program). At the same time, almost 16% of the YALP students are identified as ESL and 5% as Integration, with a particularly high percentage (21%) of all Year 7 students participating in YALP being identified as Integration. The large number of ESL students reflects changing demographics and needs in these areas. As stated earlier, YALP has also expanded its focus to work with the English Language Centre (ELC), which is not part of the focus for this evaluation.

Table 4 shows the details of participation in YALP Literacy and Mathematics on a term-by-term basis for each year level. In some instances, students were listed as participating in YALP for three or more terms, while in others students came in and out of YALP for one or two terms.

While some schools provided data for students for Term 4, this was neither requested nor always provided, and where such data were provided they were prospective rather than retrospective. Hence Term 4 data have not been included here.

Table 4: Participation in YALP Literacy and Mathematics by Term

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year level</th>
<th>Literacy (n = 229)</th>
<th>Numeracy (n = 96)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Term 1</td>
<td>Term 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prep</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 8</td>
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<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 9</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table 4, the number of students participating in YALP Literacy and Numeracy at each Year level varied slightly each term. However, these numbers do not fully reflect the movement of students into and out of YALP programs each term (and also between schools). A total of 305 students participated in YALP during the first three terms of 2011. Some students participated in Literacy in some terms and Mathematics in other terms, while a handful participated in both during the same term. Overall, a total of 20 students participated in both Literacy and Numeracy programs during 2011, mostly in different terms.
Selection of students for participation in YALP

As discussed earlier, schools used different criteria for selecting students into YALP. Here we will report on the range of March 2011 VCAA On Demand scores for Years 3 to 10 students selected into YALP as compared to those for non-YALP students. On Demand scores can be regarded as providing an approximation to Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) levels (see page 33 for more details).

*Figure 1:* Range of VCAA On Demand Mathematics scores for students selected for YALP

*Figure 2:* Range of VCAA On Demand Mathematics scores for non-YALP students

Selection into any intervention program is based on many factors, but a comparison of YALP and non-YALP students as shown in Figures 1 and 2, shows that the achievement levels for students selected into YALP Mathematics was variable.

As can be seen in Figure 1, at Year 6 in Mathematics there were no students selected for the YALP intervention, and only one student at Year 10. There is a narrow range of VCAA On
Demand scores at Years 3, 5, and 8, and a slightly larger range at Year 9. At Year 4 and Year 7 the opposite is true as can be seen from the larger range of the scores at these levels.

The range of VCAA On Demand scores for the students not selected for the YALP intervention was understandably larger, although the range is not consistent across the year levels. The range becomes larger as the primary year level goes up towards Year 6, suggesting that weaker students at lower year levels do not benefit from schooling as much as the better students. This is consistent with findings from other research, such as that by Ryan and Williams (2007) in the United Kingdom.

![Figure 3: Range of VCAA On Demand Literacy scores for students selected for YALP](image1)

![Figure 4: Range of VCAA On Demand Reading scores for non-YALP students](image2)

As might be expected, despite the different criteria adopted for selection (as outlined earlier in this report), overall students selected for YALP Mathematics were at the lower end of the range of achievement for non-YALP students.

As with selection for mathematics YALP intervention, Figure 3 shows the range of VCAA On Demand Reading scores varying considerably. At Year 10 there were very few students, with large numbers at Years 7 and 8. A comparison of Figures 3 and 4 shows that while Years 3 to 5 YALP students were at the lower end of the range of achievement for non-YALP students,
for the remaining years (especially Year 6) YALP students were closer to the higher end of the range for non-YALP students.

The question of which students benefit most from YALP and how best to integrate a program such as YALP with other intervention programs is worth further investigation.

The effects of participation in YALP

March and September VCAA On Demand English – Reading and Mathematics – Number data were used to investigate the effects of participation in YALP for Years 3 to 10 students. As a consequence of students leaving a school, and new students arriving, numbers of students participating in VCAA On Demand testing varied from term to term. In addition, assessment data is affected by student absence during assessment periods. These issues led to considerable data loss as can be seen in the following pages, where only Years 3 to 10 students for whom there was VCAA On Demand data available for both March and September are included in the analysis. In some schools, students had as many as five separate tries at VCAA On Demand tests in either Reading or Mathematics, sometimes with as many as three attempts in a single week. In these cases, where both Term 1 and Term 3 data were available, the earliest and latest attempts were used. Students who had multiple attempts, with all attempts in a single term, were excluded from the data analysis.

It should be noted that the number of Year 3 to 10 students for whom there is data in March and September can exceed the number of students in YALP in either Term 1 or Term 3, as some students may only be doing YALP in Term 2, but still have data recorded.

In order to better understand the VCAA On Demand data presented by schools to the Evaluation Team, a visit was made to the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board (VCAA).

VCAA have a range of online assessments, particularly in language and mathematics. These tests are available to teachers for assessing their students in mathematics and language at a time that suits them. Data from the tests are saved to the school computer server, and are available to teachers as diagnostic information. VCAA’s On Demand Assessment software converts student responses to test items into standard scores, Progression Points, and/or VELS curriculum levels. It should be noted that the last two formats are ordinal, or ranks.

Included in the VCAA battery of tests is the On Demand computer adaptive test (CAT) system. The CAT uses packets of three items at (or about) a particular Rasch-scale level. To be successful on a packet of three items, one has to answer correctly two or more items. The CAT system continues to administer packets of items until a termination criterion is reached.

A student’s achievement on the CAT is transformed from a Rasch scale and recorded as a standard interval scale with a ±10 range. This scale is then further transformed, to align around the progression points, and thence, by a further approximation, to a VELS band (level). Thus, the VCAA standardized score, which is Rasch-based, is the only interval data available.

Most primary schools are using both the Mathematics and Reading tests twice a year, usually in February to March and again in September.

Bearing this in mind, it was decided that the best use of the VCAA On Demand data would be to express student growth in terms of Effect Sizes (ES), particularly Cohen’s d, with Hedges’ correction for bias (see, for example, Wolf, 1986, or Hattie, 2009).

The entire data set was re-organized to help the analysis, and a range of tables produced that examined the effect on the growth of student learning over the period between VCAA
On Demand assessments. Understandably, there was a considerable amount of missing data due to issues such as:

- students leaving, or entering, a school;
- absences during assessment times;
- students assessed once only;
- decisions by teachers to forego assessment of some students; and
- missing data in that supplied by schools.

The third point above is particularly critical, as to establish growth it is necessary to have a measure on at least two occasions. For a large number of students this was not the case. Thus, part of the re-organising of the data set included the deletion of data for those students who did not have complete (that is, two) measures for either Reading or Mathematics.

For the reasons set out above, the number of data points used to calculate Effect Sizes are the same for the early and the later VCAA On Demand assessments.

For the purposes of this analysis, students who did not participate in YALP Literacy in any of Terms 1, 2 or 3 were classified as non-YALP for Literacy. Similarly, students who did not participate in YALP Numeracy in any of these terms were classified as non-YALP for Mathematics. So, for example, students who did not participate in YALP Literacy but did participate in YALP Numeracy would be classified as non-YALP for the former, but as YALP for the latter. Again only students with both March and September data were included.

The procedure for all the ES tables followed the steps below:

1. Remove all student data that was not complete (two measures) for Literacy or Mathematics, depending on the focus of the analysis shown in the respective table.
2. Compute Means, Standard Deviations, and numbers of data points (n) for the ES calculation for each sub-group of students whose data were being analysed.
3. Use an Effect Size calculator to compute Cohen’s d, with and without Hedges’ bias correction.
4. Calculate the absolute difference between the effect sizes for the sub-groups and which sub-group it favours (i.e. YALP or non-YALP).
5. Combine all the information from the steps above into a table.
6. The tables below also include a column showing the difference in Means between September and March data for each sub-group. While this step is subsumed in the calculation of the Effect Size, it is included in the tables below as this difference is often reported elsewhere as growth against VELS levels. As discussed earlier, this is not an accurate representation due to the transformations and approximations used to derive these values, but it is indicative of growth against VELS levels.

Table 5 shows Effect Sizes (ES) for Literacy, while Table 6 shows Effect Sizes for Mathematics. As expected from the data shown in Table 4, in the case of Mathematics there is no data for Year 6, as no students at this level participated in YALP Numeracy.

The effect sizes calculated and shown in Tables 5 and 6 are not easily classified into ‘low’ or ‘high’, ‘good’ or ‘bad’ effect sizes. In fact, Glass, McGaw and Smith (1981) argue that:

There is no wisdom whatsoever in attempting to associate regions of the effect size metric with descriptive adjectives such as ‘small’, ‘moderate’, ‘large’, and the like. Dissociated from a context of decision and comparative value, there is little inherent value to an effect size of 3.5 or .2. Depending on
what benefits can be achieved at what cost, an effect size of 2.0 might be 'poor' and one of .1 might be 'good'. (Glass, McGaw & Smith, 1981, p.104)

Hattie (2009), on the other hand, takes a different perspective based on using a Common Language Effect (CLE) (Hattie, p. 9). This works well with US data, where student gains per year are measured on an interval scale, with known parameters. However, in the present case, in order to allow some interpretation of the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the YALP intervention, the two right-hand columns of the tables below show the difference in effect sizes (ES) between the YALP and non-YALP students (YALP ES in the unshaded rows and non-YALP ES in the shaded rows) in terms of fractions of a Standard Deviation.

It is important to remember that the Hedges’ corrected effect sizes take sample size into account, and thus small samples tend to make large differences between Cohen’s Effect Size and the Hedges’ value.

A further point to consider is that the students selected into the YALP intervention actually are classroom teaching plus YALP, not solely YALP. Thus there is an effect to be reckoned with provided by the classroom teacher. In the tables below this is taken into account by looking at absolute differences between the two cohorts of students.

**Literacy.** Differences between Effect Sizes show that Year 3 YALP students did not achieve as much as their non-YALP peers, with Hedges’ corrected effect sizes of 0.15 and 0.42 of a Standard Deviation respectively. In the case of Year 5, YALP students achieved a tiny 0.01 of a Standard Deviation less than their non-YALP peers. While at Year 6 the non-YALP students achieved a very large 0.96 of a Standard Deviation more than their YALP peers, there were only three YALP students, who unfortunately regressed.

In Year 7, the YALP students achieved 0.47 of a Standard Deviation more than their non-YALP peers. This difference is due both to the fact that, as a group, Non-YALP students made almost no gain between March and September, and the fact that the non-YALP student group is spread over a large range of values both in Term 1 (SD = 1.11) and Term 3 (SD = 1.06), as opposed to the narrower range of the YALP group of students (SD = 0.73 and 0.78 respectively). In Year 8, YALP students show a slightly bigger effect size due to similar differences in the spread. In Years 9 and 10, no absolute difference could be calculated due to only one student participating in the YALP intervention at each of these levels.

For YALP students at all year levels, with the exception of Year 3 and for the very small number of students in Years 6 and 9 (a total of four students), the difference between mean scores for March and September (which represents an approximation to growth against VELS levels) was at least 0.25, with a maximum of 0.45 being achieved by Year 4 students.

**Mathematics.** Results for Mathematics are presented in Table 6, with absolute differences in Effect Size calculated as before. There were no Year 6 or Year 10 students in YALP Numeracy, so no differences can be found for these. Non-YALP students achieved better at Years 3, 4, and 5, with larger differences at Year 3 than Year 4 (0.31 and 0.14 of a Standard Deviation respectively), and a tiny difference of 0.01 Standard Deviations in Year 4.
Table 5: VCAA On Demand Reading YALP vs non-YALP by year level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>On Demand March 2011</th>
<th>On Demand September 2011</th>
<th>Standardised Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The difference between means is an approximation to growth against VELS levels
^ Using Bias Corrected (Hedges) Effect Size
### Table 6: Mathematics VCAA On Demand YALP vs non-YALP by year level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>On Demand March 2011</th>
<th>On Demand September 2011</th>
<th>Standardised Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
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<td>3.80</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALP</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-YALP</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The difference between means is an approximation to growth against VELS levels

^ Using Bias Corrected (Hedges) Effect Size
At Years 7 and 8, YALP students achieved significantly better than their non-YALP peers, with differences of 0.53 and 0.24 Standard deviations respectively. At Year 9, YALP students were marginally better than their non-YALP peers (0.02 of a Standard Deviation). It was surprising to see that at all of the secondary year levels, except Year 8, the Non-YALP students performed worse in September than in March.

In Mathematics, unlike Reading, results were less promising, with only Years 7 and 9 YALP students achieving ‘growth’ greater than 0.25. However, it should be remembered that for Non-YALP students results were even worse, with only Years 3 and 9 students achieving ‘growth’ of 0.25 or greater, and Years 7, 8 and 10 students demonstrating negative growth when using these measures.

Overall, results for both Literacy and Mathematics show no clear patterns and care needs to be taken in interpreting results where YALP numbers are very small. Results for the primary years appear to favour Non-YALP students over YALP students. However, for the secondary years, where numbers are larger, YALP students perform better than Non-YALP students, with non-YALP students performing very poorly in Mathematics.

The effects of time in YALP

March and September VCAA On Demand data for both Reading and Mathematics were also used to compare YALP students based on the extent of their participation in YALP during 2011. The unit chosen for measuring the extent of participation was the number of terms for Terms 1, 2 and 3 in which they were enrolled in YALP.

Literacy. Table 7 shows the results of the analysis for the Primary YALP Literacy intervention, using data for Years 3 to 6. It is clear from the Effect Size (ES) column that more time in YALP is more beneficial, although it could be argued that, based on these data, two terms of YALP is optimal, as the third term offers a marginal increase in benefit. However, there may be other reasons for schools choosing to keep students in YALP for longer periods.

Table 7: Primary Reading by number of terms involvement in YALP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>On Demand March 2011</th>
<th>On Demand September 2011</th>
<th>Standardised Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean  n  SD</td>
<td>Mean  n  SD</td>
<td>Difference between means*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.00  8  0.46</td>
<td>2.14  8  0.63</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.04  20  0.68</td>
<td>2.34  20  0.98</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.28  26  0.71</td>
<td>2.56  26  0.81</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The difference between means is an approximation to growth against VELS levels

Table 8 shows the results of the analysis for the Secondary YALP Literacy intervention, using data for Years 7 to 10. Unlike the Primary results, the Secondary results show a dramatic increase in benefit of continuing YALP for three terms (0.54). The small negative effect of two terms may be due to there only being five such participants rather than a decrease in benefit from YALP.
Table 8: Secondary Literacy by number of terms involvement in YALP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>On Demand March 2011</th>
<th>On Demand September 2011</th>
<th>Standardised Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The difference between means is an approximation to growth against VELS levels

Mathematics. Table 9 shows the results of the analysis for the Primary YALP Numeracy intervention, using data for Years 3 to 5, as there were no Year 6 students involved. While the YALP participation numbers for mathematics are small, it would appear that one term of YALP mathematics has the most effect. While the small negative effect for two terms may again be due to the small number of participants, as was seen in the case of Secondary literacy, there is a dramatic difference between one term and three terms. Even allowing for the small number of one-term YALP participants, the difference is quite stark.

Table 9: Primary Mathematics by number of terms involvement in YALP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>On Demand March 2011</th>
<th>On Demand September 2011</th>
<th>Standardised Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The difference between means is an approximation to growth against VELS levels

Table 10 shows the results of the analysis for the Secondary YALP Numeracy intervention, using data for Years 7 to 9, as there were no Year 10 students involved. In complete contrast to the Primary mathematics results, the analysis of the Secondary data shows that three terms of YALP involvement has a very large effect compared with the effects of only one or two terms.

Table 10: Secondary Mathematics by number of terms involvement in YALP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>On Demand March 2011</th>
<th>On Demand September 2011</th>
<th>Standardised Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The difference between means is an approximation to growth against VELS levels
In three of the four cases considered above, longer involvement in YALP appeared to have a clearly beneficial effect in terms of growth in VCAA On Demand scores. The one exception was for Primary Mathematics, where students with only one term of involvement showed greater gains than those with two or three terms. However, as has been stated many times before, the numbers are very small (especially in the last case mentioned here) and care needs to be taken in extrapolating from these results.

**Relative effects of YALP for male and female students**

In order to judge whether YALP has a differential effect on students based on sex, an analysis was undertaken dividing YALP students by sex, where this information was available. The results of this analysis are shown in Tables 11 and 12. These results show that there is little difference between male and female students’ benefits from involvement in the YALP intervention.

As can be seen in Table 11, there is very little difference between the benefits of YALP in mathematics for males and females (0.03 of one standard deviation).

**Table 11: Effect Sizes for Male and Female students participating in YALP Numeracy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>On Demand March 2011</th>
<th>On Demand September 2011</th>
<th>Standardised Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The difference between means is an approximation to growth against VELS levels.

For literacy, Table 12 shows the situation to be the same, with both males and females having an ES of 0.35!

**Table 12: Effect Sizes for Male and Female students participating in YALP Literacy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>On Demand March 2011</th>
<th>On Demand September 2011</th>
<th>Standardised Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The difference between means is an approximation to growth against VELS levels.

It is clear from these data that YALP does not affect students differentially based on their sex.

**6. Recommendations**

The interview data has shown that YALP is many different things to different people. Each school is using YALP in response to its perceived needs, tailoring the program to suit students whom it feels would benefit from the one-to-one attention provided by the 10 Minute Sessions. Although this flexibility might be judged to be a value of the program, it remains important for the program to be co-ordinated effectively at both a school level and...
the level of the YALP network. Otherwise the program runs the risk of appearing to be ill-focussed and arbitrary in its reach, which in turn raises questions about its efficiency and effectiveness in achieving its stated aims. To a significant extent, the difficulties the Evaluation Team has experienced in conducting this evaluation relate to the fact that the purposes invested in YALP have varied widely, and sometimes they have not been well articulated at a school level, which therefore poses challenges with respect to how its effectiveness within a particular setting might be judged.

The following recommendations concern the operation of YALP both at a school level and as a network designed to support participating schools.

The recommendations are often couched in the form of statements as to what schools ‘should’ do. It should be noted, however, that many of the schools visited are already implementing the practices recommended, and that schools in the YALP network would benefit from sharing these examples of good practice.

**Recommendation 1. Efforts should be made to articulate a clearer purpose for the YALP program.**

Flexibility and diversity may indeed be desirable, but this does not obviate the need for each school to develop a clear sense of what it is doing with the YALP program. Several schools within the network showed a very clear understanding of how the program contributed to their whole school cultures, and other schools would benefit from learning from the examples they provide.

YALP, as a network and an organisation, might consider how much emphasis it should give to ‘accelerated’ learning. By some standards this is not a claim that it can reasonably sustain on the basis of the assessment data that schools have presented to us. The interview data suggests that it is serving other purposes, still related to learning but also crucially connected with a young person’s emotional well-being and their participation in schooling. Given that students in YALP start behind expectations for their year level, indicating slower than expected progress over their entire schooling, what rate of progress is it reasonable to expect? Is it reasonable to expect better than average progress? What progress would have been made without the support of one-to-one tutoring? These are difficult questions, but YALP might be able to renew itself if it boldly tried to grapple with them. This means not only more systematic collection of assessment data (see Recommendation 8), but also a greater understanding of the kind of data that might be collected.

**Recommendation 2. Recognition should be given to the value of the YALP program based on criteria additional to growth measured against the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.**

This overlaps with the point that has just been made about giving YALP a clearer focus. The interview data show that in the judgment of the school leaders and teachers at each school, the YALP program does provide valuable support, in conjunction with other programs that are targeted at helping students overcome difficulties they may be experiencing at school. The program could be strengthened if it were more self aware in this respect, as this would mean identifying other forms of professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals than those targeted simply at literacy and numeracy strategies. Case studies would be one way to show the ways individual students have responded to one-to-one support.
Recommendation 3. Schools should adhere to the 10 Minute Session structure and timing, and try to ensure that students have at least three such sessions per week.

The interview data reveal that the 10 Minute Sessions are generally seen as effective. Even very experienced teachers, who were at first sceptical about what might be achieved by withdrawing students for such a brief period of time, have become convinced of its value.

The application of this procedure varied, however, from school to school: some sessions were characterised by highly focussed, skillfully scaffolded learning, while others were not as focussed, and in some cases the session was allowed to expand to 20 or 30 minutes with no discernible extra benefit. In this respect, the diversity and flexibility of YALP needs to be balanced by an emphasis on the value of the 10 Minute Session as an intervention strategy.

Session length has an inverse relationship with the number of sessions per student per week and the number of students who can participate in YALP. Given the overwhelming support for frequent, regular one-to-one sessions, and the belief that the structure supported learning, it is important to retain this element.

The issue is not simply the length of the sessions but also their focus. Where there was close liaison between YALP Coordinators, YALP tutors, and classroom teachers (see Recommendation 4), the sessions seemed to be much more focussed.

Recommendation 4. Schools should ensure close liaison between YALP Coordinators, YALP tutors and classroom teachers.

The interview data and observations revealed significant variation in the skill levels on which the YALP tutors were able to draw when conducting the 10 Minute Session and the focus they gave to it. It was generally the case that those YALP tutors who were former teachers had a more refined sense of purpose and capacity to scaffold the learning of young people than paraprofessional staff. But this was not always so, and in some cases paraprofessional staff showed that they could provide excellent support to the young people in their care. In those cases, however, it was noteworthy that these paraprofessionals were working in a context characterised by constant discussion and support from the YALP Coordinator and classroom teachers. They consequently had a much better sense of how what they were doing met the specific needs of the students in their care.

Recommendation 5. Schools should set clear criteria and processes for selecting students for participation in the YALP program.

Schools are engaging in complex decision-making processes with respect to which students might benefit most from participating in the YALP program. They are making carefully considered choices with respect to which year levels should be involved; whether the focus would be on literacy or mathematics or both; how the YALP program fitted with other intervention initiatives, such as Reading Recovery; what benchmarks should be used in selecting individual students to participate; what criteria should be used for students exiting the program; what follow-up would be available after the YALP program; who chooses the students and how this decision is communicated to tutors, parents and the students themselves.

This again emphasizes the importance of maintaining dialogue between YALP tutors, YALP Coordinators and classroom teachers (Recommendation 4). In a couple of schools the basis for selecting students for the program was clear neither to the YALP tutor nor to the classroom teacher from whose class the student was being withdrawn, and at least in one case it was not clear to the YALP Coordinator either. At other schools, however, it was apparent that selection was being made after extensive consultations between relevant
parties – in the case of one primary school, this involved continuing discussions between the Reading Recovery Coordinator and the YALP Coordinator; at other schools the YALP tutors worked in classrooms alongside teachers, and they were party to the decisions as to which students would be withdrawn. The better the communication between all involved, the clearer the focus of the 10 Minute Session (see Recommendations 3 & 4). This continuing communication was also crucial for assessing students’ progress and deciding when the student should leave the program.

Recommendation 6. Opportunities for quality professional learning should be available to YALP tutors involved in the YALP program.

It has already been noted that the qualifications of the paraprofessional staff acting as YALP tutors differed markedly. Who the school actually employs as a YALP tutor is determined by the school’s sense of the purposes served by the YALP program. One school, for example, had embarked on an ambitious attempt to use YALP to bring parents into the school, training them as tutors – an aim that extends far beyond the benefits of the YALP program in accelerating the learning of individual students. It seems clear, however, that all YALP tutors would benefit from experiencing quality professional learning that would allow them to understand their roles better and thus respond in a more focussed way to the needs of the children.

The YALP Trainers are generally recognised by people in schools as providing valuable support. The YALP organisation also provides professional development sessions for teachers and paraprofessional staff. These sessions might be reconceptualised more usefully as opportunities for principals, teachers, YALP Coordinators and YALP tutors within the network to share their experiences and jointly engage in constructing knowledge relating to the needs of the young people with whom they are working. The professional development session that one of the Evaluation Team observed was skillfully conceptualised and delivered, but it essentially remained in the form of the delivery of knowledge and skills by an expert, rather than a joint inquiry into the challenges of supporting students who are experiencing difficulties at school.

Both forms of professional development are arguably necessary, especially when one considers the different skill levels of the YALP tutors. It is a matter of achieving the right balance between them, though in the opinion of the Evaluation Team a culture of shared inquiry provides a transformative context in which the delivery of new knowledge and skills can be improved. It is apparent that the YALP program has the potential to provide a valuable network for educators in this particular geographical region, relating to the challenges of meeting the needs of young people who are experiencing difficulties with schooling, and this recommendation relates to the way in which such a network might be exploited more effectively.

Recommendation 7. The YALP organisation should assist schools in ensuring that appropriate resources are available to YALP tutors and that they are assisted in selecting the most suitable resources for their 10 Minute Sessions.

While it is recognised that the YALP organisation cannot provide a full resource bank, it is an unfortunate fact that many unqualified YALP tutors appear to be unable to access high quality resources and tend to pick up whatever seems useful, without necessarily appreciating the way an activity might target the specific needs of students. It is apparent that YALP tutors who are former teachers have a wealth of resources at their disposal on which they can draw. Schools where there are strong lines of communication between all the parties involved – between the YALP Coordinator, YALP tutors and classroom teachers – have developed a pool of resources on which everyone can draw. This is a practice that
other schools might emulate as part of the YALP network. The YALP trainers have already been playing a useful supporting role in this respect, and they might consider how the availability of high quality resources both within schools and across the network might be consolidated.

Recommendation 8. Schools participating in YALP should collect and store data in a more systematic way, so that the effects of student participation in YALP can be more readily established.

This recommendation relates to both the operation of YALP program at a school level and to the YALP program as a network focussed on enhancing the learning opportunities of young people who are experiencing difficulties with schooling. While some interviewees argued that assessment data do not provide the only way of gauging the YALP program’s effectiveness, this does not obviate the need to monitor the learning of students, and to do this in systematic ways. This is in everyone’s best interests. The YALP program’s sense of identity and purpose (see Recommendations 1 & 2) would be improved if schools were to approach the collection of assessment data in a more systematic way. A focus for a YALP network meeting might be to review which data each school collects and its value for supporting the learning of the students involved.

7. Conclusion

This evaluation has shown that the YALP program is held in high regard by the various stakeholders in the identified networks. Responses from almost all people involved have been overwhelmingly positive about YALP – especially about the pastoral care aspects and the one-to-one, regular interactions with students.

The structure, frequency and one-to-one nature of the 10 Minute System is regarded as the main strength of the YALP program and what distinguishes it from other intervention programs, such as the Wannik Tutorial Assistance Program, where students only experience the program on a weekly basis. However, it is not reasonable to compare YALP with programs such as Reading Recovery, which is much more resource intensive, with students spending more frequent, much longer periods over a possibly longer duration in one-to-one interactions with trained staff.

Efforts to compare learning outcomes in Literacy and Mathematics for YALP and Non-YALP students were hampered by a lack of data, particularly for Years Prep to 2 students for whom there was only data from Term 1, and usually only for Mathematics.

Overall, results for both Literacy and Mathematics for Years 3 to 10 students showed no clear patterns and care needs to be taken in interpreting results where YALP numbers are very small. Results for the primary years appear to favour Non-YALP students over YALP students. However, for the secondary years, where numbers are larger, YALP students performed better than Non-YALP students, with Non-YALP students performing very poorly in Mathematics.

Longer involvement in YALP appears to have a clearly beneficial effect in terms of growth in On Demand test scores. The one exception was for Years 3 to 5 Mathematics, where students with only one term of involvement showed greater gains than those with two or three terms’ involvement.

While YALP students at most of the year levels for which data was available appeared to show better than expected ‘growth’ against approximate VELS levels, it seems unreasonable to expect ‘accelerated’ growth from students who have been dropping behind year by year in their schooling to be the main criterion for judging the success of a program such as YALP. There were many, consistent anecdotes about the pastoral care aspects of YALP and their
importance, including its effect on increases in students’ attendance at school, and confidence and commitment in their classrooms.

The recommendations in the previous section are all designed to improve the operations of the YALP program as a network focused on dealing with the needs of young people who are experiencing difficulties with schooling. They are all premised on a recognition of the good work that participating schools are already accomplishing in their efforts to provide support for these young people. The Evaluation Team has assumed that the YALP program is more likely to be effective when it is part of a whole school strategy (something that was repeatedly endorsed by school leaders and teachers who have been interviewed as part of this evaluation) and that these efforts on the part of individual schools can be further strengthened by their participation in a larger network of schools faced with similar challenges. This is to conceive of the YALP program as a professional learning network designed to support teachers in this geographical region in their efforts to better understand and meet the needs of the young people in their care.

A common perception expressed by the school leaders, teachers and other people interviewed as part of this evaluation is that there was no quick fix to the problems faced by schools that are using the YALP intervention. What is required is sustained professional learning and engagement on the part of the school leaders, teachers and paraprofessionals involved in this network. This approach is congruent with many of the best examples of professional learning around the country (see Doecke et al., 2008). Everyone’s energies within the YALP network are devoted to providing the young people involved in the program with the support that might make a difference with respect to their continuing engagement in schooling and their chances of ultimately finding worthwhile employment.

In this respect, the school leaders and teachers within the this geographical region are engaging in professional learning from which the educational community as a whole might benefit. As a professional learning network, the YALP organisation might make more strenuous efforts to disseminate the knowledge and experience of people involved in the program, opening up its work to robust critique that would be of benefit to everyone with a commitment to enhancing the academic opportunities of young people who have been educationally disadvantaged.

8. References


### Appendix 1: Sample Completed Observation Schedule

#### EVALUATION OF YACHAD ACCELERATED LEARNING PROJECT (YALP)

**OBSERVATION SCHEDULE 10MS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School xx PS</th>
<th>Date xx August 2011</th>
<th>Time 10:00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>YALP Tutor Jenny</strong> (pseudonym)</td>
<td><strong>Student Esther</strong> (pseudonym) (F)</td>
<td>Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class Teacher Catherine</strong> (pseudonym)</td>
<td><strong>Year Level</strong> 5</td>
<td><strong>Observer</strong> xx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:00</td>
<td>Warm welcome Chat about father etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>Revises Black Beauty reading from last time. T asks questions of Esther (S)</td>
<td>Timer not on yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00</td>
<td>Puts timer on – sets at 10 mins Small card with a few sentences T asks S to read first, then go back &amp; correct punctuation &amp; spelling – put in full stops, capitals &amp; check spelling</td>
<td>Discussion about the difference between ‘bought’ &amp; ‘brought’. T asks S difference, but S doesn’t know. When T explains she can do it. When S asks ‘Is this correct’ T says ‘you tell me’ &amp; asks S to double check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T asks Is ‘is bye slippers correct?’ What about ‘It had took me’? Is that correct? S says yes &amp; T now confused – has to check her answer sheet to confirm it should be ‘had taken’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:48</td>
<td>T: Very good. Look back at the last time you did this activity how many mistakes you had. This time you got almost everything right – just ‘took’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:49</td>
<td>T: Little bit of time left. Can you read a bit more of Black Beauty?</td>
<td>3 mins on timer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S starts reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:50</td>
<td>T asks comprehension questions – e.g. S reads ‘... plans to go abroad’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T asks what does ‘abroad’ mean?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S doesn’t know – T explains ‘overseas’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:59</td>
<td>T reads a bit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:51</td>
<td>S takes over reading</td>
<td>S reads quite well – many quite difficult words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:08</td>
<td>Times rings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T ‘we’ll just finish this off’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S reads ‘mistress’ as ‘minister’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T wonders what will happen next in story – says she hasn’t read it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>So S tells her</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:50</td>
<td>T asks ‘what do you like best? [in these sessions? Or today? Not sure]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S ‘reading’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T ‘you didn’t like it at the start. Do you know why you like it now?’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T ‘you practised’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S glues the card into her ‘record booklet’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Sample Interview Schedule – School Coordinator

EVALUATION OF YACHAD ACCELERATED LEARNING PROJECT (YALP)

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR YALP SCHOOL COORDINATORS

PART 0 – IDENTIFYING INFORMATION
Interview with (Name), YALP School Coordinator at (Name of School), (date) conducted by (Interviewer’s Name)

PART 1 – INTRO & BACKGROUND INFO
Thank you for agreeing to this interview and giving us your time.

To begin with I’d like to establish some facts about your involvement with YALP in your school

How long have you been the YALP Coordinator at this school?
Is your school involved in literacy, numeracy or both?
In what year levels does YALP operate?
  Literacy? Numeracy? Both?
Approximately how many students are involved in YALP this term?
  Literacy? Numeracy? Both? (if appropriate)
Does this vary a lot from term to term?
  Year to year (if appropriate)?
How many 10 Minute Sessions (10MS) a week do students usually have at your school?
  Literacy? Numeracy? Both?
How many YALP tutors are employed at your school?
  Literacy? Numeracy? Both?
Approximately how many students does one YALP Tutor work with?

PART 2 – YOUR ROLE IN THE PROGRAM
We’d like to find out a bit about your role in the program

What is your role within the program?
What are the typical activities relating to YALP in which you are engaged?
How much time per week do you devote to the program?
How is your work in the program organised?
  By whom is it organized?
Are there meetings with others in the program?
  How often are these meetings held?
  How long do these meetings last?
What is the focus of these meetings?
Is there anything else you would like to add about the school YALP Coordinator’s role in YALP?

PART 3 – YOUR VIEWS OF THE PROGRAM
Can you tell me about YALP as you see it?
Are there any unexpected positive or negative outcomes of the implementation of YALP?
Are there school contextual issues that have an impact on YALP?
Is YALP appropriate for Indigenous school contexts?
Do you think YALP has improved outcomes for the students?
  How does this improvement show itself?
Do you think YALP would work in other contexts?
  What might they be?
What are the conditions that favour students’ engagement in the YALP sessions?
If you were giving advice to a school about to implement YALP, what might that advice be?
What is the most valuable thing you have learned from being in the program?

PART 4 – PROGRAM OPERATION
How is the program organised?
  By whom is it organized?
  What is involved in the organisation?
How are students selected?
  Who does the selecting?
  What are the criteria for selection?
  When are selections made?
  Are you satisfied with the selection process?
Can you tell me a bit more about the YALP program?
  Can you tell me about the YALP materials?
    What materials are provided by YALP?
    How are other materials produced?
  Can you tell me about the diagnostic testing?
    What testing materials are provided by YALP?
    How are other tests produced?
  Can you tell me about the 10MS content?
    Who decides the content?
What resources are provided by YALP?
How does the 10MS content link to the results of the diagnostic testing?
Does the 10MS methodology produce improved student outcomes?
Could the 10MS system be adapted for whole class improvement?
Why or why not?
Are there specific things that help, or prevent, students from learning in the YALP sessions?
What factors lead to success of the YALP program?

PART 5 – THE EFFECTS OF THE PROGRAM

We’re interested in the effects of YALP

Have students in the YALP program demonstrated growth in their learning?
   Has this growth been about the same, more, or less than expected at this year level?
Has the YALP program had an effect on student attitudes to school or learning?
Has the YALP program had an effect on student engagement in classroom learning?
Has the YALP program had an effect on student attendance at school?
Have students in the YALP program shown other changed behaviours?
When students come out of the program do they maintain their ‘momentum’ in learning?
Are there long-term effects of YALP for students, such as, school attendance or retention?
Have there been any unexpected outcomes from the YALP program?
What have been the benefits, for you, of involvement in YALP?
Has YALP been of benefit to others connected to the school, such as parents or the community?

PART 6 – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Do you feel prepared, or competent in terms of your skills and knowledge, to work with YALP?
Do the YALP tutors in your school have the capacity to deliver the program outcomes?
What kind of support have YALP tutors received in terms of training and resources?
   Who gets support?
   Who provides the support?
   Are there criteria for obtaining support?
   What are they?
What is the focus of the support?
   Pedagogy (teaching methods), Indigenous issues, mathematics, literacy, other?
When is support provided?
Do classroom teachers receive professional benefits from the program being in the school?
What are they?
Has the program helped you?
In what ways?

PART 7 – SUSTAINABILITY
Do you think that the program is sustainable?
Are there barriers to sustainability of the program?
What resources are critical to the program?
What effect does staff turnover have on the program?

PART 8 – OTHER
Are there any other comments relating to any aspects of YALP you would like to make?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP
Appendix 3: Sample Interview Schedule – Student Group interview

EVALUATION OF YACHAD ACCELERATED LEARNING PROJECT (YALP)

GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR STUDENTS

PART 0 – IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

Interview with (Names), Year (Year Levels) Students at (Name of School), (date) conducted by (Interviewer’s Name)

PART 1 – INTRO

Thank you for letting me watch your 10MS session and letting me talk to you now. (Establish what name they give to them and replace 10MS and ‘these sessions’ in all questions below by their term)

To begin with I’d like you to tell me a bit about the 10MS session I have seen today.

What was your session about? (Make sure everyone answers)

What do you think you learnt today?

Tell me some more about these sessions

How many times a week do you do them?

Do you also have sessions in literacy/numeracy (depending on which one was observed)?

How long have you been doing the 10MS?

Did you do literacy/numeracy last term? Last year?

Do you always have the same tutor?

How many students from your class are involved in 10MS this term?

Literacy? Numeracy? Both? (if appropriate)

Does this vary a lot from term to term?

Year to year (if appropriate)?

How many 10 Minute Sessions (10MS) a week do students from your class usually have?

Literacy? Numeracy? Both?

PART 2 – YOUR VIEWS OF THE PROGRAM

We’d like to find out a bit about the 10MSs

Tell me a bit more about what you usually do in the 10MSs

What are some of the good things about the 10MSs?

What are some of the things you don’t like about the 10MSs?

Do you think it has helped you learn more?

How can you tell?
What are the things that help you learn better in these sessions?
Has the 10MS changed the way you interact with teachers?
   How?
Do you pay more attention in these 10MSs than in class?
   If yes, why?
Have these sessions made a difference to your classroom lessons in literacy/numeracy (try to find their words for these before asking this)?
How could these sessions be made better?
Has the program helped you in other ways?
What is the best thing you have learned from being in the program?
Do you think this is a good program for students at your school?
   Why? Why not?
Do you think this would be a good program for students in other schools?
   What types of schools?

PART 3 – PROGRAM OPERATION

How were you chosen to take part?
   Who chose you?
   Why?
   When?
Are you happy that you were chosen?
Can you tell me a bit more about the 10MSs?
   What sort of activities do you usually do?
      How are these different from your regular classroom lessons?
      Who decides what you will do?
      Do you use materials in the 10MSs?
         What sorts of materials?
Can you tell me about any tests that you do?
   When do you do the tests?
   Do you know who makes up the tests?
   How do the 10MSs link with the results of the tests?
Do you like the way in which the 10MSs are taught?
   What’s good about it?
   What don’t you like?
Could your regular lessons be more like the 10MSs?
   Why or why not?
Are there things that make it easier or harder for students to learn in the 10MS sessions?
What advice would you give other schools that were planning to start using the 10MSs?

PART 4 – THE EFFECTS OF THE PROGRAM
We’re interested in the effects of the 10MSs
Do you think you have learnt a lot in the 10MSs?
Have you learnt about the same, more, or less than you would in class?
Have the 10MSs changed the way you feel about going to school and learning?
Have the 10MSs changed the way you learn in class?
Have the 10MSs made you want to come to school more often?
Have the 10MSs changed the way you behave at school?
If you stopped doing the 10MSs, would you keep learning better in class?

PART 5 – YALP TUTORS
Do you think your 10MS tutors run the 10MSs well??
Who helps your 10MS tutors to run these sessions?
Do your 10MS tutors use worksheets prepared by someone else?
Do your 10MS tutors use tests prepared by someone else?
Does the work you do help you do better on the tests?
Has the program helped you learn better?
In what ways?

PART 6 – OTHER
Is there anything else about the 10MSs you would like to talk about?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP