AN INVESTIGATION OF
THE HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIORS OF
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH AND WITHOUT LEARNING DISABILITIES

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how classroom learning environments, including classroom goal structures, teachers' instructional discourse, and the social climate, can facilitate or curtail students' adaptive help-seeking, particularly students with learning disabilities. Qualitative case study analysis of classroom observations and interviews of four students revealed that individual student's help-seeking varied from classroom to classroom. Also different students' perceptions of the same classroom varied regarding support for their help-seeking. The classrooms that seemed most supportive of student help-seeking were characterized by an emphasis on mastery goals and consistently supportive instructional and motivational discourse as well as a positive social environment. Implications for goal theory and for informing teacher practice with regard to promoting student help-seeking are discussed.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Adaptive help-seeking" refers to a particular subset of speech acts that individuals use for the purpose of seeking information, i.e., for correcting a knowledge deficit that interferes with academic task completion. These speech acts, or requests, typically take the form of an interrogative (e.g., "How do I do the problem?") but also may be stated in an imperative (e.g., "Tell me how to do it") or declarative (e.g., "I need to know what to do") mood. The delimiter, "adaptiveness", implies that the request for help is necessary (i.e., the child cannot correct the knowledge deficit without assistance), well planned (i.e., the child chooses a potentially helpful target and frames a request that elicits exactly the information needed), and well processed (i.e., the child poses his her request in a socially appropriate way and succeeds in obtaining the required help).

(Newman, 2000, p.352)

The past two decades have seen considerable research on students' academic help-seeking in elementary and middle school classrooms (see Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985; Karabenick, 1998; Newman, 2000; Ryan, Pintrich & Midgley, 2001 for reviews), but not in high schools. Interest in help-seeking stems from the recognition that it is an important self-regulatory strategy that contributes to student learning (Nelson-Le Gall, 1985; Newman, 1994; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1988). By seeking assistance, students may solve not only their immediate difficulties, but, in the process, acquire skills and strategies that allow them to become more independent learners in school, and in adult life (Newman, 2000). As students reach the high school years, they are increasingly expected to demonstrate effective help-seeking strategies in the classroom and show they are prepared for life beyond school (Schumm, Vaughn, Haager, McDowell, Rothlein & Saumell, 1995), either continuing with their studies or in the workplace, where effective help-seeking strategies will serve them well. However, little is known about the help-seeking experiences of high school students (Good, Slavings, Harel & Emerson, 1987; McIntosh, Vaughn, Schumm, Haager & Lee, 1993; Schumm et al., 1995; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1986). Hence students at the high school level were of particular interest in this study.
Within the classroom context, help-seeking is a complex process, involving the interaction of cognitive, motivational and social factors (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985). Student help-seeking is influenced by personal academic and social goals, affective states, and contextual characteristics that can either facilitate or hinder its strategic role in the learning process (Newman, 1998a).


Features of classroom learning environments are associated with student help-seeking, for example, classroom goal structures. According to achievement goal theorists, classroom goal structures communicate the purpose of achievement (Ames, 1992; Patrick, Anderman, Ryan, Edelin, & Midgley, 2001). High mastery goal conditions are consistently associated with students’ willingness to seek help (Midgley, Kaplan & Middleton, 2001;
Newman, 1998b; Ryan et al., 1998; Turner, Midgley, Meyer, Gheen, Kang, & Patrick, 2002). Mastery goal conditions include a focus on deep understanding and individual progress, and the promotion of intrinsic motivation and instruction adapted to students’ developmental needs (Ames, 1992; Patrick et al., 2001). Conversely, high performance goal conditions, which are associated with students’ reluctance to seek help (Ryan et al., 1998), emphasize demonstrating ability relative to others and extrinsic motivation (Ames, 1992; Patrick et al., 2001).

Recently researchers have proposed that the classroom social environment, including the degree of teacher affective support, is associated with the classroom goal structure (Patrick et al., 2001; Ryan & Pintrich, 1998; Turner, Meyer, Midgley, & Patrick, 2003; Turner et al., 2002), and that social relationships in the classroom are critical in order to understand students’ help-seeking (Newman, 2000; Newman & Schwager, 1993; Ryan et al., 2001, 2005). The social/interpersonal climate of the classroom is also influenced by teachers’ personal characteristics, which may contribute to students’ willingness to seek help (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002; Newman & Schwager, 1993; Ryan et al., 1998; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Turner et al., 2002).

Despite the potential advantages of seeking help in the classroom, research indicates, across all grades, that students most in need of help are least likely to ask for it, including low achieving students and students with learning disabilities (McIntosh et al., 1993; Newman, 1990; Newman & Goldin, 1990; Ryan et al., 1998; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Schumm et al., 1995). However, research also indicates that help-seeking is context specific. For example, the same student’s willingness to seek help may depend on differing contextual goals across different classrooms (Ryan et al., 1998). Therefore, one of the objectives of this study was to
explore how individual students sought help in different classrooms, and specifically high school students. Since high school students operate within, typically, eight classrooms throughout their school year, high school seems an appropriate setting to study the context specificity of help seeking. Moreover, different students have been found to vary in their perceptions about the same classroom contexts (Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002). Given the potential variability of student perceptions in classrooms, and the lack of information about whether different students’ perceptions might vary in the same classrooms, another goal of this study was to explore the perspective of students identified as learning disabled, compared to their higher achieving classmates without learning disabilities, with regard to their help-seeking in shared classrooms.

Teachers have been found to demonstrate differential behavior toward different students, which may affect students’ willingness to seek help (Clark, 1997; Cooper, Hinkel & Good, 1980; Brophy & Good, 1986; Eccles & Wigfield, 1985; Newman & Schwager, 1993). For example, the frequency with which teachers call on students, the amount of time they wait for a response, and the amount and type of feedback and praise they provide to students may vary (Cooper et al., 1980). No study has examined the potential link between teachers’ behavior and students’ attitudes toward and engagement in adaptive help-seeking behavior. Therefore, this study also examined whether and how high school classroom teachers, through their instructional practices and relationships with students, may have demonstrated differential behavior toward different students, influencing student help-seeking, particularly students with learning disabilities.

Although recently researchers have begun to more closely examine the importance of the classroom learning environment in influencing students’ motivation and affect as they
relate to decisions about seeking help, there has been no investigation of what students think and feel about the role of features of the classroom environment in specific help-seeking decisions (Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002; Turner et al., 2002, 2003). Ryan et al. (1998) suggest what matters are the messages that the students perceive, regardless of the messages that teachers try to convey. In this study, I explored high school students’ perceptions of specific help seeking experiences. I linked observations of classroom learning environments, including student-teacher help-seeking interactions, with students’ thoughts and feelings about specific help-seeking interactions. Further, by addressing the students’ perspective, I identified classroom features that seemed most salient to these students and most strongly linked to their willingness to seek help.

It is important to address student perspectives and incorporate their answers into efforts to make sense of their help seeking behavior, which in the past has been described largely using aggregate data. It seemed particularly important to examine the perspectives of understudied populations of high school students and those with learning disabilities. Past research has not given a voice to individual students about their own help-seeking actions in specific contexts nor to individual students about their help-seeking in varying contexts. It is important to understand the help seeking behavior of individual students in different contexts in terms meaningful to the participants because student help-seeking has been found to change according to the context. This is especially important for students with learning disabilities, who represent a subgroup of students whose seeking and getting help may be threatened by low self-esteem and self perceptions of low cognitive competence (Newman, 1990; Newman & Goldin, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). It seemed possible that perceptions of cognitive competence and feelings of self-esteem for students with learning disabilities
might be reflected differentially in different contexts as these students may be struggling in a particular subject area in one classroom and performing well in another classroom. Furthermore, because students generally experience different classroom contexts in high school, subject area differences as well as student characteristics and perceptions related to the subject might affect their decisions about help seeking. Therefore, there seemed to be increased potential to differentiate the influence of classroom contexts on individual student’s help-seeking in high schools.

It was hoped that the students identified with learning disabilities might be studied in their math classes, and that this would be the subject most affected by their learning disability. Research indicates that students perceive math to be a particularly difficult subject and tend to ask for more help in it than in other subjects (Nelson-Le Gall & Glor-Scheib 1985; Newman & Goldin, 1990; Stodolsky, Salk, & Glaessner, 1991). Therefore, it seemed there would be greater potential to observe these students’ help-seeking actions in math class, despite the potential for help-avoidance. At the same time, research indicates that students tend to voice strong feelings about their math experiences (Stodolsky et al., 1991), perhaps increasing the potential to elicit students’ candid views about their help-seeking in a subject of most difficulty for them. Furthermore, as students reach the high school years, the school environment tends to become more competitive, impersonal and formal with increased whole class instruction and focus on content coverage (Newman, 2000; Wigfield, Eccles, & Pintrich, 1996). These changes in the classroom environment, in combination with students’ increased concerns about peer relations and increased self-consciousness and sensitivity, (Harter, 1987; Hicks, 1997; Ryan et al. 1997) should be of special concern with regard to high school students’ help-seeking perceptions and behaviors.
This study offers a new direction in linking student self-reports about specific observed help-seeking interactions in the classroom and, particularly, the reports of high school students with learning disabilities. No previous studies have examined the link between the self-reports and specific observed help-seeking interactions of students.

My interest in studying the help-seeking of the same students both in and across classrooms also represents a new direction in this field of research. In the past, student help-seeking has been studied within classrooms or different student groups have been studied across classrooms. I hoped that my research would lead to a more refined model of conditions under which high school students, and students with learning disabilities, in particular, do or do not seek help and offer insights about how high school classroom contexts support this academically adaptive behavior.

Finally, a primary purpose of this study was to provide a detailed description of students' perceptions about their own help-seeking behavior, in an attempt to understand their own realities in specific contexts. This entailed providing an in-depth portrait of the help-seeking of individual high school students with learning disabilities contrasted with high school students without learning disabilities, exploring how they believe their help-seeking is influenced by features of classroom learning environments. With greater understanding of the interaction between the characteristics of students and the classroom environment, I hoped to gain insights about students’ reluctance to seek help. I hoped this in turn might contribute to enhancing reluctant students’ efforts to ask questions and seek assistance in class when needed. In creating classrooms that facilitate all students’ adaptive help-seeking, teachers can enhance students’ self-perceptions, learning, and achievement, all of which are important for life long learning and success.
This investigation is a qualitative case study (Yin, 2003). The case study is an appropriate method to use when the purpose of the investigation is to provide a rich, contextualized description of a “phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003, p.13). In this case study, observational methods and interview techniques were used to investigate (a) student help-seeking behavior in classrooms and (b) student perspectives about the role the classroom environment played in their help-seeking. More specifically, observations, in the form of running records, were used to capture students’ and teachers’ talk and action related to help-seeking. In addition, students were interviewed and responded to electronic questionnaires. These self-reports were intended to capture student perspectives about specific observed help-seeking events, as well as their more general beliefs about and orientation to help-seeking as an academically effective strategy.

In using a qualitative case study approach, including interviews and observations of students in specific classroom contexts, there was increased potential to enrich understandings about these learning contexts in relation to help-seeking behavior. By linking these perceptions to specific observations I hoped to illuminate aspects of student help-seeking which might not have been otherwise apparent. I hoped to offer insights to researchers and teachers about personal and contextual influences on students’ help-seeking.

In summary, in this study I examined how classroom contextual features, including instructional practices and the social environment, influenced high school students’ help-seeking, particularly students with learning disabilities. I focused on what students perceived with respect to these features of the classroom environment. I also studied how students with
and without learning disabilities sought help in different classrooms, examining students’ actions and speech.

**Research Questions**

Three questions focused my study of student help-seeking:

a. How do features of the classroom learning environment facilitate student help-seeking?

b. How do students interpret features of the classroom learning environment and how do their interpretations influence their decisions to seek help?

c. Do teachers’ invitations and/or responses to help-seeking differ for students with and without learning disabilities who are average or above average achieving? If so, how do they differ?

**Thesis Organization**

This thesis begins, in chapter one, with an overview of the research and research limitations that guided this study, and the research questions. Chapter two offers a review of the literature related to the influences on student help-seeking in the classroom. Chapter three presents the methods used in proceeding with this study, including procedures for data collection and data analysis, and the criteria for assessing the quality of the study. Chapter four describes the findings of this study. The concluding chapter highlights and discusses important themes that emerged from the findings in the context of previous research. It also presents implications and limitations of this study as well as suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Help-Seeking Definition

Historically, "help-seeking" has been viewed in negative terms, as an indicator of individuals' incompetence, dependence on others, and immaturity (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985; Newman, 2000). However, in the past two decades, researchers have distinguished between negative views of help-seeking and help-seeking that is an important developmental skill, and instrumental for learning (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985; Newman, 1994, 2000). Newman (2000) referred to the latter form of help-seeking as "adaptive help-seeking", characterized by certain features, including requests for information that are necessary and addressed to individuals who can potentially help.


A number of actions and decisions making up the adaptive help-seeking process can be described as metacognitive (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981; Newman, 1998a). The help-seeking process begins with the awareness of the need for help. Students must be aware of the difficulty of a task and recognize that they cannot resolve it without help. They must identify potential helpers and then determine strategies to elicit the help they need. For example, they may need to decide whether they are seeking explanations, clarification of
information, confirmation of uncertain answers, or just the correct answer. Finally, they must evaluate the help-seeking episode. Did they receive the help they needed? Can they continue to complete the task?

In summary, adaptive help-seeking is complex and multifaceted and is evidenced in classrooms when students monitor their academic performance, become aware of difficulty they cannot overcome independently, exhibit the wherewithal and self-determination to remedy that difficulty by appropriately requesting assistance from the best sources available (e.g., teachers or classmates), and then benefit from these efforts (Newman, 2000). Adaptive help-seeking is considered to be an important academic self-regulating strategy with its potential to accomplish the more immediate goals of maintaining task involvement and averting possible short term failure. Adaptive help-seeking can also bootstrap further learning and development, when students acquire skills and strategies that optimize their chances for mastery and independence, not only in school but in the long term throughout adult life (Newman, 2000).

Many factors come into play when students consider whether they will seek assistance, what kind of help they will request, and whom they will approach for assistance. Student characteristics as well as features of classroom learning environments, for example, classroom goal structures and the social-interpersonal climate have been found to be associated with students' help-seeking. The following discussion focuses on these influences.

**Student Characteristics and Adaptive Help-Seeking**

Researchers have identified a number of student characteristics associated with adaptive help-seeking in the classroom learning environment.
Age and Experience

With increased age and experience, students' ability to monitor their comprehension and determine their need for help, as well as their expertise at asking for help increases (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985; Newman, 1991, 1994). This positive association between age and adaptive help-seeking is related to the development of metacognitive and social skills (Newman, 2000). For example, learners become increasingly able to monitor their comprehension, performance, and need for help in academic situations. This results in their increased ability to adjust help-seeking according to task difficulty and to distinguish effective from ineffective helpers (Newman, 1994). With development, learners also have an expanding repertoire of communicative skills to elicit help (Newman, 2003). This help-seeking expertise provides students with the wherewithal to seek help despite potentially undermining influences as they reach the high school years, particularly with regard to their increasing concerns about peer relations and perceptions of their own social competence (Ryan et al., 1997; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997).

Social Competence and Social Goals

Aspects of students' social-motivational beliefs in relation to peers and teachers contribute to their approach to help-seeking. When students perceive themselves as socially competent (i.e., they are comfortable and skillful in relating to others), they worry less that their bids for help will incur negative evaluations from peers or teachers, and they are more likely to seek help (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). This is particularly true when they have positive, familiar relations with the potential helper (Newman & Schwager, 1993).

Students pursue social goals in the classroom (Hicks, 1997). Students who have social intimacy goals are concerned with general acceptance and forming and maintaining positive
peer relations. These students are usually more likely to seek help (Ryan et al., 1997).

Conversely, students with social status goals are concerned with their social image or status within the larger peer group. These students may perceive help-seeking as threatening to their self-worth and may be more likely to avoid seeking help when they need it (Ryan et al., 1997). Moreover, these concerns develop as students reach the middle elementary grades, and are believed to increase as they progress through school (Good et al., 1987; Newman, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997).

**Achievement and Expertise**

Students' perceptions of cognitive competence in the subject area in which they seek help influences their help-seeking attitudes and actions (Newman, 1990; Ryan et al., 1997, 2005; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). When students have self-perceptions of high cognitive competence coupled with high achievement, they do not worry that others will attribute their help-seeking to their lack of ability, and are more likely to secure the necessary help. Newman (1990) found, the greater the student’s perceived competence, the less strongly the student felt that there were costs associated with help-seeking. Along with the development of help-seeking expertise, social competence and subject area competence help mitigate potentially undermining social influences as students get older (Newman, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). For example, Ryan and Pintrich (1997) indicated that adolescents with high competence, both cognitive and social, were less likely to feel threatened by peers or their teachers regarding help-seeking. In fact, students' social competence compensated for lower perceived cognitive competence, ameliorating concerns about help-seeking.

There is much evidence that higher achieving students demonstrate more adaptive help-seeking behavior than lower achieving students (Newman, 1990; Newman & Goldin,
1990; Ryan et al., 1997, 2005; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). Moreover, Newman and Goldin (1990) claimed that higher achieving elementary grade students who perceived they had less need for help were also more willing to seek help.

With more expertise in a domain, students also demonstrate more mature information seeking, associated with improvements in cognitive and metacognitive capabilities that function as component skills of adaptive help-seeking (Nelson-Le Gall, 1985; Nelson-Le Gall, Kratzer, Jones, & DeCooke, 1990). A similar argument for the role of expertise comes from a study that showed, at least in academic domains such as math and English, higher achievers were more likely to rely on more knowledgeable others when necessary (Wood & Wood, 1999).

**Self-Worth and Academic Self-Efficacy**

Positive feelings of self-worth or self-esteem have been associated with greater willingness to help seek (Newman, 1990; Newman & Goldin, 1990). Self-worth theorists are concerned with feelings of being valued. According to Covington (1992), students are naturally motivated to preserve a sense of personal worth in their own and others’ eyes. Newman (1990) linked students’ perceived academic competence to self-esteem or feelings of self-worth, arguing that students with high self-esteem were likely to view help-seeking as an instrumental way of alleviating an inadequacy. These students interpreted failure as reflecting inadequacy along some non-global, task-specific dimension, not as an indicator of reduced self-worth.

Academic self-efficacy refers to students’ judgments of their capability of completing aspects of schoolwork successfully (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Ryan et al.’s (1998) study of sixth grade students demonstrated that high academic self-efficacy was
related to students' reported willingness to seek help when they needed it. Furthermore, Pintrich and De Groot (1990) found that high self-efficacy was significantly related to greater constructive strategy use for learning. When students with high self-efficacy encountered difficulty, they did not worry that others might attribute it to their lack of ability and were more likely to focus on securing the necessary help.

**Achievement Goals**

Students bring their own personal achievement goal orientations to the classroom, ranging from goals for mastery, improvement, challenge and learning, to goals for performance, associated with ability, grades, looking smart and outperforming others (Ames & Archer, 1988; Pintrich, 2000a). There is abundant evidence that students' achievement goals are significant determinants of their academic help-seeking attitudes and actions (Linnenbrink, 2005; Newman, 1998b, 2003; Ryan & Pintrich, 1998). Mastery goals are positively associated with adaptive help-seeking. Students motivated by mastery goals are more likely to perceive the benefits of help-seeking and less likely to avoid seeking help when they need it. They strategically attempt to overcome obstacles to learning. If given the opportunity, they request task-related information that helps them to know whether their work is correct or assists in correcting errors, resolving difficulties, and proceeding toward mastery. They are more likely to request hints than direct answers and persevere on their own rather than ask for help when it is not necessary.

Some students motivated by performance goals, concerned with demonstrating ability (performance-approach) or avoiding the demonstration of inability (performance-avoid) (Elliott & McGregor, 2001; Pintrich, 2000a) may exhibit self-handicapping achievement behaviors (Newman, 1998a, 2003; Ryan & Pintrich, 1998). These self-handicapping
behaviors are typically associated with students who are low-achieving or students with learning disabilities, but sometimes may be demonstrated by higher achievers who fear failure. These students may avoid challenge, not ask for feedback about their work, ask for correct answers without first attempting tasks on their own, or not ask for help at all (Newman, 2003). Covington (1992) posited that for students with a performance goal orientation, success is a reflection of their general ability and an indicator of their self worth. Indeed, Ryan and Pintrich (1997) found that students with a performance goal orientation showed heightened concern that teachers and peers evaluated their worth by how they performed in comparison with others.

In a recent review of research, Brophy (2005) argued that some performance goals, (e.g., to get good grades and please the teacher) are not as debilitating as social comparisons. Moreover, there has been much recent re-examination of the effects of personal achievement goals on achievement behavior, including discussions about multiple goals and further discriminating and redefining goals (Brophy, 2005; Grant & Dweck, 2003; Pintrich, 2000a; Urdan & Mestas, 2006). Research indicates students can hold multiple goals, and many hold both performance and mastery goals without a negative effect on learning. More research is needed to further discriminate and refine goal categories. However, to this point, research consistently associates personal mastery goals with students’ adaptive help-seeking.

Furthermore, perhaps high achieving students may be able to maintain positive achievement behavior, while at the same time having performance goals that include a focus on competition and comparative information. Social comparisons may not pose the same threat for these students as they do for low achieving students, as long as these students continue to be high achieving.
Gender and Culture

The following discussion will briefly address the influence of gender and cultural differences on students seeking assistance in classrooms as these variables do appear to make a difference. However, my study focuses on a homogeneous population of students—females and at least second generation Canadians—to avoid the confounds these variables may present.

Gender differences have been found in academic help-seeking behavior, generally with an increased likelihood of help-seeking for females (Butler, 1998; Ryan et al., 1998; Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002) although Newman and Goldin (1990) observed across the elementary grades that girls reported more concern than boys in math classes about negative reactions from teachers if they have to ask questions in math class. However, Ryan et al. (1998) found that elementary aged girls were, in fact, more likely than boys to seek help in math class. Newman (2002a) argued girls' relatively low expectations for success in math may be accompanied by less threat to their self-esteem, hence less inhibition about revealing that they need assistance.

Students' cultural backgrounds may influence their willingness to seek help. Students can be expected to differ in their tendency to seek help as a function of the degree to which they have internalized the norms and educational practices of the society in which they live (Nelson-Le Gall, 1985; Nelson-Le Gall & Resnick, 1998). Conventional Western norms and values about help-seeking have evolved over the years and have not been and are still not shared universally across all cultures (Nelson-Le Gall, 1985). Nelson-Le Gall (1985) discussed research that described differences between the attitudes of American and Dutch individuals a few decades ago. The Dutch demonstrated more positive attitudes about help-
seeking, while the American participants judged help seeking to indicate lack of self-reliance and dependency. In contrast to the current recognition that “adaptive help seeking” is beneficial in our North American schools, Shwalb and Sukemune (1998) discussed help seeking in their study of Japanese schools, claiming that teachers maintained almost complete control over classroom dynamics and communication in both primary and secondary school. They observed that students were trained how, when, and about what to ask questions and were not well equipped to demonstrate adaptive help-seeking once they reached college, when students had more freedom to ask questions.

In summary, a number of student characteristics associated with seeking help in the classroom highlights the conceptualization of help-seeking as combining aspects of cognitive, social, and motivational/affective factors, mediated by additional factors such as age, gender, and culture. Each student represents varying combinations of cognitive, social, motivational, and affective characteristics. Along with the mediating influences of age, gender and culture, there are many factors that offer the potential to produce varying and complex possibilities for predicting students’ help-seeking behavior over time.

**Students with Learning Disabilities’ Reluctance to Seek Help**

The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) adopted the current definition of “learning disabilities” in January, 2002. This definition refers to a number of disorders, which may affect acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering, or learning. These include, but are not limited to: language processing;
phonological processing; visual spatial processing; processing speed; memory and attention; and executive functions (e.g., planning and decision-making). Learning disabilities also range in severity and may interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following: oral language; reading; written language; and mathematics.

The term learning disability is also traditionally synonymous with the concept of unexpected underachievement – specifically students who do not listen, speak, read, write, or develop mathematics skills commensurate with their potential (Lyon, Fletcher, Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Torgeson, Wood, Schulte, & Olson, 2001). It is believed their difficulties occur despite, for example, adequate opportunity to learn, adequate intelligence, sensory integrity, healthy emotional development, and cultural and environmental advantage. The unexpected under-achievement of students with learning disabilities may be reflected in strengths in some subject areas, and weaknesses in others. This uneven profile may offer potential frustration for these students, as well as for their parents and teachers, when they are not able to achieve in some areas despite their average or above average overall functioning. This may also differentially affect their help-seeking decisions. As well, perhaps these discrepancies in academic achievement become most obvious at the high school level, with increased context specificity in classrooms.

Learning disabilities are life long. They may be expressed in varying ways over an individual’s lifetime and not just in the academic realm. For example, they may be reflected in difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, social interaction, and perspective taking. The LDAC (2002) indicate that, among the minimum requirements for success, students with learning disabilities need to develop self-advocacy skills. As these students reach high school, their ability to advocate for themselves is increasingly expected. Effective
help-seeking skills are essential in enabling them to advocate for themselves as they make the
transition into the work place or other educational institutions and to become successful life
long learners (Reiff, Gerber, & Ginsberg, 1996; Trainin & Swanson, 2005).

The few studies that have examined the help-seeking behavior of high school students
with learning disabilities highlighted the great reluctance of these students to ask for help
(McIntosh et al., 1993; Schumm et al., 1995). Furthermore, these studies provided
aggregated data and offered no information about differing contextual influences in the
classroom or characteristics of these students, other than being identified as learning
disabled, that might have contributed to their reluctance to seek help.

No study that I am aware of has discriminated the help-seeking of individual students
according to the subject areas in which they show the greatest strength and greatest
weakness. Furthermore, it is possible that students with learning disabilities may share, in the
subjects they find most difficult, some of the same perceptions and characteristics as
generally low-achieving students. The following discussion highlights characteristics and
perceptions usually associated with low achieving students, with some findings specific to
students identified as learning disabled. This provides a preview of the potential risks for
students with learning disabilities with regard to help-seeking avoidance, perhaps chiefly in
subjects in which they are experiencing most difficulty.

**Academic Self-Efficacy**

Students with low academic self-efficacy hold self-judgments of low competence for
certain tasks or schoolwork. They may be less likely to ask for help (Newman, 1990; Ryan &
Pintrich, 1997) because they think their need for help indicates they lack ability. With low
perceptions of competence, they may feel they have the most to lose from others knowing
they are having difficulty as it confirms their inadequacy (Newman, 1990; Newman & Goldin, 1990).

Self-efficacy is also linked to students' use of metacognitive strategies. Research indicates that individuals are less likely to use such active learning strategies when they believe they are not capable of mastering the task at hand; that is, when their self-efficacy is low (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990). Low self-efficacy beliefs can interfere with students' thoughts and behaviors while they work on tasks. They may not be confident that they can complete a task, even if they are aware of strategies they can use. They may then become anxious and preoccupied with concerns about failure, rather than focusing on strategies to complete the task.

**Effectiveness at Help-Seeking**

Stipek (2002) proposed that students who demonstrate help-seeking avoidance behaviors, including students with learning disabilities, may also lack competence at asking for help. They may lack awareness of what capabilities, strategies and resources are needed to perform a task effectively, including effective help-seeking skills. Further, McIntosh et al. (1993) indicated that some students with learning disabilities do not recognize what they do and do not understand. Students with learning disabilities, compared to other students in their study, requested help less frequently and did not appear confused or frustrated by challenging activities or requests from the teacher, perhaps evidence of poor self-monitoring skills.

Effective help-seeking requires considerable metacognitive awareness (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985; Newman, 1991, 1994; Paris & Newman, 1990), which some students with learning disabilities may not demonstrate. Additionally, difficulties associated with not knowing *that* help is needed or *what* help to seek are compounded when students do not have
the will or self-determination to learn or solve problems. This passivity may become apparent for many low-achieving students as early as grade four (Good et al., 1987).

**Self-Worth**

As students get older, especially in middle and high school, they show increasing concerns about the social costs of seeking help. They begin to weigh the potential social costs against the academic benefits (Newman, 1990, 1998a; Newman & Goldin, 1990; Newman & Schwager, 1993; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). For example, they are concerned about the potential embarrassment of asking for help and have fears that the teacher may think they are not smart (Newman & Goldin, 1990; Newman & Schwager, 1993; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). These concerns are exacerbated for students with learning problems who already perceive themselves to be less academically competent. Embarrassment concerns, combined with findings that students who tend to avoid help-seeking report the lowest level of emotional support and social efficacy with teachers – they do not perceive teachers as caring about their feelings and are not confident in interacting with the teachers (Ryan et al., 2005) – may have particular implications for supporting the help-seeking of students with learning disabilities. As well, Nicholls (1984) reported that for older children, low performance combined with effortful task engagement, which might include help-seeking, implied low ability and hence potential embarrassment and threat to self worth. Help-avoidance becomes a strategy for saving face. Furthermore, Juvonen and Murdock (2000) argued that as students reach the high school years, they increasingly believe that students high in ability and low in effort are most popular. The need for students to preserve feelings of self-worth (Covington, 1992), perhaps most important for those with learning disabilities or low achievement, may raise potential goal conflicts with their teachers (Stipek, 2002). Student
goals for academic success and teacher approval may conflict with goals to win peer approval and to maintain positive perceptions of ability, which are important to feelings of self-worth (Stipek, 2002). For example, if these students show demonstrable signs of effort by asking for help, they are risking judgments of low ability and a subsequent reduced sense of self-worth.

**Low Achievement and Expertise**

As discussed, students motivated by performance goals tend to demonstrate self-handicapping achievement behaviors (Newman, 2003). This problem becomes much more acute for students with performance goals who perceive that they are low in ability (Ryan et al., 1997). It is argued that even if they have mastery goals, these students may still feel they have the most to lose when others know they are having difficulty (Newman, 1990; Newman & Goldin, 1990). When motivated by performance goals, failure is generally perceived as indicative of global inadequacy and for those with self-perceptions of low ability, a need for help confirms this inadequacy (Nadler, 1983). Elliott and Dweck (1988) claimed that when these students experienced failure, they demonstrated negative affect and opted for strategies that protected self-worth (e.g., help-avoidant, rather than problem solving strategies). Further, Dunn and Shapiro (1999) claimed that some students with learning disabilities are especially vulnerable in achievement situations. They are more likely to adopt a global inadequacy view and have low self-perceptions of their academic competence.

**Domain Specific Achievement and Values**

Students' judgments about their academic competence are strongly associated with assessments of their self-esteem or self-worth (Wigfield et al., 1996). These judgments are also related to the value students place on tasks (Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles, Wigfield,
24). Expectancy-value theorists (Atkinson, 1964; Jacobs et al., 2002; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) argued that individuals' choice, persistence, effort and performance can be explained by their beliefs about how well they will do on an activity (expectancy) as well as the extent they value the activity (i.e., usefulness, importance, interest). These beliefs also appear to be distinct from one another; that is, individuals have specific beliefs about what they are good at and what they value in different achievement domains. Further, children's beliefs about their ability and expectations for success are associated with grades in the domain studied as well as being domain specific (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000; Jacobs et al. 2002). Thus, students often have different expectancies and values for different subject areas in school. These expectancies and values are influenced by a complex combination of variables related to tasks (e.g., ability beliefs, the perceived difficulty of the task, individual goals, self-concept, and affective memories). Additional influences include individuals' perceptions of their previous experiences and a variety of socialization influences.

Further, students' perceptions of competence and value for most school related activity tends to decline with age (Jacobs et al., 2002). This may be explained by their ability, as they get older, to better understand and interpret data about themselves (Stipek, 2002). Also, as students reach the middle and high school years, the school environment becomes more competitive and comparative (Wigfield et al., 1996). By the time students with learning disabilities reach the high school years, they may have collected enough evaluative feedback and comparative data about themselves to lower their competence beliefs, which are associated with a tendency to lower values for the domain(s) in which they are struggling. When students combine low expectancies with low values for a task or domain, it is expected that effort, persistence, and help-seeking will diminish in that task or domain. Students may
feel they have no choice but to devalue the domains in which they have low expectations for success, a useful self-protective mechanism. If the disability is in a domain that is highly valued by society, the student may have internalized values that have been reinforced and observed in their social surroundings (Ryan, Connell, & Deci, 1985; Ryan, Connell & Grolnick, 1992). If these students continue to value the domain while experiencing failure in that domain, self-esteem is lowered (Jacobs et al., 2002). In a study reported by Harter (1987), low perceptions of competence had greater negative effects on the self-esteem in domains children valued highly than in domains they valued less.

It is troubling that some students caught in this dilemma may discount the value of academic success, perhaps as an unconscious effort to maintain self-worth after deciding academic success is not achievable for them (Stipek, 2002). They may begin to develop competencies and seek recognition in undesirable ways. For example, they may not ask for help to avoid looking dumb, they may not complete assignments, they may adopt a devil-may-care attitude or play the class clown. At the extreme, these students may begin participating in criminal behavior. This may be a defensive attitude of last resort, not a genuine choice (Stipek, 2002).

Research indicates students most reluctant to seek help are usually the most in need of help. Included in this group are students with learning disabilities who represent the largest group of special education students in mainstream schools. Despite this negative prognosis with regard to their help-seeking (McIntosh et al., 1993), little is known about their help-seeking experiences and perspectives. Indeed, research has offered only generalized descriptions of these students’ unwillingness to seek help, and has not differentiated individual student’s help-seeking actions or perceptions according to their subject areas of
greatest strength or weakness. This study explores these students' potential varying perceptions and help-seeking actions. However, given the research findings thus far, it appears that a pattern of continuing reluctance to seek help, coupled with the ongoing need for help, may put these students at an extreme disadvantage for learning, with associated negative effects on their motivation and self-esteem, thus underscoring the urgency of exploring their help-seeking interactions and perceptions.

**The Classroom Environment and Student Help-Seeking**

One important objective of this study is to examine how features of the classroom learning environment influence the help-seeking of students with learning disabilities. A second objective entails identifying ways teachers create classroom environments that encourage and support these students to seek help effectively. Research indicates that the structuring of classroom learning environments can play a fundamental role in promoting student help-seeking (Ames, 1992; Patrick et al., 2001).

Within the classroom context, help-seeking is a complex process. It involves the interaction of many variables, in addition to student characteristics, that can either support or discourage help-seeking (Newman, 1998a). Furthermore, students who share a classroom may interpret support for help-seeking differently (Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002). As well, the same student may respond differently in terms of seeking help in different classrooms (Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002; Ryan et al., 1998). Indeed, LeMare and Sohbat found that with respect to different classroom contexts, help seeking interactions evoked strong feelings within students. Given the implications, especially for students with learning disabilities, whose help-seeking has not been specifically examined, I explored individual students' help-seeking across different classrooms. In addition to examining the influence of student characteristics
on their help-seeking, I studied the influence of classroom goal structures, the classroom social environment, and teacher characteristics.

**Classroom Goal Structures**

Classroom contextual goals or goal structures are concerned with learning and instruction, and have been variously labeled, with slight differences in interpretation, but will be referred to here as mastery and performance goals (Ames, 1992; Patrick et al., 2001). The classroom goal structure is communicated to students through task structures, evaluation and recognition practices, and participation structures. High mastery goal structures are consistently associated with students' willingness to seek help (Linnenbrink, 2005; Newman, 1998b; Ryan et al., 1998, Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Turner et al., 2002). Mastery goal conditions are typically described as supporting students focus on deep understanding, improvement, and intrinsic motivation (Patrick et al., 2001). Goal orientation theorists (Ames, 1992; Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Patrick et al., 2001) have discussed several dimensions of mastery goal conditions in the classroom context, including task, authority, grouping, evaluation/recognition, and time – which foster students' positive motivational beliefs and adaptive help-seeking attitudes and behaviors.

Mastery goal structures are represented by classroom tasks designed with an appropriate level of challenge and instructional support, enhancing students' beliefs that they can successfully complete tasks, and aiding students in monitoring their progress and need for help. In high mastery classrooms, tasks are designed to give students some choice or control over their work, encouraging them to take an active role in their learning. Tasks address multiple and meaningful learning goals and encourage students to use multiple strategies for problem solving, and to evaluate their own progress. Thus, when students
encounter difficulty, they are more likely to identify the problem and be responsible for securing the necessary help to continue the learning process. For example, in Perry’s (1998) study of the relations between writing and portfolio activities and self-regulated learning in primary classrooms, seeking help was a natural and spontaneous activity when children were given control over challenge and support for the tasks in which they were engaged.

Evaluation practices are believed to have particular salience for students’ help-seeking beliefs and behaviors. In high mastery classrooms, assessment and evaluation focuses on learning and progress, increasing ability through effort, and effective strategy use. Public comparisons, which draw attention to the relative performance of students, are minimized (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Ryan & Pintrich, 1998).

Ryan and Pintrich (1998) demonstrated how the design and purpose of grouping in classrooms influenced student motivation and help seeking. When students worked collaboratively on tasks and activities, and when groups were structured so that students’ goals and rewards were interdependent, responsibility for learning was shared among members. Cooperative grouping such as this fosters task-focused goals and student help-seeking (Nelson-Le Gall & Glor-Scheib, 1985). Further, Slavin (1983) argued that individual accountability is also an important aspect of cooperative groups, ensuring all members are involved in the learning process and encouraging students to secure help if they need it.

Research shows that collaborative work need not be just confined to small groups. For example, in Perry’s (1998) study, in classrooms with a mastery focus, the classroom structure was designed to encourage collaboration amongst all classmates, including the teacher, through sharing of ideas, resources, and strategies. Seeking and giving help was implicit in the structuring of classroom learning tasks.
The use of time in classrooms has implications for both students’ goals and help-seeking (Ryan & Pintrich, 1998). Flexible time schedules encourage students’ mastery of and intrinsic interest in tasks. Students can be thoughtful and creative with their work as well as have time to ask for the type of help that fosters understanding. Conversely, with rigid time constraints (e.g., when students are conscious of completing their work in an allotted time period), students may not take the time to ask for help or may only be interested in getting correct answers. Further, inflexible schedules have the potential to induce either frustration and anxiety or boredom, depending on the student’s pace at working.

In describing some dimensions of mastery goal conditions, a few contrasts have been provided which reflect typical conditions in a classroom with a performance orientation. High performance goals are conventionally associated with a focus on competition, public comparison, proving one’s ability (Ames, 1992, Patrick et al., 2001) and reluctance to seek help (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Midgley et al, 2001). Moreover, Newman (1998b) found that when both classroom and student goals emphasized performance, students’ reluctance to seek help was reinforced.

Classrooms with high performance goals in combination with students’ low self-confidence in their abilities are generally considered to be particularly debilitating. Such conditions may seriously undermine learning for low achieving students and students identified as learning disabled (Stipek, 2002). However, recent research suggests there are mitigating factors associated with teacher characteristics, teacher-student interactions, and competing goal orientations, which may reduce the effects of performance goals (Newman, 1998b; Turner et al., 2002; Pintrich, 2000a; Patrick et al., 2001). For example, Newman (1998b) showed, in investigating grade four and five students’ math problem solving, when
students had strong performance goal orientations in a mastery context, this context seemed to help them overcome and compensate for personal tendencies that stressed grades, looking smart, and avoiding seeking help. Patrick et al. (2001) found that the presence of some elements of a performance orientation in a classroom were not always negative. They argued the positive or negative effect depends on the manner and the affect of the teacher, or the way the teacher uses those practices and the meanings associated with them. Similarly, Turner et al. (2002, 2003) determined that students' perceptions of a performance goal structure in classrooms were not related to higher reports of avoidance behaviors. They argued that fostering a mastery goal structure combined with positive affect and supportive instructional discourse such as scaffolding (Hogan & Pressley, 1997), rather than reducing a performance goal structure is related to student reports of adaptive patterns of learning, such as adaptive help-seeking. Scaffolding builds students' understanding with strategies such as modeling, providing explanations and feedback, adjusting instruction, sharing strategies, and asking students to demonstrate their understanding (Hogan & Pressley, 1997).

Brophy (2004) reviewed research on personal performance goals and also argued that the presence of some elements of a personal performance orientation does not have to be negative. He distinguished between aspects of performance goals, arguing that students' goals to get good grades or please the teacher are not as debilitating as social comparisons. In fact, he limited his definition of performance goals to social comparison goals.

Classroom Social Environment

Recently researchers have proposed that the social environment of the classroom, which reflects the extent to which students report that they feel psychologically comfortable, important, included, supported and respected by classmates and the teacher, is also an
important feature of the classroom goal structure which influences help-seeking (Davis et al., 2001; Patrick et al., 2001; Ryan et al., 1998; Ryan & Pintrich, 1998; Turner et al., 2002). When students perceive that teachers are friendly, evoke humor, offer personal attention and encourage students as well as provide a context of peer support, good relationships are promoted.

Turner and colleagues' (2002) study underscored the importance of a mastery goal structure which fused the cognitive and the affective components of teaching and learning. This study highlighted the importance of the positive relationships that teachers develop with students and the messages they send about learning through their instructional interactions. These interactions, combined with the academic support provided, reduced self-handicapping behaviors such as avoidance of help-seeking. Similarly, Patrick et al. (2001) investigated teachers' communications of goals in classrooms, using observational data to link teacher practices to students' perceptions of classroom goals. This study illustrated the value of using rich contextualized observational data, gathered through qualitative methods, to examine instructional practices in classrooms. Like Turner et al. (2002), they argued student perceptions of the social and affective features of the classroom are an integral part of student perceptions of a classroom's mastery goal focus. Students were more likely to perceive social and affective teacher support for student learning, in addition to concern for students' physical and emotional comfort, in high, but not low, mastery-focused classrooms. Patrick et al. (2001) observed social and affective support in teacher discourse was associated with student help seeking in the high mastery classrooms. Student help-seeking and help-giving was a common practice in these classrooms.
Furthermore, Davis et al.'s (2001) and Ryan and Patrick's (2001) studies of middle school students found student perceptions of teachers who promoted positive peer relations and student-teacher relations had the most positive influence on student motivation. This demonstrates the importance of positive relationships in the classroom, again as viewed from the student perspective.

In Davis et al.'s (2001), Patrick et al.'s (2001), and Ryan and Patrick's (2001) studies, students believed positive peer and student-teacher relations were promoted in various ways. For example, students perceived that teachers made connections with students, expressing positive nonverbal affective messages, invoking humor, and sharing personal information. They built trust such that the students felt “they know me” (Davis et al., 2001). Students believed teachers demonstrated their interest in interacting with students and engaging them in the subject matter by sharing their interest and valuing of a subject. Students perceived them to be effective teachers, with respect for students’ ability to learn and a strong and evident desire for students to learn, promoting personal advancement and learning goals. Students also reported that teachers who encouraged positive peer relations in the classroom were most motivating. For example, they provided frequent opportunities for positive social and cooperative interactions, including discussions, exchanges, and seeking and giving help. Students perceived the best relationships with teachers who balanced the need for social interaction and learning goals in the classroom. Similar to Davis et al. (2001), other researchers have found that students’ perceptions of familiarity along with mutual liking increased the likelihood that they would ask the teacher for help (Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002; Newman & Schwager, 1993).
Teacher Characteristics

Some of what students report is supportive of their help-seeking reflects teachers’ personal characteristics. Friedel et al., (2002) and Turner et al., (2002) claimed that student perceptions of classrooms’ mastery goals and teachers’ affective characteristics were not only related, but influenced student help-seeking. Student perceptions of teacher characteristics associated with students’ perceptions of mastery goals and student motivation include taking time for, expressing affection toward, showing respect for, enjoying interactions with, and being attuned to students (Roeser, Midgley, Urdan, 1996). Furthermore, student perceptions of teachers as dependable, enthusiastic about the teaching content and predictable in responses to help-seeking were also viewed as willingly and effectively providing help (Davis et al., 2001; Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002; Newman & Schwager, 1993; Ryan et al., 1998). Moreover, avoidance of help-seeking among students with poor self-perceptions and low efficacy was ameliorated in classrooms in which students perceived that teachers attended to students’ social and emotional as well as academic needs (Ryan et al., 1998).

Aggregated data from previous research, gathered through student self-reports and classroom observations, show that students pay attention to both teacher affect and teacher relationships with students. They are also sensitive to teachers’ instructional and motivational actions and discourse. Their perceptions of these classroom features is believed to influence their willingness to ask for help.

Some research has focused on the messages conveyed about learning through instructional practices and interactions in the classroom (Nadler, 1998; Patrick et al., 2001; Turner et al., 2002). It is argued that teacher’ implicit beliefs about learning and achievement
are reflected in the motivational environments they create in classrooms, and influence students’ achievement motivation and learning (Graham, 1990; McDermott, 1993; Patrick et al., 2001; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

Despite teachers’ best intentions, there are many ways they can unintentionally communicate low expectations, undermining students’ efforts in learning. It has been argued that teachers exhibit different behavior toward high and low achievers. For example, the frequency that teachers call on students, the amount of time they wait for a response, and the amount and type of feedback and praise varies from student to student (Cooper et al., 1980, Good, 1981). Research indicates some teachers are less likely to engage in student-initiated interactions with low-achievers. Brophy (1985) indicated that teacher actions designed to provide extra support for low achieving students may in fact, undermine student learning. Compensatory behavior intended to support students is sometimes accompanied by subtle negative behaviors or expressions. For example, Babad (1992) claimed that teachers often displayed negative emotions (e.g., hostility, anxiety, condescension) while they invested greater time and attention to lower achieving students.

Furthermore, students may interpret teacher behavior that is meant to protect their feelings or to help them as evidence of their low competence and this is turn lowers their own expectations and effort (Stipek, 2002). Graham (1984) demonstrated in an experiment that expressing pity or sympathy, which is usually meant to protect students’ feelings about themselves, can actually have the opposite effect. Students’ who received sympathy in response to failure were more likely to attribute their failure to lack of ability and had lower expectations for success in the future than students who received anger responses.
Findings on the effect of teachers' emotions may be particularly relevant to students who are often viewed as having low competencies, such as students identified as learning disabled (Stipek, 2002). One study found that teachers expressed more pity and less anger toward children described as having a learning disability than toward children who exerted the same effort and had the same outcome but were not identified as learning disabled (Clark, 1997).

Teacher praise and criticism have been linked to effort and ability attributions. Research has shown that children, by the age of eleven, rate a child who was praised by the teacher as lower in ability than a child who was not praised, and they rated a child who was criticized as higher in ability than a child the teacher did not criticize (Miller & Horn, 1997). Teacher praise included comments such as “This is excellent. You have done very well and I am pleased”. Examples of critical comments included, “You didn’t perform well enough on this quiz” or “This sort of test performance is not acceptable”, indicating performance was below teacher expectations for that student. The potential negative effects of praise and positive effects of criticism on children’s self-confidence were also shown in another study (Eccles-Parsons, Kaczala, Meece, 1982). These studies highlight the potential for well chosen criticism to convey as much positive information as praise.

Teachers' unsolicited helping behavior can also give students messages that they are perceived low in ability, and it can undermine the positive achievement related emotions that are associated with success. Meyer (1982) described a study by Conty in which the experimenter offered unrequested help either to the subject or to another individual in the same room working on the same task. Subjects who were offered help claimed to feel negative emotions more, and positive emotions less than subjects who observed another
person being helped. Graham and Barker (1990) reported that children as young as six years rated a student they observed being offered help as lower in ability than another student who was not offered help. In explaining the effect of help on ability judgments and emotional reactions, research has shown in a variety of contexts people are more likely help others when their need is perceived to be caused by uncontrollable factors such as low ability, than when their need is attributed to controllable factors such as insufficient effort (Stipek, 2002).

Students come to school with pre-existing differences in skills and attitudes, and different patterns of socialization. Teacher expectations, teacher-student interactions, and teacher discourse are believed to contribute to further widening this variation in students’ learning and academic success (Brophy & Good, 1986; Eccles & Wigfield, 1985; Stipek, 2002). Newman and Schwager (1993) claimed that these differential types of student-teacher interactions can be expected to affect students’ attitudes, task engagement and willingness to seek help over time. Newman (2000) further commented that however unintended, teachers may play a role in low achievers becoming increasingly passive and disaffected over time.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter consists of a description of the methods used in this study, including participant selection procedures, the participants and setting, and the instruments and procedures.

Participant Selection Procedure

A purposive sampling approach was used in this study. Purposive sampling is a non-probabilistic sampling procedure, which can be used when a formally representative sample is not the aim, such as in this small qualitative case study (Palys, 1997). It is believed to be a desirable method to use in a qualitative case study to collect exploratory data from the actual experiences of a specific population. It allows for the researcher to strategically sample particular individuals in a target group based on knowledge of the phenomena of study and the needs of the study. Hence it can be used to select participants based on specific criteria.

Participants and Setting

In this study, purposive sampling was used to identify four students: two pairs of girls of similar age, grade, and ethnicity. One girl in each pair was identified as having a learning disability. The other girl in each pair was known to be higher achieving and with no identified learning disability. The goal was to achieve homogeneity on some variables (i.e., age, grade, gender, ethnicity, disability status in the pairs) to highlight the influence other variables (e.g., achievement level, perceptions of cognitive competence, perceptions of social competence, personal goal orientations, classroom contexts) had on students’ help-seeking actions.

Two large suburban secondary schools near Vancouver were the sites of this investigation. School administrators were approached at the selected schools after school
board permission (Appendix A) was obtained to conduct the study. I met with the resource teachers in the two schools to describe my study and to solicit their support in selecting student participants and classrooms in which to observe these students. The resource teachers identified pairs of female students who met the inclusion criteria and were judged willing and able to talk about their help seeking behavior. I met with the identified students to describe their role in the study. Letters of consent were provided to both the parents and the potential student participants. This letter indicated that when the students returned the consent forms, whether or not they agreed to participate in my study, their names would be entered into a draw for one of four $25.00 gift certificates to the Body Shop. Once the selected students had agreed to participate, the resource teachers approached the students’ classroom teachers. These teachers were given a description of the data collection plan and also asked for permission to observe in their classrooms. Parent and student, and teacher consent forms are provided in Appendices B and C, respectively.

One pair of student participants (pseudonyms - Kate and Kim) was in grade ten and observed in a shared math class, the subject area of most difficulty for Kim, the student identified as having a learning disability. They were also observed in a shared career and personal planning class (CAPP), the subject area in which Kim was judged to be most successful. The second pair of student participants (pseudonyms - Jess and Meg) was in grade nine. They were observed in a shared math class, the subject area of most difficulty for Meg, the student identified as having a learning disability, and an English class, the subject area in which Meg showed greatest strength.

The students identified as having learning disabilities met learning disability criteria as defined by the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Education: “Significant weaknesses in
one or more cognitive processes (e.g., perception, memory, attention, receptive or expressive
language abilities, visual-spatial abilities) relative to overall intellectual functioning, as
measured by norm-referenced assessment instruments, which directly impact performance”
(Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, British
Columbia Ministry of Education, 2002, Special consideration for individual planning,
students with learning disabilities, para. 9).

Higher achieving students were selected for each of the matched pairs with the
associated potential to offer contrasting perceptions confirming theory (Yin, 2003). This was
also intended to address findings that teachers respond differentially to high and low
achieving students, potentially differentially affecting student help-seeking behavior (Badad,
1992; Brophy, 1985; Cooper et al., 1980; Newman, 2000).

Instruments and Procedures

Data concerning each participant’s help-seeking actions, perspectives about help-
seeking, and the classroom context was collected from four sources: (1) initial individual
student interviews, (2) classroom observations, (3) researcher/student electronic interviews,
(4) final individual student interviews, and (5) a journal maintained by the researcher.

Initial Student Interviews

Following selection of the four student participants, and before classroom
observations began, I conducted a semi-structured initial interview (see Appendix D) with
each student. The purpose of this interview was threefold: to (a) explain to students their
involvement in the study, (b) build rapport, and (c) gather information about any classroom
help-seeking experiences that were salient to them, both from their present experiences and
past histories. During these interviews, students were asked questions to discern their general
and specific experiences and attitudes concerning their help-seeking in classrooms as well as their awareness of adaptive help-seeking strategies. Over the course of these interviews, the students supplied information about their personal achievement goals, their perceptions of effective helpers, perceived risks related to help-seeking, the role of their relationships with teachers in their help-seeking, and their help-seeking in different subject areas and with different teachers. Although these interviews were not formally coded, the information gleaned about the students' perspectives and experiences, with regard to help-seeking, assisted in interpreting their help-seeking interactions and responses to questions posed after observations. Many of the students' interview responses are included and referred in the results section when I describe student observations and perceptions.

These initial interviews were conducted in private meeting rooms. I took notes during these interviews and one student agreed to have her interview audio-taped. I probed responses to these interview questions, checking with students to ensure that I understood their thoughts and feelings.

**Classroom Observations**

**Classroom Observation Protocol**

Observations in the four selected classrooms were recorded using a running record observation instrument (see Appendix E, Section A) adapted from Perry (1998). This observation protocol has four sections. The first section provides space to record (a) whose classroom is being observed and at what grade level, (b) which pair of students is being observed, (c) the date of the observation, and (d) the nature and duration of the activities in which the teacher and students were engaged during that observation. The second section provides space to keep a running record of "what is going on", including teachers' and
students’ speech and actions. The third section (Appendix E, Section B) lists conceptual categories that characterize features of (a) classroom tasks and goal structures (e.g., meaningfulness and variety in task goals, processes, and outcomes, student choice in completing tasks, emphasis on learning and progress), (b) the social/interpersonal classroom environment (e.g., student perceptions about teachers’ accommodation of students’ social and emotional needs, opportunities for student collaboration and support of one another, student perceptions of teacher friendliness, caring, and enthusiasm), and (c) instructional interactions related to help-seeking (e.g., scaffolding, encouragement of strategy use, opportunities to demonstrate understanding). The fourth section includes a summary table for coding classroom observations (Appendix E, Section C) for the five observation periods in each classroom. These five observations were believed to provide sufficient data to represent patterns of contextual influences in the four classrooms, such that further observations would have become redundant in providing insight about these influences on student help-seeking actions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Drawing on the list of conceptual categories, each cell in the summary table corresponds to a conceptual category and is used to record evidence of support for help-seeking in the running records. The symbol + in a cell indicates evidence of that kind of support for student help-seeking observed during that observational period. Empty cells indicate that kind of support for student help-seeking was not observed during that observational period. A likert scale (Appendix E, Section D) was used to establish an overall judgment about the consistency of help-seeking influences in each classroom across the five observations.
Classroom Observation Procedure

In the first school I approached, a small number of female students were identified as having learning disabilities and only two matched pairs of students were identified for my study. One pair of students was successfully recruited in this school. I then approached a second school to recruit a second pair of students. Again very few female students were identified as having a learning disability and only one pair of matched students were identified as possible participants. This pair of students agreed to participate, thus fulfilling the requisite number of students to meet the criteria for this study.

Observations in the first school took place between December 12, 2005 and January 23, 2006. Observations in the second school took place between March 31, 2006 and April 23, 2006. I observed each pair of participants in each of the two subject area classrooms five times. During each classroom visit in each school, I observed an entire lesson. The timeline for lessons varied between schools, with lessons in the first school consisting of one hour and ten minutes while the duration of lessons in the second school was one hour and twenty minutes. I observed activities in which students’ help seeking occurred and student/teacher help-seeking interactions, including help sought spontaneously, help offered but not requested, and invitations/prompts to seek help if needed. I documented teacher discourse, not only with individual students, but also the whole class and small groups as much as possible. This was intended to assist in judging how representative teacher interactions with selected students were of all their interactions in the classroom. Special attention was paid to teacher speech and actions believed to support student help-seeking, as well as opportunities to increase teacher support for help-seeking. Attention was also given to the extent to which the student participants were treated differently from one another.
During each observation, I tried to sit close enough to teachers to hear what they said, but without being intrusive. For example, I kept a respectful distance by positioning myself so that I wouldn’t interfere with student-teacher interactions and students’ ability to focus on the teacher during instructional periods. As much as possible, I recorded verbatim speech when teachers spoke to the class or to the student participants about help-seeking. Immediately after each observation, I read and annotated my running records, adding details regarding events, actions or speech I did not have time to record during the observations and filling gaps in teacher speech with paraphrases of what they said. Also, at this time, I recorded teachers’ comments about themselves, their students, or some aspect of the activity that were sometimes communicated to me during, before, or following an observation period.

Once the running records were determined to be as detailed and accurate as my memory allowed, I reread them several times, noting instances of support for help-seeking and help-seeking activity. I completed a comprehensive coding of the categories for the classrooms (on the respective summary tables) once all of the observations for each class were completed.

Student Observation Protocol

The data for the student observations is drawn from the same running records as the classroom observations (Appendix E, Section A) and collected over the same five observational periods in each classroom. A second list of conceptual categories (Appendix F, Section A) was developed for observing students’ help-seeking speech and actions, including (a) adaptiveness of student’s help-seeking goals (e.g. desire for increased independence and understanding), (b) who they sought for help (e.g., whether the helper chosen was an appropriate candidate to promote increased understanding), and (c) how effective they were
at requesting help (e.g., whether they elicited the kind of help needed to increase understanding, asked in socially appropriate ways). I used this list to identify instances of each student participant’s help-seeking actions or speech in the running record.

I used a summary table (see Appendix F, Section B) to code observations of each student participant’s help-seeking behavior in each classroom across five observations. This resulted in eight summary tables. In each summary table, each cell corresponds to a conceptual category and is used to record evidence of students’ adaptive help-seeking described in the running records during an observational period. Each category was assigned a number to indicate either that the majority of instances of help-seeking were adaptive (1) or that some but not most instances of help-seeking were adaptive (0). Blank cells indicate that no adaptive help-seeking was observed. I used a likert scale (Appendix F, Section C) to help form overall judgments about the consistency and evidence of adaptive help-seeking for each student in each classroom across observations.

**Student Observation Procedure**

In recording observations of students’ speech and actions related to help-seeking, attention was focused on the “adaptiveness” of help-seeking requests. For example, the following question, as proposed by Newman (1998b) was examined: “Did students ask for process related information, to confirm understanding at a point along the way, or did they ask for final answers without explanation?” The conceptual lists developed to guide recording of details about the classroom contexts and about the students’ help-seeking were refined and expanded throughout classroom observations. For example, when the conceptual lists did not clearly explain observations, the pertinent literature was re-examined to gain further understanding and assistance in categorizing these observations.
During each observation, I tried to sit close enough to the student participants to hear what they said, again without being intrusive. I attempted to record verbatim speech associated with their help-seeking interactions. Again, directly after each observation, I read and annotated my running records, adding details about events, actions or speech associated with the student participants’ help-seeking interactions and filling in gaps in student speech with paraphrases of what they said.

Once the running records were determined to be as detailed and accurate as my memory allowed, I reread them several times, noting instances of students’ help-seeking activity. I completed a comprehensive coding of the categories for the students (on the respective summary tables) once all of the observations for each class were completed.

Termination of this observational phase was reached at a point of diminishing returns, or saturation, when I believed enough data had been collected to represent patterns of teacher actions and discourse and student actions and perspectives in the respective classrooms (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For example, in coding both the classroom and student observations, representative patterns seemed to be evident by the fourth observation period.

Electronic Interview

Electronic interview instruments

After each observation, student participants responded to several questions about their help-seeking behavior during that lesson (see Appendix G, Section A). These questions were provided electronically via e-mail or a Web Questionnaire (Hadwin, Winne, Murphy, Walker, & Rather, 2005). Student responses were used to triangulate my observations with their perceptions. For the electronic communications, students were given the choice of responding to the same set of questions either by e-mail or a Web Questionnaire (Hadwin et
al., 2005). When the e-mail format was used, the questions and student responses were transmitted via an e-mail attachment. When the Web Questionnaire was used, students entered the website (previously previewed with them), using their user name and assigned password. Students provided their responses to the questions in a frame following each question. In order to view their responses, I entered the website using my user name and password. A list of conceptual categories (Appendix G, Section B) was used to code students' responses to the questions about their help-seeking behavior across the five observations in each classroom. These categories specifically addressed students' perceptions about support for help-seeking with regard to (a) how help was given, (b) teachers' willingness to help, (c) effectiveness of the help received, (d) expectations of students, (e) the student's relationship with the teacher, and (f) characteristics of the teacher. These categories were drawn from the list of categories in Section B (Table 2A and 3A) of the classroom observation instrument (Appendix E). The emphasis in coding students' perspectives was on understanding students' interpretations and feelings about support for help-seeking in the observed classrooms.

Student participants' perceptions of support for help-seeking were coded for each observation in each classroom. The coding procedures were similar to those used to code the classroom observations. Drawing on the list of categories (Appendix G, Section B), I identified each student's response to the e-mail or Web Questionnaire (Hadwin et al., 2005) questions that represented one of the defined categories. I produced a summary table (Appendix G, Section C) for each student's responses in each classroom across five observations, resulting in eight summary tables. In each summary table, each cell of data corresponds to a conceptual category. Each category was assigned a number to indicate that
student’s perceptions of support for help-seeking (1), that student’s perceptions of no support for help-seeking (0), or that student’s indications that she did not ask for help (NA) during an observational period. When a student provided no response to a question, no coding was provided in that cell of the table. I used a likert scale (Appendix G, Section D) to assist in making an overall judgment about the consistency of each student’s perceptions about teacher help-seeking support in each of the classrooms across the five observation periods. These summaries were used to identify patterns and themes in each student’s responses concerning each classroom. In addition the summaries were helpful in exploring differences between students sharing the same classrooms.

**Electronic Interview Procedures**

The set of questions (Appendix G, Section A) provided to the students electronically, following classroom observation periods, were presented to the first pair of student participants using the Web Questionnaire (Hadwin et al., 2005). Some technical difficulties with this format may have discouraged responses from the student with a learning disability in this pair. Therefore, the student with a learning disability in the second pair was asked whether she preferred to communicate her responses using e-mail, the Web Questionnaire (Hadwin et al., 2005), or telephone interviews. Because she chose e-mail, I elected to use this format to solicit both students’ responses in this pair, after I gained agreement from the second student in this pair. These questions were available to the students on the day of each observation, except on two occasions when Web Questionnaire (Hadwin et al., 2005) server problems delayed the students’ ability to respond immediately.
After all student responses were coded, they were re-examined for consistency and to determine potential emerging categories that might not have conformed to the existing categories.

**Final Student Interviews**

After completing observations of each pair of students, I conducted final unstructured individual interviews. I asked the students their preferred medium for these interviews, and all participants requested telephone interviews. My questions for these interviews were tailored individually for each student and were driven by observations of that particular student, her responses in the electronic interviews, and questions that developed over the course of the data collection period about her responses in the initial interview. A sample of one final interview with one student (Appendix H) is provided. However, students were asked varying questions, for example, I asked Jess, “When I observed in math and English class, you seldom asked for help. Can you explain”, but I asked Kim, “You mentioned that sometimes you are still not able to understand after getting help in math class. Explain what else needs to happen for you to get the help you need.” I asked both Kim and Kate, “What does the teacher need to do to improve the chances you won’t get lost?”, and “You mentioned that you prefer/have success in asking your partner for help with math. Explain.” I also asked all of the students, “What advice would you give to a student new to high school about asking for help?” These final interviews enhanced my understanding about students’ help-seeking actions and perceptions. For example, it was possible to clarify their responses to the questions presented to them electronically after observations as well as to gain information about observed help-seeking interactions that they had not specifically referred to in their electronic responses. Similar to the initial interviews, I did not formally code the
final interviews but referred to relevant information the students provided to support
discussions about student observations and perceptions.

I took notes during these interviews, and similar to the initial interview, I probed and
questioned student responses, checking with them to ensure I understood their views.

**Researcher Journal**

The fourth method used to strengthen the data's credibility included maintaining an
ongoing journal, which included reflections and anecdotes about classroom observations as
well as other incidental observations. In addition I documented my communication with the
student and teacher participants as well as others peripherally involved in my study, such as
the resource teachers and the students' parents. This record enhanced my overall
understanding about classroom and student observations and was particularly helpful in
identifying themes in student help-seeking perceptions and actions.

**Reliability**

Triangulation of data sources, including interviews and observations, as well as
member checks, were used to assess convergence among all data sources. Member checks
were sought from two teachers to assess the accuracy of my description of classroom events
and activities. The two math teachers were selected because they enrolled the two student
participants with learning disabilities who had most difficulty in math. To complete the
member checks, these teachers were provided with my descriptions of their classrooms. Once
they had read these descriptions, they were asked to indicate whether or not they agreed with
them. They were asked identify inaccuracies in my descriptions and to offer their version of
events. I met each of these teachers individually in private meeting rooms in their respective
schools. These face-to-face meetings were audio taped, with their permission (see Appendix
I). Both teachers indicated that my descriptions of "what was going on" in their classrooms were accurate and neither suggested alterations.

Member checks were also sought with the four student participants during the initial and final interviews. When the students responded to each interview question, I checked with them to ensure that I understood their thoughts and feelings.

Finally, I continued the data gathering process from all sources until I believed that enough data had been collected to represent patterns and themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter describes the help-seeking behavior of the two female high-school students with learning disabilities who were paired with the two female high-school students without learning disabilities within the context of two secondary school classrooms. First I discuss Tom’s and Jane’s classrooms, in which Kate and Kim were enrolled. I then present Jenny’s and Liz’s classrooms, in which Jess and Meg were enrolled.

The descriptions and discussion that follow, regarding the influence of classroom contextual features, are aimed at addressing two of this study’s research questions: (a) How do features of classroom learning environments facilitate student help-seeking? (b) Do teachers’ invitations and/or responses to help-seeking differ for students with and without learning disabilities who are average or above average achieving? If so, how do they differ?

Following discussion about each pair of classrooms, the third research question, relating to observations of the paired students’ help-seeking and their perceptions about their help-seeking in their respective classrooms, is addressed: (c) How do these students interpret features of the classroom learning environment and how do these interpretations influence their decisions to seek help? Within the discussions addressing the last research question, the help-seeking of the paired students in shared classrooms is compared. Finally, the help-seeking of the two students with learning disabilities (Kim and Meg) is discussed within the context of all four classrooms.

Each individual case study is analyzed in context in an attempt to understand each situation on its own terms. I drew from theoretical concepts to explain the case studies. I also carefully examined the data, hoping to provide a more nuanced understanding of existing
theoretical concepts related to help-seeking or to seek new lines of inquiry, which might not have been sufficiently explained by existing theories (Palys, 1997).

Classroom Observations of Teacher Support for Student Help-Seeking

**Tom’s Classroom**

Tom taught a grade ten math class in which Kate, a high achieving student, and Kim, a student with learning disabilities were enrolled. Table 1 summarizes features of Tom’s classroom learning environment that are consistent with those believed to support adaptive help-seeking.

Table 1: Teacher observations in Tom’s math classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tasks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student participation</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation/recognition</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouping</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to seek help</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/teacher relationship</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer relationships</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher characteristics</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How help is given</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to help</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student expectations</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tasks - Content, Activities, and Instructional Discourse

Classroom mastery goals supportive of adaptive help-seeking include tasks that are designed with variety and diversity in the learning goals, in the processes in which students engage in achieving goals and in the means by which students demonstrate their learning. Student learning needs are accommodated through appropriate levels of challenge, instructional support, and opportunities to meet incremental goals as well as through encouragement of intrinsic motivation and active involvement in their learning (Midgley et al., 2001; Newman, 1998b; Ryan et al., 1998; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997).

Consistent with research that indicates classroom math instruction tends to focus on building the content knowledge base, rather than using the knowledge base in varying and novel ways (Schoenfeld, 2004), Tom did not vary task learning goals or offer students choices in the outcomes. However his instructional practices incorporated many features that are believed to support help-seeking.

Tom provided accommodation for individual student needs and offered students choice in how they completed the task goals. For example, although all students were generally expected to meet the same assignment deadlines, Tom assured them, “... if you’re having trouble, tell me, I will help you and give you extra time to finish”. He also paired skilled math students with less skilled students as seatmates, providing ongoing opportunities for students to seek help. Students could choose to seek help from students other than their seatmates and from Tom as well, which they did.

Tom conveyed messages about the developmental nature of learning when he offered opportunities for students to retake tests to improve their marks and when he indicated his willingness to adjust assignment completion deadlines. Tom demonstrated the importance of
applying effort and employing different strategies in learning when he encouraged the
students to try different strategies when faced with challenging problems during one lesson.
He urged the students to keep trying and suggested a strategy to solve the problems that were
difficult for them, “Leave it for a while, then try some more. It may become clear when you
come back after you have solved others. Try your own strategies.” Tom also suggested study
strategies to help the students prepare for the upcoming provincial math exam. Furthermore,
he emphasized the value of having study strategies, in the long term, to complete high school
and for further study in the future.

Tom’s instructional routine included practice using procedures and formulas with
several sample questions and students were permitted to volunteer answers and explain
procedures, demonstrating their thinking. When Tom presented sample questions, he
sometimes provided the answers to these questions as well. He then described the steps in
finding the answers while he recorded them on PowerPoint slides projected on a screen in
front of the class. When students volunteered their answers to questions, Tom asked them to
describe the steps to solve the problems while he wrote the steps on PowerPoint slides. Tom
demonstrated his willingness to consider students’ ideas and strategies. For example, during a
lesson, one student suggested an alternative problem solving strategy. Tom responded, “Try
it. Does it work?” The students debated with one another about alternate ways to solve the
problem. Tom listened to their discussion and once they had figured it out among themselves,
reminded them, “You have to watch out - short cuts might not work - but there are different
ways of doing these.”

During instruction, Tom continually checked for student understanding, again seeking
student engagement, when he asked, “Does this make sense?” “How many understand?”
“How many follow so far? How many are lost?” Tom provided additional explanation when students requested it, continually checking for understanding, and for those students who continued to indicate they did not understand, he promised, “I will come around to each of you when I finish the lesson to be sure you get it” or “I see some may need individual help with … I will come around to help you.”

Tom attempted to attach relevance to a lesson in response to one student’s voiced frustration about the long-term value of learning sine and cosine laws. Tom explained, “The best answer I can give you is that it helps stretch your mind, helps to improve your ability to learn. I know I have only needed it to teach it. Many people who take science degrees at university will use it.” Brophy (2004, p. 263) comments, apropos of Tom’s explanation, “many … activities are so far removed from everyday life that they have application potential only for specialists in the disciplines.” Tom’s response indicates that he perhaps recognized the lack of meaning in the task for many students.

Perhaps additional mastery conditions could have been incorporated into Tom’s classroom tasks. Students generally participated voluntarily during Tom’s lessons, typically to supply answers to practice questions. Most students who participated did so because they understood. Few entered the discussion because they did not understand. Perhaps by calling on a greater variety of students, Tom may have had further opportunities, by questioning and probing, to gauge individual progress, determine misunderstandings and adjust his instruction to further accommodate individual needs. Such effective teacher questioning may, in turn, promote better student questioning of themselves and others in a way that supports self-monitoring and better remediation of misunderstandings (Brown & Campione, 1994).
Typical of math instructional practices, Tom introduced new concepts and terminology and provided some review when a new topic was introduced. Perhaps, in order to better accommodate individual student needs and to increase mastery, students may have benefited from a more extensive introductory review for each lesson. Students might then have had more occasions to ask for help, thereby increasing their chances of mastering the content of the subsequent lesson. Although there may be student risk concerns related to public help-seeking (Eccles & Midgley, 1989), perhaps by routinely incorporating review, again with teacher modeling question asking and making “not knowing” commonplace, student help-seeking might be encouraged.

**Students Active Participation in Learning**

Consistent with research that indicates student help-seeking is fostered when students take an active role in the learning process (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Ryan & Pintrich, 1998), Tom gave students opportunities for choice and control over their work, as indicated in discussing *Tasks*.

Tom welcomed student participation during academic instruction. He also allowed students choices in the process of completing their assignments. For example, they decided whom they would ask for help and the amount of help they would get. Tom gave students freedom within the classroom (e.g., talking to classmates, eating snacks, moving about the classroom to borrow materials).

Tom encouraged students to be metacognitive, asking them to take responsibility to evaluate their own learning when he encouraged them to try their own strategies and discussed the importance of study skills for future learning. As well, he asked students to check their own work before handing it in to him. “If you finish your homework, check back
over it, then be sure to mark it before you hand it in ... you need to do that so you can figure out what you don’t understand or what you’re making mistakes on.” Further, he recommended a strategy for students to assess their own understanding when studying for provincial exams, “Use a red pen to mark your work to help see what you did right or wrong and to help decide what you need to study for the provincial exam”.

As mentioned, traditional high school math tasks often tend to be limiting with regard to offering students choice and control over their learning. For example, all students in Tom’s math class were required to complete the same assignments with the same expected outcome. Perhaps by incorporating novel tasks or projects that involved the demonstration of various math problem solving skills and that allowed for varying processes and outcomes, Tom might have provided students with opportunities for more choice and control over their learning.

**Recognition and Evaluation Practices**

The standards, criteria and methods that teachers use to recognize and evaluate students have implications for their help-seeking (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Ryan & Pintrich, 1998). Consistent with a mastery-focused environment, there was evidence that Tom emphasized learning, effort, personal responsibility and progress, as I have mentioned in discussing features of tasks and student participation in his classroom.

Tom did not publicly present grades or compare students’ performance with one another when I observed in his classroom. However, comparison was implicit in Tom’s requests for students to raise their hands to indicate when they knew an answer and when he suggested, during one lesson, that the first student to answer a question would be the first to be dismissed. Tom used a grading system typical in high schools, where comparison is built
into the grading system when all students are graded according to the same criteria (Wigfield et al., 1996). Student grades were assigned based on individual homework completion, classroom quiz and test marks and provincial exam marks, with an emphasis on tests and exams.

Research has demonstrated that when teachers acknowledge challenges, uses errors diagnostically, and encourage students to seek understanding with the help of others, students may be more willing to take academic risks because they see that the teacher has established classroom norms that value effort and admissions of misunderstanding (Meyer & Turner, 2002; Turner et al., 2002). Tom acknowledged challenges and encouraged students to ask others for help, and on two occasions when I observed in his classroom, he used students’ misunderstanding in a diagnostic manner. For example, during whole class instruction, when a student expressed his confusion about the process of solving a problem, Tom responded, “You will see ... let’s start on this.” The student described his thinking about the problem (not correct). Tom diagnosed the problem, and began to work through the question with the student. Several students became involved in this process and offered their solutions. Once it was solved, Tom provided a similar question for the students to solve. At another time, after commenting that he had noticed some people were having difficulty, Tom asked for the class’s attention, “Okay I’m going to explain this ... everybody listen up.” He presented several examples, demonstrating procedures to solve the problem while several students queried him throughout.

It was evident that some students were willing to show when they didn’t understand. For example, on more than one occasion, Tom asked, “How many students are lost?” Some students raised their hands. I observed individual students demonstrating their confusion
during whole class instruction as well. However, in order for all students to risk not knowing, Tom would need to use every opportunity, both through modeling and supportive discourse, to instill in the students the belief that making and correcting mistakes are valuable for learning. Given students' increasing concerns about the risks of seeking help as they reach the high school years (Newman, 1990; Newman & Schwager, 1993; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997) particularly during whole class activities (Eccles & Midgley, 1989), compounded by high school students' typical beliefs that math performance is affected more by innate ability than by effort (Stodolsky et al, 1991), these additional measures may be critical to convince every student to voice a lack of understanding in front of the class.

Although Tom consistently and patiently helped students, at times, he made evaluative comments about the difficulty level of the subject content. For example, "[There's] no reason why you shouldn't be able to finish [in class]", "We are all starting arithmetic sequences. They are pretty easy" or "[The test will be] fairly easy if you have been following the notes and doing the questions." Tom's support for student learning was very evident, and it is likely that these evaluative comments were intended to reduce student anxiety, in view of the fact that, at other times, such evaluative comments were used to increase student focus. For example, he introduced one lesson, saying, "I'm going to need you to focus really hard today – some of this unit is difficult."

Teacher feedback that supports continued effort, such as help-seeking, includes offering personally encouraging comments that focus on strengths and weaknesses (Maehr & Anderman, 1993). Tom recognized students with occasional praise when they supplied answers or participated during lessons, responding with, "Good", "Thank you," or "Good work". He also offered encouraging comments while helping students. However, I was not
able to determine what individual feedback Tom offered students about assignments, tests, or exams.

**Grouping**

Consistent with findings that collaborative student grouping supports student help-seeking (Nelson-Le Gall & Glor-Scheib, 1985; Ryan & Pintrich, 1998), Tom took measures to foster student help-seeking by assigning seatmates. Although students were assigned individual tasks, they were encouraged to seek help from their seatmates and permitted to seek help from others as well. However, students were individually accountable and goals and rewards were not co-dependent. Ryan and Pintrich (1998) determined that when groups were structured so that students’ goals and rewards were interdependent and responsibility for learning was shared, student help-seeking was supported. Perhaps, typical of high school math classrooms, student help-seeking was not supported in this way in Tom’s classroom (Schoenfeld, 2004).

**Time to Ask for Help**

Consistent with Ryan and Pintrich’s (1998) findings that providing students with time to ask for help allows them to do just that, which in turn, fosters understanding and mastery, Tom encouraged help-seeking at any time, both during lessons or while students worked on tasks following the lesson. Although Tom moved through lessons at a rapid pace, he often asked students, “Am I going too fast? Too slow?” Tom usually allotted a generous 30 - 45 minutes for students to work on homework in class. During this time he continually circulated throughout the classroom, willingly and patiently taking the time to help students. During this time students sought one another’s help as well.
Student-Teacher Relationships

Students’ perceptions about teacher support, for example how teachers promote positive student-teacher relations influences student help-seeking and is represented by teacher discourse and actions that demonstrate concern not only about students’ academic needs, but also about their social and emotional well being (Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002; Nelson-Le Gall & Gumerman, 1984; Patrick et al., 2001; Ryan et al., 1998; Stipek et al., 1998; Turner et al., 2002, Wentzel, 1997). Furthermore, student perceptions of mutual liking and friendship with the teacher have been found to be consistently predictive of student help-seeking (Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002; Newman & Schwager, 1993).

Efforts to relate positively with students were evident in Tom’s encouragement of student participation, his availability and patience in giving help, and his concern about and emphasis on learning and effort. Additionally, Tom tried to make connections with the students, usually within the context of the academics tasks, for example, relating a lesson to the students’ personal interests. When introducing a lesson about interest charged when borrowing money, he mentioned products the students might want to buy. Later in the lesson he referred to celebrities well known to students.

Tom demonstrated caring about students’ feelings through avoiding public comparisons and when he empathized with a student who was having difficulty with a math question, commenting, “I know this is hard.” He was dependable in following through on his promises about giving marks back and giving students help.

Although there was generally a serious tone in Tom’s classroom, when a student corrected him as he demonstrated steps to solve a problem, Tom seemed to joke, “I like how you guys check up on me. I like to think that I get them all right, but I’m not perfect.” Later
during that lesson, he reminded students, “Make sure you double check your work just like you double check mine!” Moreover, as Tom began one lesson, he half-jokingly commented that the students should remember a concept that had been taught a previous year. A student responded, “I know but I’ve forgotten it!”

Research indicates that avoidance of help-seeking, particularly among students with poor self-perceptions and low efficacy was ameliorated in classrooms in which teachers showed concern about students’ social and emotional well being in addition to their academic needs (Ryan et al., 1998). It was evident that Tom focused his support on students’ academic needs, and recognizing this, many students asked him for help. Tom also showed recognition of and general support for students’ social or emotional needs, as described.

Friedel et al., (2002) suggest that students need to feel the teacher takes care not to embarrass them in order to establish a sense of trust and acceptance. Though clearly unintentional, Tom’s evaluative comments about the easiness of subject content may have caused embarrassment for some students. For students who have negative views about their self-worth or cognitive competence, academic self-efficacy or who have social status concerns, avoidance of seeking teacher help is a potential consequence (Newman, 1990, Newman & Goldin, 1990; Ryan et al., 1997; 1998; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997.

Research increasingly highlights the importance of the social environment as a feature of the classroom goal structure and indeed, social relationships appear to be critical to understanding why students avoid help-seeking (Newman, 2000; Newman & Schwager, 1993; Patrick et al., 2001; Ryan et al., 1998, 2001, 2005; Stipek et al., 1998; Turner et al., 2002).
Perhaps by adding more personal focus to his largely supportive learning environment, Tom might further enhance students' willingness to seek help, particularly students at risk for help-avoidance.

**Student Relationships**

Teachers' promotion of positive peer relations, for example through frequent opportunities for positive social and cooperative interactions, including discussions, exchanges, and seeking and giving help, facilitates student help-seeking (Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Ryan & Pintrich, 1998).

Tom promoted positive student relations when he permitted students to talk among themselves and help one another while on tasks, both during teacher led instruction and while completing seatwork assignments. Tom assigned student seatmates at the beginning of the term, but I observed helping exchanges among other students as well. This decision to pair the students conveyed Tom’s expectation that students should support one another.

Tom encouraged student participation in lessons and he supported students' sharing their thinking and understanding with one another during discussion. He focused on tasks and learning and did not seem to promote a competitive environment. I observed students in Tom’s class demonstrate cooperative and respectful behavior with one another, both during discussion and while assisting one another.

**Teacher Characteristics**

Students are more likely to seek help when they perceive teachers are caring, friendly, patient, dependable, interested in them and eager for them to learn (Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002; Newman & Schwager, 1993; Ryan et al., 1998; Wentzel, 1997).
Tom showed particular dedication to teaching the students the subject material and helping them prepare for upcoming tests and particularly the upcoming provincial exam by getting test marks back to students promptly, in offering extra tutorial sessions, and in providing help that he had promised. His lessons were very task-focused, and when he completed daily instruction, he spent the remaining time circulating throughout the classroom responding to students’ requests for help. Tom showed understanding when he acknowledged the difficulty level of questions as one student showed frustration with some homework. Tom was patient when giving help, re-explaining until students seemed satisfied that they understood. As discussed in describing student teacher relations, perhaps Tom may have further enhanced student help-seeking in his classroom by making more personal connections with individual students.

How Help is Given

Instruction adapted to students’ individual needs and focused on understanding and progress is associated with students’ willingness to seek help and is demonstrated in several ways (Ames, 1992). An appropriate level of instructional support is provided (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1992), for example, through scaffolding, when teachers support students’ understanding as they help students build higher-level competencies (Hogan & Pressley, 1997).

Tom demonstrated scaffolding when he guided students through solving a problem, then provided a new problem to ensure understanding. As well, he was consistently patient in offering explanation to help build student understanding. However, Tom did not generally negotiate understanding or ensure that students used the help to monitor their understanding. He typically provided explanations, then he asked if students understood. For example, in
responding to one student’s request for help, Tom explained the procedure to solve a problem until the student declared, “Oh, okay, now I see.” The student was not asked to demonstrate this understanding by correcting a mistake or solving a similar problem.

Turner and Meyer (2004), in their review of the literature on teaching math, concluded that teaching for understanding by requiring student accountability in demonstrating understanding consistently promoted student motivation, and by association, might be expected to promote help-seeking. Although math tests build in accountability in the long term, they do not address students’ immediate and incremental needs for understanding and completing tasks. Tom may further increase student help-seeking in his classroom by consistently building accountability into his instructional practices, for example through consistently scaffolding.

Willingness to Help

Teacher willingness to offer help, characterized by dependability and responsiveness, positive, non-evaluative, and non-critical help, and explicit encouragement of question asking predicts adaptive help-seeking and was consistently evident in Tom’s classroom when I observed (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002; Newman & Goldin, 1990; Newman & Schwager, 1993; Van der Meij, 1988). Tom was available to give help at any time during class instruction and encouraged students to let them know when they needed help.

Following instructional periods, Tom continually circulated throughout the class, responding to students’ requests for help and checking on student progress. While providing help, Tom did not make evaluative comments about the students or explicitly compare students with one another.
Tom reminded students that he was available to give help during flex blocks (daily 30 minute block when students could go to any class for help) and before or after school. Additionally, Tom offered before and after-school tutorials to help students prepare for the provincial exam.

**Effectiveness of Help**

When teachers demonstrate understanding of students' need for help and provide assistance in a manner that increases student understanding, student help-seeking is encouraged (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002). Furthermore, students' perceptions about the effectiveness of the help provided and the helper's understanding of their learning needs, influences students' willingness to seek his help (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981). While Tom patiently persisted in giving help until students either indicated they understood or took the initiative to show that they understood, because they were not often asked to demonstrate their understanding it was often not evident whether the help provided increased student understanding or independence.

**Expectations of Students**

When teachers show confidence in students' ability to learn, care that students learn, promote understanding in the face of difficulty, and expect accountability, such as Tom did in his classroom, student help-seeking is supported (Ames, 1992). While acknowledging the difficulty of some subject content, Tom persisted in helping students, suggesting strategies and expecting them to keep trying. By assigning seatmates, Tom encouraged students to use one another as resources. He also welcomed student participation during class instruction. Furthermore, he expected accountability through his grading methods and trusted that students would assume responsibility for ensuring their own understanding.
Research has shown that teachers may vary in their responses to different students, with differential influences on student help-seeking (Cooper et al., 1980; Eccles & Wigfield, 1985). For example, teachers may be more positive toward or imply higher expectations of some students, which encourages student help-seeking. I did not observe any differential treatment with regard to Tom’s expectations of the students in his classroom.

**Jane’s Classroom**

Jane taught a grade 10 CAPP class, in which the two student participants described in Tom’s class, Kate and Kim, were enrolled. Table 2 summarizes evidence for the kinds of support for student help-seeking provided in Jane’s classroom.
Table 2: Teacher observations in Jane’s planning classroom

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<th>Observations</th>
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<td>Student expectations</td>
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Tasks - Content, Activities, and Instructional Discourse

During my first observation in Jane’s class, students were introduced to a Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) Project. It was clear at the outset that active student involvement was expected. Students were given many choices as they were asked to research and prepare group presentations about their selected charities. Jane described what the students would need to do to be successful with the project, “... learn about different charities - research and select one ... you will have help developing the skill set you need.”
Jane offered students the opportunity to challenge themselves by researching more than one charity.

Jane expected the students to work collaboratively in self-selected groups, again offering choices, "... two restrictions on [the] group you will be working in – [I'm] not going to designate the groups – four people in a group, [and they] must have gender balance.” Students were given the same general learning goals and deadlines with choices in meeting these goals as they proceeded through multiple tasks to successfully prepare their group presentations.

The form and the content of final products would vary, as each group was required to present a different charity. Jane provided students with an evaluation rubric describing the criteria that she would use to grade their presentations: clarity, persuasiveness, thinking and inquiry. She encouraged them to keep this rubric handy to regularly evaluate their own progress as they prepared their presentations.

Jane employed measures to engage students’ interest during lessons, when she introduced new topics by posing evocative questions. For example, she provided the students with a handout to assist in determining the legitimacy of charities, and asked “What should you be asking if someone solicits for charity when they come to your door? Do charities have the right to call you?” While drawing a pie chart, to demonstrate the breakdown of expenditures from charitable donations, Jane asked “What might be a fair amount for administrative and fund raising costs?” She often posed questions, throughout lessons, encouraging student contributions and discussion.

As well, as students worked on assignments, Jane engaged them by asking them to report their findings to the class. She allowed time for other students to offer their opinions or
findings. Jane questioned and elaborated on student responses and discussion to scaffold instruction (Nelson-Le Gall & Resnick, 1998), continually gauging student understanding. This ongoing exchange of ideas led to learning opportunities. For example, after several students had offered their answers to a question Jane posed (what type of response would you expect to get from a list of possible interview questions – yes/no, list of facts, in depth answer) one student commented, “Okay, I’m going to change my opinion about that.”

Jane’s instructional practices highlighted her emphasis on building student understanding, while accommodating individual needs. She provided daily assignments and activities intended to assist students in assessing and building their skills and knowledge for successful completion of the long-term project. For example, Jane asked the students to evaluate themselves with questions such as, “Do you have this skill? How do you know? Then [you need to do some] self-reflection. How did you get it? Do you still need to acquire it?” Jane allotted generous amounts of time in class for students to work on assignments and prepare their presentations, again accommodating individual student needs through offering time for them to seek necessary help.

The YPI project included learning goals with real life application for students. While introducing the project, Jane posed the question, “What does this have to do with Planning 10?” Jane described various skills students would need or develop while completing the project. Then she explained, “Employers look for these skills ... these are part of the skills you need to build for employment.” Jane drew the students’ attention to the long-term value of participating in the YPI project. Furthermore, Jane talked about the value of the project in providing opportunities for students to become involved in charitable organizations and the
importance of presenting the chosen charity well, with the potential for this charity to receive funding.

**Student Active Participation in Learning**

Jane designed tasks that offered students choice and control over their work, encouraging them to take an active role in their learning. She invited student participation during academic instruction, encouraging student initiated discussion and debate. For example, as groups of students presented oral summaries of an in-class reading assignment, several students voluntarily entered a discussion about the use of statistics to describe poverty rates in Canada. Jane questioned and probed, as the discussion evolved into students’ demonstrations and evaluations of their own or peer’s thinking and understanding about the issues. Although Jane did not appear to have a system to ensure equitable student participation, periods of time were given for student contributions and discussion during instruction and several students actively participated during every class.

Jane’s classroom was very informal and students seemed to come and go voluntarily, often without requiring teacher permission. Within the classroom, students were also free to talk to classmates, eat snacks, and move about to borrow materials.

**Recognition and Evaluation Practices**

Jane emphasized the developmental nature of learning. For example, she routinely checked assignments as they were submitted, sometimes suggesting improvements or asking students to recheck assignment criteria. As well, students had many opportunities and much support to develop skills and knowledge to complete the project successfully. For example, when asking the students to prepare brief oral summaries of assigned readings, Jane explained that this activity was intended to build their understanding of issues that might
come up about statistics when they investigated community charities. She also reminded them, "Use today's [reading] as a source for [when] you put together information for your presentation."

Jane offered students opportunities to monitor their own progress. For example, as mentioned, she supplied the students with an evaluation rubric (clarity, persuasiveness, thinking, inquiry), providing the criteria she intended to use in grading their YPI presentations. In one instance, I observed one of this study's student participants discussing this rubric with her group.

Jane offered students personally encouraging comments, focusing on both strengths and weaknesses, supporting continued effort. She routinely recognized students with praise as she commented on their responses or progress with tasks, saying, "Great," "That's fine," or "Good work". I observed that Jane once approached Kim (student participant with learning disability) briefly as she was leaving the classroom to compliment her privately "for doing such good work" on an assignment. As mentioned, when returning assignments to students for improvement, Jane offered constructive comments and suggestions.

Furthermore, Jane did not criticize students, present grades publicly or draw attention to the relative performance of students. However, like Tom, she used a criterion based grading system for daily assignments and the YPI project and all students were graded according to the same criteria.

The YPI project presentation judged to be most deserving by the student participants (most votes by the students) was determined to be the winner. Students groups were competing against one another to win this competition. Interestingly, some research suggests that such a between group competition structure can increase teamwork and enhance learning
(Linnenbrink, 2005), perhaps with positive implications for help-seeking. Furthermore, Jane did not make an association between the grades she assigned and the results of the competition when I observed in her classroom.

**Grouping**

Jane instituted small collaborative student groupings for most tasks and activities in her classroom. Students were often expected to work together sharing ideas and making decisions with one another. Jane encouraged student helping across groups as well and students did collaborate with other students outside their groups.

Jane graded the students as a group for their presentation, but they were not always individually accountable for their roles in the project. During several observations, it was evident that responsibility was unevenly shared in some groups. It appeared that some students, as a result, were less self-regulated. However, students were given a few individual assignments related to the YPI project, for which they were individually assessed. For example, after a discussion about the process of investigating the legitimacy of selected charities, Jane remarked, “This is an activity I want you to complete on your own. What I want to know is how much you have processed from our discussion.”

**Time to Ask for Help**

Jane provided generous time allotments for students’ in-class work on assignments. This offered students many opportunities for discussion and help, in order to complete tasks successfully. Furthermore, Jane was continually available and responsive to students’ requests for help during instructional periods.
Student-Teacher Relationships

Jane’s apparent respect toward her students’ progress and needs and her confidence in the students’ ability to learn, conveyed through the organization of tasks, instructional practices and the social environment were key features of the relationship between Jane and her students and demonstrated her concern for them beyond their academics.

Jane did not publicly compare or chastise students. She appeared patient and unhurried, both during instruction and while responding to requests for help. Jane recognized the students’ social needs in allowing them to freely move about the classroom and work in groups. Occasionally, when Jane needed to discipline students, she did so privately (e.g., for off-task behavior, to ask students to stay after class to complete assignments).

Jane showed concern for the students’ emotional wellbeing. For example, when she was having difficulty getting the students’ attention at the beginning of one class, Jane queried the group, “Everything is bubbly today … everyone is percolating. What’s up?” Some students volunteered that the never-ending rain and upcoming provincials were making them feel edgy. A few students were still noisily entering the class at that point and one student shouted, “Shut up”. Jane quietly asked everyone to calm down, waited patiently, and then acknowledged the students’ stress. At another time, when a student returned from an absence due to illness, Jane made a point of taking him aside and reviewing with him what he had missed.

Jane’s relationship with the students was quite informal and she appeared to enjoy her personal interactions with them. She took the time to chat briefly with a student about his Christmas holiday or ask a student who had arrived late to class, “What’s up sweetie?” Jane
was willing to disclose her feelings to the students, telling them that it frustrated her when they didn’t use computer lab time well because it was very difficult for her to book lab time.

**Student Relationships**

Jane implicitly and explicitly promoted good student relations through the design of her classroom tasks and her instructional discourse. For example, she provided frequent opportunities for positive social and cooperative interactions, including discussions, exchanges, and seeking and giving help. Peer collaboration and support was expected. Students were asked to determine their groups for the long term YPI project, and as well, to work with various partners for some short term tasks. They also helped one another voluntarily beyond the task groupings. Students clearly enjoyed contributing to class discussions and exchanging ideas.

Jane accommodated students’ need for social time and seemed to monitor the balance of social time with the learning focus by continually checking on students’ progress with tasks. As mentioned, students were not individually accountable for their roles in completing tasks, resulting in some uneven distribution of responsibility, with the potential to undermine student relationships.

**Teacher Characteristics**

Jane exhibited many characteristics of teachers from whom students feel comfortable seeking help. For example, she was friendly, patient, caring, and demonstrated a sense of humor. It was evident that Jane enjoyed teaching the students and was very willing to share her time and energy with them. She was very dependable in her support for the students, dedicating generous amounts of time offering help and responding to student requests for help. Jane displayed respect for both the students’ social and emotional well being as
discussed earlier (e.g., response to students who had been absent for illness or holidays, when students were upset, response to class mood, opportunities within the classroom for social interaction).

The students enjoyed appealing to Jane’s sense of humor. For example, when a student asked if answers were to be competed in full sentences, Jane emitted a growl. When another student observed, “Oh, she’s just forming another wrinkle,” Jane laughed.

**How Help is Given**

Jane often used scaffolding, both during whole class activities, as well as in providing students with help. For example, a student asked Jane, “Is that what I should be doing?” Jane responded, “Fine. What about …?” The student then asked, “Does it mean …?” (clarifying her understanding). Jane answered, “Yes. Can you give me an example of an answer for that?” The student provided an answer demonstrating her understanding, to which Jane responded, “Right.” Furthermore, both during class instruction, as well as in offering individual help, Jane frequently included demonstrations and modeling in negotiating understanding with the students.

While students worked on tasks, Jane offered help and volunteered suggestions as she observed their progress. Jane did not appear to be selective about whom she offered help nor did she make evaluative comments when helping students.

**Willingness to Help**

Jane was consistently available, responsive, and dependable in offering students help when I observed in her classroom. Additionally, as mentioned, Jane offered positive and non-evaluative help and explicit encouragement for asking questions.
Both during instruction and as she circulated around the classroom or in the computer lab while students worked on tasks, Jane regularly offered help and checked on students understanding. For example, she directed questions to the whole class during or after outlining the task goals for the day, asking, “Any questions?” “Do you want further explanation?” or “Do you want me to show you?”

Jane reminded students that she was available to give help during flex blocks (30 minute, daily block, students can go to any class for help) and before or after school.

Effectiveness of Help

Students frequently requested Jane’s assistance to check their progress in meeting assignment goals and with the process of completing tasks. Jane demonstrated understanding of students need for help, often guiding students in progressively meeting assignment goals while asking them to demonstrate their understanding. For example, a student group approached her to say they were having difficulty reconciling their interests with the criteria given for choosing a charity. Jane asked them to provide her with a brief written description about a charity and what they would like to do to meet the task goal, then to return to her to negotiate a solution. Jane prompted them, “Okay look at this site … get the information down and show me.”

Expectations of Students

Jane’s demonstration of confidence in the students’ desire and ability to learn conveyed through her organization of tasks, task messages, and instructional practices were key features of her classroom environment.

Jane offered much supportive discourse showing that she expected students to successfully complete assigned tasks. She emphasized the importance of the students’
responsibility in following through on the YPI project and not letting the charities down. She expected all students would develop new skills to be successful with the project. She encouraged student participation in lessons and expected students to use one another as resources. Jane consistently displayed positive expectations about the ability of all students to contribute and to be successful with assignments.

Student Help-Seeking

In this section, I describe my observations and the perceptions of the student participants in Tom’s math class and in Jane’s CAPP class. Before describing each student in Tom’s class, I provide an overview of each student and her general perceptions about help-seeking based on my initial interview with her. For each class, I then describe my observations and the perceptions of Kate, the student without a learning disability. This is followed by my observations and the perceptions of Kim, the student with a learning disability who was paired with Kate. These descriptions include many relevant comments the students offered during the initial and final interviews with them. When these comments are reported, the interview source is supplied.

Tom’s Classroom

Kate – General Description and Initial Interview

Kate presented as a positive, friendly, and insightful student who enjoyed good relations with her teachers as well as other students. When first approached to participate in this study, she demonstrated her good sense of humor when she indicated that she was interested but that if I were looking for a straight A student, then she wouldn’t be a candidate.
During my initial interview with Kate, she expressed her overall mastery goals. She indicated that regardless of the classroom context and her relationship with her teachers, she was determined and perseverant in getting the help she felt she needed. Although she expressed her awareness of the potential embarrassment of asking for help if she felt she was supposed to know because the teacher had already taught the concept, she also indicated this would not deter her if she felt the help was necessary. She also demonstrated her belief in her adaptive help-seeking skills; she usually asked when she needed further understanding or clarification about the criteria for assignments, she selected helpers according to her beliefs about their ability to help further her understanding, and she felt she was effective at asking for help.

**Kate’s Help-Seeking - Observations**

During my five visits to Tom’s math class, I observed Kate seek help 15 times. Kate sought Tom’s help eight times and she asked other students, and usually her seatmate, seven times. Kate consistently sought help adaptively (Newman, 1994), as Table 3 indicates. Consistent with descriptions of a personal mastery goal orientation, Kate sought task related information to gain greater understanding and achieve task goals (Ames & Archer, 1988). For example, when seeking help, if Kate did not initially understand, she persisted in asking questions until she did understand, and then usually insisted on demonstrating her understanding to the help provider. During whole class instruction, she sought clarification or help in understanding during problem solving processes an average of three times per class when I observed in Tom’s classroom.
Table 3: Observations of Kate’s help-seeking in Tom’s classroom

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<th>Observations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
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</table>

On one occasion, Kate asked Tom how to begin solving a problem, and when he explained, she indicated that she could continue on her own. In another instance, as Tom demonstrated solving sample questions to the class, Kate stopped him to ask, “How did you do that again?” As he re-explained, Kate stated, “Oh, I get it.” As Tom explained and demonstrated problem solving related to borrowing money and finding interest rate on PowerPoint, Kate indicated that she didn’t understand. As Tom explained, she stated, “I kind of get it.” As he continued, she responded, “I get it now,” then elaborated on Tom’s explanation, demonstrating her understanding. Another time Tom presented a question with the solution on PowerPoint and Kate asked, “How did you find that?” Tom explained. On more than one occasion, Kate asked her seatmate how she solved a question. As her seatmate provided a step-by-step explanation, Kate restated and elaborated, demonstrating her understanding. After Tom taught procedures to solve problems using calculators, the students were assigned practice questions. Kate asked Tom to check as she proceeded through steps on the calculator to solve a problem. He confirmed that the steps were correct. After each instance of help-seeking I observed, Kate continued to work diligently on tasks.
When I observed Kate, she demonstrated persistence and effort in seeking the help she needed to complete tasks with understanding. Kate's comments during our initial interview reflected her persistence and effectiveness at seeking help from a variety of sources to achieve her learning goals, an attribute of adaptive help-seeking (Newman, 1994), "When I need help in math, I go to flex block or math tutorial. If the teacher can't help, I rely on the tutor."

Support for Help-Seeking - Kate's Perceptions

Kate's perceptions of her help-seeking in Tom's classroom are summarized in Table 4. Kate reported that she was satisfied with the help she received. For example, she commented, "I needed help understanding the material and solving the questions so I could move on independently ... I got a clearer explanation [from the teacher or other students] so I was able to get the homework done and feel I have a better understanding."

Table 4: Kate's perceptions about her help-seeking in Tom's classroom

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<th>Perceptions</th>
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<tr>
<td>How help is given</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to help</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of help</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation of student</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher characteristics</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>NA</td>
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Kate described her helpers’ characteristics and many correspond to categories believed to support help-seeking (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Van der Meij, 1988). For example, she described her seatmate as “...nice, smart ...” and “my partner knows exactly what I am doing, where the problem lies” (initial interview). Kate reported about seeking help from her math teacher, “As always, I feel fine, that’s what my teacher is there for and if I need help he is more than happy to give it to me.” She also demonstrated her recognition that help-seeking is a useful strategy for learning. During our final interview, she commented, “… don’t be afraid to ask for help ... teachers and students, [that’s] part of their role”

Kate generally achieved high grades in her school subjects but had recently found math challenging. Kate demonstrated, in her willingness to ask for help in front of the class, that she wasn’t concerned that others might attribute her help-seeking to a lack of ability (Newman, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). This was also reflected in her comments during our initial interview, “If when [the teacher is] teaching I don’t get it, even in the middle of a lesson, I try not to wait until I am totally lost.”

Furthermore, when Kate mentioned her recent difficulties in math she commented, “The only thing that makes it harder [is] if the teacher has already gone over it in class, [it’s] embarrassing to ask if [I’m] supposed to know” (initial interview). Although she mentioned the potential for embarrassment, especially when she felt responsible for knowing, she was not deterred from asking for help. This willingness to ask for help was reflected in her comments during our final interview, “I’m not embarrassed to show when I don’t understand ... [it] doesn’t matter what others think because we’re all in there to learn math.” Again, her mastery goals were reflected in her perceptions about seeking help (Ames & Archer, 1988).
Consistent with research that indicates students who perceive themselves as comfortable and skillful in relating to others are more likely to seek help even at the risk of embarrassment (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997), Kate’s social competence was evident in her interactions with both the teacher and other students. When I observed Kate, she demonstrated confidence, a sense of humor, and a positive and respectful attitude.

With Kate’s general confidence in her academic and social competence, Kate’s willingness to seek help was unlikely to be undermined by temporary difficulty in math or the threat of others’ awareness of this difficulty (Newman, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997).

Kate expressed her autonomy concerns (Butler, 1998) in her desire to complete work herself, as she explained when she didn’t ask for help, “I didn’t ask for help. Some stuff was hard but I figured it out by myself and used my notes ... wanted to try to do stuff by myself.” Butler (1998) posited that students who endorse autonomy reasons for not seeking help, such as Kate did, may be more likely to request help adaptively when problem solving. However, other research indicated this desire for self-reliance may be associated with performance-approach goals, with conflicting evidence about whether these goals have a positive effect on student’s willingness to ask for help (Brophy, 2004; Middleton & Midgley, 1997; Ryan et al., 2001).

When asked about her perceptions of the help she sought in the classroom after each observation, Kate reported satisfaction with the help she received. However, in my final interview with her, Kate indicated she was not always satisfied with the help she received. She reflected, “Sometimes when I get help in the classroom I think I understand, but when I get home to do homework I realize I don’t understand.” She suggested that it might have helped, “… if the teacher checked in a way to be sure I do understand like my tutor. She
makes up a question to be sure I can do it correctly ...”. Kate also suggested, “[During instruction] the teacher needs to call on more people, so he gets a better idea about how everyone is doing ... the ones who don’t understand too. Now he just hears from kids who know the answers.”

Kate’s comments are consistent with my observations and underscore the need for teachers to ask students to actively demonstrate their understanding and to ensure that a broad range of students are called upon as a means to assess individual student learning needs (Newman, 1998b; Ryan et al., 1998; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997, 1998; Turner et al., 2002).

Kim – General Description and Initial Interview

Kim was a student participant in my study who had an identified learning disability and was enrolled in Tom’s math class with Kate. Math proved to be Kim’s most challenging subject, and her math achievement was most affected by her learning disability. Kim appeared to be verbal, very social, and outgoing, yet somewhat guarded in some of her interactions, particularly with adults.

During my initial interview with Kim, consistent with personal mastery goals, she indicated that she usually asked for help when she didn’t understand what to do or how to do it. Although she perceived her help-seeking actions were consistent regardless of the subject or classroom context, she also added that some factors that might influence her help-seeking included her feelings toward the teacher, teacher characteristics, grouping arrangements, and the effectiveness of the helper. She indicated that she preferred to ask her seatmate for help in math because she was not satisfied with the help her math teacher provided. She also
expressed concerns about embarrassment in asking for help in front of the class as well as her concerns about social comparison when she suggested that everybody likes to look intelligent. Finally, Kim perceived herself to be effective at asking for help and in selecting appropriate helpers.

**Kim’s Help-Seeking – Observations**

During my five visits to Tom’s math class, I did not observe Kim ask Tom for academic assistance. She asked him about homework she had missed when she was absent, to borrow a calculator and a math text, and for test marks. On one occasion, while Tom was helping another student, Kim asked for a test mark. She sighed with evident exasperation as she waited for him to finish helping the student. At another time, Kim asked for permission to go to the resource room for help during math class. Again she showed negative affect when Tom asked her to supply him with a note when she returned.

I observed Kim seek her partner’s (assigned seatmate) help with academic tasks 11 times (see Table 5). On these occasions, she generally sought her partner’s help adaptively. She asked for help to understand the steps in solving math problems or to check his work and ensure that she was proceeding correctly.

Table 5: Observations of Kim’s help-seeking in Tom’s classroom

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<td>Helper</td>
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<td>Effectiveness</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Observations of Kim seeking help from student partner
Kim usually asked her seatmate for help during instructional periods. On several occasions she asked her seatmate to show her his notes or explain the steps to problems Tom was solving during his demonstrations. Usually she copied the steps she was unable to solve or tried on her own and asked her seatmate to check her progress, then continued listening to Tom’s lesson. Kim also asked her seatmate to demonstrate steps to solve a problem on the calculator and to confirm that she was calculating correctly. As well, Kim asked her seatmate for assistance in understanding geometry terms presented during class instruction (identification of opposite angles, adjacent angles, and hypotenuse).

Kim seldom sought her partner’s help during the 30 - 45 minutes usually allotted for students to work on homework following instructional periods. When Kim did ask for help, sometimes she returned to work on her own, but she did not usually persist with the task. Kim spent these off-task periods listening to her Ipod, chatting with other students, or daydreaming. Although Kim seemed to want to demonstrate positive achievement behaviors, they were not always evident. Kim spoke to me about attention difficulties associated with her learning disability. She explained that she could not maintain her concentration through an entire class and, as a result, often completed little homework during the time remaining after Tom’s lessons. However, during one incidental observation in the school resource room, during the first class of the day, again Kim spent very little time on task (homework to be completed for the following math class) and she only worked for short periods when the resource teacher directly supervised her.

Kim displayed some behaviors described as characterizing work-avoidance (Dowson & McInerny, 2001; Meece & Holt, 1993). For example, she often came to class without the necessary equipment. She sometimes seemed disengaged from classroom instruction and
activities. For example, sometimes she did not copy procedures and steps Tom presented. Other students did this and appeared to use them to help with math homework. Some of these self-handicapping behaviors are typical of low achieving students with performance-avoidant goals who want to look smart and avoid being embarrassed (Newman, 2003).

**Support for Help-Seeking - Kim's Perceptions**

Kim expressed positive perceptions about her help-seeking interactions with her seatmate (see Table 6). She described her seatmate's willingness and effectiveness in providing help as well as her comfort in asking him for help, "[In math I am] sitting beside the smart kid" (initial interview). She also commented "He is really good ... he always checks with me each step of the way when he is explaining ... it's pretty natural for me to ask (my partner) for help ... asking for (his) help doesn't bother me."

Table 6: Kim's perceptions about her help-seeking in Tom's classroom

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<th>Perceptions</th>
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<tr>
<td>How help is given</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willingness to help</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of help</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expectation of student</td>
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<td>Teacher characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student-teacher relationship</td>
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*Note. Observations 1 to 4 reflect Kim's perceptions about the help her seatmate provided. During observation 5 Kim asked for permission to return to the resource room to get help. The codes for observation 5 represent Kim's perceptions about help the resource teacher provided.*
Kim’s explanations about her goals in seeking help were focused on her need to follow the steps or the procedures so she could get the work done. For example, she described one help-seeking incident. “I wasn’t sure about how to do the questions on the calculator … I needed to know how to do the steps on the calculator for those questions … I got help to get the steps right, so I could do more questions … the rest of the questions.” In another instance Kim explained, “I didn’t understand the teacher’s explanation. I needed to know how to get the answer. He (partner) explained how to calculate the answer … step by step. I found out how to do the questions and got my homework done.” Her perception of the help her partner offered suggests she received help which was effective in meeting her goals.

Kim did not ask Tom for academic help or enter class discussion during instructional periods. During whole class instruction, most students who asked Tom questions demonstrated some understanding about the procedures being taught. Research indicates the inhibiting features of whole class activities tend to be particularly salient regarding help-seeking as students reach the high school years (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). Students may experience an especially strong sense of social comparison and potential embarrassment that can inhibit question asking. Kim expressed these concerns, “If you ask a question in front of the class, everybody hears you. Everybody likes to look intelligent … [the] math teacher is in front of the room …” (initial interview). Ryan and Pintrich (1997) showed that student concern about “not looking dumb” in front of both teachers and other students when asking for help is a strong predictor of reported student help avoidance. This concern may have been particularly prominent for Kim as a result of her lack of competence in math, perhaps amplifying her worries about the costs associated with help-seeking related to ability and self-worth threats (Newman, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). This concern about looking
smart is congruent with performance goals (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). Fortunately, Tom assigned seatmates who were permitted to seek and offer help at any time during math class. Furthermore, he assigned a non-threatening seatmate for Kim, whom many other students approached for help. Such a helper may have helped allay Kim’s competence concerns, which in turn may have reduced her help-seeking avoidance, as well as lessened her need to ask Tom for help. Furthermore, Kim was also enrolled in extra blocks in the learning centre, allowing for additional assistance.

Friedel et al. (2002) suggest that students need to feel the teacher takes care not to embarrass them in order to establish a sense of trust and acceptance between students and teachers. On one occasion, Tom commented on the easiness of the subject content as he introduced one lesson and then proceeded to call on Kim to supply an answer to a question. She was unable to do so. This could have embarrassed her, with her concerns about looking smart and her low achievement in math (Newman, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997), affecting her willingness to ask Tom for help.

Features of a positive affective classroom climate play a particular role in student help-seeking. Avoidance of help-seeking, particularly among students with poor self-perceptions and low efficacy was ameliorated in classrooms in which teachers showed concern about students’ social and emotional well being (Ryan et al., 1998). During our initial interview, Kim commented that her help-seeking depended on how she felt about the teacher, “Depends on the teacher… I like my science teacher … so [I would] probably ask [the] teacher.” Along with earlier expressed concerns about being embarrassed if she asked Tom a question in front of the class, Kim expressed negative feelings toward him. For example, during our final interview, Kim explained why she only sought her seatmate for
help, "The teacher would have to be nicer. He's not polite or friendly. [I] would likely ask him if he was nicer." Such student perceptions have been found to negatively influence students' willingness to seek help (Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

Interestingly, Kate, who shared this math class with Kim, expressed a positive view of Tom and showed no hesitance to seek his help either during class instruction or while working on assignments. Other students in the class also frequently sought Tom's help. Research has indicated that negative perceptions about the teacher, such as Kim held, may also be associated with self-beliefs. Wentzel (1997) reported that students' beliefs that teachers are caring and supportive, may reflect, in part, their beliefs about their own personal control. Nevertheless, as Ryan et al. (1998) argued, what matters are the messages the students perceive, rather than the messages teachers try to convey. Perhaps, teachers need to show particular sensitivity to the emotional needs of students such as Kim, with her aforementioned valid concerns.

Research indicates students' perceptions about helpers' understanding of their learning needs and effectiveness at increasing their understanding influences students' willingness to seek help (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981). Kim did not ask Tom for academic assistance at any time. Kim talked about her reluctance to ask for Tom's help, indicating she would not receive the help she needed. For example, "... he (teacher) can't pick out what is important and what's not important when he teaches. I want to understand the concept ..." Kim also mentioned during our initial interview, "... math teacher doesn't explain it differently ... If I don't understand and go ask him, he explains the same way, the same way as he teaches". In her comments about "picking out what is important and not important," Kim may have also been expressing frustration about her own ability to formulate questions
that would accurately target her need. Stipek (2002) discussed the difficulty some students with learning disabilities may have in determining exactly what help they need.

However, Kate shared some of Kim’s concerns about the effectiveness of Tom’s help. Kate indicated that Tom did not always check for understanding. Both Kate and Kim expressed their awareness of the potential for embarrassment in seeking help. Kim’s unwillingness to seek help in the face of embarrassment may have been exacerbated by her low math achievement and self-perceptions of low cognitive competence and math efficacy as well as her negative feelings about Tom. In contrast, Kate was not deterred from asking for help as she was well equipped with many characteristics associated with adaptive help-seeking, including mastery goals in math, general high achievement in school subjects, and self-perceptions of cognitive and social competence as well as a positive attitude about Tom.

Jane’s Classroom

Kate’s Help-Seeking – Observations

I observed Kate seeking help eleven times in Jane’s planning class, and in most instances, she requested teacher help. As portrayed in Table 7, Kate consistently sought help adaptively (Newman, 1994), demonstrating similar help-seeking patterns and learning goals as she did in Tom’s classroom (Ames & Archer, 1988).

Table 7: Observations of Kate’s help-seeking in Jane’s classroom

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Kate generally requested teacher help for clarification about the task criteria or about the process or her progress in meeting task goals. For example, during one class, Kate and her group were not sure whether the charity they were interested in met the required criteria. Kate approached Jane with this problem. Jane asked them to research the charity, write their results and present it to her so they could negotiate a decision with her. In another instance, when asking Jane about assignment criteria, Kate clarified her understanding by giving examples of people she might choose to research for the assignment and asked Jane if they were suitable choices. Kate continued to question Jane about other facets of the task until she felt sure about what she needed to do. In another instance, Kate and her group asked Jane for clarification about meeting the goals for a short presentation to the class. Kate led her group in negotiating an adjustment in the criteria for their presentation.

As mentioned, Kate generally achieved above average grades in her schoolwork and expected to do well. She indicated the tasks in planning class were “pretty easy” and some of her help-seeking requests reflected her desire to improve on her assignments and do well but perhaps not necessarily to increase understanding. For example, Kate asked Jane to look at what she had completed and whether she had met the goals of the assignment. Jane responded, “That’s fine, great. That’s what you need.” Kate then asked, “So that’s good then?” Jane responded, “Yes.” After Kate had checked with Jane, she observed another group at work, and commented, “Oh, I don’t have that kind of information like yours” and returned to improve on her assignment. Kate’s motivation to improve her achievement, in this case, may appear to represent performance-approach goals, which are associated with a focus on wanting to demonstrate ability relative to others and publicly display task-relevant knowledge and skills (Elliott & McGregor, 2001; Pintrich, 2000a). However, Kate did not
appear to be concerned about how she performed in comparison to others, as demonstrated by her remarks that “it doesn’t matter what others think – we’re all in there to learn” (initial interview) and her actions when she openly sought help during math class instruction. As well she candidly discussed two disappointing math test marks with students who had achieved higher marks than she had. Perhaps Grant and Dweck (2003) most aptly describe Kate’s achievement goals in planning class as being focused on obtaining positive outcomes, for example, to do well in courses and to get good grades, but without social comparison concerns.

This pursuit of combined mastery/performance-approach goals (without social comparison concerns) which may have represented Kate’s goals in planning class, has been associated with high school students’ achievement of significantly higher grades than students with other combinations of goals (Wentzel, 1991), high perceptions of competence and expected achievement (Elliot & Church, 1997) as well as college students’ reported use of cognitive strategies significantly more than other groups (Bouffard et al., 1995). Further, Pintrich (2000a) found combined high mastery/performance approach goals have positive effects similar to the effects of high mastery goals on student motivation, achievement, and self-handicapping behaviors.

Whereas Kate may have demonstrated some features of both mastery and performance-approach goals in planning class, she appeared to pursue mastery goals only in math, with her focus on learning and understanding, even in the face of difficulty and potential for embarrassment.

Just as Kate’s social competence was evident in Tom’s classroom, it became increasingly apparent as I observed her during collaborative activities in Jane’s planning
class. As mentioned, student social competence perceptions are positively related to their adaptive help-seeking (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). Kate’s well-developed social skills were exemplified in the leadership and teamwork she showed in accomplishing group tasks. For example, Kate represented her group in seeking clarification about a task, negotiating a change in the task criteria, and seeking Jane’s help when her group was confused about an assignment. She volunteered to represent the group in presenting in-class oral summaries. She ensured that group assignments were completed, at times undertaking a disproportionate share of the task. In deciding on a charity to search, Kate guided her group work with comments such as, “... this idea might not fit the criteria for the assignment” and continually sought input from the members of her group in deciding on choices and roles. In her interactions with both the teacher and other students, I observed her demonstrating confidence, a sense of humor, and positive and respectful attitude. For example, she demonstrated her sense of humor when she asked a non-contributing group member, “So Sam, what did you accomplish today?”

Moreover, Kate’s focus on meeting the teacher’s expectations through teamwork and a task focus in planning class may represent social responsibility goals related to accomplishing tasks, typical of highly achievement-oriented students (Brophy, 2004) and associated with keeping interpersonal commitments and meeting social role obligations.

Support for Help-Seeking - Kate’s Perceptions

Although I observed Kate seeking help several times in Jane’s CAPP class, she reported that she had only sought help once (see Table 8). She explained that she had been absent and needed to find out what she had missed.
Kate offered various reasons why (she thought) she seldom sought help in planning class, reflecting autonomy concerns (Butler, 1998) similar to her self-reliance needs in Tom’s math classroom, as well as the collaborative work environment in Jane’s classroom, associated with students’ willingness to seek help (Nelson-Le Gall & Glor-Scheib, 1985, Ryan & Pintrich, 1998). She explained, “... I could figure it out on my own”, “... if I don’t know the answers I could figure it out myself or with my neighbors,” “... prefer to figure out by myself and the questions weren’t that hard”, or “didn’t ask for help, didn’t think anything was difficult, even if difficult my group could figure out by ourselves”.

Kate expressed similar positive views about Jane’s support for her help-seeking as she had about Tom. Kate judged Jane to be willing and able to give her help and willingly sought Jane’s help, consistent with research that associates these teacher attributes to promotion of student help-seeking (Barnett, Darcie, Holland, & Kobasigawa, 1982; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). Kate commented about asking Jane for help, “... [I] felt fine [about asking for help] because it’s my teacher’s job to help me” and “the teacher always offers to
give everyone help … if [I] need help [I] will ask.” Kate judged Tom similarly willing to provide help. Likewise, she was willing to ask for his help although she did not express the same confidence in the effectiveness of the help she received. This may be attributed to the comparative difficulty of math tasks for her as well as her perceptions, as mentioned, that Tom did not usually check for her understanding when he provided help.

Kim’s Help-Seeking - Observations

I observed Kim asking Jane for help 12 times, and unlike Tom’s class where she did not seek teacher help, she usually asked Jane for help. Kim often sought help adaptively (Newman, 1994), as Table 9 indicates, asking for clarification about the assignment criteria or for help in the process of completing assignments.

Table 9: Observations of Kim’s help-seeking in Jane’s classroom

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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, while working on one group task in the computer lab, Kim showed initiative both in seeking help on her group’s behalf as well as leading her group in completing the task. Kim presented the work to Jane to ensure it was satisfactory and Jane responded enthusiastically, “All right, good work!”

In another instance, Kim asked Jane how to set up a data table. Once Jane assisted her in entering data, Kim continued working independently. I also observed Kim ask Jane for assistance in deciding on a charity to research. Jane made several suggestions. Kim and her
group made their choice and Jane asked them to research the charity and "write down the specifics ... show me and let's see if it fits the criteria." Kim initiated this interaction, as well as writing down the results of the group's research and bringing it to Jane for discussion.

At another time, Kim asked Jane to check that she had met the assignment goals, "Okay, there, I'm done. Can I print it off now?" Jane offered suggestions, "... add something about what his future plan are in terms of his philanthropic work." Kim searched a website unsuccessfully while Jane watched, then said, "I can't find anything." Jane suggested, "Go back again and look. Interview might be a good key word because usually the question is asked about future plans in an interview." Kim found the information using the suggested key word and completed her assignment.

As well, Kim sought help adaptively from other students. For example, as she prepared a biographical card about a celebrity philanthropist (Jane had earlier provided the students with this information), Kim rechecked with another student, "What are the things you have to know about your person?" After the student described the required headings, Kim then copied the headings from his laptop. Kim also asked this student for help spelling the celebrity's name so she could find a website to seek information for the biographical card she was preparing.

Similar to her help-seeking actions (with seatmate) in Tom's class, Kim often sought help adaptively (Newman, 1994), and seemed to be demonstrating mastery goal intentions in Jane's class. However, at other times, again Kim appeared to show evidence of work avoidance. For example, although she twice asked Jane to explain an assignment, and Jane returned to check on their progress and make suggestions, she and her partner did not begin the task, but rather listened to her Ipod and socialized for the duration of the class. When
Jane checked on their progress, they avoided answering her question, "How many have you got now?" (They had been asked to select three charities that met the required criteria before choosing one for their presentation and had not started the task). Although Jane asked the students to complete their three choices by the end of class, Kim and her partner did not appear to complete the task.

At another time, instead of collaborating with her group, Kim asked Jane to assist her in selecting charities. While responding to this request for help, Jane inquired of two students sitting nearby, "Are you two in Kim’s group?" However, after this exchange, Kim was able to select a topic with her group, search for and prepare the required information about the topic. Nevertheless, perhaps in bypassing her group and asking the teacher for help, Kim may have been seeking the most expedient route to complete the task. This concern with expediency seemed to be evident at other times as well. For example, I observed Kim copying other students’ work. In one instance, Jane reminded students that the assignment they were working on was due when they returned to the next class (next day). Later during this class, as Jane began circulating to collect students’ completed assignments, Kim quickly copied another student’s answers. Later in this class, Kim copied a second work sheet after Jane suggested students should try to finish the assigned work in class.

As mentioned in discussing Kim’s conduct in Tom’s classroom, some of Kim’s behavior in Jane’s class might be characterized as work-avoidant. For example, she copied others’ work and sometimes she seemed to over rely on the teacher to complete a task.

Similar to her behavior in Tom’s classroom, Kim was off-task frequently during periods when other students worked on tasks (during the last four CAPP classes I observed Kim off-task for more than half the duration of each class), and sometimes waited until the
last few minutes of class to recruit the teacher or other students to help complete her tasks. These strategies seemed to work as she completed some assignments with minimum effort.

Perhaps Kim’s actions might need to be interpreted in the context of her views about the extent she valued the tasks in the CAPP class. Expectancy-value theorists suggest that individuals’ persistence, effort, and performance might be explained by certain beliefs, including beliefs about the value of activities to them (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Alternatively, perhaps a fatigue factor combined with Kim’s awareness that she could be relatively successful in completing planning class with a minimum of effort contributed to her work avoidance. CAPP was Kim’s last class every day. After perhaps a series of academically demanding classes for Kim, classes in which she may not have been rewarded with much success, the tactics she used in planning class to complete tasks might be adaptive for her. Alternatively Kim’s actions may represent examples of habitual behavior that developed over a period of time in response to accumulated experiences of failure. Dunn and Shapiro (1999) argued that some students with learning disabilities may be especially vulnerable in achievement situations and are likely to adopt a global inadequacy view. However, this theory does not seem to explain the instances when Kim demonstrated the mastery goals described.

Jane’s classroom activities generally differed from her computer lab activities, and were more similar to Tom’s instructional activities, often entailing teacher led instruction with large group discussion. In one instance, I observed Kim asking for help in front of the class during these activities. For example, as Jane concluded one lesson, she asked, “Any questions?” In response, Kim called on Jane to assist her setting up a data table to describe student skills learned/needed to be successful with the YPI project. Perhaps the mastery
oriented nature of Jane’s classroom (Newman, 1998) as well as Kim’s relative success in CAPP class (Newman, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997) reduced her help-seeking inhibitions during whole class activities (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). At the same time, in contrast to Kate, Kim did not participate in large group discussion during the time I observed in Jane’s classroom, perhaps because of similar threat concerns as she had in Tom’s classroom (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). As mentioned in describing Kim’s help-seeking in Tom’s classroom, Kim indicated her concerns about wanting to look smart, “Everybody likes to look intelligent” (initial interview). Again, in this context, at times Kim seemed to present aspects of personal performance-avoid goals.

Support for Help-Seeking - Kim’s Perceptions

Despite incidences of help-seeking during every planning class, Kim, like Kate reported after each classroom observation that she had not sought help (see Table 10). In each instance, she explained that she did not need help and that the tasks were easy. She did not offer her perceptions about Jane’s willingness or effectiveness in providing help. However, it was apparent that Kim felt comfortable in relating with Jane. For example, she casually invited Jane to look at a charity website she was viewing and in another instance, she jokingly questioned Jane about the value of the homework assignments, during a class activity, “... you just give us homework ... you give it, mark it, write it in your little book and that’s it!” Jane responded (laughing), “Sounds like we have it so easy, right?” In contrast to her interactions with Tom, when Kim showed either no or negative affect while asking to borrow materials or to ask for test marks, Kim appeared to demonstrate easy familiarity and pleasure in interacting with Jane.
Table 10: Kim’s perceptions about her help-seeking in Jane’s classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tr>
<td>How help is given</td>
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<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation of student</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student-teacher relationships</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classroom Observations of Teacher Support for Student Help-Seeking

In this section, I present data with accompanying discussion about observations in Jenny’s and Liz’s classrooms in which the second pair of students, Jess and Meg, were observed. I used the same coding schemes here as used in the first set of classrooms.

Jenny’s Classroom

Jenny taught a ninth grade math class in which Jess, a high achieving student, and Meg, a student identified with a learning disability was enrolled.

Tasks - Content, Activities, Instructional Discourse

Although Jenny generally presented tasks judged to be typical of traditional math instruction in which learning goals and outcomes do not tend to vary (Schoenfeld, 2004), as mentioned in describing Tom’s math classroom, Jenny designed a learning environment rich with features highly supportive of student help-seeking (see Table 11).
Table 11: Teacher observations in Jenny’s classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tasks</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Student participation</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation/recognition</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouping</td>
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<tr>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/teacher relationships</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student relationships</td>
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<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>How help is given</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to help</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of help</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student expectations</td>
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<td>+</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jenny’s classroom tasks and instructional discourse consistently engaged the students as active participants and focused on conceptual understanding and improvement. Jenny built student participation into the instructional process. Every lesson included review. During these review periods, students were held accountable for demonstrating their understanding, for example when they were asked as teams, to produce and present examples of exponent laws. During review as well as in teaching new concepts, Jenny consistently scaffolded students’ learning. For example, during her first lesson about calculating slope, Jenny produced 3 lines on a graph and asked, “Okay, so what’s the steepest?” A student responded,
"c." Jenny asked, "How did you know that?" The student explained. Jenny asked another student, "Okay, which would be easiest to walk up?" The student replied, "a." Jenny asked, "Why?" The student answered, "It's the least steep." Discussion followed then Jenny asked, "Okay, could you say cause it rises up quickly, or falls down quickly, it's steep? It's easy to calculate slope (gets out graph paper for overhead). How do you think we can calculate it so that we can figure out the slope? See all these grids. They should help with it." Jenny called on a student who stated, "Um, I have to think about it." Jenny asked, "Anyone else, what do you think?" A student suggested, "You could count the boxes ..." Jenny replied, "Okay we've got a good starting point. Could we take the starting point on both, like that, like that?"

The student responded. Jenny explained rise over run, then asked another student, "So what about this. How much does it go up or rise?" When the student answered, Jenny asked, "How far does it run?" A student interjected, "Can you go up 8 times like higher?" Jenny answered, "Sure". The student continued, "Could you go to the highest point?" Jenny suggested they try it. "Sure, let's go way up 12/6 = 2 so it's still the same. It doesn't matter where you calculate on the line (she demonstrates with 14/7)."

As Jenny negotiated understanding with the students, they were continually encouraged to demonstrate and evaluate their own thinking, as well as discover and appreciate multiple strategies for problem solving. For example, when teaching a lesson on finding the slope of a line, Jenny asked, "Okay, counting is easy to find the slope, but what if you don't have a graph but you do have coordinates, how can you find the slope. Say they give you two, four and zero, one, is there a way to find the slope?" One student responded, "I know how to do it. You can draw it cause you know it rises four and runs two." Another student suggested, "Just divide the second number by the first number." Jenny responded,
“That’s close, Sophie is on a really good track. It’s about a first, second number, and other numbers.” Several other students suggested ideas, until one student figured out how to calculate slope using a formula.

In another instance, a student asked Jenny, as students provided coordinates to find slopes, “Could it be one right next to another?” Jenny replied, “Let’s try it. We could do this point and this point.” They discovered that the formula still works.

Jenny also presented alternate strategies. For example, when a student asked how to express and answer in negative terms, another student offered a correct answer, and Jenny suggested, “You could also have done it this way (Jenny shows).” In another instance, Jenny suggested, “You can also just visualize this way,” as she presented an expanded formula.

Jenny expressed her desire to build personal relevance into math tasks for her students. She explained to me that this was her first year teaching high school math and she realized many students were already ‘turned off’ math by the time they reach grade nine. As was evident in her continual encouragement of student participation and in her attempts to offer meaningful reasons to engage in the tasks, Jenny commented to me, “I try to make meaningful connections for the students. Every day I try to create a spark for at least one student to increase their interest in math.” In one lesson, Jenny suggested a connection between the rules of math language just as there is in the English language, “Is there a difference in meaning between I ate in the house and I ate on the house?” (Jenny gives another example.) Math is a very specific language, [just like English language we use to communicate]. If you miss something or misinterpret something the meaning is all off. Today we are going to talk about negative signs and brackets because people often make mistakes on them [and they] are an important part of math language.”
At another time, in introducing a lesson on slope, Jenny emphasized, “This is an important concept you use from grade nine to twelve. It is important to get the basics now.” Later in the lesson, she said, “Let’s do another one. If you feel this is totally new [to you] and you don’t understand, that’s fine because it is new. But it’s really important. You will need it for the next three years.”

Jenny offered variety and diversity in the process of developing student understanding through daily instructional reviews, student participation in reviews, collaborative student production of examples to represent their understanding of exponent laws, puzzles within assignments which required applying math concepts being learned, homework, and pretests to prepare for tests. However, these varying tasks generally entailed the same goals and expected outcomes.

**Student Active Participation in Learning**

Jenny provided extensive opportunities for students to take an active role in their learning through participation in lessons and in decisions about the nature of the daily reviews as well as in thinking metacognitively as they evaluated their individual learning needs. For example, after handing out review questions, Jenny asked the students to decide which questions they would do, “If you’re slow at them, do the even questions. If you think you’re really fast, then do the odd questions.”

Furthermore, students chose seatmates, who they would ask for help, when they would ask for help, and how much help they would seek (Jenny offered regular after school tutorials as well as meeting students individually after hours to provide help). Moreover, students were free to move about the classroom, eat snacks, and talk with classmates while
working on tasks. Jenny provided pretests before each test, which students used in order to
decide what they needed to study. Jenny also offered students the choice of rewriting tests.

**Recognition and Evaluation Practices**

Jenny embedded within her instructional discourse the understanding that math would
offer challenges, that effort would be required, and that errors and misunderstandings would
be common (Meyer & Turner, 2002). Students were encouraged and willing to take risks as
they participated in problem solving during whole class instruction, continually offering their
ideas or querying the teacher when they didn’t understand. For example, in a typical instance,
Jenny asked if anyone could provide an answer to a question without expanding, “Let’s try
and jump straight to the answer. Does anyone feel confident? Kelly, can you try it?” Kelly
tried but had difficulty. Jenny asked, “Are we adding or multiplying?” Kelly answered
correctly and Jenny replied, “Okay good. How many got this?” A student answered, “I got it
half right.” Jenny responded, “Okay, you’re half way there!” At another time, Jenny asked,
“Now you guys know how to do that with your exponent rules, how do you solve this?” The
students did not know. Jenny responded, “Okay, I’m going to do a little reminder. See it’s
amazing how quickly we forget stuff when we’re out of it for a while. We’re going to be
doing review like this periodically because it’s really important that we keep up on
exponents.” Jenny demonstrated her understanding that learning is a developmental process
when she asked, “How could we figure this out without expanding it?” When the students did
not respond, she commented, “That’s okay, we’re not ready to skip a step yet.”

Jenny underscored the value of acknowledging errors as she took the opportunity to
offer class review when a student said he had difficulty solving a word problem. Jenny
addressed the class, “I know word problems are difficult in general. I know Sam was brave
enough to ask but I’m sure he’s not the only one who didn’t get it.” She then scaffolded the students’ learning, calling on several students in solving the problem. Throughout many exchanges such as described, Jenny demonstrated the non-evaluative task-focused nature of her classroom.

Jenny acknowledged challenges after she made an error, “So this is five.” A student commented, “No it’s four.” Jenny responded, “Okay, yeah, it’s hard with this one cause you have to extend the line.”

Jenny continually asked students to assess their understanding and as well to demonstrate their understanding during daily reviews and lessons. She constantly monitored individual and group progress, diagnosing and responding to difficulties as she circulated and observed student homework progress, in responding to requests for help, and in assessing student test and quiz results. For example, after observing student progress on homework and responding to several students’ requests for help, Jenny diagnosed a common problem, and spoke with the class, “Remember if they didn’t give you a graph, you have to make a table of values.” Jenny demonstrated with three questions, producing tables of values and offering, “Okay, here are a couple of examples for you.” In another instance, after circulating, she addressed the class, “Okay I’m hearing ‘I don’t understand how to read the slope and the y intercept’. Okay let’s review.” Jenny used scaffolding and demonstrating, as well as providing a model on the Overhead, commenting, “Here’s a reminder for you.”

Jenny routinely recognized students with positive feedback about their responses or progress with tasks. For example, as mentioned, when a student offered, “I only got that half right”, Jenny responded, “Well you’re halfway there.” At various times Jenny responded as students progressed with tasks, “Okay, good stuff for everyone to figure it out”, “That’s
really good”, “Okay, we’ve got a good starting point”, “Okay let’s try some more now that we’re all starting to get it”, or “That’s close, you’re on a really good track”. As well, as Jenny observed student progress with homework, and when she returned tests to students, she offered feedback including suggestions, help, and praise.

As well as monitoring students’ progress during lessons and reviews, through observation of students working on tasks and homework, quiz, pretest and test results, Jenny also offered opportunities for students to monitor their own progress and assess their learning needs. Jenny encouraged students to be metacognitive, suggesting, for example, “I’ve got a pretty comprehensive pretest for you. It’s good to try to do this without your notes. It’s a good way to see where you are weaker.” At another time, Jenny suggested, “Are you checking your answers in the back? Check your answers but don’t get your answers. [It’s a] good way to see if you’re on track. Maybe check after every five questions” or “When you’re not sure, go backwards and work it through.” Throughout, Jenny consistently asked students to assess their own learning and participate in deciding what they wished to focus on for daily reviews. For example, in preparation for a test, she asked, “Are you pretty good at this estimating?” Most students respond, “No.” Jenny replied, “Are you pretty far off?” They answered, “Yes.” Jenny suggested, “Okay, let’s do some estimating.” At another time, after a review, Jenny commented, “You can use these solved questions as guides to see if you’re on the right track.” After another review, Jenny asked, “Okay how do you guys feel about this stuff? Where are you with this stuff? Four (etc.)?” (Jenny often asked students to evaluate their understanding or how difficult they found homework on a scale of one to five).

Similar to the task goals and outcomes in Tom’s math class, the students in Jenny’s class usually completed the same assignments requiring the same outcomes. As well, all
students were graded according to the same criteria, as mentioned in discussing Tom’s and Jane’s classrooms. Jenny also did not publicly present or discuss grades, draw attention to the relative performance of students or encourage competition. Indeed, her instructional methods and discourse highlighted her focus on teamwork as she continually engaged many students during lessons and reviews, ensuring accountability as she asked for various students’ input during lessons and consistently using terms such as “we” and “let’s” in discussing tasks.

**Grouping**

Jenny provided students continual opportunities to work with one another. Students were asked to work together or confer with one another on some tasks, and freely sought help from one another while doing homework or completing pretests. At the same time, Jenny demanded individual accountability, both as she questioned many different students during lessons, as well as through homework, quizzes, and tests. Jenny, like Tom, did not formally institute collaborative groupings in her classroom. However, collaborative groupings occurred informally during every class as students worked on tasks as well as during instructional periods. Many students worked in pairs, or as small groups, and at times, students easily interchanged desks with one another over the course of one class period.

Similar to Tom’s math tasks, Jenny did not generally design tasks in which student goals and rewards were inter-reliant (Ryan & Pintrich, 1998). However she encouraged student collaboration as is evident in the above discussion.

**Time to Ask for Help**

Jenny provided generous time allotments for instructional review, including many student participants on in-class work on review assignments and new tasks. During these times, students actively engaged in class discussion and problem solving, as well as seeking
help from Jenny and one another. Jenny was continually available and responsive to requests for help during and following instruction.

**Student-Teacher Relationship**

Jenny showed recognition and respect for students’ needs beyond academics. Jenny’s classroom atmosphere was respectful and positive. She was continually patient, both during instruction and in responding to requests for help. She did not publicly compare or criticize students. Jenny allowed students to move about freely and work in groups. She chatted with students near the end of each class, appearing to cue them that this was acceptable after much hard work (which was evident in every class). Jenny apparently enjoyed these personal exchanges with the students as they talked about various topics, from student weekend jobs, to the qualities of ipods, to a student animatedly recounting to her the events of a sports game in which he was a participant.

Jenny demonstrated her concern for the students’ personal and emotional needs when she suggested at the end of a difficult lesson, “If you need to loosen up, take a break and stretch your legs. Let’s do that for a few minutes.” Then she added, “You get five minutes to be goofy.” In another instance, as she observed Meg’s progress on a task, she commented, “All right, you got them right!” and rubbed Meg’s arm. Meg responded with a broad smile.

Jenny constantly encouraged students and provided positive feedback. She appealed to them as part of a team, suggestive that we are “all in this together” as evidenced by various comments, for example, “Number 17 is a bad question. Don’t worry if you get one like that. I will see what you did,” or “These are easy to mix up. I do [it] too. So be careful.”

Jenny used humor in relating with the students. For example, when a student lofted a shot at the garbage can with balled up wastepaper and missed, Jenny smiled and commented,
“Good try.” In another instance, when a student sat with his head lying on the desk, Jenny asked the class, “Should we sing happy birthday to Rob to wake him up.” Students showed their comfort in reciprocal joking. For example, when asked to write his answer on the overhead for the class, a student joked with Jenny, “You’re taking a big chance asking me to do it!”

Like Jane, Jenny shared a similar informal relationship with the students and offered social and emotional support believed to build trust.

**Student Relationships**

Jenny provided frequent opportunities for student discussion during instruction as well as collaboration and helping while they worked on tasks. Jenny’s task activity structure was similar to Tom’s. However, Jenny continually used scaffolding instruction, asking for a variety of students’ responses during every lesson and permitting students to choose their own seatmates as well as freely exchange seating while working on tasks.

Students in Jenny’s class appeared to be willing to risk “not knowing” during whole class instruction and openly shared both their frustrations as well as their enjoyment of math. For example, after Jenny queried them, while many students indicated they needed continued algebra review, one student commented, “I love algebra!” Students’ willingness to be so candid may be attributed to the nonjudgmental and respectful tone Jenny set in the classroom.

As mentioned, Jenny not only accommodated students’ need for social time, but she regularly participated in social exchanges with the students.
Teacher Characteristics

Jenny, similar to Jane, was friendly, patient, caring, and used humor and showed personal interest in the students. She also showed her eagerness for students to learn math.

It was apparent that Jenny not only enjoyed teaching the students, she also enjoyed teaching math. She appeared committed and dependable in her support for the students, dedicating generous amounts of time to negotiating understanding during instruction and while assisting students individually. Jenny displayed respect for the students’ academic, social and emotional well being as discussed earlier (e.g., team approach, personal interest in the students, concern that students understand and learn, opportunities within the classroom for social interaction).

Jenny emitted an aura of quiet confidence in her knowledge of the subject matter, in her confidence in the students’ ability to learn, and in her promotion of a sense of “belongingness” (Weiner, 1990) where all students are important participants in the learning process.

How Help is Given

Jenny consistently used scaffolding, and offered models and demonstrations, both during whole class activities and when providing individual help. Jenny was creative in providing help. For example, in offering a strategy to help a student recognize positive and negative line slopes, Jenny raised her arms in a “Y” position to demonstrate that the left arm represented a negative slope and the right arm represented a positive one.

While students worked on tasks, Jenny regularly checked their progress, offered help and volunteered suggestions. She did not appear to be selective about whom she offered help
nor did she make evaluative comments when helping students. Furthermore, Jenny was patient in providing help, and, in one instance, spent several minutes helping one student.

**Willingness to Help**

Jenny consistently offered positive and non-evaluative help and explicit encouragement for asking questions. Jenny continually demonstrated willingness to help during class instruction and when she circulated around the classroom while students worked on tasks. Further, she offered math tutorials after school twice weekly, and reminded students of additional tutorials to help them prepare for tests. As well, students met with her for individual help before and after school.

**Effectiveness of Help**

Students frequently requested Jenny’s assistance for help in problem solving or for clarification about their understanding. I observed that many students seemed to prefer Jenny as a helper and were prepared to wait until she was available if she was busy helping other students. Jenny demonstrated understanding of students’ need for help and consistently provided assistance that increased student understanding through her instructional methods and classroom routines (scaffolding learning, providing pretests as models for tests, providing models of sample questions to assist students, demonstrations, making students accountable by calling on several each class, checking with each student while they worked on tasks, etc.)

**Expectations of Students**

Threaded throughout her instructional practices and interactions with students, Jenny demonstrated a respectful confidence in the students’ ability to learn and progress. She established an atmosphere in which she and the students seemed to comprise a “team”. This
was evident as she continually engaged in dialogue with the students not only during instruction but when she asked students to assess their learning needs to help decide the daily reviews. Jenny demonstrated that making errors, not understanding and forgetting are to be expected. At the same time, Jenny expected and ensured student accountability, as she continually called on many students during instruction, checked their progress daily, and assessed their progress through homework assignments, quizzes, pretests and tests.

During my observations in Jenny’s classroom she did not appear to demonstrate evidence of differential treatment toward students with regard to her expectations.

**Liz’s Classroom**

Liz taught a grade nine English class in which the two student participants in Jenny’s math class, Jess and Meg, were also enrolled.

**Tasks - Content, Activities, Instructional Discourse**

During my observations in Liz’s class, students engaged in many activities. They selected library books for sustained silent reading (SSR), planned for writing book reviews, wrote journal entries, and were introduced to the study of a Shakespeare play. As well, students were engaged in a variety of other tasks, intended to build skills with long term mastery expectations in planning and completing projects they would present to the class (see Table 12).
Table 12: Teacher observations in Liz’s English classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<td>Tasks</td>
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For these projects, students were asked to choose a character, describe three or four traits about the character, select song lyrics of their choice to depict these traits, and prepare a speech explaining the links between the lyrics and the traits. As the date neared for the presentations, Liz demonstrated for the students, “When it’s your turn, you’re going to come up, and put your music on. We’ll listen to the music with the lyrics you present on the overhead. Then you will present the character you chose. [You will describe] four characteristics and give evidence from your lyrics. You will need to discuss this.”
In preparation for these presentations, students were engaged in several tasks, which involved the continual building of skills and understanding. They wrote paragraphs, selected three or four adjectives about a character “Louisa” from a novel they read, found text evidence to support their choices, and explained how these examples represented the traits. Students were asked to prepare opening and closing sentences as well as use transition words in their paragraphs, all skills they were expected to use in completing their projects. In describing one task, Liz focused on building their understanding, “You’re going to put them into a format … very much like the one you did for … This time I want you to be more precise with your transition words. Last time you got to choose how you would use it. This time I want you to do it in a specific way. The first transition word will go at the beginning of the first example, etc.” Liz emphasized that writing is a developmental process, for example, when she responded to a student who was concerned whether a paragraph she had written should be considered a draft or final product, “Remember, technically, everything is a draft because we always revise our writing.”

In assisting students in developing skills for the project, during teacher led class discussion, Liz encouraged them to share their thinking. Liz elicited from the students adjectives they had chosen to describe “Louisa” and wrote them on a poster board. She encouraged them to consider other ideas, “It’s not always best to choose the first three characteristics you think of. You might come up with better ideas as you hear more ideas from everyone.” Students collaborated in building understanding. For example, a student (Meg) asked the class during discussion, “She was sort of to herself. What’s the word for that?” Another student responded, “private” and Liz added, “That’s a good one, private, as Meg says, to herself.”
Liz used scaffolding, modeling and demonstrating to build student understanding, while calling on various students. For example, after diagnosing common errors, Liz reviewed the use of transition words. She began, "Most outlines are really good, but some had trouble with transition words. If you start with 'another example', what's wrong with that?" Several students responded, "You haven't given a first example." Liz replied, "Yes. In what context can you use however, Tory?" Tory answered, "The next point has to be the opposite of the first." Liz restated, "Yes, it is used to show contrast." Liz then reviewed how to give evidence for characteristics and drew a model outline on the overhead.

In another example, Liz asked, "What's the dramatic irony in the story Chris?" After he responded, another student asked, "Why is it dramatic irony?" Liz responded, "Good question." She asked, "Why is it dramatic irony?" Another student responded. Liz then asked, "How is this situational irony, Sam?" Sam explained. Liz asked, "Is it verbal irony?" Chris indicated correctly that it wasn't and Liz replied, "Let's review. What does verbal irony mean?" Another student supplied the correct answer and Liz added, "So you're right Chris."

As Liz introduced the play "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (not related to the projects), typical of exchanges that occurred as this discussion continued, she questioned and elaborated on student responses and discussion, again scaffolding, while encouraging students to demonstrate and evaluate their thinking.

For example, students were given a handout of questions with a "before" and "after" column. They were asked to complete the "before" column, to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding about Shakespeare, before studying the play, in preparation for a class discussion. Liz asked for student responses about the first question, "Who is William Shakespeare?"
S1 (first student): “A guy.”
Liz: “What has someone else got?”
S2 (second student): “He’s gay.”
Liz: “Why do you say that?”
S2: “Because he likes romance.”
Liz: “Can you explain?”
S2: “The way his male characters talk (S2 reads an excerpt from the play).”
Liz: “So it’s the male characters talk about love and romance.”
S2: “Also it’s poemy too.”
Liz: “You have raised an interesting point that I’m sure people think about.”
S3 (third student): “Didn’t everybody talk like that back then?”
Liz: “Interesting point. Is that the way people talked all the time then?
S2: “So he wears like a dress too.”
S4 (fourth student): “But that’s the fashion of men’s clothing then.”
Liz: “So (repeats all the points that have been made). Lots of things you have said we
will be coming back to as we study the play and they will become more meaningful.
S2 is really talking about stereotypical gender roles – our expectations about how
men and women should behave. We need to talk about where these come from – how
these stereotypical ideas develop. Also in terms of parents and children and
expectations, etc. So, you have brought up interesting points we will continue to talk
about in terms of the play. These issues will be raised again and again.”

Throughout her instructional discourse, Liz emphasized that many tasks would
involve varying outcomes. For example, Liz stated, “A while ago we talked about theme
statements. There’s not going to be one sentence or line that is only right. You could fill in different responses. So let’s fill in for this.” Liz wrote: Sometimes ____ the result is _____. Liz called on students to supply alternate responses. In another example Liz suggested, “The book doesn’t really tell you. We just have to figure out the meaning ourselves.”

Students were given many choices in preparing regular journal entries, and Liz provided topics of personal interest to them. For one journal entry, students were asked to choose their identities, create new names, explain how they chose the names and their meaning, and describe the significance of these names in their new life. Liz engaged their interest as she explained, “Pretend you are Louisa. If you want to create another existence for yourself, what would your new name be? What life would your new name suggest you are living?” In a previous lesson, Liz had discussed the meanings in names in the “Louisa” novel and the students had completed an accompanying assignment. The students showed high interest and continually shared with one another as they wrote.

In addition to providing topics of personal relevance for their journal entries, Liz allowed students to make choices in preparing their presentations. They chose characters and lyrics as well as modes to present the lyrics, all of which created interest and animated discussion among the students.

During group instruction, Liz encouraged students to approach tasks metacognitively, offering them strategies to monitor their own progress by providing model paragraph outlines, listing criteria for acceptable paragraphs, and demonstrating the steps required for student presentations.

Liz also offered strategies and encouraged effort as she outlined one task “I want you to write five adjectives to describe Louisa. Try to use specific adjectives. It will make it
easier to do literary paragraphs if single words are chosen. Don’t give up if you come up with a word that isn’t an adjective. You might be able to turn it into an adjective. See if you can.”

Liz encouraged students to use help-seeking as a strategy as they prepared to work on a challenging task. She explained, “My plan is that you get the outline finished in class. So we’ll do it in class so if you have trouble, what’s your plan?” Students responded, “Ask.” Liz replied, “Yes.” However, at another time, Liz may have discouraged students from adopting potentially effective strategies that might have involved peer collaboration. For example, as students began to write paragraphs, Liz reminded them, “We are doing it in class so that I can help you.” In view of the fact that Liz consistently encouraged student discussion and sharing of ideas during instructional periods, perhaps in this instance, she may have believed her help would be particularly required to further clarify the task goals and criteria as the students proceeded with writing the paragraphs.

Student Active Participation in Learning

Liz offered choices within tasks, often guided by students’ interests as they prepared their presentations and journal entries, as well as during other tasks. Students were all expected to complete tasks with similar goals, although the processes and outcomes often varied.

Liz encouraged independent thinking as students engaged in discussion and debate during classes, as discussed in Tasks. Like Jane, Liz questioned and probed, as some discussions evolved into students’ demonstrations and evaluations of their own or peer’s thinking. Again, like Jane, Liz did not appear to have a system to ensure equitable student participation. However she called on several students during instruction and discussions and students consistently participated enthusiastically.
Liz's classroom was quite informal and students talked to classmates, ate snacks, and moved about, borrowing materials, working with their seatmates and occasionally working with others. Although students had been assigned seating at the beginning of the term, on my second observation, three weeks into the term, Liz allowed students to choose their own seatmates. She appeared to monitor this closely, indicating to the students, “We'll see how it goes” reminding them they could continue with the seating arrangements if there was not too much socializing. Twice she warned them when the class was particularly noisy or social that they might need to return to assigned seating. For example, during a particularly enthusiastic class response when Liz asked the students about their involvement in the play “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” which was being studied in drama class, Liz called, “Above the roar, do you need a new seating plan?” Liz indicated to me that this class was unusually rambunctious but was also creative and eager to participate. Further, Liz commented about the trade-offs, in terms of the energy required for her to teach this highly energetic, enthusiastic and vocal group of students as compared to another less lively and less enthusiastic class, which she also taught.

Liz's concern with management at the beginning of the term may have, at times, discouraged student collaboration as they worked on tasks. On three occasions, during the last five to ten minutes of the class period, when the classroom noise level was high and when she observed that students were not working very productively, she asked students to work silently. For example, on one occasion, as students worked on their journal entries, which they eagerly shared with one another, the classroom became very noisy. Liz stated, “Okay, I know it’s fun to talk about but I want five minutes of silent work. Once you are finished you can share with one another if you want.” At another time, a group of five
students who had been working together became noisy and off-task. Liz asked them to return to their seats and one student responded, “But we’ll work quietly.” Liz responded, “All right, I want you to work silently.” Three students continued to work together while two returned to their desks of their own volition. Earlier on during this observational period, Liz observed this same group of students at work, approached them, and commented, “A little hive of activity ladies, nice to see”, indicating that she valued productive student collaboration.

Following her request for silence from these students, she reminded the whole class that they should work silently so students could finish their work. On the third occasion, again during a very noisy period at the end of class, Liz asked, “Okay I’m going to ask you to work quietly for ten minutes. If you work well you should be finished number one and two. You are to stay in your seats and work silently.”

Liz’s requests for silence or quiet seemed to be intended to reduce the noise level and encourage productive work habits, rather than discourage collaboration. She demonstrated this, when at the end of some classes, she voiced her appreciation for their responsiveness to her requests to work more quietly. Her concerns with class management at the beginning of the term may have resulted in her discouragement of collaboration during seatwork, which was inconsistent with her whole class instructional practices where students were encouraged to share their ideas. However, when she asked for silence or for students to return to their seats, it did seem to have a calming influence, after which the students often returned to working collaboratively with a reduced noise level. Furthermore, both Jess and Meg conveyed their beliefs that Liz was not a strict teacher and did not indicate that she discouraged peer interactions in the classroom.
Perhaps Liz could have explicitly expressed the value of working together collaboratively, along with her reminders about reducing the noise level and staying “on task”. In this way she might have provided a clear message about the value of students’ active participation in their own learning and of working together collaboratively.

**Recognition and Evaluation Practices**

Liz routinely recognized students and offered personally encouraging comments about their responses or progress with tasks. For example, she commented, “You have brought up an interesting point. We will continue to talk about it in terms of the play,” “I’d like you to be aware of Meg’s point about being aware of where other actors are on stage,” “I didn’t realize you guys would have so much information about what a good actor is. You’ve given really interesting, sophisticated thoughts,” and “There are some pretty fascinating entries I’m reading (journal entries about changing names)”.

Liz also focused on strengths and weakness, when offering individualized feedback. In one instance she commented to a student, “You need to find a better transition word, one that connects the two ideas. At another time, she stated, “Lovely work, nice transitions, just this sentence (reads it). What do you think about it?” The student recognized that it was a run-on sentence and was able to correct it.

Liz did not criticize or compare students, and did not discuss grades at all when I observed in her classroom. However she used a criterion based grading system, similar to the other three classrooms in which I observed.

Liz acknowledged challenges, with a focus on building understanding. For example, as students offered theme statements, Liz called on a student. The student responded, “No I can’t. I have something but it doesn’t make sense.” Liz encouraged her, “Well go ahead and
we’ll make sense of it.” Although this student was not prepared to continue, after Liz called on several others to provide their theme statements, she returned to this student to determine if any of their theme statements might explain what she was thinking.

Liz used student misunderstanding in a diagnostic manner when she determined that several students were having difficulty using transition words, and provided further instruction to the class. However, at another time, Liz did not take the opportunity to use student errors in this manner. For example, when many students asked Liz for similar help with writing topic sentences she helped each individually but did not offer a class review.

**Grouping**

Liz provided many opportunities for students to exchange ideas and opinions during whole class instructional activities. As well, students were allowed to choose their seatmates and help one another on assigned tasks. I observed students helping others as well.

Perhaps Liz might have encouraged students to work together on some tasks that seemed ideally suited for collaboration. For example, the Shakespeare ‘before’ assignment might have been an ideal small group activity for students to share their knowledge and report back to the teacher during the planned discussion, but when two students began to work together, Liz reminded them, “I’m going to ask this to be an individual assignment. You need to do it on your own.” However, Liz may have assigned this task to gauge individual student’s understanding and knowledge about Shakespeare and his plays. She may have felt that this would become most evident if the students entered the class discussion with their initial thoughts and understandings. Finally, like Tom and Jenny, Liz did not assign group tasks that incorporated provisions for interdependent goals or rewards.
Time to Ask for Help

Liz permitted students to ask for help at any time, and in four classes that I observed, students were given generous amounts of time to work on tasks. However, during one observation period, most of the class time was taken up with last minute organizational planning for the class presentations to begin the next day, followed by a highly interactive introductory lesson about Shakespeare. Students were assigned two tasks near the end of the lesson, allowing little time to ask for help. Although they did not request Liz’s help, students discussed these tasks with one another as they began to work on them and Liz did not discourage this collaborative work.

Student-Teacher Relationships

Liz demonstrated her desire to build positive relationships with her students in several ways. She showed recognition of the students’ social needs when she allowed them to move about in the classroom and when she chatted with students, and at one time, joining a group of girls who welcomed her into their conversation. While they chatted, Meg patted Liz’s arm, showing familiarity and enjoyment in her company. At another time, a student gave her a quick hug.

Liz showing personal interest in the students, for example, as she introduced “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”, she asked a student, “Ben, aren’t you in the school play? Can you give us a few lines?” At another time, as the librarian described several books to the students, he suggested the book Zombie might interest the boys. Liz made a point of showing her awareness of students’ personal interests when she interjected, “We had a book exchange in class and quite a few girls recommended Stephen King and Zombie like books.” On
another occasion Liz demonstrated her concern about a student, when she noticed his head down and asked, “Are you all right? Are you feeling okay?”

Liz joked with the students, for example, as she outlined one task, “… if you want to create another existence for yourself, what would your new name be?” A student responded, “Superman.” Liz laughed, “Okay you don’t want a name that stands out but Superman fits you perfectly!” In another instance when a student suggested he could bring an Itrip to play the song lyrics for his presentation, Liz joked, “Do you have to pack for it?”

Liz’s classroom atmosphere appeared generally positive, and students appeared to enjoy relating with Liz and to feel supported by her. For example, in responding to my questions about her help-seeking, Meg explained that she felt comfortable asking Liz for help because, “My teacher is rad!” Another student showed her enjoyment of Liz’s humor when she remarked to her seatmate, “She’s funny!”

**Student Relationships**

Liz promoted positive peer relations when she provided opportunities for student discussion and showed that varying student opinions were valued. As well, Liz called on students for their ideas when she was helping other students. For example, when a student mentioned a book that he liked and asked her the name of the author, Liz replied that she did not know and turned to another student and asked if he knew. This student shared his knowledge about the author with the student who had made the inquiry. In another example, when asked by a student for help finding a quote from a novel to represent a ‘Louisa’ characteristic, Liz solicited the class for help, “Everybody, we’re trying to find the ‘money in the sock’ quote. Jamie needs it. Can anyone find it?” Another student found it and asked Liz, “Who wanted the ‘money in the sock’ quote?” Liz relayed this information to Jamie.
Although she encouraged students to support one another in this manner, students might have worked on this assignment in collaborative groups. Further, during the same observational period that Liz had encouraged student collaboration, at another time, when a student called out to another student to help him, Liz interjected, "I'll help you. I've got nothing to do. I'm happy to help you." Perhaps again Liz was demonstrating her concern about classroom management because the student had called out. However she did not admonish him for doing so. As mentioned in earlier discussions, social and cooperative interactions, such as students helping one another and working collaboratively on tasks may have been discouraged at times in Liz’s classroom. Nonetheless, student collaboration still occurred regularly, perhaps because the students recognized that Liz’s concerns about class management were not intended to discourage them from supporting one another.

**Teacher Characteristics**

Liz exhibited many qualities characteristic of teachers from whom students are comfortable in seeking help. For example, she was friendly, caring, interested in the students, and demonstrated a sense of humor and an upbeat disposition.

Furthermore, Liz appeared dedicated to teaching the students, clearly enjoyed teaching English and showed her pleasure when students demonstrated their high engagement in tasks or when they contributed in discussion and offered insightful and thoughtful comments.

**How Help is Given**

Liz consistently demonstrated scaffolding during whole class activities, and often did so as well as when providing individual help. However, during one observational period, one student (Jamie) seemed to be experiencing continuing difficulty and frustration about
completing tasks in preparation to write literary paragraphs (e.g. list three adjectives to
describe a character, and find evidence in a story for each adjective, choose transition words
from a list compiled during a class discussion, write concluding sentences). Liz did not
demonstrate the consistent scaffolding typical of her usual practices when she helped him. As
well, at one time during this class, Liz encouraged him to seek only her help although many
other students worked collaboratively on these tasks during this class. When the class began
to work on this assignment, Jamie immediately asked Liz, “Can I start writing now? I have
my three characteristics [adjectives].” Liz responded, “No, you have to have your evidence
first.” He responded, “So now what do I do?” Liz answered, “You now look in the story and
find proof or evidence.” Jamie supplied one adjective, “I think she was foolish.” Liz
suggested, “Okay find evidence.” Then Liz continued to circulate. Jamie immediately asked
another student, “How do we do this? Come here and help me please.” This student replied,
“You come here and I will help you.” Liz overheard this exchange, and asked Jamie, “How’s
it going?” Jamie replied, “I don’t know what to do.” Liz asked, “So what three adjectives
have you chosen?” Jamie listed the three adjectives he had chosen. Liz suggested, “So now
find examples in your story to show proof.” Jamie asked, “How she was …? Is that
evidence? “Liz responded, “Yes. Just jot them down. Then when you find evidence for each
adjective, ask me to help you again.” Jamie replied, “Okay.” Shortly after Liz left him, Jamie
called to another student, “Hey, okay, I’ve got an example. What should I do?” Liz, who was
nearby, interrupted, “I can help him. That’s my job. You go do your work.” Throughout this
period Jamie continually sought help and students from whom he repeatedly asked for help,
showed their frustration in responding. For example, one student commented, “Jamie, you’re
being really annoying. You haven’t even got … ” At another time, when Jamie asked a
student, “For determined, is running away a good example?” the student expressed exasperation, “Oh, no, no, no …” Despite their frustration with him, students tried to help him and in one instance two students collaborated in trying to figure out how to help him.

Perhaps Liz’s actions indicated her efforts to get Jamie to show some persistence in tackling tasks he found challenging, hoping that he would have some success, thus increasing his confidence. She may also have been concerned about Jamie’s relationships with other students as a result of his constant requests for assistance. Jamie demonstrated dependent help-seeking behavior in continually asking others to tell him what to do. Perhaps in being directive with Jamie, Liz showed her recognition of his low tolerance for frustration and that moving him toward more adaptive help-seeking behavior would require many incremental steps.

When Liz was not responding to requests for help, she regularly checked on students’ progress with tasks, offering help and volunteering suggestions. Moreover, Liz did not appear to display any evaluative or negative overtones when helping students, even over the period of time when Jamie demonstrated little effort or persistence with tasks as well as dependent help-seeking behavior.

Willingness to Help

Liz appeared to be consistently willing to help students during instruction. As well, she was evidently eager to help them when they worked on tasks as she continually checked on their progress and offered help as she circulated throughout the classroom. She also explicitly encouraged students to ask her for help.
Effectiveness of Help

Liz attempted to ensure student understanding through her instructional methods and classroom routines (scaffolding, modeling, demonstrating, calling on several students during each class, monitoring students work on tasks, etc.). Liz generally provided individual help that appeared to increase student understanding, although the help she provided Jamie did not always seem to increase his understanding.

Student Expectations

Liz demonstrated positive expectations about students’ ability to learn and progress in giving task choices, in providing tasks intended to build student skills for the lyrics project and through attempts to accommodate student needs as they faced challenges while working on tasks. Liz showed confidence in students’ ability to contribute productively during lessons as she encouraged participation. She showed enthusiasm for both teaching the students and for their demonstrations of learning during class discussions and as they progressed with tasks.

However, as a result of apparent management concerns, at times, she may have discouraged students from using one another as resources while they worked on tasks.

Liz appeared generally consistent in her treatment of students with regard to her expectations of them although during help-seeking interactions with Jamie, her instruction was more directive and less scaffolded. Perhaps, as mentioned, Liz may have offered help in this manner to keep his frustration from escalating.

Student Help-Seeking

In this section, I describe the student participants in Jenny’s math class and in Liz’s English class. Jess is the student without a learning disability and Meg is the student with an
identified learning disability, who was paired with Jess. In the introductions to my descriptions of Jess and Meg, I provide an account of each of their general help-seeking perspectives, which was gained during the initial interviews.

For each class, I then describe observations and the perceptions of Jess, followed by observations and the perceptions of Kim, who was paired with Kate. Many of the students’ responses during the initial and final interviews are included in the descriptions and the interview in which their comments were made is indicated.

Jenny’s Classroom

Jess – General Description and Initial Interview

Jess was a grade nine student who was reported as achieving grades above 90% in all subject areas. Her English and math teachers reported that she sometimes behaved inappropriately in their classes (loud, aggressive, or inappropriate exchanges with peers), but became quiet and worked on her own in the classroom when I was observing. She was also reported to have taken an interest in the Goth subculture, surrounding herself with some other students with this same interest.

During our initial interview, Jess’s mastery goals were evident in her comments that she put the most effort into the subjects she found the most difficult. She also indicated that she found schoolwork easy and seldom required help. Although she indicated that she usually asked her friends for help first, she emphasized that in the subjects she found most difficult, she preferred to ask teachers for help. Consistent with mastery goals, she said she would persist in asking for help by asking others if the help the teacher supplied did not increase her understanding. She mentioned that math is the subject (this term) in which she would most likely ask for help, because unlike, for example, English, it does not always make sense. She described her high motivation in English, which she felt was fun and easy, and on which she
spent a lot of time. She mentioned similar concerns as Kate about the potential for embarrassment if she asked for help when she felt she was supposed to know. She commented on the inhibiting effects of asking for help in front of the class when “everybody’s listening” as well as classroom norms that require students to wait for permission to ask for help during instructional periods. She emphasized that she would ask when she felt she needed the help, even in the midst of instruction, but that some students might not. She demonstrated sensitivity when she suggested that teachers should be aware of students who need help but who would not interrupt a lesson. She added that teachers need to be sure to make eye contact with all students during instruction, and especially students who are expected to have trouble. She also stressed the importance of not singling anyone out.

**Jess’s Help-Seeking – Observations**

When I observed Jess as she entered the classroom before classes started, she appeared to enjoy socializing with her friends. During classroom activities, she was very focused, listening to instruction, working continuously, and usually alone, on tasks, or reading a novel once she completed her tasks.

Jess sought her teacher’s help adaptively each of the four times she asked for help during my observations in Jenny’s classroom (see Table 13). She asked about the steps in problem solving each time. In three instances, Jenny confirmed that she was on the right track. During the fourth help-seeking interaction, Jess recognized an error she had made in the steps as Jenny began to explain. After each request for help, Jess continued working independently and did not request further help with similar problems. In one instance, Jess indicated that she thought of asking for help but didn’t because it was an insignificant problem that was not important enough to ask.
Table 13: Observations of Jess’s help-seeking in Jenny’s classroom

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Jess sought Jenny’s help after lessons as she worked on her homework and when Jenny was circulating throughout the classroom. During my initial interview with Jess, she indicated that she preferred to ask for help “when there’s work time and [I can] just walk to the teacher instead of putting [my] hand up ... [because] everyone is staring at you if you raise your hand in math, in [the] middle of teaching everyone’s listening.” Later in the interview, she again suggested the same concerns, “When someone else starts to ask questions in class it’s easier to ask after [you] wait for someone else. People don’t pay as much attention [after the] first question is asked.” However, she added, “[I] decide how important [it is] to me ... [I] will ask on the spot of the teacher if [it’s] really important to me.” These comments seem to indicate Jess’s concerns related to the inhibiting features of whole class activities (Eccles & Midgley, 1989) and perhaps threats related to social status concerns (Ryan, et al., 1998). However, it appears Jess felt able to juggle mixed goals in order to achieve her primary goals for mastery. Despite concerns that might have inhibited her help-seeking, Jess was also equipped with a history of very high achievement and the associated perceptions of cognitive competence (Newman, 1990; Ryan et al., 1997).
Support for Help-Seeking - Jess’s Perceptions

Jess supplied little information about the help she received, generally only explaining that she wanted to be sure she was using the correct procedures in problem solving, reflecting mastery goals (Ames & Archer, 1988). Jess offered little comment about the teacher’s support for her help-seeking (see Table 14). However, she stated that she was satisfied with the help she received.

Table 14: Jess’s perceptions about her help-seeking in Jenny’s classroom

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It was apparent that Jess engaged in minimal contact with her teacher, and only in relation to academic matters, despite Jenny’s highly supportive classroom social and task environment. As mentioned, concerns were expressed about Jess’s relationships with teachers in the classroom as well as her interest in a non-mainstream subculture. However, she was also achieving very high grades in all subject areas and appeared to have found a balance between any potential social concerns (Ryan, et al., 1997) and her apparent mastery goals (Ames & Archer, 1988). Given the importance of the social realm to adolescents (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997), Jess appeared to be coordinating potentially conflicting goals admirably.
Meg – General Description and Initial Interview

Meg appeared to be a cheerful, optimistic, and friendly individual. She enjoyed friendships with many students in the classroom, including Jess, and was often seen sharing hugs, jokes, and chats. She was also friendly with her teachers and myself. She appeared to take pleasure in her frequent contact with her mother during the school day and seemed to be proud of her mother’s role as a Special Education Assistant in the school she attended. At the same time, she asserted healthy independence, as evidenced when she responded to a question in our initial interview about what she does when she is having difficulty with her schoolwork, “I rarely ask my Mom!”

Jenny reported that Meg was maintaining a D grade in math and Liz indicated she was achieving a high B grade in English. Meg’s mother reported that Meg attained mostly B grades in other subjects.

During our initial interview, Meg expressed her mastery goals when she reiterated more than once that if she doesn’t understand, she perseveres in seeking help until she does understand (during lunch, after school, tutorials). She indicated that math is the only subject in which she really needs help this term. She also expressed her desire to do well in schoolwork overall. She discussed some influences on her help seeking, for example, her relationships with her teachers, teacher characteristics, and the availability and effectiveness of helpers. She also indicated that her feelings toward her teachers influenced how much effort she put into school subjects. Finally, she mentioned that her willingness to ask for help and her effectiveness at help-seeking had improved over the previous year, which she partially attributed to the increased comfort she felt with her teachers.
Meg’s Help-Seeking – Observations

Meg consistently requested help adaptively (see Table 15) when I observed her in Jenny’s classroom. She usually sought help for clarification or demonstration of steps in solving problems. After she requested help she continued to work independently. Even when she requested help five times during one class, she quickly refocused on her task. Like Jess, Meg’s help-seeking behavior in math class reflected personal mastery goals.

Table 15: Observations of Meg’s help-seeking in Jenny’s classroom

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<td>Effectiveness</td>
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During my initial interview with Meg, she indicated that if she didn’t understand after receiving help in class, “I keep asking. [After I get help] with one question [I] still may need help so I come at lunch or after school to be able to do the rest of the work.” Consistent with her statement, I witnessed her persisting in trying to achieve understanding, and in one instance, for a period of five minutes during one help-seeking episode with her teacher. Meg readily sought help when she recognized she could not continue with tasks on her own. This was evident in her task focus; she was generally either working on tasks or asking for help when I observed her following lessons in the classroom.

Although I observed Meg seeking help thirteen times, she reported only asking for help six times. She also indicated that she requested teacher help most often but I observed her seeking help from other students on several occasions as well.
Support for Help-Seeking - Meg’s Perceptions

Meg consistently reported that the help she received assisted her in meeting her goals and that she received positive support from her helpers (see Table 16). She described seeking help from both her teacher and her friend, Jess, “Yes [it helped meet my goal] because I had good explainers.” Meg also indicated that she was comfortable asking both the teacher and other students (usually Jess, or another girl, who was also a friend and a strong math student), “I felt comfortable because I liked the people I asked” or “[I] felt fine [because] she’s one of my close buds.”

Table 16: Meg’s perceptions about her help-seeking in Jenny’s classroom

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<td>How help is given</td>
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<td>Willingness to help</td>
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<td>Effectiveness of help</td>
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While I was unable to elicit Jess’s views about her relationship with potential helpers, Meg was willing to express her views. During our initial interview, Meg highlighted the importance of student-teacher relationships in her willingness to seek help (Friedel et al., 2002; Ryan et al., 1998; Turner et al., 2002; Patrick et al., 2001) when she expressed her concerns about potential helpers. For example, when asked whether she felt her help-seeking behavior changed in different situations, she responded, “I speak up more this year than last
year because I'm finding teachers more available, easier to talk to, easier to ask questions. Last year I didn't ask my teacher because he and I didn't get along very well ... ” She also mentioned, “In Spanish [last term], I asked my friends cause my teacher wasn't very easy to talk to ... always put people on the spot ... would get mad if [you] don't pronounce it right” (initial interview).

Meg demonstrated that she was comfortable requesting teacher help in front of other students as well as calling on other students to ask for help while the class worked on tasks. She did not appear to be concerned about looking incompetent in front of others even though math was the subject of most difficulty for her, again reflecting her mastery goals (Newman & Goldin, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). Unlike Jess, Meg neither expressed nor demonstrated concerns about potential embarrassment related to her help-seeking.

As mentioned, Meg achieved at least average grades in all subject areas except for math. During our initial interview, she indicated that she did not generally have much difficulty with subjects other than math, demonstrating her overall confidence in her cognitive competence (Newman & Schwager, 1993). Further, she indicated her expectation that, with persistence, she could have success with math as well. Not only did she state that she persisted in seeking help until she received the help she needed, but she also reflected in our interview, “I have two math classes in a row ... the second one for extra help. [I have math] three hours every morning and usually have to work after school [on it]. I do a lot of math every day ... I really want to do good this year.” In the context of her positive help-seeking behaviors and her demonstrated and stated perseverance in getting help to increase her competence, it appears that when Meg referred to “doing good,” she was not subscribing to negative performance goals.
Finally, Meg seemed to enjoy warm and positive relations, not only with her teachers, but with other students, particularly three students who were high achievers in math, perhaps reflecting social intimacy goals associated with positive help-seeking behavior (Ryan et al., 1997).

**Liz’s Classroom**

**Jess’s Help-Seeking - Observations**

Jess did not seek help during my five observations in Liz’s English class (see Table 17), similar to her minimal help-seeking in Jenny’s class. She usually worked by herself and did not contribute to class discussions. However, she appeared to consistently remain focused during instruction and while working on tasks. For example, during one class Jess worked alone, continuously, and did not chat with anyone. However, each time she arrived for class, similar to her actions in math class, she typically chatted with other students, showing mutual enjoyment. In the first English class I observed, Jess was the first student to note in her agenda various assignment due dates discussed in class, again reflecting her task-focus.

Table 17: Observations of Jess’s help-seeking in Liz’s classroom

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<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
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Jess’s behavior was reported to have changed in both Liz’s and Jenny’s classes during my observations. Perhaps as a consequence of being observed, she was reported to be more much more subdued. Possibly her help-seeking behavior also changed. During our final
interview, I asked Jess about the effects of my presence as an observer in the classroom. She indicated that her behavior may have changed initially, but that she soon forgot that I was present.

Although Jess did not seek help in English class, there seemed to be no evidence that she demonstrated any other than mastery goals, and indeed, she appeared to be very self-regulating, just as I observed in Jenny's class, as evidenced by her task focus and her high achievement.

**Support for Help-Seeking - Jess's Perceptions**

Consistent with my observations, Jess reported either that she did not seek academic help or couldn’t recall whether she had sought help (see Table 18). She once asked a procedural question about whether an assignment should be handed in. Again, similar to her responses about help-seeking in Jenny's math class, Jess offered little information to help understand her perceptions about help-seeking. As well, similar to her interactions in Jenny's class, it appeared that Jess only initiated contact with Liz, her English teacher, in relation to academic matters, despite Liz's effort at establishing positive student-teacher relations.

Table 18: Jess’s perceptions about help-seeking in Liz’s classroom

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<tr>
<td>How help is given</td>
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The teachers mentioned concerns about Jess's behavior, alluding to emotional stresses in her life outside school, in addition to her social concerns. However, Jess may have been demonstrating behavior associated with striving for personal independence and autonomy, not unlike the rationale Kate provided when she explained why she did not seek help. Indeed, in our final interview, when I asked Jess about her help-seeking during my observations, she stated, “I don’t really need help, usually. Mostly, if I don’t get it at the beginning, I wait for a while, try to figure it out on my own, then [check with] friends, then [ask the] teacher if [I still] [don’t get it].” Jess also reflected that she asked for teacher help in math more than in English because, “My friends in math aren’t the smartest people and I need to rely on the teacher more.”

With regard to her general views about help-seeking, perhaps reflecting a common adolescent view associated with the inhibiting features of asking help in front of others (Eccles & Midgley, 1989), Jess stressed that she would advise a student entering high school, “Ask whenever you need help, but if you don’t want to look stupid, don’t ask too much. Accumulate your questions so you don’t ask too many times [or you will] really look stupid (final interview).”

Finally, during this interview, Jess emphasized her personal mastery goals (Ames & Archer, 1988), along with her beliefs about the goals demanded of a student such as herself (plans to attend university), and the importance of her relationships with teachers with regard to her help-seeking, “If there’s a teacher I seriously despise, I wouldn’t ask them, but I would do everything I could to be sure I understood … ask students, everyone I could think of, ask my Dad because I want to do really good.” When asked what she meant by wanting to “do
really good”, she explained, “My main goal is to understand now, but in grade 10, 11, and 12, marks are really important.”

**Meg's Help-Seeking – Observations**

Similar to her help-seeking goals in math class, Meg requested help adaptively each of the five times I observed her seeking help in Liz’s English class (see Table 19). She asked for clarification about whether she was meeting assignment goals, when she indicated that she was unsure she had chosen appropriate lyrics for her presentation and when she wondered if she had prepared too much information for her presentation. At other times, she asked for an explanation about the characteristics of a topic sentence, for help selecting an adjective to describe a personal characteristic, and for help choosing a transition word. Meg received help after each request and was able to continue working independently. Similar to her help-seeking actions in math class, Meg’s help-seeking behavior reflected mastery goals.

Table 19: Observations of Meg’s help-seeking in Liz’s classroom

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<td>Instrumental</td>
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Meg usually asked for teacher help, similar to her help-seeking in Jenny’s class. However, on one occasion, she sought help from the entire class during a classroom discussion, “She was sort of to herself. What’s the word for that?” Again, Meg demonstrated her comfort in asking questions in front of the class (Eccles & Midgley, 1989), similar to her actions in math class, with an apparent lack of concern about self-worth threats related to
help-seeking (Ryan et al., 1998). Perhaps her positive relationships with both the teacher and other students (Newman & Schwager, 1993) as well as perceptions of cognitive competence related to her above average achievement in English and success in other subjects (Newman, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997) contributed to her mastery goals. Furthermore, Liz’s encouragement of student participation during classroom instruction may have contributed to Meg’s comfort in both speaking out and seeking help publicly.

Although Jess appeared to share similar mastery goals with Meg, while Meg enjoyed frequent interactions with her teacher and frequent involvement in classroom discussion, it seems that Jess’s unwillingness to do so may have reflected social concerns, or perhaps other stresses that were not evident for Meg.

Support for Help-Seeking - Meg’s Perceptions

Although Meg reported that she asked for help only once in Liz’s class (see Table 20), she indicated that she was satisfied with the help she received when she stated, “I wasn’t sure how to organize the paragraph. I wanted to do it properly. The teacher gave me help and I finished my work. I felt fine [asking because] my teacher is rad.”

Table 20: Meg’s perceptions about her help-seeking in Liz’s classroom

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Several factors appeared to contribute to Meg's adaptive help-seeking behavior. Meg demonstrated social competence (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997), appearing to enjoy warm relationships with both her teachers and other students. Meg's actions and comments also reflected her positive self-esteem and perceptions of cognitive competence (Newman, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997), supported by her successful achievement in many subjects.

Furthermore, Meg perceived her teacher and the classroom environment, just as she described in Jenny's math class, to be positive influences with regard to her help-seeking.

Students with Learning Disabilities' Help-Seeking Across Classrooms

Previous studies have not specifically examined the help-seeking experiences of students with learning disabilities. As a result, the students with learning disabilities in this study were of particular interest. Therefore, in this section, comparisons are drawn between Meg and Kim, the two cases with learning disabilities, with regard to their help-seeking in the context of the two respective classrooms in which they were each observed.

While Meg consistently demonstrated adaptive help-seeking, and appeared to maintain a mastery focus in both Liz and Jenny's classrooms, Kim's personal goals seemed to vary from mastery to work avoidance within and across Tom's and Jane's classrooms.

Meg increased her effort and perseverance as she faced increasing academic challenges. For example, she stated, in the initial interview, that she wanted to do well in math. She felt that with effort, she could have success with math when she explained, "I have two math classes in a row ... the second one for extra help. [I have math] three hours every morning and usually have to work after school [on it]." Her expressed desire to work hard to achieve success in math was also reflected in my observations of her in Jenny's math class. She was very task focused and consistently persisted in trying to achieve understanding when she sought help, from the teachers most often, both in Jenny's math class and Liz's English
class. She also willingly asked for help in both classes during whole class instruction as well as when she worked on tasks following instruction.

Kim usually expressed and demonstrated mastery goals when seeking her seatmate's help in Tom's classroom and her teacher's help in Jane's planning classroom. However, she did not seek Tom's help at any time when I observed her, and she was often off task during seatwork periods when students worked on assignments, both during math and CAPP classes. Several factors may have contributed to Meg's and Kim's goals and help-seeking across the four classrooms in which I observed them.

**Student - Observations**

Kim and Meg shared similar characteristics in that their learning disabilities particularly challenged their achievement in math. However, they appeared to have few other personal characteristics in common with regard to help-seeking influences. While Meg's academic difficulties were described as quite specific to math, it was reported that Kim encountered difficulty in other subject areas as well. Meg conveyed her confidence in her cognitive competence and lack of concern about potential risks related to help-seeking. For example, she indicated that she did not have much difficulty with subjects other than math, and she readily sought help and entered discussion during whole class instruction in both math and English classes.

In contrast to Meg, who did not show concerns about asking for help, Kim expressed concerns about the potential embarrassment of asking for help in front of math class as well as the importance of "looking smart" and her low math competence. Reflecting these concerns, she did not ask for help publicly or enter discussions in math class. However, she
once asked for help during whole class instruction during Jane’s planning class, although, again, she did not enter class discussions.

Meg seemed to share close friendships with a few above-average achieving and task-focused students in both classes in which I observed (which she also reported in discussing her help-seeking). Meg also enjoyed warm interactions with other students as well as her teachers, Liz and Jenny, demonstrating qualities associated with social competence. Meg’s evident social competence may have also contributed to her apparent absence of concern about incurring negative judgments from potential helpers about her math competence (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997).

Unlike Meg, Kim tended to socialize with other students in the classroom, who, like her, seemed less task focused. For example, she was often off task during seatwork periods after lessons when help-seeking would have been appropriate. Furthermore, sometimes Kim exercised poor social skills. For example, when she approached Tom for information, she interrupted him while he worked with another student, and then displayed negative affect while waiting for a response. At another time she loudly called, “Shut up,” to a student as he entered Jane’s classroom in the midst of an instructional period.

It appears that Meg and Kim came to the classrooms differentially equipped with regard to their general achievement, perceptions of cognitive competence, and social competencies as well as their achievement goals. Meg’s actions and perceptions represented mastery goals while Kim expressed general views and demonstrated some characteristics aligned with performance goals that may have undermined the mastery goals that she sometimes expressed.
Classroom - Observations and Student Perceptions

My observations of and the students’ perceptions about the classrooms in which they were enrolled further illuminated their help-seeking. There appeared to be many similarities among the classrooms with regard to their overall support for student help-seeking. Many features characteristic of a mastery goal structure supportive of adaptive help-seeking were evident in all four classrooms. However, there were also more specific similarities among the three teachers, Jane, Jenny, and Liz, with regard to the supportiveness of their classrooms. For example, they demonstrated similar instructional strategies, consistently scaffolding students’ learning, encouraging deep understanding, negotiating meaning, and monitoring student understanding. These are associated with students’ perceived ability to learn, high involvement in learning, and willingness to ask questions (Hogan & Pressley, 1997; Nelson-Le Gall & Resnick, 1998; Meyer & Turner, 2002). Further, student threat concerns related to public help-seeking may be reduced when teachers model question asking, such as they did, instilling in students the belief that making and correcting mistakes are valuable for learning (Brown & Campione, 1993; Eccles & Midgley, 1989).

Kim’s unwillingness to seek Tom’s help or ask for help in front of the class may have been influenced by Tom’s infrequent use of scaffolding and more traditional approach, which included demonstrations and descriptions of procedures and the question, response, evaluation sequence. For example, at the beginning of one instructional period, when Tom called on Kim for a correct answer to a question just after he had commented to the class, “today’s lesson is pretty easy”, Kim seemed to “freeze” and appeared embarrassed when she was unable to provide an answer. Friedel et al., (2002) underscore the inhibiting effects on the help-seeking of students who are having difficulty when teachers embarrass them.
Further, studies have indicated that in traditional math classes, with an emphasis on correct answers, when students have concerns about ability and self-worth, such as Kim appeared to have, students’ willingness to seek help is undermined (Turner & Meyer, 2004).

In contrast, Jenny continuously integrated scaffolding and constant student participation within her instructional discourse, as well as the message that “not knowing” was common and expected. Jenny also once commented about the easiness of a task while scaffolding students’ learning. However her comment was interjected in a series of ten rapid-fire questions during scaffolding in a context where students were accustomed to showing that they didn’t know. In contrast, students in Tom’s classroom generally volunteered if they thought they knew the answers and he did not tend to call on individual students.

Although Tom most often provided supportive instructional discourse, perhaps he may have inadvertently contributed to Kim’s concerns about embarrassment and appearing incompetent. Classrooms with consistently high mastery goals, such as Jenny’s appeared to have, may have helped encourage Meg to maintain her mastery goals and might have reduced aspects of students’ performance-avoidant goals such as Kim seemed to demonstrate (Newman, 1998b).

Activities that incorporate flexible, varied and informal student grouping in classrooms can reduce student concerns about social comparison and promote student collaboration and help-seeking interactions (Brown & Campione, 1994; Nelson-Le Gall & Glor Scheib, 1985; Ryan & Pintrich, 1998). Jane and Jenny encouraged students to choose their own groupings as they worked on tasks, allowing for informal collaboration and help-seeking. Although Liz was concerned about management issues related to the classroom
noise level and students’ productivity, students informally collaborated with their chosen
seatmates and worked together with others informally at times as well. The atmosphere in
Tom’s classroom was more formal. Tom’s grouping practices were very similar to Liz’s,
although Tom assigned pairs as seatmates and did not vary this grouping arrangement.
Perhaps this aspect of Tom’s practice may have been salient for Kim, who demonstrated
several help-avoidant characteristics and perceptions. Kim commented in our initial
interview, when asked about situations in which she is the most comfortable seeking help,
“When we work in groups, makes it way easier ... get lots of different people and ways of
explaining.”

Additional classroom contextual features seemed to play a role in Kim’s and Meg’s
help-seeking, especially with regard to these students’ perceptions about the classroom
social-emotional climate. Jenny, Jane and Liz shared similar informal relationships with the
students and offered emotional and social support that is believed to build trust, thought to be
a very important ingredient of classrooms that promote student help-seeking (Davis et al.,
2001; Newman & Schwager, 1993; Patrick et al., 2001; Ryan et al., 1998; Turner et al.,
2002). For example, they initiated conversations with the students, showing personal interest
in them, and demonstrated concerns about students’ emotional welfare as well as their social
and learning needs. Both Kim and Meg also expressed positive affect about these teachers.
For example, when responding to electronic interviews about her help-seeking experiences,
Meg referred to Liz as “rad” and also expressed her comfort in seeking Jenny’s help, saying,
“I felt comfortable because I like the people I asked.” Kim also demonstrated positive affect
and showed pleasure in sharing humor during interactions with Jane.
Tom established a more formal classroom tone and relationship with the students. While he clearly demonstrated his concern about students’ learning needs, he seemed to make less effort to support the students personally. Furthermore, Kim expressed negative affect toward Tom in explaining that she never asked Tom for help, “The teacher would have to be nicer … He’s not polite or friendly. I would ask him if he was nicer.” Kim’s negative perceptions about Tom may have reflected her lack of confidence in interacting with Tom, in part, because of her fear of being embarrassed combined with her low math achievement and concerns about her social competence (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Ryan et al., 2005). However, as Ryan et al. (1998) indicated, what matters are students’ perceptions. In their research, teachers’ social/emotional support was shown to play an important role in ameliorating students’ tendency to avoid seeking help, particularly for students with low math competence and perceptions of low cognitive competence and self-efficacy.

It seems that the supportive task features which were consistently evident in Jenny’s, Jane’s, and Liz’s classrooms may be particularly important in supporting not only students with low achievement but all secondary students, with their increasing awareness and sensitivity about the risks related to help-seeking, as well as their increased need for positive and supportive relationships with peers and their teachers (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield, Buchanan, Reuman, Flanagan & MacIver, 1993; Nichols, 1990)

Kim demonstrated mastery goals in both Tom’s and Jane’s classroom when she sought help adaptively both from her math seatmate and from Jane. She also displayed some behaviors characteristic of personal performance-avoid goals when she employed a minimum of effort or avoided work altogether. In both classrooms, at times, Kim seemed motivated by goals to avoid embarrassment and look competent. However, important features of Jane’s
classroom, in combination with Kim’s relative competence and achievement in CAPP class, may have increased her willingness to seek Jane’s help and display positive affect in relating to Jane.

Kim’s withdrawal of effort and frequent off task behavior may have been an attempt to deflect attention from low ability, particularly during math class. Working hard in math as Meg did can raise self-worth concerns, such as Kim may have had, about trying hard and failing to do well (Covington & Omelich, 1979). Meg seemed to be equipped with a mastery focus, which is associated with persistence in trying to improve, despite the potential for concerns about cognitive competence (Elliot & Dweck, 1988). Perhaps aspects of Tom’s instructional practices may have increased Kim’s sensitivity about her performance, and contributed to her help-seeking avoidance (Covington, 1992). Furthermore, research indicates that student threat concerns and reactions can be different for teachers than for peers (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997), perhaps explaining Kim’s willingness to seek her seatmate’s help but refusal to ask Tom for help.

Kim’s need to ask for Tom’s help may have been diminished by the availability of her seatmate, who was a competent helper, as well as a daily skills block where she received support. However, it is argued, as students reach adolescence, relationships with non-parental adults, such as teachers, becomes increasingly important. These adults serve as role models and sources of support (Midgley, Feldlaufer & Eccles, 1989). Students in this study seemed to deem relationships with their teachers as important, and Kim’s negative views about her relationship with Tom perhaps highlights the important role these students assigned to their relationships with their teachers.
Like Jenny, Liz provided similar important supportive features, particularly her scaffolding tactics and warm relationships with students, which, in combination with Meg’s positive characteristics and perceptions, may have contributed to positive outcomes with regard to Meg’s help-seeking actions.

Meg expressed satisfaction with the help she received in Liz’s and Jenny’s classrooms. Kim, however, expressed concern about the effectiveness of Tom’s help, which was corroborated by Kate’s comments and my observations. To exacerbate this problem, Kim seemed to hold negative self-perceptions, which may have discouraged her from asking for Tom’s help. For example, Kim projected blame on Tom for “not knowing what was important and what was not” in giving help, perhaps reflective of her own concern about knowing what to ask. In contrast, Meg demonstrated her comfort in asking for help until she understood. For example, during one lengthy math help-seeking episode, she persisted in asking Jenny until she gained the understanding she desired. And unlike Kim, Meg did not express concern about the potential for embarrassment. Furthermore, along with other personal characteristics, which appeared to positively affect her achievement goals, Meg expressed positive feelings about her teachers.

Although not intended as a focus in this study, it appears Meg and Kim may have experienced different levels of support in their homes, which may have contributed to Meg’s resiliency in facing academic challenges. Meg’s mother worked as a Special Education Assistant in the school Meg attended and constantly monitored Meg’s progress through regular checks with her teachers. Meg’s mother also appeared to enjoy good relationships with the teachers as well as with her daughter. Kim’s mother’s job appeared to take her out of town often, and although Kim’s father indicated it was his role to monitor her progress in
school, Kim mentioned in our initial interview that she tended to rely on her older sister for help with homework. Newman (2000) indicated, in his review of help-seeking influences, the importance of parental interactions with teachers and shared cognitive/intellectual activities with their children (i.e., helping with homework) in the development of students’ competencies for self-regulated learning and, arguably, adaptive help-seeking. Further, Newman reported that, throughout the school years, parental involvement facilitates the maintenance and continued development of children’s affective-motivational resources that support self-regulation.

Finally, Meg’s and Kim’s help-seeking behaviors and perceptions offer an interesting glimpse into the potential complexities of the help-seeking behaviors of students identified as learning disabled. Firstly, they demonstrate the potential heterogeneity of the learning disabled population with regard to their help-seeking actions and perceptions. For example, Meg consistently sought help while Kim’s help-seeking behavior varied, with evidence of avoidant and dependent patterns. Secondly, while to some extent Kim’s avoidant help-seeking behaviors reflected current theory regarding the expected help-seeking behavior of students identified as learning disabled (McIntosh et al., 1993; Schumm et al., 1995), Meg’s did not. Finally, these studies, which reported aggregate results, do not reflect the variations within students with learning disabilities across classrooms, as evidenced in Kim’s help-seeking behaviors. They also do not account for students like Meg, who despite learning challenges, consistently and frequently seek help adaptively.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

In this study I examined features of the classroom context, including the social environment and teacher-student helping interactions and how these influenced help-seeking behaviors in students with and without learning disabilities. I linked observations of the classroom environment, including help-seeking interactions with students’ perceptions about their help-seeking behavior through interview techniques.

In order to gain greater understanding of the interaction between the characteristics of the students and the classroom environment with respect to students’ help-seeking, I asked three questions, which are addressed in the following summary: (a) How do features of the classroom learning environment support student help-seeking, (b) Do teachers’ invitations and/or responses to help-seeking differ for students with and without learning disabilities? If so, how do they differ? (c) How do these students interpret features of the classroom learning environments and how do these interpretations influence students’ decisions to seek help?

Summary of Results

Classroom Observations

Given the current traditions of secondary schools, in which curriculum goals are generally prescribed and students are graded according to the same criteria, the four classroom teachers I studied demonstrated overall positive support for student help-seeking. Support for student help-seeking was evident in many aspects of their classroom goal structures, the social-emotional climate of their classrooms, their personal characteristics and their helping interactions. With regard to classroom goal structures, similarities were evident in their evaluation and recognition practices, which were supportive of student help-seeking. For example, they focused minimally on grades, generally avoided public comparisons of
students, accommodated individual needs, and recognized effort and progress when I observed in their classrooms. As well, all four teachers provided students with opportunities for active participation in learning. For example, teachers involved students in problem solving during lessons and provided opportunities for paired or group helping interactions or activities. All teachers provided time for students to work on tasks after instructional periods, providing opportunities for student help-seeking. Features of a positive social-emotional environment were evident in all four classrooms. All teachers demonstrated empathy and patience in providing help, and showed a desire for students to learn. Finally, all four teachers encouraged students to seek help and were consistently available and responsive to students' requests for help, thus demonstrating support for help-seeking.

One of the goals of this study was to examine teachers’ demonstrations of their expectations of students and whether teachers’ invitations and/or responses to help-seeking of students with and without learning disabilities differed. It did not appear that teachers demonstrated differential treatment of the students in this regard either during my observations or through eliciting students’ perceptions.

However, my observations, often reflected in student perceptions, revealed other distinctions and patterns among the four classroom learning environments that may have differentially influenced student help-seeking. In this discussion I highlight these variations, and do not elaborate on features of the classroom learning environments that were very similar across the classrooms. I focus on features of the classroom goal structure including tasks, teachers’ instructional discourse, student participation in the learning process, and the grouping structures in the classrooms. I also discuss aspects of the social-emotional climate,
including student-teacher relationships and teacher characteristics. Finally I discuss
differences detected in the helping interactions in the classrooms.

The following summary highlights the distinctions among the practices of the four
teachers in relation to student help-seeking.

**Tasks – Content, activities, instructional discourse.** Unlike Liz and Jane, Jenny
usually, and Tom always provided closed tasks in their math classrooms when I observed in
their classrooms. Such tasks limit students’ choices with regard to task processes and
outcomes, but closed tasks are typical of math instruction in high schools (Paris & Turner,
1994; Shoenfeld, 2004). Further, the notion of traditional math instruction suggests
constraints on scaffolding, particularly during whole-class instruction (Meyer & Turner,
2002), which was evident in Tom’s instruction. However, Jenny, similar to Jane and Liz,
consistently demonstrated and encouraged deep understanding and monitored student
understanding through extensive scaffolding, including a different style of questioning than
Tom used, which is believed to be more supportive of student help-seeking (Nelson-Le Gall
& Resnick, 1998). For example, these three teachers required students to collaboratively
generate actions and answers and interact during instruction while Tom typically engaged in
demonstrating and describing procedures or confirming student responses. Such scaffolded
support, as Jenny, Jane, and Liz consistently provided, also implies teachers’ positive
expectations about students’ ability to learn, consistent with a mastery focus (Patrick et al,
2001; Turner et al., 2002, 2003). Furthermore researchers have found that although students
may perceive classrooms as sharing a similar mastery focus, as well as some elements of
performance goals (e.g., tasks and grading standards), such as these four teachers appeared to
do, student affect and motivational behavior can vary significantly, and this has been
attributed to teachers' instructional messages (Turner et al., 2002, 2003). Similar to my interpretations about the classrooms in which I observed, Turner et al. (2003) suggest that it is the balance of supportive motivational and instructional discourse that makes the difference.

Jenny, Liz and Jane initiated and conveyed messages to the students about the meaningfulness or importance of tasks either during instruction (Turner et al., 2003) or implicitly through the tasks they assigned. Tom did not initiate conversations about the value of tasks in his classroom, and, in one instance, when asked, indicated that a task likely lacked value for many students. Teacher messages that convey the meaningfulness of tasks are believed to promote students' intrinsic motivation for actively engaging in tasks (Ames, 1992; Brophy, 2004; Turner et al., 2003), which is related to students' willingness to ask for help.

Active student participation. Patrick et al. (2001) and Turner et al. (2002, 2003) indicated that student perceptions of teachers with high mastery focus were reflected in their encouragement of active student involvement and student interaction associated with student help-seeking. Jenny, Jane, and Liz emphasized student involvement and encouragement of student interaction during whole class instruction, particularly through their consistent use of scaffolding, focused on having many students participate and encouraging students to interact, share ideas and assist one another. In analyzing teachers' classroom discourse, studies have determined that high student involvement is associated with scaffolding (Meyer & Turner, 2002; Turner, Thorpe, & Meyer, 1998). Although Tom used scaffolding tactics, his instructional strategies most often included teacher demonstrations and descriptions of procedures.
Grouping. There was variation in the opportunities students were given for flexible, informal and varied student groupings in the four classrooms. Jane particularly encouraged such groupings, which are associated with reduced student concern about social comparison and the promotion of student collaboration, including help-seeking interactions. Jane’s classroom tasks consistently required group work with interdependent goals and rewards, unlike the other three classrooms. However, Jenny encouraged students to confer with one another and assigned some tasks that students were asked to work on collaboratively. Moreover, students usually informally grouped themselves as they worked on tasks in her classroom. Liz permitted students to select their own seatmates and at times they worked with others as well. However, Liz’s concerns with management, which were reflected in her requests for quiet, may have discouraged students’ helping interactions at times. The grouping structures were very similar in Liz’s and Tom’s classrooms, although the students in Tom’s classroom were assigned one seatmate to work with for the term.

Social/emotional support. Research indicates the critical role of the social-emotional environment, including teacher-student, student-student relationships and teacher characteristics in students’ perceptions about influences on their help-seeking (Friedel et al., 2002; Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002; Newman & Schwager, 1993; Ryan et al., 1998; Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Ryan & Pintrich, 1998). There appeared to be some distinctions in the affective climates among the four classrooms in this study with regard to student-teacher relationships. Jenny, Jane and Liz established warm, nurturing environments through their expressions and demonstrations of concern about students’ emotional, social and academic needs, and their informal relationships with the students, evident in the personal interest they showed in the students, their apparent enjoyment in their relationships and personal
exchanges with students, and the continuous recognition and encouragement inherent in scaffolding learning. Additionally, Jenny seemed to address possible fears and anxieties when she publicly recognized a student for admitting 'not knowing', encouraging others to be willing to do the same, and similar to Jane and Liz, continuously demonstrated, during scaffolding, the expectation that making mistakes and errors are valuable aspects of learning.

Similar to Jenny, Jane and Liz, Tom demonstrated positive affect, concern for the students’ learning needs and recognition of students’ social needs with regard to their relationships with other students. However, he established a more formal tone in his classroom and seemed to show less personal interest in and personal support for students.

Perhaps Tom offered the students emotional/social support more typical of a male teacher. Research generally indicates that female teachers are reported to be more supportive and expressive than male teachers (Meece, 1987 review) and attributes such as warmth, understanding, and sensitivity to others are typically seen to be more associated with women than men (Feldman, 1993). Interestingly, Feldman (1993) also noted that students tend to globally rate same-gendered teachers higher than opposite gendered teachers. I was only able to locate one study that specifically addressed teacher gender and student help-seeking (Le Mare & Henry, 1997). These researchers found a significant effect of teacher gender on helper preferences at the elementary level, indicating students preferred peers over a male teacher, and a female teacher over peers as helpers. Nevertheless, for students with poor self-perceptions and low self-efficacy, evidence of teacher concern for their social and emotional wellbeing may be critical to reducing self-handicapping help avoidant behavior.

How help is given and the effectiveness of help given. Characteristic of classrooms in which teachers demonstrate supportive helping interactions, which is often reflected
similarly in their whole-class instructional discourse (Turner et al., 2002), all four teachers were accessible, approachable, patient and reliable in giving students help. Furthermore, they all appeared to offer positive and non-evaluative help as well as encouraging students to ask for help. However, during whole-class instruction Jenny, Jane, and, Liz generally scaffolded student learning, monitoring understanding and adapting instruction to increase student understanding, similar to the kind of discourse associated with students’ positive approach behaviors in Turner et al’s (2002, 2003) studies. Although Tom also recognized students’ need for help, he rarely used scaffolding or asked students to demonstrate their understanding. Tom, Jane, and Jenny’s whole class instruction were generally representative of how they provided individual help. However, as discussed, on one occasion, over a continuous series of helping interactions with one student, Liz did not demonstrate the scaffolding, which was typical of her instructional interactions. As discussed, this inconsistency in her instructional tactics may be attributed to her sensitivity to this student’s capacity for frustration.

**Student Observations and Perceptions**

In examining student characteristics and perceptions, insights were gained about students’ characteristics, perceptions and personal goals that contributed to their help-seeking actions. The following summary highlights the students’ role in their help-seeking behaviors.

**Kate.** Kate, the high achieving student in Tom’s and Jane’s classroom demonstrated personal characteristics consistent with her adaptive help-seeking and general demonstration of mastery goals in both classrooms. Along with her high achievement, she demonstrated social competence in her good relationships with her teachers and other students. Further, she perceived herself to be cognitively competent and projected a positive disposition toward her
teachers. She also judged both Tom and Jane as consistently willing and available to help. Kate consistently expressed satisfaction with the help Jane provided. However, she expressed some dissatisfaction with the help Tom offered as well as its effectiveness in meeting her needs. Further, Kate reflected my observations in her perception that Tom did not tend to monitor students’ understanding during whole-class instruction. Nonetheless, consistent with her mastery goals, Kate regularly requested Tom’s help, and in fact seemed to compensate when Tom didn’t check for her understanding by persevering in gaining understanding and indeed, in insisting on demonstrating her understanding.

**Kim.** Kim, the student with learning disabilities, paired with Kate in Jane’s and Tom’s classrooms, demonstrated characteristics of students who are reluctant to seek help. She experienced low achievement in math as well as other subject areas. She sometimes exercised poor social skills, was often off task during seat-work in both classrooms when help seeking would have been appropriate, and when Tom called on her to answer a question in math class, subsequent to his comments about the easiness of the subject material, she appeared to “freeze”. Tom may not have recognized the high potential for embarrassment and the associated inhibiting effects on Kim’s help-seeking, with her concerns about wanting to look smart (Ryan et al., 1997), the risks of asking for help in front of the class (Eccles & Midgley, 1989), and her lack of competence in math (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). Furthermore, consistent with Ryan et al.’s (2005) findings that students who avoid seeking help do not perceive teachers as caring about their feelings, Kim reported this negative affect towards Tom when she stated that he was not friendly or polite.

Unlike her generally adaptive help-seeking interactions with Jane as well as her seatmate in Tom’s classroom, and the positive views she expressed about Jane, Kim was
unwilling to seek Tom's help. Unlike Kate, who expressed positive feelings toward Tom, and who frequently and consistently sought his help adaptively, Kim reported negative affect toward Tom. Although Kim's negative perceptions may be related to her self-beliefs about her own personal control (Wentzel, 1997), research shows the significant negative effects on student help-seeking when teachers do not take care not to embarrass students who are experiencing difficulty (Friedel et al., 2002). As well, Kim's unwillingness to ask for Tom’s help, particularly during whole class instruction, may be attributed to her low achievement, her concerns about her cognitive competence, embarrassment and her desire to avoid not looking smart. However, Kim, like Kate, indicated that that Tom needed to monitor student understanding and adjust his instruction accordingly during instruction and helping interactions.

Jess. Jess, the high achieving student in Jenny and Liz’s classrooms, demonstrated characteristics consistent with her adaptive help-seeking and her mastery goals. For example, she was very task focused in both classrooms. She sought Jenny’s help to check for understanding about problem solving procedures and expressed her satisfaction with the help provided. She did not seek help in Liz’s class, and indicated that she rarely needed help. Further she expressed mastery goals and a desire for autonomy, associated with students’ adaptive help-seeking (Butler, 1998) when she indicated that she usually preferred to figure out problems on her own. She also expressed both the importance of understanding and her awareness that, over the next three years, she needed to focus on achieving high grades in order to enter a university of her choice. Although she expressed some concerns related to the inhibiting features of whole class activities with regard to asking for help (Eccles & Midgley, 1989), this did not appear to deter her from seeking help.
Meg. Meg, the student with learning disabilities, paired with Jess in Jenny’s and Liz’s classrooms achieved at least average grades in all subject areas except math, the subject most affected by her learning disability. As mentioned, Meg displayed several personal characteristics, for example, social competence, a positive disposition about her general cognitive competence, positive affect about her teachers, and mastery goals that may have buffered any potential avoidance tendencies associated with her low achievement in math. This was reflected in her consistent and frequent adaptive help-seeking and willingness to enter discussion during whole class instruction in both math and English classes. Further, Jenny’s particularly supportive scaffolding and provision for students to work together informally and collaboratively may have contributed to Meg’s willingness to ask for help, despite her low achievement in math. Finally, Meg appeared to enjoy a high degree of parental involvement and support for her academic challenges, which assists in sustaining students’ self-regulation and help-seeking.

Discrepancies in reports of student help-seeking. I observed the student participants in this study seek help more often than they reported. There may be a few explanations for this discrepancy. The electronic questionnaire format did not specifically ask the students to report on each help-seeking incident during each class and students were not likely counting their help-seeking interactions. Perhaps occasional delays in responding to the electronic questionnaires may have also affected some participants’ recall of their help-seeking. Finally, the greatest discrepancies between my observations and the students’ perceptions occurred in Jane’s class, the classroom in which collaborative activities were most prevalent. With such constant interactions, perhaps it was more difficult for Kate and Kim to keep track of their help-seeking interactions.
Conclusions

The learning environments in the four classrooms I studied included many features that are judged to be supportive of students’ adaptive help-seeking. Consistent with these findings, the three students, Kate, Jess, and Meg shared positive views about the classroom environments and generally demonstrated adaptive help-seeking behavior, consistent with personal mastery goals. However, Kim engaged in much less adaptive help-seeking than Kate in Tom’s classroom, and perceived the classroom environment as “relatively” less supportive. In contrast to Kate, whose high achievement, perceptions of cognitive competence, social competence, mastery goals, and positive feelings about Tom would have contributed to her adaptive help-seeking, Kim demonstrated characteristics believed to place students at extreme risk for help-seeking avoidance. Also, she expressed concerns about embarrassment, looking smart, and her academic competence (Newman, 1990; Newman & Goldin, 1990; Newman & Schwager, 1993; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). Kim’s characteristics and related perceptions may have resulted in her particular sensitivity to certain of Tom’s practices (e.g. evaluative comments about the subject material preceding public questioning of students having difficulty, lack of flexibility and informality in groupings, lack of scaffolding, formality with students). More research is needed to generalize these findings. However, consistent with previous research findings, they indicate a need for teachers to provide a social-emotional environment where they avoid embarrassing students and show interest in students’ lives outside school. In addition, incorporating practices that provide for informal and flexible grouping arrangements, as well as consistent scaffolding during instruction, may prove particularly salient for students who share Kim’s concerns about ability and embarrassment in asking for help.
Finally, in a qualitative case study such as this, where the boundaries between the investigated phenomenon and context are not easily discerned (Yin, 2003), it is difficult to extricate help-seeking influences and assign varying degrees of importance to them. However, in triangulating evidence from researcher observations and reflections and student perceptions about their help-seeking, it appears, in this investigation, a combination of factors influenced student help-seeking. More specifically, it seems student characteristics interacting with the classroom learning environments, including aspects of teachers’ instructional practices and the social-emotional context, played a role in influencing the help-seeking of the students with learning disabilities in the respective classrooms in which I observed them.

**Implications**

This study extends research about student help-seeking in classrooms, both from a theoretical/research standpoint as well as a practical perspective.

**Research and Theoretical Implications**

This study used a combination of qualitative methods, including classroom observations, students’ retrospective self-reports acquired electronically after each observation, and semi-structured face to face and unstructured telephone interviews. The use of multiple methods allowed for the triangulation of data from classroom observations with students’ reports of attitudes toward and engagement in help-seeking in the observed classrooms. This approach stands in contrast to other studies of academic help-seeking (Newman, 1998a; Newman & Schwager, 1993; Ryan et al., 1998; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Van der Meij, 1988) that relied on student surveys. In those studies, students were required to select their responses from an existing framework (to link their self-reported willingness to
seek help with teacher practices in classrooms). Similar to this study, Le Mare and Sohbat (2002) used semi-structured interviews to ask students about their attitudes about help-seeking in classrooms. However they asked students about their general attitudes rather than asking them to reflect on specific observed help-seeking interactions.

Using semi-structured, retrospective interview techniques, this study provides insights about what students attended to spontaneously with regard to teacher practices in real-life classrooms, particularly students with learning disabilities who often avoid seeking help (McIntosh et al., 1993). Qualitative approaches such as those used in this study provide in-depth descriptions of learning environments that, through replication on a larger scale, may contribute significantly to theory development by identifying teacher practices most strongly linked to students’ perceptions about their help-seeking.

The matched cases in this study support findings that different students’ perceptions of the same classrooms can vary (Le Mare & Sohbat, 2002). For example, despite sharing the same math classroom, with no apparent differential teacher behavior or differential expectations of students, Kim and Kate perceived aspects of their math classroom differently. Further, by examining the help-seeking of individual students both in and across classrooms, this study represents a new direction in this field of research and supports research that contends an individual student’s goals and help-seeking may vary across classrooms (Ryan et al., 1998), as evidenced in Kim’s help-seeking. Importantly, the data in this study indicate the population of students who have learning disabilities is heterogeneous with respect to help seeking. These findings conflict with studies that have reported, using aggregate data, that students with learning disabilities represent a subculture of students most likely to avoid
help-seeking (McIntosh et al., 1993; Schumm et al., 1995). For example, Meg sought help frequently and adaptively.

This study reflects survey-based studies’ findings that students pursue a combination of goals (Bouffard et al., 1995; Pintrich, 2000a; Wentzel, 1991; Wolters, Yu, & Pintrich, 1996), and in examining outcomes associated with multiple goals, contributes to an understanding of how students coordinate and enact these goals in naturalistic settings.

In triangulating observations of teacher practices, student-teacher help-seeking interactions and students’ perceptions about those interactions, insights were gained about students’ goals as well as the classroom contextual characteristics they attended to with regard to their help-seeking. In providing open-ended questions, which allowed students to describe their goals in their own words, this study lends ecological validity to some aspects of goal theory and clarifies and elaborates others. Brophy (2005) indicated that only two investigators whose work was informed by goal theory asked elementary students to generate their own goals. Brophy reports little information was yielded about student goals in these studies, perhaps because the student participants were younger and less able to recognize or articulate their goals. I was able to locate only one study of high school students in which the researchers used interview methods to ask students to describe their achievement goals in their own words (Urdan and Mestas, 2006). In this study, students were asked to describe their reasons for pursuing performance goals, prompted by survey items of performance goals. These researchers identified complexity and variety in the reasons students gave for pursuing performance goals, raised questions about the ensuing effects and the theoretical meanings of performance goals. However, unlike my study, the students were not asked to
describe their goals in specific classroom contexts, and individual student's characteristics such as achievement levels were not considered.

Further, in eliciting spontaneous explanations about students' goals, this study may assist in informing goal theory, which is presently undergoing examination (Brophy, 2005; Linnenbrink, 2005; Urdan & Mestas, 2006; Wolters, 2004). For example, Kate demonstrated mastery goals along with some goals associated with wanting to do well and get a good grade, but seemingly without the social comparison concerns, reflecting recently espoused theories further discriminating personal achievement goals (Brophy, 2005; Grant & Dweck, 2003). Thus, this research may further clarify the content and operation of students' goals, both theoretically and as they operate in real-life classrooms situations. Further studies, eliciting students' spontaneous goals in naturalistic settings should continue to examine how students describe their goals in their own words. As Urdan and Mestas (2006) argued, in defining goals for research participants, survey and experimental methods may mask the variety of reasons students have for pursuing achievement goals and limit researchers' understanding of the meaning, complexity, and effects of personal goals.

Practical Implications

One of most important contributions of qualitative research such as this is the evidence it provides about how teachers might create learning contexts that promote help-seeking. This study builds on findings about what teachers do and say to communicate support for student motivation, including help-seeking (Patrick et al., 2001; Turner et al., 2002, 2003), and adds examples of support for student help-seeking. In making connections between actual teacher practices and student perceptions, this study can inform teachers about how to promote help-seeking in their classrooms. The application of such knowledge
can promote students' positive self-perceptions and feelings of acceptance, leading to further help seeking efforts, learning, and achievement.

Ryan et al. (2005) determined that teachers are able to identify the students who avoid seeking help in their classrooms. The findings in this study, particularly regarding teacher practices that help-avoidant students may be particularly sensitive to, can assist teachers in positively influencing these students' help-seeking.

This study offers parallels to Patrick et al.'s (2001) and Turner et al.'s (2002, 2003) findings that a combination of certain teacher practices may be particularly important in promoting student motivation and help-seeking. Turner et al. (2003) found that despite similarities in classroom goal structures (high mastery/high performance), as reported by student surveys in their study, student perceptions varied with regard to their affect and approach or avoidance behaviors. Student reports of positive affect and approach behaviors were particularly influenced by teacher practices that included a positive socio-affective climate, encouragement of active student involvement in learning, and instructional scaffolding, which implicitly includes many supportive motivational features (Turner et al., 2003), the promotion of students' intrinsic interest, and frequent encouragement of students. Similarly, the classrooms in my study demonstrated features associated with high mastery goal structures combined with some features of performance goals, also with some varying student outcomes regarding student help-seeking and student perceptions about their help-seeking. For example, in my study, similar to Turner et al.'s (2002, 2003) and Patrick et al.'s (2001) findings, three classrooms seemed to be distinguished by their greater degree of instructional support, including scaffolding, encouragement of active student participation, desire to attach meaning to tasks for the students, as well as their relationships with the
students, including their supportive affective messages. My study supports Turner et al.'s (2003) contention that it is necessary to attend to more than goal structures, but particularly affective features, when examining classroom contexts, since certain teacher discourse may be associated with different student perceptions and outcomes regarding help-seeking.

Studies have increasingly identified the influence of the classroom social/emotional climate on students’ help-seeking (Friedel et al., 2002; Nelson-Le Gall & Gumerman, 1984; Newman, 2000; Newman & Schwager, 1993; Ryan et al., 1998; Turner et al., 2002) as well as its association with mastery goals (Patrick et al., 2001; Turner et al., 2002, 2003), which is often revealed through teacher discourse (Patrick et al., 2001; Turner et al., 2002, 2003). This study contributes to our understanding about how affective aspects of the classroom environment can support students’ help-seeking. In this study, insights were gained about what students spontaneously attended to with regard to the social-emotional support teachers provided. High school teachers need to be sensitive to the social/emotional needs of their students with regard to promoting help-seeking in their classrooms, especially students at risk of help-seeking avoidance. This sensitivity may be particularly salient for high school students, who are at a stage in their lives when the social realm, which is so important to them, is perceived as both increasingly complex and increasingly filled with risks related to help-seeking (Ryan et al., 2001).

This study may contribute to instructional practices in high school math classrooms. In Jenny’s math classroom, I observed rich examples of how teachers might scaffold instruction, offering a contrast to some traditional views of math instruction (Meyer & Turner, 2002). Jenny’s highly supportive instructional scaffolding, reflecting both cognitive and socio-emotional supports that increase students’ motivation to learn (Turner et al., 2002,
2003), offers a contextualized model that can guide and inform math classroom instructional practices.

When I met with Jenny and Tom to complete member checks regarding reliability of my classroom descriptions, they demonstrated their eagerness to critically reflect on and engage in scholarly discourse about their teaching practices. Teachers can be assisted in reflecting about and effecting changes in their practices to promote student help-seeking through intervention studies, using qualitative methods. Qualitative studies can provide educators with in-depth descriptions of teacher practices that support student help-seeking, presenting them with opportunities to see reflections of themselves or other desirable practices, supported by theory, which may assist them in examining their teaching strategies.

As mentioned, my study reflects Ryan et al.’s (1998) conclusion that it is important for teachers to recognize different students may interpret features of their practices and interactions differently as student perceptions are filtered through individual characteristics and motivations. Teachers need to show particular sensitivity to students whose perceptions are negative, regardless of whether they agree with the accuracy of these student perceptions – since what the students perceive is their reality (Ryan et al., 1998). Moreover, adolescent students are particularly concerned with being viewed as and feeling “normal”. As well, non-parental adults are becoming especially important as role models and sources of support for them (Midgley, et al, 1989). Given the potential vulnerability of students with learning disabilities, teachers need to get to know these students, for example, learning about their personal interests and areas of efficacy, and finding authentic ways to recognize, value, and build on their strengths. In a twenty year longitudinal study of individuals with learning disabilities, one predictor of future success was the development of special talents and
abilities or “personal passions”, for which they have traditionally received little attention or support from teachers (Goldberg, Higgins, Raskind, Herman, 2003). This study also pointed out the critical role supportive adults, for example, teachers played in their achievement of life success, according to these individuals. Clearly, teachers can play a significant role in recognizing and supporting students with learning disabilities’ special talents and abilities, and do play a significant role in these students’ success in life. Many of these students may need to have reasons to come to school and participate in school communities, despite persistent academic challenges and the accompanying persistent negative messages they may be receiving about their academic competencies. Indeed, these needs and challenges may not be unique to the population of students with learning disabilities. In fact, Goldberg et al. (2003) reported that some of the student participants in their study might not be identified as having a learning disability by current definitions. But they all had learning difficulties. Thus, many students with learning difficulties may face similar academic difficulties and potential vulnerabilities. Perhaps Goldberg et al.’s findings should apply to all students who have learning difficulties.

**Limitations and Future Research**

This qualitative case study was necessarily designed on a small scale to provide an in-depth exploration of four secondary students’ help-seeking and their perspectives about the influences on their help-seeking in naturalistic classroom settings. Unfortunately, limiting this study to few cases effectively limits the generalizability of potentially meaningful findings. However, Ryan et al. (2001) highlighted the need for more research that examines how different contextual factors, including features of goal structures and the social climate might interact with personal characteristics of students to influence help-seeking. My study
responds to this need and offers insights and raises questions about the importance of some of these features, which require further validation, perhaps with larger sample sizes.

Given the lack of research related to the questions my study poses, and the potentially meaningful insights gained in this investigation, researchers should continue to examine the link between classroom learning environments and the help-seeking interactions and perceptions of high school students with and without learning disabilities. However, investigating a larger number of classrooms may enhance replications of this study. This might reveal consistent patterns in teacher actions and speech that may further guide teachers in establishing practices and discourse that promote student help-seeking, particularly students with learning disabilities.

Further research might examine how particular features of instructional discourse and interactions (e.g., socio-affective support, encouragement of active student involvement and accountability through scaffolding) within high school classrooms, which perhaps typically display a combination of mastery and performance goals, may influence student help-seeking. For example, using Turner et al.’s (2003) study as a model, high school students with and without learning disabilities might be surveyed about perceived classroom goal structures. In addition, similar to my study, qualitative observational and interview techniques might be used with more cases, to link the influence of perceived classroom goal structures in combination with instructional practices and interactions on help-seeking of students with and without learning disabilities.

This study should be replicated on a larger scale, continuing to examine students’ spontaneous descriptions of their goals to add context and to inform recently proposed goal
orientation frameworks (Brophy, 2005; Grant & Dweck, 2003; Urdan & Mestas, 2006), and assist in re-examining frameworks devised using forced responses with survey methods.

Methodological limitations were revealed as I proceeded with this study. First, although students within pairs shared the same two classrooms, there were differences within these pairs between math and English and math and CAPP classes. Different findings may have emerged if there were more similarities within pairs between the two sets of classrooms.

Second, the participants in this study included four female students, three female teachers, and one male teacher. Research indicates that male and female teachers may provide socio-emotional support differently in classrooms. Further, studies have shown some evidence that students prefer same gender teachers in their overall ratings of teachers. In replicating this study with more cases, perhaps students with and without learning disabilities as well as teacher participants should be represented equally by gender.

Third, the format of the questions presented electronically may have not only limited students' responses but resulted in a discrepancy between my observations of student help-seeking and their reports of their help-seeking. Students were not specifically asked to report on each help-seeking incident during one observational period. After each observation period, students usually provided their perceptions about the most significant help-seeking events or responded more generally in referring to more than one help-seeking incident. In order to gain more detailed student perspectives, the question format may need to change, providing explicit instructions asking for student perspectives about each help-seeking event. Alternatively, this may require one-on-one conversations with researchers, prompted by researcher observations of help-seeking interactions and/or students' recall of their help-
seeking interactions. However, in this study, eliciting students' responses occasionally required prompting and encouragement, including relying on parental prompting. By further increasing the demands on the students, their help-seeking may be inhibited as well as their willingness to continue to participate in such a study. Occasional student delays in responding may have also diminished their recall of help-seeking incidences. In my estimation, the students I interviewed expressed their views candidly, particularly during the final telephone interviews, offering illuminating insights. In future replications of this study, an interview should be conducted at the midpoint of the data collection period to gain additional understanding about observations of students' help-seeking, helping address some of these concerns. Similar to the questions in the final interview, these questions should be tailored to gain insights about students' electronic responses as well as to prompt students' recall and reflections about additional observed help-seeking occurrences, which students may not have addressed in their electronic interviews.

Member checks and triangulation of data sources (observations and interviews) were used to establish reliability in this study. Perhaps, in replicating this study, to increase the reliability of findings, a greater number of classrooms and student participants could be studied, with more member checks. Further, interview techniques could be used to gain teacher perceptions about help-seeking interactions, particularly student help-seeking avoidance (Ryan et al., 2005), which may also increase understanding of student help-seeking as well as complete the circle of evidence.
References


APPENDIX A

Letter Requesting Permission-Superintendent

February 2005

Name, Superintendent
Coquitlam School District #43
550 Poirier Street
Coquitlam BC V3J6A7

Dear ,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology and Special Education at the University of British Columbia. In partial fulfillment of my Master of Arts degree in Special Education, I am researching how features of the classroom environment, for example student-teacher relationships and teacher practices, influence the academic help-seeking behavior of high school students identified as learning disabled as compared to average or above average achieving students who have not been identified as learning disabled. The purpose of this letter is to provide some detailed information about my research project, and request permission to conduct my research with students in classrooms from Coquitlam School District.

Selection of participants: I would like to include four high school classrooms and four students in my study. If you permit me to conduct my research in your school district, I will ask you to identify one or two schools in communities of similar SES. Next, I will ask the principals of these schools to nominate four teachers on their faculty who would be interested in my study. If these teachers agree to participate, I will ask the school resource teacher in consultation with the participating teachers, to nominate four female students of the same grade, age, and majority culture. Two students will be identified as learning disabled in math and will be enrolled in different math classes. These two students will be enrolled in one other subject area, in areas of strength for each of them, again in different classes. Each of these two students will be paired with a student of average or above average achievement and with no identified learning disability. Informational and consent letters will be sent to these students and their parents or guardians.

All participants will be informed about the nature of their involvement in my study and asked to indicate in writing their willingness to participate. Moreover, they will be made aware that participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw from my study at any time with no negative consequences. The names of all participants will be kept confidential in all my reports and presentations resulting from my study. Also, all of my study data will be stored in a locking file cabinet and results pertaining to participants or their schools will be discussed using an identification code.
APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form-Parent and Student

The Classroom Environment:
Influences on Help-Seeking of High School Students Identified as Learning Disabled

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology and Special Education at the University of British Columbia. In partial fulfillment of my Master's degree, with the permission of the Coquitlam School District, I am conducting a research project at your daughter's school. The general focus of this study is to examine influences in the classroom environment on the academic help-seeking of high school students. I plan to conduct this research with students who have and who have not been identified as learning disabled. The purpose of this letter is to provide you and your daughter with information about this project and to invite your daughter to participate in it.

Purpose of the study:
This project will examine the help-seeking of secondary students with and without learning disabilities in classrooms. It will study how these students interpret features in the classroom environment, for example, organization of classroom tasks or student-teacher interactions that might influence whether and how they ask for help when it is needed. I hope to contribute to a better understanding of classroom influences on academic help-seeking, an important behavior that contributes to student learning.

Your daughter's involvement:
If your daughter agrees to participate in this project, she will be asked to participate in a 10-15 minute initial interview during the school day in a private setting and at a time convenient to her and her teacher. During this interview, I will describe the study in more detail, answer questions your daughter may have about this study and hope to learn about her past experiences and ideas about seeking help in the classroom. With her permission, this interview will be audio-taped.

Following the initial interview, I will observe five to seven times in two of her classes over approximately a five to seven week period. I will place myself unobtrusively in the classroom and will not require interaction with the teacher or your daughter during these observations. During these visits I will document observations of what is going on in the classroom. No audio or video recording will be used. Following each classroom observation I will interview your daughter electronically about her experiences with seeking help during that observation period. This will allow her to respond at times convenient for her and eliminate disruptions to her school schedule. I expect this will require approximately ten minutes of her time following each classroom observation. I hope to find mutually convenient times so that this interview can occur within a day or two after each observation.
CONSENT FORM (PARENT/GUARDIAN COPY)

Research Project Title: The Classroom Environment: Influences on Help-Seeking of High School Students Identified as Learning Disabled

Investigators: Dr. Nancy E. Perry, Judy R. Dowler

I understand that my daughter’s participation in this study is voluntary and confidential, and that she may withdraw from the project at any time without negative consequences.

In providing my signature below, I acknowledge that I have read the consent form, discussed it with my daughter, and have kept a copy for my personal records.

I give consent /I do not give consent (please circle one) for my daughter to participate.

Name of daughter (please print) Name of Parent(s) or Guardian(s) (please print)

Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Date

Phone number

I would like to receive a summary of the results of this study once it is completed.

Name: __________________________

Address: __________________________

**Please keep this copy for your own records.**
CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title: The Classroom Environment: Influences on Help-Seeking of High School Students Identified as Learning Disabled

Investigators: Dr. Nancy E. Perry, Judy R. Dowler

I understand that my daughter’s participation in this study is voluntary and confidential, and that she may withdraw from the project at any time without negative consequences.

In providing my signature below, I acknowledge that I have read the consent form, discussed it with my daughter, and have kept a copy for my personal records.

I give consent /I do not give consent (please circle one) for my daughter to participate.

Name of daughter (please print) Name of Parent(s) or Guardian(s) (please print)

Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Date

Phone number

I would like to receive a summary of the results of this study once it is completed.

Name: ________________________________

Address: __________________________________________

__________________________________________

**Please return this copy of the consent form in the attached stamped and addressed envelope by __**
CONSENT FORM (STUDENT COPY)

Research Project Title: An Investigation of the Help-Seeking Behaviors of High School Students with and without Learning Disabilities

Investigators: Dr. Nancy E. Perry, Judy R. Dowler

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and confidential, and that I may withdraw from the project at any time without negative consequences.

In providing my signature below, I acknowledge that I have read the consent form and have kept a copy for my personal records.

I consent /I do not consent (please circle one) to participate.

________________________________________
Name (please print)

________________________________________  __________________________________
Signature                                      Date

________________________________________
Phone number

I would like to receive a summary of the results of this study once it is completed.

Name: ____________________________________

Address: __________________________________

________________________________________

**Please keep this copy for your own records.
STUDENT CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title: An Investigation of the Help-Seeking Behaviors of High School Students with and without Learning Disabilities

Investigators: Dr. Nancy E. Perry, Judy R. Dowler

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and confidential, and that I may withdraw from the project at any time without negative consequences.

In providing my signature below, I acknowledge that I have read the consent form and have kept a copy for my personal records.

I consent / I do not consent (please circle one) to participate.

Name (please print)

Signature __________________________ Date __________________________

Phone number __________________________

I would like to receive a summary of the results of this study once it is completed.

Name: __________________________

Address: __________________________

______________________________

**Please return this copy of the consent form in the attached stamped and addressed envelope by ___.**
APPENDIX C

Consent Form – Teacher

March , 2005

Dear Teacher,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology and Special Education at the University of British Columbia. I am conducting a research project in your school district in partial fulfillment of my Master’s degree and with the approval of the Coquitlam School District. My research project is titled “An investigation of the help-seeking behaviors of high school students with and without learning disabilities”. Past research has shown that students who most need help, such as those identified as learning disabled, are often the least likely to seek it. This project will explore how students engage in help-seeking behaviors with a view to how teachers can support adaptive help-seeking of students, particularly those students most reluctant to seek help. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with some detailed information about the project, and the nature of your involvement should you choose to participate in it. After reading this information, please complete the attached consent form indicating that you would/would not like to participate in this project. A copy of the consent form is included for your records.

The study will be carried out this spring over a five to six week period. Two to four students in your classroom will be nominated to participate in this study. Once they and their parents/guardians have consented to their participation, each student will engage in a 10-15 minute interview with me during the school day. To ensure valuable instructional time is not lost, the interview will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for both you and the student. During this interview, I will describe the study in more detail and hope to learn about the student’s past experiences and ideas about seeking help in the classroom. Following these interviews, one pair of students will be confirmed as the student participants from your classroom in this study. One of these students will be identified as learning disabled, and this may or may not be apparent in the subject area you are teaching. The other student will be average or above-average achieving with no identified learning disability. I will then observe in your classroom five or six times over approximately a five to six week period during the (subject area) period in which the student participants are enrolled. I will place myself unobtrusively in the classroom and will not require interaction with you or the student participants during these observations. The student participants will also not be publicly identified in or outside the classroom. I will document what is going on in the classroom during these observations. Following each classroom observation, there will be short electronic interviews (approximately 10 minutes) with the student participants about their perceptions of their own academic help-seeking. These will occur at the convenience of the students and can be easily accomplished out of school hours. When all classroom observations have been completed, I may request a 10-15 minute follow-up interview with each student at a time during the school day convenient to you and the students.
CONSENT FORM (Teacher Copy)

Research Project Title: An Investigation of the Help-Seeking Behaviours of High School Students with and without Learning Disabilities

Investigators: Dr. Nancy E. Perry, Judy R. Dowler

I have read the letter describing this research project and the nature of my participation in it. I understand that my participation is voluntary and confidential, and that I may withdraw from the project at any time without negative consequences.

My signature indicates my desire to participate in the project.

Signature: __________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________

I do not wish to participate in this project.

Signature: __________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________

In providing my signature above, I acknowledge that I have read the consent form and have kept a copy for my personal records.

I would like to receive a copy of the results of this research.

Name: __________________________________________

Address: _________________________________________

___________________________________________

*Please keep this copy for your own records.*
CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title: An Investigation of the Help-Seeking Behaviors of High School Students with and without Learning Disabilities

Investigators: Dr. Nancy E. Perry, Judy R. Dowler

I have read the letter describing this research project and the nature of my participation in it. I understand that my participation is voluntary and confidential, and that I may withdraw from the project at any time without negative consequences.

My signature indicates my desire to participate in the project.

Signature: ____________________________
Date: ________________________________

I do not wish to participate in this project.

Signature: ____________________________
Date: ________________________________

In providing my signature above, I acknowledge that I have read the consent form and have kept a copy for my personal records.

I would like to receive a copy of the results of this research.

Name: ______________________________
Address: ____________________________

_______________________________

*Please return this copy of the consent form in the attached stamped and addressed envelope by ___.*
APPENDIX D

Initial interview: Student perceptions about help-seeking

1. What do you do when you are having difficulty with your schoolwork? (Do you ask for help? Who do you ask? How does that work?)

2. Do you do anything differently in different subject areas? Different classes? Explain. (Strongest subjects? Weakest subjects? What makes it easier or harder to ask for help?)

3. How effective are you at asking for help? (timing, verbalizing the question, clarifying for yourself that you understand, persevering if the help is not meeting your needs)

4. What are the common reasons why you would ask for help?

5. Comment about getting help – your observations and feelings over the years as a student.
### APPENDIX E

**Section A**

**Classroom observation instrument**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Start Time</th>
<th>End Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation #</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Running record**
APPENDIX E

Section B

Table 21: Classroom goal structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Supportive of help-seeking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tasks</strong></td>
<td>Tasks with incremental learning goals, long term mastery expectations, encouragement of intrinsic motivation. Provision for variety, diversity and challenge in processes to complete tasks and outcomes/products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active student</strong></td>
<td>Provision for student choice in goals, processes, products, encouraging decision making, metacognition, self-evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>participation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation and</strong></td>
<td>Private evaluation and emphasis on progress, persistence, increasing competence through effort, understanding, personal responsibility, intrinsic motivation, recognition of value of errors in learning. Provision for choice to demonstrate learning. Recognition of students for their multiple abilities and dimensions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>recognition</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>practices</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grouping</strong></td>
<td>Provision for collaborative, varied, heterogenous grouping where help-seeking is a normal part of learning process. Student goals and rewards are interdependent with built in individual accountability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of time</strong></td>
<td>Provision for flexibility in classroom schedule, time to ask for help.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22: Classroom social environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Supportive of help-seeking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student-teacher</strong></td>
<td>Demonstration of effort to establish personal relationships with students, attending to social and emotional needs as well as academic, so that students feel comfortable and familiar with teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td>Promotion of positive peer relationships through provision for frequent cooperative interactions, encouraging helping, discussions, exchanges, modeling. Shows recognition of balanced need for social interaction and learning goals in classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>Friendly, understanding, caring, dependable, supportive, respectful, uses humor, patient. Shows enthusiasm and dedication for teaching, the subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 23: Classroom instruction and help-seeking interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How help is given</th>
<th>Supportive of help-seeking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negotiates meaning, encouraging demonstration of student understanding (e.g., scaffolding), student effort and persistence, strategic use of help to monitor understanding, minimizing frustration and risk. Models patterns of discourse (e.g., questions and probes to diagnose misconceptions) that may develop student skills in questioning. Helps students distinguish between adaptive help-seeking and dependent help-seeking (e.g., gives feedback, models help seeking, admits ignorance, uses resources).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Willingness to help | Responsive to help-seeking (e.g., listens, helps without evaluating, gives specific instructions and direct encouragement for asking questions, regularly and actively offers help and checks for understanding, predictable in willingness to offer help). Positive affect in responding to help-seeking (e.g., enthusiastic, uses humor). Addresses emotional needs (e.g., anxiety reduction). |

| Effectiveness of help | Shows understanding of student’s need, provides assistance in a comprehensible way, increasing student understanding and independence in completing tasks. |

| Expectations of students | Positive expectations for students’ ability to learn, to be accountable, to accept challenges, to use available classroom resources (e.g., promotes understanding even in the face of difficulty, expects to be asked for help, encourages students to use one another as important resources, teaches students how to give help). |
APPENDIX E

Section C

Table 24: Summary - Classroom support of adaptive help-seeking

+ - Evidence of support for help-seeking

Teacher _____________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active student participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation/recognition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/teacher relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How help is given</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX E

Section D

Likert Scale
Classroom support of adaptive help-seeking

0-------------------------------------------------1--------------------------2-----------------------------3
No evidence of support Seldom Usually supports Consistently supports
 supports
APPENDIX F

Section A

Table 25: Students’ adaptive help-seeking strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adaptive help-seeking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental – requests help that builds understanding and independence in learning (e.g., asks for assistance in process, hints, steps in method to problem solve, clarification of understanding, new examples to try out learning).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selects an appropriate helper who is likely to provide the desired information and support independence in learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectively asks for help – timing, disposition (e.g., pleasant, courteous), verbalizing question so that helper understands need (e.g., explicit, direct, precise or able to clarify question), persevering until appropriate help is attained, understanding is increased.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX F

Section B

Table 26: Summary - Students’ adaptive help-seeking strategies

1 = Majority adaptive help-seeking
0 = Majority not adaptive help-seeking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective help-seeking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX F

Section C

Likert Scale

Students’ adaptive help-seeking strategies

0------------------------1------------------------2------------------------3
None                     Seldom                  Often                    Consistently
APPENDIX G

Section A

Electronic interview:
Student perceptions about help-seeking interactions

Classroom subject: ________________

Section 1
If you asked for help during my visit in your _______ class on ________, please answer the following seven questions. If you did not ask for help, please go to section 2.

Q1. Why did you ask for help? (What was your goal?)
Q2. What kind of help did you want? (For example, did you just need an answer to a question you were working on, need to know what to do, need to get more understanding so you could move ahead on your own, etc.)
Q3. What did you do or say to ask for help?
Q4. Who did you ask for help?
Q5. What help did you get?
Q6. Did it help meet your goal? Why or why not?
Q7. Could you explain how you felt about asking for help?

Section 2
If you did not ask for help during my visit in your _______ class on ________, please answer the eight questions in this section. If you did ask for help, please answer the questions in Section 1.

Q1. Did you find anything difficult about the tasks in the class? If you did, what did you find difficult?
Q2. If you answered yes to Q1, did you attempt to solve the problem? If you did try to solve the problem, what did you do? Were you able to figure things out?
Q3. Did you think of asking for help?
Q4. If you thought of asking for help, why didn’t you use this strategy?
Q5. Did either the teacher or a classmate offer or provide help without you asking for it?
Q6. If the teacher or a classmate provided help, what help did you receive?
Q7. Was this help useful to you? How? Did it resolve the problem you had with the task?
Q8. If you found the help useful, will you ask for similar support in the future?
## APPENDIX G

### Section B

Table 27: Students' perceptions about help-seeking interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Supportive of help-seeking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How help is given</strong></td>
<td>Negotiation of meaning, encouraging demonstration of student understanding (e.g., scaffolding). Encouragement of student effort and persistence, strategic use of help to monitor understanding, minimizing frustration and risk. Models patterns of discourse (e.g., uses questions and probes to diagnose misconceptions) that may develop student skills in questioning. Help students distinguish between adaptive help-seeking and dependent help-seeking (e.g., gives feedback, models help seeking, admits ignorance, uses resources).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Willingness to help</strong></td>
<td>Responsive to help-seeking (e.g., listens, helps without evaluating, gives specific instructions and direct encouragement for asking questions, regularly and actively offers help and checks for understanding, predictable in willingness to offer help). Positive affect in responding to help-seeking (e.g., enthusiastic, uses humor). Addresses emotional needs (e.g., anxiety reduction).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effectiveness of help</strong></td>
<td>Shows understanding of student’s need, provides assistance in a comprehensible way, increasing student understanding, independence in completing tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expectations of students</strong></td>
<td>Positive expectations for students’ ability to learn, to be accountable, to accept challenges, to use available classroom resources (e.g., promotes understanding even in the face of difficulty, expects to be asked for help, encourages students to use one another as important resources, teaches students how to give help).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student-teacher relationship</strong></td>
<td>Demonstration of effort to establish personal relationships with students, attending to social and emotional needs as well as academic, so that students feel comfortable and familiar with teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher characteristics</strong></td>
<td>Friendly, understanding, caring, dependable, supportive, respectful, uses humor, patient. Shows enthusiasm and dedication for teaching, the subject.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G

Section C

Table 28: Summary - Students’ perceptions about help-seeking interactions

0 – Perceived as unsupportive  
1 – Perceived as supportive  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Observation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>How help is given</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to help</td>
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<td>Effectiveness of help</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expectation of student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher personal characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student-teacher relationships</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX G

Section D

Likert Scale

Student perceptions about help-seeking interactions

0-----------------1------------------2---------------------3
Not Supportive     Sometimes Supportive     Usually Supportive     Consistently Supportive
APPENDIX H

Sample final interview: Student perceptions about help-seeking

1. You mentioned that you prefer asking your partner for help in math. Can you explain?

2. What would your teacher have to do differently for you to be more willing to ask him for help?

3. When the teacher is teaching a lesson and going through the steps in solving a sample question, what do you do if you start to get lost?

4. What would you like the teacher to do to improve the chances you won’t get lost?

5. In one lab assignment in planning class, your group had to select three charities and answer questions about them to see if they qualified as being suitable for your final presentations. Did everyone have to do that assignment? What if you had already chosen your charity?

6. When you had time in class to work on assignments, I noticed that sometimes you worked on homework and sometimes you didn’t. When you didn’t, were you having trouble with the work or did you plan to do it in the resource room or at home or were there other reasons?
APPENDIX I

Transcribed member reliability checks

Interview with Tom

KEY:
I: Interviewer
R: Respondent

I: I’m speaking with Tom, math teacher, grade 10 at school number one. The purpose of this meeting is to determine if you agree with my description of what went on in your classroom, and you’ve read the description.

R: Yes, I have, yeah.

I: Yes, yeah. So go ahead.

R: Oh, um, a lot of it was pretty good. Um, I thought that, uh, I know the whole purpose was to get to study, uh, students who could help and I wasn’t too sure if there was more so on the student’s part or on my part or just on the student’s in general in their behavior as a class.

I: Specifically I was looking at certain students actually.

R: Certain two students –

I: Yeah. So I was looking at the classroom context with them in mind and then according to goal theory which talks about reasons for, {R: Yeah}, achievement in the classrooms.

R: And, uh, a lot of that, uh, was of, um, a lot of things that you saw, um, I thought you picked out and I was kind of flattered by a lot of the comments. Um, –

I: Well you should be, I hope it –

R: It was good, yeah. Like I, um, I like building a relationship and a connection with the students so I feel that when I do that there’s more on my side {I: Yeah} so they feel more comfortable approaching me as a teacher and asking for help or any, um, any advice on how they could do their work better.

I: Yeah.

R: And, um, there was a lot of, um, areas where I saw the students, well where, so where
you mentioned that the students were really responsive with my way of teaching {I: Mmm, Mmm} them and also my way of dealing with them {I: Mmm, Mmm} so and, um, –

I: What I’m really interested in also is, um, if the description of what I wrote about what was actually happening in the classroom.

R: Yeah.

I: I mean was the description accurate.

R: Yes, a lot of it was accurate. There were a few things where, um, I had to think about it to see, uh, if that had happened and {I: Right, yeah} I think it might have been. Like it wasn’t, I think you came a couple of times and wasn’t too sure, um, if that had happened but I thought it probably did, like and I probably didn’t notice it {I: Yeah} so it kind of made me realize that some of these students probably won’t seek help if, um, I didn’t prompt them more enough like or if they do understand, okay good, then we moved on {I: Yeah} and then where I didn’t question any further to make sure that they did understand. {I: Yeah} And then there were also other areas where I remember situations where students were saying “oh I get it” or like students who were responsive, more responsive were the ones that got the answers {I: Yeah} and the ones that were more attentive were the ones that were comfortable with the way I was teaching and like socializing with the students so that they were able to get help from their classmates {I: Yeah} or from me specifically.

I: Yeah.

R: And, uh, with the class dynamics too, um, saw that students also sought help from the other classmates so they were allowed to talk and as kind of a really social setting as well too that more towards the, um, more emphasis on the class work.

I: Mmm, Mmm. Yeah.

R: So, and um, there was one where you mentioned about my class, I can’t remember what page it was on, it’s one of the pages here, um, but you mentioned, um, –

I: Sorry, I thought it was 10 double spaced, but it was actually 10 –

R: That’s fine, I just, I just, yeah, I read through it all and there was one where it said, um, the class was, wasn’t, um, it wasn’t strict but it was tough for me, like it was more structure that there wasn’t any, um, air for them to really kind of like be laid back and not do work whereas I was always kind of hounding into them to –

I: Did I say that?

R: Uh, not those, none of those were but the message was, that was the message where the class was well structured, that the students were expected to do work when they
were supposed to do it and I was on their case for that and yeah I was having –

I: Oh right.

R: They kept working, um, even when they were socializing a little bit they kept
working and they were doing the work and, um, –

I: That was very evident.

R: Yeah, and that was, that was great. Like, uh, like my, my big thing with students is
that once the lesson’s over they, they just kind of like sit back and don’t do anything
whereas these ones were, um, actually doing the work afterwards and better, the
sooner the better so that it still stays fresh in their memory from the lesson.

I: Yeah, yeah.

R: Um, but, uh, most of it was very accurate, um, I don’t think, see I should have
highlighted the stuff that, uh, that was pretty brief. I just mean the question where I
remember {I: Yeah} situations and {I: Yeah} and, um, where the students, like one
lesson was like I told them that the stuff was kind of like easy or the stuff was really
hard {I: Yes, yes} to kind of prepare, so I kind of prepared them ahead of time
knowing that this is like, cause I go through the lesson and it’s oh this is gonna be
pretty hard for them so I made sure that they were paying attention –

I: So that was your rationale –

R: Yeah, I was, I always like to give them the heads-up, like this test is gonna be hard or
this quiz is gonna be hard and it’s always, um, I mean if they’ve been doing all the
work and they’ve been understanding the materials that they’ve been given that they
should find it easy but like if they don’t then they’re not gonna, they’re not going to,
uh, succeed on that. Um, also like I also noticed that students who need extra time,
like there’s always individualization with the students. Like some students are good at
math, some students aren’t. Some students are adapted so they get a little bit more
time or extra help on or support on their homework and tests. Um, so there’s a variety
of learning that was there. Um, students also, I always make sure that the students
understand, like I always popped in like does this make sense or do you guys
understand what I’ve said or if not then ask more questions. Um, also there’s one
point where you mentioned about the students, um, solving for themselves the
strategies. {I: Yes, Yes} I let them try, I asked them to try out their method to see if it
works and a lot of times it did and sometimes it didn’t and it was good that they saw
that strategy, that if it worked or not and then the students realizing that it didn’t work
and it was good that you noticed that I didn’t say well see there, I didn’t put them at
fault for that. Like and I told them that, um, it’s not going to be always one method of
solving the problem, there’s always different ways and if it works great and if it
doesn’t then you need to find another method and, um, I think the thing I’m trying to
say here is that I didn’t tell them that there’s only one way to do math {I: Yeah}, like
there’s always several ways of, and, um, like they’ll make mistakes and I’ll make mistakes too and there’s one instance there where I did make a mistake on the board and I did tell them that, you know, teachers aren’t perfect and I think having that, having said that like the students realize that, you know, everyone’s human, like we’re all gonna make mistakes. So and it’s good that the students are always looking, they’re actually paying attention so they see the mistake. And I didn’t fault them for that and they know that I’m not perfect and I think there’s a comfortable issue there so they know that I as a teacher, I’m not going to like get on them and say well don’t ever point me wrong again –

I: {Chuckle} Well that was certainly –

R: So but I like doing that, like I don’t mind making mistakes in front of the students. Um, –

I: So you felt that was a pretty, what I observed also from what you’re saying and I don’t want to put words into your mouth, but was fairly typical, pretty representative of how you felt.

R: With the class or –?

I: Yeah, yeah.

R: I mean like it’s a, it’s one thing to always be correct and another thing to be incorrect at one time and then –

I: I mean just in general, I mean your impression.

R: Of the, of the class or –?

I: The representation overall.

R: For the –

I: Of this description would be overall pretty representative. I mean you were saying, I mean I’m glad you were saying things that were happening there you feel are representative of what you always do.

R: Yeah.

I: Yeah.

R: Yeah, um, like with this class like I kind of, I know it’s high school too and I know that some of these kids were somewhat, um, the level of, um, learning wasn’t as high as I expected so I kind of had to bring it down a notch so that they can like get them involved, get them interactive with their lesson and try and make it interesting for
them to stay focused {I: Yeah} and then with the two students, at certain times they were great and then at certain times were not paying attention, but they did seek help either from the classmates or from me as well. {I: Yeah} And, um, and both of the students, like we respected each other very well to the point where there was no hesitation in asking for help at all or fear of asking for any help.

I: Which students are you referring to?

R: Both of those students that were –

I: Oh I see, yes.

R: And that goes with the whole entire class as well too {I: yeah} but more so, uh, with the majority of the students they were really comfortable in asking help from students and from me. {I: Yeah} I like to encourage having students at different levels working with each other, the one at the higher level can teach the one at the lower level and strengthen their skills, and then the one with the lower level can learn from a different source of instruction.

I: It was cute because one of your students actually, one of the students that was studying said to me, “You know, I think he paired us, I’m not sure why he paired us together but I kind of think it’s because he wanted a really strong student with a weaker one, which I am the weaker” was the student’s comment. It was kind of –

R: And also like with some of the students too, like you know that they’re, there was a time where I did pair them up beside another student to do that because, uh, knowing, um, the background of the student, like they were able to be compatible with one another and they got along with one another and they would help each other out. And so for one instance I paired up a really strong student who worked well with other people with another student that was weaker but he or she didn’t mind not working with this student knowing that they’re gonna help each other out. Whereas I avoided a super smart kid who doesn’t really socialize with anybody and pairing them up with a lower end student that those two students had no relation with, {I: Yeah} like you could just tell that those students, um, they don’t hang out together, they don’t socialize with one another so like the awkwardness would be kind {I: Yeah} of, it’ll be set there cause they’re not gonna help each other out. {I: Yeah} So, um, but the students were great. Like I think they, they liked the fact that they, it wasn’t complete instruction where they’d rather sit there and they had to listen and they had to put pen to paper and head down and do the work. {I: Yeah} So, um, what else, uh, I like how you mentioned about, um, not just teaching math but also teaching students to, um, to broaden their lines to learning, um, to further their education. {I: Yeah} um, like not just to, um, learn the material just to get a mark but also like to strengthen their minds and think for themselves and also move on to, um, a high level of education once they graduate from high school. Um, that was good. Um, gives them responsibility for themselves for them to do well on their own. Like you need to study, you need to practice, you need like, the only person that’s writing this test is yourself. {I: Yeah}
Like, um, there are students whose parents are teachers will help you but evidently it’ll be your performance on a test and if that’s what you’ve done and you’ve learned for themselves. So and a lot of the students know that, um, that they get help from their, from their sources, that they’ll end up doing well. And a lot of students, sometimes they’ll help themselves, like a lot of them are very independent. At the same time there’s also a lot of students that need to get help from their tutors or from other people to get help and that’s where, um, flex at the beginning of the year wasn’t very great for that class. Like a lot of students didn’t come in and then halfway through I think students began to realize what a hole they’ve dug, what a hole they’ve dug themselves into and they’ve been coming in for extra help and they’ve been bringing in other friends to come in and help do their math homework.

I: During flex.

R: During flex –

I: Yeah, absolutely, what a great concept.

R: So and, um, but, um, a lot of them at the same time also didn’t because they knew, I think, I don’t know if it’s because they didn’t want to seek help. A lot of them were just kind of like “Oh whatever, math” and just kind of like they’ll kind of cruise on by. So and, um, but you’ll get that in all types of students. Like some students will get help and some students won’t. So, um, –

I: Well you’ve certainly given me lots of responses.

R: That was good, yeah, it was awesome. Like I mean, like I thought, um, the majority of this was on, um, the students and how they would seek help. Like there was a lot of stuff like commenting on my performance in the class so –

I: Well this, this is one of, this is a small piece of my description.

R: Yeah.

I: My focus is the students but the students I always had to focus within a context so I described the context and then my focus was the students.

R: I see.

I: So, um, yeah.

R: But, um, I’m just going through these last few pages here. It was good that, um, you mentioned that I was kind of more, I was also concerned with their social and emotional background. Like, um, like that had me set like not to, not to demean them socially, like “Oh, you think you’re cool, you think you’re like, you know, the coolest student in school” or in terms of the emotion, like I know that some students were
going through a tough time {I: Yeah} through high school and I think I was sympathetic to them and, um, kind of a little bit mean too yet firm with them, like in terms of how they need to behave and what their expectations are in class. {I: Yeah} Um, and then also like targeting, um, individual students that require that. Like they were able to, um, learn and not abuse a situation in the classroom or like where they can come in and like something like cell phone issue, like a lot of students, um, they had their cell phones ring in class but they don’t answer, they get embarrassed and cause we had that talk at the beginning of the year where, you know, I know your cell phone’s gonna go off and like don’t answer it, turn it off or turn it off before you come into class, uh, and if it becomes destructive a lot then I’ll keep it. So a lot of students respected that, they didn’t, they didn’t answer the phone, um, they didn’t, um, like use it and call somebody else in class or walk out of the classroom so that was really good. I didn’t, I didn’t, um, part of the reason why I was that, uh, I actually think I did respect my position as a person, as a teacher, that like it’s a learning environment and, um, and I was really grateful to most students cause I already actually enjoy teaching those kids and I think them knowing that I like them they were kind of more like hey I want to, I want like to be seen as a good student in the teacher’s eyes.

I: It was a very respectful atmosphere.

R: Yeah, and like most, like they weren’t as, um, uh, they weren’t as bad as I thought they would, like that class like I think a lot of the students I really, um, like teaching individual students for their own, cause I mean even if they got the best mark or the lowest mark, like they each had their moments where there’s like I remember them doing particularly well on one instance and I called them on that and I think for them to get like continuous good feedback, constructive feedback, like they really appreciated that and in return like they don’t want to disappoint me and I really, I really liked that, like the students really respect me, like they’ll, they keep saying hi to me in the hallways and I’ll say hi to them in the hallways and I had one parent call me and said that, um, she was really glad that her son had me in his class cause like previously your son didn’t do well in math and he’s actually studying for a test and, um, I have a lot of good connections with some of the parents as well too, and especially with the two students that you were talking to, I talked to the parents and they were really supportive {I: That’s great} and, um, it was good that like we’re all on the same page to make, um, the students successful and the kids, I don’t think they really realized that but in hindsight I think they are becoming more successful so, um, it’s a condition for good teacher/student relationships. So caring about the students as learners, um, built up that relationship so that was good, I liked that. Um, and then, uh, and I’m not too sure if that kind of really motivated the students to become learners themselves but I think there’s more of a self, what’s the word I’m looking for, um, there’s more of an incentive for themselves to become better students and to motivate themselves. Not to the point where they’re really aggressive in terms of motivating themselves, but there was some sort of motivation for them to do better than like, they don’t bother not doing it, {I: Yeah} so.
I: Great.

R: Does that, is there anything, are there any other questions or –?

I: No, no, all I really was interested, well what it was, um, whether the description is pretty much the way you thought what went on in the classroom. But I also appreciate, one I appreciate that you feel that this has maybe been somewhat useful.

R: No, it was. Like I think, um, it kind of made me realize like going back to like my teaching skills and how I can like better myself as a teacher and make the students more successful. Like I think it was a learning experience with this class too {I: yeah}, um, like and from this, uh, this is a thesis or a –

I: A thesis, yes. Well this is a piece of it, it’s nearly 200 pages.

R: Yeah, so I’m just reading this thing, oh it’s good that, like this is good so I will keep up with this and then also I saw some other parts where oh I didn’t see that, I didn’t like about like seeking help where, um, I did maybe one time where I had said something mistakenly and like you know they take it the wrong way and then they’re not going to come up and see me again so like, you know, in the future like yeah I’ll have to be careful with that and –

I: Well certain students particularly –

R: Certain students, yeah, and the way you address things, like if you and the student are, have a pretty good rapport with one another then you can jokingly do that but then when another student may not take it the right way so you just have to be careful but and a lot of stuff like I enjoyed meeting and, um, I’ll keep up with that and then there was a few things in there it was like oh I think that’s a good point, I didn’t see that. Like maybe I’ll adapt that into my teaching style next time and see if that works and –

I: Well thank you. {Chuckle}

R: Thank you very much. No it was good.

I: And I’ll say thank you Tom. I can’t call you {R: Yes, I know, yeah} by your real name because it’s –

R: I was careful not to say my name –

I: How do you like Tom?

[END OF TOM’S INTERVIEW]
Interview with Jenny

KEY:
I: Interviewer
R: Respondent

I: Set 2, grade 9 math class, teacher Jenny. The purpose of this meeting is to determine if you agree with my description of what went on in your classroom.

R: Okay.

I: And it doesn’t, I’m not looking for you to go into a long explanation if you don’t have one, I mean it’s just {R: Oh} really a matter of whether or not you felt that what –

R: Well I think that the way you used actual dialogue from a class and I think that it was actual taped dialogue, right [TAPE STOPS ] ...

I: – mention –

R: Oh okay.

I: Class writing.

R: It sounds very similar to how I speak so, uh, –

I: I hope so. {Chuckle}

R: Yeah. {Chuckle} It’s funny to see on paper but, um, it reminded me of times in class so using that was for me the key to say oh yeah that did happen or yeah I do remember saying that, so it is in my opinion accurate.

I: Good, okay.

R: There you go.

I: End of interview.

R: I guess so.

I: Thank you.

R: Yeah.

[END OF INTERVIEW]