

**20 Years on...**  
**Evaluation of the Peer Support Programme in New Zealand  
Schools**

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## **Abstract**

*The Peer Support programme operates in many secondary schools throughout New Zealand. It aims to provide support for new entrants in their transition to high school as well as leadership opportunities for senior students as they work with small groups of younger students. The programme has been in our secondary schools since 1985.*

*This project examines the history of Peer Support, the current status of the programme in New Zealand schools and the future prospects of Peer Support. Much of the history relates to the long term involvement with the programme of Rotary club members around the country. The Peer Support concepts were initially adopted from Australia and were modified to suit the needs of New Zealand schools and students.*

*A survey sent to secondary schools provides information on the current status of the programme nationally. Two thirds of secondary schools are operating the programme. Interviews with students, leaders and teachers in a case study school provide personal views on the current effectiveness of the programme for participants. Analysis of survey and interview data highlight some issues which need to be addressed to ensure the programme continues to be effective in schools.*

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A special thank you to John Watson and Rory O'Connor, both great believers and champions of Peer Support over many years. Your personal support and encouragement throughout this project have been appreciated.

*“A student-help-student programme for relationship skills and self-esteem”*

(The Rotary Peer Support Trust (South Island), 1995)

## **Section 1: Introduction**

Peer Support has operated in New Zealand secondary schools since 1985. The writer has had personal involvement in Peer Support since 1993 as a school Peer Support coordinator and trainer (tutor consultant) of student leaders, teacher trainees and teachers at a regional level. This has led to strong beliefs in the power of the programme in schools and in the training of teachers. These beliefs come from the positive effects observed that the programme has on easing the transition to high school for Year 9 students and the leadership opportunities and successes for Year 12 and 13 students. Peer Support has also enhanced the pastoral care and guidance system within the school. The range of teachers training in Peer Support is also encouraging and is not limited to teachers of Physical Education or Health or Guidance Counsellors, who often feel obliged to be involved as part of their curriculum area and role in a school. All curriculum areas are represented by Peer Support teachers. The two day training and subsequent involvement with the programme in their school provides many teachers with an extra curricular activity that is not based around sport or culture.

The evolving nature of Peer Support throughout the country is of interest. National Peer Support conferences are held biennially where fellow tutor consultants and Rotarians meet to discuss Peer Support. The writer was one of an editorial team for the new Peer Support manuals so is interested in seeing the response to the new manuals. The previous manual was produced in 1995 and is bicultural in context. However, many New Zealand schools have become more multi-cultural over the past ten years. Cultural diversity is addressed in both the Peer Support Unit Standard qualification and also in the new manuals produced at the end of 2004.

Although Peer Support has been in New Zealand schools for 20 years there has been a limited amount of published information evaluating the programme. Everts (2003) and Seber (2001) both looked at whether the current Peer Support programme met the

needs of overseas born students in New Zealand schools. Although quite a large sample of students (755) was involved in Everts' study the research was limited to six Auckland schools. Seber's sample was much smaller (78 students and teachers) and focused on interviews in just two schools. The results of both Everts' and Seber's research have been considered with the inclusion of a theme on culture in the new Peer Support manual published at the end of 2004 (The New Zealand Peer Support Trust, 2004).

Earlier studies of Peer Support include a brief report from a British psychologist with research interests in the area of bullying, who visited 12 New Zealand secondary schools in 2000 and was full of praise for the New Zealand Peer Support programme (Peer Support New Zealand, 2001). Other studies were done in the 1990s and used limited sampling of one or two schools. Stotter's exploratory study (1999) of the experiences of Peer Support leaders involved a small sampling from one school in Auckland. Hendrie (1997) was acknowledged by Rotary as the first university managed project on the efficacy of Peer Support (Watson, 2000). However, Hendrie's study was also limited to sampling from one school in Taranaki. Prior to 1997, Lewis and Scarrold (1989), on behalf of the Department of Education, evaluated two high schools operating Peer Support programmes. Six studies over the past twenty years do not truly reflect the anecdotal evidence that Peer Support is a valuable resource in New Zealand secondary schools.

## **Section 2: Research Questions and Design**

There are three main areas covered by this research:

- The history of Peer Support in New Zealand.
- The current state of Peer Support in New Zealand.
- The future of Peer Support in New Zealand.

The history and longevity of the programme over 20 years is well worth reviewing because its sustainability has been remarkable. The reasons behind the introduction of the programme in to New Zealand schools, via Elizabeth Campbell's Australian model for Peer Support, are interesting. A chance meeting between a drug awareness consultant visiting a Hamilton school and a Rotary exchange student who had attended high school in Australia marks the beginnings of the Peer Support programme in this country.

Rotary's long term involvement with the programme and the core of dedicated teachers in areas throughout the country show unusual commitment to the programme. Ultimately it is of value to find out what is it about the Peer Support programme that has it kept operating in secondary schools over the past twenty years and look to future sustainability.

The design of this project utilises a national survey to ascertain which schools are operating Peer Support programmes and in what format to determine the current status of the programme throughout the country. Information regarding the schools that have never used the programme or those who use other programmes is also reported. Reasons for non involvement are documented and could be used to assist with future planning at a national level.

The second stage of this research involves interviews with a range of people: Year 9 students, Peer Support leaders, Peer Support teachers and the Principal in a school currently operating Peer Support. The interviews provide anecdotal information on how the programme works in a school. The interviews also indicate what made the

programme work, what outcomes are perceived from the programme and what skills are developed by students and teachers alike by their involvement with Peer Support.

The findings of the surveys and interviews provide recommendations to the next New Zealand Peer Support Trust conference on ways to sustain and/or modify the programme for the next 20 years.

## **Section 3: Literature Review**

### **The History of Peer Support**

The Peer Support Programme was introduced into New Zealand schools after a chance meeting in 1983 between Rotarian, John Divett and a Rotary exchange student from Australia who was attending school in Hamilton. The student outlined the influence of the Peer Support programme in her Australian school. The initial impetus for the introduction of the programme was concern about drug use by secondary school students. Elizabeth Campbell, a New South Wales Health department officer, was called in to advise on a drug-related death in a large Sydney high school in 1972. She became aware that an exploitative relationship existed between senior and junior students at the school. As an antidote to adverse peer pressure within the school she set about fostering a spirit of trust. However, it took several years before the programme she developed gained a firm and financial endorsement from a Rotary club in Sydney.

John Divett visited Elizabeth Campbell in Australia to learn more about the programme. He learnt of the energy and standing of Rotarians in getting the programme started in New South Wales. On his return to New Zealand he gauged reaction and interest from local secondary schools about setting up the programme in Hamilton. The response was positive and so the programme began in several Hamilton schools in 1985. The emigration of a Sydney Rotarian to Christchurch in 1985 saw several schools in that city start Peer Support programmes in 1986. The support of Rotary clubs, especially in promoting the programme and providing financial assistance to train teachers was instrumental in the rapid development of the programme in New Zealand.

Rotary District Governors were involved in setting up regional trusts in Hamilton and the South Island in the late 1980s with the ultimate aim of a New Zealand Peer Support Trust to manage the ongoing costs and rapid expansion of the programme. Funding assistance was initially provided from the JR McKenzie Trust and leading Rotarians also consulted with senior officers in the Department of Education. The first evaluation of Peer Support in schools was part of the new Ministry of Education Transition Division's research into "Tomorrow's Schools". The research by Lewis

and Scarrold (1989) was based on surveys of students and staff in two schools. In the report some recommendations were made for schools introducing a Peer Support programme as well as proposals of how Peer Support could develop in New Zealand. Many of these recommendations have since been adopted including developing a relevant New Zealand model for Peer Support. Funding from the New Zealand Lottery Board and the Toc H New Zealand Bowerbank Charitable Trust were used to develop and edit a New Zealand manual in 1994.

The first New Zealand manual for Peer Support (The Rotary Peer Support Trust (South Island), 1995) has a bicultural focus. Each theme or topic has a Maori translation and issues relating to cultural differences between Maori and Pakeha are acknowledged and discussed. This manual has been used since 1995 by many schools as the basis for developing Peer Support programmes suitable for that school. However, research by Everts (2003) indicated that pastoral care provisions for migrant and international students in New Zealand schools, especially in Auckland, were not being maximised by the current Peer Support programme.

The response to multi-cultural difference has occurred in two ways. Firstly, Everts (2004) outlines a three stage Pastoral Care of Overseas-Born Students (PCOS) project which began in 2001 and will conclude at the end of 2005. Several Auckland schools have been trialling innovations in peer-group based programmes for international students during this project. Secondly, a new Peer Support manual was published by the New Zealand Peer Support Trust late in 2004. The new student and teacher manuals both discuss and reflect cultural awareness and diversity (The New Zealand Peer Support Trust, 2004).

The place of Peer Support in secondary schools has been enhanced by links to curriculum and assessment. There are links to the essential learning areas and skills of the New Zealand Curriculum framework (The Rotary Peer Support Trust (South Island), 1995, The New Zealand Peer Support Trust, 2004). Peer Support relates to the Social Studies and Health and Physical Well-being essential learning areas via raising cultural awareness, promoting concern for others, encouraging peer tutoring and exploring self-awareness. In relation to the essential skills there are links to communication, problem-solving, self management and social and cooperative skills.

Schools may also offer study towards a Unit Standard as part of the programme for Peer Support leaders. This is an NZQF Level 3 four credit assessment standard contributing towards the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). The standard assesses the leader's ability to describe the programme, to demonstrate leadership skills and to lead group sessions.

### **Peer Support Contexts**

The term "Peer support" can be interpreted in several ways and is dependent on the context. The basic premise is:

*"...that at every level and in every age group in society people absorb information and values from their each other (Campbell, 1980b, p.5).* Peer support or similar terms such as peer helping, counselling, mentoring, tutoring and review are terms often used in encouraging supportive networks in society. Tindall (1989) notes that many programmes that focus on disseminating information, provide social support networks or assist in minimising risk-taking behaviours use the principles of peer helping. Although there are natural tendencies to want to help others, Carr (1984) indicates that peers need training to develop their communication and helping skills before they can effectively help others.

Even within the education context the understanding of the term is varied. Snell and Janney (2000) describe Peer Support as a way to provide help for students with both physical and social disabilities in the classroom. Cowie and Sharp (1996) comment that Peer Support programmes follow the natural willingness of young people to be friendly and co-operative towards one another. Tindall (1995) believes that peers can engage and offer support for young people because of their credibility, approachability and understanding of youth concerns.

The key aims of Peer Support programmes are to promote personal development in the helpers, to use peer helpers in the role of caring support for peers and to produce a positive influence on the emotional climate of a school (Cowie and Sharp, 1996). Everts (2002) describes the New Zealand context as a secondary school based programme where senior students are trained to lead a group of Year 9 students. Lewis and Scarrold (1989) previously describe a similar process including using peer

pressure in a positive way and for Peer Support student leaders to assist Year 9 students in developing their decision-making and problem solving skills.

Varying interpretations of the Peer Support programme are operating in many countries. Unlike New Zealand, Australia has a state rather than a country-wide programme. For example, The Peer Support Foundation of Victoria is distinct from the Peer Support Foundation based in Sydney. The nature of these programmes however, seems to be similar to that produced by Elizabeth Campbell in the 1970s. Yoda and Ito (2001) report on Peer Support in Japanese schools as a means of combating social issues such as bullying and social isolation in Japan. The current focus in the United Kingdom views Peer Support as an anti-bullying intervention (Cowie and Hutson, 2005). In contrast, a Peer Support website (<http://www.peersupport.ukobservatory.com>) contains a report from Zambia where Peer Support is based around teen peers talking about safe sex and ways of caring for those dying from AIDS and supporting orphaned children. The needs within a country determine the focus of Peer Support in that country.

### **Student leadership**

Student leadership refers to any form of leadership led by students within a school. Leadership opportunities can range from being Head student, a prefect, a Student Council member, to a peer mentor or a peer mediator. There are other community based leadership programmes available in New Zealand schools apart from the Peer Support programme. These include the Cool Schools programme for peer mediation, Peer Sexuality, Students against Driving Drunk (SADD), and until recently, the Yellow Ribbon ambassadors. “Young Leaders Days” conferences have been organised in the main cities over the past five years. Well known personalities from all sectors of our society inspire student leaders and potential leaders in schools with motivational speeches.

The Peer Support programme provides leadership opportunities for senior students. Lewis and Scarrold (1989) report on improved self confidence, the ability to handle situations and improved communication skills for Form 7 students interviewed in their study. Similar outcomes for leaders are further reported ten years later via interviews with Peer Support leaders (Hendrie, 1997 and Stotter, 1999). Both

researchers report senior students with more open minds, increased pro-social behaviours and valued experience in interpersonal relationships.

Some schools develop their own leadership programmes to meet the specific needs of the school. These may be in addition to the Peer Support programme or stand alone programmes. Five schools operating Peer Support programmes reported on the diversity of their programmes and about extensions to the traditional programme which usually operates in Term One (The New Zealand Peer Support Trust, 2002). These extensions provide further leadership opportunities for senior students as well as ongoing support for students in the school. Paired reading where an older student is matched with a junior student to assist with reading operates in some schools. One to one mentoring of a junior student who is struggling both socially and academically is another. Cowie and Hutson (2005) comment on befriending, whether formal or informal, creates a more caring and safe school environment. For some students this form of assistance by a peer is less threatening than going to see the school counsellor. Cowie and Hutson also report on boys' reluctance to seek help and how an email support system proved successful in one school. Such peer support networks must enhance the school's pastoral care and guidance system. However, there must be a commitment to ongoing training, support and supervision of the peer helpers for the safety of all involved.

### **Student welfare**

Schools have a responsibility for student welfare. This comprises everything that the school community can do to meet the personal and social needs of students and enhance their well-being. The Peer Support programme assists student welfare by developing effective communication skills, providing a feeling of belonging to a wider community, developing a caring attitude towards others and an ability to form friendships (The Peer Support Foundation Ltd. 1990). The value of Peer Support in reducing risk-taking behaviours such as substance abuse and sexual behaviour in teenagers have been reported (Jason and Rhodes, 1989; Carter, 1995; Mohai, 1991; Russell, 1993).

Recent studies overseas have evaluated Peer Support programmes in wider school life. A study into the effectiveness of a Peer Support programme at a Sydney high

school proposed that Grade 7 students involved in the programme had increased ability to handle change and attitudes towards bullying compared to the control group (Ellis, Marsh, Craven and Richards, 2003). Baginsky (2001) reports on Peer Support programmes in fourteen primary and secondary schools in Britain where teachers and students were asked about the programme over a 12 month period. The focus was on the potential and actual advantages and disadvantages of the programme for students and the school in general. Improvements in student behaviour, developing citizenship and reduction in the level of “tale-telling” were seen as advantages. In contrast, lack of leader training leading to confidentiality issues, the potential to develop a hierarchy of students and time involved in managing the programme were the main disadvantages discussed. Further research is being carried out by Baginsky and others in other countries to gain more than a snapshot view of Peer Support programmes in operation.

### **Transition to secondary school**

Transition involves the move of students from primary school or intermediate to secondary school. For most students in New Zealand this transition occurs between Year 8 and Year 9. However, in the case of Year 7-13 secondary schools the transition occurs between Year 6 and Year 7. The issue of discontinuities in the transition was highlighted in 1962 in the report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand and much work has been done since to provide linkages for the transition. The Education Review Office also outlined concerns about the effects of transition for students in Forms 1 to 4 (Education Review Office, 1994). However, a Ministry of Education commissioned literature review on transition (McGee, Ward, Gibbons and Harlow, 2004) has resulted in a longitudinal study currently being undertaken to look at the effects of transition on a group of Year 8 students into secondary school. Hawk and Hill (2004) comment favourably about “peer support” programmes in the early stages of secondary school especially in schools involved in the AIMHI project.

Either prior to or at the start of the transition period to secondary school there are systems and processes in place to assist students entering secondary school. For example Open Days, tours of the school, meeting key people including teachers and Peer Support leaders during the enrolment process. Schools generally operate some

form of Orientation programme for new entrants to the school on their first day. However, the nature of the programme varies widely as does the level and nature of ongoing support for students.

### **Summary**

This literature review covers many aspects of Peer Support which are examined further in this research project. The importance of the history of Peer Support and its place in New Zealand schools is the basis of the survey of schools that are currently operating the programme. It is important to be clear what is meant by the term Peer Support with regard to the context of the New Zealand programme. The term has been interpreted and used in a variety of ways in other countries and there are many like terms being used such as peer mentoring, peer counselling and buddies. The ideas and research around student leadership, student welfare and transition to secondary school all impact on Peer Support programmes. The programme is designed to offer leadership opportunities, to promote a positive caring school climate and also to assist new entrants to secondary school to adapt to the transition from primary school or intermediate. The case study school interviews provide an insight into the success of the programme in New Zealand schools and highlight challenges for future sustainability.

## Section 4: Methodology

Choosing the best research techniques for this project was important to ensure that the current status of the Peer Support programme in New Zealand is evaluated and useful recommendations for its future are made based on the analysis. This project used qualitative research to answer the research questions. A useful guide provided by Mutch (2005) outlines the key aspects of qualitative research design such as use of purposive sampling, case studies and interviews to gather data on people's stories, descriptions and opinions on the research questions. Data is analysed by inductive logic with quotations and visual information providing the reader with a clear understanding of the research question. These research characteristics are valid for this project.

The project involved two stages of data gathering as outlined below:

Stage One: A pilot survey was trialled with three schools. A detailed survey was then sent by email or post to almost every Year 7-13 and Year 9-13 secondary school in New Zealand. (see Appendix C for survey questions).

Stage Two: A case study. A school taking part in Stage One was invited to be the case study school. The case study involved interviews with a sample of people involved in Peer Support this year: Year 9 students (6 students), Peer Support leaders (5 students), Peer Support teachers (4 teachers) and the Principal on their perceptions of the programme as it operated this year (see Appendix D for interview questions).

Mixed methodology has been used to gather data about the current status of Peer Support in New Zealand schools. A survey gathers quantitative data from a sample to generalise a population (Mutch, 2005). A survey is a cost effective tool to gather data from a large sample, the questions are standardised and anonymity is assured (Opie, 2004). A survey also helps to measure variables but as Bouma (as cited in Mutch, 2005 p.123) warns "*each question must have some bearing on one of the variables you are studying*". See Appendix B for the original research questions for scoping the

project which assisted in formulating the survey questions. Opie (2004) proposes that a pilot study of the survey be sent to a sample of participants. Such a pilot can check the wording of questions, ordering of question sequences and clarity of layout and instructions to participants and was found useful in this project.

While it is important to know the extent and general operation of Peer Support throughout the country it is also vital to gather information from Peer Support programme participants within a school. As Bell (cited in Opie, 2004 p. 95) points out a survey will provide responses to the What? When? Where? and How? questions but not the Why? questions. Peer Support is about human relationships and it is important to understand the factors which influence those relationships. A case study *“focuses on providing rich description of a bounded case”* (Mutch, 2005, p.112). As Opie (2004, p.74) describes *“the focus of a case study is on a real situation, with real people in an environment often familiar to the writer”*. The use of semi-structured interviews in the case study school provides guiding questions where responses could be expanded on by the participants. However, there is a possibility of researcher bias when conducting interviews. Opie (2004) suggests seeking permission of participants to tape the interviews as a way to reduce bias and encourage a deeper response to questions. This strategy was useful in this project. Each interview was more like a conversation.

## **Ethical considerations**

Ethics relates to the code of conduct which governs a person's actions or behaviours according to Wellington (as cited in Mutch, 2005, p.76). It is important that a researcher understands ethical issues before, during and after the research project. However, it is also vital that ethics are practiced and reflected on by the writer regularly consulting with their conscience (Neuman as cited by Mutch, 2005, p. 34). An all-encompassing summary of ethics as quoted by Mutch is relevant for all researchers to reflect on:

*“It is important to act ethically to protect the researched, the writer and the credibility of the research”* (Mutch, 2005, p.88).

Before interviewing participants it is necessary to consider the possibility of harm-physical, emotional, psychological or cultural-either to those interviewed or to the writer. Mutch (2005) likens it to a type of “risk management” system that teachers would perform before taking students on a trip. Risk management is important for both teacher and student safety. Snook (2003) also reminds us of the importance of preserving confidentiality, especially when research is likely to be used by others interested in the topic. This is especially relevant in a small country such as New Zealand where there is limited research in this particular topic. Participants in this project were assured of confidentiality and anonymity of all information provided during the interviews and the subsequent security of interview tapes and transcripts.

## Section 5: Results and Survey Analysis

### Research Question: How widespread is the Peer Support Programme in New Zealand schools?

Information on schools was obtained from the Ministry of Education website.

Composite schools, which include Area Schools and religious or special character schools, were not surveyed. The survey was sent to 301/336 or 90% of Year 7-13 and Year 9-13 secondary schools. Schools with rolls below 200 and those schools that the writer was aware had recently been subject to merger, such as in Invercargill, were not surveyed.

**Table 1 Summary by School Decile Rating of Schools Operating the Peer Support Programme**

Year 7-13 Schools				Year 9-13 Schools			
School Decile	No. of schools replying	Peer Support	No Peer Support	School Decile	No. of schools replying	Peer Support	No Peer Support
1	2	1	1	1	7	5	2
2	4	3	1	2	16	7	9
3	1	0	1	3	13	7	6
4	5	4	1	4	14	9	5
5	6	5	1	5	10	7	3
6	5	2	3	6	14	10	4
7	4	4	0	7	14	9	5
8	12	9	3	8	13	10	3
9	2	1	1	9	10	8	2
10	12	9	3	10	15	11	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>43</b>

### **Analysis of schools operating the Peer Support programme**

Overall the number of Year 7-13 schools which responded to the survey was 53/85 or 63%. Of those schools 38/53 or 72% operate the Peer Support programme.

Overall the number of Year 9-13 schools which responded to the survey was 126/216 or 58%. Of those schools 83/126 or 66% operate the Peer Support programme.

The total number of schools which responded to the survey was 179/301 or 59%. Of those schools 121/179 or 68% operate the Peer Support programme. There was a good response to the survey from schools in all decile ratings.

### **Analysis of schools not operating the Peer Support programme**

Overall 32% of schools responding to the survey were not operating the Peer Support programme. Four schools had operated Peer Support in the past but stopped for a range of reasons including lack of time, intrusion into the timetable, lack of motivated staff to run it, logistics of working with large numbers of students. Three schools indicated that they were planning to operate or re-activate the programme in 2006. Only five schools did not indicate if they had any other student support programmes in place.

The majority of schools offer some form of programmed support. These include alternative school-developed peer support programmes, peer mentoring, peer mediation, peer health tutors, community based mentoring as well as adult mentors, year pals, buddies, big sisters, tuakana-teina relationships, whanau support classes, peer tutoring, peer reading, use of the house system, vertical form structures and prefects, Project K and Cornerstone Values programmes. The focus of most of these programmes is to assist junior students to settle into secondary school as well as providing leadership opportunities for the seniors. Further details of these programmes would be of interest in comparison to the Peer Support Programme. However, this was outside the scope of this project. It is interesting to note that many of the schools operating the Peer Support programme were also operating one or more of the alternative programmes as well.

**Table 2 Summary by Region of Schools Operating the Peer Support Programme**

<b>Region</b>	<b>No. of schools replying (n=179)</b>	<b>Peer Support n=121)</b>	<b>No Peer Support (n=58)</b>	<b>% of schools operating Peer Support</b>
Northland	14	8	6	57
Auckland	37	25	12	67
Waikato/ Bay of Plenty	32	21	11	66
Taranaki	3	2	1	66
Gisborne/Hawkes Bay	15	7	8	47
Manawatu/Wanganui	12	6	6	50
Wellington/Wairarapa	20	14	6	70
Nelson/Marlborough	5	3	2	60
Canterbury/West Coast	23	19	4	83
Otago	9	7	2	78
Southland	9	8	1	89

### **Analysis of Regional Peer Support**

Some regions have been grouped together, such as Waikato/Bay of Plenty, for a variety of reasons. Some regions are smaller with a fewer number of secondary schools, there are often close links for teacher professional development in these regions as well as considering Rotary District alignment.

Areas where Peer Support appears to be strong (% of schools operating the programme is near or above the survey average of 68 %) include Auckland, Waikato/Bay of Plenty, Wellington, Canterbury/West Coast, Otago, and Southland.

Areas where the number of schools operating Peer Support is below the survey average include Northland, Gisborne/Hawkes Bay, Manawatu/Wanganui, and Nelson/Marlborough. Some of these areas are remote and cover a large area and may not have regular teacher training opportunities due to a limited number of tutor

consultants living in these regions. The small sample size for Taranaki may not be a true reflection of the state of Peer Support in that region.

**Table 3 Summary by School Size of Schools Operating the Peer Support Programme**

<b>School size (roll number)</b>	<b>No. of schools replying (n=179)</b>	<b>Peer Support (n=121)</b>	<b>No Peer Support (n=58)</b>	<b>% of schools operating the Peer Support programme</b>
Small (200-500)	48	34	14	71
Medium (501-1000)	78	49	29	63
Large (1001-1500)	32	24	8	75
Very large (>1500)	21	14	7	67

**Analysis of school size and Peer Support**

Schools of all sizes are operating Peer Support. 70% of the schools responding to the survey had roll numbers below 1000 students and 68% of these schools are operating Peer Support. Schools in the small and large roll categories have a slightly higher than average likelihood of operating Peer Support, compared to medium or very large roll category schools which are slightly below the 68% average.

**Table 4 Summary by School type of schools operating a Peer Support Programme**

School type	No. of schools replying (n=179)	Peer Support (n=121)	No Peer Support (n=58)	% of sample schools with Peer Support
Co-ed state	120	81	39	68
Co-ed integrated	9	7	2	78
Co-ed independent	4	1	3	25
Girls state	13	10	3	77
Girls integrated	9	8	1	89
Boys state	13	6	7	46
Boys integrated	8	7	1	88
Boys independent	3	1	2	33

#### **Analysis of school type and Peer Support**

While two thirds of co-educational state schools are operating Peer Support there are some interesting statistics for other types of schools. 77% of girls state schools versus 46% of boys state schools are operating Peer Support. Although the number of integrated schools is only a small proportion of the number of secondary schools in New Zealand the levels of Peer Support operating in these schools is much higher than average. In contrast the small number of independent schools which responded to the survey suggests that Peer Support is not considered as important or relevant for these types of school. Three of these schools commented that they had a range of programmes in place to support new entrants. Such schools also reported providing leadership opportunities for seniors via prefects, sports and house captain programmes.

**Table 5 Summary of the Number of Years the Peer Support Programme Has Been Operating in Schools**

<b>Years of Peer Support</b>	<b>Number of schools (n=121)</b>
Unknown/undisclosed	7
Less than 5 years	17
5 to 10 years	27
10 + years	37
15 + years	18
20 years	15

**Analysis of longevity of Peer Support in schools**

70/121 or 58% of the schools reported Peer Support operating for at least 10 years in the school. The continuity of the coordinator and/or the Guidance staff appears to be a link in the knowledge of the history of the programme within a school. Several schools commented on being involved with Peer Support for many years although they could not give an exact number. Other schools with a long history of Peer Support commented on Peer Support as:

- “part of the positive culture of the school”,*
- “an integral part of school”,*
- “ a vital part of school life”,*
- “ a cornerstone of the school”,*
- “a tradition of our school”.*

**Analysis of the number of teachers and students involved in Peer Support**

Although the numbers are not definitive, the following data indicates an approximate number of people involved in Peer Support during the survey year:

At least 150 teachers in the survey schools are coordinators or assistant coordinators.

At least 760 teachers in the survey schools are trained in Peer Support.

At least 5,546 senior students were Peer Support leaders in survey schools.

At least 21,495 Year 7 and Year 9 students experienced the Peer Support programme in survey schools.

**Table 6 Summary of the Number of Trained Peer Support Teachers in Schools**

<b>Teachers trained in Peer Support in schools</b>	<b>Number of schools (n=121)</b>
Unknown/unsure	14
Less than 5	52
Between 5 -10	23
More than 10	32

**Analysis of teacher training in Peer Support**

Three schools reported that all teachers were trained in Peer Support. While it is encouraging to note that 32/121 (or 26%) of schools have more than ten Peer Support teachers it is of concern that 52/121 (or 43%) of schools report fewer than five teachers trained in Peer Support. Fifteen of these schools reported only one staff member trained and this person was often identified as the Guidance Counsellor.

About 60% of schools reported training happened at regional level provided by Rotary or Peer Support tutor consultants. Six schools use a combination of in-house and regional training of teachers. Some schools reported in-house training being used as a refresher while others acknowledged the expertise of Peer Support teachers in their school to train their own teachers. Five schools from throughout the country reported on teachers who had been trained while doing their teacher training. The writer has knowledge of such training for at least the past eight years at Waikato University College of Education for all secondary teacher trainees.

Fourteen schools reported no recent training or refresher courses for teachers. In four of these schools only one teacher had received training. Several schools commented on receiving training when the first New Zealand manual was published in 1995.

All schools reported a Peer Support coordinator. Four schools had new coordinators this year. Several schools had an assistant coordinator as part of their succession

planning as well as easing the considerable workload of the coordinator when the programme was operating in Term 1. In many schools the Guidance Team has responsibility for Peer Support. A number of schools reported that the coordinator is also the Guidance Counsellor and often the sole person trained in Peer Support.

**Table 7 Summary of Peer Support Schools Involvement with a Rotary Club**

<b>School involvement with a Rotary Club</b>	<b>Number of schools (n=121)</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	57	47
No	58	48
Unsure	6	5

**Analysis of Rotary involvement with Peer Support schools**

The Peer Support programme has been supported by Rotary New Zealand since it began in 1985. It is concerning to note that almost half of the Peer Support schools did not have contact with their local Rotary club. However, at least 47% of Peer Support schools reported some involvement with the local Rotary Club regarding Peer Support. Involvement ranged from funding of resources such as Peer Support manuals, badges and certificates to assistance with meeting some of the costs of teacher leader training. A number of schools acknowledged Rotary by profiling both the Peer Support programme and Rotary support of the programme in their school in a range of ways. For example, by providing Peer Support Leaders or school coordinators as guest speakers at Rotary Club meetings, inviting local Rotarians to present Leader certificates at school assemblies or by acknowledging Rotary support via the school newsletter or newspaper articles.

The school's decile rating does not seem to be significant in determining Rotary contact with an even split of schools in each decile range (1-3, 4-7 and 8-10) having contact with Rotary. Canterbury/West Coast and Southland have an average of 80% of schools in contact with Rotary clubs compared to other regions where

approximately 50% of schools have contact. About 50% of schools in each roll range have links with Rotary clubs. More than 50% of state schools have contact with Rotary compared to only 38% of independent or integrated schools.

In schools where the Principal was a Rotarian it was felt that the aims of the programme were understood and well supported by the Senior Management Team. Equally in schools where the Senior Managers are trained and actively involved in Peer Support the survey respondents reported long term successful programmes. In some schools the coordinator was also a Senior Manager and this appeared to be helpful in promoting the benefits of the programme throughout the school community as well as easing timetabling issues for Peer Support sessions.

**Table 8 Summary of Type of Leader and Method of Selection of Peer Support Leaders**

<b>Type of leader</b>	<b>Number of schools (n=121)</b>		<b>Method of selection</b>	<b>Number of schools (n=121)</b>
Year 13	77		Students volunteers	53
Year 12 &13	28		Students volunteers then selected	52
Year 12	11		All train then volunteer	3
Year 11	2		All train then selected	3
Year 11,12,&13	1		Students are selected	7
Unknown/not disclosed	2		Unknown/not disclosed	3

#### **Analysis of leader selection**

96% of leaders were in either Year 12 or 13. The majority of schools (64%) have only Year 13 students as Peer Support leaders. Nine schools did not report on their leader numbers. Some schools with only Year 12 leaders commented on the heavy commitments of Year 13 students as the reason they use younger leaders. Schools with medium to large rolls can expect to have a larger pool of senior students to select from. However, there were several small schools with rolls under 500 students who

choose only Year 13 leaders. One school with both Year 12 and 13 leaders commented on the possibility of using Year 11 leaders next year because of the commitments of seniors. One school had a range of leaders from Year 11 to 13.

While almost all Year 9-13 schools operate Peer Support for Year 9 students there were a range of models in operation for Year 7-13 schools. In some schools Peer Support operated at both Year 7 and 9, other schools only at Year 7 and others only at Year 9. Two schools commented that their leaders found the Year 7 students easier to work with and that the way they trained their leaders supported this.

In terms of selection most schools have some screening process for leaders. This could either be students having to apply to become a leader, having an interview with staff, staff observations during training or staff knowledge of the student prior to training. Comments were made by several schools of the importance of leader balance especially for gender and ethnicity. On occasions students have been directly approached and encouraged to become leaders to address these imbalances. Several schools commented on how many students view Peer Support as a real leadership opportunity. Six schools provide training for all Year 13 students as part of the school experience. In half of these schools was there selection after training was completed.

**Table 9 Summary of Timing and Length of Peer Support leader training**

<b>Timing of training</b>	<b>Number of schools (n=121)</b>		<b>Length of training</b>	<b>Number of schools (n=121)</b>
End Term 4	34		1 day	12
Start Term 1	31		1 + days	9
End Term 4 & Start Term 1	15		2 days	57
At camp	15		2 + days	33
Not disclosed	26		Not disclosed	10

#### **Analysis of leader training organisation**

The majority (74%) of schools operate at least two full days training for leaders. Those schools running training camps did not disclose the timing of camp. However, almost 40% of schools train leaders towards the end of Term 4, usually after external

examinations finish. Over half of these schools report a follow up half or full day training prior to the junior students arriving at school. 25% of schools leave training until the start of the new school year prior to classes starting. The advantage of this was stated as “*so that the leadership skills are fresh for seniors to use and develop*”.

The above data does not reflect that most schools do hold regular meetings with their seniors during Term 1 either immediately after a Peer Support session to de-brief or between sessions for planning and support purposes. Several schools reported on these meetings being held for between 15 to 30 minutes once a week, often during lunchtime. These meetings were seen as important in providing on-going support and guidance to leaders.

In at least two schools outside providers were used in conjunction with trained teachers to provide the leader training. The school counsellor is often the Peer Support coordinator and plays a key role in training. In over half the schools surveyed the coordinator has an active rather than coordinating role when training leaders. Where the number of trained Peer Support teachers is limited in a school the coordinator is much more involved in the training.

**Table 10      Overview of the Aims of Peer Support Leader Training**

<b>Aim</b>	<b>Number of schools identifying aim (n=121)</b>
Group building	84
Leadership development	106
Build communication skills	98
Develop cooperation	83
Build leader self esteem	76
Outdoor activities	26
Experience Peer support activities	92
Practice being a leader	96
Build support networks	52
Other	19

### **Analysis of the aims of leader training**

A range of aims were identified by schools. While some schools identified all aims and added others there were a few schools which only identified up to five objectives. These were mainly around building the group, developing and practicing leadership, communication and experiencing Peer Support activities. An outline of student leader training suggested in the Peer Support manuals uses these aims and themes (The Rotary Peer Support Trust (South Island), 1995, The New Zealand Peer Support Trust, 2004). Other themes mentioned by schools in leader training include developing cultural awareness and tolerance, mediation and mentoring skills and building house and team spirit.

### **Analysis of the number of students involved in Peer Support**

**Table 11 Comparison of Themes in Peer Support Manuals Since 1980**

<b>Session</b>	<b>Elizabeth Campbell's Peer Support manual 1980</b>	<b>Australian Peer Support Foundation manual 1990</b>	<b>New Zealand Peer Support manual 1995</b>	<b>New Zealand Peer Support manual 2004</b>
1	Getting to know you	Getting to know you	Getting to know you	Getting to know you
2	Building self esteem	Working together	Orientation to school	Orientation to school
3	Communication	Listening	Building the group	Building the group
4	Bullies in the playground	Communication	Communication	Communication
5	Decision-making	Group decision making-Values	Co-operation	Co-operation
6	Family relationships	Self awareness/esteem	Self awareness and self esteem	Self awareness
7	Self-awareness	Feelings	Cultural awareness	Understanding culture
8	What is friend?	Peer pressure	Values	Values
9	Building self-confidence	Goal setting	Expressing feelings	Peer Pressure
10	Trust and sharing	Winding up ( if only 10 sessions held)	Friendship and trust	Bullying
11	Valuing	Group cooperation	Peer pressure	Expressing feelings
12	Communication	Listening /communication	Bullying	Friendship and trust
13	Self assertion	Group decision making/values	Family relationships	Family relationships
14	Communication and relationships	Self awareness/self esteem	Endings	Endings
15	Valuing and self awareness	Relationships-friends		
16	Trust exercises	Relationships-family		
17	Why does my language change? (peer pressure)	Assertiveness		
18	Self assertion	Time management		
19	Autobiography(self awareness)	Trust		
20	Too valuable to die (self esteem)	Winding up		

### **Analysis of Peer Support manual themes**

The 1980 Australian Peer Support manual was based on the Peer Support programme developed in a Sydney high school in 1971 by Elizabeth Campbell. It was based around 20 sessions run by trained Year 10 students for Year 7 students making the transition to secondary school in Australia (Campbell, 1980a). The 1990 manual, developed by the Peer Support Foundation in New South Wales, follows a similar pattern of either ten or twenty sessions with some recurring themes (The Peer Support Foundation Ltd., 1990).

In contrast both New Zealand manuals have a maximum of fourteen sessions and include Maori translations for each theme (The Rotary Peer Support Trust (South Island), 1995, The New Zealand Peer Support Trust, 2004). The first eight sessions are considered core themes although schools choose the themes best suited to their school and students. New Zealand schools operate sessions run by trained Year 12 or 13 students for either Year 7 or Year 9 students making the transition to secondary school.

**Table 12 Overview of Peer Support Session Themes Used by Schools**

<b>Session Theme</b>	<b>Number of schools using the theme (n=121)</b>
Orientation to school	93
Getting to know you	98
Building the group	89
Communication	90
Cooperation	81
Self awareness/self esteem	61
Cultural awareness	54
Values	62
Feelings	51
Friendship and trust	90
Peer Pressure	78
Bullying	87
Family	23
Endings	30
Other e.g. goal setting, decision making, negotiation	21

**Analysis of themes used by schools**

The survey question listed all of the themes in the 1995 and 2004 New Zealand Peer Support manuals. Most schools use the Peer Support themes as outlined in the Peer Support manuals. However, other themes based on need or the special character of the school, such as decision-making, self assertion, negotiation, goal setting, personal organisation were common in schools where peer mentoring was considered part of peer support. Many of these themes are also in the original Australian manuals and are relevant to teenagers everywhere.

**Table 13 Summary of the Number of Peer Support Sessions and Length of Each Session**

<b>Number of Sessions</b>	<b>Number of Schools (n=121)</b>		<b>Length of Each session</b>	<b>Number of Schools (n=121)</b>
less than 5	5		15-20 minutes	22
5 to 7	18		25-30 minutes	15
8-9	23		40-45 minutes	16
10	38		50 minutes	19
More than 10	21		60 minutes	33
Uncertain	16		Uncertain	16

### **Analysis of Peer Support session organisation**

The New Zealand Peer Support Trust recommends a minimum of eight 30 minute sessions operate each year for a school to be an accredited Peer Support school. There is a significant variation in the number and length of Peer Support sessions held within the survey schools. At least 68% of schools operate eight or more sessions, and a similar percentage acknowledge Peer Support sessions of 30 minutes or more. Most schools include the orientation programme operating on the first day at high school in their total number of sessions. For the majority of schools this is a full day of the Peer Support leaders working with their groups. While some time is given to tours, sorting timetables and the like, many schools reported that the first two or three themes-orientation, getting to know you and building the group- are used on the first day. Year 9 camps, with a focus on Peer Support activities, are also used by several schools as a way of completing the programme while reducing interruptions to the school programme. Several schools indicated that other activities such as tabloid sports days and lunch time competitions are further opportunities for the Peer Support leaders to develop their skills in working with their groups outside of themed Peer Support sessions.

The organisation of sessions also shows schools' ability to weave Peer Support into the daily organisation. Many schools operate weekly sessions using an extended form or tutor group time or assembly time while others opt for a rotation out of a subject line in the timetable for both junior students and Peer Support leaders. Approximately

half the schools surveyed operate horizontal form structures with Peer Support leaders allocated to each junior form class. Those schools with vertical form structures have senior leaders within the same form and Peer Support is often incorporated into a House structure as well. Other schools allocate seniors to horizontal forms where there may also be House links.

All co-educational schools reported Peer Support groups of mixed gender. Only one school indicated that this caused some problems with group function. In general group size ranges from six to twelve students with two or three co-leaders. The importance of Peer Support co-leaders in a group was mentioned by many schools, particularly in modelling peer support in action for the younger students.

Some schools complete the formal Peer Support programme within the first month of Term 1 by operating two or three sessions a week. There were a range of reasons for doing this. Some schools reported that this minimised disruption to the school programme while others indicated that the intensity of the sessions over the first month resulted in more rapid settling for the new entrants. Most schools in this group reported that informal support continued throughout the year, especially by Peer Support leaders either being assigned to a junior form class or being in the same vertical form group as their students. A number of schools are using one to one or small group peer mentoring following on from Peer Support.

There is also considerable variation in the length of each Peer Support session. Those operating 15- 20 minute sessions tend to do so during form time at the start of the day and over half these schools continue Peer Support into Term 2 and even throughout the entire year. The schools with 30 or 40 minute sessions often use part of an assembly period or extended form time. Schools operating 50 or 60 minute sessions tend to use the equivalent of one period of class time at the school. A majority of schools commented that different classes are targeted for each session to minimise disruption to class room programmes.

**Table 14 Summary of the Type of Manual Used by Peer Support Leaders**

<b>Type of manual</b>	<b>Number of schools using manual (n=121)</b>
A manual is used	106
No manual used or reported	15
School manual	49
School manual (based on 1995 Peer Support manual)	12
School manual (based on 2004 Peer Support manual)	11
School manual (based on 1995 and 2004 Peer Support manuals)	8
1995 Peer Support manual	7
2004 Peer Support manual	26

**Analysis of manual use in schools**

Like the themes for each session, schools choose how to best provide material for their Peer Support leaders. 88% of the schools surveyed have some type of manual. 40% of schools report a school manual without indication of the source of material. 31% have their own manual developed from the nationally published Peer Support manuals. 27% report to use the 1995 or 2004 Peer Support manuals as is. One of the intentions of the editorial committee responsible for the production of the 2004 manual was to create a manual which schools could use directly. The aim was to reduce the workload for teachers and provide a range of themes with a range of activities for schools and leaders to choose from. Schools do seek financial support from their local Rotary club to assist Peer Support leaders in purchasing the manual. Leaders can keep the manual as a personal resource as further proof of their involvement with Peer Support. Many leaders will find use for such a manual in their careers especially where there is a focus on team-building activities.

**Table 15 Recognition of Peer Support Leaders and the Peer Support Programme**

<b>Form of recognition</b>	<b>Number of schools using this form of recognition</b>
Peer Support training certificate	63
Peer Support group leader certificate	76
Peer Support badge	48
Special school certificate	21
Peer Support Unit Standard	24
Other- special leaders celebration	4
- leadership award	4
Letter home	29
School newsletter	50
School newspaper	10
Local newspaper	9
School magazine/year book	73
School assembly	77
School prize giving	31
School report	53
Testimonial/school leaver documentation	89

**Analysis of Peer Support leader and programme recognition**

There was a wide range of recognition in schools of Peer Support leaders and the whole Peer Support programme. 94% of schools reported some form of recognition. 87% of schools recognised individual leaders at school assemblies by presentation of certificates and/or badges. About 25% of schools present the training and group leader certificates and badge while other schools present a combination of these.

Around 20% of schools are offering the Unit Standard. Many indicated that they offered it as an extra and only a limited number of students were aiming for and achieving the credits. Several schools indicated that they would like to offer the Unit Standard assessment but felt they lacked the training or time to do this effectively.

It is interesting to note that 80% of schools assessing the Peer Support Unit Standard also present both of the certificates and a badge. These schools in particular indicated that their Peer support programmes were operating well with comments such as:

*“Peer supporters are highly valued...they do a tremendous job in the school long after the programme ends”. “A lot of work to organise but the results are worth it”.*

There seems to be a link between the level of recognition and the effectiveness of the programme within some schools. A small number of schools reported only one form of individual leader recognition (a certificate) and fewer than three forms of programme or whole group recognition such as school assembly. Comments from these school suggest that the programme is not functioning as well as it could. Such schools also reported low numbers of trained staff to oversee the programme within the school. In contrast a high number of schools reported three forms of individual leader recognition and four or more forms of programme recognition as well as good levels of trained staff. The survey respondents in each of these schools are enthusiastic about Peer Support in their schools.

Quite a few schools indicated that Peer Support has become part of the school’s marketing programme. In one city several schools indicated that the mention of a Peer Support programme in the enrolment information was a factor contributing to parents’ decision-making about their choice of secondary school for their Year 8 child. The promotion of Peer Support at open days/information days prior to enrolment of new entrants was also significant in almost one third of schools. One school reported that Peer Support was linked to the school’s strategic goals.

Only one school reported recognition of Peer Support via the school’s website. However, an Internet Google search for “Peer Support in New Zealand Schools” undertaken by the writer in the initial stages of this project suggests this recognition is far more common than the sample group reported. The search produced numerous references to New Zealand school websites where the Peer Support programme is mentioned. The use of photographs in school newsletters and year books showing Peer Support in action was also reported by many schools.

## **Section 6: Case study school interview analysis**

### **Research Question: What are the views of Peer Support from different perspectives within a school?**

The case study school has operated the Peer Support programme since 1993. Interviews were carried out on two separate days owing to time constraints as a result of the school timetable and the unpredictable length of each interview. The interview questions were semi-structured (see Appendix D) so it was encouraging to the writer that many participants chose to extend their responses during interview. Taping the interviews also assisted in making the participants more forthcoming with their responses. There is little likelihood of bias among participants as none of those interviewed were informed of who else was being interviewed. Participants were randomly selected by teachers in the school and individually invited to take part by the writer.

#### **The Peer Support leader interviews**

The school has a combination of Year 12 and 13 students as Peer Support leaders and this was reflected in the five students interviewed. Three students were in Year 13. Two of these students had been Peer Support leaders in Year 12 as well. These students both reported huge personal growth and development of leadership skills, especially in relation to working with other people, from being Peer Support leaders for two years. One student also spoke proudly of being a Head student in the school this year and putting their leadership skills to good effect. Equally the Year 12 students spoke about learning valuable leadership skills as Peer Support leaders and both were seeking nomination for Head student roles in the school as well as becoming Year 13 Peer Support leaders.

The leaders' knowledge of Peer Support focused around their role in assisting their group of Year 9 students to settle in to high school and Peer Support is seen as part of the school culture.

*“Peer support-it’s just what you do as a senior here...plus its good to hang out with the younger kids at the start of the year and in tutor.” (Year 13 leader)*

Orientation day at the start of the year is seen as important and the time when the leaders can have most effect by providing encouragement, support and someone more accessible than some teachers for students to talk to. The Year 9 camp is viewed by all leaders as the highlight of the programme followed by getting to know the new students and helping them settle in to high school.

The qualities needed to be a good leader according to the leaders interviewed include being approachable, friendly, a positive role model, a good communicator, being able to relate to younger students as well as being firm with trouble makers. All leaders commented on poor Year 9 behaviour; being naughty, not listening and lack of cooperation. These students tended to be in the minority but could spoil a session for the rest of a group if not controlled. One leader reported that the group rules session coincided with class rules being set and the leader felt like a teacher on that day with the group being more like a class room situation. The leader did not enjoy taking on a “teacher role” that day.

*“You want to be looked up to but you want to do a good job too.”* (Year 13 leader)

*“They have to be able to communicate with you...not your friend but know they can come to you...they need to respect you.”* (Year 12 leader)

Many of the lessons learned by the leaders relate to becoming more self-aware, confident and improving communication with others. Two leaders enjoyed the challenge of working with groups where there was a Year 9 student who didn't fit in and encouraging acceptance of that student by the rest of the group.

*“I've learnt that you can't get along with everyone.”*(Year 13 leader)

*“You can't always do things by yourself and you need to seek support from others such as co-leaders or teachers.”* (Year 13 leader)

The majority of leaders found the leader training helpful especially in preparing them to lead a group and to practice activities themselves. The two leaders who repeated

training indicated that they had learnt new things each time and enjoyed training with two different groups of peers. Female leaders commented on the ability of male leaders to deal with male students. However, some co-leaders were seen to be lacking initiative and not pulling their weight at times. A comment was also made that there were too many leaders this year and that it would be useful to seek recommendations from current leaders as to the suitability of the next group of leaders. All leaders thought that the skills they had developed would be useful once they left school, especially in learning how to mix with a new group of people.

*“Peer support is about getting to know completely new strangers and trying to make a group from all these different, different people. It’s kind of the same as when you go into adult life-you try and make the best from what you’ve got”.*

(Year 13 leader)

### **The Year 9 student interviews**

Six Year 9 students were interviewed and all of them appreciated the support their leaders gave them on the first day of high school. Leaders were described as:

*“fun to be around...relaxed with us and there for us “.*

However, later in the term Peer Support was described as

*“sometimes fun, sometimes boring”.*

Students reported highlights of Peer Support sessions including being out of class, some of the games, going on camp, missing assembly and talking to seniors. The students enjoyed having Peer Support leaders of the same sex working with them. Two students commented they didn’t feel a need for Peer Support after the first two weeks, although they kept contact with their seniors in tutor group. When questioned further about what made Peer Support boring students indicated problems with lack of physical activity during sessions, too much time sitting talking or writing and disorganised or “growly” leaders.

All of the students recognised that the programme had helped them settle in to high school. The students found the tours around school and getting to know other people useful. Most acknowledged being scared, nervous or anxious on the first day but felt

they settled quite quickly. If asked about Peer Support by Year 8 students the students all said that it was worthwhile and they would encourage them to get involved.

*“Go along with it and be nice to people-don’t be nasty”.*

In addition to this most students indicated that they would probably become a Peer Support leader in the future because they want to help out with younger kids and do what their leaders had done for them or make it an even better experience than they had received.

### **The Peer Support teacher interviews**

The four teachers interviewed were from different houses to reflect the way the Peer Support programme is run in the school. All teachers were actively involved in the programme for between two and ten years and are clear on the aims of the programme at the various levels.

For Year 9 students:

*“Seniors making sure the environment for Year 9s is a more supportive and welcoming environment for them...providing someone they can go to, like a mentor...helping the transition to high school.”*

For leaders:

*“Seniors have a chance to develop their leadership skills...to take some responsibility...our students are great resources that we should use more often...important to allow students an opportunity to play that role”*

For the school:

*“A good programme with many benefits-especially mingling between seniors and juniors in tutor group...build good relationships between students.”*

Personal views of the programme are positive and all teachers became involved because they believed they have something to offer and that the programme is worthwhile in the school.

*“It’s excellent teacher training-the ideas and concepts are great...it teaches you a lot about relationships and being a leader especially in relation to your own class teaching”*

*“It’s an opportunity to build relationships with senior students outside the classroom and curriculum”*

Teachers saw their role being a good trainer, picking suitable leaders and supporting the leaders and Year 9s during year. One of the challenging aspects was recognising the type of support each leader needed-from help with being more organised for some to encouraging words for others. It was important for teachers to be available but not interfere unless asked to during sessions.

The programme is seen to be constantly evolving in the school. The new manual contains good information presented in a “more user friendly way” than previously. It is also important that the school develop a programme from this that is relevant for their school and students.

There are factors which help and hinder the programme. A teacher responsible for coordination of the programme is essential for smooth operation especially in terms of providing resources and organising training. Commitment and enthusiasm of all involved is important as well as ensuring the rest of the staff understands the programme aims.

*“The peer bit of Peer Support is really important...their peer interactions are important and seen to be valued in this school.”*

All teachers considered that there had been too many leaders this year and at times this had hindered the programme. There is a need to be inclusive but screening is important. Some Year 12 leaders are not considered mature enough.

*“They’re often not as proactive and tend to sit back and let the Year 13’s do the work or lead.”*

Unpredictability is another factor which could affect how groups operated; such as leaders being absent, groups that were too small, coping with groups inside during wet weather. All teachers felt the biggest problem for the leaders is the management

of the Year 9 students. All teachers are keen to support leaders and are prepared to deal with behaviour issues as needed.

All teachers see a future for the programme. This includes developing the programme beyond Term one in other ways through to building more peer themes throughout school not just those visible in Year 9 and Year 13. All teachers indicated they would speak positively about the programme with parents or other teachers with descriptions such as:

*“It’s a good system where they tautoko other students”*

*“The Year 9 students are helped into the start of the school year by seniors who have been there done that and know how they feel.”*

One teacher who is also the parent of a current leader has seen their child grow socially and is proud that they are giving something back to the school outside of academic work.

### **The Principal’s interview**

The Principal is very supportive of the programme.

*“Peer Support has high profile and high importance in the school...it is seen to provide leadership opportunities and a role modelling effect so Year 9 students are quickly exposed to the positive school culture”.*

Part of the programme’s success in the school is attributed to a capable, enthusiastic coordinator and a group of committed trained teachers. Comment was made about the importance of updating the rest of the staff by outlining the aims of Peer Support at the start of the year and a review of achievements at the end of year. This is especially important with the present focus on NCEA and length of the external exams making it difficult to find a time to train the leaders without cutting into class time. The Unit Standard assessment in Peer Support would add further relevance to the programme but so far this has not been fully implemented in the school.

## **Section 7: Discussion**

The purpose of gathering the research data is to assess the current status of the Peer Support programme in New Zealand schools. Two out of three secondary schools are operating the programme. There is a need for student support programmes to be in place at each transition phase in education so that new entrants can settle quickly, feel comfortable in their new environment and continue their learning without too much interruption. Peer Support is one programme which effectively assists the transition. Equally Peer Support is also an effective programme for developing leadership skills in senior students and harnessing the natural helping tendencies in people.

Although the Peer Support programme has been in operation for twenty years there are indications of potential difficulties which need to be duly considered and addressed both nationally and within schools. The place of Peer Support in the curriculum, accreditation of schools to operate the programme, succession planning for training teachers at both a regional and school level, ensuring training provides leaders with the skills to work with a diverse range of students, the role of the supervising teacher and acknowledgement and recognition of leaders are all areas which now need further consideration.

It is necessary to ensure that Peer Support is viewed as a valuable part of the curriculum. The soon-to-be-released draft New Zealand Curriculum document promotes five key competencies: thinking, self-management, participation and contribution, using language, symbols and texts, relating to others as important skills and attitudes for students to learn while at school. The value of communication skills, team work and caring for others should not be underestimated in the overall education of children.

Many schools in competition for students are using Peer Support as a marketing tool to attract students and parents. However, good marketing must have a plan. Raising the profile of Peer Support for new entrant parents must have a flow on effect for senior students. Further emphasis on marketing the Peer Support Unit Standard and in training teachers to assess it will also validate Peer Support as useful NZQF Level 3 qualification credits. In turn Peer Support will become valued by employers. A survey

of Peer Support leaders using their skills in the workforce would provide further validity for this qualification.

It is also important to ensure that the training is part of the school's year planner. The overcrowded nature of the curriculum and the pressure of external assessments at Year 11, 12 and 13 are putting pressure on schools. Some schools are considering limiting the number of programmes or activities which are viewed to be "non-academic" or "outside the classroom". This is proposed to maximise teaching time and increase student pass rates for NCEA. In turn the extended examination period also means that the traditional time for training leaders after exams in Term 4 is shrinking. The start of year training option in other schools is also under threat as more schools look to use "professional call back days" for teachers for curriculum planning before Term 1 begins.

The importance of school accreditation in Peer Support also needs consideration. While the majority of schools appear to be meeting the requirements of a Peer Support school-appointing a Peer Support coordinator, using Peer Support trained teachers to run the programme, training leaders for a minimum of 2 days and operating a minimum of eight 30 minute Peer Support sessions-there appear to be schools which have modified the programme to suit their needs to a point where they may not meet accreditation in all areas. Schools where the programme is strong are operating a minimum of two days leader training and this should not be sacrificed if positive outcomes are to come from the programme overall. Ensuring that there is some funding for the programme materials is also important. A small budget allocation to Peer Support from the schools operations grant as well as regular contact with the local Rotary club can provide a potential source of support for the programme.

The strength of Peer Support also depends on the enthusiasm and commitment of the Peer Support teachers. In a number of schools there appeared to only be one teacher trained. The enthusiasm, effectiveness and high workload on this person cannot be sustained long term. It also seems that there is a heavy reliance on the school guidance counsellor to be responsible for the programme. Many counsellors already have heavy workloads dealing with social and personal issues with students. In several of the

schools there were less than five teachers trained in Peer Support and these teachers often had not received any further training since their initial training.

It is important that an adequate number of teachers are trained in each school and that succession planning is in place to keep numbers steady. An annual allocation in the school's professional development budget is important to meet training costs. A coordinator should be appointed and where possible given either a time allowance and/or financial recognition for the role. The support of senior management for Peer Support is vital to the programmes longevity in a school.

Regional training, via tutor consultants of the Peer Support Trust of New Zealand, exists throughout the country. Most regions offer training in November so that costs for relief are reduced. However, there do appear to be areas of the country where Peer Support is not as strong. Information about teacher training may not be getting through to schools or perhaps the costs for a school to support teacher training is becoming prohibitive. There is a need to have tutor consultants spread throughout each region and not just in the main centres so that there is regular contact with local schools about Peer Support. In addition the ability to provide local training reduces travel or overnight accommodation costs for more remote schools.

It is encouraging to note that at least two Colleges of Education are using Peer Support tutor consultants to train all secondary teacher trainees in Peer Support. It is hoped that schools are acknowledging and using the skills and enthusiasm of these new teachers to keep their programmes alive as well as reducing the costs of training more teachers.

Another issue relates to behaviour of junior students during Peer Support. While the number of uncooperative students is in the minority all leaders interviewed in the case study school indicated that their biggest concern as leaders was disruptive students. While most indicated that they were able to handle any problems they also acknowledged that Peer Support was probably most needed by such students to help them build better relationships and to talk about their problems. The role of the supervising teachers in school to provide ongoing support and training for their leaders is vital.

Schools must place a priority on continuing leader training in group work as well as constantly affirming and supporting leaders. It is also vital that the junior students are kept busy and interested during Peer Support. Schools should choose themes and activities which are relevant for the students at their school. Schools should also evaluate the effectiveness of the programme each year and be prepared to make changes. The outcome of Everts research into Peer Group-based programmes for International students (Everts, 2004) will be particularly useful for schools with high numbers of these students. Schools may need to consider how they operate the programme and consider providing a more intensive programme early in Term 1 or provide ongoing contact via a mentor or buddy system throughout the whole year.

### **Limitations of the study**

The size of this study was large and there is much more analysis of data possible which would give an even more definitive picture of the status and operation of Peer Support nationally. Opie (2004) also warns that responses to survey questions may vary depending on how the respondent views the questions. This was certainly noted by the writer during this project. Some respondents only answered briefly while others were quite descriptive in their responses.

Using only one school in a case study provides a personal snapshot of Peer Support by those interviewed but it is very dependent on the environment of the school involved. Interviews in other case study schools throughout the country would provide further information about regional similarities or differences. Interviewing students in large versus small schools, low versus high decile schools, rural versus city schools and single sex versus coeducational schools would give an excellent overview of Peer Support throughout New Zealand. This would be a lengthy task and would require funding to travel to schools around the country. A more sophisticated method of organising and coding data would also be required such as computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (Opie, 2004).

## **Section 8: Conclusion**

There is up to twenty years of Peer Support history in New Zealand schools. Compared to other programmes this is significant and much of the credit for its longevity must go to the support of a core group of influential Rotarians and the many committed Peer Support teachers and tutor consultants around the country. Twenty years on the programme is still successful in almost two thirds of New Zealand schools. Senior students are keen to learn and practice leadership skills and comment that being a Peer Support leader is a way to give service to their school. The future looks promising especially since the formation of the Peer Support Trust of New Zealand in 2002. It has provided funding to produce the new Peer Support manual, as well as supporting the work of regional tutor consultants. However, the programme must continue to develop and grow. Regular evaluation at national, regional and school level is necessary so that improvements can be made.

There is great power in this programme. Long term personal involvement and a strong belief in this programme was the impetus for undertaking this project. Year 7 and 9 students are supported and nurtured as they take the big step to secondary school. Peer Support is also one of the best personal development programmes available in schools for our seniors, especially in developing leadership and relationship skills. The core of Peer Support is about the school's greatest resource- people. Students helping students makes the school climate so much more positive for all.

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## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Glossary

Appendix B: Original research questions for scoping the project

Appendix C: Peer Support Survey sent to schools

Appendix D: Interview questions used in case study school

## **Appendix A: Glossary**

### **Peer**

Peers are people of equal rank and importance. For the context of this study a peer is a student attending a Year 7-13 or a Year 9-13 secondary school in New Zealand.

### **Peer Support**

Peer Support occurs when students help other students by offering friendship and someone to talk to. It develops self-esteem, self-acceptance, confidence and the ability to make sound decisions.

### **The Peer Support programme**

This is a personal development programme for secondary school students, led by trained senior students. It is designed to provide support among students in secondary school. The programme requires a minimum of eight thirty minute sessions and is important in the transition to secondary school.

### **Peer Support leaders**

These are senior students who have been trained to facilitate small groups of junior students throughout the Peer Support programme.

### **Peer Support teachers**

These teachers have received two days of Peer Support training. Their role is to train the Peer Support leaders and to support them throughout the programme's operation in the school.

### **Peer Support coordinator**

This person is a trained and enthusiastic Peer Support teacher who has responsibility for coordinating all aspects of the Peer Support programme in the school.

### **Peer Support tutor consultants**

Each Rotary district has a pool of experienced Peer Support teachers who train other teachers in Peer Support.

**The New Zealand Peer Support Trust**

This national trust, based on the six Rotary Districts of New Zealand, is designed to overview the implementation of the Peer Support programme in secondary schools.

## **Appendix B: Original research questions for scoping the project**

### **1. How widespread is the Peer Support programme in New Zealand schools at present?**

Why are schools running it?

Why have schools dropped it?

Why have schools never done it?

### **2. How do schools operate the Peer Support programme?**

How many sessions do schools operate?

How long is each session?

How often are sessions?

How is Peer Support linked in to Orientation programmes?

How and where does Peer Support fit into the school timetable?

Who is trained as a leader?

What year levels are involved as leaders?

Do students get invited to be Peer Support leaders?

When does leader training occur?

How long is training?

Where is training held?

Who does the training?

What is involved or covered in leader training?

Are leaders encouraged to co-lead a group?

What on-going training is there for leaders?

What schools are using the Unit Standard?

How effective has that been?

What recognition do Peer Support leaders receive?

Are Peer Support training and leaders certificates formally presented?

What changes have happened to the structure and operation of the programme since it began in the school?

What processes do schools have in place to train more teachers?

What ongoing training is there for teachers?

### **3. How do schools use the Peer Support programme?**

Does the school create its own programme but call it “Peer Support”?

Does the school use the 1995 manual as a guide but produce its own booklet for leaders?

Has the school used the newly published Peer Support manuals for leaders and teachers this year?

How has the specific programme operating in the school changed since the school started Peer Support?

#### **4. What are the viewpoints of Peer Support from different perspectives?**

A range including- contributing primary schools, Year 9 students, student leaders, teachers-both trainers and general staff, Principal and senior managers, parents/school community, employers

#### **5. Other questions of interest**

What is the role of the New Zealand Peer Support Trust?

What involvement do local Rotary clubs have in supporting the programme in schools?

Has Rotary involvement changed over the time the programme has been operating in a school?

What links are being made between Peer Support and the Social studies or PE/health curriculum?

How valued are Peer Support leaders in the workforce?

What other Peer related programmes are operating in the school at present in addition to Peer Support? e.g. Peer mediation, Peer mentoring, Peer sexuality

How wide-reaching is the training of teachers in Peer Support?

Which teacher training providers are involved in training their students in Peer Support?

What is the effect of NCEA and the “crowded curriculum” on training and implementation of Peer Support in schools?

Is Peer Support relevant and operating in Middle schools or Year 7-13 schools?

## **Appendix C: Peer Support Survey sent to schools**

### **PEER SUPPORT SURVEY**

#### **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

1. What is the current roll of the school?
2. Type of school?
3. Decile of school?
4. Does the school currently operate a Peer Support programme?  
If **NO** please indicate briefly the reason(s):  
Does the school operate any similar programmes? (please give brief details)  
That is all you need to answer. Thanks for your help. Please press **SEND** now to return the survey to me.

If **YES** please take the time to answer the rest of this survey.

5. Is there a Peer Support Coordinator on the staff?  
If **YES** please give the name of that person:
6. How many years has Peer Support operated in the school?
7. Has this been a continuous programme?  
If **NO** please indicate when/why the programme stopped:
8. Does the school have any involvement with the local Rotary Club regarding Peer Support?

If **YES** briefly outline the nature of this involvement:

9. How many teachers are currently trained in Peer Support in your school?
10. How/when do teachers receive this training? (please give a brief description)
11. How many Year 7 and Year 9 students in the school in 2005?
12. How many trained Peer Support leaders in 2005?
13. What kind of Form system operates in the school?  
(e.g. vertical/horizontal/other?)

#### **PEER SUPPORT SESSIONS**

14. How many sessions of Peer Support operate each year?
15. How long is each session?
16. When do sessions occur? (briefly describe time of year/time of day/links to school timetable)
17. Are there themes for each session?  
If **YES** which of these themes are most commonly used (use letters from list below):

- |                          |                        |                           |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| A) Orientation of school | B) Getting to know you | C) Building the group     |
| D) Communication         | E) Cooperation         | F) Self awareness         |
| G) Cultural awareness    | H) Values              | I) Feelings               |
| J) Friendship & trust    | K) Peer Pressure       | L) Bullying               |
| M) Family                | N) Endings             | O) Other (please specify) |

18. Does the school have a Peer Support manual in use?

If **YES** what type of manual (use 1 or more letters from list below):

- A) A School produced manual
- B) Peer Support Programme for Secondary Schools manual (1995 version)
- C) The Peer Support Programme for Secondary Schools manual (2005 version)

### **COMPOSITION OF PEER SUPPORT GROUPS**

- 19. On average how many Year 7 (or Year 9) students are there in a group?
- 20. Are the groups mixed or single sex?
- 21. Are the groups from core classes, vertical or horizontal forms?
- 22. How many Peer Support leaders per group?

### **PEER SUPPORT LEADER TRAINING**

- 23. Do you have Year 12, Year 13 or a combination of students as leaders?
- 24. How do students become Peer Support leaders? (e.g. volunteers or selected?)
- 25. When, where and for how long are leaders trained? (please give brief details)
- 26. Who takes the training?
- 27. What are the key aims of the training? (use 1 or more letters from list below):
 

A) Build the group	B) Develop leaders	C) Build communication skills
D) Develop cooperation	E) Build leader self esteem	
F) Outdoor activities	G) Experience Peer Support activities	
H) Practice being a Peer Support leader	I) Build support networks	
J) Other aims (please specify)		
- 28. What recognition do Peer Support leaders receive? (use 1 or more letters from list below):
 

A) Peer Support training certificate	B) Peer Support leader certificate
C) Peer Support badge	D) Special school certificate
E) Peer Support Unit Standard qualification F) Other (please specify)	
- 29. Is there acknowledgement of Peer Support leaders via any of the following? (use 1 or more letters from list below):

- A) Letter home
- B) Newsletter
- C) School newspaper
- D) Local newspaper
- E) School magazine/year book
- F) School assembly
- G) Prize giving
- H) School report
- I) Testimonial/school leaver documentation

30. Are you planning to operate a Peer Support programme in 2006?

If you would like to finish with a comment about how you see Peer Support in your school please do so here:

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. Now press **SEND** to return the survey to me.

## **Appendix D: Interview questions used in case study school**

### **Interview questions for Peer Support leaders**

1. Tell me what you know about Peer Support.
2. What is the role of a Peer Support leader?
3. What makes a good Peer Support leader?
4. What did you learn from being a Peer Support leader?
5. What parts of being a leader did you enjoy the most? Explain/expand
6. What parts of being a leader did you least enjoy? Explain/expand
7. How well did your training prepare you to be a leader?
8. What do you remember about your own experiences of Peer Support as a Year 9 student?
9. What made you decide to become a Peer Support leader this year?
10. Would you recommend being a Peer Support Leader to another student? Explain/expand
11. Do you think your experience as a leader will help you once you leave school? Explain/expand
12. Any further comments/questions?

### **Interview questions for Year 9 students**

1. Describe the Peer Support programme you had this year
2. Tell me about your first day at high school.  
What did you do with your peer support group/leader that day?
3. What did you think about the Peer Support sessions you had with your leaders during term 1?
4. What do you remember you experienced during those sessions?
5. Was there anything which made those sessions less enjoyable for you?
6. Why do you think this school has Peer Support?
7. What would you tell a Year 8 student coming to high school next year about Peer Support?
8. Do you think you would consider becoming a Peer Support leader in senior school?
9. Do you have any further comments?

### **Interview questions for Peer Support teachers**

1. What is Peer Support?  
What are the aims of it-for the school, the leaders, the Year 9 students?
2. What are your views of the Peer Support programme?
3. How long have you been involved in Peer Support?
4. Why did you decide to become a Peer Support teacher?
5. What do you see as your role in Peer Support in this school?
6. How well did the programme operate in this school this year?  
What helps the programme? What hinders the programme?
7. What changes have you seen in the programme over the (last 5) years?
8. What changes do you see ahead for Peer Support?
9. If another teacher or a parent asked you about Peer Support what would you say?
10. Do you have any further comments?

### **Interview questions for the Principal**

1. What is Peer Support?  
What are the aims of it-for the school, the leaders, the Year 9 students?
2. What are your views of the Peer Support programme?
3. How long has the school involved in Peer Support?
4. How well did the programme operate in this school this year?  
What helps the programme? What hinders the programme?
5. What changes have you seen in the programme over the (last 5) years?
6. What changes do you see ahead for Peer Support?
7. If another teacher or a parent asked you about Peer Support what would you say?
8. Do you have any further comments?