OVERVIEW OF QUICKSMART PROJECT 2009

2009 has seen an exponential expansion in the number of schools participating in the QuickSmart program. This reflects the inclusion of schools from South Australia, Victoria, Canberra, Metropolitan Sydney, Lismore Diocese and the North Coast of N.S.W. The ‘QuickSmart family’ has grown to accommodate just under 170 schools, with 95 joining us this year. The team is busy bracing for yet another expected explosion in the number of schools taking part in QuickSmart later this year.

Whilst the QuickSmart Numeracy Program has experienced an amazing growth, the QuickSmart Literacy Program continues to create interest in areas where the Numeracy Program is already well established. In the Northern Territory, a two day Literacy implementation workshop was held with six new schools during the QS Team’s visit in March. This brings the total number of schools using the Literacy Program in the NT to 12. QuickSmart Literacy continues to be used in schools in the Lismore Diocese and at Orara High School [Coffs Harbour – N.S.W.]

With this increased interest in the Literacy Program, a great deal of energy and time has been devoted in recent times to refining and editing our existing Literacy materials and procedures to conform to copyright requirements and to meet the multiliteracy needs of QuickSmart Literacy learners. It includes several new pieces of text with teaching materials for each one. The Team has been fortunate to have the services of Katie Kilner who has expertise in both primary education and visual arts and whose illustrations have added interest and meaning to the texts. Currently, Noelene is working with two local Armidale secondary schools in trialling these new materials and procedures. Progress is also being made in moving towards producing the materials in a kit form similar to the Numeracy Kit. It is hoped that with all the experience we have now had, this will not be such a long and drawn out process.
Due to funding constraints, *QuickSmart* programs are not always implemented at the beginning of academic school years. This was the case for fourteen schools in the New England area and ten schools in the Northern Territory who started their *QuickSmart* journeys in the middle of 2008. During Term 1 2009, these schools attended mid-program call-back workshops where they reported on their *QuickSmart* programs and the progress of their *QuickSmart* students. How wonderful it was to hear such uplifting stories about the individual and collective successes of the many school *QuickSmart* programs.

Back at *QuickSmart* Central at the University of New England, QS team members have individually and collectively been involved in entering and analysing all the data, both quantitative and qualitative, that has been supplied to us by participating schools over the years 2001 – 2008 and which has been subsequently used in compiling the ‘largest’ report ever written on the *QuickSmart* project [See later report].

A wonderful *QuickSmart* Website has been created thanks to Eve and the IT expertise of SiMERR’s multi-media manager, Rachael Adlington. In between all of this, John and Lorraine have somehow managed to present papers and symposiums at national and international conferences and write and publish articles about *QuickSmart* in many journals and other publications.

If you have news that we could include in future *QuickSmart* newsletters, please contact – Jenny Thomas at: jthoma26@une.edu.au
**QUICKSMART AWARDS**

Independent acknowledgments of the success of the *QuickSmart* program are treasured and valued by the QS team as recognition that the intervention is making a difference to children’s experiences of learning success.

**American Educational Research Association Award [2007]**

This award and international recognition of the *QuickSmart* program and its associated research was made at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association [AERA] held in Chicago in 2007. Fifteen thousand researchers attended the 2007 AERA conference. It is the largest conference of educational researchers held in the world. The symposium based on the *QuickSmart* research entitled *International Perspectives on Quality Educational Research that Supports Students Learning in Reading and Numeracy* and presented by John and Lorraine et.al. was highlighted in the conference program as a Presidential Invited Session.

**Learning Difficulties Australia [LDA] Tertiary Student Award [2008]**

This is an occasional award through which LDA recognises significant research in the field of Learning Difficulties.

Anne Bellert was the first Research Associate of the *QuickSmart* Project in 2001 and 2002. Anne, who works for the Catholic Education Office in the Lismore Diocese, is currently a PhD student at the University of New England where her supervisors are Lorraine and John. This prestigious award recognised Anne’s research through the initial trials of the *QuickSmart* program into the value of automaticity in acquiring the basic skills required for success in the maths education of struggling students.

**Vice Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Research – Team Award**

This award is intended to recognise staff who have demonstrated a highly collaborative approach and outstanding achievement in research. The *QuickSmart* nomination was supported by evidence that demonstrated:

- peer reviewed publications;
- research grant success;
- other professional awards or recognition for research activity; and
- evidence of impact on professional, or other practice, or on policies.

This award has recognised the teamwork of Lorraine, John, Jenny, Noelene and Eve.
DATA AND QUICKSMART RESEARCH

THANK YOU...

… to all the *QuickSmart* instructors and coordinators and principals who have organised and administered standardised and CAAS tests, collected the data, and sent it in to the SiMERR National Centre. Your collection of qualitative data by organising the completion of the evaluative questionnaires (and by completing the questionnaires yourselves) has been equally important. We acknowledge that this data collection is a huge task, which frequently occurs at busy times in schools (at the beginning and end of the school year).

The data you have all collected has been crucial to the success of the program – it is used to continually evaluate whether or not the numeracy and literacy programs are working (they certainly are!) and also to write reports for government agencies in order to secure funding for the continuation of the *QuickSmart* programs and their extension to other schools.

Most recently, the *QuickSmart* team based at the SiMERR National Centre used the data to write a major report that summarises *QuickSmart’s* development and achievements since the first time it was implemented in 2001. The major report is about 200 pages long and includes approximately 300 pages of appendices. In the main body of this report we were able, thanks to all your efforts, to provide extensive quantitative and qualitative sets of evidence from over 3,000 students and many hundreds of teachers and parents. Both sets of results point to how *QuickSmart* helped “narrow the gap” for low-achieving middle-school students.

As one of our external statistics consultants, Dr Peter Grimbeek, of Griffith University, Queensland, stated:

The *QuickSmart* database provides an unusually extensive range of mathematics and literacy measures related to intervention and comparison groups. More specifically, it is distinguished by its richness in terms of the totality of participants (more than 3000, with 1200 in the NT), the number of years across which data has been collected (2001-2008), the range of year levels involved (Years 3-11), and its relatively even gender balance (i.e., 50.4% female students). The program is for educational reasons directed to those with learning difficulties, with a relatively small subset (22%, excluding NT students) of comparison students who have progressed more normally. Analysis of outcomes based on this purposive sample identifies consistent differences in favour of *QuickSmart* participants, an outcome consistent with the value of the program.

So, well done all of you! The *QuickSmart* team at SiMERR would like to thank you in anticipation for your continued efforts in gathering these crucial data.
PROGRESS REPORT

QUICKSMART NUMERACY PROGRAM RESOURCES

The expansion of the Numeracy Program into so many schools throughout 2008 and 2009 has kept the QuickSmart team extremely busy. Though this growth may be likened to an erupting volcano, sudden and surprising and needing immediate responses, the development and production of the new round of resources and materials plodded along like a ponderous and weighty elephant.

For some QuickSmart schools the talk of these state of the art resources had reached the HO-HUM level of anticipation. But for schools that have joined the program since August 2008, the Resource Kit and Games Pack has become a reality. No longer are QuickSmart personnel or school administrative staff chained to their photocopiers or to be seen cutting up flashcards for weeks on end. Setting up the QuickSmart intervention has suddenly become far less onerous. And the QuickSmart Team are quietly proud of their achievement. By now 126 schools have been the recipients of these magnificent kits.

Considering that the background of all QuickSmart team members commenced through the ranks of classroom teachers, this achievement has seen us all on a steep learning curve. Our collective knowledge has expanded to include product design, printing, plastic box manufacturing, the collation and packaging of nearly two million cards and game pieces, and the successful freighting of weighty and fragile kits. We are indebted to many talented and practical people and businesses that have guided us through this minefield.

One of the lovely stories to come out of this myriad of tasks involved in the production of this kit is our partnership with a local business, Print Pack Post, part of Integrated Living, which employs people with an intellectual disability. Print Pack Post is responsible for all the collating, packaging and freighting of the kits and materials to QuickSmart workshops across the nation. Following is an article published on the University Web and in the local Armidale paper about their wonderful and professional work.

‘UNE maths program adds confidence’ - une.edu.au/news

Employees at Ascent Business Services in Armidale are working with the University of New England on a project that is helping school students to improve their basic skills in mathematics.

Ascent Business Services is a division of Integrated Living Australia, an
organisation that supports people with a disability. A team of eight people, working in the Print Pack Post division at Armidale’s Acacia Park, is collating numeracy resources used in the QuickSmart program developed at UNE. Two million cards are being sorted into 200 sets of QuickSmart resources.

For the Ascent employees, the work has had an educational dimension. ‘It’s been a very interesting exercise for us to see the advancement of some in their basic maths capabilities,’ said Mr Jack Kelly, Team Leader in Ascent’s ‘Print Pack Post’ operation.

One of the employees, Paul Wadleigh, said the project offered exciting possibilities for learning. ‘If we have spare time, we practise,’ he said.

‘They are also developing an eye for detail,’ Mr Kelly said, ‘and noticing any cards that might be defective.’ There has, indeed, been a remarkable improvement in the speed and accuracy of their work.

Mr Stuart Wark, General Manager of Employment Services for Integrated Living, said the project had ‘opened new horizons’ for the employees by ‘expanding their literacy and numeracy skills.’
THE QUICKSMART TEAM

As a result of the huge expansion in the number of schools implementing the QuickSmart programs, an increase in the number of personnel in the QS team has occurred.

Professor John Pegg and Associate Professor Lorraine Graham still very ably head up the team and competently navigate the programs through all the phases that are involved in seeking funds, maintaining the research base, delivering the professional development workshops across the land, and writing the mandatory reports that need to accompany each research grant.

As of the beginning of 2008, the number of Research Associates attached to the QuickSmart Program has grown to three:

Jenny Thomas continues to support the project by ensuring that all materials and resources are provided and freighted to the workshop locations. In her spare moments, she continues to revise and finalise the next edition of the Numeracy Folders and Manuals.

Noelene Raymond, who joined the QS Team in the second half of 2006, has taken over the huge responsibility of revising, revitalising and developing further material for the QuickSmart Literacy Program. In doing so she has ensured that all material meets copyright standards and this has involved writing many of all the texts that are now included in the program. As a distraction she has done follow up research in local Armidale Schools and at Orara High which has verified the long term success of the QS programs.

Eve Croeser joined the team from Curtin University in W.A. at the beginning of 2008 and has taken over the huge responsibility of all data entry. This has flowed into supporting and co-writing the biggest report to government about QuickSmart ever written. The creation of our new QuickSmart Website is in great measure also attributable to Eve’s skills, ably assisted by the SiMERR Multi Media Unit Manager, Racheal Adlington.

In the last six months the QS Project has benefited from the services of two local and very talented GAP STUDENTS who are hell bent on earning enough money in the year before heading off to university to support themselves as independent students. PAIGE NIES [Nov – Dec 2008] and JOSH OSBORNE, our 2009 Gappy, have tallied up many hours collating all the QuickSmart Numeracy and Literacy Manuals and workshop materials. The list of their contributions to the smooth running of the QS operation is too long to itemise. Certainly the QS Team is greatly indebted to their contribution.
QUICKSMART CONTACT PEOPLE

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Below is a list of the contact details of the QuickSmart Co-ordinators in all the QuickSmart School Clusters. The value of these people to the ongoing strength and success of the QuickSmart programs in schools is immeasurable. They are critical in the organisation and communication required for all QuickSmart workshops, they act as the first point of contact in providing solutions and support for many QuickSmart issues, they visit QuickSmart schools [sometimes in very isolated situations] and they maintain consistent and valuable contact with the QuickSmart team at SiMERR. For all of this, the QuickSmart Team is very grateful.

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