

10<sup>th</sup> September, 2007.

**Critical Friend's comments on Mid-project report: ASISTM project,**

**“Narrowing the performance gap: Improving Basic Mathematics Skills of Indigenous students”.**

It is a privilege to be involved in this project, which is successfully using a tested and effective teaching and learning intervention to raise the achievement of indigenous students in two schools in New South Wales.

The project team from UNE (SiMERR) has maintained close contact with the two schools, identified as Aboriginal School 1, and Aboriginal School 2, both in regional centres. Staff from the two schools have attended an initial briefing day in Sydney as well as two Professional Development Workshops at the University of New England. In my role as Critical Friend I attended the initial briefing day and the first of the Professional Development Workshops. Since then I have maintained contact with the project team by phone and email.

The first four milestones have been achieved or partially achieved, with some adjustment required due to unforeseen difficulties at the school level. Staff changes and changes in school scheduling and timetabling have occurred, resulting in minor delays in recruiting students to the project and in the completion of some of the proposed testing of student achievement. These are explained in the mid-project report. Other difficulties include the distant location of Aboriginal School 2 and the erratic school attendance of some students. The project team is working hard to reduce the effects of these difficulties.

The report indicates that the enthusiasm of the teachers that was evident at the first Professional Development Workshop has been maintained, and continues to grow as teachers notice the improvement in skills and attitudes of the targeted students. In my opinion, the time taken to work carefully with the teachers and to provide ongoing support has ensured the success of this project to date, and indicates that this intervention is likely to lead to continued use of the QuickSmart materials in the future in these schools.

Regarding the financial report, some minor transcription errors have been noted and discussed with the project team. Apart from that, all appears in order.

Congratulations are due to the UNE project team, the teachers, and the students, for the successful start to this project.

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