

# DIocese OF LISMORE

## CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE



PT:jw

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### To Whom It May Concern:

The Catholic Education Office of the Lismore Diocese has been involved in the development and implementation of the QuickSmart program since 2003. Initially the program was delivered to a group of 12 students in one school. In 2007 the QuickSmart program is being implemented in seven schools in the Lismore Diocese and 86 students are participating in the QuickSmart programs in literacy and numeracy.

The QuickSmart Numeracy program has played an important part in meeting the learning needs of students in the middle-school grades who experience learning difficulties in basic mathematics. Whilst our classroom teachers maintain their vital role as the primary educators of these students, the availability of a curriculum relevant, research-based intervention to provide additional support for these students is perceived to be very beneficial. Recent interviews with principals of participating schools indicate that they are very keen for the program to continue in their schools.

The current implementation model sees the participating schools managing the program relatively independently of the Catholic Education Office. A small additional allocation of funding is made to each school and the schools link this with other allocations for literacy / numeracy to enable them to fund the program. Most of the actual support for the program is provided by staff of The University of New England's National Centre of Science, Information and Communication Technology and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia (SiMERR). Staff from the SiMERR centre supply extensive materials that provide all necessary resources and a step-by-step guide to implementing the program as well as support by 'phone and email. In addition SiMERR staff convenes two workshops per year which bring together tutors and supervisors from all seven QuickSmart schools in the Lismore Diocese. Invariably these workshops are informative and supportive and provide a valuable opportunity for practitioners to share challenges and successes.

The program's focus on developing facility with 'the basics' has been welcomed by teachers and parents alike. Students and their teachers and parents report that the improved knowledge of basic maths facts and procedures better enables the students to participate in the classroom mathematics lessons and to apply this knowledge in a range of learning and living situations. Gains in students' learning outcomes, confidence and self-efficacy have been informally reported by students, teachers and parents on many occasions over the past five years. To date the Catholic Education Office has not independently verified these reported gains although a process to do this is currently being developed.

Besides gains in student knowledge two other perceived benefits need to be noted. Firstly program tutors, class teachers and parents have repeatedly commented that

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participation in the program has a notable effect on students' confidence in themselves as a maths learner. At the beginning of the program it is not unusual for students to comment that they 'hate maths' or that they are 'dumb' at maths however, by the conclusion of the program students frequently make comments and display learning behaviours that indicate increased confidence, a more positive attitude and a readiness to 'have a go' that is in marked contrast to their earlier attitudes.

Another positive outcome of the program is the professional development experienced by the tutors who are either teachers or teacher assistants. The QuickSmart tutors gain information about effective approaches for teaching basic skills to students with learning difficulties and also gain valuable insights into students' learning as a result of close observation of students in small groups over an extended period of time. Many tutors have expressed that they feel their professional knowledge has been boosted as a result of being a QuickSmart tutor.

The Catholic Education Office of the Lismore Diocese is pleased to have had such involvement with the QuickSmart program over the past five years. The QuickSmart program seems to be unique as an intervention that targets students in the middle-school years with learning difficulties in mathematics. We are pleased to have had this opportunity and look forward to continued association with the QuickSmart program and the SIMERR Centre.



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