



St Mary's Carnarvon

Flexible Literacy for Remote Schools Evaluation

A review into the effectiveness of Direct Instruction (DI) and Explicit Direct Instruction (EDI) in 39 remote schools in WA, NT and Qld shows improved learning progress, behaviour and attendance, often beyond expectations.

The promising results in the first 18 months of implementation of the Good to Great Schools Literacy and Remote Schools program was reported by Principals and teachers.

“In some cases, the schools are reporting benefits that go beyond their expectations, including more students performing at grade level, improved student behaviour, improved school atmosphere, better learning outcomes for children evidencing trauma and improved school attendance,” the report states.

Results at a glance

Observed changes in students, the most significant changes observed were:

- Students have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them as learners (eighty three percent EDI, sixty six percent DI).
- Students are building better educational habits and routines (seventy five percent EDI, sixty one percent DI)

- Students are more confident learners (sixty five percent EDI, fifty six percent DI).
- Students are showing improved English oral language skills (forty eight percent EDI, seventy seven percent DI).

Observed changes in learning environment:

- The evidence from this evaluation is that EDI or DI is the right choice for these schools and the implementation of this Program is starting to create the outcomes that were hoped for by these schools. No school regrets its decision to implement EDI or DI and many are reporting benefits that go beyond their expectations.
- The survey found that across the schools, all DI Principals and seventy two percent of EDI Principals believe that DI or EDI respectively are fundamental to whole school reform.
- Experienced teachers also rated the Program highly with sixty percent of teachers with more than ten years teaching experience seeing EDI or DI as central to whole school reform and should be extended to other schools.
- The majority of survey respondents believe that the overall learning environment in the school has improved and that students now have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them as learners (EDI eighty three percent, DI sixty six percent).

* Teacher experience with the program varied between one month- 18 months at the time of survey.



“With DI, every child in our school can experience success.”

Literacy Key Leader, Lombadina

The Evaluation:

Independent evaluator Dr Annie Holden, of ImpaxSIA Consulting, conducted the 18-month milestone survey and interviews of 185 participants, 32 principals, 116 teachers, 19 assistant teachers and 18 Instruction coaches employed by the schools.

This study provides a qualitative focus and is intended to assist GGSA to continue to improve its approach to remote and Indigenous education reform while a more comprehensive and quantitative evaluation is underway by the University of Melbourne. Nearly fifty in-depth interviews were undertaken with the

schools' leadership teams, teachers, Indigenous assistant teachers, parents and community members.

scientifically validated teaching approaches: Explicit Direct Instruction (EDI) and Direct Instruction (DI) to improve the poor outcomes of remote (particularly Indigenous) education.

Participating schools receive ongoing training for existing and new teaching staff and school leadership, individual in-school coaching from visiting experts, expert data assessment and teacher improvement strategies, classroom materials and implementation resources.

SNAPSHOT What teachers said:

- “We’ve gone from an environment that was confronting and unpleasant, to a situation where the vibe is now more like a normal school across Australia where there are instances not outside the realm of the most highly functioning schools around Australia.” Instructional Coach, Angurugu School, Groote Eylandt
- “I thought the kids won’t be interested in this at all. But as soon as I started DI I found they learn amazingly using this technique. It’s very different to the way I would normally teach but it works! I didn’t think the kids would do it, Teacher Angurugu School, Groote Eylandt
- “This idea that they will enjoy the mastery with the ten percent increase each lesson; they really feel like they can achieve. So now I am a full DI convert. In this context,

Program in brief:

The GGSA Literacy in Remote Schools initiative, funded by the Australian Government’s Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Program, supports 39 schools to introduce two effective,



where education is such a hard sell, it's working really well." "The kids get lots and lots of praise and I've seen more increase in the kids' English ability in the last half year or so than I've seen in any other literacy program. And I've used five different English programs in the six years I've been in the Northern Territory." Teacher, Angurugu School, Groote Eylandt

- "At the beginning of last year it was not unusual to go into a classroom and for there to be only two students, now in each class we have a core of students of 8 to 12 turning up every day – compared to what we were experiencing before. It is very exciting." Instructional Coach, Angurugu School, Groote Eylandt
- "We are really looking forward to NAPLAN next week as we believe there is going to be a big jump. We can see it in the students and those of us with children here can see it in our own children." Instructional Coach, St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School, Carnarvon
- "I have a girl in my class who I thought was always going to be challenged as a learner, as she found it difficult to retain words when she was learning to read prior to DI. But now she is learning and learning well. Now, she is right up there. To see how happy she is; she is experiencing success and keeping up with the group. This is amazing." Literacy Key Leader, Christ the King Catholic School, Lombadina
- "When we first started teaching using EDI, it was so demanding, we would come to the teachers' room at break, just exhausted. But once it became second nature it was easier...You have to be switched on, all the time, and so do the kids have to be. It's intense. You have to be fully engaged and the students have to be fully engaged." Teacher
- "Students love to know how they are doing and parents are able to see exactly how their children are succeeding. I know exactly where my kids are at and the parents enjoy it too because they can see where their kids are at." Teacher, St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School, Carnarvon
- "For us ATAs it feels good. It could be a bit unsteady at first but then we got used to it. Of all the DI techniques, I really like that everything is set out for us, scripted for us. And we get support from [the Instruction Coach] and we support each other. If another ATA is struggling, we show her or practice with her. The Coach goes around and checks how we're going. And when the Implementation Manager comes she observes too and gives feedback.

I get constant feedback and support." Aboriginal Teacher Assistant (ATA), Christ the King Catholic School, Lombadina

- Warruwi created an online learning community site upload short videos for feedback and discussion: "We watch our videos and we see how we can improve. That is great. You miss a lot when you are teaching so the video helps you be more aware, not only of what you're doing but also of what's happening when your back is turned. Those videos also get uploaded to our closed Facebook page and all the teachers watch each other and offer each other feedback and suggestions. We also have twice weekly DI practice sessions, which is really helpful." Teacher, Warruwi School, South Goulburn Island

What Principals said:

- "The teachers we have now can see we are making a difference. We are having a definite positive impact; it makes a difference to the kids who come every day, and not just the kids but the families and the community. We had staff before who were "You can't change that. You can't fix that", but they can see now you can. For example, people would say "you won't be able to get kids to sit in their seats for two hours and do DI" but we can now and they do." Angurugu School, Groote Eylandt
- "Since DI, we've had quite a few parents say their children come home and mimic the teaching of DI at home – we see that the kids are understanding what a 'learner' looks like in a class. Now kids can articulate what a learner's body looks like – what a respectful behaviour looks like, what does transitioning look like, and how to do it." Angurugu School, Groote Eylandt
- "We can't control the teachers we get because we don't get enough applicants, but the accountability process of DI ensures we get to attain a certain quality – that's a huge benefit. The reality is we have huge turnover. We get all different quality teachers – so DI really helps us. Acting Principal (A.P.), Angurugu School, Groote Eylandt
- "Our goal for the future is to train up people to become peer coaches. That will be down the track. But the idea to build the capacity of the school to be self-sustaining. I think it would take over five years but that is where we are aiming." Acting Principal, Warruwi School, South Goulburn Island
- "We wanted a whole-of-school approach to teaching reading, and a way of managing high staff turnover, and decided to trial DI as a possible fit for the school." Acting

Principal, Warruwi School , South Goulburn Island

- “Our reputation has improved. It’s not only because of EDI but that is a big part of it. Now we have long waiting lists for students, longer than we have ever had.” Deputy Principal, Star of the Sea.
- “Now we have a group B2 which is now comparable to a second grade level. This means they have jumped two grades bringing them close to grade level. The group of readers who started with DI is now ahead of our Grade Sevens in reading.” Principal in Training. Angurugu School.

What parents said:

- “Now in the mornings Kayalla gets up and has a shower and breakfast and then she comes and wakes me up and says “Mum take me to school”. She wants to go to school because of DI. Because DI helps her to know when she needs to listen. Before, I would sit in class with her but that was OK when it was just two or three days. Now I

have asked the school kitchen if I can have a job there because now she wants to come five days and I don’t want to go to class for five days.” Mother Angurugu School, Groote Eylandt

- A parent from the Wanindilyakwan community reported that many in her community did not want to try it at first “but now they like it and we think the community future will be better for it.”
- “We don’t want to leave Carnarvon now because our boys are doing so well here under EDI that we don’t want to risk taking them to another school.” School employee/parent.

The Report was published January 2017 and can be found at www.goodtogreatschools.org.au

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DI maths training Groote Eylandt