

QuickSmart

I have read (thoroughly) the Full Report sent to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (May 2009), together with all the *QuickSmart* material available online at the SiMERR National Centre website, plus the three journal articles sent to me.

QuickSmart is clearly one of the few (possibly the only) intervention programs implemented in Australia to have been subjected to such rigorous and thoughtful evaluation over a period of almost nine years and across diverse settings. As such, it certainly merits the description 'evidence-based approach'. The total program is extremely comprehensive, in that it includes preparation sessions for school principals, teachers, and instructors; professional follow-up; resource materials for teachers and students; a computer-based formative assessment and monitoring component, and the use of data from formal standardized measures of attainment for evaluation purposes. From the evidence provided it is not surprising that more and more schools are showing interest, and are anxious to implement *QuickStart* with their own at-risk students.

The Full Report is a truly exemplary document – extremely well written and cogently argued. The statistical treatment (particularly the appropriate use of Effect Sizes) has indicated the effectiveness of *QuickSmart* with both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous middle school students with weaknesses in basic numeracy and/or literacy skills. The Effect Size achieved in some cases is quite remarkable. At the moment, hard data on a sufficient number of students are available mainly in the numeracy area, but the evidence collected thus far for literacy appears to be equally promising.

It was great to see that issues of fidelity of implementation and of sustainability of the intervention program over time have been addressed. Comments within the Report clearly indicate that the designers are fully aware of key issues involved (and the potential pitfalls) in implementing and sustaining such innovations in and across schools.

Both the Full Report and the online materials present an excellent rationale for the design and methodology of the numeracy and literacy programs. The high priority given to establishing automaticity is well grounded and highly appropriate. The lesson format is designed to ensure maximum learning time, success, and engagement for students during each 30-minute session. This clear structure is also very helpful indeed for instructors who may not all be trained teachers.

I think that the Full Report is such a valuable document that it should be reproduced (in a slightly modified form) as a monograph, either by SiMERR National Centre, or by The Australian Council for Educational Research, perhaps as one in a series of 'evidence-based interventions'. It certainly merits wide circulation. In my experience, official reports made to funding bodies or

Education Departments quickly sink without trace. I would not want to see that happen to this important report.

For local consumption, the sections on numeracy in the Full Report could be taken almost as they stand (cut-and-paste) and used as an article for a journal such as *Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties* or the *Australian Mathematics Teacher*. Clearly the overall evaluation of *QuickSmart* should be prepared for an international journal (e.g., *Intervention in School and Clinic*, or *Psychology in the Schools*, or *Special and Remedial Education*; etc). It is even more important, I think, to use some of the descriptions and basic information from the Full Report to write some 'less academic' articles on *QuickSmart*, directed at teachers' through their professional magazines, and also for the media. Official Reports and academic papers tend not to be read by many teachers.

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