The QuickSmart in Schools programs are research-based intervention programs for middle-school students. Over the last eleven years, research related to the QuickSmart programs has accumulated compelling evidence that persistently low-achieving middle-school students can be supported to meet national numeracy and literacy benchmarks as measured by the National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), and improve scores significantly on standardised tests. Professor John Pegg and Associate Professor Lorraine Graham of the National Centre of Science, Information and Communication Technology and Mathematics Education in Rural and Regional Australia (SiMERR) developed QuickSmart in 2001.

From 2001 to 2012, close to 700 schools from all Australian States and Territories have implemented QuickSmart numeracy or literacy programs. This represents more than 10,000 participating students, of whom approximately 30% or 3000 identify as Indigenous students.

The number of participating numeracy students/schools doubled from 2009 to 2010 and further increased into 2011.

In 2012, new clusters of schools have begun in Southern Adelaide, South-East Queensland, the Gulgong, Lismore, Hunter and South Sydney districts of
New South Wales, and several locations in Victoria, including East Melbourne and Ballarat.

As students progress through school after completing *QuickSmart* programs, more and more evidence is accruing that shows a positive effect on student performance as measured by NAPLAN assessments. For example, a recent analysis completed by the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training (Bradbury, 2011) revealed that “the *QuickSmart* program appears to have had a significant impact on student logit growth as measured by NAPLAN for a number of the cohorts investigated”.

Specifically, the students participating in *QuickSmart* Numeracy while in Year 4 (assessed at year 3 and 5 through NAPLAN) during 2009 or 2010 showed significant gains in numeracy scores.

Similarly, the students who were in Year 4 in 2009 or 2010 all showed significant gains in the NAPLAN Literacy areas of Grammar, Reading and Spelling. The 2010 Year 6 *QuickSmart* Literacy participants also demonstrated strongly significant gains over the control group in the areas of Grammar and Reading.

The *QuickSmart* website includes examples of research evidence from a variety of sources at http://www.une.edu.au/simerr/quicksmart/pages/qsresearchevidence.php.

Stefan joined the *QuickSmart* team in 2010 as a Research Fellow. He has a doctorate in Social Anthropology and over the past 14 years has worked on research projects in experimental psychology, sociology, anthropology and education. His most recent area of interest is the analysis of large sets of data in education research.

Stefan’s work for *QuickSmart* involves managing a large corpus of quantitative data (student results from over 400 schools around Australia), conducting statistical analyses of these data, and preparing draft reports for individual schools and for school clusters. He also prepares quantitative summaries for annual reports on the performance of all *QuickSmart* students in Australia.

In addition to this, Stefan manages and analyses the qualitative data (responses to questionnaires) from *QuickSmart* students and their teachers, parents and school principals.
The Teach, Learn, Share website (www.teachlearnshare.gov.au) is a Federal Government initiative, where ‘educators and education systems can share their most effective approaches to literacy and numeracy teaching and learning in Australia’\(^1\), overseen by DEEWR (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations).

Not surprisingly, QuickSmart has been registered on this site as both a literacy and a numeracy intervention. In order to be registered, an application was submitted by SiMERR, and evaluated by the National Partnership Literacy and Numeracy Expert Reference Group (the group responsible for assessing all applications for registration).

We know that you have many wonderful QuickSmart stories, and since it is possible for you to have your say about any of the programs on this site, we are inviting you to post your comments about QuickSmart on this website. Your comments will form part of a Reader Comments forum, and as such you will need to agree to abide by the terms of use as posted on the site.

We know that you have many wonderful QuickSmart stories, and since it is possible for you to have your say about any of the programs on this site, we are inviting you to post your comments about QuickSmart on this website. Your comments will form part of a Reader Comments forum, and as such you will need to agree to abide by the terms of use as posted on the site.

**What to do:**

1. Go to:

2. Click on ‘Register’ (if you haven’t already done so on this site) and fill in your details.

3. Agree to the terms and conditions\(^2\).

4. Post your comment(s).

So, this is an opportunity for you to share your views about QuickSmart with others, and at the same time to explore a website whose goal is to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for students. If you would like any assistance from us in posting your comments, do contact one of the QuickSmart team as listed on the back page of our newsletter.

The more responses you add, the better it is for QuickSmart!

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\(^1\) From the Teach, Learn, Share website.

\(^2\) The terms and conditions state, amongst other things, that ‘the discussion forums are intended to be a medium for the exchange of information between, and points of view of, many people, and these are the points of view and statements, opinions or questions are not of the Commonwealth. Divergent points of view can provide for vigorous and refreshing debate within online forums, and while you will not always agree with another user’s opinion, it is courteous to remember that each user is entitled to his or her own viewpoint.’
Watching the two QuickSmart Literacy tutors, Melissa and Kim in action at Peel High in Tamworth was engaging and inspirational. It was clear these two tutors were weaving some serious magic in the QuickSmart room. The atmosphere was warm and productive with honest positive relationships between tutors and students and students and peers.

I was ‘a fly on the wall’ in the ‘Grandma’s Cake’ lesson. The students fell easily into a routine of highlighting unknown words. The tutor had a positive tone of inquiry with her questioning techniques.

“What does ‘glum’ mean?”

These questions were asked in a non-threatening manner. In turn, the students were keen to contribute and tease out comprehension of meanings in a spirit of curiosity. It was evident the students felt comfortable to ask questions, give suggestions and problem-solve.

The lightning speed of the flash cards drove the students’ excitement and keenness to succeed. The process of tallying scores made the students’ achievements evident. The reward each student received from their lesson was factual evidence-based results. The reward I received was observing students’ self confidence and literacy skills improve.

Next lesson was captivating not only for me, but also for the students. The expression Melissa put into her reading of ‘The Perfect Family’ had the group mesmerised. It reinforced for me the craft involved in storytelling and its importance in the QuickSmart approach as an active receptive tool that can engage students in the reading process.

Quite simply, the students enjoyed being
read to.

The focus then turned to individual reading and comprehension.

What do you think is going to happen?”

The answers were not monosyllabic half attempts; they were creative, logical and interesting.

More teaser questions, such as “What do you think is going to happen?” produced some funny and individual responses. These could become great building block ideas for future writing and story crafting lessons.

Thank you again to the students and to the tutors of Peel High, Tamworth. It was a privilege to watch your dedication and professionalism in engaging the students with QuickSmart Literacy.

Eliza Bowen
August 2012
If you haven’t already sent us your data for 2012, please be aware that it is now possible for schools to upload their own Literacy OZCAAS, PAT Comprehension and PAT Vocabulary test results via our website.

Simply click on the Login menu on the top right-hand side of QuickSmart’s home page, then, select the Literacy Private Area. You will be prompted for a username and password. (If your username or password is unavailable, please email quicksmarthelp@une.edu.au or phone Dave Heap on (02) 6773 5061 for assistance.)

Once you are into the Literacy Private Area, choose the Literacy Data Upload option and enter your username and password again. After this step, follow the prompts to enter the pre-test and post-test data for each of your QuickSmart and Comparison students.

There are many advantages to using the Literacy Data Upload tool to enter 2012 data. Most importantly, after you have entered your students’ assessment information and clicked the Request Report button, the QuickSmart Team at SiMERR will receive your data and work towards providing you with a preliminary analysis within one month. This individual school report will be sent by email to your QuickSmart Co-ordinator along with a spreadsheet containing your data. Access to this spreadsheet will allow you to check your school’s data to ensure that all scores have been entered correctly.

If you are part of a Cluster of QuickSmart schools, a Cluster Report will then be generated as soon as all schools in the cohort have submitted their data. This report will present the average gain and Effect Size scores for all test results across all schools in your Cluster. It will be sent by email to your QuickSmart Co-ordinator as soon as possible in 2013.

We are sure you will appreciate the efforts of our team to streamline and speed up the process of providing you with data reports. We are looking forward to hearing from you and receiving pre-test and post-test data from 2012 QuickSmart and Comparison Literacy students.
**QuickSmart**

**QuickSmart New Look Website**

The QuickSmart website has been given a facelift – a new look and new features! We now have a blog that feeds onto the website homepage and a stream of current QuickSmart news via our new RSS feed. QuickSmart users can easily access the Numeracy and Literacy Private Areas under the Login menu and can also join us on our social network sites via Connect. These changes are just the beginning... new updates coming soon at http://www.une.edu.au/simerr/quicksmart

**NEW!!! QuickSmart Champions 2012**

Is there a staff member at your school (or organisation) whose efforts in supporting QuickSmart over time go above and beyond the call of duty? Tell us about them! We want to be able to acknowledge the efforts of these QuickSmart champions.

Go to:

http://goo.gl/WAo2T

to submit your application. If your nominated person is successful, we will present that person with a certificate recognising their efforts in supporting underachieving learners, and their contributions to the success of the QuickSmart program in your organisation. We will also acknowledge that person on our webpage and in our next newsletter.

It takes only 5 minutes to let that person know how much their hard work is appreciated by you!
QuickSmart for adults was launched in 2012, with programs being well established at the GEMCO mine on Groote Eylandt and the Northern Territory prisons in Darwin and Alice Springs. About a dozen mine workers and more than 50 prisoners have been working through QuickSmart Numeracy, and the implementation of the Literacy program is underway.

Participant responses:
A prisoner who began QuickSmart Numeracy on +1 progressed all the way to ÷12 and became a QuickSmart instructor. He wrote to the QuickSmart team: “For me it is like putting together a puzzle that I could never quite figure out, but QuickSmart has made it easier for me to put the pieces together.

“I have begun to see patterns that make it easier to find the answers. (For example: 6 x 2 = 12, 12 ÷ 2 = 6; 2 x 12 = 24 and 24 ÷ 2 = 12.) It isn’t as hard as I thought it was and it is fun.”

An employee with GEMCO stated:
“I don’t want to miss this training, I’m going to come to work every day. It’s helping me work out the change when I go shopping.”

The value of the QuickSmart programs:
QuickSmart in Workplaces and QuickSmart in Correctional Centres are laying a foundation for increasing employment opportunities and reducing recidivism. The Groote Eylandt and prison communities have high proportions of people with socio-economic disadvantage. Attainment of basic skills in numeracy and literacy is commonly low and a critical hindrance to future opportunities.

Numeracy and Literacy are invaluable for employment opportunities. The Industry Skills Council report “No More Excuses” (2011) states, “Approximately 53% of working age Australians have difficulty with numeracy skills; 46% of Australian adults have difficulty with reading skills, and 13% are classified in the lowest literacy category.”

“Language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) are the essential underpinning skills that enable people to be productive in their work, to
continue to learn and develop, and to participate fully in society.”

Education in numeracy and literacy holds particular significance amongst prison populations. A Review of the Evidence: The Case for Education-Based Incarceration (Fitch and Delevi, 2012) states, "Higher levels of education have been linked with lower rates of institutional discipline ... more instances of post-release employment ... and fewer occurrences of recidivism upon release."

Instructors: At GEMCO, mines training staff deliver QuickSmart as part of a wider Indigenous employee training and development program that recently won a BHP-Billiton worldwide award. In the prisons, numerate and literate prisoners provide the instruction for their fellow prisoners.

Results: The results in each setting are exciting. The progress in attaining basic skills is matching and even bettering that recorded in schools. The personal responses of participants and instructors also mirror the consistently enthusiastic feedback from students, teachers and parents.

These adults are achieving competence with basic facts and gaining skills in real life maths problem solving. Adults who began with adding zero are mastering division. Students are becoming instructors. People who dropped out of schooling and react against traditional educational settings are showing high and enthusiastic attendance. Friendly competition along with mutual support is to be seen amongst participants. Indigenous elders are arranging for younger men to attend QuickSmart lessons.

Conclusion: These complex new settings have not been without complex new challenges. 2012 has been a learning year, not just for the participants but also for mine and prison staff and the QuickSmart team.

In 2013 the QuickSmart team is looking to extend QuickSmart within these existing sites and beyond. For example, at Darwin Correctional Centre QuickSmart is being provided as a regular education program within the Industries work section. As for “beyond”: stand by for more good news stories from adults across Australia.

Martin Trotman
Conducting research with students who are struggling with aspects of their learning can be very rewarding for both the researcher and the students. This has been my experience in Terms 3 and 4, 2012. Having dipped our toes in the water for a six-week period in 2011 looking at the possibility of adding a Written Expression component to the QuickSmart Literacy program, it was great to be given the opportunity to return to Armidale High School to carry on this research for a longer period of time. With twelve weeks of instruction time available, plus the extra time needed for pre- and post- testing, we were able to continue on with what we had tried in 2011 and modify and adapt the material and the structure of our previous experiences.

For the six (3 pairs) selected students, their achievements were very pleasing, with five of the six personally feeling very happy with their efforts. For the sixth student, whose progress was less impressive, there was a realisation that this student may well have benefited by doing the existing QuickSmart Literacy Program (Reading and Comprehension) prior to participating in the Written Expression component. However, results overall showed that the six QuickSmart students had made good gains as opposed to the two control students who had assisted with the research.

Following the intervention, these were the students' responses to the student survey question,

*QuickSmart is –*

- good because it has helped me improve my English
- helpful in improving my reading and writing skills
- fun because you get to write stories and work with friends
- the best thing ever because it has helped me with my learning
- helpful
- fun because it has helped me to develop my writing style and skills

*Jenny Thomas*
We know that there are many people who could benefit from QuickSmart, not only struggling students in the middle years of schooling. The challenge is to come up with a format for other learners that recognises their different circumstances. Such learners include unemployed job seekers whose work opportunities can be enhanced by participation in QuickSmart.

Thus, one of the exciting new developments for QuickSmart is an online format. The work for the online version started in 2012 with QuickSmart numeracy thanks to a grant from the Federal Government, and a collaboration between the University of New England and the New England Institute of TAFE. It is intended that the program offered will pick up as many features of the QuickSmart in schools program as possible: the lesson structure, automaticity, progress goals, feedback, games and problem solving. When the learners meet a fact they don’t know or would like help with, there will be links either to support video clips, or to static images that explain the fact.

One of the exciting spin-offs of an online version of QuickSmart is the opportunity to collect even more data than we currently do. This means that we can learn more about how people of different ages and from different backgrounds learn and we will be able to base further developments on the data we collect and analyse.

As you might imagine, this is a huge task, and it presents the team with unique challenges on a daily basis. The timelines are tight, with a trial version aimed for release early this year, followed by a useable version soon after. If you know anyone who fits within the category of unemployed job seekers who would be willing to trial the program for free until the end of June, contact Helen Doyle at hdoyle2@une.edu.au or phone 02 6773 2538.
Professor John Pegg – QuickSmart Co-developer:
Phone: (02) 6773 5070   Email: jpegg@une.edu.au

A/Prof Lorraine Graham – QuickSmart Co-developer:
Phone: (02) 6773 3821   Email: lgraham@une.edu.au

Mrs Jenny Thomas – Numeracy and Literacy:
Phone: (02) 6773 2788   Email: jthoma26@une.edu.au

Ms Shirley Cooke - Numeracy:
Phone: (02) 6773 4564   Email: scooke2@une.edu.au

Mrs Noeline Raymond – Casual Literacy Workshop Presenter:
Phone: (02) 6773 4564   Email: nraymond@une.edu.au

Mrs Anne Parnell - Numeracy:
Phone: (02) 6773 4289   Email: aparnel2@une.edu.au

Mrs Lyn Alder - Literacy:
Phone: (02) 6773 4289   Email: valder2@une.edu.au

Mr Martin Trotman – Social Inclusion:
Phone: (02) 6773 3135   Email: mtrotma3@une.edu.au

Dr Stefan Horarik – Data Analysis:
Phone: (02) 6773 3256   Email: shorarik@une.edu.au

Mr Russel Glover – Executive Officer:
Phone: (02) 6773 4288   Email: rglover@une.edu.au

Mrs June Billings – Executive Assistant:
Phone: (02) 6773 5065   Email: jbillin5@une.edu.au

Ms Rhiannon Wright – Administrative Assistant:
Phone: (02) 6773 5067   Email: rwright21@une.edu.au

Mr Gerard Todd and Mr Dave Heap – IT Support:
Phone: (02) 6773 5061   Email: quicksmarthelp@une.edu.au

Mrs Helen Doyle – QuickSmart Online™ Project Manager
Phone: (02) 6773 2538   Email: hdoyle2@une.edu.au

For more information on QuickSmart please visit:
website: http://www.une.edu.au/simerr/quicksmart/
or find us on FaceBook and Twitter