

**STRESSES AMONGST PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS WITH LEARNING PROBLEMS IN  
INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS IN AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL**

by

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that **STRESSES AMONGST PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS WITH LEARNING PROBLEMS IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS IN AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL** is my own work and that all sources that I have been used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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**Signature**

(Ms VA Kirchner)

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**Date**

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## **SUMMARY**

This study examines stresses experienced by primary school learners with learning problems in inclusive classrooms in an Independent School. Literature suggests that learners with learning problems experience more academic, emotional and social difficulties at school than do their peers without learning problems. The Transactional Model of stress was used as a point of departure for the qualitative empirical study to understand stress as it is experienced by three Grade 4 learners. Several school stresses were identified which contributed to unmet emotional and social needs. The three central sources of stress were classified as S1 (Inability to meet perceived/anticipated demand), S2 (Overload – too much expected) and S3 (Self-expectations not met). The learners' own suggestions regarding the relief of these stresses were examined and contributed to guidelines to assist teachers in relieving these stresses experienced by learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom.

## **KEY TERMS**

Learning problems; Stresses; Childhood stress; Transactional Model of stress; School related stress; Inclusive classroom; Independent school; Guidelines to relieve school related stress



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

<b>1.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	1
1.1.1	The medical deficit model of learning problems	2
1.1.2	The social model of learning problems	2
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Initial awareness of problem</b>	5
1.2.1	Awareness of problem	5
1.2.2	Exploration of problems	6
1.2.2.1	Stress models representing the theoretical framework	6
1.2.2.2	Childhood stress	7
1.2.2.3	School related stress	8
1.2.2.4	Stress and learning problems	8
1.2.2.5	Inclusion and learning problems	9
1.2.3	The need for this research	10
<b>1.3</b>	<b>Delimitation of study</b>	10
<b>1.4</b>	<b>Statement of the problem</b>	11
<b>1.5</b>	<b>Aims of the study</b>	11
1.5.1	Primary aims	11
1.5.2	Specific aims	12
1.5.2.1	to answer the following research questions	12
1.5.2.2	to conduct a literature study	12
1.5.2.3	to conduct an empirical study	12
<b>1.6</b>	<b>Clarification of concepts</b>	12
1.6.1	Learning problems	12
1.6.2	Stresses	13
1.6.3	Inclusive classroom	14

1.6.4	Independent school	14
1.6.5	Teachers and educators	15
<b>1.7</b>	<b>Research methodology and design</b>	<b>15</b>
1.7.1	Literature study	15
1.7.2	Empirical study	15
<b>1.8</b>	<b>Plan of study</b>	<b>16</b>
1.8.1	Chapter 2	16
1.8.2	Chapter 3	16
1.8.3	Chapter 4	16
1.8.4	Chapter 5	16
<b>1.9</b>	<b>In conclusion</b>	<b>17</b>

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE STUDY

<b>2.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Needs of primary school children</b>	<b>18</b>
2.2.1	Physical needs	19
2.2.2	Social needs	19
2.2.3	Emotional needs	19
2.2.4	Intellectual needs	19
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Inclusive education in South Africa</b>	<b>20</b>
2.3.1	The inclusive classroom	20
2.3.2	Inclusion in Independent Schools in South Africa	21
2.3.3	Inclusive practices in Independent Schools	21
2.3.4	Inclusive strategies	22
<b>2.4</b>	<b>Stress</b>	<b>23</b>
2.4.1	History of the term stress	25
		26

2.4.2	Types of stress	27
<b>2.5</b>	<b>Childhood stress</b>	28
<b>2.6</b>	<b>School related stress</b>	31
<b>2.7</b>	<b>Signs and symptoms of stress</b>	32
2.7.1	Signs and symptoms of stress in Primary School Children	33
<b>2.8</b>	<b>Models for understanding stress</b>	34
2.8.1	General Adaptation Syndrome	34
2.8.2	Life Change Model	36
2.8.3	Transactional Model	36
<b>2.9</b>	<b>Learning Problems</b>	38
<b>2.10</b>	<b>Learning Problems and Stress</b>	39
2.10.1	Learning Problems and social interaction	40
2.10.2	Learning Problems and emotions	42
2.10.2.1	Characteristics of emotional problems	43
<b>2.11</b>	<b>In conclusion</b>	46

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

<b>3.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	47
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Purpose of research</b>	47
3.2.1	Research questions	47
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Nature of empirical study</b>	48
3.3.1	Data collection plan	49
3.3.1.1	Stages of data collection	49
3.3.1.2	Sources of data	49
3.3.1.3	Number of data sources to be accessed	49
3.3.1.4	Location of data collection	49
3.3.1.5	Frequency of data collection	50



3.3.2	Selection of sample	50
3.3.3	Data collection instruments	52
3.3.3.1	Interviews	52
3.3.3.2	Observations	53
3.3.3.3	Drawings	53
3.3.4	Processing, analysing and interpretation of data	57
3.3.4.1	Content categories and codes	58
3.3.4.2	Data display	58
3.3.4.3	Intercoder reliability	58
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Ethics</b>	<b>58</b>
3.4.1	Participant selection	59
3.4.2	Informed consent	59
3.4.3	Confidentiality	59
3.4.4	Prevention of adverse consequence	60
3.4.5	Other ethical considerations	60
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Trustworthiness</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>3.6</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>61</b>

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EMPIRICAL STUDY**

<b>4.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Learner participants in this study</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Parent participants in this study</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Stress and learning problems</b>	<b>64</b>
4.4.1	Stress symptoms as rated by teachers and parents	64
<b>4.5</b>	<b>Data collection for this research</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>4.6</b>	<b>Discussion of findings relating to Child 1(MC) and Parent 1(P1)</b>	<b>67</b>
4.6.1	Interview with P1	67

4.6.2 Interview with MC	68
4.6.2.1 Theme 1 - Sources of enjoyment at school	69
4.6.2.2 Theme 2 – Challenges at school	70
4.6.2.3 Theme 3 – Stresses at school	71
4.6.2.4 Theme 4 – Coping with challenges and stresses at school	72
4.6.3 MC’s DAP – observations and overall impressions	74
4.6.4 Kinetic School Drawing done by MC	76
4.6.5 MC’s three wishes	78
4.6.6 Summary of possible school stresses for MC	78
<b>4.7 Discussion of findings relating to Child 2 (ES) and Parent 2 (P2)</b>	<b>79</b>
4.7.1 Interview with P2	79
4.7.2 Interview with ES	80
4.7.2.1 Theme 1 – Sources of enjoyment at school	81
4.7.2.2 Theme 2 – Challenges at school	82
4.7.2.3 Theme 3 – Stresses at school	83
4.7.2.4 Theme 4 – Coping with challenges at school	85
4.7.3 ES’s DAP - observations and overall impressions	86
4.7.4 Kinetic School Drawing done by ES	88
4.7.5 ES’s three wishes	90
4.7.6 Summary of possible school stresses for ES	90
<b>4.8 Discussion of findings relating to Child 3 (MR) and Parent 3 (P3)</b>	<b>91</b>
4.8.1 Interview with P3	91
4.8.2 Interview with MR	92
4.8.2.1 Theme 1 – Sources of enjoyment at school	92
4.8.2.2 Theme 2 – Challenges at school	93
4.8.2.3 Theme 3 – Stresses at school	93
4.8.2.4 Theme 4 – Coping with challenges at school	95

4.8.3 MR's DAP- observations and overall summary	96
4.8.4 Kinetic School Drawing done by MR	98
4.8.5 MR's three wishes	100
4.8.6 Summary of possible school stresses for MR	100
<b>4.9 Conclusion</b>	<b>101</b>

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, GUIDELINES AND CONCLUSION**

<b>5.1 Introduction</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>5.2 Purpose of this research</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>5.3 Findings with regard to the literature study</b>	<b>103</b>
5.3.1 Inclusive education	103
5.3.2 Needs of primary school learners	103
5.3.3 Stress	103
5.3.4 Learning difficulties	104
5.3.5 Potential sources of stress for learners with learning difficulties	105
<b>5.4 Findings with regard to the empirical study</b>	<b>105</b>
5.4.1 Summary of findings for MC	106
5.4.2 Summary of findings for ES	107
5.4.3 Summary of findings for MR	108
<b>5.5 Formulation of proposed guidelines for teachers</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>5.6 Summary of all identified learner participants' school stresses</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>5.7 Stresses identified and guidelines for teachers</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>5.8 Limitations of this study</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>5.9 Recommendations and possibilities for research</b>	<b>118</b>

<b>5.10 Conclusion</b>	119
<b>References</b>	120
<b>APPENDIX A</b>	127
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	130
<b>APPENDIX C</b>	132
<b>APPENDIX D</b>	133
<b>APPENDIX E</b>	134
<b>APPENDIX F</b>	136
<b>APPENDIX G</b>	138

## **INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS**

**CHILD 1 (C1) - Transcript 1**

**CHILD 2 (C2) - Transcript 2**

**CHILD 3 (C3) – Transcript 3**

**PARENT 1 (P1) - Transcript 4**

**PARENT 2 (P2) - Transcript 5**

**PARENT 3 (P3) – Transcript 6**

**LIST OF FIGURES**

<b>FIGURE 1.1: Ecosystemic Model Layout</b>	11
<b>FIGURE 2.1: Barriers to learning found in ISASA schools</b>	21
<b>FIGURE 2.2: The effects of short-term and long-term stress</b>	26
<b>FIGURE 2.3: Phases of General Adaptation Syndrome</b>	35
<b>FIGURE 2.4: Loneliness as experienced by primary school learners</b>	40
<b>FIGURE 2.5: Summary of emotional problems</b>	44
<b>FIGURE 4.1: Draw-A-Person by MC</b>	74
<b>FIGURE 4.2: Kinetic School Drawing by MC</b>	76
<b>FIGURE 4.3: Draw-A-Person by ES</b>	86
<b>FIGURE 4.4: Kinetics School Drawing by ES</b>	88
<b>FIGURE 4.5: Draw-A-Person by MR</b>	96
<b>FIGURE 4.6: Kinetic School Drawing by MR</b>	98
<b>FIGURE 5.1: Summary of findings for MC</b>	106
<b>FIGURE 5.2: Summary of findings for ES</b>	107
<b>FIGURE 5.3: Summary of findings for MR</b>	108

**LIST OF TABLES**

<b>TABLE 2.1: The Transactional Model of Stress</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>TABLE 2.2: Summary of stress models</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>TABLE 2.3: Characteristics of learners with learning problems</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>TABLE 2.4: Potential social stress factors for learners</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>TABLE 2.5: Potential emotional stress factors for learners</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>TABLE 3.1: Emotional indicators in Human Figure Drawings for children</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>TABLE 3.2: Picture variables for the Kinetic School Drawing</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>TABLE 4.1: Scores obtained from the Checklist for Stress Symptoms</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>TABLE 4.2: Emotional indicators from learner participants' DAPs</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>TABLE 4.3: Themes and sub-themes for MC</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>TABLE 4.4: DAP analysis for MC</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>TABLE 4.5: Analysis of KSD for MC</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>TABLE 4.6: MC'S three wishes</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>TABLE 4.7: Possible school stresses for MC</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>TABLE 4.8: Themes and sub-themes for ES</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>TABLE 4.9: DAP analysis for ES</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>TABLE 4.10: KSD analysis for ES</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>TABLE 4.11: ES's three wishes</b>	<b>90</b>

<b>TABLE 4.12: Possible school stresses for ES</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>TABLE 4.13: Themes and sub-themes for MR</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>TABLE 4.14: DAP analysis for MR</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>TABLE 4.15: KSD analysis for MR</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>TABLE 4.16: MR's three wishes</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>TABLE 4.17: Summary of possible school stresses for MR</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>TABLE 5.1: Different theorists' explanations of stress</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>TABLE 5.2 – Combined summary</b>	<b>109</b>

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION, STATEMENT OF PROBLEM, AIM OF THE STUDY AND CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the stresses experienced by primary school learners with learning problems in inclusive classrooms in an independent school. In order to contextualise the study, I have provided an explanation of the education scenario and related concepts.

Inclusive education is currently a worldwide phenomenon (Swart & Pettipher 2007:3). In the Republic of South Africa, the key concepts, strategies and our national approach to inclusive education were summarised and explained in the Department of Education White Paper 6, Special Needs Education (2001:6-7). In this document, inclusive education and training were characterised as follows:

- acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support;
- enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners;
- acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases;
- broader than formal schooling and acknowledging that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal settings and structures;
- changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and the environment to meet the needs of all learners;
- maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning.

The underlying ideology of inclusive education is based on human dignity, equality for all and the advancement of human rights. These values are a reflection of our South African Constitution, Act 108 of 1996. Ideally, in the inclusive classroom, differences between learners should be respected and all learners should receive the required support to enable them to learn optimally. The focus is on overcoming barriers in the system, as opposed to overcoming barriers in the learner (Department of Education 2001).



The above highlights a paradigm shift from the medical deficit model to the social model of disabilities and learning problems, two models of disabilities and learning problems that will be discussed in the next section.

### **1.1.1 The medical deficit model of learning problems**

Traditionally the medical deficit model, popular from the early 1900s, has been used when working with children with learning problems. In essence, this model takes the view that the learning problem 'belongs' to the individual. The emphasis is thus placed on the individual and his/her weaknesses, needs and deficits. In a school situation, this would imply that the learner with learning problems is viewed as someone with intrinsic deficits and invariably the focus is on these. These intrinsic causes of learning problems could be genetic, teratogenic (abnormal physiological development) or medical in nature.

The most important consequence of this model is that by bringing the person's difficulties into the foreground, there is the risk of pushing the person into the background (Swart & Pettipher 2007:6).

### **1.1.2 The social model of learning problems**

The social model regards the deficit or problem as something outside the individual, in the environment or the way in which society deals with the individual. The individual is thus in the foreground.

In this study, a combination of the social model and the medical deficit model will be used to examine the stresses that learners with learning problems experience in the inclusive classroom in an independent school. It is important to take cognisance of the fact that researchers do not all view the medical deficit model and the social model as mutually exclusive. According to Swart and Pettipher (2007:6), the medical deficit model still has a place in education, although not as a single philosophy. "Traces of the medical model are still evident in educational and psychological policy, practice and attitudes today. However, medical information cannot be ignored completely and is still necessary as the current conceptualisation of a person's functioning and disability is conceived of as a *dynamic interaction between biological, individual and social perspective*" (Swart & Pettipher 2007:6).

The change from the medical deficit model to the social model requires a shift in attitudes, values and beliefs, for educators in particular. By implication, educators have to accommodate learners experiencing learning problems in the inclusive classroom. This requires that educators acquire the necessary knowledge and skills about children with learning problems and how to give these children the necessary support. In my experience, this is not an easy task. It also means that a new framework for assessing, identifying and supporting learners in the inclusive classroom is needed. The National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS)

documents of 2005 and 2008, addressed this need for giving educators and schools a conceptual framework and guidelines for inclusive learning programmes. These documents outlined guidelines for supporting and developing inclusive classrooms.

In keeping with the above mentioned transformational shift from the medical deficit model to the social model, the SIAS document outlined the following (Department of Education 2008a:5-6):

“Support should no longer focus on ‘deficits’ that have been ‘diagnosed’ in individual learners, who are assumed to be in need of ‘remediation’ through individual attention by specialist staff. Support includes all activities in a school which increase its capacity to respond to diversity. Providing support to individuals is only one way of making learning contexts and lessons accessible to all learners. Support also takes place when schools review their culture, policies and practices in terms of the extent to which they meet individual educator, parent and learner needs. Support takes place when educators plan lessons in such a way that they accommodate all learners. Support, then, must focus broadly on the learning and teaching process by identifying and addressing learner, educator and institutional needs. Though the major responsibility for coordinating support may rest with a limited number of people, all staff need to be involved in support activities.”

Educators are thus key to the success of inclusion. According to Swart and Pettipher (2007:15-20) educators also need to acquire additional skills, a conceptual framework and language as well as a set of instructional and technical skills so as to enable them to work with the needs of diverse learners. Downing (2002:11) states that the knowledge, competencies and skills required for inclusive education are markedly different and require additional training and support for educators. It thus becomes clear that the change from the previous system of education to an inclusive education system requires change and adaptability on the part of the educator. Some educators in South Africa have found the transition to inclusive education challenging and feel that they are ill equipped to deal with changes brought about by accommodating the diversity of learners in their classrooms (Eloff & Kgwete 2007:253-254).

Many current definitions of learning problems still have their roots in the medical deficit model and view that learning problems are largely as a result of intrinsic problems within the individual, usually a neurological disorder (Dednam 2007:365; Lerner & Kline 2006:8-10). Thus it follows that many of the general characteristics of learners with learning difficulties will be in line with the medical deficit model.

According to Dednam (2007:366-367), general characteristics of learners with learning problems can be summarised as follows:

- Significant discrepancies between these learners’ potential and academic achievements;
- They may have a history of language development delays;

- Limited vocabulary and possible difficulties with articulation and expressive language.
- May be over reliant on peers and educators for assistance with work.
- Poor memory.
- Poor fine and gross motor coordination as well as poor spatial orientation often leading to untidy written work and directional problems with reading and writing.
- Their pace of work is slow and they struggle to complete tasks timeously.
- They are easily distracted and have a short concentration span.
- They tend to have poor organisational skills.
- They have problems with sequencing resulting in incorrect reading and writing.
- They may have visual and/or auditory perceptual problems resulting in difficulties with reading and writing.
- Their integration of sensory information is poor and they experience problems with letter-sound association.
- They avoid activities that expect them to give lengthy visual or auditory attention.
- They may overreact to noises.
- Due to emotional problems caused by failure and poor social perception their motivation and attention are poor. This further aggravates their failure in their schoolwork.

All learners with learning problems do not manifest all these characteristics. Some learners manifest more than others and the intensity and combination of areas of difficulty are unique to each learner.

Social difficulties often accompany learning problems and children with learning problems may also be lonely, rejected by their peers and victimised (Dednam 2007:367).

The above cited list of general characteristics of learners with leaning problems gives a good indication of the challenges faced by these learners and their teachers in the inclusive classroom.

According to the Erikson's Ego Psychological Theory, children between the ages of six and twelve years are at the developmental stage of industry versus inferiority. These ages correspond to the ages of the children used in this study. During this stage, a child develops a sense of industry. In a modern technological society, formal schooling, directed at the acquisition of the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics, creates opportunities for learning and co-operation. The danger at this stage of development is that a child may fail to acquire the necessary skills and tools of their particular culture. This could result in the child developing feelings of inferiority (Meyer 1997:218)

Upon examining the characteristics of the child with learning problems and taking their academic vulnerabilities, possible social difficulties and the potential emotional problems caused by failure into account, it seems likely that children with learning problems may develop a sense of inferiority or inadequacy during this developmental stage. A sense of inferiority or inadequacy developed

through repeated failure may result in poor self concept and other emotional difficulties such as anxiety and/or depression (Lerner & Kline 2006:517-530). According to Mwamwenda (2004:310), learners with a poor self-concept tend to demonstrate the following tendencies in a learning/academic situation:

- less originality and less initiative
- feelings of worthlessness
- do not persist in problem-solving
- reduce their efforts and give up easily

From the above discussion, it appears that children with learning problems may be more likely than their peers to experience emotional and social difficulties in the school environment.

## **1.2 INITIAL AWARENESS OF PROBLEM**

### **1.2.1 Awareness of problem**

My awareness of the problem arose as a result of personal experience, both in my family situation as well as my work experience.

I have a son, currently aged 16, who was diagnosed as dyslexic in his pre-school years. Although I do not question the accuracy of his diagnosis, except that it was premature, I have since learned to question this early “medical deficit” labelling of children. My son embarked on a long path of interventions in the form of occupational therapy, speech therapy, remedial teaching and individual in-class facilitation. These interventions took place both at school and outside school. He began Grade 1 at the age of 7 years, after spending an additional year in the reception year. From his Grade 1 year onwards he was placed in an inclusive classroom in an Independent School.

He was often stressed and nervous when he had to work as part of a group or had to present information. It was also difficult for him to read aloud in front of others and he needed extra support and assistance when completing written tasks. He required extra time to complete tasks and developed anxiety before and during tests and exams, which further hampered his scholastic performance and results. During his early schooling years (Grade1-Grade 3) he often complained of stomach aches and headaches. In the evenings he found it difficult to fall asleep and was often tearful. He often expressed that he was ‘stupid’ and that the other children in class were all doing better than him. In my observation, he spent much time comparing himself to his peers and evaluating himself as falling short academically.

Socially, he was labelled 'the boy who could not read or write properly' and although he was not often a favourite choice as an academic partner, he was, fortunately, talented on the sports field and this helped him to integrate socially. From Grade 4 to Grade 7, he had an in-class facilitator to assist him with the various academic tasks. Although this helped him enormously academically, it further entrenched his feelings of being 'different' from his peers. On many occasions I thought that I may be doing him a disservice by keeping him in the school and an inclusive environment.

His teachers, although understanding and supportive, did not always know how to cope with his difficulties. By and large, they expected him to simply do what the other children did and few adaptations were made to the curriculum to attend to his needs. This resulted in him experiencing failure, more often than not. Although the school did accept learners with diverse needs, adequate knowledge and other practicalities to accommodate these learners successfully, were not in place.

In my working experience as a learning support teacher and classroom teacher, I have seen that although it is possible for children with learning problems to succeed in the inclusive classroom, it is often a difficult journey. I observed symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches and sometimes avoidance behaviours such as paying frequent visits to the bathroom or becoming the class 'clown.'

It is my experience that these children often develop a poor identity regarding their academic performance, a poor self-esteem and are frequently labelled negatively by both their peers and educators.

These experiences lead me to actively investigate the stresses children with learning problems experience in the inclusive classroom.

### **1.2.2 Exploration of problem**

It is generally recognised that stress is a universal phenomenon, prevalent in adults, adolescents and children (Lewis 2009). As such, stress and the negative effects thereof have been well documented. Sources of childhood stress may be societal, familial or school related in nature. School-related stress will be the focus of this study, particularly the stresses amongst primary school learners with learning problems.

#### **1.2.2.1 Stress models representing the theoretical framework**

Various stress models will be discussed in Chapter 2. These models include the General Adaptation Syndrome Model of Hans Selye, the Life Change Model of Holmes and Rahe, and the Transactional Model of Richard Lazarus (Lewis 2003; Wiechers 1994).

### 1.2.2.2 Childhood stress

Stress is no longer an exclusively adult phenomenon and in recent years research has paid more attention to childhood stress. Humphrey (1993:17) states that children of all ages are likely to encounter a considerable amount of stress. He believes that the experience of stress begins at birth and possibly even before birth. Adults often fail to recognise stress in children (Humphrey 1993:18) and it is therefore of utmost importance for parents and educators to be able to recognise, identify and evaluate childhood stress (Romer 1993:1-19).

Stress brings with it certain benefits as well as long term negative effects on general health and emotional well-being. "Stress is an inevitable part of life. Human beings experience stress early, even before they are born. A certain amount of stress is normal and necessary for survival. Stress helps children develop the skills they need to cope with and adapt to new and potentially threatening situations throughout life. Support from parents and/or other concerned caregivers is necessary for children to learn how to respond to stress in a physically and emotionally healthy manner. The beneficial aspects of stress diminish when it is severe enough to overwhelm a child's ability to cope effectively. Intensive and prolonged stress can lead to a variety of short- and long-term negative health effects. It can disrupt early brain development and compromise functioning of the nervous and immune systems. In addition, childhood stress can lead to health problems later in life including alcoholism, depression, eating disorders, heart disease, cancer, and other chronic diseases" (Middlebrooks & Audage 2007:2).

Due to the afore-mentioned negative implications of stress in children, several researchers have developed school-based stress prevention programmes to address stress and coping in children. These programmes are deemed necessary due to the high prevalence of stress in children and the relationship between stress, health complaints and pathology (Kraag, Van Breukelen, & Kok 2009; Lewis 2009; Middlebrooks & Audage 2007:3; Lewis 2003:3). None of these above cited stress prevention programmes are aimed specifically at children with learning problems, but rather at the general school population.

Stress in young children is often seen as an overt physical reaction. This may be in the form of crying, self-comforting behaviours, sweating palms, aggressive or defensive outbursts sleep disturbances, headaches, stomach aches and nervous fine-motor behaviours (Marion 2003:56-70).

In older children (aged 11 and 12) several psychosomatic symptoms in young adolescence in Israel were studied by Knishkowsky, Palti, Tima, Adler and Gofin (1995:352). This study revealed that the most common psychosomatic complaints reported amongst the students were headaches and abdominal pain (20% of the students reported these symptoms). Similar findings were found in British and Swedish studies. Several investigators have related these symptoms to stressful life events and psychological distress (Knishkowsky et al. 1995:354).

### **1.2.2.3 School related stress**

According to Chandler (1997:2) in modern times, school has become such a large part of children's lives and therefore the school is a highly significant factor in children's life-stress situation. Chandler believes that schools need to focus on creating a secure, stable and structured environment for all children and that the focus of all schools should be on giving a sound academic programme. In doing so, stable, safe environments will be created in which children can learn and develop academically and emotionally.

In a report on School Related Stress, presented at the Annual Conference of the American Educational Research Association in April 1996, the following points emerged:

- Stress is a significant problem for children and this may impact their physical and emotional health as well as their academic performance.
- Phillips (in Helms 1996) identified two major categories of school related stress:
  - (a) Mastery of academic subject matter and evaluation of performance.
  - (b) Relationships with peers and teachers and participation in classroom activities.
- School makes up a significant part of a child's life and provides a context in which demands for academic performance, social relationships and acceptance are placed on children. They are constantly being evaluated by their teachers, parents and peers.
- Children with disabilities (including learning problems) may experience greater stress at school whilst having fewer strategies to deal with stress (Helms 1996:1-2).

From above discussion, it becomes apparent that children with learning problems are likely to experience higher levels of school related stress than their peers without learning problems.

### **1.2.2.4 Stress and learning problems**

As already mentioned above, children with learning problems, are more likely to experience higher stress at school than their peers without learning problems. According to Helms (1996:13) the specific areas in which children with learning problems experience higher school related stress are teacher interaction and peer interaction.

Children with learning problems tend to have a lower status amongst their peers in the classroom and have a lower peer-nominated popularity rating. They are also less likely to be chosen by peers as a best friend (Estell, Jones, Van Acker, & Rodkin 2008:11). This may result in children with learning problems experiencing higher rates of social isolation than their peers. As discussed earlier, children of primary school age are, according to Eric Erikson, at the developmental stage of industry versus inferiority. The danger at this stage of development is that a child may fail to acquire

the necessary skills and tools of their particular culture. Relating this to the child's social context, social isolation and/or lack of popularity may result in feelings of inferiority developing in the child.

Abrams in Gorman (1999:1) broadens the spectrum of potential problems: "The vast majority of children with learning disabilities have some emotional problems associated with the learning difficulty." Learning problems may lead to emotional distress, low academic self concept, anxiety, depression, ineffective social behaviour and physical ailments or complaints.

Elevated levels of absenteeism have been reported in American schools for learners receiving special education services, especially learners with learning disabilities. Attendance problems are currently viewed as a reflection of the learners' underlying difficulties in academic or socio-emotional functioning (Redmond & Hosp 2008:2-8). Given the relationship between stress and physical illness, this increase in absenteeism could be related to stress related illness or symptoms.

Children with learning problems are at risk of having one or more related disorders which might add to their stress levels. These related disorders include other brain processing disorders, attention-deficit hyperactive disorder, problems with emotional regulation (anxiety, depression, and anger control), tic disorders and bipolar disorder (Silver 2007:1-4). Children with learning problems may be more vulnerable to developing depression due to failure in achievement tasks (Sideridis 2007:526; Maag & Reid 2006:7).

#### **1.2.2.5 Inclusion and learning problems**

Inclusion is a complex process, influenced by many factors. It is no simple matter and many factors need to be taken into account when placing a child with learning problems.

In the South African context, a study conducted by Eloff & Kgwete (2007:353-354) examined inclusion in South African schools and teachers' perceptions of inclusion. Three themes regarding teachers' perspectives on support for inclusive education were identified. These themes centred around:

- perceived lack of skills and competence in dealing with learners with learning problems and other disabilities;
- large class size
- Insufficient resources

Some researchers believe that inclusion of children with learning problems and other disabilities may not receive the required levels of support in the inclusive classroom or may even be at a greater disadvantage by being placed in inclusive classrooms (Klingner & Vaughn 1999:23; Shanker 1995:18).

#### **1.2.3 The need for this research**



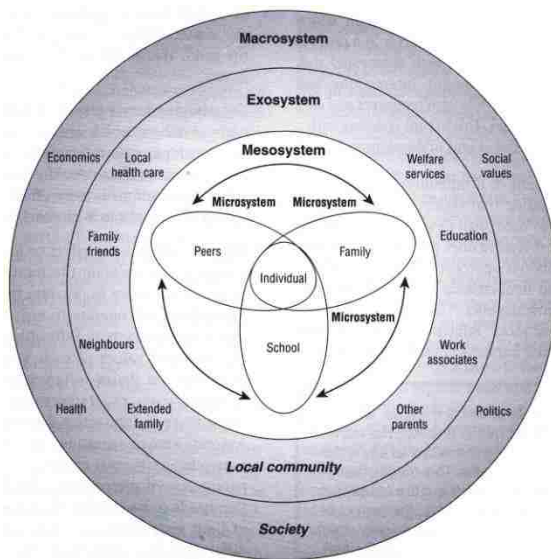
Although much research has been done on inclusion and the advantages and disadvantages thereof, particularly in the first world countries, there seems to be little research in South Africa on how inclusion impacts on children with learning problems. The research in South Africa, to date, appears to focus on the implementation of inclusion in South African schools and the impact it has had on teachers.

A South African study into inclusive education in 2007, identified challenges teachers were experiencing in the implementation of inclusive education in the classroom. The most common theme that emerged from this investigation was that the educators perceived that they were not adequately skilled or trained to deal with the diversity of learners in their classrooms. These educators felt that they were failing to meet the needs of all their students. This finding was also observed by the researchers' observations during visits to the classrooms (Eloff & Kgwete 2007:351-355). In my work, as the head of the Learner Support Unit at my present school, educators have expressed similar concerns and feel overwhelmed, at times, by having children with learning problems in their classes. They do not feel as if they are sufficiently trained or skilled to serve the best interests of some of these children. This study aims to provide guidelines for teachers to assist teachers to relieve stresses experience by learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom.

Further, the researcher could find no research on learners with learning problems or stresses that they experience in inclusive classrooms in Independent Schools in South Africa.

### **1.3 DELIMITATION OF STUDY**

According to the bio-ecological model of Urie Bronfenbrenner, child development takes place through processes of progressively more complex interaction between an active child and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. His model of the ecology of human development acknowledges that humans don't develop in isolation, but in relation to their family and home, school, community and society. Each of these ever-changing and multilevel environments, as well as interactions among these environments, is key to development (Swart & Pettipher 2007:9). This is illustrated in figure 1.1 below. This figure demonstrates schematically the interaction and interrelationships between the individual and the multiple other systems that are connected to the individual.

**FIGURE 1.1: Ecosystemic Model Layout** (Swart & Pettipher 2007:11)

I acknowledge that, in accordance with the above, stress can not necessarily be contained in one subsystem and that stress is not caused by any one factor in isolation, but rather by a combination of factors and interactions. However, for the purposes of this study of limited scope, the focus will be school related stress.

For the purpose of this study, research will be limited to primary school children who:

- have been identified as children with learning problems;
- are in inclusive classrooms;
- attend a private, independent school in the Western Cape;
- speak English as a first language;
- are in Grade 3 and Grade 4 in 2010;
- are between the ages of eight years and ten years.

#### 1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- What stresses do primary school learners with learning problems experience in inclusive classrooms in an independent school?
- What guidelines can be proposed to assist to relieve these stresses experienced by learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom?

#### 1.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY

##### 1.5.1 Primary aims

- To determine stresses that primary school learners with learning problems experience in inclusive classrooms in an independent school.
- To formulate guidelines to assist teachers to relieve these stresses experience by learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom.

##### 1.5.2 Specific aims

In order to achieve the primary aim, the research has the following specific aims:

### **1.5.2.1 to answer the following research questions**

- a. What stresses do primary school learners with learning problems experience?
- b. What stresses do primary school learners with learning problems experience in the inclusive classroom?
- c. What guidelines can be proposed to relieve these stresses?

### **1.5.2.2 to conduct a literature study**

A wide literature study will be conducted to gain background knowledge on school related stress in primary school learners. Particular focus will be placed on school related stresses experienced by learners with learning problems in inclusive classrooms, as well as manifestations of stress in primary school aged children. The literature study will provide insight into the above research questions and place the present study within the framework of both the social model of learning problems and, to some extent, the medical deficit model of learning problems as discussed above in sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2.

### **1.5.2.3 to conduct an empirical study**

The methodological orientation of this study is qualitative in nature. The focus of qualitative research is to access the subjective experience of the participants. A checklist regarding manifestations of stress in children with learning problems will be compiled from the literature study. This checklist is to be completed by the relevant class teachers and the parents of participant learners.

Thereafter, data will be collected through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with the learners, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with a parent or parents of the/a learner/s. The learners will be asked to complete a Kinetic School Drawing as well as a Draw a Person drawing and a summary of stress indicators gathered from these drawings. The data will then be analysed using qualitative methodology.

## **1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

### **1.6.1 Learning problems**

There is much debate regarding a definition of learning problems. This is due to the fact that several models of learning problems exist.

As discussed above, the deficit-based model views learning problems as originating within the individual whereas the social model view regards the deficit or problem as being outside the

individual and as lying in the environment or the way in which society deals with the individual. Both of these views of learning problems have relevance to this study.

The term learning problems can be defined as follows: “Learning problems can be described as a general term which refers to a heterogeneous group of neurological disorders in the basic psychological processes of the brain and which manifest in difficulties with language (speaking, reading and writing) and/or mathematical calculations” (Dednam 2007:363).

According to the text revised fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV-TR), “A learning problem can be diagnosed when the individuals achievement on individually administered, standardised tests in reading, mathematics or written expression is substantially below the expected for the age, schooling and level of intelligence” (DSM-IV-TR 2000:49). This definition is broad as it is non-specific regarding the origin of the individuals learning problems. The problems have could arise from interrelated intrinsic, extrinsic, curriculum, systemic and social factors which impact on learners.

In the context of this study, the selection of participant learners “experience difficulties despite the fact that they have good teachers, a positive home circumstances and a stimulating environment” (Dednam 2007:363). The term ‘selection of participants’ was chosen as it seems to be a better description of the qualitative process whereas “sampling” seems more appropriate to a more positivistic methodology (Mertens, 2005:237-239).

These learners have difficulties with language (speaking, reading and writing) and/or mathematical calculations. The social contexts of the learners will be taken into account.

### **1.6.2 Stresses**

According to Humphrey (1993), childhood stress has reached pandemic proportions. It was revealed in a survey of more that 4000 primary school learners in Kansas, that almost half of these learners experienced severe stress behaviours. These behaviours included headaches, insomnia, nail biting, worry about school performance, stomach aches and short tempers. Humphrey defines stress in the following way: “Stress can be considered as any factor acting internally or externally that makes it difficult to adapt and that induces increased effort on the person to maintain a state of balance within himself or herself and the external environment” (Humphrey 1993:v).

Stress may take various forms. For the purpose of this study, the following types of stress will be mentioned:

- Stress may result from a perceived or anticipated demand which a person feels she/he will be unable to meet. (e.g. When a learner doubts his/her ability to pass a test)
- Stress may take the form of ‘overload’ in that too much is expected. (E.g. when a learner is unable to keep up with his/her peers in his/her learning due to learning problems.)

- Stress may occur when a person's expectations regarding an important area of his/her life are not met by the reality of the experience. (E.g. A child who has been looking forward to starting school and then really struggles with the demands of school work.)

### **1.6.3 Inclusive classroom**

An inclusive classroom is one in which all learners are supported so that a full range of learning needs may be met. The focus is on overcoming barriers to learning and on the adaptation of the support systems available in the classroom. The educator's role in an inclusive assessment is crucial. What is really required is a conceptual understanding of inclusion and the diverse needs of learners, including those with disabilities. Learning programmes and materials as well as assessment procedures must be made accessible to all learners, and must accommodate the diversity of learning needs in order to facilitate learners' achievement to the fullest. Barriers to learning could arise from interrelated intrinsic, extrinsic, curriculum, systemic and social factors which impact on learners (Department of Education 2008b).

### **1.6.4 Independent school**

The South African Schools Act of 1996 established a national schooling system and recognised that there are two different categories of schools. These are public schools which are state controlled and independent schools which are privately governed. All private schools in South Africa fall into the category independent schools (Independent Schools Association of South Africa 1996).

The Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa (ISASA) is the largest association of independent schools in South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, Angola and Mozambique (ISASA 2002).

The South African Schools Act of 1996 recognised only two categories of schools: public and independent. Public schools are state controlled and independent schools are privately funded and governed. Independent schools' right to exist is further confirmed in terms of Section 29 of the South African Constitution provided they register with the state, do not discriminate on the basis of race, and maintain standards not inferior to those of comparable public institutions.

Independent schooling has a long history in South Africa as some of the first education institutes in the country were missionary schools. Since the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 dramatic changes have occurred in the independent school sector. In 1990 there were approximately 550 registered independent schools in the country and the dominant public perception of independent schools at that time was "white, affluent and exclusive". Now there are at least 1290 independent schools that serve across the full socio-economic spectrum. The Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa (ISASA) is the largest association of

independent schools in South Africa and it represents more than 460 independent schools in South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, Namibia, Angola and Mozambique (Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa).

According to Lockhart Walton (2006:53) independent schools are encouraged to be inclusive of learners who experience barriers to learning, but are not compelled to do so.

### **1.6.5 Teachers and educators**

In this study, the terms teacher and educator are used interchangeably to refer to a person who teaches in a school.

## **1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

A theoretical investigation will be conducted entailing a literature study of stress in children in learning situations and the manifestations thereof, as well as stresses experienced by children with learning problems.

Furthermore, an empirical investigation of a qualitative nature will be conducted with selected learners with learning problems. This research will be descriptive in nature. There will be no attempt on the researcher's behalf to manipulate or control any variables.

### **1.7.1 Literature study**

In order to achieve the aims of this research, a literature study will be carried out (See 1.2.2 for more details).

### **1.7.2 Empirical study**

In this study, a case study design will be used. Case study designs investigate small, distinct groups and are single site studies (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:36). In the case of this study, the group will all be selected from the same independent school in the Western Cape. The group comprises of four children with learning problems who are in inclusive classes. The aim of the study is to gain insight into the stresses the sample group experience in the inclusive classroom.

The following instruments will be used for data collection:

- A checklist regarding manifestations of stress in children with learning problems, compiled from the literature study. This checklist is to be completed by the relevant class teachers and the parent/s of the participant learners.
- Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with the sample learners.

- Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with a parent or parents of the/a sample learners.
- Kinetic school drawings and a summary of stress indicators gathered from these drawings.
- Draw a Person drawings and a summary of stress indicators gathered from these drawings.
- The Three Wishes for each of the participant learners.

## **1.8 PLAN OF STUDY**

### **1.8.1 Chapter two**

The literature study will focus on school related stresses that primary school children experience as well as stresses experienced by primary school children with learning problems. The manifestations of childhood stresses will also be a focal point.

Attention will also be given to possible methods and interventions which can assist and support these learners with learning problems, so as alleviate some of the stresses.

### **1.8.2 Chapter three**

Chapter three will give details regarding the research design. It will be a qualitative, case study design.

Manifestations of stress in children's drawings and stress indicators of the Draw-a Person test and the Kinetic Family Drawing will be examined.

Detailed information of sampling, data collection and interpretation as well as ethical considerations will be discussed.

### **1.8.3 Chapter four**

The results and findings are discussed in detail.

### **1.8.4 Chapter five**

Chapter five contains conclusions drawn from the research as well as proposed guidelines for teachers.

## **1.9 IN CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this chapter was to outline the direction of this study. According to Lerner and Kline (2006:19) learning problems first become evident when the learner enters school and fails to acquire academic skills. Among the behaviours often seen in the early primary school years are the inability to concentrate, poor motor skills and difficulty in learning to read. Emotional problems also become more of an impediment after several years of failure. For some students, social problems increase in importance at this age level.

The following sources of stress were identified in 1.6.2 above:

- Stress may result from a perceived or anticipated demand which a person feels she/he will be unable to meet. (E.g. When a learner doubts their ability to pass a test)
- Stress may take the form of 'overload' in that too much is expected. (E.g. when a learner is unable to keep up with his/her peers in his/her learning due to learning problems.)
- Stress may occur when a person's expectations regarding an important area of his/her life are not met by the reality of the experience. (E.g. A child who has been looking forward to starting school and then really struggles with the demands of school work.)

Taking into account that stress may result from unmet expectations, "overload" and unmet demands, it is likely that the primary school learner with learning problems will experience higher levels of stress than his/her peers without learning problems. Stress in turn, is a significant problem for children and it may impact their physical and emotional health as well as their academic performance (Helms 1996:1).

The following excerpt serves to illustrate school experiences of a learner with learning problems which could potentially produce stress: (Lerner & Kline 2006:19)

"That day stands out starkly in my memory. I was at the blackboard, carefully printing the words that my first-grade teacher had asked me to write. As I stepped back from my work, the laughter of my classmates told me I'd done something terribly wrong. What was so funny? I was confused by the laughter. "Fred," the teacher admonished, "you wrote all of your e's backwards."

During second grade things became worse. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't grasp simple math – even adding 2 and 3 was difficult. I kept wondering, What's wrong with me?

By third grade my parents became increasingly concerned. I remember my mother plaintively asking, "What'll become of Fred?"

It therefore seems important that teachers have insight and guidelines to assist them to relieve these stresses experienced by learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

By way of introduction, I quote from “A Fable for Teachers” (1974:1) in Lerner and Kline (2006:103).

“Once upon a time the animals decided they must do something educational to help their young meet the problems of the world. A school was organised where they adopted a curriculum consisting of running, climbing and swimming. To make it easier to administer, all of the animals took the same subjects. Of course, the duck was excellent in swimming – in fact, he was better than the instructor; running, however, was a weak area for him. Therefore, he had to stay after school and drop swimming in order to practice running. Now, this was kept up until his webbed feet were badly worn and soon he became only an average swimmer. However, average was an acceptable criterion in this school, so no one was concerned about it – except, of course, the duck. While the rabbit was good in running, he was not up to par in swimming and suffered a nervous breakdown because of the makeup work required to improve his swimming. By the end of the year, an abnormal eel that could swim exceedingly well and also run and climb had the highest average overall and was consequently named the valedictorian of the class.”

This quote illustrates several important points of this study.

Firstly, all learners are different, with different strengths and vulnerabilities. By way of example, some learners are talented in sport but struggle with reading and writing, whilst still others may be “stars” in the classroom, yet demonstrate little musical talent. When working with a learner with learning problems, it quickly becomes apparent that some areas of the academic curriculum are extremely difficult for this learner to grasp. However, due to the nature of the modern schooling system, learners need to learn the basics of reading, writing and mathematics. These learners can be paralleled to both the duck and the rabbit in the fable cited above. Learners with learning problems may spend so much time and energy trying to *keep up* with the curriculum and their peers that they lose focus of other potential talents they may have, and sometimes they suffer nervous breakdowns in trying to keep up with peers.

Secondly, this fable highlights the *damage* caused by the system to both the duck and the rabbit. The duck damaged his webbed feet and the rabbit had a nervous breakdown. In my opinion, children with learning problems often suffer *damage* as a result of their school experiences. This damage is not confined to the classroom, but becomes part of the learner’s being. Silver in Lerner and Kline (2006:107) stated the following in this regard:

“Learning problems do not begin and end at the classroom door; they pervade every aspect of

the child's life. They interfere with everything important to the child – from riding a bicycle to making friends, from knowing how to behave at recess to being an effective student.”

Thirdly, in my experience as a parent of a child with learning problems and as a specialised teacher, I have come across many “rabbit”-type learners, learners with learning problems who work really hard to try and keep up but often fail to do so, or just manage to “hang on”. These learners often experience their school years as negative and stressful as many of them struggle academically, socially and emotionally.

## **2.2 NEEDS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN**

This study focused on primary school children, more specifically, children from the ages of eight years to ten years. In order to examine potential stress factors in learners of this age, it is important to take note of the various needs of children at this age. According to Humphrey (2004), many child psychologists believe that undesirable stress is due to the failure of adults to help children meet their needs. These needs will be examined again in 2.10 of this chapter when discussing stress and learners with learning problems. Humphrey (2004:54-57) classifies these needs as follows.

### **2.2.1 Physical needs**

These physical needs include the need for food, rest, activity and proper care of the body. Physical needs are also concerned with strength, flexibility, agility, endurance and balance (Humphrey 2004:54).

### **2.2.2 Social needs**

Social needs of children include the following (Humphrey 2004:55):

- the need for affection, which involves acceptance and approval by persons;
- the need for belonging, which involves acceptance and approval of the group;
- the need for mutuality, which involves co-operation, mutual helpfulness and group loyalty.

### **2.2.3 Emotional needs**

The degree to which the child's emotional needs are met has a considerable influence upon the child's personality and mental health. The basic emotional needs of the child include (Humphrey 2004:55-56):

- the need for a sense of security and trust;

- the need for self-identity and self-respect;
- the need for success, achievement and recognition;
- the need for independence.

Although human beings are highly adaptive, if a child's emotional needs are continually not met, the child can easily develop emotional problems or personality disorders.

#### **2.2.4 Intellectual needs**

Meeting the intellectual needs of children is important for success in school and life in general. These intellectual needs include (Humphrey 2004:56-57):

- a need for challenging experiences at their own level;
- a need for intellectually successful and satisfying experiences;
- a need for the opportunity to solve problems;
- a need for the opportunity to participate in creative experiences instead of always having to conform.

Humphrey found in his research that children who are stressed score 12-15% lower on intelligence tests than children who are not stressed.

### **2.3 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

South Africa's policy on inclusive education is based on providing education that is appropriate to the needs of all children, regardless of origin, background or circumstances. This involves having an inclusive approach to the values and views of others. The implementation of this policy implies that the education system accommodates the full variety of learning needs. It is particularly important to accommodate learners who experience different barriers to learning. The system should meet the specific needs of such learners as inclusively as possible, rather than the learner being separated, excluded or discriminated against in any way (Donald & Lazarus 2006:17-18).

According to Donald and Lazarus (2006), to accommodate this diversity in education, the principles of flexibility, relevance and respect need to be applied.

- Flexibility – It is necessary that the curriculum be flexible in order to be inclusive.
- Relevance – For education to be relevant, it needs to be useful to society as a whole as well as to the individual student.
- Respect – Inclusion in education depends on respect for diversity. This means respect between educators and learners, between learners and learners, between educators and those in positions of authority, and between schools and their communities.

### 2.3.1 The Inclusive Classroom

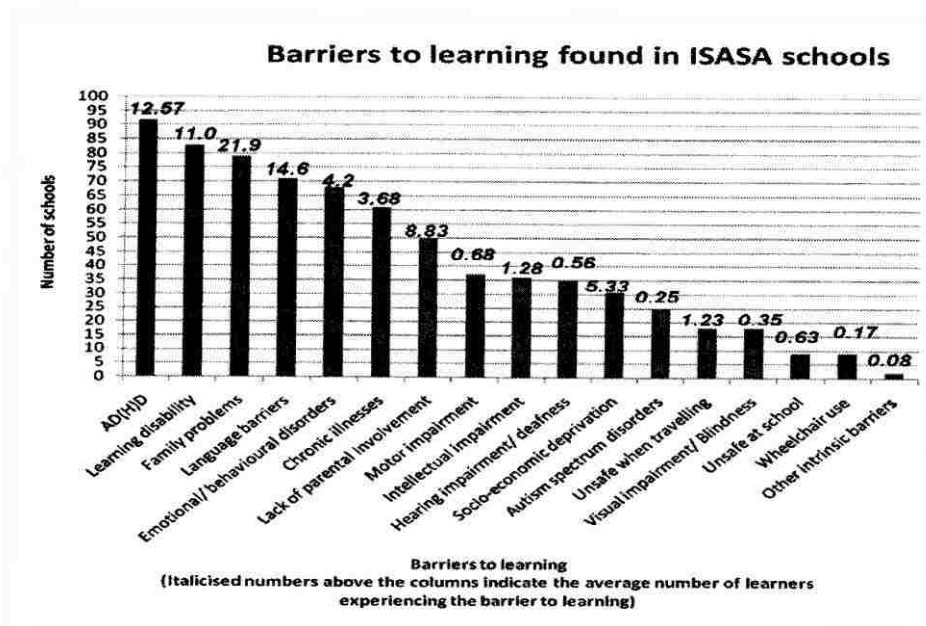
As a result of the Inclusion Policy of Education in South Africa, more learners with learning problems are in inclusive classrooms. Sapon-Shevin (2007:7-8) likens the inclusive classroom to a game with no losers. “We don’t abandon people who are having trouble. We don’t celebrate “I won” unaware or indifferent to those who are struggling. We don’t ask children to fit into an existing, fiercely competitive activity. Rather, we change the game so that it is fun and accessible to everyone.”

### 2.3.2 Inclusion in Independent Schools in South Africa

There is little research on inclusion in Independent Schools in South Africa. One study was, however, undertaken by Walton, Nel, Hugo and Muller in 2009. This study aimed at establishing the extent and practice of inclusion in Independent Schools. This article is therefore used extensively as a point of departure for the discussion in this section. According to this study, South Africa has a well-established and growing independent education sector that serves 2.9% of South African learners (DoE 2008a:5). Figure 2.1 below details the various barriers to learning found in the participating ISASA schools. From this graph, the following can be noted: (Walton, Nel, Hugo & Muller 2009:113-115)

- AD(H)D is one of the most common childhood disorders, with a prevalence of between 3% and 6%, and even up to 20% of children worldwide (Holz & Lessing, 2002:103). It is therefore not surprising to find that the majority of ISASA schools record serving learners who experience AD(H)D.

**FIGURE 2.1: Barriers to learning found in ISASA schools** (Walton et al. 2009:113)



- Less than a third of responding schools serve learners who experience barriers to learning that could represent specialised tuition needs (e.g. Sign Language or Braille) or which could require significant adaptation of the curriculum (for example, where learners have intellectual impairments) or facility (for wheelchair use).
- The low incidence of socio-economic deprivation as an extrinsic barrier to learning should be seen in the light of the high school fee structure in independent schools in South Africa.
- The variety of barriers represented in the schools and the percentage of learners who experience barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms suggest that most ISASA schools are committed to ensuring diversity in their learner population.

### **2.3.3 Inclusive practises in Independent Schools**

The study conducted by Walton et al. (2009: 115-116) examined inclusive practises in Independent schools and reached the following conclusions:

- In keeping with one of inclusion's fundamental tenets that learners who experience barriers to learning are taught alongside their peers in the general classroom, very few ISASA schools (9 of 106 schools) teach learners who experience barriers to learning in separate classrooms for all or most of the day.
- Learners who require support receive this either exclusively from their classroom teachers, or, more often, in a 'pull-out' system where they are withdrawn from the classroom individually or in small groups for a limited period to receive assistance from support personnel.
- A number of ISASA schools report that they have specialist or trained support personnel operating on site at the schools, either in private practice or employed by the schools.
- It is evident that a significant majority of independent schools have at least one remedial or special needs teacher available to support learners, and nearly half of the schools that participated in the study, have an occupational therapist on site. The presence of specialist support personnel at schools suggests affluence, in terms of the additional salaries paid and venues provided by the schools, and the cost of therapies to parents.
- Responding schools were asked if they had appointed a special needs co-ordinator, and what the nature of the post was. Fifty four schools (51.43%) have special needs co-ordinators. Of the schools reporting that they have a special needs co-ordinator, at least half note that the special needs co-ordinator is a person trained in some aspect of learning support, either a special needs teacher, or a psychologist or other therapist. The post is often (in 22 of the 54 schools) a senior appointment.

In addition to enjoying the specialised assistance from therapists and other trained personnel, international literature suggests that teachers themselves in inclusive schools need practical help

to ensure that they can meet the additional demands of an inclusive classroom. Such help could take the following forms:

- teachers could be given time to prepare and to plan collaboratively;
- they could be given a reasonable, manageable work load;
- the number of learners per class could be kept low enough to enable teachers to address the needs of all the learners in their classes;
- teachers and learners could be given an aide in the classroom;
- teachers could be given the additional training they would require to support the diverse needs of learners in the classes.

The second part of the research question is concerned with finding answers to the practices that facilitate the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning in the responding schools. A literature review indicated a wide range of inclusive practices used in developed countries. These inclusive practices include school-wide, classroom and individual level support for teachers and learners (Walton, Nel, Hugo & Muller 2009:116-117).

- At school-wide level, it has been revealed that in ISASA schools various inclusive practices are used to provide support and accommodate diversity. Like inclusive schools in developed countries, many ISASA schools make trained support personnel (special needs teachers and various therapists) available at the schools.
- Other support specialists frequently found in independent schools include occupational therapists, speech therapists and psychologists. This is congruent with the frequent occurrence of learning problems, language barriers and family problems as barriers to learning (Figure 2.1). The presence of support personnel is, however, linked to the affluence of the school, and learners in more affluent schools are more likely to find additional support personnel at their schools.
- Like schools in the United Kingdom, many ISASA schools employ special needs coordinators. The fact that in many schools this is a senior appointment, suggests that great value is placed on the support of learners who experience barriers to learning.

#### **2.3.4 Inclusive Strategies**

In a classroom consisting of learners with diverse learning needs, teachers can employ a number of strategies that enhance learning for all learners, and can furthermore provide specific support to those who experience barriers to learning. According to Walton, Nel, Hugo and Muller (2009:121-122), ISASA schools often use co-operative learning and teaching for diverse learning styles.

The strategies used most often in ISASA schools, in order from most used to least used, are:

1. allowing extra time;

2. modifying the classroom environment;
3. handwriting concessions;
4. co-operative learning;
5. spelling concessions;
6. modification of assessment tasks;
7. reading assessment tasks to learners;
8. Individualised Education Programmes (IEPs);
9. teaching to various cognitive styles; and
10. oral assessments.

ISASA schools also use some of the strategies described in the literature to provide support for teachers (Walton, Nel, Hugo & Muller 2009:121-122).

- The most noticeable support is the management of class size. Independent schools are known for their low learner to educator ratio of 1:16. (DoE, 2006:4), although it is not clear whether effective support for teachers who teach learners who experience barriers to learning is the reason for, or the result of small classes.
- The low incidence of classroom facilitators in ISASA schools is noteworthy, as the use of facilitators is a well-documented inclusive practice in developed countries.
- Adjustments to timetables, teaching loads and extra-mural responsibilities are often made.
- Teacher training, which is regarded as essential for the implementation of inclusion, is being provided.

These afore-mentioned practices indicate the commitment of many ISASA schools towards accommodating diverse learners, and in particular, learners who experience barriers to learning. Relevant support for these learners is provided through the inclusive practices described in literature from the developed world, and implemented in many ISASA schools who participated in this study.

I have worked at an inclusive, independent primary school for the past eight years. At the school where I work, the following inclusive practices have been implemented.

- The class size is reasonably small (approximately 22 learners per class).
- Specialised teachers are employed by the school to teach subjects such as music, drama, library, computers and sport. This gives class teachers free time during the day to plan and prepare lessons.
- The school has a full-time learner support co-ordinator who is a qualified specialist teacher.
- There are occupational therapists, speech therapists and other learner support teachers on the school property, although in a private capacity. There are also two psychologists in private practice linked to the school.

- These specialists form a multi-disciplinary support team. This team meets weekly to discuss concerns about learners. The educators attend the meetings to discuss their concerns regarding certain learners. Practical ideas for supporting the particular learner under discussion are suggested and implemented.
- The full-time learner support co-ordinator spends time in the classrooms at the school, working with individuals or small groups of learners who require additional support. The school also employs five classroom assistants. These assistants spend an allocated number of hours in the pre-primary and Foundation Phase classes each week to assist educators as required.
- In the Foundation Phase, differentiated group teaching is practiced in literacy and mathematics so as to accommodate a wide range of abilities and developmental levels.
- Each learner participates at his/her own pace in an individualised reading programme as well as a group reading programme.
- Some learners in the Intermediate Phase have Individual Education Programmes for certain subjects whilst following the general curriculum in other subjects.
- Some learners with learning problems in the intermediate phase have readers and/or scribes during tests/exams and formal assessments.
- Extra time, as well as spelling and writing concessions, are given to learners with learning problems for assessments, tests and exams.
- Learners, who require more intensive support in the classroom, have a part-time or full-time facilitator with them during the school day. These facilitators are paid for by the parents.

From the above discussion, it can be seen that Independent Schools in South Africa are making strides towards inclusive education.

## **2.4 STRESS**

Stress is an inevitable part of life. Human beings experience stress early, even before they are born. A certain amount of stress is normal and necessary for survival. Stress may result from internal or external influences that disrupt an individual's normal state of well-being. These influences are capable of affecting health by causing emotional distress and leading to a variety of physiological changes. These changes include increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure, and a dramatic rise in hormone levels. According to Humphrey (1993), "[s]tress can be considered as any factor acting internally or externally that makes it difficult to adapt and that induces increased effort on the part of the person to maintain a state of balance within himself or herself and the external environment" (Humphrey 1993:13).



### 2.4.1 History of the term stress

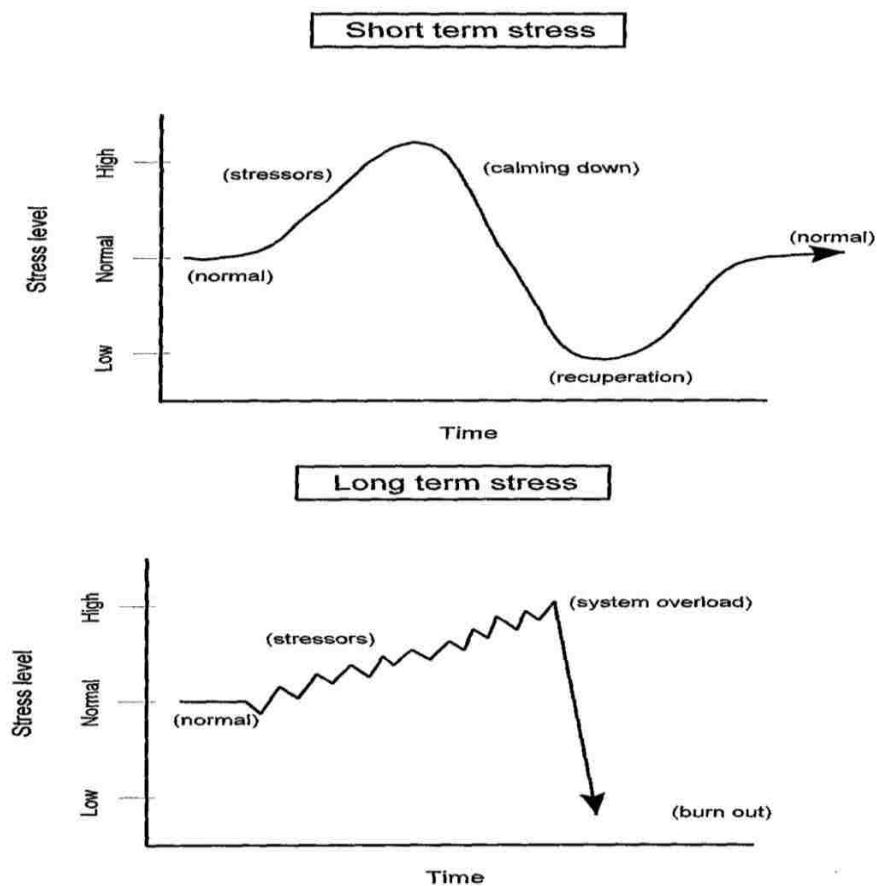
The term stress was used as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It was used to mean hardship, adversity or affliction. The concepts of stress and strain survived and, in 19<sup>th</sup> century medicine they were conceived as a basis of ill health. According to Humphrey (2004:2), there is no solid agreement regarding their derivation of the term stress. It could have derived from the Latin word *stringere* which means 'to bind tight' or it could have been derived from the French word *détresse* meaning distress.

By 1936, Hans Selye used the term 'stress' in a very technical sense to mean a set of bodily defences against any form of noxious stimuli, a reaction he called the General Adaptation Syndrome. He further distinguished between two types of stress, namely eustress and distress. Eustress is constructive stress, illustrated by emotions empathic concerns for others and positive striving that benefits the community. Distress is destructive stress, illustrated by anger and aggression and is said to be damaging to one's health (Lazarus 1999:32).

The effects of both short term and long term stress are illustrated below.

**FIGURE 2.2: The effects of short-term and long-term stress**

(Lewis 2003:29)



### 2.4.2 Types of stress

In the following section, different types of stress will be examined as seen by different theorists. The different types of stress are important in the discussion of stress in the remainder of this chapter and how it affects learner in general as well as learners with learning problems.

Lazarus drew a distinction among three types of psychological stress in 1966.

1. Harm/loss deals with harm or loss which has already taken place.
2. Threat has to do with harm or loss that has not yet occurred but is likely to occur in the near future.
3. Challenge deals with the idea that difficulties can be overcome with persistence and self-confidence (Lazarus 1999:33).

Following, are descriptions of the three types of stress that The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child has identified based on available research (Middlebrooks & Audage 2007:5-6).

- **Positive stress** results from adverse experiences that are short-lived. Children may encounter positive stress when they attend a new day care, get a shot, meet new people, or have a toy taken away from them. This type of stress causes minor physiological changes including an increase in heart rate and changes in hormone levels. With the support of caring adults, children can learn how to manage and overcome positive stress. This type of stress is considered normal and coping with it is an important part of the development process.
- **Tolerable stress** refers to adverse experiences that are more intense but still relatively short-lived. Examples include the death of a loved one, a natural disaster, a frightening accident, and family disruptions such as separation or divorce. If a child has the support of a caring adult, tolerable stress can usually be overcome. In many cases, tolerable stress can become positive stress and benefit the child developmentally. However, if the child lacks adequate support, tolerable stress can become toxic and lead to long term negative health effects.
- **Toxic stress** results from intense adverse experiences that may be sustained over a long period of time—weeks, months or even years. An example of toxic stress is child maltreatment, which includes abuse and neglect. Children are unable to effectively manage this type of stress by themselves. As a result, the stress response system gets activated for a prolonged period of time. This can lead to permanent changes in the development of the brain. The negative effects of toxic stress can be lessened with the support of caring adults. Appropriate support and intervention can help in returning the stress response system back to its normal baseline.

Humphrey (2004:11-16) classifies types of stress into three categories. These categories are as follows:

- **Physical stress**

Physical stress can be explained as stress relating to the body. Two types of stress can be noted in this regard. The first one can be referred to as emergency stress, whilst the other as continued stress. Physical stress may result from unusual or prolonged physical exertion or injury.

- **Psychological stress**

Psychological stress occurs when an individual foresees or imagines an emergency situation. "Stage fright," characterised by muscle tension and an elevated heart rate, is a specific type of psychological stress that is experienced by many children and adults alike. Psychological stress brings about nervous tension which, in turn, when prolonged and unrelenting, can result in psychosomatic disorders and serious disease.

- **Social stress**

Human beings are social by nature and life involves a constant series of social interactions. The individual and society have some kind of impact upon one another. Many levels of social stress exist. These would include adverse economic conditions, hostility, negative attitudes and poor social relationships.

For the purpose of this study, the following three sources of stress will be central to the conceptualisation of stress as experienced by learners with learning problems. The focus will be on stress as experienced in the school environment.

- Stress may result from a perceived or anticipated demand which a person feels she/he will be unable to meet (e.g. when a learner doubts his/her ability to pass a test).
- Stress may take the form of 'overload' in that too much is expected (e.g. when a learner is unable to keep up with his/her peers in his/her learning due to learning problems).
- Stress may occur when a person's expectations regarding an important area of his/her life are not met by the reality of the experience (e.g. a child who has been looking forward to starting school and then really struggles with the demands of school work).

## 2.5 CHILDHOOD STRESS

For the purposes of this study, the focus will be placed on stress factors that are predominant in

primary school children, more specifically, aged approximately from eight to ten years.

Stress helps children develop the skills they need to cope with and adapt to new and potentially threatening situations throughout life. Support from parents and/or other concerned caregivers is necessary for children to learn how to respond to stress in a physically and emotionally healthy manner.

The beneficial aspects of stress diminish when it is severe enough to overwhelm a child's ability to cope effectively. Intensive and prolonged stress can lead to a variety of short- and long-term negative health effects. It can disrupt early brain development and compromise functioning of the nervous and immune systems. In addition, childhood stress can lead to health problems later in life including alcoholism, depression, eating disorders, heart disease, cancer, and other chronic diseases.”

According to Erikson (Meyer 1997:218), children of this age are in the psychosocial phase of industry versus inferiority. This theory integrates both psychoanalytic and social insights as well as the view that people are active in their own development. Erikson believed that people are highly adaptable and that negative experiences can be remediated or avoided at any point.

During this phase, children normally start formal schooling or learn basic productive skills expected in the social context concerned. The child's social world is thus expanded to include teachers, mentors and peers. The challenge at this stage is to acquire new skills that are required in the adult world. These skills may be physical, cognitive or social. In the western world, the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic are of great importance.

Humphrey(1993:17-18) states that children of all ages are likely to encounter a considerable amount of stress in our complex and modern society. He also highlights that each individual has a stress tolerance level. If the stress becomes greater than the individual's tolerance level, the result will be emotional stress and unhappy circumstances. Children are not as likely to cope with stress effectively as adults as they do not have as many readily available options or responses. It is also likely that children may be punished for using the same type of stress-coping techniques that are acceptable for adults, e.g. anger, withdrawal and daydreaming.

Humphrey (2004:43-45) identified various self-concerns that induce stress in children. It is important to acknowledge and understand these self-concerns of children so as to be able to consider factors that may induce stress in children. Humphrey points out that not all of the self-concerns are characteristic of all children.

The self-concerns are as follows:

- Self-concerns associated with achieving personal goals – Stress can result if adults set goals that are too difficult for the child to achieve. Goals that are set too low may result in the child feeling that they are not doing as much for themselves as they should.
- Self-concerns that involve self-esteem – Insufficient opportunities to succeed and/or lack of praise from adults may affect the child's self-esteem negatively.
- Self-concerns that centre around social standards – Some children may become confused by the different social standards required from them at different levels of development.
- Self-concerns involving personal competence and ability – This self-concern may well be the most frustrating one for many children. Many children are becoming increasingly concerned by their ability or lack thereof, to cope with problems and challenges which they face.
- Self-concerns about their own traits and characteristics – Children are concerned about being different from the norm. The desire to be like their peers involves mutuality, one of the social needs of children. When a child differs from others in certain traits and characteristics, it can be a serious stress-inducing factor.

The peer group becomes very important as a basis for comparison for the child's acquisition of skills or tasks. Children learn to work together as a team and learn to defer the satisfaction of needs. This fosters a sense of self-confidence. Success in acquiring skills will result in a sense of industry, whilst failure results in a sense of inferiority and inadequacy. All children will experience some failure and some success. The important factor is the balance of experience. Depending on this balance of experience, the child will take a sense of relative competence to the next stage. (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana 2006:62-65; Wiechers 1994: 497; Meyer 1997:216)

Several common stress factors in primary school aged children were cited by Sears and Milburn (Wiechers 1994:497-498):

- anxiety about going to school
- bullying by other children
- change of school
- conflict with teachers
- competition
- problems with class mates
- anxiety about tests and exams
- parental pressure to achieve / parents or siblings with high expectations of the child
- inability to make an athletics team
- scholastic failure in general

- learning problems
- failing an exam
- dental appointments
- fashion fads and challenges
- being teased by peers
- speaking in front of the class
- pressure to take sides in parental conflicts
- special recognition for achievements
- lack of parental interest in child's academic achievement
- younger siblings
- parents or siblings that bring disgrace on the family
- excessive television watching, especially violent programmes
- embarrassment about parents' alcoholism, sickness or unemployment.

## 2.6 SCHOOL-RELATED STRESS

Chandler (1985) studied stress in childhood and in her book "Children Under Stress: Understanding Emotional Adjustment Reactions" discusses childhood stress at length. Although this source might be considered out-dated by some, I am of the opinion that it is still a relevant and important source, as will become apparent in the text that follows.

Chandler identifies three sets of behaviours which the learner needs to develop upon starting formal schooling. Each of these three areas represents an area of potential stress for a child.

- The learner needs to master basic pre-academic skills as prerequisites for reading, writing and mathematics. For those learners with developmental delays in one of these basic skills, school can be a particularly stressful experience.
- Learning academic related behaviour is also important at this stage. In order for the child to learn, he/she must learn to attend, to sit at an assigned seat, to be quiet at the appropriate times and to speak at appropriate times. Some learners may have difficulties in developing attention and concentration and for these learners school may offer little but frustration and failure.
- The learner also needs to develop competency in social skills. These skills include learning how to take turns, how to share and how to be considerate towards the needs of others. Learners who do not develop the required social skills may feel overwhelmed and stressed as a result of the wider social demands placed upon them upon entering formal schooling. (Chandler 1985:16-17)

Humphrey (2004:70) suggests that many school situations can cause stress for children and that children who face a set of demands with insufficient resources may respond in maladaptive ways. Misocoping responses may include social withdrawal, feelings of low self-esteem and beliefs of being a failure.

Humphrey (1993:69-70) emphasises the fact that the element of competition, present in both the classroom and on the sports field, may lead to reduced performance as opposed to peak performance. A child may perceive/feel that he or she will not be able to respond adequately to the performance demands of competition. Under such circumstances he/she experiences a considerable threat to their self-esteem, which results in stress.

## **2.7 SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS**

Literature suggests that stress manifests itself through various physical, psychological and behavioural symptoms (Lewis 2003:31; Signs and symptoms of stress:1-3). The following are some common symptoms of stress:

### **◆ Physical symptoms**

The physical symptoms of stress involve fatigue, dry mouth, grinding of teeth, headaches, indigestion, nausea, sleeping problems/insomnia, weight loss/gain, palpitations, pounding heart, excessive perspiration, dizziness, breathlessness, constipation, diarrhoea, indigestion, asthma and allergies, migraines, stomach aches, muscle tension and aches, peptic ulcers, hyperventilation, skin disorders such as psoriasis, increased heart rate, increased blood pressure and cholesterol levels, tingling in hands/legs, tremor in hands/legs, impotence, immune system disorders manifesting in more frequent colds and flu.

### **◆ Psychological symptoms**

Psychological symptoms may include anxiety, depression, excessive guilt, excessive worry, feelings of failure and inadequacy, frustration, helplessness, hopelessness, hostile, impatient, irritable, indecisive, rumination, pessimistic thinking, sensitivity to criticism, mood swings, negative thinking, tense and uneasy, loss of confidence, lowered self-esteem and self-concept, verbal and physical aggression, fearfulness, inability to concentrate, memory loss, despair, suicidal thoughts and ideation, poor performance, lower achievements, social incompetence and loss of motivation.

### **◆ Behavioural symptoms**

Behavioural symptoms of stress are frequent and/or excessive crying, aggression, agitation,

avoidance behaviour, difficulty with relaxing, difficulty with relationships, eating too much or too little, withdrawal from activities and/or relationships, impatience, nail biting, risk taking, substance abuse, restlessness, poor time management, outburst of anger, poor eye contact and poorer personal hygiene.

The above list is not exhaustive and these symptoms may also be indicative of other afflictions and are not exclusively the outcomes of stress.

The symptoms given above are contained in a Checklist for stress symptoms. This Checklist (cf. Appendix A) is mainly for the use of teachers (as discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.3.3.2) although parents will also complete the checklist to verify the teacher information (children may differ in class and at home).

Certain symptoms have been omitted from the checklist. These omissions will be briefly discussed below:

**Physical Symptoms omitted:**

Weight loss/gain, constipation, diarrhoea, indigestion, peptic ulcers, increased heart rate, increased blood pressure/cholesterol levels and impotence

These symptoms were omitted as the teachers would not readily have knowledge of them.

**Psychological Symptoms omitted:**

Hopelessness, rumination, despair, suicidal thoughts and ideation.

These symptoms were omitted as they would be difficult for teachers to ascertain without in depth discussion with the learner.

**Behavioural Symptoms omitted:**

Substance abuse and poor personal hygiene.

These symptoms were omitted and they are not relevant to learners in Grade 3 and Grade 4 at the school under scrutiny.

**2.7.1 Signs and symptoms of stress in Primary School Children**

Primary school-aged children may show various sign and symptoms of stress. According to Wiechers (1994:498-499), the following symptoms (not an exhaustive list) can indicate stress in young school children:



- regression to earlier forms of behaviour (e.g. thumb-sucking or bed-wetting)
- loss of appetite
- conspicuous changes in behaviour
- physical complaints such as headaches and stomach aches
- sleep disorders
- problems getting along with peers
- aggressive or defensive outbursts
- nervous fine motor behaviour
- uncharacteristic withdrawal
- increased irritability
- loss of motivation
- inability to concentrate
- listlessness

## **2.8 MODELS FOR UNDERSTANDING STRESS**

### **2.8.1 General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)**

Hans Selye (1907–1982), “the father of stress research,” was the founder of the Institute of Experimental Medicine and Surgery at the University of Montreal and later the International Institute of Stress. He introduced the General Adaptation Syndrome model in 1936 showing the alleged effects of stress on the body. Selye developed the theory that stress is a major cause of disease because chronic stress causes long-term chemical changes.

This initial reaction to stress is a fight or flight stress response. The process of the body’s struggle to maintain balance is what Selye termed homeostasis. Selye determined that there is a limited supply of adaptive energy to deal with stress. The amount of adaptive energy declines with continuous exposure. “Every stress leaves an indelible scar, and the organism pays for its survival after a stressful situation by becoming a little older” (Hans Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome, classic stages of chronic stress).

The General Adaptation Syndrome has three distinct phases:

- **Alarm Stage**

During this first phase, the body recognises that there is danger and prepares to deal with the threat, the fight or flight response. During this phase the main stress hormones are released to provide instant energy.

- **Resistance Stage**

The body shifts into this second phase with the source of stress being possibly resolved. Homeostasis begins restoring balance and a period of recovery for repair and renewal takes place. Stress hormone levels may return to normal but the individual may have reduced defences and adaptive energy left. If a stressful condition persists, the body adapts by a continued effort in resistance and remains in a state of arousal. Problems begin to manifest when repeating this process too often with little or no recovery.

- **Exhaustion Stage**

At this phase, the stress has continued for some time. The body's ability to resist is lost because its adaptation energy supply is gone. This results in overload, burnout, adrenal fatigue or dysfunction. Chronic stress can damage nerve cells in tissues and organs. Thinking and memory are likely to become impaired, with tendency toward anxiety and depression (Lazarus 1999:43-44; Naylen, 1998:230-231; Wiechers 1994:475).

According to Selye, (Hans Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome, classic stages of chronic stress) stress can be positive or negative. Positive demands he calls eustress and negative demands he calls distress as mentioned in 2.4.1 above. Eustress is far less damaging to the individual than distress. Stress is largely seen as coming from the environment although the manner in which the individual interprets and copes with stress is taken into account.

**FIGURE 2.3: Phases of General Adaptation Syndrome**



(Adapted from *The Hormonal Nightmare*)

### **2.8.2 Life Change Model (LCM)**

Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe (Holmes & Rahe 1967:213-221) explain stress as relating to changes in a person's life. These changes may be big or small, desirable or undesirable. Whether changes are viewed as positive or negative, these changes make adaptational demands and are therefore stressful (Lazarus 1999:51). In accordance with this model, the accumulation of many small changes can be as powerful as one major stressor. In light of this, Holmes and Rahe developed a scale to measure the impact of life changes. This scale was named the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Holmes & Rahe 1967:213-221). This scale was designed to measure the impact of life changes. Various stressful events are allocated a numerical value, with the maximum value of 100 points (Life Change Units-LCU) being assigned to the death of spouse and minimum points of 11 being assigned to minor violations of the law.

Holmes and Rahe found that 93% of people, who were currently experiencing health problems, had a LCU score of 150 points or above during the previous year. These research findings strongly support the connection between stress and illness.

### **2.8.3 Transactional Model**

Lazarus (1999) views individual personality traits and processes as key to understanding stress. Individuals may react to and cope with similar stressful stimuli in different ways. Lazarus states "It is the meaning constructed by a person about what is happening that is crucial to arousal of stress reactions" (Lazarus 1999:55).

Stressful experiences are construed as person-environment transactions. These transactions depend on the impact of the external stressor. This is mediated by two factors.

- Firstly, the person's appraisal of the stressor and
- Secondly on the social and cultural resources at his or her disposal.

When faced with a stressor, a person evaluates the potential threat. This first evaluation is known as primary appraisal. Primary appraisal is a person's judgment about the significance of an event as stressful, positive, controllable, challenging or irrelevant. Facing a stressor, the second appraisal follows, which is an assessment of people's coping resources and options. Secondary appraisals address what one can do about the situation. Actual coping efforts aimed at regulation of the problem give rise to outcomes of the coping process. In the table below the key constructs of the Transaction Model of Stress and Coping are summarised.

**TABLE 2.1: The Transactional Model of Stress**

<b><u>Concept</u></b>	<b><u>Definition</u></b>
Primary Appraisal	Evaluation of the significance of a stressor or threatening event.
Secondary Appraisal	Evaluation of the controllability of the stressor and a person's coping resources.
Coping efforts	Actual strategies used to mediate primary and secondary appraisals.
<i>Problem management</i>	Strategies directed at changing a stressful situation.
<i>Emotional regulation</i>	Strategies aimed at changing the way one thinks or feels about a stressful situation.
Meaning-based coping	Coping processes that induce positive emotion, which in turn sustains the coping process by allowing reenactment of problem- or emotion focused coping.
Outcomes of coping	Emotional well-being, functional status, health behaviours.
Dispositional coping styles	Generalized ways of behaving that can affect a person's emotional or functional reaction to a stressor; relatively stable across time and situations.
<i>Optimism</i>	Tendency to have generalized positive expectancies for outcomes.
Information Seeking	Attentional styles that are vigilant (monitoring) versus those that involve avoidance (blunting)

Source: Glanz, Rimer & Lewis 2002:214

The basics of the three theoretical models of stress are summarised in the table below. These models serve as important background to this study.

**TABLE 2.2: Summary of stress models**

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Theorist/s</b>	<b>Explanation of stress</b>
General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)	Hans Selye	Stress is the body's physical reaction to biological stressors.
Life Change Model (LCM)	Thomas Holmes Richard Rahe	Stress is a result of changes in a person's life.
Transactional Model	Richard Lazarus	Stress is a result of an individual's perceptions/interpretations of circumstances or life changes.

## 2.9 LEARNING PROBLEMS

Learners with learning problems show a wide range of learning and behavioural traits. Each individual displays different combinations of these traits. Table 2.3 below shows the common learning and behavioural traits of learners with learning problems.

**TABLE 2.3: Characteristics of learners with learning problems**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Description</b>
Disorders of attention	Learner does not focus when a lesson is presented; short attention span, easily distracted, poor concentration, may display hyperactivity.
Poor motor abilities	Difficulty with gross motor and fine motor coordination (exhibits general awkwardness and clumsiness)
Psychological processing deficits	Problems in processing auditory and visual information (difficulty interpreting visual and auditory stimuli)
Lack of phonological awareness	Poor at recognising the sounds of language (cannot identify phoneme sounds in spoken language)
Poor cognitive strategies for learning	Does not know how to go about the task of learning and studying Lacks organisational skills; passive learning style (Do not direct their own learning)
Oral language difficulties	Underlying language disorder. (problems in language development, listening, speaking and Vocabulary)
Reading difficulties	About 80% of learners with learning problems have problems in Reading. (problems in learning to decode words, basic word recognition skills or reading comprehension)
Writing difficulties	Poor at tasks requiring written expression, spelling and handwriting.
Mathematics	Difficulty with quantitative thinking, arithmetic, time, space and calculation facts.
Social skills	Does not know how to act and talk in social situations; difficulty with establishing satisfying social relationships and friendships.

*Source:* Lerner & Kline 2006:16

According to Lerner and Kline (2006), four times as many boys as girls are identified with learning problems at clinics and schools. Gender research has however shown that there are as many girls as boys with learning problems, but that fewer girls are identified (Lerner & Kline 2006:17). Boys with learning problems tend to exhibit more aggressive behaviour and loss of control, whilst having

abilities in visual-motor activities, spelling and written language. Girls tend to display more problems in social behaviour, language and academic difficulties with maths and reading (Lerner & Kline 2006:17).

For many learners, learning problems first become apparent when they begin formal schooling and they fail to learn required academic skills. Primary school learners with learning problems often struggle in reading, writing and mathematics. Learners with learning problems may also find it difficult to concentrate and have poor fine and/or gross motor skills resulting in difficulties with forming letters and writing. In later primary school years, when the work load increases and becomes more difficult, learners with learning problems may experience difficulties with organising and retaining information (Lerner & Kline 2006:19).

Emotional problems often develop as a result of negative school experiences due to repeated failure (Lerner & Kline 2006:19; Maag & Reid 2006:3-4; Sideridis, Mouzaki, Simos & Protopapas 2006:159-161). Some learners may also develop social difficulties in primary school and this inability to make and/or keep friends becomes important at this stage (Estell, Jones, Van Acker & Rodkin 2008:11; Lerner & Kline 2006:19; Pearl 2002:77-78; Weiner 2002:99-102).

It is important to examine the potential social and emotional difficulties of learners with learning problems in combination with the needs of learners in order to understand the stresses that learners with learning difficulties may experience. This is the aim of section 2.10 below.

## **2.10 LEARNING PROBLEMS AND STRESS**

As discussed in section 2.2 above, Humphrey (2004:54-57) identified needs of primary school learners. He also states that unmet needs result in undesirable stress. It is important, in the context of this study, to examine the social, emotional and intellectual needs of learners with learning problems in order to establish potential sources of stress for these learners.

Additional to this, the following three sources of stress are central to this study and will be examined in conjunction with the above.

- Stress may result from a perceived or anticipated demand which a person feels she/he will be unable to meet. (e.g. When a learners doubts their ability to pass a test)
- Stress may take the form of 'overload' in that too much is expected, e.g. when a learner is unable to keep up with his/her peers in his/her learning due to learning problems.)
- Stress may occur when a person's expectations regarding an important area of his/her life are not met by the reality of the experience. (E.g. A child who has been looking forward to

starting school and then really struggles with the demands of school work.)

### 2.10.1 Learning problems and social interaction

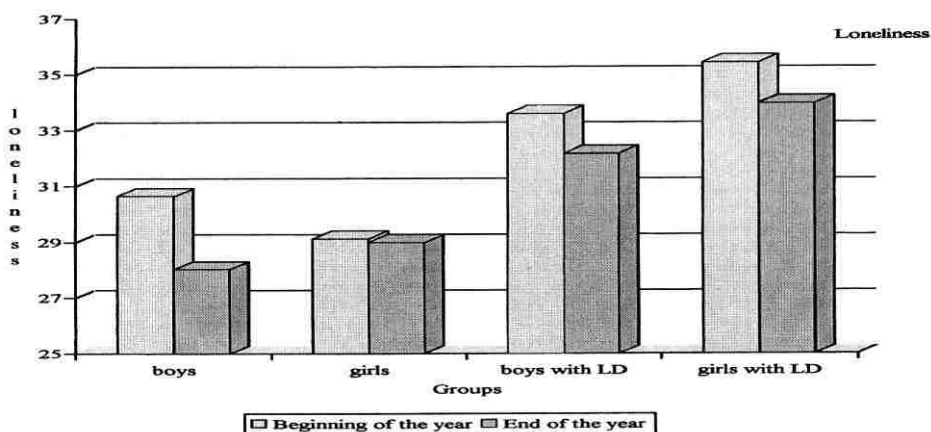
As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study, in section 1.2.2.4, children with learning problems tend to have a lower status amongst their peers in the classroom and have a lower peer-nominated popularity rating. They are also less likely to be chosen by peers as a best friend (Estell, Jones, Van Acker & Rodkin 2008:11). This may result in children with learning problems experiencing higher rates of social isolation than their peers.

Research has also shown that children with learning problems experience higher levels of loneliness than their peers (Margalit & Al-Yagon 2002:53). Peplau and Perlman (1982) defined loneliness as an unpleasant experience when individuals perceive a discrepancy between their desired and accomplished patterns of social networks. According to Buchholz and Catton in Margalit and Al-Yagon (2002:54), loneliness has two interrelated dimensions: social loneliness (a disruption of the social network and is related to peer rejection) and emotional loneliness (a deficiency in intimate close relationships). Learners with learning problems may also experience difficulties in being alone and keeping involved with solitary activity, thus increasing their need for interpersonal contact. In addition to this, according to Valas (1999:45), personal characteristics of learners with learning problems may predispose them to the loneliness experience and make it more difficult for them to cope with feelings of loneliness.

Further research by Valas (1999) established that primary school learners with learning problems are likely to be less accepted by their peers, have lower self-esteem and feel lonelier than their peers. The experience of high levels of loneliness was particularly high for primary school learners. The experience of loneliness did, however, decrease from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. This is clearly illustrated in figure 2.4 below.

**FIGURE 2.4: Loneliness as experienced by primary school learners**

(Margalit & Al-Yagon 2002:58)



Tanis Bryan, a pioneer in research of children with learning problems and their social relationships, emphasised the importance of peer relationships among learners with learning problems and much of his research focused on the social relationships of learners with learning problems. His findings indicated that many learners with learning problems have relationships with peers that may warrant concern. Taking into account that learners with learning problems often have lower social status than their peers, Bryan proposed that learners with learning problems could be more vulnerable to the influence of their peers (Pearl 2002:85). Research by Pearl (2002:85-87) confirmed this to be the case. Her research found that a disproportionate number of learners with learning problems did not belong to a social group (i.e. were isolated/rejected). Furthermore, a disproportionate number of learners with learning problems who did belong to a social group were in groups high in problematic characteristics. Pearl emphasises that learners with learning problems who have classroom companions do not necessarily have supportive friendships providing the degree of relatedness considered important for healthy psychological adjustment.

Weiner (2002:99-104), studied friendship and social adjustment in children with learning problems. She found that learners with learning problems had a higher percentage of friendships with other learners with learning problems than their peers without learning problems. Friendships of learners with learning problems from grade 4 to grade 6 were also found to be less stable over a three-month period than their peers without learning problems. Weiner (2002) found that learners with learning problems were more likely to be less accepted by their peers, have poorer social skills and higher levels of problem behaviours as rated by teachers, experience more loneliness and social dissatisfaction, have lower academic self-concepts and have higher levels of depressive symptoms than their peers without learning problems.

The following table serves to summarise the findings in this section.

**TABLE 2.4: Potential social stress factors for learners with learning problems**

<b>Potential social stress factors for learners with learning problems</b>
Low status amongst peer group
Difficulties with close relationships
Low popularity rating as given by peers
Higher levels of loneliness than peers without learning problems
Difficulties with sustaining solitary activities
Difficulties coping with feelings of loneliness



Social rejection and/or isolation
More vulnerable to peer influence
Poor social skills

Taken in context of the social needs of primary school learners, i.e. the need for affection which involves acceptance and approval by persons, the need for belonging which involves acceptance and approval of the group and the need for mutuality which involves co-operation, mutual helpfulness and group loyalty, it follows that learners who feel lonely and social isolated will not fulfil their social needs and stress is a likely result.

According to Eric Erikson, (Meyer 1997:218) learners of this age (8-10 years in the case of this study) are at the developmental stage of industry versus inferiority. In terms of the learners' social context, social isolation, lack of popularity and rejection or neglect from may result in feelings of inferiority developing in the child. In this situation, the learner may experience stress due to his/her expectations regarding an important area of his/her life, namely social expectations, are not met by the reality of the experience.

To reiterate the three sources of stress stated in section 2.10 above, stress may result from a perceived or anticipated demand which a person feels she/he will be unable to meet, stress may take the form of 'overload' in that too much is expected and stress may occur when a person's expectations regarding an important area of his/her life are not met by the reality of the experience. These sources may be applicable to social demands where the child with learning problems may feel unable to meet the expected social norms of their peer group and/or teachers. The learner with learning problems may also experience stress as a result of being disappointed in that their social expectations are not met.

### **2.10.2 Learning Problems and Emotions**

"Emotional problems not only interfere with academic learning, but they can impact on the entire life of the student" (Lerner & Kline 2006:526).

The statement above clearly implies the impact that emotional difficulties can potentially have on the learner with learning problems. In this section, the characteristics of emotional problems and research conducted regarding learners with learning problems and their emotions will be examined.

#### **2.10.2.1 Characteristics of emotional problems**

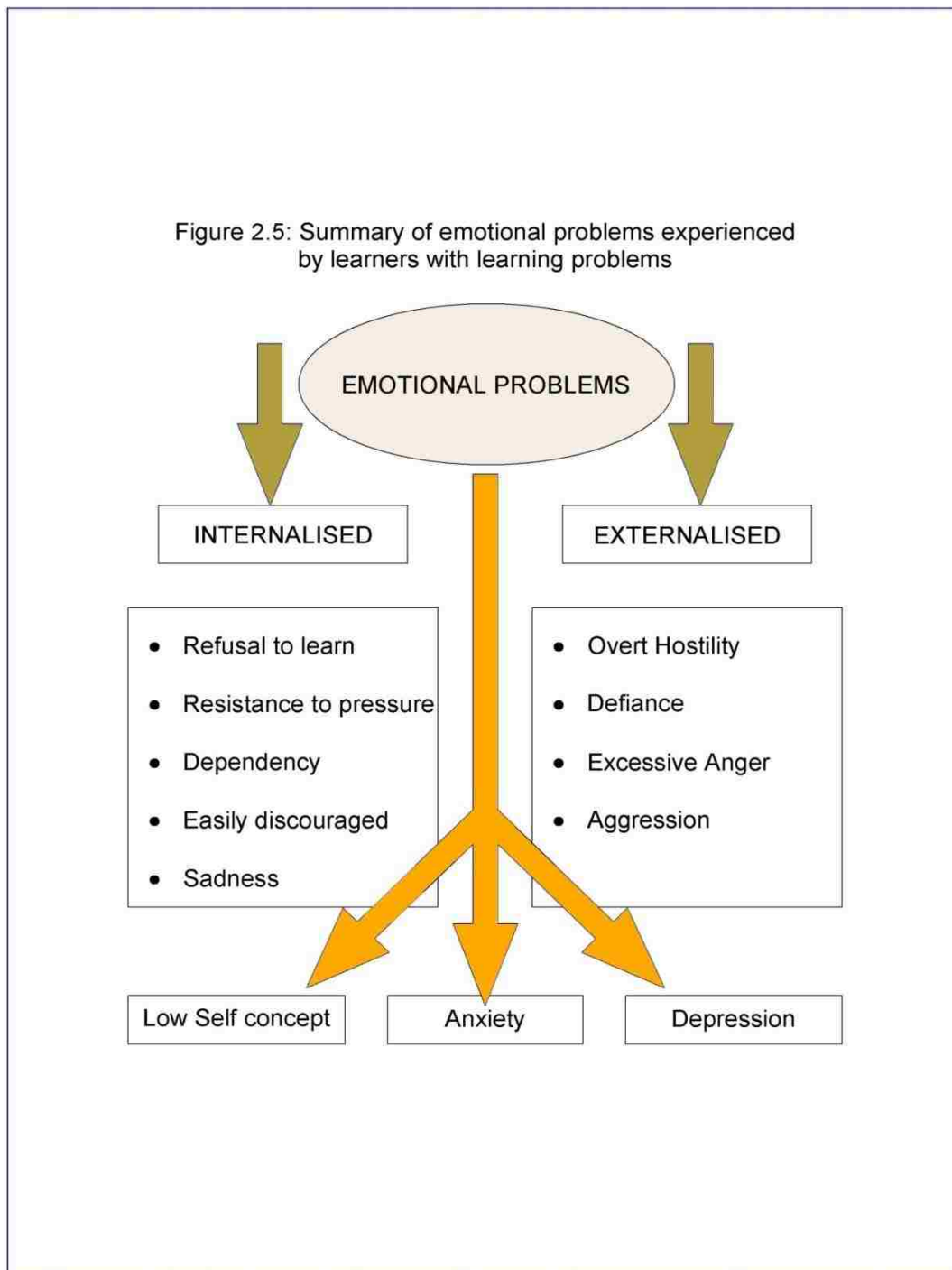
According to Lerner and Kline (2006:527-528), the emotional and personality development of learners encountering learning problems and learning failure does not follow the same development as that of learners who are successful in learning. Failed attempts at mastering tasks result in feelings of frustration and self-dissatisfaction as opposed to a sense of accomplishment. Successful experiences and accomplishments build self-esteem, whereas experiences of failure break down self-esteem. Parents of learners with learning problems may well become disheartened and anxious, which may lead to parental rejection or overprotection.

Many learners with learning problems develop emotional problems. These problems may result in anxiety, depression and a low self-esteem.

- Anxiety – learners with learning problems display higher levels of anxiety than their peers without learning problems. The pressures of school and academic demands may lead to feelings of things being “beyond their control,” leading to feelings of hopelessness.
- Depression – Many learners with learning problems suffer from depression and a pervasive mood of unhappiness. This depression may be related to stress and frustration of school demands.
- Low self-esteem – Learners with learning problems often have emotional scars from repeated failure. They are unable to develop a sense of competence and self-worth and thus often have a negative view of themselves. They seldom receive recognition and their academic and/or social failures lead to frustration, feelings of incompetence, lack of self-worth and poor self-concepts (Lerner & Kline 2006:527-528).

Learners with emotional problems may react to their emotional problems by internalising or externalising them. A summary of the characteristics of emotional problems is given in the diagram below.

Figure 2.5: Summary of emotional problems experienced by learners with learning problems



Abrams in Gorman (1999:1) states that learners with learning problems have many other potential problems: “The vast majority of children with learning disabilities have some emotional problems associated with the learning difficulty.” Learning problems may lead to emotional distress, low academic self-concept, anxiety, depression, ineffective social behaviour and physical ailments or complaints. In this regard, a study conducted Redmond and Hosp (2008:2-8) revealed that elevated levels of absenteeism have been reported in American schools for learners receiving special education services, especially learners with learning problems. Attendance problems are currently viewed as a reflection of the learners underlying difficulties in academic or socio-

emotional functioning. Given the relationship between stress and physical illness, this increase in absenteeism could also be related to stress related illness or symptoms.

According to Silver (2007:1-3), it is not uncommon for learners with learning problems to struggle with anxiety, depression or anger control due to feelings of frustration and repeated failure. Silver states that learners with learning problems may develop anxiety disorders related to a specific theme such as separation, social interactions or performance or alternatively may experience more generalised anxiety. If anxiety levels become too high, the learner may experience panic attacks. The prevalence of anxiety disorders among learners with learning problems has been found to be well above normative levels. Silver also states that children with learning problems are at risk of having one or more related disorders which might add to their stress levels. These related disorders include other brain processing disorders, attention-deficit hyperactive disorder, problems with emotional regulation (anxiety, depression, and anger control), tic disorders and bipolar disorder (Silver 2007:1-4).

Children with learning problems may be more vulnerable to developing depression due to failure in achievement tasks (Sideridis 2007:526). Studies conducted by Maag and Reid (2006:6-7) showed that learners with learning problems had significantly higher depression scores than learners without learning problems. Learners with learning problems also had higher scores on negative cognitions/thoughts, which are associated with depression, as well as greater levels of stress and anxiety.

Researchers have also found that learners with learning problems possess the typical characteristic of helplessness (Sideridis, Mouzaki, Simos & Protopapas 2006:160-161). They also found that learners with learning problems gave up on tasks more easily than their peers without learning problems, viewed academic tasks as threats, developed negative emotions and cognitions both prior to and following an academic task and employed regulatory systems that have their basis in avoidance motivation.

According to Humphrey (2004:55-56), unmet emotional needs cause stress and have considerable influence upon the child's personality and mental health. The learner with learning problems may experience stress as a result of lack of self-respect, low self-esteem, lack of independence as well as insufficient recognition and achievement. This stress can lead to anxiety and/or depression if unresolved.

**TABLE 2.5: Potential emotional stress factors for learners with learning problems**

<b>Potential emotional stress factors for learners with learning problems</b>
Low self-esteem
Dependency
Few experiences of success and achievement
“Overload” – cannot keep up with peers
Self-doubt regarding perceived or anticipated demands
Negative emotions and cognition
Unmet expectations of self
Parental anxiety

## **2.11 IN CONCLUSION**

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that learners with learning problems may experience additional stresses in the classroom environment. These stresses may be predominantly social and/or emotional in nature and may result in, amongst other things as mentioned above, feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. It is important for teachers to recognise and understand the feelings and experiences of these learners so as to be able to assist and support them. As mentioned in 2.2 above, many child psychologists believe that undesirable stress is due to the failure of adults to help children meet their needs (Humphrey 2004:54-57). Thus, if teachers are empowered to help learners with learning problems meet their needs; this may result in a reduction of the stresses experienced by these learners.

In the following chapter I will give details of the qualitative research design of this dissertation. Manifestations of stress in children’s drawings and stress indicators of the Draw-a-Person test and the Kinetic Family Drawing will be discussed and examined. Detailed information of sampling, data collection and interpretation as well as ethical considerations will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapters in this study, the phenomenon of stress, more specifically stress in children, were discussed. Stresses in learners with learning problems were also examined in some detail. This chapter focuses on research method, data collection and data interpretation. Research ethics, being of central importance to any research, will also be discussed.

In addition to this, the interpretation of children's drawings will be explored in this chapter, with an emphasis on possible emotional indicators in children's drawings.

#### **3.2 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

The purpose of this research was two-fold:

1. To determine stresses that learners in Grade 3 and 4 with learning problems experience in inclusive classrooms in an independent school.
2. To formulate guidelines to assist teachers in relieving these stresses experienced by learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom.

These two aims are formulated as research questions below.

##### **3.2.1 Research questions**

- What stresses do primary school learners with learning problems experience?
- What stresses do primary school learners with learning problems experience in the inclusive classroom?
- What guidelines can be proposed to relieve these stresses?

### 3.3 NATURE OF EMPIRICAL STUDY

The methodological orientation of this study is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research aims to describe and expore, to describe and explain, to understand and to examine and discover. Many qualitative studies are exploratory and usually focus on individuals, groups, organisations or systems (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:397).

Qualitative research can be deifned as follows:“Qualitative research is research which seeks to provide understanding of human experience, perceptions,motivations, intentions and behaviours based on descriptions and observations and utilising a natural interpretative approach to a subject and its contextual setting” (Encyclopedia.com: A dictionary of Nursing).

In this study, interpretivism is of relevance as a research paradigm.

“Interpretivism is a way of gaining insights through discovering meanings by improving our comprehension of the whole. Interpretivism proposes that there are multiple realities, not single realitites of phenomena and that these realities can differ across time and space” (Neill 2006:1). In terms of this research, the focus will be on reality as perceived by the learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom and the perceived stresses they experience in this environment.

Several key characterisitcs can be identified in qualitative research designs.

- Researchers strive to understand the meaning people have constructed about their world and there experiences.
- The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis.
- The product of a qualitative inquiry is richly descriptive (Merriam & Associates 2002:1-5).

According to McMillan & Schumacher (2001:35), qualitative design may be interactive or non-interactive. This study will be an interactive qualitative design. An interactive qualitative inquiry can be defined as “an indepth study using face-to-face techniques to collect data from people in their natural setting. The researcher interprets phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:35).

This research has a case study design, which means that the data analysis focuses on one phenomenon, which the researcher selects to understand in depth, regardless of the number of sites or participants used for the study (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:398). A case study design involves the collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular participant or small group, frequently including the accounts of subjects themselves (Glossary of key terms: Research glossary). According to Worchel and Shebilske (1989) as quoted in Mwamwenda

(2004:10), the advantage of a case study design is that it is an easy method of gathering information in a short time, and it also makes it possible to study human behaviour in a naturalistic setting.

### **3.3.1 Data collection plan**

The focus of qualitative research is to access the subjective experience of the participants. To achieve this, the researcher needs to make a concerted effort to identify and temporarily set aside his/her own assumptions (Fischer 2009:584).

#### **3.3.1.1 Stages of Data Collection**

The empirical research consisted of two stages:

- The first stage entailed semi-structured interviews with the parent/s of the selected participants. Each participant's parent was interviewed individually prior to interviews with the learner participants. Parents were also asked to complete the *Stress Symptoms Checklist for Stress Symptoms* and symptoms that were marked as occurring frequently are discussed (Refer to Appendix D as well as Appendix A).
- During the second phase, the individual learner participants were asked to complete a Kinetic School Drawing, a Draw-A-Person drawing and the Three Wishes. A semi-structured interview was conducted with each individual learner during this second phase (Refer to Appendix C).

#### **3.3.1.2 Sources of the data**

The source of data is the interview transcripts as well as the Draw-A-Person and Kinetic School Drawings and the Three Wishes of the learners with learning problems.

#### **3.3.1.3 Number of data sources to be accessed**

Three participants were used in this study. As discussed in section 3.3 above, qualitative research focuses on gathering in-depth data from sources and this is deemed more important than the number of sites or participants used in the study.

#### **3.3.1.4 Location of data collection**

Encounters with the participants took place at the Independent School in the Western Cape, from which the participant sample was drawn. The interviews with learners and parent/s were conducted



individually in the researcher's consulting room. The participant learners were firstly asked to complete the two drawings and Three Wishes and thereafter participated in a semi-structured interview.

### **3.3.1.5 Frequency of data collection**

The data was collected from learners during a single session. Parents of the learners were interviewed prior to the commencement of the individual session with the learners.

### **3.3.2 Selection of sample**

The population for this research was limited to learners from an Independent School in the Western Cape. This is an inclusive school, accommodating children with learning problems. The population was further limited to children between the ages of 8-10 years who are in Grade 3 or 4.

As this is a qualitative case study design, random selection is not relevant. Instead, I made use of purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling "allows the researcher to select information-rich cases for study in depth. It is done to increase the utility of information obtained from small samples" (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:401). The power and logic of purposeful sampling is that a few cases studied in depth can give many insights about a topic.

Participants were selected on the basis of their best fulfilling the criteria necessary for this research. These criteria are:

- (1) Having learning problems
- (2) Being between 8-10 years of age
- (3) Being in Grade 3 or Grade 4 at the time of research
- (4) Being in an inclusive class in an independent school.

The learners selected had to be willing to participate in the research and the informed consent of their parents had to be given prior to the commencement of the research.

In Chapter 1, section 1.6.1, the concept of learning difficulties was detailed. The Independent School from which the research participants were selected is an inclusive school and caters for learners with a variety of special needs. Amongst these learners are learners who have been identified as having learning problems. This is in line with ISASA (Independent Schools of Southern Africa) policy, as discussed in detail in Chapter 2 (2.3.2 and 2.3.3). The learners were identified as having learning problems according to one or more of the following criteria, as tabulated in Table 2.3 in Chapter 2.

### Identification of stress symptoms

Teachers of Grade 3 and Grade 4 were given a *Checklist for Stress Symptoms* (See Appendix A) to complete for all learners in their classes identified as having learning problems. This checklist was compiled from the literature study in Chapter 2. The items on the checklist were explained to the teachers individually so as to clarify any areas of uncertainty.

### Interpretation of stress symptoms

Participants were selected on the basis of their manifestation of stress symptoms, as reported by their teachers in the *Checklist for Stress Symptoms* (Appendix A). The three learners who had the highest stress scores on the *Checklist for Stress Symptoms* were selected as participants for the study. Each item marked on the checklist was allocated a score. These scores were then totalled.

The scores were calculated as follows:

- Never            0 points
- Seldom         1 point
- Sometimes     2 points
- Often            3 points
- Unknown       0 points

### Consent

It is important to gain signed, informed consent from the parents taking part in the research and to gain assent from all the learners taking part in the research. Parents of the participant learners were also required to give written consent for their children to participate in the research. Informing participants was done in a manner that encouraged free choice of participation. The aims of the research project were discussed with the three selected learners. During this discussion, issues relating to the purpose of the research, confidentiality and the audio recording of the interviews were explained. In addition to this, the time required for participation and the non-judgemental role of the researcher were discussed (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:421). If fewer than three learners agreed to participate, further learners would have been selected on the basis of what was discussed above.

A letter explaining the research invited parents of learners who agreed to participate, to give permission for their child to take part in the research (See Appendix B). Parents who were willing to participate themselves, by taking part in an interview, also gave permission and consent for their own participation. Should a parent not have given their consent, the above mentioned steps would have been repeated until informed consent had been obtained for three participants.

### **3.3.3 Data collection instruments**

There are four basic data collection procedures in qualitative research: observations, interviews, documents and visual images. Most qualitative research depends on multi-method strategies to collect data. Multi-method is the use of multiple strategies to collect and corroborate data (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:428).

In this study, data will be collected through interviews, observations and drawings obtained during individual encounters with the participants and the parents of the participants. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed for analysis. The drawings will be interpreted with specific reference to emotional indicators in the drawings. The encounters will be conducted in a quiet setting. Other observations, including concentration, eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, body movements and other nonverbal actions will be noted.

#### **3.3.3.1 Interviews**

In qualitative research interviewing obtains data how individuals explain or “make sense” of important events in their lives (McMillan and Schumacher 2001:443). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:444), the purpose of the interview in qualitative research is to:

- Obtain present perceptions of activities, roles, feelings, motivations, concerns and thoughts.
- Obtain future expectations or anticipated experiences.
- Verify and extend information obtained from other sources.
- Verify or extend hunches and ideas developed by participants or researcher.

In this study, semi-structured interviews will be held with each participant, upon completion of the two drawings and the Three Wishes. All interviews will be conducted through the medium of English. Interviews will be free of jargon. Questions will be formulated so that they are not leading or suggestive.

Semi-structured interviews are organised around areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth. The researcher is able to follow up particular interesting avenues that emerge and the participant is able to expand on areas of particular interest. The researcher may have a set of predetermined questions, but the order and wording of the questions can be modified based upon the interviewer’s perception of what seems most appropriate. Questions may also be omitted if deemed inappropriate and additional questions may be included (Robson 2002:270).

A semi-structured interview schedule with general themes and questions regarding the participant's experience of school and feelings about school will be used in order to enrich the data collected (See Appendix C). These questions can be categorised into the following themes:

- General feelings about school;
- Relationships with peers and teachers
- Particular likes and dislikes at school
- How often learners get or feel ill
- How learners spend free time
- How learners feel about test and task completion in class
- Common thoughts learners have relating to school
- Suggestions about how to deal with stresses that they experience

### **3.3.3.2 Observations**

Participant observation enables the researcher to obtain people's perceptions of events and processes expressed in their actions and expressed as feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. These perceptions or constructions take three forms: verbal, nonverbal and tacit knowledge (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:437-439). With regards to this study I will be conscious of actively observing whilst I am interviewing the learner participants and when the learner participants are completing the drawings. It is important to take note of verbal messages, nonverbal cues such as gestures, tone of voice and facial expressions. Observation of the learner whilst drawing may reveal self control, motivation, perfectionism, impulsiveness or compulsiveness (Skybo, Ryan-Wenger & Su 2007:18). The observations made during interviewing will be included in the transcriptions.

### **3.3.3.3 Drawings (Draw- A-Person and Kinetic School Drawing)**

- **Draw-A-Person test**

Human figure drawings are useful assessment tools. They are quick to administer, inexpensive and non threatening to children (Skybo et al. 2007:15). Human figure drawings originated in the 1920's (Goodenough 1926) and later by Koppitz (1968, 1989) and Di Leo (1970). Children are asked to draw, versus spontaneous drawing, and drawing is thus used as a method of communication. Drawings can be assessed for developmental level as well as evidence of emotional indicators. Drawings are not diagnostic, but rather provide strong cues for follow up interviews with children and parents (Skybo et al. 2007:15).

Cox (1993:74-75) proposes that children's human figure drawings, as an indicator of intellectual maturity, are reasonably reliable and valid. However, it is important to note that Cox also questions

the use of children's figure drawings to assess children's personality and emotional adjustment. Cox believes that claims made about specific features in a child's drawing, have been based largely on intuition and individual practitioners experiences as opposed to research findings (Cox 1993: 88-89). She thus cautions against assigning a particular problem to a child on the basis of very specific features in their drawings. Svenson (1968) and Roback (1968) in Cox (1993:81), after reviewing research, agreed that the Draw-A-Person test can be used to provide a fairly reliable global impression of a child's adjustment. However, judgements made on single signs in a drawing, such as line quality or the manner in which a particular body part is drawn, are much less reliable. Di Leo (1973) in Cox (1993:82) emphasises that "knowledge of developmental sequences is essential, lest one considers deviant what is merely the immaturity of a normally developing psyche." Drawings of children with learning problems may be affected by perceptual and/or fine motor difficulties. This factor needs to be taken into account when analysing the drawings of children selected for this study.

As discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.10.1 and section 2.9.1 respectively), learners with learning problems often experience emotional difficulties as well as social difficulties. These difficulties may result in the learner with learning problems developing physical, psychological and behavioural stress symptoms (Refer to Chapter 2 section 2.7). Koppitz (1968) in Cox (1993:83) listed 30 emotional indicators that may appear in children's drawings, by which a child's emotional relative adjustment or disturbance may be assessed. It thus follows that children experiencing emotional and behaviour difficulties, may well manifest some of these emotional indicators in their drawings. Emotional indicators in drawings include the absence of certain parts, the size of the figure, a slant of more than 15 degrees from the vertical and very long or very short arms.

**TABLE 3.1: Emotional Indicators in Human Figure Drawings for children**

(Developed from Koppitz (1968) in Skybo et al. 2007:19)

Scoring: 0 = not present in drawing 1= present in drawing			
	Poor integration of parts of figure		Omission of eyes
	Shading the face or part of it		Omission of nose
	Shading the body and/limbs		Omission of mouth
	Shading the hands and/or neck		Omission of body
	Gross asymmetry of limbs		Omission of arms
	Figure slanting by 15 degrees or more		Omission of legs
	Tiny figure, 2 inches or less in height		Omission of feet
	Big figure, 9 inches or more in height		Omission of neck

	Transparencies		
	Tiny head, 1/10 <sup>th</sup> of total height of figure		
	Crossed eyes, both eyes turned inwards		
	Teeth		
	Short arms, not long enough to reach waist line		
	Long arms, that could reach below knees		
	Arms clinging to side of body		
	Big hands, bigger than face of figure		
	Hands cut off, arms without hands and fingers		
	Legs pressed together		
	Genitals		
	Monster or grotesque figure		
	Three or more figures spontaneously drawn		
	Clouds, rain, snow		

Cox (1993:89) concludes that it is reasonable to use a child's human figure drawing as a general indicator of a child's problems, since on Koppitz's list of 30 emotional items (as above), children who were referred for clinical treatment produced more of these than did normal children. Skybo et al. (2007:26) recommend the following procedure for increasing validity of the Draw-A-Person test:

- The instruction given must be the same for all children
- No comments are to be made by the test administrator regarding the quality or content of the drawing
- Child should not be rushed
- Two therapists/clinicians should evaluate the drawings for emotional indicators independently until at least 95% agreement is reached, by which one can be confident that independent evaluations are valid and reliable.

- **Kinetic School Drawing**

According to Zians (1997:3), children's drawings provide an adequate estimate of intelligence (Goodenough 1926; Harris 1963 in Zians 1997:3), self-perception (Koppitz 1968; Machover 1949 in Zians 1997:3), socio-emotional status (Burns & Kaufman 1970; Di Leo 1983; Sarbaugh 1982; Koppitz 1968 in Zians 1997:3), as well as depicting the child's view of him/herself in the family (Burns & Kaufman 1970; 1972 in Zians 1997:3) and within the school setting (Andrews & Jansen 1988; Knoff & Prout 1985; Prout & Celmer 1984; Prout and Philips 1974 in Zians 1997:3).

Prout and Philips (1974) in Zians (1997:6) made a simple adaptation to the Kinetic Family Drawing in 1974, to create a new procedure called the Kinetic School Drawing. The child is asked to draw a

school picture with everyone in the picture engaged in activity. These pictures are then analysed and supposedly yield data about the child's self-perceptions, self concept, attitudes towards school and peer acceptance.

Zians found that there was a lack of adequate interpretation guidelines for Kinetic School Drawing in the existing literature. Her Master's study attempted to address this void. Zians study examined the use of the Kinetic School Drawing by both experts and non-experts. Experts were defined as clinicians who had been employed in school psychology position for twenty years or more and who had frequently used the Kinetic School Drawing as part of their assessment procedure over a period of at least ten years (Zians 1997:29). Zians examined the analysis and interpretation procedures used by three experts when working with Kinetic School Drawings. From this examination, the following picture variables relevant to the interpretation of the Kinetic School Drawing were identified:

**TABLE 3.2: Picture Variables for the Kinetic School Drawing**

(Zians 1997:74-75)

<b>Picture Variables</b>
<b>Global</b>
Taking clues from picture for most important element
Obtain insight into child's life form feeling or mood of the picture
<b>Content</b>
Sizes of people
Activity self is engaged in
Academic vs non academic task
Relationships in picture as portrayed by activity, physical position and facial expressions
Who is drawn in the picture
Detail or lack of detail
Postures of people
<b>Style</b>
Stress upon pencil
Spatial arrangement of picture
<b>Symbolism</b>
Obvious signs and symbols that are salient to the child
How school is portrayed (Building, school yard and classroom)
Details
Colours

<b>Age</b>
Insight into context
Progression of detail for older children
Stick figures show resistant behaviour
Ability to share information in drawing task

The picture variables given in table 3.2 above, will guide the analysis and interpretation of the Kinetic School Drawings in this study. In addition to this, the child will be asked questions about his/her drawing upon the completion of the drawing. These questions will be adapted from Dr Black's School Related Projective Questions (Zians 1997:76) as incorporated in Appendix C.

### **3.3.4 Processing, analysis and interpretation of data**

Analysis of the participants drawings will be based upon the categories as discussed above in 3.3.3.4, specifically Table 3.1 and 3.2. These guidelines are in accordance with work done by Skybo and Zians.

According to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006:402), qualitative data are analysed inductively. The researcher does not impose or make assumptions about the relationships among the data before collective evidence. The researcher focuses on discovery and understanding. This required flexibility in the research design. As data are analysed, the researcher seeks to find patterns, relationships or common themes amongst the data.

Transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews with participants will be produced. Non-verbal communications will be noted on these transcripts. Separate transcripts will be produced for the interviews with the parent/s of the participants. The content of these transcripts will then be analysed and coded. The main method of data analysis will be content analysis. Content analysis is a method of sorting the content of communications. Content analysis is defined by Holsti (1969) in Stemler (2001:1) as "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specific characteristics of messages." Content analysis helps researchers to sift through large volumes of data in a systematic fashion and can be a useful technique for allowing researchers to discover and describe the focus of an individual or group. Content analysis allows inferences to be made, which can then be corroborated using other methods of data collection. The major benefit of using content analysis comes from the fact that it is a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Stemler 2001:3).



### 3.3.4.1 Content categories and codes

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:467) define coding as a “process of dividing data into parts by a classification system”. According to Gay et al., (2006:471), coding involves the “process of categorically marking or referencing units of text with codes and labels as a way to indicate patterns and meaning.”

There are two approaches to coding data:

#### 1. Emergent coding

The categories are established following preliminary examination of data. Emergent coding will be used in this research for the analysis of interview transcripts. The following steps will be followed in this regard (Stemler 2001:3):

- Two people independently review the material and come up with a set of features that form a checklist.
- The notes are then compared and differences that show up in the initial checklist are reconciled.
- A consolidated checklist is then used to independently apply coding to data.
- The two people then check the reliability of the coding. 95% agreement is suggested.

#### 2. Priori coding

Priori coding is another coding method whereby categories are established prior to the analysis of data based on theory. Categories are agreed upon and coding is then applied to data. Revisions are made as necessary.

### 3.3.4.2 Data display

Data will be displayed in an organised, concise assembly of information so that conclusions can be drawn in chapter 4 and 5. The reduced set of data will be used as a basis of thinking about its meaning and will be of assistance in drawing conclusions (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:462).

### 3.3.4.3 Intercoder reliability

A second coder will code two ‘full’ transcripts, randomly selected, to ensure that there is agreement on the allocation of codes and thus intercoder reliability.

## 3.4 ETHICS

Ethics is not a simple matter and depends not only on the code of ethics of controlling bodies but also on the ethical perspective of the researcher. According to Smith (1990) in Gay et al.

(2006:408), “The researcher should have an ethical perspective that is very close to their personal ethic position.”

### **3.4.1 Participant selection**

Some groups are vulnerable to exploitation in research. In this regards, Tisdale (2004:21) makes the following statement: “To be considered vulnerable, the population must be one that, in addition to being easily available, has been historically viewed as less than ‘desirable.’ In light of this, learners with learning problems could possibly be viewed as a vulnerable group and therefore special care should be taken to ensure that ethical principals and practices are followed throughout the study.

### **3.4.2 Informed consent**

Prior to the onset of the research, consent must be obtained from the Headmaster of the independent school at which research is planned to take place (see Addendum E).

According Gay et al. (2006:409), the following points are important regarding informed consent:

- Informed consent should take the form of a dialogue that mutually shapes the research and the results.
- Confidentiality is of utmost importance for protecting both research informants and participants. The use of pseudonyms is recommended so as to assist towards concealing the identities of the participants.

As the research participants in this study are children between the ages of 9 and 10 years of age informed consent will be obtained from a parent or legal representative.

Parental consent will be requested in writing (see Appendix B) and will specify the following:

- the general purpose of the research,
- the nature of the child’s involvement, and
- the child’s freedom to withdraw from the research at any point. In addition mention will be made of the fact the child’s identity will be protected when the findings are reported.

Over and above the written consent obtained from the parent or legal guardian, the learners taking part in the study will sign an assent form.

### **3.4.3 Confidentiality**

The participants’ disclosures are unlikely to be of an extremely private nature, however, confidentiality will be ensured through the use of pseudonyms. Data will be gathered by means of a

voice recorder through interviews, observations and projection media in the form of drawings. Participants will be ensured that information gathered will be treated as confidential.

#### **3.4.4 Prevention of adverse consequence**

“Qualitative researchers are morally bound to conduct their research in a manner that minimises potential harm to those involved in the study. As such, researchers need to convey with confidence to participants that they will not come to harm as a result of involvement in research (Gay et al 2006:409).” Special attention will be paid to ensure that participating in the study does not render the participants vulnerable to their teachers or peers. Data collection will occur after the school day so as not to interfere with participants’ daily school routine. Due to the fact that the interview may in itself be stressful for the learners, the interview will be terminated with progressive relaxation exercises to music as well as a visualization exercise. The collected raw data (drawings and transcripts) will be shredded after two years upon completion of the study.

#### **3.4.5 Other ethical considerations**

According to Smith (1990) in Gay et al. (2006:409), the following ethical considerations also need to be taken into account during research:

- Qualitative researchers must remain attentive to the relationships between the researcher and the participants. This relationship is determined by roles, status, language and cultural norms.
- The researcher needs to pay attention to the research processes of giving information, reciprocity, collaboration and be sensitive to how these processes are viewed by the participants in research.
- An action is not ethical unless it conforms to ethical standards such as honesty and justice. The principle of “do unto others as you would be done by” is relevant in this regard.

### **3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Quantitative research is evaluated against criteria such as “reliability” and “validity”. These criteria are however not applicable to qualitative research. In qualitative research, the terms trustworthiness and understanding are used to describe the validity of the data. According to Gay et al. (2006:403), trustworthiness can be established by addressing the credibility, transferability, dependability and the confirmability of the studies findings. These four criteria will be briefly discussed below.

- **Credibility** - Credibility refers to the researchers ability to take into account all of the complexities that present themselves in a study and deal with patterns that are not easily explained (Gay et al. 2006:405).
- **Transferability** - Applicability refers to the degree to which the findings can be generalised to larger populations. Research findings are transferable if they fit into similar contexts outside the study situation. To accomplish transferability of research findings, detailed descriptive data as well as detailed descriptions of the context need to be collected (Gay et al. 2006:405).
- **Dependability** - Research findings are considered to be consistent if the same results are obtained when the enquiry is replicated with the same subjects or in a similar context. This implies stability of data (Gay et al. 2006:405).
- **Confirmability** - Neutrality indicates that the research results and findings are without bias. Reflexivity is important in this regard. The researcher needs to reveal underlying assumptions or biases that may cause them to formulate a set of questions or present findings in a particular way (Gay et al. 2006:405).

### 3.6 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to give detail regarding the case study methodology that will be used in this research. Data collection, sample selection and ethical considerations of the research project were also addressed. In addition the chapter explains how the data will be collected and how data analysis will serve to incorporate findings from the literature review and answer the critical research questions.

## Chapter 4

### EMPIRICAL STUDY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the empirical data obtained through various means, will be discussed. Data was collected as follows:

- Grade 3 and Grade 4 teachers, at an inclusive, independent school in the Western Cape were asked to identify learners with learning problems in their classes. The teachers were then asked to evaluate these learners on the *Checklist for Stress Symptoms* (Appendix A).
- The three learners who scored the highest on the *Checklist for Stress Symptoms*, all of them Grade 4 learners, were then selected to participate in the research.
- Parental permission was obtained for the learners to participate in the research. Parents also participated in the research through an interview with the researcher. The interviews with the parents of the selected learners took place prior to the interviews with the learners (Appendix D).
- Interviews with the selected learners then took place. During these interviews, the learners were asked to complete two drawings (Draw-A-Person and Kinetic School Drawing). They were also asked to state their “Three-Wishes” and then asked interview questions as in Appendix C.

#### 4.2 LEARNER PARTICIPANTS IN THIS STUDY

Three learners, two boys and a girl participated in this study. These three learners share the following characteristics:

- They have been identified as individuals with learning problems.
- They all currently attend an inclusive, independent school in the Western Cape.

- They have been identified as individuals who manifest high scores on the *Checklist for stress symptoms* (Appendix A).

In order to protect the anonymity of the participants and uphold confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used. A brief description of the three participant learners follows.

- Learner 1 – (MC)

MC is currently in Grade 4, aged 9 years and 9 months at the time of this research. He lives with his mother and sees his father daily. MC's parents have been divorced for several years. MC has three much older brothers who live away from home. MC has not formally been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, although diagnostic tests conducted by specialists have identified in him many traits associated with Asperger's Syndrome.

- Learner 2 – (ES)

ES is currently a Grade 4 learner, aged 10 years at the time of this research. ES lives with her mother and older brother. Her parents have recently separated. ES has been diagnosed as a child with ADHD and is currently taking Ritalin LA.

- Learner 3 – (MR)

MR is currently a Grade 4 learner, aged 9 years and 11 months at the time of this research. He lives with both of his parents and his older sister. MR has been diagnosed as a child with ADHD and is currently taking Ritalin LA.

### **4.3 PARENT PARTICIPANTS IN THIS STUDY**

- Parent 1 – (P1)

P1 is MC's mother. P1 works from home.

- Parent 2 – (P2)

P2 is ES's mother. P2 does not work outside of the home.

- Parent 3 – (P3)

P3 is MR's mother. P3 does not work outside of the home.

#### 4.4 STRESS AND LEARNING PROBLEMS

As outlined in Chapter 2 of this study (2.4.2), for the purpose of this study, the following three sources of stress will be central to the conceptualisation of stress as experienced by learners with learning problems. The focus will be on stress as experienced in the school environment.

- 1) Stress may result from a perceived or anticipated demand that a person feels she/he is unable to meet, e.g. when learners doubt their ability to pass a test.
- 2) Stress may take the form of 'overload' in that too much is expected, e.g. when a learner is unable to keep up with his/her peers in his/her learning due to learning problems.
- 3) Stress may occur when a person's expectations regarding an important area of his/her life are not met by the reality of the experience, e.g. a child who has been looking forward to starting school and then really struggles with the demands of school work.

These sources of stress will be referred to as S1 (1 above), S2 (2 above) and S3 (three above) in the proceeding sections.

##### 4.4.1 Stress symptoms as rated by teachers and parents

Teachers and parents of the three participant learners were asked to complete the *Checklist for Stress Symptoms* (Appendix A) and scored in accordance with the procedure set out in Appendix G. The following table summarises the scores obtained.

**TABLE 4.1: Scores obtained from the Checklist for Stress Symptoms**

	MC		ES		MR	
	Teacher	Parent	Teacher	Parent	Teacher	Parent
Physical stress symptoms	4	20	21	14	0	2
Psychological stress symptoms	40	37	40	52	34	33
Behavioural stress symptoms	15	25	23	30	22	26
<b>Total score</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>61</b>

Discrepancies in scores of teachers and parents are notable in the above table.

Several reasons for the discrepancy in scores could be considered; amongst these could be the following:

- Learners' could manifest more stress symptoms at home than they do at school
- Learners' mothers may be more sensitive towards their child's stress symptoms than the teacher
- Learners' may manage their stress levels better at school than they do at home.

#### 4.5 DATA COLLECTION FOR THIS RESEARCH

Data collected comprised of the following:

- Draw-A-Person (DAP drawings were drawn by each of the learner participants).
  - All drawings were evaluated and analysed individually by two people. Firstly by myself and subsequently by my colleague (JD – a registered counselling psychologist), as recommended by Skybo and discussed in Chapter 3 (3.3.3.4). Agreement was reached independently on 95% of the items.
  - Emotional indicators for the DAP drawings of the learners were indentified and are tabulated below.

**TABLE 4.2: Emotional indicators from learner participants' DAPs**

Scoring: 0 = not present in drawing 1= present in drawing							
MC	ES	MR		MC	ES	MR	
0	0	1	Poor integration of parts of figure	0	0	0	Omission of eyes
1	0	0	Shading the face or part of it	0	0	1	Omission of nose
0	0	0	Shading the body and/or limbs	0	0	0	Omission of mouth
0	0	0	Shading the hands and/or neck	0	0	0	Omission of body
0	0	0	Gross asymmetry of limbs	0	0	0	Omission of arms
0	0	0	Figure slanting by 15 degrees or more	0	0	0	Omission of legs



0	0	0	Tiny figure, 2 inches or less in height	0	0	0	Omission of feet
0	0	0	Big figure, 9 inches or more in height	0	0	0	Omission of neck
0	0	1	Transparencies				
0	0	0	Tiny head, 1/10 <sup>th</sup> of total height of figure				
0	0	0	Crossed eyes, both eyes turned inwards				
0	0	0	Teeth				
0	1	0	Short arms, not long enough to reach waist line				
0	0	0	Long arms, that could reach below knees				
0	0	0	Arms clinging to side of body				
0	0	0	Big hands, bigger than face of figure				
0	0	0	Hands cut off, arms without hands and fingers				
0	0	0	Legs pressed together				
0	0	0	Genitals				
0	0	0	Monster or grotesque figure				
0	0	0	Three or more figures spontaneously drawn				
0	0	0	Clouds, rain, snow				
<b>Total</b>				<b>Total</b>			
1	1	2		0	0	1	

- Kinetic School Drawings (KSD) were drawn by each of the learner participants.

All drawings were evaluated and analysed individually by two people. Firstly, by the researcher and subsequently by the researcher's colleague (JD – a registered counselling psychologist), as recommended by Skybo and discussed in Chapter 3 (3.3.3.4). Agreement was reached independently on 95% of items.

As discussed in Chapter 3 (refer to 3.3.3.4), the Kinetic School Drawing can be used to yield data regarding a child's perceptions and attitudes towards school and peer acceptance. The three learner participants in this study each completed a Kinetic School Drawing. These drawings are interpreted below according to the guidelines proposed by Zians (Refer to Chapter 3: Table 3.2).

- The Three Wishes

The participant learners were each asked to tell the researcher of the three wishes that they would like to be granted.

- Interviews with learner participants

The interviews conducted with the learner participants were interpreted using the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach. According to Smith and Osborn (2006:51), the aim of this approach is to "explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world." This approach aims to try and understand the experiences and perceptions of the participant. The IPA approach is well suited to qualitative studies that utilise small sample sizes (Smith & Osborn:2006) and thus was chosen to analyse the semi-structured interview transcripts in this study.

- Interviews with the learners' parents were conducted, recorded, transcribed and summarised.

## **4.6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS RELATING TO CHILD 1(MC) AND PARENT 1(P1)**

### **4.6.1 Interview with P1**

During the interview with MC's mother (P1) she mentioned that MC was diagnosed last year as a child with many Asperger's traits, but not a child who fulfils the complete set of criteria for Asperger's Syndrome. She described him as a child who is easily fatigued by physical activity and who is very tired after a full day at school. This makes doing homework difficult at times. She stated that he is generally a tense and anxious child who dislikes changes in his daily routine. This anxiety manifests in nervous fine-motor behaviours such as chewing and motor tics. MC has difficulty falling asleep at times and P1 attributes this to MC's inability to "shut down." (Refer to transcript 1:4 [interchangeably referred to as T1:4]) P1 suggested that MC is prone to excessive worry.

According to P1, MC struggles in social situations and he feels socially inadequate. He finds it difficult to connect with people of his own age. He becomes anxious when attending social events and resists doing so. P1 also stated that MC has a low frustration tolerance and finds it difficult to wait for his needs to be met. He can become frustrated and irritable easily. P1 described MC as being "in his own

little world” and as having “very selective concentration.” (Refer to transcript 1:3) MC has a special interest in computers and gaming and spends much of his free time on his computer.

P1 is of the opinion that MC is happy to come to school in the mornings and enjoys the computer classes and his interaction with his friend, D, at school. (Refer to transcript 1:4). He also gets along well with his teachers. Negative aspects of school for MC, according to P1, are sports activities and lessons, homework and negative interaction with peers on occasion (Refer to transcript 1:5). P1 sees MC’s school experience as mostly positive. She attributes his high stress levels and anxiety partially to intrinsic characteristics and partially to his slow pace of work, daydreaming and poor time management. From the above information, as given by P1, the following school-related stresses can be identified:

- Changes in routine
- Homework pressure
- Social interactions
- Not having his needs met immediately
- School sport
- Negative interactions with peers
- Slow pace of work and poor time management resulting in “getting behind.”

#### **4.6.2 Interview with C1 (MC)**

Several themes and sub-themes emerged from this interview transcript. These themes will be listed and discussed below. The three main sources of stress (as mentioned in Chapter 4 section 4.4) will be indicated, where relevant, in the columns on the right-hand side of the table.

**TABLE 4.3: Themes and sub-themes for MC**

Themes and sub-themes			
1) Sources of enjoyment at school			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-academic activities</li> <li>• Academic activities</li> <li>• Friendship</li> <li>• Physical activities</li> </ul>			
2) Challenges at school			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic challenges</li> <li>• Organisational challenges</li> <li>• Relationship challenges</li> </ul>			
3) Stresses at school	S1	S2	S3
• Relationship challenges			√
• Physical demands	√		
• Academic demands and task completion		√	
• Organisational skills	√		
• Recurring thoughts		√	
4) Coping with challenges and stress at school			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perseverance</li> <li>• Breaking things/tasks up</li> <li>• Suppression of negative thoughts</li> </ul>			

#### 4.6.2.1 Theme 1 - Sources of enjoyment at school

During the interview with MC, several sources of enjoyment at school emerged. These will be discussed below. Direct reference to the interview transcript for MC will be given. T4 refers to this

specific interview transcript. Page numbers for specific quotes will also be indicated and highlighted on the transcript.

a) Non-academic activities

MC stated that his favourite activity at school is to “watch movies” (T4:8) MC also indicated that he thought that he was good at “clubs” at school (T4:9). This took him some time to think of. Clubs is a non-academic time at school where the learners get an opportunity to learn different skills. Both of these favoured school activities are non-academic tasks. This may be an indication that MC feels that he is not very good at academic subjects.

b) Academic activities

MC enjoys Mathematics (T4:8) at school and finds spelling tests (T4:8) and reading easy (T4:14). MC also stated “I do my best in Maths” (T4:9), although he said that division sums were the hardest thing at school (T4:10). This indicates that MC is able to persevere with tasks that he finds difficult.

c) Friendship

MC finds social interactions difficult, as discussed above in the interview with P1. He has one particular friend at school, referred to in transcript 4 as D (T4:10). One of the things that make him feel happy at school is his friend, D (T4:13). MC seems to interact with other learners at times, as he stated that “I like talking to him (RB) sometimes at the desk, we don’t talk a lot though” (T4:10). This positive peer interaction is clearly very important to MC.

d) Physical activities

Generally, MC becomes easily fatigued by physical activity, as mentioned by P1. He enjoys swimming at school, when he remembers to take his swimming things to school. He also prefers hockey to rugby.

#### **4.6.2.2 Theme 2 - Challenges at school**

Several areas of challenge at school emerged during the interview with MC. These areas of challenge are briefly discussed below.

a) Academic challenges

Afrikaans was MC’s least favourite subject at school (T4:10). He also finds division sums difficult, as discussed above.

b) Organisational challenges

Organisational skills are clearly an area of difficulty for MC. He stated that swimming was his worst thing at school although he enjoys swimming itself. The reason for him “hating swimming” (T4:9), is because he rarely remembers to take his swimming things to school.

c) Relationship challenges

MC becomes “sad” when a child teases him at school (T4:11).

#### 4.6.2.3 Theme 3 – Stresses at school

The focus of this study is stresses experienced by learners with learning problems in an inclusive classroom at an Independent School. This section will therefore be of primary importance to this study. During the interview with MC, several stresses at school were identified. These are discussed below.

a) Physical demands

MC expresses concerns about attending school camps. He said that he gets “nervous of school camps” (T4:12). When asked why he feels nervous about school camps, he replied: “I think that it is going to be quite difficult to do” (T4:12). MC was referring to the physical activities that the learners are involved in at camp. During the interview with P1, she had also mentioned that he becomes very fatigued by physical activity (T1:1). P1 also made the following statement regarding school sports: “He does not enjoy sport. He has an acute awareness that he is not good at it. He is very aware of his limitations because of his poor muscle tone. He will participate because he knows he needs to” (T1:5).

From the above, it seems likely that the physical demands of school sport and school camps are a source of stress for MC. This stress may be as a result of a perceived or anticipated demand which he feels he will be unable to meet (S1).

b) Academic demands and task completion

MC chose non-academic activities as his favourite activities and also evaluated himself as being good at a non-academic activity. He took quite some time to think of something that he viewed himself as good at. This may indicate that MC has a poor academic self-image. MC also stated the following: “Hard times table tests like the times 7 table and the 12 times table. The hard timetables, that’s the ones I struggle with” (T4:13). This statement indicates that MC struggles with some academic tasks and this may cause him stress (S1).

When asked directly what makes him feel stressed at school, MC replied: “Yes, when there’s lots of sums on one page. I think AAAHH there’s so much sums here, OH do I have to do them all!” (T4:13).

This statement clearly expresses feelings of stress in the form of “overload’ in that too much is expected (S3).

P1 also expresses that MC does not cope with the homework load and that the homework pressure is too much for MC (T1:1), once again indicating stress in the form of ‘overload’ (S3).

c) Organisational skills

MC stated that he hated swimming lessons. When asked why this was the case, he said “I hardly remember when it is swimming” (T4:9). MC explained that he likes swimming, but hates forgetting to take his swimming things to school. This appears to be a source of stress for MC in that he may feel that he is unable to meet the demands placed on him; in this case, remembering to pack his swimming things on the required day (S1).

d) Recurring thoughts

MC has recurring negative thoughts at times. P1 explained that MC worries excessively about several things, including the state of the planet and war (T1:2). MC talked about a ‘horrible video’ he saw at school. He stated that he did get over it, but that “I had it on my mind for a few weeks” (T4:9). This indicates that MC has difficulty at times with recurring thoughts.

e) Relationship challenges

MC has one special friend at school. He places high importance on this friendship (T4:10). P1 emphasised that MC really struggles socially and tends to connect to one person on a commonality (T1:3). MC also expressed that when other learners tease him or say nasty things to him, he feels sad and stressed (T4:11; T4:14). This would indicate stress when a person’s expectations regarding an important area of his/her life are not met by the reality of the experience (S3).

#### **4.6.2.4 Theme 4 - Coping with challenges and stresses at school**

MC demonstrates the following skills in dealing with his stress at school. These skills may assist him to cope better with his own stress levels.

a) Perseverance

When faced with a difficult activity, MC states that he ‘tries to think harder’ (T4:13) and that he also tries his best with Maths. These statements show that MC can persevere when things are difficult for him.

b) Breaking things/tasks up

MC explained how he manages to cope with a whole page of sums that make him feel overwhelmed. The following is an extract from T4:15

C1: No, you've got to do that (referring to the whole page of sums).

VK: You've got to do them, yes.

C1: There is no ways I can get rid of that.

VK: No, you can't get rid of that, so how do you approach that when you see that whole page of maths and you go AAHH I've got to do all these sums. How do you get yourself to feel less stressed?

C1: I get a few of them to get them slowly.

VK: Oh that's a good thing. Take a few and then another few and then you break it down into smaller bits

C1: Yes, it takes me quite some time to do those sums, but I did get them done.

VK: There we go so you found a way hey?

C1: Yes I get past them.

VK: You've found a way of getting it to work for you.

This extract demonstrates that MC breaks up the whole page of sums into doing a few at a time, and that way manages to work his way through them. He makes the task less overwhelming in this way. This is a positive way of dealing with his feelings of stress.

c) Suppression of negative thoughts

MC worries about things and tends to have recurring thoughts about things that worry him (as discussed above in 4.5.1.3 d above). When asked about how he deals with these thoughts, he responded as follows: (T4:14)

C1: By not thinking of it

VK: By not thinking of it. Do you think you could just have a thing to put it?

C1: Yes, like that DVD. That also made me feel terrible.

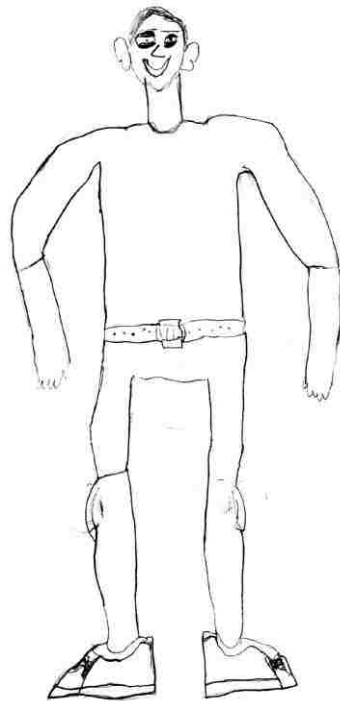
VK: That also made you very stressed and how did you make that stress better?

C1: By not thinking of it. I tried, I did my best to keep it out of my mind. I think about other things.

From the above, it appears that MC makes a cognitive decision to not think about or suppress negative or upsetting thoughts. The way in which he explains it gives the impression that it is a choice he has made, as opposed to avoidance behaviour. In this way he manages to reduce his own stress.

#### 4.6.3 MC's DAP – Observations and overall impressions



**FIGURE 4.1: Draw-A-Person by MC**

MC drew a young man whom he named “Sleepy Pete.” He paid much attention to detail whilst drawing and the drawing took him 30 minutes to complete. Sleepy Pete is 20 years old. MC started drawing at the bottom of the page and rubbed out frequently. He counted the fingers on the hands three times to check that he had drawn the correct number of fingers. MC drew and rubbed out the arms of his person twice before he was happy with them, stating initially that they were too long and then too short/little. MC was animated whilst drawing and laughed a lot. Whilst drawing, MC fiddled with the table cover and the pencils on the table. He “tidied up” his drawing at the end, by rubbing out sketchy lines and replacing them with firmer lines.

The overall impression gained from the drawing is fairly rigid and robot-like. It gives a strong sense of being mechanical. The head appears small for the body and although the figure is happy and smiling, the drawing creates a strange atmosphere, possibly due to the very large ears and heavily shaded eyes.

The focal point of the drawing is the very large body, which has quite a stand-offish feel. The head and facial features are the last aspect of the drawing that one’s eyes are drawn to, perhaps giving the impression of inaccessibility. This may well emphasise MC’s difficulties with social interaction and interpersonal engagement in reality. This could further be highlighted by the fact that MC started the

drawing at the feet, as opposed to the head. The frequent rubbing out may indicate feelings of being unsure of himself and anxiety.

MC's DAP will be discussed in greater detail below.

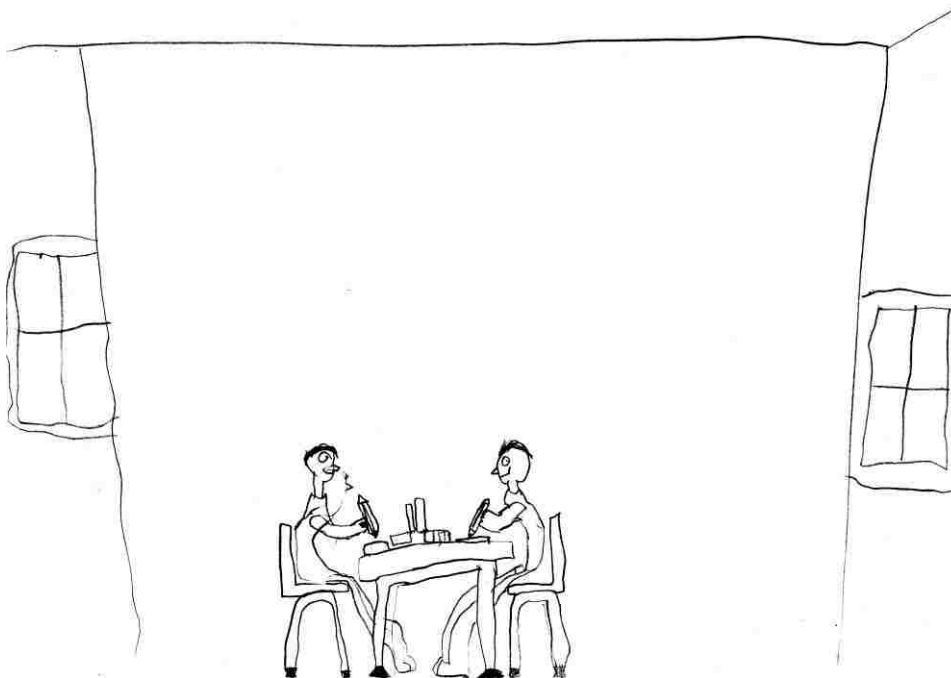
**TABLE 4.4: DAP analysis for MC**

	Determinant	Interpretation of response	Comment
1	Small head	May indicate feelings of inadequacy intellectually or socially and/or adjustment difficulties.	MC struggles to complete academic tasks and finds interacting with his peers difficult.
2	Long neck	A separation of intellectual ideas from emotions and feelings.	MC tends to deal with the world in a cognitive manner as opposed to an emotional manner. He finds it difficult to connect with others.
3	Heavily shaded eyes (Emotional indicator – refer to table 4.5.1.4)	Possible anxiety and/or suspiciousness.	MC becomes anxious easily when any unexpected events or changes in his day to day routine occur.
4	Very large feet/shoes	Suggest excessive security needs	MC needs to be prepared for any upcoming social events or changes in his routine.
5	Large ears	Possible auditory difficulties. Hypersensitivity to criticism.	MC tends to be noise sensitive and is easily distracted by noise.
6	Vague hands	Suggest a lack of confidence in social situations and general lack of confidence.	MC finds it difficult to read social cues and struggles to interact with his peers.
7	Older figure than subject	Suggests identification with parent image.	MC identifies well with both of his parents.
8	Drawing is slightly to the left of page.	May indicate impulsive acting out behaviour.	MC has emotional outbursts at times, usually due to changes in routine. (Refer to transcript 1)

9	Robotic like figure	Possible emotional disturbances with feelings of depersonalisation.	MC has an intense interest in computer games and bionikles (Refer to transcript 4: //)His robot-like drawing may be a reflection of this.
10	Stiff posture	Suggests tension and has been associated with depression.	MC is prone to tension and anxiety (Refer to transcript 1)
<b>Line quality</b>			
11	Initial short, sketchy lines	Insecurity, timidity and anxiety	MC experiences anxiety frequently and is very unsure of himself in social situations.
12	Rubbing out frequently	May indicate uncertainty, indecisiveness and possible anxiety and a need for help.	MC needs routine and structure. He becomes anxious easily.

#### 4.6.4 Kinetic School Drawing done by MC

**FIGURE 4.2: Kinetic School Drawing by MC**



<b>TABLE 4.5: Analysis of KSD for MC</b>	
<b>Picture variables</b>	<b>MC</b>
<b>Global</b>	
Taking clues from picture for most important element	Picture fairly empty except for the two figures and the wall and window detail. The learners in the picture are not engaged in a shared activity, but are working individually.
Obtain insight into child's life from feeling or mood of the picture	Learner seems to be involved in activity and unaware of external surroundings, both animate and inanimate.
<b>Content</b>	
Sizes of people	The sizes of the figures are in proportion to the relative size of the classroom environment.
Activity self is engaged in	Engaged in solitary written activity.
Academic vs non-academic task	Academic activity.
Relationships in picture as portrayed by activity, physical position and facial expressions	Working at a table with one other child at table. Both learners are engaged in their own individual tasks. Working independently, whilst facing one another. A sense of engagement is evident in the picture and figures appear to be looking at or towards one another. No other people present in the picture.
Who is drawn in the picture	MC drew himself and another child/boy.
Detail or lack of detail	Some detail given in chairs, windows and table. Of note, are the items on the table (e.g. workbook, space case and pencils) which are drawn with great detail. Rest of the drawing is "empty".
Postures of people	Sitting upright at a desk.
<b>Style</b>	
Stress upon pencil	Lines are not too heavy, although some pressure is evident. Lots of rubbing out and overworking of the drawing.
Spatial arrangement of picture	Figures are central and grounded.
<b>Symbolism</b>	
Obvious signs and symbols that are salient to the child	None noted
How school is portrayed (Building, school yard and classroom)	Classroom detail is sparse and only two people present in the classroom. The focus in the drawing is on academic activity with no adults/ teachers or other learners present.

Details	Details on pencils, table and chairs.
Colours	No colours used
Age	
Progression of detail for older children	Age appropriate
Stick figures show resistant behaviour	No stick figures present
Ability to share information in drawing task	MC struggled to initiate the activity. He found it very difficult to stay focused on the task (refer to Transcript VK/C1), but was able to share some information about the drawing.

#### 4.6.5 MC's three wishes

**TABLE 4.6: MC'S three wishes**

MC's three wishes	
1	I wish I had all the computer games in the world.
2	I wish that toys can be cheap.
3	I wish that I can know what games are still going to be made.

MC's three wishes confirm his avid interest in computer gaming and his aspiration to learn more about and own more of this area of interest.

#### 4.6.6 Summary of possible school stresses for MC

From the data analysed above, the following possible school stresses can be identified for MC:

**TABLE 4.7: Possible school stresses for MC**

Stresses	Interview with P1	Interview with MC	DAP(Possible indicators of stress)	KSD(Possible indicators of stress)	Three wishes
Changes in routine	√				
Homework pressure	√				
Social interaction and possible feelings of isolation	√	√	√	√	

Physical demands (sport)	√	√			
Negative interaction with peers	√	√			
Academic demands (time management / pace of work/ organisational skills)	√	√	√		
Recurring thoughts (at school and at home)	√	√			
Possible detachment of intellect and emotions			√	√	

#### 4.7 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS RELATING TO CHILD 2 (ES) AND PARENT 2 (P2)

##### 4.7.1 Interview with P2

During the interview with ES's mother, P2 stated that EC was diagnosed as an ADHD child and that she takes Ritalin, Risperdal and an anti-depressant medication. Although P2 does not like ES to take these medications, she feels that it is necessary for her daily functioning. P1 describes ES as manifesting several physical symptoms of stress, including frequent tummy aches, difficulties falling asleep, occasional headaches and muscular aches and pains (Refer to transcript 2:1). According to P2, ES has a very poor appetite and this is aggravated by the medication that she takes (Refer to transcript 2:8).

P2 perceives ES as being prone to negative thinking, excessive worry and mood swings (Refer to transcript 2:4). She stated that ES really struggles to get herself organised and tends to forget things frequently (Refer to transcript 2:3). P2 is of the opinion that ES experiences feelings of inadequacy and failure and expresses these feelings verbally (Refer to transcript 2:2). P1 described ES as a child who is easily frustrated, who is irritable and who needs instant gratification, the failure of which results in outbursts of anger and verbal aggression, often directed at P2.

P2 mentioned that ES develops sudden fears, which soon disappear and are replaced by other fears (Refer to transcript 2:5-6). ES's paediatrician recently prescribed an anti-depressant for ES as according to P2, ES becomes depressed about feeling different from her peers. The anti-depressant should also help her with her high stress levels (Refer to transcript 2:6). P2 says that at school, ES struggles to keep up with academic work because her pace of work is very slow and she is easily distracted. ES tends to lose interest in things quickly and she does not enjoy school sport. According to P2, ES has good relationships with most of her teachers, as she is a very loveable child. Her peer

relationships are at times more difficult and P2 says that ES tends to be “a bit bossy” (Refer to transcript 2:10). P2 rates ES’s general school experience as a 5/10 and thinks she would prefer to be home schooled (Refer to transcript 2:10). P2 ascribes ES’s negative experiences with teachers (being shouted at, getting into trouble and being belittled by teachers in front of others) as a negative impact on ES’s perception of school (Refer to transcript 2:11&12).

From the above information, as given by P2 the following school-related stresses can be identified:

- Social interactions
  - ▶ Teacher interactions
  - ▶ peer interactions
- Being in trouble at school
- Not having her needs met immediately
- Physical demands/School sport
- Academic demands
  - ▶ Slow pace of work
  - ▶ Poor time management, resulting in “getting behind.”
  - ▶ Poor organisational skills

#### 4.7.2 Interview with C2 (ES)

**TABLE 4.8: Themes and sub-themes for ES**

Themes and sub-themes
1) Sources of enjoyment at school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-academic activities</li> <li>• Academic activities</li> <li>• Friendship</li> <li>• Strengths</li> </ul>

2)Challenges at school			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic challenges</li> <li>• Organisational challenges</li> <li>• Relationship challenges</li> <li>• Feelings of anger and aggression</li> </ul>			
	S1	S2	S3
3)Stresses at school			
• Relationship challenges(peers)			√
• Academic demands		√	
▶ Organisational skills	√		
▶ Task completion		√	
▶ Test anxiety		√	
▶ Concentration difficulties		√	
• Loneliness			√
• Expectations of others	√		
• A need for inner calm	√		
4)Coping with challenges and stress at school			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive self-talk</li> </ul>			

#### 4.7.2.1 Theme 1 - Sources of enjoyment at school

During the interview with ES, several sources of enjoyment at school emerged. These will briefly be discussed below. Direct reference to the interview transcript for ES will be given. T5 refers to this specific interview transcript. Page numbers for specific quotes will also be indicated and highlighted on the transcript.

##### a) Non-academic activities

ES enjoys drama, art, singing and library at school. She especially likes reading and she said the following in this regard: “Yes, I love books. Reading is basically my life. I love it because it is so full of



adventure” (T5:4). ES also expressed that she likes to see her friends in the morning when she comes to school because “they have a happy smile” (T5:6).

b) Academic activities

ES’s favourite school subject is Life Orientation. She expressed that they draw and sing during this lesson and that she “likes expressing herself” (T5:6).

c) Friendship

ES enjoys going to school in the mornings because she enjoys seeing her friends. The following extract highlights this: “In the morning I like to see my friends when I come to school, they have a happy smile” (T5:8). ES seems to enjoy the company of her peers, as indicated in the following statement.” My friends are so, so funny. They can make you laugh and laugh so they are nice friends to have” (T5:6).

d) Strengths

ES enthusiastically expressed that she loves drama, art, music, singing and reading (T5:6). These are areas in which she does well and as such can be viewed as islands of competence for ES at school.

#### **4.7.2.2 Theme 2 - Challenges at school**

Several areas of challenge at school emerged during the interview with ES. These areas of challenge will be briefly discussed below.

a) Academic challenges

ES does not enjoy Maths at school and chose this as one of her worst things at school (T5:7). ES commented that she finds Maths “boring, all you do is work out sums.” ES also indicated that she finds Maths, times tables and Natural Science difficult subjects (T5:8).

b) Organisational challenges

ES finds it difficult to organise herself and to remember things. She worries that she has forgotten something in the morning when she gets to school. This appears to be a source of stress for ES and will be discussed further below in Theme 3.

c) Relationship challenges

ES articulated that she sometimes got into trouble at school for saying rude things to other children because the other children “tell on” her to the teachers (T5:7). She also expressed and acknowledged

that she can be bossy at times and that this is a problem (T5:8). ES feels that some children pick on her (T5:8) and say rude things about her mom. She also mentioned that she would like to send away “the people” from school, one girl in particular (T5:7). During the interview, ES also stated that she sometimes felt lonely at school and that she always had to ask her friends if she could play with them (T5:9).

From the above, it appears that ES has some difficulties with relationships at school.

#### d) Feelings of anger and aggression

ES indicated that she becomes angry/annoyed when others are mean to her or reject her. The following extract from transcript 5 highlights this point:

VK: How does it make you feel when someone is mean to you?

C2: I just get really, really annoyed. I feel like kicking something and I get angry.

VK: What would you like to do, if you were allowed to?

C2: I would really like to punch or kick the other person, lots of things.

ES clearly has feelings of anger and aggression at times at school and needs to deal with this in an appropriate way.

### 4.7.2.3 Theme 3 – Stresses at school

The focus of this study is stresses experienced by learners with learning problems in an inclusive classroom at an Independent School. This section will therefore be of primary importance to this study. During the interview with ES, several stresses at school were identified. These will be discussed below.

#### a) Relationships with peers

During the interview with ES, she indicated that if she could get rid of one thing at school, it would be “the people” (T5:7). She then added “there is one girl I would like to send away... She is not nice to me. She bullies me. She acts too big for her boots. She always rolls her eyes at me.”

ES also mentioned that some children pick on her at school. “There is a boy DR and a girl CG who pick on me... He says such rude things to me. He even told me that my mom was fat. He often says rude things about my mom. We just don’t get along. I try to stay out of his way but every time he is whispering at his table and he always looks at me when he is doing it. I just tell him to leave me alone.(T5:8). ES acknowledged that she was “bossy” at times and that children sometimes tease her because she can be “bossy and a bit rude” (T5:8).

### b) Academic demands

ES expressed that she dislikes Maths and would like to “send it away.” She finds Maths boring and difficult. She also said the following regarding Natural Science:

“I can’t catch up with everybody. The teacher shouts at me when I can’t finish my work. I was sick for a few days and then it was hard for me to catch up my work and then I got shouted at.”

This statement shows that ES finds it difficult to complete tasks and that she may get into trouble with teachers because of this.

#### ► Organisational skills

ES expressed the following in relation to organisational skills and the stress she experiences in this regard:

In the mornings, I am particularly nervous because I don’t know if I have forgotten something. I don’t know if I have forgotten this or that, have I done this, have I done that (T5:9).

ES said that she worries about things when she gets to school in the morning. She explained her feelings of nervousness in the following way: “I jump around until the bell rings and think of lots of things” (T5:9).

#### ► Task completion

ES attributes much of her school stress to not being able to complete academic tasks. She explained this clearly in the excerpt below (T5:10/11):

VK: Do you feel stressed out at school?

C2: Yes I do. I don’t like doing work because I get more and more stressed because I can’t finish this. School for me is like gone in a minute, but actually it is also really long. It is both.

VK: So you feel stresses when you don’t get your work finished and you get nervous when you think you might have forgotten something or forgotten to do something and you get stressed when you write a test.

C2: Yes

#### ► Concentration difficulties

ES complained that she finds it difficult to finish her work and that she does not like school work for this reason (T5:10). She also expressed that if she could concentrate better, then she would feel less stressed at school (T5:11).

#### ► Test anxiety

The following extract highlights ES's test anxiety (T5:10):

VK: How do you feel when you write a test?

C2: Very nervous. I just really want to please my dad and mom.

VK: Is that what makes you feel nervous?

C2: Yes, if I don't get good marks, I kind of feel disappointed because my dad wants to see me get good marks.

Writing tests and the accompanying feelings of nervousness imply that ES finds writing tests stressful.

c) Loneliness

ES said that she sometimes feels lonely at school (T5:9). In way of explanation, she said the following: "I have to go to my friends, they never come to me. I always have to ask if I can play." From this statement, it appears that ES may be somewhat socially isolated at school.

d) Expectations of others

As discussed under the heading "Test Anxiety" above, ES expressed that she really wants to please her mom and dad by getting good marks at school. She does not want to disappoint her parents by not doing well. ES clearly stated that this makes her feel very nervous when writing tests. This clearly adds to her stress levels.

e) Need for inner calm

Towards the end of the interview, ES said that she would feel less stressed at school if she could "be totally calm all the time" (T5:11). From this statement, one can deduce that ES does not always feel calm and this lack of calm adds to her stress.

#### **4.7.2.4 Theme 4 - Coping with challenges and stresses at school**

ES demonstrates the following skill in dealing with her stress at school. This may assist her in some way to cope better with her own stress levels.

a) Positive self-talk

The following extract from transcript 5 illustrates how ES uses positive self-talk to help lower her stress levels in certain situations:

VK: How do you feel when you go on a stage or have to sing in front of people?

C2: I feel normal. I get a little bit nervous before and then when I am on stage I am nervous and then I tell myself that I can do it and that I need to believe in myself and then I can do it.

This positive self-talk, may well help ES if also used in other stressful situations at school.

#### 4.7.3 ES's DAP - observations and overall impressions

ES drew a 29 year old model, whom she named Rebecca. The general impression that arises from an overview of this drawing is one which gives the impression of fantasy, flamboyance, extravagance and a possible general sense of escaping the present and looking towards an idealised future. This future seems to be characterised by glamour, recognition/fame and happiness. There is, however, a sense of vigilance, fragility and possible helplessness portrayed by the character drawn, which will may well have more to do with the present than the future.

**FIGURE 4.3: Draw-A-Person by ES**



A more detailed analysis of ES's drawing is given below: (Information gained from Transcript 2 and Transcript 5)

**TABLE 4.9: DAP analysis for ES**

	Determinant	Interpretation of response	Comment

1	Large head	Possible anxiety, high achievement aspirations, poor emotional and social adjustment in children with academic difficulties.	ES is a very anxious learner. She experiences academic and social difficulties in her school environment.
2	Tiny waistline	Suggests precarious emotional control, perhaps as expressed by temperamental outbursts.	ES expressed a need for "inner calm" as it is something that she finds difficult to achieve.
3	Short arms (Emotional indicator – refer to table 4.5.1.4)	Feelings of inadequacy, poor adjustment and possible passive dependency.	ES is reliant on her mother to help her with tasks and organisation. She does not view herself as being good at academic subjects.
4	Fewer than five fingers	Feelings of inadequacy	As above
5	Cupid bow shaped mouth	Associated with exhibitionistic tendencies	ES loves drama and singing. She enjoys being on the stage and clearly seeks fame and recognition.
6	Wide eyes	Suggests possible hysteria	ES experiences sudden fears which tend to disappear and be replaced by other fears.
7	Thin/frail arms	Physical or psychological weakness and feelings of inadequacy	ES is very small and thin for her age. She feels "different" from her peers and struggles with peer interactions and academic tasks.
8	Very long legs implied (length of skirt)	Suggest a strong need for or striving towards autonomy.	ES seems to strive for fame/recognition, glamour and happiness.
9	Female figure drawn, significantly older than subject	Suggests identification with parent image.	ES is reliant on her mother for the organisation of her daily routine.
10	Drawing is slightly to the left of page.	May indicate impulsive acting out behaviour	ES has a tendency towards being impulsive.
<b>Line quality</b>			

11	Short, sketchy lines	Insecurity, timidity and anxiety	ES presents as an anxious, nervous learner. P2 expressed that ES feels “different” from her peers.
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#### 4.7.4 Kinetic School Drawing done by ES

**FIGURE 4.4: Kinetics School Drawing by ES**

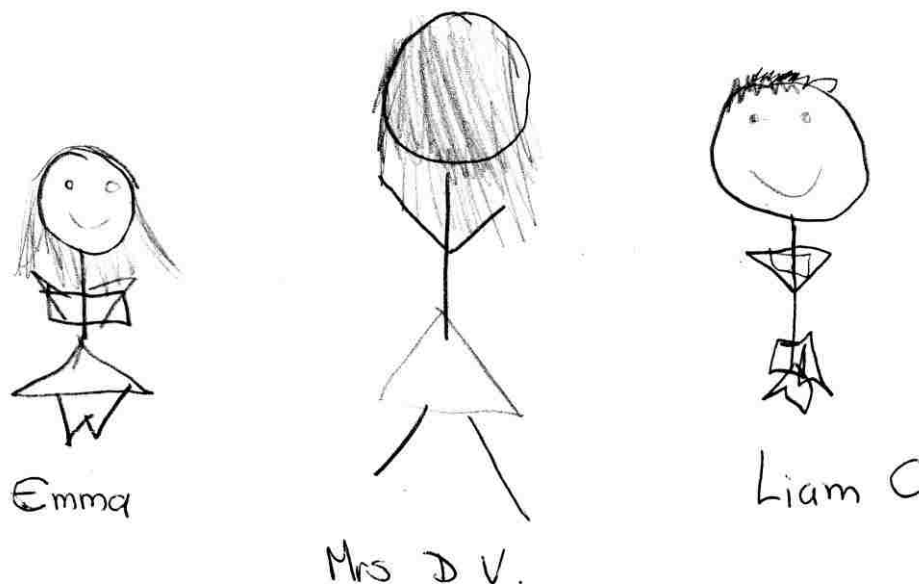


TABLE 4.10: KSD analysis for ES	
Picture variables	ES
<b>Global</b>	
Taking clues from picture for most important element	Stick figures drawn in the picture. The picture appears a bit rushed and little attention to detail is given.
Obtain insight into child's life from feeling or mood of the picture	Referring to transcript VK/C2, the learner has drawn herself in a place where she feels safe, content and happy. She states that “reading is her life.” There is interaction between teacher and learners, as the teacher is talking and they are listening, happily.
<b>Content</b>	
Sizes of people	The sizes of the people are in proportion to the drawing as a whole. The adult/teacher has been depicted as larger than the learners.
Activity self is engaged in	Listening to the librarian, whilst holding a very “large book.” (Refer to transcript VK/C2)
Academic vs. non-academic task	Whilst reading can be an academic activity, for this learner, it is an activity from which she gains pleasure and is passionate about.
Relationships in picture as portrayed by activity,	The two learners in the drawing are engaged in passive interaction with the teacher, i.e. they are listening to the librarian. ES has depicted this as a happy

physical position and facial expressions	activity in a environment in which she feels comfortable. The distance between the two learners is rather large and they are not engaged with one another.
Who is drawn in the picture?	ES drew herself, another learner (a boy) and the Librarian. ES chose to draw a new boy at school after initially saying that it was "just a random person." (Refer to VK/C2)
Detail or lack of detail	Very little detail is shown in the picture.
Postures of people	The two learners are sitting on cushions as the Librarian is standing talking to them, typical of a scene one would find in the school library.
<b>Style</b>	
Stress upon pencil	No undue stress on pencil.
Spatial arrangement of picture	The distance between the learners has been noted as rather large.
<b>Symbolism</b>	
Obvious signs and symbols that are salient to the child	Books and reading are very important to ES. She stated that "reading is basically my life."
How school is portrayed (building, school yard and classroom)	ES depicted herself in the library. She expressed that this was a happy place for her in the school.
Details	The book and the library
Colours	No colour.
<b>Age</b>	
Progression of detail for older children	Little detail given. ES rushed this drawing as she wanted to do something else.
Stick figures show resistant behaviour	All figures are shown as stick figures.
Ability to share information in drawing task	She was able to share information well. She described the emotional significance of the situation depicted in her drawing well as well as the emotional response about doing the drawing (E.g. "I am bored with drawing now.")

#### 4.7.5 Three Wishes

**TABLE 4.11: ES's three wishes**

<b>ES's three wishes</b>
--------------------------



1	I wish I had a happy family.
2	I wish to be famous for my singing.
3	I wish that the world could be eco- i.e. everything being looked after and nothing getting hurt.

- ES's first wish indicates that she does not feel that she has a happy family at the moment. Her parents have recently separated and this has been emotionally very difficult for ES.
- Her second wish re-iterates her desire for fame and recognition and also her love of singing.
- Her third wish gives expression to her possible need to be taken care of, nurtured and protected from hurt.

#### 4.7.6 Summary of possible school stresses for ES

From the data analysed above, the following possible school stresses can be identified for ES:

**TABLE 4.12: Possible school stresses for ES**

Stresses	Interview with P2	Interview with ES	DAP(Possible indicators of stress)	KSD(Possible indicators of stress)	Three wishes
Relationships with peers	√	√	√	√	
Relationships with teachers	√	√			
Loneliness and possible feelings of isolation	√	√		√	
Physical demands (sport)	√				
Expectations of others		√			√
Academic demands (time management / pace of work/ organisational skills/concentration)	√	√		√	
Test anxiety	√	√			
Not having needs met immediately	√				

## **4.8 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS RELATING TO CHILD 3(MR) AND PARENT 3(P3)**

### **4.8.1 Interview with P3**

During the interview with MR's mother, P3 stated that MR was diagnosed as a child with ADHD and that he takes medication for this (Refer to transcript 3:5). P3 described MR as a physically active and healthy child, who loves sport. P3 does not perceive MR as an anxious child at home, but acknowledged that he does experience difficulties with academic tasks and that this could make him anxious at school (Refer to transcript 3:1).

P3 reported that MR becomes frustrated, agitated and irritable easily and dislikes any changes in his daily routine. He becomes tearful and emotional when plans are changed without prior warning and planning (refer to transcript 3:1). P3 stated that MR has always been a very busy child, who often procrastinated and avoids tasks (refer to transcript 3:2). She describes him as a "very quick fix child," who needs to have his needs met immediately (refer to transcript 3:2). According to P3, MR is an even-tempered child, although he finds it difficult to relax and wind down on a physical level (refer to transcript 3:3). He has no sleeping difficulties, but has a poor appetite (refer to transcript 3:3). MR has always been a nail biter.

P3 says that MR is normally happy to come to school in the mornings and enjoys sport and playing outdoor games with his peers (refer to transcript 3:4). MR plays with other children in a group, but does not have one particular friend (refer to transcript 3:4). P3 rates MR's school experience as a 7 or 8/10 and says that MR generally enjoys school, with the exception of the academic component. P3 notes that the academic component at school is very difficult for MR and that he seldom experiences academic success.

From the above information, as given by P3, the following school-related stresses can be identified:

- Social interactions/no special friend
- Changes in daily routine
- Academic challenges
- Not having his needs met immediately

### **4.8.2 Interview with C3 (MR)**

**TABLE 4.13: Themes and sub-themes for MR**

Themes and sub-themes			
1)Sources of enjoyment at school			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-academic activities</li> <li>• Academic activities</li> <li>• Friendship</li> </ul>			
2)Challenges at school			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic challenges</li> <li>• Relationship challenges</li> </ul>			
	S1	S2	S3
3)Sources of stress at school			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship challenges(peers)</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic demands</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test anxiety</li> </ul>			
4)Coping with challenges and stress at school			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoidance/Not trying so as to avoid failure</li> </ul>			

#### 4.8.2.1 Theme 1 - Sources of enjoyment at school

During the interview with MR, several sources of enjoyment at school emerged. These will be discussed below. Direct reference to the interview transcript for MR will be given. T6 refers to this specific interview transcript. Page numbers for specific quotes will also be indicated and highlighted on the transcript.

##### a) Non-academic activities

MR chose sport as his favourite activity at school. He also expressed that he enjoys playing playground games (4-square). MR also felt that he was good at sport at school (T6:5). P3 mentioned that MR has always been a physically busy and active child who has always been good at physical activities (T3:1). It appears that MR has a positive self image regarding physical and sporting activities, which come easily to him.

b) Academic activities

MR stated that he enjoys Maths the most and that he thinks that he is “a little bit good at it” (T6:5). MR said “Once I know it then I know it and then I can do it” when asked why he liked Maths. It is interesting to note that very little information was given by MR regarding academic activities at school.

c) Friendship

MR expressed that he enjoys coming to school in the mornings because he likes to play with his friends (T6:6). When asked who his friends at school were, MR gave names of four children and then tried to think of another name, without success (T6:7).

#### **4.8.2.2 Theme 2 - Challenges at school**

Several areas of challenge at school emerged during the interview with MR. These areas of challenge will be briefly discussed below.

a) Academic challenges

MR named Afrikaans as his least favourite subject, but then said that he “was a little bit good at it, but not much” (T6:5). MR indicated that he finds Social Science, Afrikaans and Natural Science “hard” (T6:6).

b) Relationship challenges

MR expressed that he feels very upset when other learners say nasty things to him and are unkind to him (T6:7).

#### **4.8.2.3 Theme 3 – Stresses at school**

The focus of this study is stresses experienced by learners with learning problems in an inclusive classroom at an Independent School. This section will therefore be of primary importance to this study. During the interview with MR, several stresses at school were identified. These will be discussed below.

a) Academic demands

P3 stated that MR does not really discuss school work with her much other than to say that a test was “too difficult” and that he did not know the answers to the questions (T3:1). P3 also made the following statement regarding MR’s academic experiences: “Occasionally he will say that the work is too difficult

for him, but more often he seems to be completely indifferent. I have been told by teachers that he has a negative self-image and that now he believes that he can't do it" (T4:2).

It was also noted that during the interview with MR, very little information regarding academic activities at school was forthcoming from MR.

MR indicated that he finds Social Science, Afrikaans and Natural Science "hard" (T6:6) and that he is "a little bit good at Maths and Afrikaans, but not much" (T6:5). It appears that MR has had a history of not succeeding academically and that he possibly deals with this by not talking about it and perhaps even not thinking about it.

Towards the end of the interview, when discussing how to make school less stressful, MR suggested the following:

VK: If you were the boss of the school what would you do to make kids less nervous and stressed?

C3: I would make the tests more far apart so that you have a long time to practise so that you don't get nervous and then the kids can know everything off by heart and then you test them on one day for a practise and then you do the proper test the next day.

VK: So you would like to have a practise test before the real test?

C3: Yes, then if they get everything right for the practise test then they don't need to do the real test the next day. Then everyone can try and get full marks.

The above extract shows that MR would like to achieve well or better academically and that academic demands are a likely source of stress for MR.

#### b) Relationship challenges

MR initially stated that nobody ever picks on him at school, although he has seen other learners being bullied (T6:7). However, when asked if there was anyone who was nasty to him or teased him at school, his answer was very different, as can be seen by the following extract (T6:7):

C: Yes, child z says nasty things to me.

VK: Is it just to you or is to lots of kids?

C3: I don't really know, just mostly to me I think. One time when I was running down from the field then he tripped me and then I was crying. Then he was telling everyone that I was a sissy boy and he even fell once and cried.

VK: That does not sound very nice. How did that make you feel?

C3: I feel upset.

MR also mentioned that he “used to have lots of friends at his old school” implying that he had more friends then than he has currently.

When asked about how he gets on with his teachers MR replied “My Grade 1 teacher was not so strict and I liked her. My Grade 2 teacher was very strict and I did not get on with her. The one in Grade 3 was also strict. My Grade 4 teacher is not so strict, just a little bit” (T6:8).

From the above discussion, it appears that MR may have some difficulties with relationships with both peers and teachers. As discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.9.1, difficulties with relationships and feelings of loneliness are causes of stress.

#### c) Test anxiety

Several common stress factors in primary school aged children were cited by Sears and Milburn (Wiechers, 1994:497-498). Test anxiety is listed as one of the sources of stress for primary school aged children. During the interview with MR, he expressed that he feels nervous for tests. This is illustrated in the following extract (T6:8):

C3: It's just like I am going to get everything wrong, but I hope that I am not.

VK: What are you thinking in your mind before the test?

C3: I am thinking that I must not mess up and that I must get things right.

VK: Does your heart go a little bit faster when you feel nervous like that?

C3: Even faster than when I run the 800m.

It can be seen from the above that MR has both physical and psychological symptoms of stress before writing tests. A sense of inadequacy also comes through in that MR feels that he is going to get everything wrong even before he starts. Test anxiety appears to be a source of stress for MR.

#### **4.8.2.4 Theme 4 - Coping with challenges and stresses at school**

##### a) Avoidance

During the interview with P3, she expressed that MR often tries to avoid and put off tasks. This relates to anything from homework to having a shower. P3 indicated that MR tries to finish homework as quickly as possible. “He just does not like other things, like school work, to get in his way. As far as school work goes, he gives as little time as possible to that” (T6:2). P3 also mentioned that she and

MR do not discuss school work very often (T6:2) other than when “occasionally he will say that the work is too difficult for him, but more often he seems to be completely indifferent. I have been told by teachers that he has a negative self-image and that now he believes that he can’t do it (T6:2).

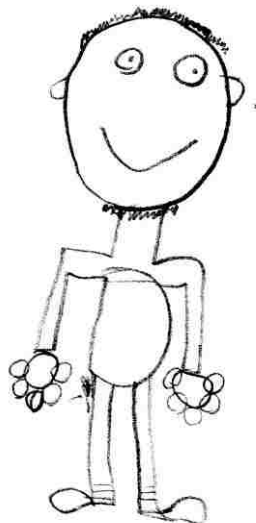
Given that MR voiced that he would like to get better marks at school, it appears possible that he may have given up trying, after having experienced little academic success in the past. This may lead to avoidance behaviours in that he no longer tries to do better.

#### **4.8.3 MR’s DAP - observations and overall impressions**

The overall impression of MR’s drawing is that it is an immature drawing that is characterised by a large round head and abdomen. The drawing is of an older man (37), a rich banker, who is happy. The drawing gives the impression of being happy, albeit of a simplistic nature. Of note are the large hands, which may indicate overcompensation for feelings of inadequacy as well as the omission of the nose which could imply shyness and a lack of overt aggression. The drawing is small and thus could reflect feelings of insecurity and withdrawal and possible poor self-esteem.

Although the general tone of the picture is a happy one, this could be indicative of avoidance or lack of insight into the drawer’s personal struggles. MR described his character, Richard, as nice and kind, and this comes through in the drawing.

**FIGURE 4.5: Draw-A-Person by MR**



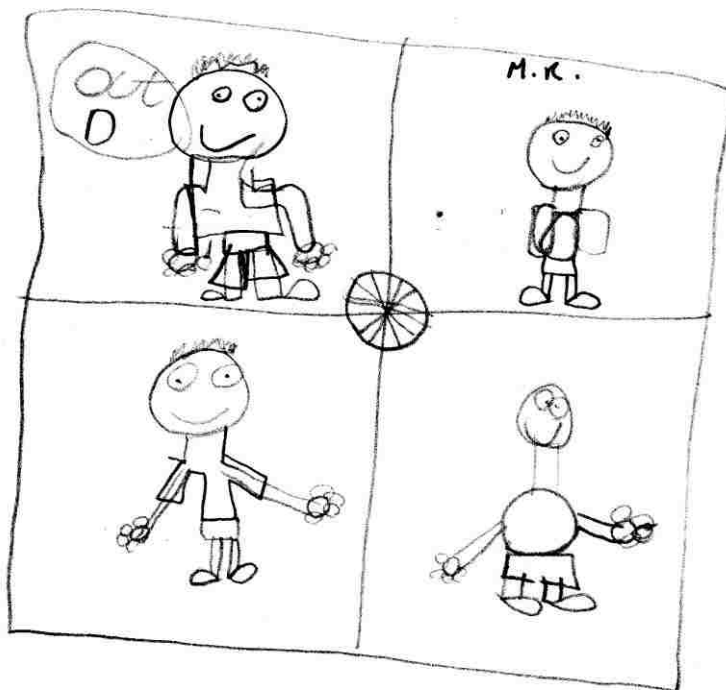
<b>TABLE 4.14: DAP analysis for MR</b>			
	Determinant	Interpretation of response	Comment
1	Small person drawn	Feelings of inferiority, ineffectiveness, inadequacy and insecurity. Low self-esteem.	MR appears to have a low self-esteem, particularly regarding his academic work.
2	Long neck	A separation of intellectual ideas from emotions and feelings.	MR struggles with academic work at school and appears to not really care about his academic results.
3	Large head	Possible anxiety, high achievement aspirations, poor emotional and social adjustment in children with academic difficulties.	MR possibly feels socially inadequate and has a poor academic self-image.
4	Transparencies evident (Emotional indicator – refer to table 4.5.1.4)	Immaturity, adjusting problems	MR presents as very young for his age.
5	Nose omitted (Emotional indicator – refer to table 4.5.1.4)	Very shy and withdrawn, depressive or otherwise emotionally disturbed.	MR does not make friends easily and prefers to be in a group playing a game.
6	Long arms	Associated with need for protective mother figure.	MR is dependent on his mother to help him to organise his daily routine.
7	Large hands	Compensation for feelings of inadequacy, often social inadequacy.	MR does not make close friends easily and tends to join in group games as opposed to making friends.
8	Petal-like fingers	Immaturity and feelings of inadequacy.	MR presents as very young for his age.



9	Significantly older male figure drawn	Suggests identification with parent image.	MR seems to identify with his father. He enjoys doing things with his dad and wants to do the same job as his dad does one day.
10	Poor integration of body parts	May suggest poor co-ordination, impulsivity and/or indicate immaturity on the part of the child.	MR appears very young for his age and he is very dependent on his mom.
11	Drawing is centred, high on page.	Centred – most common placement. High on page – optimism, frequently unjustified/ greater than average use of fantasy.	MR expressed a wish for money and possessions.

**4.8.4 Kinetic School Drawing done by MR**

**FIGURE 4.6: Kinetic School Drawing by MR**



<b>TABLE 4.15: KSD analysis for MR</b>	
<b>Picture variables</b>	<b>MR</b>
<b>Global</b>	
Taking clues from picture for most important element	The drawing depicts four figures playing a game. All the figures are drawn fairly small, with MC drawing himself as the smallest figure of the four. MR draws himself without hands and transparencies are noted in three of the four figures drawn.
Obtain insight into child's life from feeling or mood of the picture	The figures in the drawing all appear happy and are engaged in an activity which MR states as enjoyable. Although the learners are playing together, no real interpersonal interaction can be seen in the drawing.
<b>Content</b>	
Sizes of people	The learners depicted in the drawing are small. MR draws himself as the smallest figure of the four.
Activity self is engaged in	Playing a game on the playground.
Academic vs. non-academic task	Non-academic task
Relationships in picture as portrayed by activity, physical position and facial expressions	All figures are facing the front and although they are all playing the same game, no eye contact is shown.
Who is drawn in the picture?	MR drew himself first and then added three other learners to the drawing. The game "Four square" depicted in the drawing requires four players. MR named two of the other learners in the drawing, but could not name the fourth figure.
Detail or lack of detail	Little detail is shown in the drawing.
Postures of people	The figures drawn are standing on the "four square" court.
<b>Style</b>	
Stress upon pencil	Little stress on the pencil, with the exception of the figure drawn at the top left-hand in the drawing.
Spatial arrangement of picture	All figures drawn are facing frontwards.
<b>Symbolism</b>	
Obvious signs and symbols	MR enjoys sport at school and the KSD depicts him playing a ball

that are salient to the child	game with his peers.
How school is portrayed (building, school yard and classroom)	Only the playground is shown in the drawing. No teachers are shown in the drawing and no classroom is evident.
Details	Scant details in the drawing generally. Some detail evident in the drawing of the ball. Transparencies noted in two of the figures drawn.
Colours	No colours were used in the drawing.
Age	
Progression of detail for older children	Little detail in figures. Drawings appear immature for age. Three of the figures have been drawn with very long arms (below waist) and none of the figures have noses or eyebrows.
Stick figures show resistant behaviour	No stick figures drawn.
Ability to share information in drawing task	MR was able to explain what he had drawn in his picture.

#### 4.8.5 Three wishes

**TABLE 4.16: MR's three wishes**

MR's wishes	
1	I wish for a motorbike.
2	I wish for a car-for a Lamboguinie, for when I am older.
3	I wish I had lots of friends in Bel'aire (Where MR lives).

- Wish one and two both indicate aspirations for material possessions.
- The third wish is for friends. This wish may well relate to the fact that MR does not really have a special friend and that he would like to have more friends and perhaps a close friend.

#### 4.8.6 Summary of possible school stresses for MR

From the data analysed above, the following possible school stresses can be identified for MR:

**TABLE 4.17: Summary of possible school stresses for MR**

Stresses	Interview with P3	Interview with MR	DAP(Possible indicators of stress)	KSD(Possible indicators of stress)	Three wishes
Changes in routine	√				
Relationships with peers and possible feelings of isolation	√	√	√	√	√
Relationships with teachers		√			
Academic demands	√	√	√	√	
Test anxiety		√			
Not having needs met immediately	√				

#### 4.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, various data were interpreted and analysed with the specific aim of gaining insight into school stresses experienced by the three participant learners with learning problems in an inclusive classroom at an Independent School. In the proceeding chapter, this information will be used as a basis to formulate guidelines to assist teachers in relieving these stresses.

## Chapter 5

### FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, GUIDELINES AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the findings emanating from the empirical study conducted, as described in Chapter 4 of this research. The methodology for this study was discussed in detail in Chapter 3 and a literature study relevant to the topic was presented in Chapter 2. In addition to this, in this chapter guidelines will be formulated to assist teachers to relieve the stresses experienced by learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom in an Independent School, based on the data gained from this investigation. Limitations of the study will be identified, recommendations for further research will be made and a final conclusion drawn.

#### 5.2 PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH

The primary purposes of this research are as follows: (Refer to 1.5.1)

- to determine stresses that primary school learners with learning problems experience in inclusive classrooms in an Independent School.
- to formulate guidelines to assist teachers in relieving these stresses experienced by learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom.

The specific aims of the research are to find possible answers to the following research questions as formulated in Chapter 1 (1.5.2.1):

- a. What stresses do primary school learners with learning problems experience?
- b. What stresses do primary school learners with learning problems experience in the inclusive classroom?
- c. What guidelines can be proposed to relieve these stresses?

### **5.3 FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO THE LITERATURE STUDY**

The literature study, as presented in Chapter 2, serves two purposes. Firstly, it provided the foundations upon which to build the study and secondly, it placed the study within the South African and the international context. The literature study focused on the concepts of inclusive education, needs of primary school learners, stress, learning difficulties and the potential sources of stress for learners with learning difficulties. The paragraphs below summarise the key findings from the literature study regarding these main concepts.

#### **5.3.1 Inclusive education**

South African education policy, in line with international trends, has moved towards inclusive education. One of the implications of this relatively recent change in educational philosophy is that a wide range of learners with differing educational needs will be accommodated and supported within the inclusive classroom environment. As this research was conducted at an Independent school, this section of the literature study focused on inclusion in Independent Schools. It was found that most Independent Schools follow inclusive practices and seem committed to ensuring diversity in their learner population (refer to Chapter 2, section 2.3.2).

#### **5.3.2 Needs of primary school learners**

Humphrey (2004:54-56) emphasizes that unmet needs in primary school children could result in undesirable stress. Of specific relevance to this study, the social, emotional and intellectual needs of learners were examined so as to identify possible causes of stress in primary school learners. In short, learners need to experience social acceptance and belonging, a sense of security, trust and self-identity, success, achievement, recognition as well as intellectual challenges and problem-solving opportunities at their own level. If these needs are unmet, stress is likely to result.

#### **5.3.3 Stress**

Stress, as a term, has been used for several decades. Although short-term stress is not in itself harmful, prolonged and severe stress will have negative effects. There are many definitions of stress to be found in the literature. For the purpose of this study, the following definition of stress is used: “[s]tress can be considered as any factor acting internally or externally that makes it difficult to adapt and that induces increased effort on the part of the person to maintain a state of balance within himself or herself and the external environment” (Humphrey 1993:13).

In addition to this, the following three sources of stress were identified as central to this study.

- Stress may result from a perceived or anticipated demand which a person feels she/he will be unable to meet, e.g. when learners doubts their ability to pass a test.
- Stress may take the form of 'overload' in that too much is expected, e.g. when a learner is unable to keep up with his/her peers in his/her learning due to learning problems.
- Stress may occur when a person's expectations regarding an important area of his/her life are not met by the reality of the experience, e.g. a child who had been looking forward to starting school and then really struggles with the demands of school work.

Literature suggests that stress manifests itself through various physical, psychological and behavioural symptoms (Lewis, 2003:31; Signs and symptoms of stress:1-3). These symptoms are many and varied and were discussed at length in section 2.7 of Chapter 2. These stress symptoms were used to compile the *Checklist for Stress Symptoms* as found in Appendix A of this study.

Several models for understanding stress were identified and discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.7. The following summary highlights the different theorists' explanations of stress.

**TABLE 5.1: Different theorists' explanations of stress**

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Theorist/s</b>	<b>Explanation of stress</b>
General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)	Hans Selye	Stress is the body's physical reaction to biological stressors.
Life Change Model (LCM)	Thomas Holmes Richard Rahe	Stress is a result of changes in a person's life.
Transactional Model	Richard Lazarus	Stress is a result of an individual's perceptions/interpretations of circumstances or life changes.

In terms of this study, the Transactional Model of stress will be used as a point of departure to understand stress as it is experienced by the learner participants.

#### **5.3.4 Learning difficulties**

In the literature, several different models and definitions are presented in regard to the term *learning problems*. This difference is largely based on the perceived source of the learning problem. According to the medical-deficit model of learning problems, the learning problem originates within the individual. In opposition to this, the social model of learning problems views the learning

problem as outside the individual and in the environment or the way in which society deals with the individual. In the context of this study, the selection of participant learners with learning problems fell within the following definition: Learners who “experience difficulties despite the fact that they have good teachers, positive home circumstances and a stimulating environment” (Dednam 2007:363).

### **5.3.5 Potential sources of stress for learners with learning difficulties**

In Chapter 2 section 2.9 of this study, potential sources of stress for learners with learning difficulties were discussed. Emanating from this discussion, were several key findings:

- Social interactions may be a source of stress for learners with learning problems. These learners may have poor social skills and low status amongst their peers, may be socially isolated and/or rejected, may have more feelings of loneliness than their peers without learning problems, may have difficulties with close relationships and be more vulnerable to peer influence. As such, the social needs of learners with learning problems may well be unmet, resulting in stress.
- Several emotional stress factors for learners with learning problems became apparent through the literature study. Learners with learning problems may have few experiences of success and achievement, leading to self-doubt in relation to anticipated demands, low self-esteem, unmet expectation of self, dependency, “overload” and being unable to keep up with their peers. Unmet emotional needs result in stress and unresolved stress can in turn lead to anxiety and depression (Humphrey, 2004:55-56).

## **5.4 FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO THE EMPIRICAL STUDY**

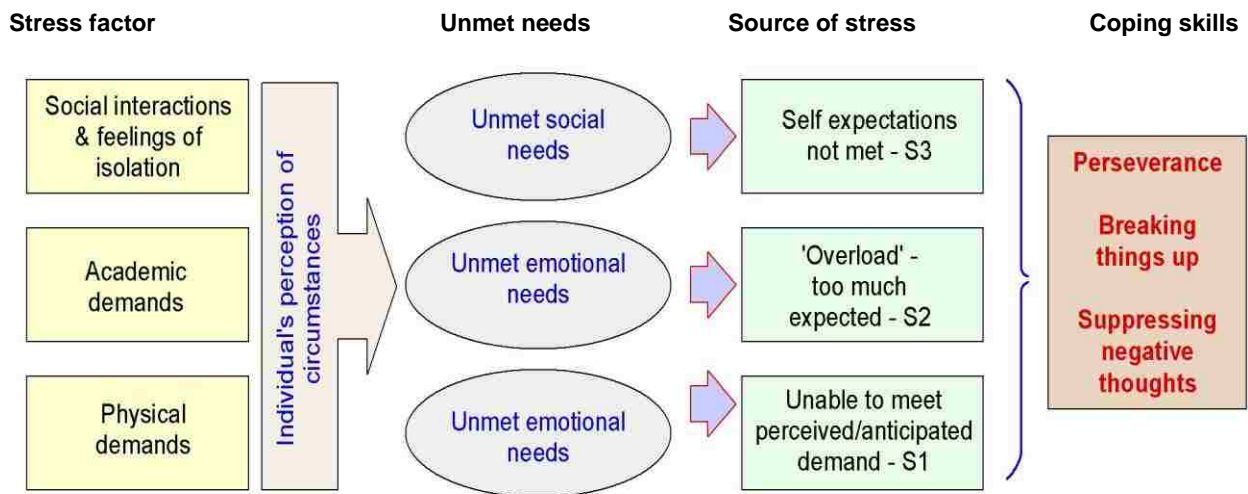
Findings from the literature study led to the compilation of the *Checklist for Stress Symptoms* (Appendix A of this study). The stress symptoms listed in Chapter 2 section 2.7 were formatted into a checklist that participant teachers were asked to complete. Parent participants were also asked to complete this checklist during the parent interview and symptoms marked as “frequent” were then discussed. Some items were omitted on the grounds of them not being applicable to the participant population. Grade 3 and Grade 4 teachers in the participating school were asked to complete the *Checklist for Stress Symptoms* for all learners in their classes identified as having learning problems. A total of 14 checklists were completed by teachers. The checklists were then scored, as outlined in Appendix G of this study. The three learners with the highest scores were



selected for this study. All three learners were Grade 4 learners. Each learner participant participated in an interview, completed a Draw-A-Person drawing, a Kinetic School Drawing and the Three Wishes. The data gained from the aforementioned activities yielded the following insights:

#### 5.4.1 Summary of findings for MC

**FIGURE 5.1: Summary of findings for MC**



From the above diagrammatical representation, the three main stresses for MC are evident. MC has his unique perceptions of the various circumstances (Transactional Model of stress). Unmet needs, as represented above, result. For the purposes of this study, these sources of stress are then classified as S3 (Self-expectations not met), S2 (Overload – too much expected), or S1 (Inability to meet perceived/anticipated demand). Also refer to Chapter 4 section 4.4. MC demonstrated three coping skills with regard to stress. These are shown on the far right-hand side of the diagram.

The teacher's stress rating of MC produced a total score of 59, whilst his parent stress rating produced a score of 82. This significant difference in score is notable. Several reasons for the discrepancy in scores could be considered; amongst these could be the following:

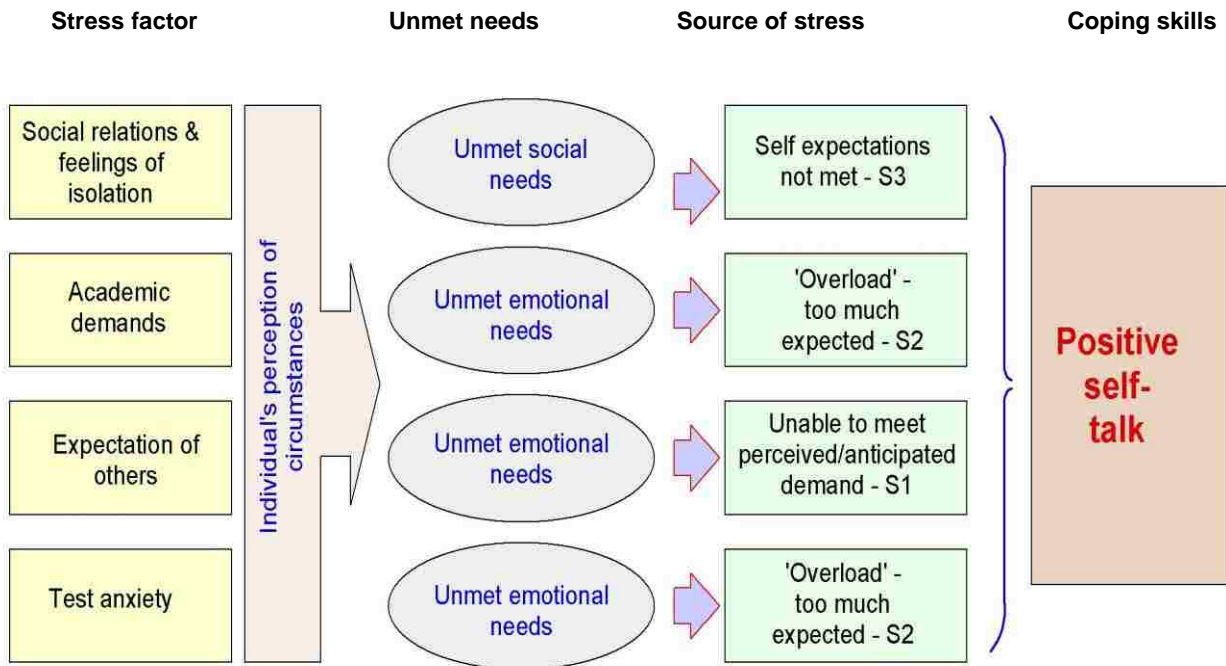
- MC could manifest more stress symptoms at home than he does at school
- MC's mother may be more sensitive towards MC's stress symptoms than the teacher
- MC may manage his stress levels better at school than he does at home.

Also of significance is the fact that MC uses several coping skills in an effort to manage his own stress levels. These coping skills of perseverance, suppressing negative thoughts and breaking

tasks up into small pieces so as to make them more manageable, are likely to make a positive contribution towards this stress management.

#### 5.4.2 Summary of findings for ES

**FIGURE 5.2: Summary of findings for ES**



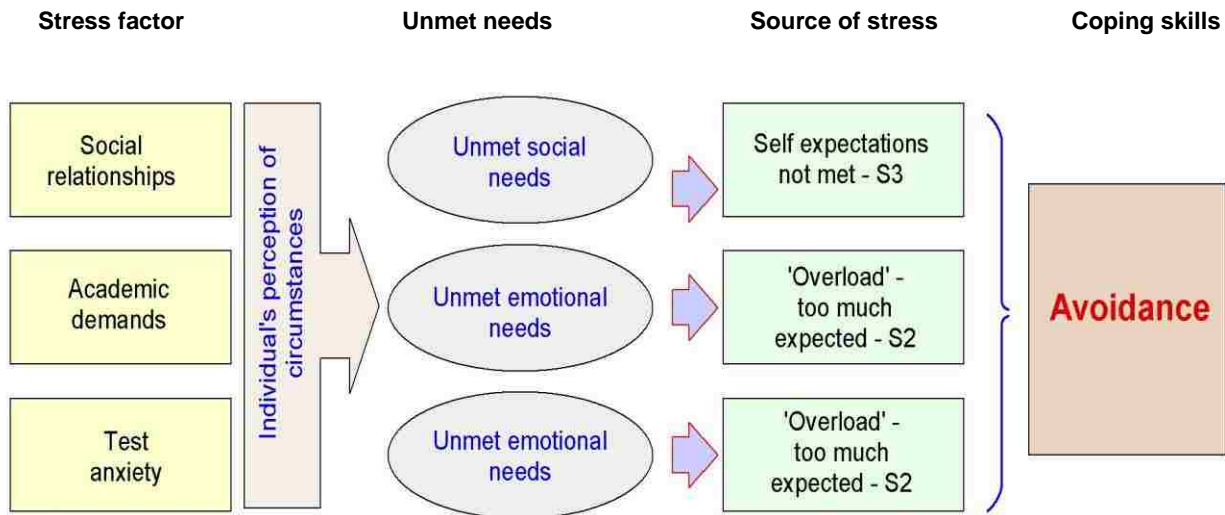
From the above diagrammatical representation, the four main stresses for ES are evident. ES has her unique perceptions of the various circumstances (Transactional Model of stress). In terms of children's needs (Humphrey, 2004:55-56), unmet needs result in stress. These unmet needs are represented diagrammatically above. In addition to this, for the purposes of this study, the three central sources of stress are then classified as S3 (Self-expectations not met), S2 (Overload – too much expected), or S1 (Inability to meet perceived/anticipated demand). ES demonstrated one coping skill with regard to stress. This is shown on the far right-hand side of the diagram.

The teacher's stress rating of ES produced a total score of 84, whilst her parent stress rating produced a score of 96. The discrepancy between the scores is relatively small, showing only a small difference between teacher and parent perceptions of ES's stress symptoms. It is noteworthy that ES had the highest score of all the learners who were scored by teachers. It is of significance that ES demonstrated only one coping skill for stress. This was positive self-talk and ES said that

she used this when she was nervous and about to perform on the stage. This is a positive coping skill and ES may benefit from further support in the area of developing more coping skills for stress.

### 5.4.3 Summary of findings for MR

**FIGURE 5.3: Summary of findings for MR**



From the above diagrammatical representation, the three main stresses for MR are evident. MR has his unique perceptions of the various circumstances (Transactional Model of stress). In terms of children's needs (Humphrey, 2004:55-56), unmet needs result in stress. These unmet needs are represented diagrammatically above. In addition to this, for the purposes of this study, the three central sources of stress are then classified as S3 (Self-expectations not met), S2 (Overload – too much expected), or S1 (Inability to meet perceived/anticipated demand). MR demonstrated one coping skill with regard to stress. This is shown on the far right-hand side of the diagram.

The teacher's stress rating of MR produced a total score of 56, whilst his parent stress rating produced a score of 61. The discrepancy between the scores is relatively small, showing only a small difference between teacher and parent perceptions of MR's stress symptoms. It is of significance that MR demonstrated only one coping skill for stress: avoidance. This is not a positive coping skill and MR may benefit from support in the area of developing positive coping skills for stress.

## 5.5 FORMULATION OF PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS

The second aim of this study is to formulate guidelines to assist teachers in relieving these stresses experienced by learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom. In order to achieve this aim, the following procedure was used:

- The stresses experienced by the learner participants, as identified in Chapter 4, were examined. The learners' own suggestions regarding the relief of these stresses were examined and are discussed.
- The stresses identified by the parents of the learner participants were also examined and are discussed.

## 5.6 SUMMARY OF ALL IDENTIFIED LEARNER PARTICIPANTS' SCHOOL STRESSES AS SEEN BY LEARNERS AND PARENT PARTICIPANTS

In order to achieve the above aim, a summary of the stresses experienced, as indicated by all three of the learner participants during the interviews, as well as in the drawings and the Three Wishes, need to be considered. In conjunction with this, the participant learners' school stresses as perceived by parent participants will also be included in this summary. This summary is given in the table below.

**TABLE 5.2 – Combined summary of learner participants' identified school stresses as well as participant learners' school stresses as perceived by parent participants**

Identified stresses	MC	ES	MR
1 – Changes in daily routine	√		√
2 – Homework pressure	√	√	√
3– Teacher relationships		√	√
4 – Social interactions/ feelings of loneliness	√	√	√
5 – Negative peer interactions	√	√	√

6 – Physical demands	√	√	
7 – Expectations of others		√	
8 - Academic demands	√	√	√
▶ Organisational skills	√	√	
▶ Time management/pace of work	√	√	
▶ Concentration difficulties		√	
▶ Test anxiety		√	√
9- Not having needs met immediately	√	√	√
10 - Possible detachment of intellect and emotions	√		
11 - Recurring thoughts	√		

## 5.7 STRESSES IDENTIFIED AND GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS

Relevant sections from the transcripts, as indicated below, are highlighted on the transcripts.

- **Stress 1 – Changes in daily routine**

Two of the three parent participants commented that the learner participants were easily upset by changes in their daily routines. P1 emphasised that MC sticks to a routine at home of his own accord and that he needs to be warned in advance if a change in routine is anticipated (T1:2). P3 made the following statement in this regard:

“If I have not told him that we are going to Gran and I have not told him about it. He does not like surprises. He likes to plan and be pre-warned. If I had not prepared him for him coming here later today, he would get upset about it because it is a change in his normal routine. Any alterations in the normal day-to-day plans make him frustrated. If we are going out for dinner, I need to tell him in the morning, not just before we go (T3:1).

Changes in routine therefore appear to be stressful for these learners. This has relevance for the school situation, as changes in the daily routine at school are likely to also result in stress. The implications of this are twofold:

- It would seem important that teachers try as far as possible, to keep to a daily routine, which the learners find predictable.

#### **Guideline 1**

**Create a predictable daily classroom routine.**

- If a change in the daily routine is anticipated, learners need to be prepared for this change beforehand, so as to reduce the potential stress that may result from unpredictable changes in routine.

#### **Guideline 2**

**Prepare learners beforehand if any upcoming changes are going to be made to the daily school routine.**

- **Stress 2 – Homework pressure**

P1 mentioned that MC does not cope well with the homework pressure. The following statement from T1:1 expresses this clearly:

“I am going to meet with his teacher at the beginning of next term and try to work out a different homework structure for him. Obviously he needs to keep up with the academic schedule, but just structure it so that it is not too much on any given day.”

It appears from the above that too much homework on any given day may cause stress for some learners. P1’s suggestion of structuring homework so that it is more evenly spread out seems both sensible and plausible.

#### **Guideline 3**

**In order to reduce homework pressure and stress that may develop as a result of homework, teachers could structure the learners’ homework in such a way that not too much is given on any one particular day.**

- **Stress 3 – Teacher relationship**

During the interview with P2, she expressed that ES had not wanted to come to school the previous year, due largely to negative interaction with her teacher. The following extracts from T2:10-12 highlights this point:

I think for a few years now she has not had a good teacher and she got shouted at and shouted at and shouted at and it has just put such a negative effect on her and that's why she doesn't want to go to school (T2:10).

Later, in the same interview P2 again emphasised the impact of ES's relationship with her teacher:

VK: Ok, I know we have discussed it, but for the purpose of this interview, can you be quite specific about what kinds of things stressed her out last year or the year before.

P2: .... last year it wasn't a teacher that could understand E; she is a boy teacher; she is not a girl teacher; she never praised E. E did not get a star of the week until the end of the year. Not 1, not a well done, not a you're doing so well, all she did was shout at E the whole time in front of the whole class. E used to come home all the time crying (T2:11).

During the interview with MR, he made the following statement regarding his teachers:

My Grade 1 teacher was not so strict and I liked her. My Grade 2 teacher was very strict and I did not get on with her. The one in Grade 3 was also strict. My Grade 4 teacher is not so strict, just a little bit.

P2 felt strongly that ES was doing much better, academically and emotionally, this year. She attributed this to her current teacher. She described ES's current teacher as being calm and understanding. She expressed that the teacher does not shout at ES and that if there is a difficulty, she discusses it with ES privately and not in front of her peers. This teacher has also made allowances for ES's difficulties with cursive handwriting and she now writes in print, which is easier for her. In light of the above discussion, the following guidelines can be suggested:

#### **Guideline 4**

**Encouragement and positive input from the teacher may help learners with learning problems.**

#### **Guideline 5**

**A calm atmosphere in the classroom may assist learners with learning problems to feel less stressed.**

#### **Guideline 6**

**Discussing difficulties privately with the learner with learning problems, as opposed to in front of their peers, may help reduce stress for these learners.**

- **Stress 4 – Social interactions/feelings of isolation**

As discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.9.1), learners with learning problems may have varied difficulties in their relationships with peers and teachers. All three of the parent participants felt that their children experienced social difficulties. P1 described MC's social difficulties in the following manner:

".....he really struggles. He will connect to one person on a commonality and he will hold onto that" (T1:3).

ES expresses that she feels lonely at school, that her friends do not come to her and that she needs to go to them at playtime (T5:9).

It therefore appears that social interactions can be difficult for these learners. Whilst it is acknowledged that teachers cannot "fix" these social difficulties, an awareness of them and sensitivity towards them may help to ease the stress they may create. Two guidelines follow from the above.

#### **Guideline 7**

**It is important to develop a climate of tolerance and mutual respect in the classroom, where all learners can feel secure and valued.**

Learners are required to work in groups or pairs in class at times. In order to avoid any particular learner from being excluded or marginalised by their peers during group activities, the following guideline is suggested:

#### **Guideline 8**

**In order to minimise exclusion of certain learners, teachers could put learners into groups/partners for activities, as opposed to letting them choose their own.**

- **Stress 5 – Negative peer interaction**

All three learners indicated that negative interaction with peers was a source of stress. MC said that he feels very upset and a little bit stressed when a certain child in his grade says unkind things to him (T4:14). ES commented that some children tease her and say nasty things about her mother and that she feels really angry and would like to kick them (T5:9). MR related being very upset when a boy tripped him and called him a "sissy boy" when he cried. Although it is unrealistic to expect all negative interactions between learners to be eliminated, teachers who are aware of the social dynamics in the classroom could minimise negative interactions within the bounds of their classroom by adopting a "no tolerance" approach towards bullying and/or unkind behaviour.



### Guideline 9

**Teachers can reinforce attitudes of mutual respect and adopt a “no tolerance” approach to bullying/unkind behaviour in the classroom. In this way, negative interactions between learners could be minimised.**

- **Stress 6 – Physical demands**

P1 and P2 both indicated that school sport and the physical demands thereof are stressful for their children (MC and ES).

P1 made the following statement in this regard:

“...he does not enjoy sport. He has an acute awareness that he is not good at it. He is very aware of his limitations because of his poor muscle tone. He will participate because he knows he needs to” (T1:5).

P2 stated that ES does not like sport at school and that she is “not good at it” (T2:9).

At the Independent School the participant learners attend, sport is compulsory for all learners, five days a week. This could possibly be adapted to alternative forms of physical exercise for learners who have learning difficulties and who find competitive sport difficult or an added stress.

### Guideline 10

**Possible adaptations could be made to the sports programme for learners with learning difficulties.**

- **Stress 7 – Expectations of others**

Parental expectations, regarding academic results, seem to be a source of stress for ES. This is seen clearly in the following extract from T5:10.

VK: How do you feel when you write a test?

C2: Very nervous. I just really want to please my dad and mom.

VK: Is that what makes you feel nervous?

C2: Yes, if I don't get good marks, I kind of feel disappointed because my dad wants to see me get good marks.

In this regard, the following guideline for teachers is proposed:

### Guideline 11

**Teachers can guide parents and help them to have realistic expectations regarding the academic achievements of their children with learning problems.**

- **Stress 8 – Academic demands**

► **Organisational skills**

Two of the three participant learners find it difficult to get themselves organised. This appears to be a cause of stress for them. This is highlighted by ES in the following extract taken from T5:9.

“In the mornings, I am particularly nervous because I don’t know if I have forgotten something. I don’t know if I have forgotten this or that, have I done this, have I done that.”

**Guideline 12**

**Teachers can help learners with learning problems reduce their stress levels by being aware of their difficulties with organisation. Checklists and reminders can be placed on these learners’ tables and verbal reminders given to assist in this regard.**

The following extracts taken from T4:13-15 demonstrates MC’s feelings of stress when faced with a large number of sums all on one page:

VK: and you’ve got butterflies in your tummy.

C1: Yes, when there’s lots of sums on one page. I think AAAHH there’s so much sums here, OH do I have to do them all. In that fat Maths books there is lots of pages of sums.

VK: There were lots of sums in that book? Did that make you feel stressed when you see that?

C1: Yes, all the sums on one page.

VK: Then you wonder how you are going to do it all?

C1: There is no ways I can get rid of that.

VK: No, you can’t get rid of that so how do you approach that when you see that whole page of Math’s and you go AAHH I’ve got to do all these sums. How do you get yourself to feel less stressed?

C1: I get a few of them to get them slowly.

VK: Oh that’s a good thing. Take a few and then another few and then you break it down into smaller bits.

C1: Yes, it takes me quite some time to do those Maths but I did get them done.

MC describes how he “breaks down” the daunting page of sums into doing a few at a time, slowly, and in this way he gets them done. The following guideline follows from this:

**Guideline 13**

**In order to assist certain learners to complete tasks, teachers could break down the task into smaller, more workable sections, which are less “overwhelming” for those learners. This may, in turn, reduce stress for these learners.**

### ► Test anxiety

ES and MR both expressed that they feel nervous for tests at school.

ES related that she wanted to do well to please her mom and dad. She also said that if she does not get good marks she feels disappointed because her dad wants to see her get good marks (T5:10).

The following extract from T6:8 clearly describes MR's test anxiety:

VK: When you write a test, do you ever feel nervous?

C3: Yes, before the test.

VK: How does that feel?

C3: It's just like I am going to get everything wrong, but I hope that I am not.

VK: What are you thinking in your mind before the test?

C3: I am thinking that I must not mess up and that I must get things right.

VK: Does your heart go a little bit faster when you feel nervous like that?

C3: Even faster than when I run the 800m.

According to Chandler (1985:20), "... all children need to experience academic success. It is therefore important for teachers to take a progress orientated approach to assessments and to celebrate successes of the child, no matter how small."

The following two guidelines are suggested in this regard:

#### Guideline 14

**Teachers need to be aware of the fact that some learners may become very anxious for tests and try to create a calm and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom during tests.**

#### Guideline 15

**Tests and assessments should be progress oriented so as to highlight each individual's progress and achievements. (Alternative forms of assessment may also be considered for learners with learning problems, e.g. oral as opposed to written assessments.)**

- **Stress 9 – Not having needs met immediately**

All three of the parent participants clearly explained that the learners become frustrated, impatient and angry when their needs are not met immediately. The following three extracts demonstrate this point:

►P1: He will be impatient with follow through; instant gratification is probably a bit of an issue. He needs things now. I have tried to teach him not to interrupt adult conversation, I talk to him about speech bubbles and that works beautifully because he can see it. But still, if he wants to say something, he has got to say it now. I think he thinks that he might forget it if he does not say it now. He becomes impatient if his need is not met now. Then he will get angry and storm off (T1:3).

-----

►VK: Does she get frustrated easily?

P2: umm, only of she can't get her own way. It's this thing we must do it NOW.

VK: Immediate gratification?

P2: Ja, I bought 2 ice teas. Can we have that ice tea now, no, but why not, because, but I want it now, and what happens, she opens it, I just took one sip, now I could have pushed her but you just get to the stage where you're like "what the hell" You know?

VK: Mmm. Ok, so she gets frustrated if her desires aren't met now. And how does she express her frustration?

P2: Angry, shouts at me, speaks to me horribly (T2:3).

-----

VK: When does he become impatient?

P3: He is a very quick fix child. If he decides he is hungry, then he needs to get fed right now. Not in ten minutes, not even in 1 minute, but now. Whatever he wants, it needs to be immediate. He is very much an instant gratification child (T3:2).

This has implications for the school environment. Teachers may not be able to respond to every learner's needs immediately and some learners may then become angry and/or frustrated. It is important for teachers to be aware of why certain learners may respond in this way.

### Guideline 16

**Teachers need to have sufficient knowledge and insight regarding typical behaviours of learners with learning problems so as to be able to understand these learners better.**

- **Stress 10 – Possible detachment of intellect from emotions and Stress 11- Recurring thoughts**

These items were highlighted in blue on the table above and will be discussed together in this section. Both of these stresses fall beyond the scope of practise for teachers. Teachers may be aware that certain learners are experiencing recurring thoughts and/or other emotional difficulties. It would be important for teachers to discuss their concerns with the learner's parents/caregivers, so that appropriate intervention can be supplied.

### **Guideline 17**

**It is important for teachers to know how and when to refer a learner for therapeutic or other intervention and to also help parents in this regard.**

## **5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

This study presents several limitations, which are discussed below:

- The size of the sample used in this study is very small, involving only three participant learners and three participant parents. Although sufficient data was gained for this limited study, more participant learners and parents may have provided more information and insight into the topic.
- All participant learners were selected from an Independent School in the Western Cape. The findings of this study may therefore be unique to this school.
- Purposeful sampling was used in this study and as such uncertainty regarding whether or not the sample is representative of the population arises.

## **5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS AND POSSIBILITES FOR RESEARCH**

Further research in this area would be of value as there appears to be a need for knowledge of and insight into this topic. Future research endeavours may include the following:

- Increasing the sample size to include more learner and parent participants with the aim of obtaining more information and insight into the topic.

- Including more schools, both independent and public, in the research would contribute towards making the findings less school specific and more generalisable to a wider population.
- Research involving the stresses of high school learners with learning problems would be of value, as these may well be very different from those of primary school learners.
- Interviewing teachers to gain their insight into their perceptions, knowledge and insight into the stress of learners with learning problems, could be of great value.

## 5.10 CONCLUSION

This study provided some insight into the stresses experienced by primary school learners with learning problems in an inclusive classroom in an Independent School. It highlighted certain stresses as perceived by the participant learners themselves and as perceived by their parents.

Guidelines to assist teachers to relieve these stresses experienced by learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom were then proposed from the data obtained.

From the data collected as well as the guidelines proposed, it appears that teachers have an important role to play in reducing stress for learners with learning problems in their classrooms. The following quote by Carl Jung seems appropriate in this regard:

"One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child." -- *Carl Jung*

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**Appendix A****Checklist for stress symptoms**

Please complete the checklist below by ticking the appropriate block.

Name of learner: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Does the learner display any of the following physical stress symptoms?</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
1	Fatigue					
2	Dry Mouth					
3	Dizziness					
4	Breathlessness					
5	Asthma					
6	Stomach aches					
7	Headaches					
8	Frequent colds or flu					
9	Muscle tension or aches					
10	Sleep problems					
11	Nausea					
12	Tremors in hands/legs					
13	Allergies					
14	Nervous fine motor behaviours					
15	Grinding teeth					
	<b>Does the learner display any of the following psychological stress symptoms?</b>					
16	Anxiety					
17	Excessive worry					

18	Feelings of failure and inadequacy					
19	Frustration					
20	Helplessness					
21	Irritability					
22	Negative thinking					
23	Mood swings					
24	Indecisiveness					
25	Verbal and/or physical aggression					
26	Tension and uneasiness					
27	Fearfulness					
28	Depression					
29	Hostility					
30	Impatience					
31	Inability to concentrate					
32	Sensitivity to criticism					
33	Loss of confidence					
34	Loss of motivation					
35	Social incompetence					
36	Poor performance					
	<b>Does the learner display any of the following behavioural stress symptoms?</b>					
37	Avoidance behaviour					
38	Aggressive or defensive outbursts					
39	Agitation					
40	Withdrawal from activities					
41	Impatience					





**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

Researcher: Valerie Kirchner (Telephone number: 021 855 5538)

Dear Parent/Guardian

Thank you for agreeing to allow your child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this study, which will take place from \_\_\_\_\_ 2011 to \_\_\_\_\_ 2011. Thank you also for agreeing to participate in this study, by attending an interview.

This form outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your own involvement as well as your child's involvement in this study. This form also outlines the rights of all participants in this study.

This study is a research requirement for my Master's Degree in Guidance and Counselling. I am completing this degree through UNISA and my work is closely monitored and guided by my supervising professor, Professor D. Kruger from UNISA. Ethical approval for this study has been granted by my supervisor.

The purposes of this study are:

- 1) To evaluate stresses experienced by primary school learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom.
- 2) To formulate guidelines for teachers working with learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom.

The methods to be used to collect information for this study are explained below.

I will be interviewing the learners individually, ask them to complete two drawings (Draw-A-Person and Kinetic School Drawing) and The Three Wishes projective activity, during which the children will be asked to name their three biggest wishes. I would also like to interview you, as parent/s, so as to gain deeper insight into your child's school experiences.

This information will be interpreted and thereafter I will write guidelines for teachers to assist them in their task of working with learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom.

You are encouraged to ask any questions at any time about the nature of the study and the methods that I am using. Your suggestions and concerns are important to me; please contact me at any time at the telephone number listed above.

My final report on this data will be submitted as a dissertation of limited scope for my Master's degree. In addition, I will make a summary report available to all the research parents/guardians. I guarantee that the following conditions will be met:

- 1) Your real name/your child's real name will not be used at any point of information collection, or in the final writing up of the data.
- 2) The completed interviews and drawings will be treated as highly confidential materials. Only I, as the researcher, my supervisor and one other psychologist will have access to the data.
- 3) Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice, and the information collected and records and reports written will be turned over to you.
- 4) You, as a parent, will receive a copy of the final report before it is handed in so that you have the opportunity to suggest changes to the researcher, if necessary.

Do you grant permission to be quoted directly?      Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to the terms

Respondent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to the terms:

Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix C**

### **Interview Schedule/Guide for Learners**

- 1) What is your favourite activity at school?
- 2) What lessons do you like the most?
- 3) What lessons do you find the easiest?
- 4) What things at school are you good at?
- 5) What is the thing which you do best in at school?
- 6) What is the thing you like best at school?
- 7) What are the best thing and the worst thing about school?
- 8) How much trouble are you having in school?
- 9) If you could get rid of one thing at school, what would that be?
- 10) If you could get rid of everything at school except for one thing, what would that be?
- 11) What do you like the least about school?
- 12) What is your least favourite lesson?
- 13) What things at school do you find difficult/hard?
- 14) Who are your friends at school?
- 15) Do the children in class ever tease you?
- 16) Do the other children sometimes pick on you?
- 17) Do some children treat you badly?
- 18) Are you sometimes lonely at school?
- 19) If "yes" to any of the above questions (9-12), how does this make you feel?
- 20) What do you like doing when you are not at school?
- 21) Are there things at school that make you feel nervous or scared?
- 22) What do you think about before you come to school in the mornings?
- 23) Are there things at school that make you feel happy?
- 24) Do you get on well with your teachers at school?
- 25) How do you feel when you are writing a test at school?
- 26) What would you like to be when you grow up?
- 27) What do you do outside of school for fun?
- 28) Are you stressed out at school?
- 29) If so, what causes you to be stressed out?
- 30) What would help to relieve these stresses?

The learners will be asked to think of Three Wishes. These will be written down and discussed.

**Appendix D****Parent interview guide/schedule**

Parents will be asked to complete the stress symptoms checklist (cf. Appendix A). Any symptoms marked as “often” by the parents on this checklist will be discussed during the first part of the interview.

- 1) Is your child happy to come to school in the mornings?
- 2) What does your child enjoy about school?
- 3) Are there certain things at school that your child does not enjoy at school?
- 4) How does your child get along with the other children in the class?
- 5) Does your child get on well with his/her teacher?
- 6) How do you perceive your child’s experience of school?
- 7) Has your child been diagnosed with anything other than learning problems?
- 8) Do you feel that your child is stressed out at school?
- 9) If so, then what causes your child to be stressed out?
- 10) What do you feel would help to relieve these stresses?

**Appendix E**

Valerie Kirchner  
Cell: 074 143 4643  
email: vk@somcol.co.za  
1 March 2011

Dear Mr de Waal

Request to conduct research pertaining to stresses experienced by learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom

UNISA has approved my proposal to research **Stresses amongst primary school learners with learning problems in inclusive classrooms in an independent school**. This study forms part of my Master's degree requirements. I am required to collect data from learners who have been identified as having learning problems. I would appreciate your permission to conduct interviews with three learners identified as having learning problems in Grade 3 and Grade 4. Parents of the selected three learners will also be asked to attend an interview. Each of the three selected learners will also be asked to complete two drawings of a projective nature as well as the Three Wishes projective activity.

The interviews to be conducted with the selected learners will focus on the following:

- General feelings about school
- Relationships with peers and teachers
- Particular likes and dislikes at school
- The general health of the learners
- How learners spend free time
- How learners feel about test and task completion in class
- Common thoughts learners have relating to school

The interviews with the parents of the participants will focus on the same themes. Parents will be asked to give a description of their perception of the learner's experiences and feelings about school.

The information gleaned from the above-mentioned interview and drawings will be analysed and used as a basis for formulating guidelines for teachers to assist them to relieve stresses experienced by learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom.

You are welcome to review my research, however, participants' responses will be recorded anonymously and their identities will not be revealed.

Regards

---

Valerie Kirchner

## **Appendix F**

### **Assent form**

This study intends to look at stresses that learners' with learning problems in Grade 3 and Grade 4 experience at school. For this purpose, I will be asking you questions about your school experiences, and ask you to do some drawings. The information that is gathered during this study will be used to try and help you and your teachers reduce your stress levels at school.

The following points explain your rights during this study:

- 1) Your real name will not be used at any point of information collection, or in the final writing up of the data.
  
- 2) The completed interviews and drawings will be treated as highly confidential materials. Only I, as the researcher, my supervisor and one other psychologist will have access to the data.
  
- 3) Your participation in this research is voluntary. You do not have to agree to take part in this study.
  
- 4) You have the right to withdraw at any point of the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice, and the information collected and records and reports written will be turned over to you.
  
- 5) You should talk to your parents about taking part in this study before you sign this form.
  
- 6) Your parents will be asked to sign a permission form on your behalf so that you can take part in this study.
  
- 7) I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have about this study. Please ask me questions if you should wish to do so.

This research project has been explained to you and you understand what is going to be done and why. You have talked to your parents/legal gaurdian about this project and you have decided that you would like to be part of it. You understand that your parents/legal guardian will be given a copy of this form to keep. Please do not sign this form if you do not understand this study.

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of parent/gaurdian: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher obtaining assent:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details of researcher:

Cell number: 0741434643

E-mail address: vk@somcol.co.za



**Appendix G****INFORMED CONSENT FORM (Teacher)**

Researcher: Valerie Kirchner (Telephone number: 021 855 5538)

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study, which will take place from \_\_\_\_\_ 2011 to \_\_\_\_\_ 2011.

This form outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your own involvement in this study. This form also outlines the rights of all participants in this study.

This study is a research requirement for my Master's Degree in Guidance and Counselling. I am completing this degree through UNISA and my work is closely monitored and guided by my supervising professor, Professor D. Kruger from UNISA. Ethical approval for this study has been granted by my supervisor.

The purposes of this study are:

- 1) To evaluate stresses experienced by primary school learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom
- 2) To formulate guidelines for teachers working with learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom.

The learners will be selected from Grades 3 and 4. Firstly, you will be asked to identify learners in your class who have been identified as experiencing learning problems. Please consult the table below in this regard.

**Characteristics of learners with learning problems**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Description</b>
Disorders of attention	Learner does not focus when a lesson is presented; short attention span, easily distracted, poor concentration, may display hyperactivity.
Poor motor abilities	Difficulty with gross motor and fine motor coordination. (exhibits general awkwardness and clumsiness)

Psychological processing deficits	Problems in processing auditory and visual information. (difficulty interpreting visual and auditory stimuli)
Lack of phonological awareness	Poor at recognising the sounds of language. (cannot identify phoneme sounds in spoken language)
Poor cognitive strategies for learning	Does not know how to go about the task of learning and studying. Lacks organisational skills; passive learning style. (does not direct own learning)
Oral language difficulties	Underlying language disorder. (problems in language development, listening, speaking and vocabulary)
Reading difficulties	About 80% of learners with learning problems have problems in Reading. (problems in learning to decode words, basic word recognition skills or reading comprehension)
Writing difficulties	Poor at tasks requiring written expression, spelling and handwriting.
Mathematics	Difficulty with quantitative thinking, arithmetic, time, space and calculation facts.
Social skills	Does not know how to act and talk in social situations; difficulty with establishing satisfying social relationships and friendships.

(Lerner & Kline 2006:16)

Secondly, you will be asked to complete a *Stress Symptoms Checklist* for each learner in your class who has been identified as having learning problems. The fifty items on the checklist will be explained to you individually and clarification given on any items of which you are unsure. These checklists will then be scored by the researcher as follows:

- Never            0 points
- Seldom         1 point
- Sometimes     2 points
- Often            3 points
- Unknown       0 points

The four learners who manifest the highest stress scores as shown in the *Stress Symptoms Checklist* will be selected as participants for the study.

Information gained from this study will be interpreted and thereafter, I will write guidelines for teachers to assist them in their task of working with learners with learning problems in the inclusive classroom.

You are encouraged to ask any questions at any time about the nature of the study and the methods that I am using. Your suggestions and concerns are important to me; please contact me at any time at the telephone number listed above.

My final report on this data will be submitted as a dissertation of limited scope for my Master's degree. In addition, I will make a summary report available to all the research parents/guardians/teachers. I guarantee that the following conditions will be met:

- 1) Your real name will not be used at any point of information collection, or in the final writing up of the data.
- 2) The completed *Stress Symptoms Checklist* will be treated as highly confidential. Only I, as the researcher, my supervisor and one other psychologist will have access to the data.
- 3) Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice, and the information collected and records and reports written will be turned over to you.

Do you grant permission to be take part in this study? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to the terms:

Respondent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to the terms:

Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Interview transcript VK and P1 (Parent 1)

Parent1 had completed the Stress Symptoms Checklist and we began our discussion by looking at items on the checklist that had been marked as “often.”

VK: I see that you have marked fatigue as often. Is that during the school term?

P1: Physical activity related. When I pick him up at 3 o'clock, he is drained. I even wanted to speak to the teachers about the homework pressure because we could maybe negotiate a different homework pattern. I give him half an hour at home to unwind and then it is homework time and he just doesn't cope. He does not cope with his homework pressure. He does not plan his oral presentations, he says that he has it under control and he has. He will go there and deliver a speech and I will land up helping him with his cards, but the intellectual part he knows. It is not like I am feeding him but I help him with the practicalities involved, to help him get that part done. I am going to meet with his teacher at the beginning of next term and try to work out a different homework structure for him. Obviously he needs to keep up with the academic schedule, but just structure it so that it is not too much on any given day. The reading as well, he will read, but only what he wants to read not the books he is given to read, but it's fine. The physical and sports activities make him very tired.

VK: Sleeping problems, difficulty falling asleep?

P1: He is a very light sleeper. If he has had a heavy day and he has played a computer game, I stop him playing at about 7 o'clock. I try to get him into a routine where we will sit at the table and eat, if he had his way he would sit at his computer and eat, so at 7 o'clock I tell him it is cut off point and that his brain needs to slow down, otherwise he will have difficulty falling asleep and I normally get him to read a book and relax before going to sleep.

VK: And once he is asleep, does he wake up easily?

P1: Not easily, no. He will get up at around 5 in the morning and then he is done. Then he is active again. Very, very seldom will he sleep late. He always sticks to routine. He gets up, gets dressed, has breakfast and that is what he will do.

VK: Every morning?

P1: Yes, he is up and he is going.

VK: You mentioned nervous fine motor behaviours.

P1: Chewing and also sometimes he does this shoulder lift. Last night when he went to his dad, I noticed he was lifting his shoulders and then I know that he is a bit tense and anxious. It is almost like it is in preparation for what is like a fear factor, what might happen. The unknown. The chewing I think is just part of the syndrome. His dad, at 40, still chews pens to pieces. It is also not all the time, by the way. He will go for a while where he is not chewing, but when he is anxious he needs to have an outlet and then he starts chewing.

VK: Do you know if he chews a lot in the classroom?

P1: I don't know but I am pretty sure that he must do with his pencils and things. He definitely does it at home. If the pressure is on I am sure he will chew the pencils, the ruler, the rubber, whatever he gets.

VK: You marked that he has anxiety often.

P1: He does, but I also had anxiety issues so I don't know if it is a genetic thing that has spilled over onto him. I have learnt to manage it now but with lots of restructuring and reprogramming. He does have a tendency to be anxious. If we are moving out to a braai, a social function or the unknown, I need to prepare him so well beforehand. I need to tell him what we are going to do and that these are the people that are going to be there otherwise he will throw what I call a wobbly.

VK: What does a "wobbly" entail?

P1: He will resist and he will delay and he will procrastinate and try to negotiate to get out of the situation. Sometimes he will loose it, where he will throw his toys out of the cot and I actually give him time out and ask him to please go to his room and calm down. He manages to diffuse himself and then he will say he is sorry. He has so much insight, it is unreal. He is able to focus himself back and then when we get there he actually enjoys himself, but to get him to that stage is really difficult. I used to ask him if he would like to go and then he would always say no. Now it is a case of we are going and it is just how long we are going to take. It has been a huge shift for me because I was sort of like his slave always asking him if he would like this or that. I was raised in a very militaristic environment and I was at boarding school for ten years of my life where you had to conform, so I have not taken that type of approach with my children. They need to be offered alternatives, but I think I took it overboard. He actually needs structure.

VK: Excessive worry, what kind of things does he worry about?

P1: The planet, humanity, he wants to save the world and war he is so anti-war. He takes on the whole world and all of its problems and that becomes his problem and he mulls that over and over in his head.

VK: How does he show his frustration?

P1: He gets frustrated when he does not get his own way. Because he is so clever what we see as them getting there own way, they see as this is what we need to do, so if I say to him that it is enough on the computer, I try to limit his gaming, then he will ride around outside on his scooter and I suppose it is because he is lonely, he will get very frustrated when I tell him that that is enough. He seems to think it is fine. It is a battle of wills. His frustration also comes from his social situation, where he feels he is not quite getting it and he doesn't. He does not get the social dynamics of 9 year old boys and I don't think he ever will and its fine. It does not spill over into aggression. He just remains frustrated until he composes himself. He has an amazing ability to compose himself, which for his age is unusual. He has insight into his own behaviour. He is very aware which is quite sad for a 9 year old because you lose the child part of living. He is like a little adult in a 9 year old body.

VK: Irritability?

P1: He gets irritable with people who don't understand him. It's a difficult one. Irritable has to do with tolerance. He has a low frustration tolerance, so if the tolerance gets too little, he runs out of patience and tolerance. Then I know that he has had enough now and that it needs to end, whatever it is, so that is where the irritability comes out. He won't get irritable with people easily, he is actually fairly

tolerant to a point, but if they push his boundaries, he is very demarcated, the minute they cross that, then he becomes irritable.

VK: In what situations is he impatient?

P1: He will be impatient with follow through; instant gratification is probably a bit of an issue. He needs things now. I have tried to teach him not to interrupt adult conversation, I talk to him about speech bubbles and that works beautifully because he can see it. But still, if he wants to say something, he has got to say it now. I think he thinks that he might forget it if he does not say it now. He becomes impatient if his need is not met now. Then he will get angry and storm off. The irritability and the frustration tie in together.

VK: I see that inability to concentrate is marked as often.

P1: I think that he goes into his own little world and if something is boring according to his standards, then he just won't bother. If it is interesting enough to grasp his attention, then he will have full focus and he right there, in the zone. His concentration is unfortunately very selective. I have explained to him that even if he finds something boring, he needs to do it. It is part of what we need to do which he still thinks is a waste of time.

VK: How does he manage socially?

P1: I marked social incompetence as often because he really struggles. He will connect to one person on a commonality and he will hold onto that. This year he has been much more keen to get out there, I think it is very much his father's influence. This is what we guys need to do, become more social. If he had his way, he would stay indoors the whole time, behind his computer. That would be his first choice. But now he tells me that we need to do more outdoor activities together because I am also an indoor person. I will go for a walk on the beach and I am in my own little world too and I am actually quite happy there. I had two old school friends of mine over for supper last night and we had fun but I come to the point where I have had enough now, I am done and they don't get it. That is what he does to; he gets to the point where he has had enough.

VK: When does he get agitated?

P1: He gets agitated when things don't happen the way he wants them to happen. Mommy said we are going now, so we need to go now and it is 15 minutes late and we haven't moved yet, he gets anxious and then he gets agitated. If you say something then you have to do it. But I am also like that. The agitation links in with something that has not quite followed through. I feel like I need to try and stretch that a bit. I know that it is his world, but there are other worlds too, which he does not get yet. I know that he will get there. He needs to learn that there are other people's needs that also need to be taken into account. I probably allowed it because he is an only child, despite the fact that I have 3 other boys, they are all much older and out of the house. I have always catered to his needs.

VK: You said earlier that he is restless in bed at night.

P1: It is almost as if he does not really know how to shut down. Unless he is physically exhausted, I will go into his room in the early evening and he normally throws all the bed clothes off and then I will cover him up. Other nights he will be upside down in his bed. I don't know how he gets there, but he does. I would say that the restlessness is linked to what is going on in his head. He can't seem to slow down and switch off. I actually give him tissue salts sometimes if I sense the agitation and

anxiety and it does work a bit. He is not on any medication though, we need to cope. I am so against Western medicine at the moment and I would never put him on it. I am sure that M will teach himself to self regulate as he gets older.

VK: Can we move on now to some general questions?

P1: Yes.

VK: Has M ever being diagnosed with anything other than learning problems?

P1: Yes, he was diagnosed last year as having many Asperger's traits. He does not fulfil all the criteria though, so was not given that label. At the same time, his dad was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome.

VK: When you take M to school in the mornings...

P1: His dad takes him to school and I fetch him from school. That is our agreement.

VK: Ok. When his dad fetches him from you in the mornings is he happy to get up and go to school?

P1: Fine, no problem. In Grade 1, he used to try and get out of it if he could. For the past year and a half though, he has been fine. He might procrastinate a bit in his room but he has a routine where he is up and dressed and has breakfast. He hates being late so if he is on his computer in the morning and he needs to get going then I just need to say to him that he needs to get a move on or else he will be late.

VK: What do you think M likes most about school?

P1: Computers and his friend D. He seems to be enjoying Natural Science at the moment, but again I need to prompt him. He shows some interest though, not like with maths. He just says that he does not get it and then I sit and help him. He just breezes though, he does not work hard. I want to teach him the discipline of doing homework and planning. I left him to do it on his own for two weeks to see what would happen, but he got 80% for his spelling without even looking at it. I told him that the workload will increase and that he needs to get into the mode of working and practising.

VK: What does he enjoy least about school?

P1: Homework, he hates homework. It is insignificant according to him and his attitude is that he has the whole week to do it and so he will leave it until the day before. I am trying to instil in him that the more effort you put into it, the better you will do. Marks don't really mean anything to him. He will normally do well, but it doesn't matter to him. I quite like that because it means that he does not feel any pressure to perform.

VK: What do you think his least favourite activities at school are?

P1: Sport, he does not enjoy sport. He has an acute awareness that he is not good at it. He is very aware of his limitations because of his poor muscle tone. He will participate because he knows he needs to. Luckily the sports coaches are quite good with him and if they encourage him then he will give it his all. He is not absolutely focused on the dynamics of the game, he is not really there.

VK: Does M ever come home and complain about anything or anybody in particular?

P1: Sometimes there is a bullying thing and the other day he told me that a particular child is “not well.” M could not understand that this particular child had asked him to chase him and he found that really abnormal. He could not understand it at all.

VK: How does M get along with his teachers generally?

P1: No problems there. He really likes his teachers. He has never once complained about a teacher. He forms a bond with his teachers. I think that he sees the hierarchy and he respects that.

VK: How do you perceive M school experience from a mom’s point of view?

P1: I see it as mostly positive. There are days when he is emotionally distraught. I have too much sympathy on those days. I just want to get into his world and make it all better. Then I ask myself what I am doing and if I should maybe have done home schooling with him, but of course he does not need that. He needs structure and routine and that environment. On the whole the school that M attends have a unique approach. All the children are encouraged in some way and there is no last kid. It is a whole mind shift which I actually buy into. On the whole, I feel his school experience is very positive. The anxiety is self inflicted and I do the same thing to myself. We create our own fears. The fear of the unknown is a big one. We need to try and unlearn that and live in moment. He enjoys going to school and does not try and get out of it. He is very seldom absent. I think he has only missed 2 days of school in the past 2 years.

VK: Do you feel that M is stressed out at school?

P1: Yes, I think so and I think it is time related. He is very slow and especially with written work so I think that creates a feeling of anxiety. The anxiety comes from having to conform with what is expected of him. He does not pace himself with work and then he gets behind with his work. He daydreams in class.

VK: What do you think could help M and other children like him to decrease their stress levels at school?

P1: To create awareness. It is essential for people working with M to realise that he is a very different child with different thought processes. People need to be more tolerant and patient, but that ties in with insight and awareness. So education, information and knowledge are key. M looks normal and he appears to be normal but his behaviour is not “normal” according to society’s standards, he gets labelled. Children will say that M is a baby because he cries quite easily. Adults will say that M is obnoxious. It is a personal judgement thing, based on ignorance. I think if people knew and understood then they would see things differently.



## Interview transcript 2 (VK and P2)

VK: Ok I am just going to go through the ones that you have ticked off and if you've got extra information just give it to me and if you haven't then its self explanatory. Ok I see you've got fatigue marked here. Is she tired from, what kind of things?

P2: Sometimes she doesn't sleep too well at night and if she doesn't have her Risperdal to make her fall asleep, because the Ritalin keeps her awake then she cant sleep and then she is exhausted the next day, or if she has to get up early in the morning she'll say "I'm tired I don't want to go to school"

VK: And things like sport and physical activity does that make her fatigued or not really?

P2: No, I wouldn't say so, umm, she's run up this hill and is not even half out of breath.

VK: Ok, so it's more related to bad sleeping?

P2: Ja.

VK: Tummy aches?

P2: All the time.

VK: All the time, normally mornings?

P2: Ja, mornings.

VK: Early morning, pre-school?

P2: Ja, 'I can't go to school, my tummy is aching.'

VK: But I see not headaches, huh? Just tummy aches?

P2: Headaches once in a while.

VK: But not really.

P2: No, and if she gets one then I give her a tablet then she's fine.

VK: Muscle tension and aches? Does she complain of that a lot?

P2: Yes, she complains that her legs hurt the whole time and like yesterday she did hockey and when she woke up the first thing she says is my body hurts all over today. And she complains about aches in her legs a lot but I think that's growing pains because she has shot up a huge amount.

VK: Yes she has.

P2: So those are growing pains.

VK: Then sleep problems you mentioned earlier, she struggles to fall asleep?

P2: Ja.

VK: If she manages to get to sleep?

P2: Fine, she doesn't wake up. She'll wake up but she she'll go back to sleep.

VK: Ok, so it's not difficult for her to sustain sleep.

P2: No

VK: Ok, then anxiety. Could you expand on that a little bit?

P2: Anxiety and stress and worry being very similar.

VK: Yes

P2: That is when there is a big project coming up or things like she will remind me 4 or 5 days in a row because she is scared she will forget herself.

VK: OK, so it's on her mind.

P2: Ja, like for next Tuesday she has to do about sea creatures and at 6 o'clock this morning we were Googling the sun fish.

VK: Ok.

P2: If I'm dressed could we Google the sunfish?"

VK: Ok so she wakes up with those things.

P2: Ja.

VK: What other kind of things do you think she worries about, obviously you said now school projects. And for tests, does she worry about writing tests?

P2: No, no she won't even tell me about it.

VK: Ok.

P2: She'll sometimes say I've got spelling we have to do it now but then it is Friday morning before the spelling.

VK: OK, what other kind of things does she worry about?

P2: I say she worries but then she does nothing about it and it comes back and she spends hours writing in the silver pen. I can see we want the prettiness but not...

VK: So the project takes a secondary sort of role.

P2: Yes,

VK: Ok, feelings of failure and inadequacy. Does she verbalise that to you? What kinds of things does she say?

P2: Umm, 'oh I'm stupid, I'm ugly, I'm not worth it' Or especially if S and I say, when she's gone wild the afternoon, "but now E you have spoiled both of our afternoons and it's not fair you have to think of the consequences. You can't carry on like this and then our afternoon is bugged up and you just carry on", cause that happens almost every afternoon. In the morning, it's better now.

VK: Ok so the mornings are easier?

P2: Ja, I'm showered by the time I wake her so she can have my undivided attention, I help her dress, what are we having for breakfast, sometimes I stir-fry noodles at 6 o'clock in the morning so that

she can eat but you know its getting that everything ready. Here's your bag, here's your hat, here's your hockey stick.

VK: So organisational skills you still have to carry?

P2: Ja, I do it because it just makes life easier.

VK: She is still very young as well.

P2: Ja, otherwise we get in the car and we've forgotten the bag at home and we haven't got the guitar and actually we haven't got the guitar, that was for today. It just gets disorganised.

VK: All over the place. Frustration. Does she get frustrated easily?

P2: Umm, only of she can't get her own way. It's this thing we must do it NOW.

VK: Immediate gratification?

P2: Ja, I bought 2 ice teas. Can we have that ice tea now, no, but why not, because, but I want it now, and what happens, she opens it, I just took one sip, now I could have pushed her but you just get to the stage where you're like "what the hell" You know?

VK: Mmm. Ok so she gets frustrated if her desires aren't met now. And how does she express her frustration?

P2: Angry, shouts at me, speaks to me horribly.

VK: So it's verbal?

P2: Verbal, to me, and that happens with all ADHD kids, the one closest to them, it comes out to them.

VK: It's like a safe place for her.

P2: She doesn't do that to her dad, never ever.

VK: And irritability? Does she get snappy?

P2: Oh Ja, but with me, because it's like "but mom I've told you, I've asked you" "yes, but I'm busy" "ja, but I've asked you 10 times"

VK: There's almost also a link to the NOW.

P2: Ja, everything must happen NOW in E's life. And if you say, could we have an ice-cream. I'll think about it, then she knows already that she'll get that ice-cream because she will work me till she gets it. And she'll work it "but you said maybe, you said perhaps..."

VK: What about negative thinking? How would you put that?

P2: Umm, I can't do it. I can't do it, I'm going to fail, cause now I haven't studied or helped her. I have got two kids that I have to help study, I can't, you know, put up with everything, plus I've got everything else to remember. I keep on saying; you have to remind mom on a daily basis otherwise I cannot remember.

VK: Does she give up quite easily?

P2: No, Uh, She gets bored.

VK: So she loses interest rather than giving up?

P2: Ja, except when she is on the Ritalin, she will sit and do a puzzle, a 1000 piece puzzle, for 2 hours she'll sit there, or she will sit and read for 2 hours. But if she is not on it, don't think, she will unpack the whole mosaic cupboard and then she will stick 2 blocks and then its over. Pack it away, I'll do it later.

VK: Ja, that is fairly typical I would say. And mood swings? Does she go from fairly happy to grumpy?

P2: In the mornings before her Ritalin and in the afternoon when it tapers down. I can tell you exact times. Twenty minutes before she takes her pill, and before that Ritalin kicks in, that whole mornings but now you must understand "I go hello and I sing to her and tickle and bite her and encourage her to get dressed. I make a whole thing in the morning. I never go 'wake up' with neither of my kids. Then from 3 o'clock on the mood swing is terrible till 5 o'clock when she takes her Risperdal then she is fine again.

VK: Then she is fine, her moods are steadier?

P2: Mmm...

VK: On the medication than off?

P2: Ja, you know it's very difficult. You don't want your kid to be on all medication but and you would know, I've had people tell me 'how can you put your child on Ritalin, and I turn around and can say to then, if my child is not on Ritalin she could kill herself because she will stand on that edge, and she'll stand and look and if she is not on Ritalin she will see what happens if I stand a bit further. We caught her hanging off a 4 storey wall 2 months ago cause she was playing with the ball.

VK: Not aware of the possible consequences?

P2: NO, no, why should I do that. We see E going off the wall we say ok fine we carry on, S says no there's a problem. R gets there she is hanging off a wall that is 4 storeys high now what if she slips, ja.

VK: Scary, very very scary. And you obviously managed to grab her?

P2: She will just do stupid things.

VK: It's unconsidered.

P2: Ja, and she says to us I am so sorry, I can't help it, like when she makes me and S cross and I know she can't help it cause I know sometimes when I get cross I get so mad with her, I say to her just go away and leave me alone and I've sometimes said to her 'I hate you' which is so wrong but she just pushes me to such a limit I just can't anymore and you just want to kill them, you know.

P2: And she says to me do I think she's ever going to outgrow it and I think "God, I hope so cause I'll be an alcoholic.

VK: It's not easy.

P2: Uhuh.

VK: And then aggression, verbal or physical, you've already said verbal

P2: Verbal, it's always verbal and normally...

VK: Directed at you...

P2: Ja

VK: What is she like with S?

P2: Umm, oh she will smack him once in a while but then he turns around and he smacks her back. But that's just sibling and his hormones are... not even on the shelves here at the moment. There somewhere else.

VK: But for the most part it is verbal and it's mostly directed towards you.

P2: Ja, always. No and she'll never speak to my husband like that, always me

VK: Fearfulness, what kind of thing is she afraid of?

P2: Ummm, but then you never know with E if it is real fear or pretended fear. You'll look at something on TV and then she'll suddenly be petrified of bugs where she was never afraid of before so you never know is she really afraid?

VK: Now does that last or does it just sort of peter out after a while?

P2: No it peters out after a while till the next thing.

VK: Until there is something new?

P2: Ja, she used to love bugs, my car had special grooves in it for all the bugs from the college.

VK: Ok, so now she has decided to be...

P2: No, now bugs are out... what's she scared of. Oh, darkness, there must be lights on. And I'm upstairs, they're downstairs and almost every night she comes up at about 2 or 3 o'clock

VK: In the morning, she comes and climbs in with you?

P2: Ja, which is ok as long as she falls asleep there.

VK: Yes, not start having a conversation at 2 o'clock in the morning.

P2: No, she knows.

VK: Then you've also marked here depression.

P2: Ja, I think she also sometimes gets depressed cause she knows she's different and even though one tries to make as if she is not different, my god, she is different. You know, there's no two ways about it, you know. But like I said to her, yes there's the negatives, but I said look at the positives, you are such a bright child, and umm, you know you can do all of this, look at your spelling, S, poor S battles with spelling and she sits and rambles off words like... Ja

VK: Ja, it's just so completely natural for her

P2: It just goes and she goes, bathroom, b-a-t-h-r-o-o-m and S goes...

VK: Ok so if she is feeling kind of depressed it's normally to do with being different and feeling different.

P2: And sometimes she says I just feel ugly today. But she is now on a mild anti-depressant

VK: Ok, I didn't know that.

P2: Ja, in the morning because of her getting so stressed about things so A put her on that and I must say I think she has calmed down. If it wasn't for her and S fighting it would have been quite relaxing. Because there is never any of that when S is not here.

VK: So there are just sibling things too...

P2: Ja.

VK: And hostility, who does she take her hostility, where, is she hostile with you?

P2: Ja.

VK: Just you, if things aren't the way...

P2: Her way.

VK: Ok, so those are all sort of interlinked.

P2: Ja

VK: And impatience?

P2: Impatient, things must happen now, not tomorrow, now.

VK: Ok, and then the inability to concentrate goes with the ADHD?

P2: Ja, with the ADHD.

VK: Then sensitivity to criticism, is that with all sources or is it worse with some people than others or...?

P2: I think when friends say something its worse, umm, she'll say oh but L S, cause she sings so beautiful that is like, a stick this big in E's heart. Ja, it's because it's that competitiveness and now "other people say wow did you hear her sing, but they haven't heard me sing" you know.

VK: Ok, this is understandable

P2: We're all like that.

VK: No for sure, completely understandable. Ok this is very similar to what we had before, aggressive and defensive outbursts.

P2: Yes, towards me

VK: Towards y.ou again. And also to do with having to wait?

P2: Ja

VK: Restlessness to do with...?

P2: The ADHD

VK: You said she is able to settle to things for...

P2: Oh when she has had her Ritalin she calms down completely, she'll sit and do soduko in the car for 2 hours

VK: So it's *completely* different?

P2: Ja, it's like a different child. Yes mommy, no mommy, it's just unbelievable what a drug like that can do, whether it's good or bad it's just, its just, amazing how it can make a child capable of doing things.

VK: Mmm, and poor time management?

P2: Ja.

VK: At school activities she struggles to although she is extremely capable of doing it she does spend lots of time doing other stuff or...

P2: sorting her pencil case or...

VK: Or whatever, so she doesn't always get...

P2: The art teacher Mrs VG says to me first term E had music so she missed Art all the time so its very difficult, she says she has to give her a symbol for effort because E has never, not been there and this term she is there but she is 10 minutes late and she say can I just sit on the window sill. I said but you know M, say to her I understand they have to learn what to draw but say to her, draw me a ballerina. She will sit and draw you the ballerina. She says, well she is not very arty, I said , I beg to differ, I think, maybe not in drawing but I think like me she is going to be an arty child. She loves fashion designing. She will sit and draw dresses for hours.

VK: She maybe just needs a starting point.

P2: Exactly, don't go in there and say ok everyone is drawing shoes, E you haven't started with your shoe yet, well you aint going to get any shoe out of her I can tell you that much. She will take as long as possible and rub out for the next 20 minutes. Unless you say to her, why don't you draw me a shoe for the winter? You design as shoe; you'll have the best shoe in Cape Town in 10 minutes.

VK: Ok, that brings up an interesting point that we're going to come to now. It's a very interesting point and her eating too much or too little, I assume it's too little.

P2: Ja, but when it wears off, oh my god, 4 o'clock, wow, it opens and closes that fridge non stop, she must finish 4 apples, umm, she doesn't really like eating bread and stuff so she'll eat fruit or she'll do 2 minute noodles but she is not allowed to have the sprinkles on it cause its got MSG and stuff in it, ummm even though we buy the woollies one without the MSG its got rubbish in it

VK: Ja.

P2: Or biltong or you know she'll snack on healthy things.

VK: But during the day while, when the Ritalin is in effect she really struggles to eat hey?

P2: She doesn't eat a thing.

VK: Nothing?

P2: Nothing.

VK: So you can get her to eat breakfast before she takes it?

P2: Ja

VK: ...and then again now when it wears off.

P2: Ja, that's why I make noodles at 6 in the morning, stir fry noodles,

VK: So that she can eat...?

P2: So her tummy gets full. This morning she had muffins. Doesn't want cereal and doesn't want toast.

VK: And then suppertime, good appetite at suppertime?

P2: Yup.

VK: Ok so it's just the medication, so she sort of makes up?

P2: Ja, two healthy meals.

VK: After hours?

P2: Ja.

VK: And then the other one is nail biting. Has she always been a nail biter?

P2: No.

VK: When did it start?

P2: It must have been a year ago, a year and a half ago. Now if I catch her I say now I want to rub some aloe on her nails cause that will stop her in 2 secs.

VK: And when does she nail bite? Is it all the time or when she watches tv or...?

P2: I think it's at school because I hardly ever see her biting her nails.

VK: Ok, when she is sitting at her table or whatever?

P2: Ja.

VK: Ok these are sort of more structured interview questions. It says, your child is happy to go to school in the morning?

P2: No

VK: So you have the avoidance tactic and you have the tummy aches and the...

P2: Sometimes we're fine, other times it takes more, quickly come get dresses, we can do that sun fish and then once we're dressed we're fine.

VK: Ok so it's that initial push. What would you say E likes about school? In your eyes.

P2: Learning about things and I think that is why she is doing so well now. Natural science, Social Science. Writing is boring to her, why would I have to sit and write?

VK: Ok so content subjects where she can learn new things?

P2: Ja, her general knowledge is incredible. She sits with myths and facts on my phone for hours reading all of it. And the other day she says, you know, a giraffe only has so many bones.

VK: Ok, and if you had to say what sort of things E doesn't like about school, is there specific things she doesn't like?

P2: Sport, cause she is not good at it.



VK: Ok.

P2: Umm, I think that's about the only thing.

VK: Ok, sport is not her, and they do quite a lot of sport, but that is not her thing?

P2: No, my kids aren't sporty kids. I have never been a sporty person I mean R has never been an exceptional sporty person. So...

VK: And how does E get along with other kids in her class?

P2: Umm, I think fine, I think she can get a bit bossy but... the only one she doesn't get along with is D, he bullies her.

VK: Ok, has she mentioned him by name

P2: Yes, she says and S says she must go and put his name in the bully box. They never check it.

VK: They do, I check it.

P2: Because she put C name in there.

VK: C was pulled out about 4 times for that, so it does get checked but that's interesting. And with teachers? How is E with most of the teachers?

P2: All the teachers love her cause she is so lovable, she just gives hugs and kisses and Mrs RI, my god, she must have gotten 5 gifts already and it's not even half the year. It just shows you from last year to this year, when you give positive and you show love, what you get.

VK: That is also, we're going to get to that. You're hitting on quite a few things here that are coming right at the end there. In your eyes, if you had to sort of give a mark out of 10 for E's school experience would you give like a 5 out of 10 cause she thinks its ok or a 2 out of 10 if she thinks it's pretty bad or an 8 out of 10. How do you think her school experience is for her in general?

P2: Probably 5 out of 10

VK: Do you think she feels that it is just something everybody has to do? If she had a choice at her age, you can go to school or you cannot go to school...

P2: She would probably not go to school. She says she \_\_\_\_\_ a school out there, I must be on drugs... which you are but not on my life, I'm sorry.

VK: do you really think she would go for home schooling if she had that option.

P2: Ja

VK: She would quite happily stay at home and have somebody come and teach her here

P2: Ja, she would

VK: and why do you think that is?

P2: I don't think she likes rules

VK: Routines and structures...

P2: You know why it's always that, I think for a few years now she has not had a good teacher and she got shouted at and shouted at and shouted at and it's just put such a negative effect on her and that's why she doesn't want to go to school.

VK: So she has a negative connotation because of her school experience.

P2: Ja

VK: Which is exactly what this is sort of getting to? Ok so the next question says has your child been diagnosed with anything other than learning problems. Learning problems is a very broad, I mean we know E has been diagnosed with ADHD from very long ago but everything fits into that ADHD profile of her. So she is...

P2: A very clear ADHD

VK: Very clear ADHD and from my experience with her very much ADHD

P2: Very much.

VK: So she fits into that profile?

P2: Ja, when people say to me my child is ADHD and they're not even on Ritalin and I go "you have no idea girl!"

VK: It is a scale huh? Where you can be this end or this end.

P2: Unfortunately E is that end.

VK: Do you feel that E is stressed out at school? Do you feel that school is quite a source of stress for her?

P2: I don't think now, previously yes. I think that since the beginning of the year it's bettered so drastically and she comes home so proud, look I got 100% for my music you know.

VK: So she is having a much better year with much less stress?

P2: Ja, a much much better year. She says to me, oh, I only got 17 out of 20 I'm not going to get that A. She's relaxed. We're going to hit all the A's don't worry. So she is wanting to achieve where...

VK: and that's something new, that's something that's only happened this year?

P2: Yup.

VK: Ok so we've said you think she is less stressed now.

P2: Yes I think so.

VK: And the reasons for that being, now we can go back to the things you mentioned. You feel that it is very teacher related.

P2: Huge, huge.

VK: Ok, I know we have discussed it but for the purpose of this interview can you be quite specific about that, what kind of things stressed her out last year or the year before.

P2: Not so much the year before with A it was still ok but last year it wasn't a teacher that could understand E, she is a boy teacher, she is not a girl teacher, she never praised E. E did not get a star of the week until the end of the year. Not 1, not a well done, not a you're doing so well, all

she did was shout at E the whole time in front of the whole class. E used to come home all the time crying.

VK: Ok so if we pull that apart its negative input, its no encouragement...

P2: Belittling in front of other people.

VK: Belittling in front of other people.

P2: Which is a big thing.

VK: I know E is very physically affectionate. Did she get any physical affection?

P2: Maybe a little bit but not, I don't think as much as she gets this year or the year before. She's like me, we're very, me, E and S, we're extremely physical lovey people.

VK: You're very tactile?

P2: Yes, and we're tactile. Like S kisses me the whole time and hugs me. He's not opposed to do it even in front of his friends still.

VK: So it is not so much the work per say it's more the handling of the child.

P2: Ja, look I think also there were worse. No cause they did India and all those things, like when they did the Taj Mahal. E can tell you everything about it and she sucks up information like that but it's also the way it gets presented and the way you encourage the kids that makes them want to do more. Its like if I say to you, that book report I want it tomorrow or you say you know what, if you finish that book report for tomorrow you know I'll give you this, you know that star you wanted or come lets try I'll help you. Then there's encouragement, then you want to try.

VK: No, absolutely. And the last question says, which you've pretty much answered already, how could you relieve, in your opinion, the stresses? And you've pretty much said, a lot of it has been relieved this year because of the approach being that this year's teacher. How does she differ from last year?

P2: She's calm, she never shouts at E or she'll talk to E but she never does it in front of the class, she takes her into the back room and says "E, now I've told you this, this and this" and that makes the world of difference because she's not belittling E in front of her friends. Because E already feels like a freak cause she can't write fast and she just says to E you don't do cursive writing, it doesn't matter, as long as you finish it that's the most important. In any case, who needs cursive writing? It's not the dark ages anymore.

VK: No, as long as the child can write, something, whether on a computer or...

P2: Whatever.

VK: It doesn't warrant much of a fuss really.

P2: And you know what, if E's homework isn't written in the book, there I see she's written it because E couldn't finish in time. Its small little things. And when she's done work. WELL DONE, brilliant. You can just see every page there is an encouragement.

VK: A lot more positive input which makes a big difference to E

P2: Ja, huge.

VK: And you say it makes her want to try.

P2: Yes.

VK: Try and do well.

P2: Yes, for the teacher.

Vk: And would you say that, let's say she has a negative school experience, like the last couple of years, do you think that affected her self image? How she feels about herself?

P2: Yes, I think, it started in Sub A when Mrs W got cancer, that knocked her for a huge six, that just floored her for an entire year and that's where it started, she has 3 teachers in that year and a lot of them didn't understand what it was about, I mean that one that was a substitute that went away, she said oh I am taking E off Ritalin for the day, I want to see what she is like and then wrote she's restless and I was like what did you expect that's why she is on the medication. Like funny things. And then, ja, second year, I think she was just not mature enough and because she got knocked that first year it was the best thing to keep her back.

VK: Absolutely.

P2: I also think that certain teachers have got their specials and even though she tries very hard she was stressing E by pushing her the whole time and that made a big difference too, you know there is positive pushing and there is pushing till a kid is nervous.

VK: Then the stress level obviously goes up.

P2: Ja.

VK: So ideally the situation for E is the situation where she is not having negative input and she is also not feeling incredibly pressurised to perform. When she can sort of be herself and she can have lots of encouragement that makes her want to do better.

P2: Ja.

VK: And do you think, this is a little bit of a leading question, but do you think the insight of the teacher into the child and how they work, do you think that makes a difference?

P2: Yes definitely, I know all teachers get training for ADHD but some of them have got no idea. I would actually very much like all those teachers to have an ADHD child for a week on their own. KS said after she had E on her own for 5 days, she said, I'm not going to have kids for a very long time cause she realised what it was about. It's alright to sit in the class but they don't know what it's like, you know and I know because we have got those kids but they don't know what it is to have those kids all the time and how their minds work and all those things.

VK: And also I think there is a lack of understanding of, you do so much for the child and then you send them to school and somebody is breaking them down and all the good you were trying to do.

P2: Ja, it's like, people go, oh but you know, are you feeding them the right food, hello, my husband works for Woolworths, I buy everything organic, E picks up a pack of chips and says oh the \_\_\_\_\_ I can't have it, now you're telling me I'm not feeding my child. Maybe I could give her more vitamins and stuff but she is already getting pills. There was a whole article about how Ritalin breaks down all the vitamins and stuff but then she is eating apples and...

VK: Eating lots of fruit.

P2: I just don't want a child to sit at breakfast with a handful of pills like this, I think it's not necessary

VK: Ok, thank you



## Interview transcript VK and P3 (Parent 3)

VK: I would like to discuss the symptoms that you have marked as frequent on the check list. I see that you have not marked any of the physical stress symptoms as often.

P3: M has always been a very physical and active child. He has recently had a few headaches, but that has been since he has gone back on his medication. He rode a bike ridiculously early and considering that he has had ear problems, I don't know how he managed to balance at all. He has always been good at that. I don't really see him as being anxious. He is not anxious at home but with the work at school it may well be different.

VK: In what situations does he get frustrated?

P3: Anything from playing on the Play station and not being able to achieve what he thinks he should be able to achieve to a change in plans. If I have not told him that we are going to gran and I have not told him about it. He does not like surprises. He likes to plan and be pre-warned. If I had not prepared him for him coming here later today, he would get upset about it because it is a change in his normal routine. Any alterations in the normal day to day plans make him frustrated. If we are going out for dinner, I need to tell him in the morning, not just before we go. He likes being at home; he is a real home body.

VK: How does he express his frustration?

P3: He complains and he gets emotional actually. He won't have a complete breakdown, but he gets very close to tears. He does not ever become physically aggressive but expresses his frustration verbally.

VK: And irritability?

P3: Again it goes around any changes he has to make around his plan. He gets irritable if he has to do something that I want him to do instead of what he had originally planned. He then gets frustrated and irritable.

VK: I see that negative thinking has been marked as often. How does that manifest?

P3: Just in situations where he does not want to do something, he will just say that he is not going to do it and I obviously can't leave him alone at home. I would not say that he is negative in that won't say I can't do it so I refuse to do it. He just does not like having his day to day plans changed and then he will just dig his heels in and refuse.

VK: When it comes to his thoughts about himself and his school performance, I see that poor performance is one of the items that have been marked as frequent, does he express negative thoughts about this.

P3: He and I do not often discuss his school things that much. If he does badly on a test, he will tell me that it was too difficult or that he did not know the answers. It has never really been a big deal in his life. He has never said that he is an idiot and so he does not know the answers. Occasionally he will say that the work is too difficult for him, but more often he seems to be completely indifferent. I have been told by teacher's that he has a negative self image and that now he believes that he can't do it. When we sit down and do his homework, he will start to try generally and he has never expressed to

me that the work is too hard and that he does not know what I am talking about. It is difficult because it as though none of it really interests him and so he just shrugs it off.

VK: What about his inability to concentrate?

P3: He has always been extremely busy. On medication he is more inclined to voluntarily do his homework. But it is not just homework, it is everything. If I ask him to go and shower he will always say "just now" or "I already showered yesterday." It is anything that he does not consider important, like eating, sleeping, brushing his teeth. He can play his Play station for hours and concentrate, but the things he does not want to do he cannot concentrate at all. He has very selective concentration. If it is something he feels like doing then he can concentrate.

VK: When does he become impatient?

P3: He is a very quick fix child. If he decides he is hungry, then he needs to get fed right now. Not in ten minutes, not even in 1 minute but now. Whatever he wants, it needs to be immediate. He is very much an instant gratification child. Look, I do understand it, I want that diamond and I want it now!!

VK: Tell me about his avoidance behaviours?

P3: He will avoid doing anything as long as he can. If you ask him to shower, he will say that he just want to finish watching a TV programme. He always wants to do something else first. His favourite line is "Can I just.....?" I don't find that as much now he is on medication. As far as homework is concerned, he does like to have a break straight from school and I think that is only fair, and then at about 4, he is more willing to come and do his homework. He still wants to know in advance how long it is going to take. You can almost see him working it out in his head, if he has to read for 5 minutes instead of ten and only has to practise half of his spelling words, and then he can be back playing as soon as possible. In actual fact, his time management from his perspective is very good. He plans his time almost to the minute. He just does not like other things, like school work, to get in his way. As far as school work goes, he gives as little time as possible to that.

VK: What about agitation?

P3: Again, it is directly related to that. He gets agitated and frustrated because you are preventing him from doing the things that he wants to do. This weekend, he decided that he wanted to go and play cricket in the nets. My husband has also been frustrated with him because although he really likes taking him to the nets he finds that if it was not really in M's day plan, they get there and he really does not want to be there. So this weekend he had rediscovered one of his old computer games and before that he and really wanted to go to play cricket and now he was involved with his game and was not so interested any more. You could see him caught between thinking that he did want to go but now he did not really want to leave his game. The agitation and frustration all relate to his plans he has for himself. Sometimes, he has not expressed that plan to me and so I do not know about it. Then I may have made arrangements and it does not suit him. On occasion he really can have a meltdown.

VK: How does he have a melt down?

P3: He will argue with me and get very emotional and tearful. He never kicks and screams or breaks things. He has never damaged anything or anything like that. He will walk off in a huff sometimes or he will verbally express that he is not happy, but it is more emotional.

VK: How does he express anger?

P3: He is never overly happy or overly angry. He is not an extreme person. His mood is fairly consistent. He may get upset but he won't go and cry for hours in his bedroom, he is not going to kick and scream and shout and go over the top. He will tell you the way it is but I would say much more even as opposed to outbursts of any extreme. It is almost as if it is too much effort. With me, if I am angry then you know I am angry but for the rest I am also very even tempered. I think he is a bit like that too.

VK: The time management we have discussed already, what about difficulty relaxing?

P3: That is very much on a physical level. Winding down, calming down but again, it is different now that he is on the medication.

VK: In what way?

P3: For me it is night and day. For example, he is now able to sit still. For me it is a completely different child. Physically, he is still able to do all the sport and the activities that he would normally do but he is definitely more able to sit and be still. He is never going to be a still child. He is very physical he is very active but he is not bouncing off the walls in the same way as he was.

VK: What about sleeping. Does he find it difficult to fall asleep?

P3: No, he has always slept well. There are occasions where he has had a change in routine. During the holidays, he goes to bed later than the night before school starts when he has to go to bed early, he may then struggle to fall asleep. Generally he sleeps incredible well.

VK: What about his appetite?

P3: His eating has been affected by the medication. He has never been much of an eater. I have always had to remind him to eat. If he is hungry he will go and get something. Food is a complete non-entity in his life. He eats because he gets given a plate of food.

VK: If you were not to give him a plate of food?

P3: It would not worry him at all. I think he would survive for 3 days without thinking about it. My husband is like that too, whereas I need three meals a day. My husband often goes the day with nothing to eat.

VK: You said that C3 (child 3) is a nail biter.

P3: Yes, he always has been.

VK: I would like to move on to some general questions now. When you bring C3 to school in the morning, is he happy to come to school?

P3: One morning since we have been here, he did not want to come and that was all. I would say that he is happy to come. The morning that he did not want to come was right in the beginning when he was new and not settled in yet. He was happy enough on the way to school, but was very upset when I wanted to leave. It was the separation. By the next morning he was fine again. He likes both of us to come with him to school in the morning. He has established his routine now. We walk him to class and he puts his bags down and we walk back to the four-square court and he gives me a hug and then he disappears.



VK: What do you think he enjoys at school?

P3: Sport. If I ask him how his day was he will always say fine. If I ask him what he did at school, he will say that he can't remember. He has finished his school day and so he has nothing to say further. They did speeches on sea creatures yesterday and even getting that information out of his is not an easy thing. He is not interested. For him it is gone and finished and he wants to move on. He goes to school to see his friends and to play sport.

VK: Is there anything that he specifically mentions as not liking at school?

P3: He has not come home from school with a particular dislike or like for that matter about anything. At the beginning when he came to the school, he said that he did not have any friends but it was not a big issue in his life, it was just the way it was. He just goes with the flow.

VK: How are his relationships with the other children in his class?

P3: He has only once had a special friend. He has always been more of a group child. I think he has settled in and when we drop him in the morning there are lots of children who greet him. I don't think that he has made a friend really. There is another boy who came into his class a few weeks ago. That has helped because he is not the new boy anymore and he and this little chap are on similar wavelengths and they seem to have settled together quite well. The other boy also lives just around the corner, which has also helped. He likes the girls and always has. He does not come home and mention a particular child that is his friend. He does not seem to know a lot of the children's names and he plays four-square with them every day.

VK: How has he got on with his teacher's generally?

P3: He has always got on with his teachers fine.

VK: How do you see his school experience in general?

P3: On a scale of 1 to ten, I would give him a 7 or an 8 because he likes school. It is difficult because he does like school, he does not like the learning part of it though. He is happy to come to school and he is happy to come home again. School is not a dreadful place for him. The academics do get in the way of his otherwise perfect day. Generally he experiences school positively. It is bizarre I think because with his difficulties you would think that he would dislike school. We have wondered about it because school has not been easy for him at all. He does not get into trouble at school, he does not get picked on and he seems to be well liked so I think his days at school must be fine. The fact that he got 4 out of 50 for his test does not seem to worry him at all. School work is just an inconvenience for him; it just gets in the way. He likes his teacher.

VK: Has he ever been diagnosed with anything other than learning problems.

P3: Yes. He has been diagnosed as having ADHD.

VK: Do you feel that your child is stressed out at school?

P3: No. I would say he scored 0 for stress at school. I don't think that M knows what stress is. However if you change his routine then he becomes stressed. He needs to be able to plan ahead.

VK: The last question seems then to not be relevant to C3. The question is what do you think could help to lower your child's school stress?

P3: I don't really think anything should change. If you took school work out of his school day then it would be perfect. It is a concern for me though. I need him to be stressed and worried about his school work, but he just doesn't. I worry about how he is ever going to get through school. He does not worry at all if he passes a test or not. I think he will find something that he likes to do after school and then he will be fine. I just wish that there was some way of getting him to take school work more seriously.

## 1 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

VK: Right what I want you to draw on this piece of paper is I want you to draw me just in pencil a person, any person, it can be a young one, an old one, a girl, a boy, a man, a lady but I want you to do your very best drawing of a person on this page, ok, you don't have to colour him we're just going to draw the person and then we are going to talk about him a little bit afterwards, ok are you ready.

VK: Are you almost done, angel?

C1: Yes, nearly.

VK: Nearly done.

C1: I'm just cutting him out now.

VK: I see you rub out your sketchy lines and then you go back with harder lines.

C1: Yes.

VK: Do you always do that when you draw?

C1: Mostly.

VK: It's a very nice drawing.

C1: Thank you.

C1: Just the feet now.

VK: Just the feet?

C1: Yes.

VK: Ok?

C1: Done.

VK: Well done! Sjo you worked hard on that darling, you did that beautifully.

C1: Thank you.

VK: Right now let's see, shall we give this person a name?

C1: Sleepy Piet.

VK: Sleepy Piet.

C1: The eyes are half open.

VK: Yes I see he does look...

C1: Oh wait his nose!

VK: Oh there we go he's got a nose. Are we going to write his name on there? Let's write Sleepy Piet on there, that's what we've called him. What made you think of the name Piet? Do you know somebody called Piet?

C1: (laughs)

VK: No, it just came into your head? Now tell me how old is Sleepy Piet?

2 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

C1: Uh hmm?

VK: If you had to give him an age how old would he be?

C1: 20

VK: Is he 20?

C1: That's why he is tall

VK: Ok he's grown. Ok so write there, on there, he's 20.

VK: And now can you explain to me why Sleepy Piet has very large knees

C1: (laughs) maybe they're too large

VK: No I thought maybe it's for a reason, from doing some sport or some something. Hmmm? What does Sleepy Piet like doing?

VK: Is there anything else he likes doing or does he just like to sleep all the time?

C1: He likes to sleep

VK: Just sleep?

C1: Yes

VK: What doesn't he like doing?

C1: Waking up

VK: And what happens if you go in his room and wake him up? What does he do?

C1: He jumps to make you get out of his room and then shouts "don't wake me up again!"

VK: Is he upset?

C1: Yes, when he gets woken up.

VK: And now what do you think. In this picture that you drew here, how is he feeling right now? How does he feel?

C1: Tired, he's tired.

VK: But what's this he's got on his face here.

C1: A smile.

VK: Why is he smiling?

C1: He's happy and tired.

VK: Happy and tired, what makes him happy-M Hey, what makes Sleepy Piet happy?

C1: Ummm...

VK: He's smiling, so what's that big smile for?

C1: Ummm...

3 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

VK: Did someone tell him something or did something happen.

C1: Someone told him a joke.

VK: Someone told him a joke?

C1: Earlier on, before he was tired.

VK: Before he was tired, and now he is still smiling at that same joke. What do you think he is going to do next?

C1: He is going to be tired now.

VK: Is he going to go straight back to bed?

C1: Yes.

VK: What type of bed does he like to sleep in nunu? A single bed or a big giant king size bed.

C1: A single bed.

VK: Does he like sleeping in a single bed? Does he like a fluffy blanket or a duvet or what does he like to sleep with?

C1: Usually a duvet and a blanket.

VK: Ok a duvet and a blanket.

C1: A blanket over a duvet.

VK: To keep himself nice and warm?

C1: Yes.

VK: Ok, so you say he's feeling sleepy and he's also feeling kinda happy.

C1: Yes.

VK: Ok, anything else special about Sleepy Piet that you want to tell me.

C1: No.

VK: Ok so shall we put Sleepy Piet to bed huh. With those dark rings under his eyes.

C1: They're his eyelids.

VK: Are his eyelids very heavy?

C1: Yes.

VK: Ok, thank you for Sleepy Piet; I'm going to put him to bed now. Right, now the next thing I am going to ask you is, do you know the story about Aladdin and the magic lamp...

C1: Yes.

VK: With the genie that pops out.

C1: Yes.

#### 4 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

VK: And what does the genie say to him? To Aladdin?

C1: He gives him; he says he'll give him 3 wishes.

VK: He says he is going to give him 3 wishes, right; now, we're going to play a game that you're Aladdin and I'm the genie.

C1: Ok.

VK: Ok, so I've just popped out of the jar, and I say "oh my master, I grant you 3 wishes in the world. Could you, master make your very first wish?

C1: I'd like all the games in the world.

VK: Okay, number one, all the games. Is that any particular ones like board games or computer games or...

C1: Computer games.

VK: All the computer games in the world. Hmm... What kinds of games do you like snookle?

C1: Strategy games.

VK: Is that with ummm...

C1: Where you have to hold your fortress and attack the enemy baddies.

VK: Ok so it's like war and building up armies and that sort of thing.

C1: Yes, that's what I like.

VK: What is your favourite game at the moment?

C1: StarCraft, I was playing it earlier on.

VK: Ok what do you have to do in that game love?

C1: It's when you must train workers build your troops and you must also build supply producing structures so you can make more troops because you cannot train any more if you don't have supplies.

VK: Ok, so you have to build houses and food and all that kind of stuff for them.

C1: You must build structures and all that stuff like supply \_\_\_\_\_ so that you can increase to the maximum supply from what you currently have.

VK: So its lots of planning in that game hey? Is that your favourite game?

C1: Ja there's also two resources.

VK: Oh and what are they?

C1: There's \_\_\_\_\_ gas and minerals. They're the two resources that you must harbour.

VK: What do you do with those minerals?

C1: You must use them. Minerals are used to build like almost everything. Minerals are used for like everything in the game.

5 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

VK: Almost like money in the game, like money in our world is minerals in the game?

C1: Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ gas is quite important because it allows you to build advanced units and special structures.

VK: OK, now that was your first wish, what is your second wish if you could have another wish? Remember I am still being the genie, that was the first one, the second one is?

C1: Ummm...

VK: It can be anything except a thousand more wishes. It can't be a thousand more wishes. That's not allowed

C1: (laughing) yes, cause that would just make the genie mad.

VK: Yes, then he would put a bad spell on you or something, or he would go away in disgust. Ok so what's the next one?

C1: I'm still thinking.

VK: You're still thinking.

C1: That toys will be cheap.

VK: That toys are cheap, so why would you like them to be cheap?

C1: So that I can buy lots with my pocket money.

VK: What kind of toys would you buy?

C1: Lego and bionicles.

VK: You like lego?

C1: Yes, and bionicles.

VK: And bionicles. You build things out of lego?

C1: Yes.

VK: What do you like to build darling?

C1: I like building bionicles.

VK: Ok, bionicles are those funny little alien looking things hey?

C1: I'll show you one I've created by myself.

VK: Ok go bring it here so we can have a good look at it.

C1: Ok.

VK: Oh wow.

C1: I built this one.

VK: He seems like a little, he's like a robot hey? A roboty type thing?

C1: He's like a warrior.

6 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

VK: A warrior?

C1: Yes.

VK: He looks quite dangerous, huh, he's got a bit of a scary face.

C1: He can balance.

VK: He can balance, ok; he's got quite a sword in his hand.

C1: Yes.

VK: Ok, you need to find one more wish. You've had two, so we've got you have all the computer games in the world, the next one is that toys can be very cheap so you can buy lots.

C1: Yes.

VK: And the last one?

C1: I'm still thinking.

C1: That I could know, like, what other computer games are going to be made.

VK: So you want to know before, you want to know in advance, huh?

C1: Yes.

VK: What games are still going to be made is that right?

C1: Yes.

VK: Hmm, and if you knew all that then... you could already start thinking about it...

C1: Yes.

VK: ... and planning about it.

C1: Yes.

VK: Ok, right, there we go, there's your Aladdin three wishes. And there is Sleepy Piet.

C1: (Laughing) AH!

VK: I'm going to ask you to do one more drawing and then I'm going to ask you some questions about school, ok?

C1: Ok.

VK: Ok now it doesn't matter, you can do it that way or that way, it doesn't matter either way. This time you have to draw for me a picture of you doing something at school. Ok, it has to be at school and you have to be doing something.

C1: Ok.

VK: So for instance, you could draw, you give me an example, what could you be doing at school? You have to be busy with something, what could you be doing at school?

C1: Umm, like work?



7 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

VK: You could be doing work, what else could you do at school?

C1: We watch movies.

VK: You watch movies, you might be watching a movie at school, and you might be in the computer room or on your sports fields. Ok and I would like you to draw you and some other people cause you are not all by yourself at school, you're often with other people. But it doesn't have to be everybody in the whole class because that's going to take you a month and a half to draw that.

C1: Or the whole day.

VK: Yes, the whole day. I want you to just draw a picture of you, and some other people, at school doing something together, whatever it is. Do you want a little cardboard to press on love or are you fine?

C1: It's fine.

VK: And this one if you feel like putting colour in you can but you don't have to.

C1: Ok.

VK: Ok, you ready steady?

C1: Yes.

VK: Are you struggling to think of something to draw?

C1: Yes.

VK: Ok, when we spoke now you said, you sometime in the classroom are working, that's a choice, or sometimes you're watching movies, or sometimes you play sport. You even go to the science room these days, you go to the IT room, and you play outside at break time. You can draw anything. Can you not choose one?

C1: No.

VK: Is it hard to choose?

C1: Yes.

VK: Do you want to do the questions first then we'll come back to the drawing?

C1: Ok.

VK: Shall we do that, then maybe you'll think of something in the meantime hey?

C1: Ok.

VK: Ok, right if I said to you what is your very best thing to do at school what would that be, your most favourite thing at school?

C1: Watching movies.

VK: Watching movies, is that when Teacher R sometimes shows you a movie normally only at the end of term.

C1: Ja.

## 8 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

VK: And out of all the lessons, not a movie lesson but like your maths lesson or science, which one do you like the best, which is your favourite?

C1: I like doing maths.

VK: You like maths? Ok. And what lesson do you find the easiest, what lesson do you not have to think too hard?

C1: Spelling tests.

VK: Spelling is easy for you; you don't really have to study too hard?

C1: Yes, it's not very hard.

VK: You're lucky, you can just spell easily

C1: Yes

VK: Umm, what do you think you're good at?

C1: Umm, clubs.

VK: You're good at clubs. What about subjects in school, like maths and spelling and science and reading. What are you good at?

C1: So it's not about clubs?

VK: No it can be, I've written there clubs. What is the thing that you do your very best at school, that you try really hard?

C1: Umm

VK: Can you think of anything?

C1: I do my best to do my maths.

VK: You do your maths the best. Right, now the next thing is what is what is your worst thing about school? What don't you like, is there something you really don't like?

C1: Swimming. It's because I hardly remember, I hate swimming

VK: Oh do you forget to take your things?

C1: Yes, I hardly remember when it's swimming

VK: Oh, do you like swimming when you're in the swimming pool? Or not really?

C1: Sometimes I remember.

VK: And when you do remember is swimming nice?

C1: YES

VK: Oh it is nice; you just don't like it when you forget. Ok. If you could get rid of one thing at school, if you could take one thing away, what would it be? Something that you never had to do again?

C1: Watch that horrible video.

9 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

VK: Oh I know exactly which one you're talking about; you wish that you never ever had to do that again hey?

C1: Ja, but I got over it.

VK: You did get over it but it was not so easy hey?

C1: No, I had that in my mind for a few weeks.

VK: Mmm, I know you did.

C1: But I got over it now.

VK: Good I'm glad. And as far as lessons, which lessons don't you like, which is your worst lesson, like a lesson you don't really enjoy? You said your best is maths and which one is one you don't like so much? If you think of all your subjects. Is it English or Afrikaans or Science or...

C1: Afrikaans.

VK: Is it Afrikaans?

C1: Yes.

VK: You don't like doing Afrikaans so much? Hmmm...

C1: Yes.

VK: Ok, what things at school do you find difficult or hard. What is difficult?

C1: Division sums.

VK: Have you started doing long division sums? Are those the ones that are hard?

C1: Most of the division sums are very hard.

VK: Ok. Who are you friends at school?

C1: D.

VK: D is your best friend hey?

C1: Yes.

VK: Ok, who else do you play with sometimes?

C1: R

VK: Oh, R, RB?

C1: Yes.

VK: Ok, and what about other M?

C1: I like talking to him sometimes at the desk; we don't talk a lot though

VK: OK.

C1: Cause I know that desks are in \_\_\_\_\_

10 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

VK: That's right, what's the rules in class.

C1: Not to talk to your neighbour.

VK: Mmm, ok. Is there anyone at school who sometimes teases you?

C1: DR in the other Grade 4 class.

VK: Ok, and what sort of things does he tease you about? Does he just say ugly things or... Hmm?

C1: He says if he was the boss of the world he would not have created me.

VK: Sjoe, that's not a nice thing to say to somebody.

C1: No.

VK: And are there any other children at school who are not nice?

C1: Not sure.

VK: Not sure, is that the only one that makes you sad sometimes?

VK: How does it make you feel when he says things like that?

C1: I feel very sad.

VK: You feel very sad, I'm sure you feel very sad. Does he pick on other children as well?

C1: D.

VK: Mmmm, and does D also get sad?

C1: Yes, also he picks on L.

VK: Does he pick on L as well?

C1: But luckily he was caught there.

VK: By a teacher?

C1: By Mr N

VK: OhOh big trouble

C1: (laughing) ja.

VK: And how is sport going for you at school?

C1: ok.

VK: What sport are you doing now at the moment?

C1: Rugby and hockey.

VK: Which is your best, rugby or hockey?

C1: I like hockey.

11 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

VK: You like hockey the best. When you are not at school, when you are at home and in the holidays, what's your favourite thing to do?

C1: Like when I'm sick.

VK: No, or like when its holidays or weekend, when you've got time that you don't have to go to school. What's your favourite thing to do then?

C1: I like to play computer games.

VK: Ja, that's your favourite, you love playing your computer games. Are there things sometimes at school that make you feel nervous or a little bit frightened?

C1: Things like the next grade camp because I was a bit nervous on the grade 3 camp.

VK: Ok.

C1: And I'm sometimes nervous of school camps.

VK: What do you think makes you nervous, is it cause you're going away from home?

C1: No just that I think that it is going to be quite difficult to do.

VK: All the things, all the climbing and jumping and running. All that stuff?

C1: Ja.

VK: Ok, so the thinking of going on camp makes you a little bit nervous?

C1: Yes.

VK: Ok, in the morning when you wake up normally when it's a school day, what do you do first thing in the morning? I know you obviously have to get dressed, brush your teeth, and eat your breakfast.

C1: I first have breakfast.

VK: Ok and then after that.

C1: I get into my school clothes, brush my teeth and go to school.

VK: You go straight to school.

C1: Yes.

VK: And on the way to school what do you think about, normally, or don't you really think about anything?

C1: I usually look outside the car window.

VK: To see what's outside huh? So you are not really thinking about anything.

C1: Sometimes I think.

VK: About?

C1: Computer games.

12 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

VK: About a game that you have been playing hey and you're thinking what's coming next and what you're going to do?

C1: Yes.

VK: Are there things at school that make you feel very happy?

C1: Talking to D.

VK: And do you like your teachers, do you get on nicely with your teachers?

C1: Yes I do ja.

VK: And when you have to write a test, the tests you do that are small like your tables test and your spelling test but also your other tests. How does it feel when you write a test?

C1: Hard times table tests like the times 7 table and the 12 times table. The hard timetables, that's the ones I struggle with.

VK: Ok, and when you have to write those tests how does that make you feel? Do you feel nervous?

C1: I try and think harder.

VK: Do you just think harder? So you really concentrate?

C1: Yes.

VK: OK well done. What would you like to be when you grow up one day?

C1: A boss of my own company making computer games.

VK: There you go; are you going to make your own computer games?

C1: Yes, I'm already thinking about making a strategy game.

VK: Are you?

C1: Yes.

VK: Sjoie, that's a good start for being the boss of your own business, if you're thinking of it already. What sort of things at school make you feel stressed? You know what stressed is right, when you feel sort of nervous and your muscles here are all tight...

C1: Yes.

VK: ...and you've got butterflies in your tummy...

C1: Yes, when theres lots of sums on one page. I think AAAHH there's so much sums here, OH do I have to do them all? In that fat maths books there is lots of pages of sums.

VK: That was in grade 3 hey?

C1: Yes.

VK: There were lots of sums in that book hey? Did that make you feel stressed when you see that?

C1: Yes, all the sums on one page.

VK: Then you wonder how you are going to do it all huh?

13 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

C1: Yes.

VK: And let's say they give you lots and lots of pages to read, does that make you stressed as well. Not so much?

C1: Reading?

VK: Reading ja.

C1: No I'm ok with reading

VK: That doesn't make you feel stressed?

C1: Yes, I like reading

VK: Ok so it's just sums, lots and lots of sums that make you a bit stressed out? Ok, and when D says mean things does that also make you feel stressed?

C1: No just sad, very sad.

VK: Just sad, but not stressed?

C1: Quite stressed.

VK: Does it also make you feel stressed, ok. Now, we're almost finished, so you get stressed if there is lots of work, particularly in maths and maybe thinking about camp is also a little bits stressful and then when somebody teases you are says something ugly

C1: Yes.

VK: Ok, so what do you think would help to make you feel less stressed?

C1: By not thinking of it.

VK: By not thinking of it. Do you think you could just have a thing to put it?

C1: Yes like that DVD. That also made me feel terrible.

VK: That also made you very stressed hey? And how did you make that stress better?

C1: By not thinking of it. I try; I did my best to keep it out of my mind. I think about other things

VK: Right, ok, that's a good way of handling it. And the same if, what do you do if you see a page of maths, you can't really not think about it.

C1: No you've got to do that.

VK: You've got to do them ja.

C1: There is no ways I can get rid of that.

VK: No you can't get rid of that so how do you approach that when you see that whole page of maths and you go AAHH I've got to do all these sums. How do you get yourself you feel less stressed?

C1: I get a few of them to get them slowly.

VK: Oh that's a good thing. Take a few and then another few and then you break it down into smaller bits.

14 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

C1: Yes, it takes me quite some time to do that maths but I did get them done.

VK: There we go so you found a way hey?

C1: Yes I get past them.

VK: You've found a way of getting it to work for you.

C1: Yes.

VK: Ok, that's very good that you can learn to control your own stress by not thinking about it or breaking it down into smaller pieces.

C1: Yes.

VK: Well done.

C1: Thank you.

VK: Right you did exceptionally well, thanks for talking to me so nicely. Now we just have to do that one last picture and then we're done.

C1: Ok.

VK: We're going to... I'll let you listen to some of that when we're done so you can hear what you sound like on the tape...

C1: Ok.

VK: Right where is that piece of paper?

C1: My mom just made some videos with my voice in it and it sounded a bit funny.

VK: Our own voices always sound funny when you hear it from there cause we hear it from inside, now you have to hear it from outside.

C1: I wish it could just record when you tapped it

VK: I am sure you could, when you make a noise it will come out on there. Right here we go, there's your paper. Now remember, we are going to do something at...

C1: School.

VK: Something at school. Now you just need to choose the thing and draw about that. It can be anything.

C1: Ok.

VK: Have you thought of something in the meantime.

C1: Yes.

VK: Oh well done.

C1: I can't make this one as 3D as Sleepy Piet.

VK: That's ok. I wondered if the eraser had disappeared again.

C1: Yes, I'm thinking now, where'd that eraser go?



15 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

VK: But it's still here, we didn't manage to make it disappear.

C1: I have an eraser problem at school, it keeps on disappearing.

VK: You and D, both of you, they're always disappearing.

C1: Yes, because I do put it in my spacecase, but then somehow it's just gone the next day.

VK: Maybe someone borrows it or uses it without asking.

C1: No, no one borrows it; I do put it back in at the end of the day. Yes, imagine this is the school day, at the end, I put it in the spacecase, close the lid, and the next day I open it and see no eraser.

VK: It's strange.

C1: Ja, I wonder what happens to it. It couldn't have been the cleaners cause it wasn't outside the spacecase.

VK: Is that your table you're drawing or somebody else's table?

C1: My table, the table that I sit at. I couldn't fit it to the edge now, my table. That is where the parking is through there.

VK: Ok is that where the parking lot through that side?

C1: Yes.

VK: What you thinking about?

C1: I am going to draw (M)R next to me but now I just drew the second chair on the other side. He does not sit there.

VK: We can pretend he sits there.

C1: Right.

VK: What are you going to be busy doing in class? Are you going to be doing some work?

C1: Yes.

VK: Did you draw little pencils.

C1: Yes and there's a book.

VK: So you're not writing on the table.

C1: Yup.

VK: You'd be in trouble for that.

C1: Right.

VK: What club did you do?

C1: Patchwork and board games.

VK: Did you make a cushion?

C1: Yes, I'll bring it.

16 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

VK: Did you have fun making it?

C1: Yes, I enjoyed it.

VK: Did you get to choose all your own patches.

C1: Yes and our own thread and we used the sewing machine to sew it all together.

VK: Did you sew this all yourself.

C1: Yes.

VK: Wow, that's really cute.

(chatting about patchwork continues)

VK: Ok finish your drawing angel.

C1: Ok, I hope (M)R can sit there.

VK: Yes you can just pretend he sits there, that's fine. Everyone calls him R hey?

C1: Yes.

VK: **Otherwise they get mixed up cause you're M and he's M, so you're M and he's R.**

C1: Yeah, that works, otherwise I just get confused cause he could think it was him and he could think it was me.

VK: That's right, could get quite confusing.

C1: Yup.

VK: Is that your spacecase?

C1: Yup.

VK: Does it have a rubber in it, an eraser, or is the eraser gone?

C1: It's gone.

VK: It almost looks like a little laptop.

C1: He was in the cycling club.

VK: Yes with Mrs E, did he have fun?

C1: Yes.

C1: Here's my book.

VK: What work are you busy doing?

C1: Maths.

VK: Maths. Is it division sums or is it easier sums?

C1: Easy sums.

17 - Interview transcript VK and C1 (Child 1)

VK: Easy sums.

C1: I'm going to start with his head again, it's too small. I'm starting with his head again, it looks too small.

VK: Oh is it too small for his body.

C1: Ja.

VK: All finished, you in the classroom? And you are doing maths and its MC and MR. Are you guys chatting at all or are you being very good and working?

C1: Being good and working.

VK: Ok, Let me see what else I wanted to ask you. How are you and (M)R feeling in this picture?

C1: Happy.

VK: Are you happy?

C1: Yes, that's why they are both smiling.

VK: They're both smiling.

VK: What is coming after maths do you think?

C1: Spelling.

VK: And spelling is easy for you hey?

C1: Ja.

VK: Ok sweetheart, that's very nice, I am just going to write here. Well done, you did a very good job today. Are you feeling tired after all that hard work?

C1: Yes, I am quite tired. But not as tired as Sleepy Piet.

VK: Not as tired are Sleepy Piet, no one in the world is as tired as Sleepy Piet I don't think huh?

(Tape cuts off)

## Interview transcript: VK and child 2 (C2)

VK: Hello C2.

C2: Hi.

VK: Are you ready to do some drawings for me and then answer some questions?

C2: Yes

VK: I would like you to draw a person for me. I would like it to be your best drawing of a person. Here is your piece of paper and a pencil and a rubber. You can take as much time as you need. *(C2 decided quickly and began drawing immediately. She did not chat whilst drawing. She was focused whilst drawing. She finished the drawing in just over 3 minutes.)*

VK: So tell me about the person that you have drawn in your picture.

C2: Well basically I just drew a person. I don't really know who she is. I can just see her in my mind.

VK: If you had to give your person a name, what would you call her?

C2: Probably Linda or maybe Rebecca.

VK: So is she called Rebecca?

C2: Yes, she is Rebecca.

VK: How old is Rebecca?

C2: She is 29.

VK: What is Rebecca doing in your picture?

C2: She is modelling.

VK: Does she like modelling?

C2: Yes, she loves it.

VK: How is she feeling in this picture?

C2: She is feeling happy because she has got a little bit of fame and stuff. She is in all of the magazines.

VK: Is she a cover girl?

C2: Yes she is.

VK: Does being a little bit famous make her happy?

C2: Yes.

VK: What is she going to do after she has finished her modelling shoot?

C2: She is going to go and play in a river?

VK: In a river? Does she like water?

C2: Yes she does. She is going to go and get muddy and dirty.

VK: Is she going to get changed out of her very posh dress first?

C2: No, she is going to swim in her dress. She will take her shoes off, but not her dress.

VK: Would you like to be like Rebecca one day?

C2: Yes and wear a fancy dress. She is a little bit tanned; especially on her head (*C2 is colouring in her person*) I love people wearing red lipstick. I also want to colour in her eyes.

VK: What colour eyes is Rebecca going to have?

C2: Blue like me. Oh never mind, let's give her green eyes. Does it look weird?

VK: She has very green eyes. That's lovely C2.

C2: She is happy and she is having lots of fun. I am done now.

VK: Next we are going to see what 3 wishes you would choose if you had a magic genie that could grant you any 3 wishes.

C2: I am thinking. My first one would be to have a happy family. My second one would be to be famous for my singing and my last one would for the world to be eco.

VK: What do you mean by eco?

C2: Like that no animals die and things like that.

VK: Would you like all the things on earth to be looked after nicely?

C2: Yes. I would really like that. Nothing getting hurt. Do have to draw my wishes now?

VK: No you don't have to draw them.

C2: Good, that would take long.

VK: You wished for a happy family. Is your family happy?

C2: No my dad has gone and it makes me sad. It makes my brother sad as well but he tries not to show it.

VK: And what about you, do you show that you are sad?

C2: I try not to show it because it is hard for the one parent if you show that you are missing the other one. It stresses them.

VK: So if you are at your mom's house and you are missing your dad, then what do you do?

C2: I don't say anything. My mom has been in love with my dad for 22 years and now he has gone away. She is sad. Dad is happy when we are with him. It is very noisy where dad lives.

VK: Where does dad live now?

C2: In CT in the middle of the city. It's very noisy but there is a guy who sells fruit every day right there. His fruit is delicious and juicy. I love fruit.

VK: Now I would like you to draw a picture of you at school. You do lots of different things at school so I would like you to draw you and other people at school busy doing something.

C2: I could be painting or in the drama room. Can I be in the library?

VK: Yes you can. What would you be doing in the library?

C2: I would be reading. I love reading. Can I use this one?

VK; Maybe you should use a pencil first and then add colour afterwards if you want to.

C2: I want a pencil with a ball.

VK; I don't have a pencil like that. Have you decided what to draw?

C2: Yes, I've got it. I am going to draw stick figures.

VK: I am interested to see what you are going to draw.

C2: Oh dear, I am drawing on the table.

VK: Never mind, it is only pencil so it will come out easily.

C2: These are all books that I am drawing.

VK: Are those all the shelves in the library full of books.

C2: Yes, I love books. Reading is basically my life. I love it because it is so full of adventure. Can I show you the book that I am reading now?

VK: Yes you can.

C2: I am reading the Frog Princess but it is the fun Frog Princess.

VK: Wow! This is a very big book.

C2: The princess turns into a frog.

VK: How far are you in this very large book?

C2: Let me check. I am on this page.

VK: Do you read every day?

C2: Nearly every day, when I have time because I have to do lots of things like homework and stuff and oral and we have a book quiz tomorrow. Ok I am finished with all of the books on the bookshelf now. I have a big fat book balancing between my hands.

VK: Are you busy reading?

C2: Yes but my feet are like this (*demonstrates sitting with legs crossed*). I like this, it's so nice. I am going to make myself more comfortable. I will draw a cushion for me to sit on.....and I have a big smile.

VK: Why are you smiling in your picture?

C2: Because I am happy that I am reading but now I look like I have a beard (*when she draws her hair*). I am the bearded lady, the very young lady.

VK: You are a young lady. Who are you drawing now?

C2: I don't know. Some random girl who is choosing a book. No actually this is Mrs DV, the teacher, because she is bigger.

VK: She is bigger than you. What is she doing in this picture?

C2: She is telling us all about books.

VK: Now you have drawn another smiling face. Whose smiling face is that?

C2: I don't know, I am just drawing people here.

VK: Do you normally go to the library with your class?

C2: Yes. Ok that is a very bad drawing. It looks like his neck is broken. You laugh like someone I know, but I can't figure out who it is.

VK: Do I? I wonder who that is.

C2: I don't know. I know now.....you laugh like my mom.

VK: Oh, is it like your mom's laugh?

C2: Yes but my mom laughs silently.

VK: Have you thought about who the other child in the drawing is?

C2: Yes it is LC.

VK: Is he in your class?

C2: He is a new boy in my class. I am done now. I don't want to draw any more. I am really bored of drawing.

VK: That was the last drawing that you need to do for me. We can just talk now. Will that be better?

C2: Yes, much better.

VK: What is your favourite activity at school?

C2: What do you mean by activity? Do you mean like a lesson?

VK: It can be anything like maths or sport or drama or anything that you do at school.

C2: It is drama and art and music and I love my singing lessons too.

VK: So do you like all the creative things at school?

C2: Yes, I love them and of course library too.

VK: If you had to choose your favourite lesson at school, what would that be?

C2: That would be LO (life orientation).

VK: What do you like about LO?



C2: I think it is because I like expressing myself and we do a lot of drawing and singing in LO. Like we did family qualities and because my family is funky so I enjoyed that a lot.

VK: Ok. What would you say is the easiest thing for you at school?

C2: Music is really easy for me and singing.

VK: What things do you think you are good at at school?

C2: I think that would be drama. I like drama.

VK: How do you feel when you go on a stage or have to sing in front of people?

C2: I feel normal. I get a little bit nervous before and then when I am on stage I am nervous and then I tell myself that I can do it and that I need to believe in myself and then I can do it.

VK: What is your favourite thing about coming to school?

C2: In the morning I like to see my friends when I come to school, they have a happy smile.

VK: That is a lovely thing to see in the morning. Now, what is your worst thing about school?

C2: Maths

VK: You answered that easily. What don't you like about maths?

C2: It is just boring. I like something with entertainment. It's boring, all you do is work out sums.

VK: And for you, working out sums is very boring?

C2: Yes, I need something that will keep me occupied and that is not maths.

VK: Ok. Are you in trouble at school often or not often?

C2: I don't get into trouble often, only sometimes.

VK: When you do get into trouble then what kind of things do you get into trouble for?

C2: Like climbing on things or getting told on.

VK: Told on?

C2: Yes, for saying rude things. Like with child X, he bullies me so I kind of bully him back in a way. If he says something rude to me then I say something to him like "I'll cut your face off" and then they tell on me. Especially one boy, he is always rude to me.

VK: If you could get rid of one thing at school, what would you get rid of?

C2: I don't know. I think it would be people.

VK: People your age?

C2: Yes, there is one girl I would like to send away and also maths.

VK: You have already explained to me why you don't like maths, but why would you send this girl away?

C2: She is not nice to me. She bullies me. She acts too big for her boots; she always rolls her eyes at me.  
Can I please play with the doll house whilst we talk, please?

VK: We need to finish talking first and then you can play with the doll house.

C2: Ok.

VK: What things at school do you find difficult?

C2: Maths and my times tables. Also Natural Science is hard.

VK: What makes it difficult?

C2: I can't catch up with everybody. The teacher shouts at me when I can't finish my work. I was sick for a few days and then it was hard for me to catch up my work and then I got shouted at.

VK: Who are your best friends at school?

C2: CK, CG, NG and IK. I have lots of friends at school. My friends are so, so funny. They can make you laugh and laugh so they are nice friends to have. I am serious. We have a mission to find Miss H (teacher) a boyfriend. We always pat her on the head because she is so short.

VK: Do the children in your grade ever tease you?

C2: Sometimes.

VK: What do they tease you about?

C2: Basically that I can sometimes be a bit rude.

VK: What do you mean by that?

C2: Well, I can be a bit bossy at times and that is the problem.

VK: Do you think that you are bossy sometimes?

C2: Yes, I think so.

VK: Do you ever feel like there is anyone who picks on you?

C2: Yes, there is a boy DR and a girl CG who pick on me?

VK: What kind of things do they do to you?

C2: He says such rude things to me. He even told me that my mom was fat. He often says rude things about my mom. We just don't get along. I try to stay out of his way but every time he is whispering at his table and he always looks at me when he is doing it. I just tell him to leave me alone.

VK: That does not sound very nice. Do you ever feel that people treat you badly?

C2: No.

VK: Have you ever felt lonely at school?

C2: Yes, once or twice.

VK: When do you feel lonely at school?

C2: I have to go to my friends, they never come to me. I always have to ask if I can play.

VK: How does it make you feel when someone is mean to you?

C2: I just get really, really annoyed. I feel like kicking something and I get angry.

VK: What would you like to do, if you were allowed to?

C2: I would really like to punch or kick the other person, lots of things.

VK: What do you like doing when you are not at school?

C2: I love rollerblading. I like doing scrapbooking and pretending to model and I also like reading.

VK: Are there any things at school that make you nervous?

C2: In the mornings, I am particularly nervous because I don't know if I have forgotten something. I don't know if I have forgotten this or that, have I done this, have I done that.

VK: Is that before you get to school in the morning?

C2: No, it is at school, when I get there.

VK: Do you worry about things when you get to school?

C2: Yes.

VK: How do you feel when you feel nervous?

C2: I jump around until the bell rings and think of lots of things.

VK: How do you feel once the school day has started?

C2: Then I feel chilled.

VK: Are there things at school that make you feel happy?

C2: Yes. Art, drama, music, library. I am happy at school because all the troubles from home just go away.  
Then I don't think about home.

VK: Is it nice for you to be able to not think about home stuff?

C2: Yes it is.

VK: How do you feel when you write a test?

C2: Very nervous. I just really want to please my dad and mom.

VK: Is that what makes you feel nervous?

C2: Yes, if I don't get good marks, I kind of feel disappointed because my dad wants to see me get good marks.

VK: Do you like getting good marks?

C2: I also like getting good marks. It makes me feel proud.

VK: What do you want to do when you grow up?

C2: I want to be a model, a singer or a fashion designer. I want to be famous.

VK: Do you want to be a little bit famous or a lot famous?

C2: A lot.

VK: Good for you. Do you feel stressed out at school?

C2: Yes I do. I don't like doing work because I get more and more stressed because I can't finish this.  
School for me is like gone in a minute, but actually it is also really long. It is both.

VK: So you feel stresses when you don't get your work finished and you get nervous when you think you might have forgotten something or forgotten to do something and you get stressed when you write a test.

C2: Yes

VK: Well the next question I was going to ask you was "What makes you stressed out at school?" but you have already answered that question.

C2: Yes I have.

VK: What do you think would help you to be less stressed out at school?

C2: If I could just remember things instead of forgetting them and if I could concentrate more and also if I could be totally calm all the time.

VK: All those things are things you want to change in you, but what could the school change to help you to be less stressed at school?

C2: They could make the school more colourful. They should paint the walls green and pink and orange. Also if they would let me take my work home then that would be better. My mom knows how to help me a lot. She helps me to concentrate better. Then I get my work finished quicker. Are we finished yet? I want to play with the doll house.

VK: Ok. You can play with the doll house now.

## Interview transcript – VK and Child 3 (C3)

VK: I would like you to draw me a person. It can be any person.

C3: Can it be a stick figure?

VK: I want you to do your very best drawing of a person. I want you to take your time and do it as best as you can.

C3: Ok. How big must it be?

VK: That is up to you, it can be as big as you want it to be.

C3: I better add some hair. I don't want my person to be bald. Now for the hands.

VK: Is there anything else you want to add to your person?

C3: Yes, a beard.

VK: How old is the person that you drew?

C3: He is 37.

VK: Shall we give him a name?

C3: His name is Richard.

VK: I assume that he is a man because he has a beard?

C3: Yes he is. Girls don't have beards.

VK: What does Richard do?

C3: He is a banker; he is a very rich banker. You can see his expensive stripy socks.

VK: Were his socks very expensive?

C3: They were R4000-00.

VK: Wow, those are expensive socks! How is Richard feeling in this picture?

C3: He is in a very happy mood because he just got money, more money.

VK: What does he want to do with all of this money?

C3: He is trying to buy a motorbike and a Lamborghini.

VK: Does he like cars and motorbikes?

C3: Yes.

VK: What else does he like to do with his money?

C3: He likes to just keep it and count it and then when he has the right amount of money he goes straight away to the shop and he buys something.

VK: I see. In your picture, where is Richard?

C3: He is at home. Now I am going to try and draw a pocket. There, it has money coming out of it.

VK: Is that his money pocket where he keeps his money?

C3: Yes.

VK: Is there anything else you want to tell me about Richard?

C3: He is very nice and kind. If his friend comes over and asks him for something then he will buy anything for him.

VK: So he would be a good friend to have?

C3: Yes.

VK: The next thing I want to do is ask you if you had any three wishes in the whole world, what would you wish for?

C3: I wish that I could get a motorbike.

VK: Would you really want to have a motorbike?

C3: I really want one.

VK: Does your daddy have a motorbike?

C3: No, but he sometimes rode on his brother's motorbike. I also wish for a car.

VK: Is that your second wish?

C3: Yes, the car is for when I am older. What do you call the fastest car in the world?

VK: I am not sure.

C3: Do you watch Top Gear?

VK: Not often. Do you like to watch it?

C3: Yes but have you seen the one with that... Oh, I will just say Lamborghini for now.

VK: Ok.

C3: It is the one that tries to beat a plane and he does with that car because it is the fastest car in the world.

VK: Goodness me. He beats a plane? That is fast.

C3: Yes and my third wish would be to have lots of friends where I live.

VK: Do you have friends that live near you?

C3: Only the new boy, but now he has been grounded so we can't play.

VK: Why was he grounded?

C3: We played yesterday and he was meant to go home at six and he did not go on time. He was half an hour late.

VK: Oh dear.

C3: I don't get grounded if I come a bit late, I just get shouted at. I think maybe he can play again tomorrow.

VK: Is he a nice friend?

C3: Yes.

VK: If you could choose someone to live near you, who would you choose?

C3: SN. He was my best friend in Jo'burg. I still miss him. There is a few more but I can't remember their names. I remember what they looked like.

VK: Ok, for your last picture, I would like you to draw a picture of yourself at school. It is a school picture, but you have to be busy doing something with other people. It can be anything that you do at school.

C3: So could I draw soccer goals because we play soccer at break?

VK: You can draw anything that you do at school.

C3: I want to draw me playing 4-square.

VK: That is a good idea.

C3: Can it be a stick figure or not?

VK: Why don't you draw proper people rather? It won't take you too long, you draw quite quickly.

C3: Ok, I can draw proper people. Can I use the rubber?

VK: Yes you can, there it is.

C3: Your rubber looks like chalk.

VK: It does but it works well.

C3: Here is my shirt and now for my pants. I can draw pants better. The one that I am drawing now is king. Now I can draw the hands...that was the easiest part.

VK: Are hands easy for you to draw?

C3: Yes.

VK: What is the most difficult part?

C3: The ball. (C3 started singing "She'll be coming round the mountain when she comes.") That looks better now. That leg looks good.

VK: It is turning out to be a really good picture.

C3: Can I do a question bubble?

VK: Yes you can if you want to. You can put in whatever you want.

C3: He is shouting "Out!"

VK: Is the ball out?

C3: No, the person is out. They are out of the game.



VK: Ok, I get it now.

C3: I have got that song in my head now. You have no idea how quickly I get songs stuck in my head.

VK: Is it hard to get them out again?

C3: Yup. I am drawing the last person in the 4-square now.

VK: Ok. There we go. Which one is you in the picture?

C3: That one there (pointing to figure)

VK: Who is playing with you in your picture?

C3: That is X and that is Y and I don't know who the other one is. Someone with a long neck in the school. We are all playing 4-square.

VK: When is this?

C3: It is early in the morning, before school starts, before we line up. I like playing 4-square in the morning.

VK: Are you finished with your picture now?

C3: Yes, now are you going to ask me some questions?

VK: Yes I am.

C3: How long will it take?

VK: Not too long. Do you want to have a break for a while?

C3: No, it's ok.

VK: The first question I am going to ask you is about your favourite thing to do at school. What is your favourite thing to do at school?

C3: Playing sport.

VK: What is your best sport?

C3: Cricket and then 4-square.

VK: How about hockey?

C3: It is ok unless you get hit by the ball, then you don't want to be in that.

VK: I can understand that. If you had to choose a lesson that you liked the most, what would that be?

C3: That's easy. Maths.

VK: Ok and what is your worst subject or lesson at school?

C3: Afrikaans.

VK: Ok. What lesson at school do you find the easiest?

C3: I think maths as well. Once I know it then I know it and then I can do it.

VK: Do you enjoy it once you know how to do it?

C3: Yes.

VK: What things do you think you are good at at school?

C3: Well I think I am good at sport and a little bit at maths and a little bit at Afrikaans, but not much.

VK: What about things like art and drama?

C3: They are lots of fun. I like those. I don't think I am so good at them though, I just like them.

VK: When you come to school in the mornings, what do you look forward to?

C3: Playing with my friends.

VK: You like that. Do you get into trouble at school?

C3: Not much, only sometimes.

VK: When you do get into trouble, what kind of things do you get into trouble for?

C3: When I go to the Natural Science class then I always run and then I get into trouble for running in the passages. Also sometimes for homework, but not much.

VK: It does not seem like you get into trouble much.

C3: No, not in this school. In my old school I got into trouble at least 15 times.

VK: What for?

C3: Everything, I can't remember.

VK: That's ok. If you were the boss of the school and you could get rid of one thing at school, what would you get rid of?

C3: Chapel. I don't like it. It is long and it is boring.

VK: If you were the boss and you could only keep one thing about the school, then what would you keep?

C3: The sport.

VK: What is your worst thing about school?

C3: Waking up early in the morning, by far.

VK: How do you feel in the morning when you wake up for school?

C3: I don't want to get up. It is hard to get up in the morning. Today I was even late. It was from the holiday. I am not used to getting up early in the morning any more. I will get used to it again, but it is hard now.

VK: What time do you like to wake up?

C3: About half past seven.

VK: Ok. What things at school do you find difficult?

C3: Some of the subjects are hard. Social Science and Afrikaans... and Natural Science is also hard but I know some of it.

VK: Who are your friends at school?

C3: (gives names of four children)

VK: That is quite a few.

C3: I think I have one more (thinks for a long while)... (gives another name).

VK: Is he in your class?

C3: Yes he is.

VK: Do you think there is bullying in the school?

C3: Yes. I have even seen it.

VK: Has anyone ever picked on you?

C3: No.

VK: Where did you see bullying?

C3: Oh, just when I came from the field, I heard someone saying nasty things and I did not do anything about it because they stopped then.

VK: Is there anyone who you feel treats you badly or says nasty things?

C3: Yes, child z says nasty things to me.

VK: Is it just to you or is to lots of kids?

C3: I don't really know, just mostly to me I think. One time when I was running down from the field then he tripped me and then I was crying. Then he was telling everyone that I was a sissy boy and he even fell once and cried.

VK: That does not sound very nice. How did that make you feel?

C3: I feel upset.

VK: Do you ever feel lonely at school?

C3: No, I always have something to do.

VK: What do you like doing when you are not at school?

C3: I like riding my bike around, but my front tire is popped now.

VK: Will dad fix it for you?

C3: No, we will take it in to get it fixed.

VK: Is there anything at school that makes you feel nervous or stressed?

C3: No, not at all.

VK: Ok. In the mornings, when you wake up what do you think about before you come to school?

C3: I think about playing 4-square.

VK: You really like 4-square a lot. What are the things about school that make you feel happy?

C3: Playing with friends and there are lots of people.

VK: Do you enjoy being around lots of people?

C3: Yes, I was used to having lots of friends in my old school because everybody knew me, so I had lots

VK: How about your teachers, do you like your teachers?

C3: I like my teachers, my main teacher last year was nice, and she was not strict. Most of the others were strict. My Grade 1 teacher was not so strict and I liked her. My Grade 2 teacher was very strict and I did not get on with her. The one in Grade 3 was also strict. My Grade 4 teacher is not so strict, just a little bit.

VK: When you write a test, do you ever feel nervous?

C3: Yes, before the test.

VK: How does that feel?

C3: It's just like I am going to get everything wrong, but I hope that I am not.

VK: What are you thinking in your mind before the test?

C3: I am thinking that I must not mess up and that I must get things right.

VK: Does your heart go a little bit faster when you feel nervous like that?

C3: Even faster than when I run the 800m.

VK: How do you feel when you are actually writing the test?

C3: Then I feel fine.

VK: Do you have any ideas about what you might want to do when you have finished school?

C3: I want to be a model builder and I want to know how to ride a motorbike and have a motorbike shop.

VK: That's interesting. Can you tell me what a model builder does?

C3: My dad used to do it. Have you seen a model of a building or a house before?

VK: Yes.

C3: Well that is what my dad used to do; he builds models of buildings for people.

VK: What else do you like to do when you have free time?

C3: I like to run around and play on the play station and ride my bike.

VK: Do you feel stressed or nervous about school?

C3: Only in the beginning when I came to the school, not any more.

VK: What could adults do to make school less stressful?

C3: I don't know.

VK: If you were the boss of the school what would you do to make kids less nervous and stressed?

C3: I would make the tests more far apart so that you have a long time to practise so that you don't get nervous and then the kids can know everything off by heart and then you test them on one day for a practise and then you do the proper test the next day.

VK: So you would like to have a practise test before the real test?

C3: Yes then if they get everything right for the practise test then they don't need to do the real test the next day. Then everyone can try and get full marks.

VK: That is a nice idea, I like that idea. We are done now with the questions.

C3: Oh, that was too quick.