

Enhancing Reading Intervention Knowledge (ERIK)

Abstract

The Early Reading Intervention Knowledge (ERIK) resource was an outcome of research jointly undertaken by the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) and the University of Melbourne. The research project, entitled: *Enhancing Reading Intervention for 'At Risk' Students*, funded by Commonwealth Government Grants, was completed between 2000 and 2004 and involved over 700 Year 1 & 2 students attending Catholic Primary Schools.

The aims of the research project were as follows:

- To identify the literacy learning characteristics of early primary students who require ongoing early literacy intervention programs, despite participation in conventional reading programs such as Reading Recovery.
- To map these characteristics into instructional pathways that match how the students are learning literacy at any point in time.

As a direct outcome of the joint research project a resource was developed: *Enhancing Reading Intervention Knowledge (ERIK)*. ERIK is comprised of an assessment profile and teaching materials developed by the CEOM, for implementation by Catholic schools. This resource explores three intervention pathways: Phonological Awareness, Orthographic Processing and Comprehension. Since the completion of the original research phase in 2004, the resource has continued to evolve and expand is currently being implemented in over 200 schools. Schools implementing the teaching programs submit data enabling CEOM to monitor its ongoing effectiveness. A summative analysis of the data was completed in 2009.

Results from current school implementation identified that accelerative reading progress was evident across the 12-20 week implementation period (time period dependent on the number of sessions carried out per week: between 3 and 5 sessions per week) for both reading accuracy (10.13: mean gain in months) and reading comprehension (15.62: mean gain in months) with a lower level of gain apparent in students' reading rate (1.63: mean gain in months). It should be noted that the reading rate data contained a number of outlier scores which influenced the descriptive findings (mean: 1.63, sd.: 16.46). However, this finding has implications for students achieving and sustaining appropriate levels of reading fluency. Reading rate is only one aspect of reading fluency but provides an indication of levels of ability in this critical area of reading competence given its importance in facilitating improved

comprehension (Schwanenflugel et al, 2006; National Reading Panel, 2000; Stacey & Wheldall, 1999; Torgeson, 1998). The variation in outcomes achieved suggested that while ERIK can be viewed as a positive intervention option to enhance reading accuracy and comprehension, modifications to the intervention may be required to enhance students' reading fluency competence.

Given that the students in the sample were those who had not responded positively to previous interventions (such as Reading Recovery) or had not sustained gains, the finding that a significant majority did experience accelerative gains in the areas of accuracy and comprehension was positive. On the basis of the outcomes achieved, only the cohort of students who did not experience accelerative gains would require further assessment (i.e. $n = 36 / 21\%$ of total group). The information gained from the student's response to the intervention could be added to the data gained from any subsequent assessment that is undertaken.

Since the completion of the research project the use of the resource has expanded from Years 1 & 2, to Year 1 through to Year 6. The outcomes of the data collection since the completion of the research continue to report improved accuracy and comprehension across all year levels, with gains in months recorded for accuracy as high as 13.88 months and for reading comprehension as much as 20.83 months, across the 12-20 week implementation period.

Training in the implementation of the ERIK program is available to all Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. The training provides teachers and aides with a working understanding of the assessment tools used to profile students and guidelines for selecting the most appropriate intervention pathway. The ERIK training specifically focuses on program learning for students who remain at risk in the area of literacy beyond year one. Over six hundred teachers and teacher aides from over 200 Catholic Primary Schools have undertaken this training since 2006.

The training component is underpinned by key principles, such as:

- early intervention; intervention to occur as early as possible in the student's education,
- assessment; to inform selection of the most appropriate teaching pathway, and
- building teacher capacity; to ensure the best possible teaching for 'at risk' students.

Overall, the data indicates that the ERIK program is an effective intervention option for students continuing to experience reading difficulties when reading accuracy and reading comprehension are considered. While substantial gains and effect sizes were achieved, it should be noted that no control group sample was available which would support the view that other school based variables may also have influenced the achieved outcomes. However, these findings are consistent with the original research where a control group was used for comparative purposes and accelerative gains were evident.

References

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