

2007 Showcase Awards for Excellence in Schools

Submission Template

Submission overview:

Come and Read with Me is an innovative program implemented by Gladstone South State School that invests in the early development of students with disabilities (SWD). The major innovation is the involvement of senior citizen volunteers from Hibiscus Gardens Hostel, a local residential care facility. They participate as mentors and “adopted nanas/granddads/aunties/uncles”, contributing the wisdom and experience of age to the nurturing and development of the students’ reading, oral language, social skills and life skills.

Description:

Introduction and Aims.

Students with a disability at Gladstone South State School are involved in a regular reading program with senior residents from Hibiscus Gardens. *Come and Read with Me* involves weekly visits by nine students, one teacher and one parent to Hibiscus Gardens. Each student is partnered with a senior person who works as a mentor, providing the students with regular opportunities to engage in using a range of language and literacy tools to develop social communication, life and social skills, and thought patterns. Once a semester the residents have visited the school to be an audience for student performances, and to meet the students’ teachers and parents. They enjoy reading our school newsletters and have become a vital part of our school community attending a range of school functions and celebrations of student learning.

The program has multidimensional aims. The primary objective is to give SWD children who need additional assistance with their reading (and language skills) the opportunity to read regularly with a supportive adult on a one-to-one basis. Students are provided with real life contexts for reading, writing, spelling and communicating with others. The program trains the volunteers to be mentors and allows students to:

- Participate in reading in a one-to-one setting. One student is one of seven children with a sole parent and he values his time with his mentor.
- Receive additional support and assistance to gain confidence through the support of a caring *nana/grandad and aunty/uncle*. Students have the same mentor each visit.
- Experience and share the pleasure of reading to develop a genuine desire to read
- Have the opportunity to experience someone reading to them (some of their parents are illiterate or are very busy).

The program allows for differing experiences and levels of development of our students with special needs, as they require more support to become readers and language users.

The program also has important social objectives. Some of the school-based activities in preparation for each weekly visit require the students to work as a team. Activities at Hibiscus Gardens involve the students in developing social contact with persons outside their age group. Importantly, activities involving board and card games aim to teach the students with autism the importance of learning how to win and lose.

The program also aims to provide residents from Hibiscus Gardens with personal satisfaction and social contact through the opportunity to be active, do something worthwhile for the community and be role models. These factors contribute to increasing their personal well-being. The program helps



Awards for Excellence
in Schools

create a sense of purpose, reduces social isolation and seems to have broad positive effects on physical and mental health.

Components of the Program

The Nanas/Grandads and Aunties/Uncles have received training to enhance their skills in supporting our students via (i) Support-A-Reader Training and (ii) participation in sessions run by a Speech Language Pathologist to guide them in assisting the students with their individual speech/language development programs and (iii) teacher/principal-led awareness sessions about relevant impacts of intellectual impairment and autistic spectrum disorder. Our volunteers are incredibly enthusiastic about their mentoring role.

Hibiscus Gardens is a place that our students look forward to visiting each week. The residents make our students feel very much loved and valued. Students engage in writing to their adopted mentor from Hibiscus Gardens on a regular basis, which provides them with a real purpose for writing letters and cards. The mentors also write back to the students.

In preparation for each trip to Hibiscus Gardens, our students with disabilities visit the school library to select a special book for their mentor to read to them, as well as taking a text from school to read to their mentor. This preparation activity develops authentic purpose and motivation to use the library. The subsequent use of the books with the mentor provides intensive one on one support for our students. Each student now has 100% borrowing rate from the school library.

Getting ready for each trip also involves our students in the real-life activities of cooking and preparing afternoon-tea items to take to Hibiscus Gardens. This involves development of life skills such as purchasing ingredients for cooking, reading recipes and making food. This has evolved to the making of birthday cakes for our senior residents (the oldest being 98 years old) and end of term celebrations such as Christmas at McDonald's, Easter celebrations.

The program delivers literacy and language activities including reading aloud to students. Benefits are:

- Enhanced literacy and language skills in our students with disabilities
- Improved attendance of students (Our students are never away on a Tuesday when they visit Hibiscus and have between 95 – 100% attendance rate)
- Opportunities for our volunteers to contribute to the community, develop social networks and improve the well being of individuals and families within the community
- Enhanced intergenerational relationships by engaging older people
- Expanded skills of volunteers through the provision of training sessions about language and literacy skills and understanding of students with disabilities.
- Maintaining and sharing of knowledge and wisdom

Connection to QSE – 2010, Destination 2010 and/or Education and Training Reforms for the Future:

This program links closely to QSE 2010 and Destination 2010 by focusing on providing education and training to meet the needs of our students and communities particularly focusing on our students with disabilities at Gladstone South State School.

Learning – Improved learning outcomes for the diverse range of students in Education Queensland Schools - Schools have inclusive practices to meet the educational needs of all students

- Quality academic outcomes are achieved by each student (as evidenced in individual IEP's and EAP's) focusing on students' individual level of reading
- Quality social outcomes are achieved by each student (behaviour support and records of misbehaviour minimal) by them developing confidence and a 'can do' attitude

- Quality citizenship outcomes are achieved by each student

Schools – Schools have innovative and distinctive strategies responsive to community and student needs

- Innovative approaches to schooling that is based on clear educational rationale and respond to the distinctive needs of students in each phase of learning (The program is flexible in meeting the individual needs of the students and is aimed at the student’s independent reading age.)
- Distinctive and innovative approaches respond to community needs

SC 2 Schools have productive partnerships with their community and with business, industry and other government agencies

- Develop the school as a community asset that is the centre for learning and community engagement
- Develop sustainable collaborative relationships with parents, school and local community members. The school uses the neighbourhood resources as a tangible means of improving the learning outcomes for students and involving the community in their day to day activities.

SC 2 Schools provide safe, supportive and disciplined learning environments – the students know that there is an expectation around how we mix and work with others and strive to achieve this each week to visit their mentor

Workforce Leadership that drives educational reform, supports productive relationships and promotes innovation

- Implement programs and networks that strengthen the quality of leadership in the school and develop a constructive organisational culture.

Staff has developed innovative and creative ways of meeting the needs of our students with disabilities and taken key leadership roles in achieving this. This has also included the up skilling of valuable resources in our community such as our mentors from Hibiscus Gardens and utilising the skills and abilities of a range of personnel employed by Education Queensland such as Speech Language Pathologists.

Outcomes/Evidence:

‘Come and Read with Me’ during its implementation period has demonstrated both academic and social outcomes for our students with disabilities, and positive well-being outcomes for the volunteers.

Social Learning Outcomes

An understanding and appreciation of the social outcomes has lead to an improvement in the quality of education delivered to students with disabilities at Gladstone South State School. The social outcomes dimensions (Performance Management and Reporting) of:

- Self Confidence
- Interest in Learning
- Relating to Others
- Commitment to Community Well Being
- Understanding Social Order.
- Optimism for the Future

have been used as key tracking mechanisms to show improvement with this project.

Because the students involved in this program have a disability or are below the age cohort for administration of the survey, the formal administration of this survey has been modified to meet the school’s needs.



Awards for Excellence
in Schools

The outcomes that have been continuously achieved are:

- Self Confidence – students have a real enthusiasm for coming to school and participating and engaging in language and literacy skills as they read a book, share a story, talk and play games with their mentor. Attendance at school is regular and between 95 – 100% attendance.
- Interest in Learning – students have self initiated writing letters or cards to their mentors something which they did not do prior to this program. The students now read regularly for a real purpose and for enjoyment.
- Relating to Others – students have learnt about others and how to engage and interact with them in appropriate ways through their regular visits with their mentor. This has also changed behaviours back at the school site as the children strive to be invited each week to Hibiscus Gardens. Behaviour records and suspensions of this cohort of students are minimal. Of the students involved in the program, one student has been suspended once in the last two years and behaviour records have decreased markedly for these students.
- Optimism for the Future – the students are keen to share and talk about what they will do in the future, when they grow up, and leave school.

Academic Learning Outcomes

The one-on-one support from a caring adult has seen significant improvement in the children's reading, writing and speech (this is demonstrated through the students' IEPs, EAPs and specific goals that are set).

The primary focus of this program was around support a reader to improve our students with disabilities attempts at reading. This has been achieved and will continue to show improvement for our students with disabilities through:

- Reading on a one-to-one basis
- Through use of interesting books
- Allowing the children to choose the book
- Encouraging the child to become self reliant
- Acceptance and valuing of the child's efforts to make meaning
- Modelling reading to our students with disabilities
- Observing the child's growth as a reader
- Sharing a love of reading

Tracking of student learning outcomes is monitored through their IEPs and EAP's. Tracking of student growth is monitored also through the use of the Year 2 Diagnostic Net. All students have shown progress moving through the phases of the Year 2 Diagnostic Net and achieving various indicators as records of their ongoing growth and success.

School Opinion Data from 2006 demonstrates the high level of satisfaction of parents.

Community-Links Outcomes

This program is sustainable through our strong community links with Hibiscus Gardens and the use of our volunteer population. Our school program that has been in place for two years is now being reflected in The Department of Communities Initiative – Reading to Children Initiative 2007.

The simple processes and model used in the 'Come and Read with Me' program at Gladstone South is now being used as part of our process for engaging and working with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population through our Adopt-an-Elder project and Working Together – Making a Brighter Future program. Local schools in the Gladstone area are also exploring how they may too develop a program such as this with their students with disabilities and nearby neighbourhood centres.



Awards for Excellence
in Schools

See Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 6 which demonstrate improved community engagement and well being of Hibiscus Garden Residents.

Improved family relations and well being refer Appendix 2

Other documentation:

The following appendices are included:

- a signed supporting statement from the principal and the parents and citizens' association
- 1 - a letter of support from Carol Lattimer Diversional Therapist
- 2 - a letter of support from Jackie Crighton, parent
- 3 - a letter of support from Mrs Liz Cunningham, MLA
- 4 - letter from a student
- 5 - letter from a student
- 6 - Excerpt from Aged Care Magazine – Australia Wide publication
- 7 – Parent School Opinion Survey 2006
- 8 – Student Behaviour Records
- 9 – Student Learning Outcomes
- 10 – Anecdotal Data from Students, Staff and Mentors

Personnel involved in the project (names and roles):

Juleen Meldrum – Students with Disabilities Teacher
Sandra Polkinghorn – Teacher Aide
Jackie Crighton – Parent
Carol Lattimer – Diversional Therapist – Hibiscus Gardens
Belinda O'Sullivan – Deputy Principal
Leanne Ibell - Principal

ENTERING YOUR SUBMISSION

- 1. Ensure you have enclosed all compulsory information by completing the Entrants' Checklist in appendix C.**
- 2. Ensure the principal signs this submission form.**
- 3. Forward your submission to your Regional Coordinator by 20 April 2007.**

Appendix 1 - ***Letter of support from Carol Lattimer – Diversional Therapist***

As a Diversional Therapist the reading group has been a wonderful inspiration for the residents at Hibiscus Gardens.

It has fostered links between the generations within the community.

This program has provided an avenue for the young members of our society, to keep in contact with and to and learn from the older generation.

It has allowed the residents of Hibiscus Gardens to be able to share their joy and their sorrows with the children.

Many of these grandparents don't get to see their grandchildren very often or some don't have any. In view of that, it is really breathtaking to see open arms and cuddles on the arrival of the children each week.

This program has fostered a sense of well being and belonging, in a relationship where someone cares and looks forward to the time that can be shared.

The children spend time, one afternoon a week visiting their nana and pop at Hibiscus Gardens. The residents certainly look forward to the children coming. Each week without fail these residents are waiting for the children to come through the front door to see them. The residents enjoy the interaction with the children and get pleasure from listening, talking, reading, and playing games.

The children frequently make cards and cakes for each birthday celebrated with the residents.

The residents have joined the children on occasions at Gladstone South State School for morning tea, listening to children sing and watching them skip, and the children have been invited to spend time with them when they have functions a couple of times a year.

At the end of 2006 the literacy program celebrated their Christmas Party at McDonalds. This was very amusing and a thrill for some of our residents, as they had never eaten McDonalds before.

The program has been a huge success at Hibiscus Gardens, with this being the second year running. We have been very fortunate; as the ten residents, the oldest being 98, who first started the program in 2006, are still going strong!

I will say, as is inevitable in such a program such as this, some children will experience the sadness and a sense of loss when their nana or pop passes away, but children learn to accept the inevitability of death, and the importance of quality of life. There will always be a new nana or pop always ready to greet them on the next visit.

I would like to thank Juleen & Jackie from the Gladstone South State School, without your hard work each week organising the children, the program would not have succeeded.

Most of all, I would love to thank all of the children, our hearts are filled with happiness and joy when you visit.

Carol Lattimer
Diversional Therapist
Hibiscus Gardens 2007

Appendix 2 - *Letter of support from Jackie Crighton – parent*

Leanne,

Juleen asked me this morning if I would be willing to write from my eyes how I see our Hibiscus Reading Program, as you are looking to Showcase it. With great pleasure I am responding.

Hibiscus Gardens Reading Program has impacted on our family very positively:

- Sam was placed in the program because his reading was quite poor. His reading has improved. Each week he takes his chapter book and reads to his Nana. He is then rewarded with a game of Uno with his “card shark” Nana, as time allows.*
- We are regularly celebrating someone’s birthday. The children have been known to bake and decorate cakes to celebrate birthdays and most weeks someone has a birthday to celebrate. This too is an opportunity to give our undivided attention to each of our group, old or young, and to let them know we think they are special. What a privilege.*
- Nana Iris has become a part of our family. We have a photo of her and Sam and she sits proudly on our fridge door. We talk of her at meal times and pray for her at bedtime. Our weekly visits bring us into her world and she in ours. It is delightful.*
- The children respect and look to their Nana’s and Uncles for love and support and our Nanans and Uncles relish this “need” and they shine. The children have an opportunity to journey with these folks. They hear of tales of old and see the frailty of the end of life. In a very physical way, the children have opportunity to respect and honour the wisdom and experience of age. My children’s grandparents are not as old or frail nor live in the same locality. This community experience builds upon that which we lack as a family*
- It is really a win - win. Our children need this extra support and our older folk want to be needed and not simply “retired” or forgotten.*
- As a mum driving our South Kids to Hibiscus I enjoy meeting and mingling with our precious older folk. We are a highlight to their week and they are to mine.*

I am thankful on behalf of my son and the other children that we have such a program to support our struggling readers and I appreciate the opportunity to be a part of the lives of these precious folk.

*Thanks for this opportunity,
Jackie Crighton*

*Gladstone South State School
Students with A Disability Parent
School Opinion Survey 2006
Appendix 7*

Aspects of schooling compared between all parents and parents of Students with a Disability

Aspects of Schooling

Area	State Benchmark		Like Schools Benchmark		Flagged	
	All Parents	Parents of SWD	All Parents	Parents of SWD	All Parents	Parents of SWD
Quality Curriculum for all students	Below	Above	Below	Above		
Effective teaching	Above	Above	Above	Above		
Improved Learning outcomes for all students	Above	Above	Above	Above		
Confidence in public education	Above	Above	Above	Above		
Adoption of technology to enhance teaching, learning and management	Above	Above	Above	Above		
A safe, supportive and productive learning environment	Below	Above	Above	Above		Above
Overall	Above	Above	Above	Above		Above



Awards for Excellence
in Schools

Appendix 8 – Student Behaviour Records

The table below represents the total number of student behaviour incidences (misbehaviours) for the students involved in the program

Student	Total 2005	Total 2006	Total 2007 @ Term 1
A	0	0	0
B	3	1	0
C	1	0	0
D	20	5	1
E	15	4	1
F	55	12 + 1 suspension	2
G	3	1	0
H	0	0	0
I	0	0	0
Total	97 + 0 suspensions	23 + 1 suspension	4 + 0 suspensions

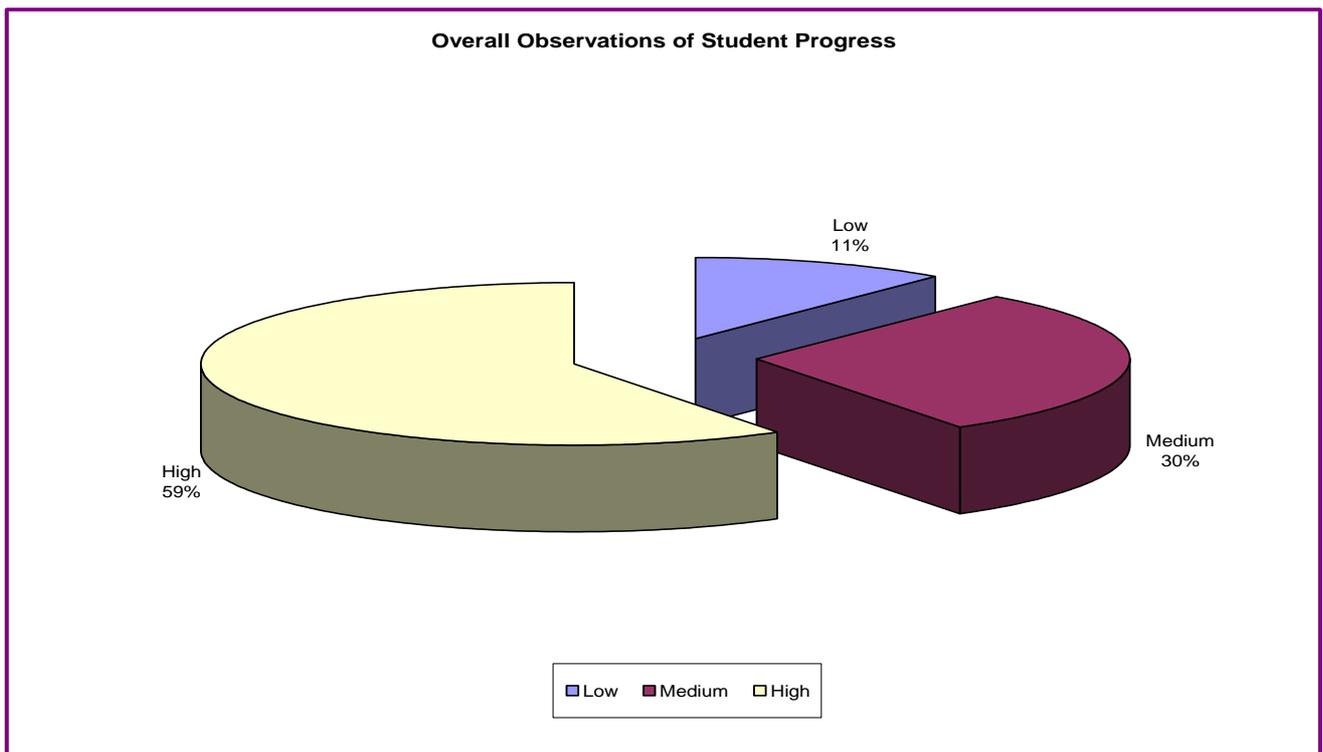
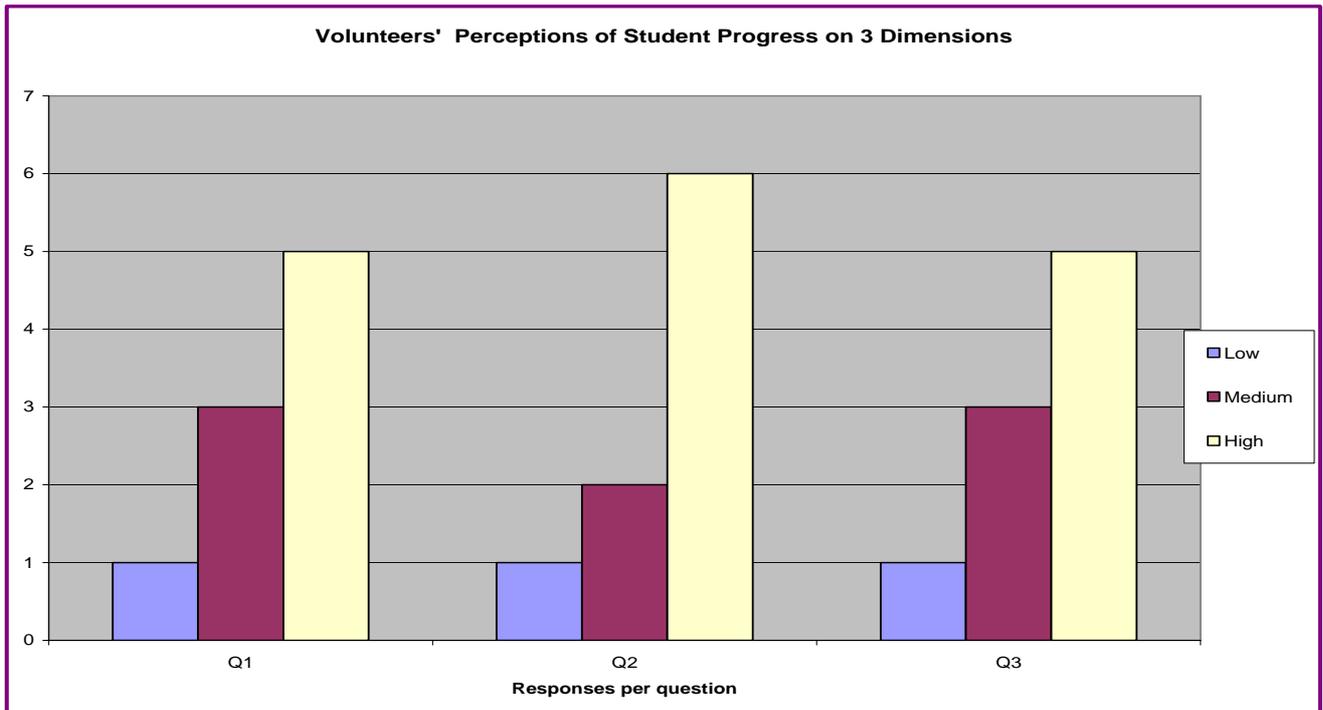
Appendix 9 – Student Progress

Data was gathered on

Question 1 – Has your students' attitude to reading improved?

Question 2 – Has your students' fluency improved?

Question 3 - Has your student made progress with their reading?



Appendix 10 – Anecdotal Data from Students, Staff and Mentors

Students

My Nana is kind to me and listens to me.

I like being with Nana who I have become friends with.

She has helped me improve my reading.

We celebrate birthdays with each other at Hibiscus Gardens. We all enjoy cooking, icing and eating all the cakes.

I love to read to my Nan – I can now read.

We read lots of interesting books together. I have even taught my Nan some things she didn't know.

My Uncle makes me feel very special. We talk about lots of things. He helps me read and sort out problems that I might have.

My Nans help me with my speech. I get to practise with them and they help me. I feel very special.

Staff

My student's participation in the Hibiscus Gardens program has seen an improvement in my student's reading. He is now a more confident reader when reading aloud to his peers. The connection my student has with his Nana is one that will last a lifetime.

I have seen a remarkable increase in my student's positive attitude and willingness to join in learning back in the classroom.

I get great feedback from my student after each visit and he writes recounts about Hibiscus Gardens each week.

My student comes back so excited and is a breath of fresh air. He willingly shares his experiences and his reading with his peers.

Behaviour towards learning and life is far more positive following my students' involvement in this program.

Three of the students in my class are involved in this program and it has provided them with not only the opportunity for one-on-one focused mentoring with their reading but has provided them with invaluable experiences around life skills such as getting along, solving problems, facing things with a positive attitude and having a go.

Mentors

It was very hard to get my student to open his book to start with. He just wanted to play Uno or draughts. Now he gets the book out and sits down and gets straight into reading. There has been a huge improvement in his attitude. It is wonderful that he is enjoying reading and we have a lot of giggles.



Awards for Excellence
in Schools

We learnt as much information from the books my student has chosen from the school library as what he has. You are never too old to learn.

I think that it is amazing that there is a photo of me on my student's fridge. I feel very proud.

I really look forward to my student's visit each week – it gives us all a lift to be doing something to help someone.

The time the children spend with us goes so quickly. It is very quiet on the holidays – we don't enjoy the break without the children visiting.

In the beginning, our student didn't read. She was very nervous and didn't take a lot of interest in the books. Once she got to know us, she was full speed ahead with her reading. She has come a long way and is a pleasure to teach. She is trying hard with her speech and we have been working on activities in her scrapbook – she is much easier to understand now. We love to see the South children come in and are very happy to help them.

They have taught us a lot. We have learnt a lot about them too. Our student is more confident now and makes us feel good. We talk about what we can tell our student next week when she visits.

Our student has taught us to play cards (UNO). She always wants to win, but we have taught her to lose and to share.

It makes us feel good to help our student. We are not capable of doing much else.

When it was my birthday (93), the children brought me a cake and we played 'pass the parcel'. It was a lovely surprise.

When I had a fall and broke my arm, my student brought along a plastic ring to make me feel better and I wear it each week for her. She often brings along flowers from her garden for us.

My student is getting a little better with his reading. He was very shy when he first came but is talking much more now.

I have enjoyed all the birthday celebrations and am happy to keep on helping the South students as it gives me something to look forward to each week. We all had a wonderful time at McDonalds – my first time. We feel part of the school community and are made very welcome at school functions such as the school Fashion Parade.

My student is a darling little boy. He is very talkative now and likes to read to me and is getting much better. I really look forward to Tuesdays when the students come. I love books and want to give the students a love of books too.

My student has asked me to go to his place for a cup of tea. When I met his mum at South School, she also invited me to their place.

My student has brought me a lot of love and joy to my life. He always blows me a kiss when he is leaving. I feel so special.

I have taken a liking to my student and we have become very good friends. She wrote in a card "You are the world to me" and that I am "the greatest friend ever" and it brought tears to my eyes when I read that.



Awards for Excellence
in Schools

My student is more confident now and not as uptight as when she first visited. I am very impressed with her writing and she often writes to me in between her weekly visits.

We are surrounded by aged people here and the South students are like a breath of fresh air – they give us a boost.

My student is very eager to read and is now reading with more personality. I feel that my student really cares about me and I am very happy to help her with her reading.

We get a lot of satisfaction that at the end of the session, we have achieved something together with our students.

When my student gets to a word that he doesn't know, he'll have a try at it and then he looks up at me to help. It makes me feel valued to help him. He has picked up lots of little words which will help him. He wants to read more now than when he first started.

I help my student with his behaviour. We talk about that fighting is not good. He is very excited about playing football for his school and wants to be a champion "Bronco" player one day.

We have been reading environmental signs that will help the boys when they get older.

I have all of their photos and newspaper clippings on a photo board in my room.