

QuickSmart – Lismore Diocese

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Project Title	QuickSmart Literacy/Numeracy Programs – Lismore Diocese
Project Team	Professor John Pegg, Associate Professor Lorraine Graham, Ms Jenny Thomas, Ms Noelene Raymond (SiMERR National Centre); Ms Anne Bellert, Mr Barry Bermingham (Lismore Diocese)
Period	2003-2008 ongoing
Funding Agency	Lismore Diocese and SiMERR (ARC 2003-2005)
Organisational Base	SiMERR National Centre

Description

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QuickSmart literacy and numeracy programs were first implemented in the Lismore Diocese in 2003 in one primary school. Seven schools now offer QuickSmart (QS) literacy and numeracy programs. Professional development workshops conducted by the QuickSmart team introduce staff from participating schools to the theory and research that underpins the QuickSmart numeracy and literacy programs. Support materials and resources are supplied as well as a step-by-step guide to implementing the programs. Follow up workshops are valuable opportunities to share successes, to discuss further refinements to programs and to troubleshoot and seek advice. The current implementation model sees participating schools managing the QuickSmart program relatively independently of the Lismore Diocesan Catholic Education Office. This measure of sustainability of the QuickSmart program over a number of years is an indication of its educational value.

The project included: delivery of workshops for professional learning about the implementation of the QuickSmart Program; support of staff at the participating schools and work with the Diocesan Coordinator to implement the QuickSmart program with integrity; and, gathering qualitative and quantitative data related to the QuickSmart program in the participating schools

Participants

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From 2003 to 2007, a total of 248 students have participated in a QuickSmart intervention. Staff and students from seven schools in the Lismore Diocese currently participate in the QuickSmart program. These schools are: St Francis Xavier, Woolgoolga Mary Help of Christians, Sawtell John Paul Secondary College, Coffs Harbour St Paul's Secondary College, Kempsey St Joseph's Primary School, Kempsey St Mary's Primary School, Bowraville St Joseph's Primary School, South Grafton

Findings

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The findings of this research collaboration between SiMERR National Centre and the Lismore Diocese support the improvement of basic literacy and numeracy skills for students who participate in the QuickSmart program. This improvement has been consistently evidenced by school reports presented at workshops in the Lismore Diocese since 2003. The improvement of students on statewide tests (i.e. BST, SNAP and ELLA) has also been investigated independently of SiMERR. A report by Bellert (2008) concludes that, "Students in middle school with learning difficulties improved their performance markedly on BST / ELLA / SNAP tests of academic performance after participating in QuickSmart programs i.e., these students 'Narrowed the Gap'."

Outcomes

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Journal Articles

- Graham, L., Bellert, A. & Pegg, J. (2007). Supporting Students in the Middle School Years with Learning Difficulties in Mathematics: Research into Classroom Practice. *Australasian Journal of Special Education*, 31 (2), 171-182.
- Graham, L., Bellert, A., Thomas, J., & Pegg, J. (2007). A basic skills intervention for middle school students with learning difficulties. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 40 (5), 410-419.
- Bellert, A. & Graham, L. (2006). Caught in the middle: Reaching and teaching middle years students with learning difficulties. *Australian Journal of Middle Schooling*, 6 (1), 3- 10.

Conference Presentations

- Graham, L., Bellert, A., & Thomas, J. (2005). QuickSmart: Improving literacy for students with learning difficulties. *Multiliteracies and English Teaching K-12 in the Age of Information and Communication Technologies*, vol.1, 1-27.
- Bellert, A., Graham, L., & Walsh, M. (2004, June). Effective intervention for students with learning difficulties in the middle school grades: A QuickSmart approach. *Successful Learning Conference*, University of Sydney. Electronic Media

- Brenton, P. (2006-7). DVD of Interviews with QS Program Stakeholders (Principals, teachers, instructors, students)

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The focus of the QuickSmart programs on developing the basic skills required for the successful participation of struggling learners in the literacy and numeracy aspects of the curriculum have been welcomed by both teachers and parents. Stakeholders report that improved literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge better enable the students to participate in classroom lessons and to apply their knowledge in a range of learning and living situations. By the conclusion of the intervention program, students frequently make comments and display learning behaviours that indicate increased confidence, a more positive attitude and a readiness to attempt learning tasks that is in marked contrast to their earlier attitude to learning. The QuickSmart Program began in one school in the Lismore Diocese in 2003. Five years later it is part of the learning support offered to low-achieving students who attend seven schools in the Diocese. As well as being offered as an intensive program, many of the instructional approaches introduced in QuickSmart are now being used as a regular part of classroom reading and numeracy instruction. The Catholic Education Office of the Lismore Diocese has further plans to extend QuickSmart in 2009 and in collaboration with SiMERR National Centre has applied for extensive funding under a pilot scheme offered by DEEWR to support schools located in low socio-economic areas.

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