

Researching Effective Teaching and Learning Practices for Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities in the Australian Capital Territory

Final Research Report

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Executive Summary

Description of the Research

The research was a cooperative project of the ACT Department of Education, the Catholic Education Office, the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT Inc and the University of Canberra and aimed at improving teaching practices and educational outcomes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The research was funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) under the *Effective Teaching and Learning Practices for Students with Disabilities Initiative*. The research adopted the Freebody and Luke (1990) *Four Roles for the Effective Reader* model as the conceptual basis for nine guided action research projects conducted by ACT educators - five in schools in the Department of Education, two in ACT Catholic schools, and one in the independent system. In addition, an independent review was conducted of all studies and the entire project was evaluated using a 'Program Evaluation' model.

The *Four Roles* model was chosen as the conceptual base because of its theoretical sophistication and scope; its consistency with research on the development of literacy; its classroom applicability and acceptance by ACT teachers; and its capacity to incorporate the techniques and strategies that teachers often use in isolation.

The research partners decided on action research as a methodology because it allowed teacher-researchers to frame, manage, conduct and disseminate the results of the research. *The overarching research question was: How can the Four Roles / Roles of the Reader model be integrated with existing programs and approaches to improve literacy outcomes for students with learning difficulties and disabilities?*

Methodology

The research was conceptualised as a multi-component action research project and details of the methodology of each study are provided in a Resource Book for Teachers that has been drafted for the Minister's approval.

The Research Partners set the direction, focal points and general methodology while the teacher-researchers contextualised and applied the model in ACT schools.

The teacher-researchers were given intensive professional development and supervision in the *Four Roles* model and in the design, conduct and evaluation of action research.

Projects could only commence after the Project Manager had approved each research proposal.

The teacher-researchers collected pre- and post- intervention data on the students using a wide range of qualitative and quantitative measures.

Typically, data analysis involved pre- post comparisons and assessment of portfolios, running records and similar data.

Dissemination has included website publicity, two practitioner-led workshops, school-based professional development presentations and will also include a Resource Book for Teachers (which has been drafted for Minister's approval).

Summary of Projects

The projects that made up this research were unified conceptually – through their use of the *Four Roles* model but they were quite distinct in terms of focus, method and scope. They are briefly summarised below.

Gaynor & Stephen, working with boys with learning difficulties, found that the *Four Roles* model was associated with improved levels of reading accuracy and comprehension, increased risk-taking in language and written tasks, increased self-esteem and fewer behavioural problems.

Maher & Hill examined how student engagement can be increased through the use of a website based on the *Four Roles* model and found that the model was applicable to secondary students; facilitated curriculum differentiation; worked well in a cooperative learning context; produced observable literacy gains; and that teachers found the application of the model professionally stimulating.

Zimmer implemented strategies such as custom made books, the Picture Exchange Communication System, voice output and other devices and reported some dramatic changes in the literacy repertoires of two students with significant cognitive impairments. The school-based literacy project that was associated with this piece of action research won a national literacy-teaching award in 2004.

Stephenson's research was conducted in a Level 5 Learning Support Unit for young primary level students and found objective evidence that the *Four Roles* model enhanced students' literacy skills.

Listing used the *Four Roles* model to engage and challenge students (at college-level, with complex disabilities) in meaningful literacy experiences and to improve their reading outcomes through the study of narrative text. Listing found that the targeted students improved their literacy scores, that the improvement generalised to other areas of literacy and that gains were maintained over time. The *Four Roles* model significantly raised the teacher's literacy expectations for students with disabilities.

Dresser focused on improving the literacy of students with a significant intellectual disability and found that the *Four Roles* model led to significant improvements in sight word recognition, reading and comprehension and gave her new ways of providing appropriate interventions for students with a significant intellectual disability.

Culleme, Dyer & Vincent conducted case studies with students with a range of disabilities in three settings - mainstream, Level 5 Special Education and an Autism Specific Unit. The researchers reported that the *Four Roles* model extended their professional repertoires and gave them a framework for developing and sharing teaching strategies.

Patrick explored the relevance of the model for students with an intellectual disability using texts that focused on post-compulsory students' interests. Results included students' increased engagement with text and the teacher's growing confidence as a teacher of literacy to senior students.

Thistleton used the model to inform programming and to develop teaching and learning strategies for students with mild intellectual disabilities and reported gains in decoding and comprehension, increased confidence and greater enthusiasm for reading.

Finally, **van Haren & Vervoorn**, after reviewing all studies, concluded that the *Four Roles* model provided a satisfactory framework for teachers to explore and develop a rich and

innovative range of teaching strategies and that these strategies had a strong effect on student engagement and literacy outcomes.

Outcomes and findings

Each of the studies that adapted and applied the *Four Roles* model found that it was associated with literacy gains for the target students when it was delivered as part of the class program. It can be concluded that this research demonstrated that *the Four Roles of the Reader model can be integrated with existing programs and approaches to improve literacy outcomes for students with learning difficulties and disabilities*. In addition to the positive findings about the applicability and usefulness of the *Four Roles*, the project evaluation found that the expectations of the teacher-researchers were largely met; the research contributed to enhanced professional relationships, collaboration and networking; principals, colleagues and school boards were supportive and encouraging; parents were pleased with their children's progress; the *Four Roles* model influenced schools' literacy programs and that the model was adopted by other teachers; the teacher-researchers were very satisfied with the professional development and supervision they received; and the project contributed to teachers' skills and sense of professionalism.

How the research could influence classroom practice

The *Four Roles* model provides a successful framework that teachers can adapt for all students including those with significant intellectual disabilities, i.e. there is no need to use a different curriculum framework for programming for students with significant learning or developmental difficulties.

Teachers should maintain high expectations for students with special needs and avoid offering them diluted and self-limiting curriculum literacy options.

The teacher-researchers in this project demonstrated how an appropriately informed focus on students' literacy outcomes can drive educational programming and lead to successful interventions.

Detailed description of the research, objectives and outcomes

The Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training funded this research under the “Effective Teaching and Learning Practices for Students with Learning Difficulties Initiative” in September 2002. The research was a cooperative project of the ACT Department of Education¹, the Catholic Education Office, the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT Inc and the University of Canberra.

The research aimed to improve teaching practices and educational outcomes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Conceptually related action research projects² were conducted in classrooms across the ACT education sectors to improve literacy outcomes for middle school students from the target groups. The research adopted the Freebody and Luke (1990) *Four Roles* model as the conceptual basis for these guided projects conducted by classroom teachers. Five of the projects were conducted in schools in the Department of Education, two in ACT Catholic schools, and one in the independent system. In addition, the two consultants, Ms Rita van Haren & Ms Janette Vervoorn, conducted an independent review of all projects, i.e. across the sectors, and their full report is provided in a Resource Book (which has been drafted for the Minister’s approval). The research partners invited Professor Tony Shaddock of the University of Canberra, to oversee and manage the research.

Teachers’ teaching of literacy is influenced by many factors – their initial college or university preparation, the approach taken in their current or previous school, popular theories, theorists and influential speakers, and by observation of successful classroom practice – their own and others. It is true to say that many teachers adopt an eclectic mix of literacy teaching techniques the origins of which are difficult to trace. Furthermore, when such practices are claimed to account for improvements in students’ literacy outcomes, it is sometimes difficult to understand the rationale for the practices and/or to account for their claimed effectiveness. Consequently, when given the opportunity to undertake a significant piece of classroom-based research, the research partners decided to locate the research within an appropriate and acceptable theory of literacy development. The *Four Roles* model was adopted because of its conceptual sophistication and scope; its consistency with research on the development of literacy; and its classroom applicability and acceptance by ACT teachers. Furthermore, the framework was broad enough to incorporate the techniques and strategies that teachers often use in isolation and it provided an appropriate rationale for them.

The research partners also believed that an effective way to influence classroom practices more broadly would be to implement a research program that teacher-researchers would frame, manage, conduct and disseminate. So, having set the conceptual framework, the

¹ At the time, the ACT Department of Education was the Department of Education, Youth Affairs and Family Services.

² The initial plan was to conduct eight studies. However, in response to teacher interest, the ACT Department of Education funded an additional two projects as part of the project. One of the 10 projects could not be completed because of illness. Ultimately, nine projects were completed.

partners chose 'action research' as an overarching research methodology that would be used in the separate projects. As McNiff suggests:

Teachers tend to be distrustful of educational research, seeing much of what goes on supposedly in their interests as largely irrelevant to the practical problems of today's lessons. Action research presents as an opportunity for teachers to become uniquely involved in their own practice, to professionalize themselves, and to give reasoned justification for what they are doing (McNiff, 1988, p. xviii).

The research partners strongly believed that a package of interrelated, well-planned, carefully executed, guided action research studies would be an efficient and effective way to contribute to the general knowledge base, to enhance the learning outcomes of students, and to improve the skills of teachers and schools involved.

The research partners initially proposed eight potential focal points for the current research:

- Phonemic awareness;
- Guided reading/cooperative reading;
- Cognitive strategy instruction;
- Writing;
- Oral language;
- Visual literacy;
- Augmentative approaches and assistive technology; and
- Applications of information technology.

The aim was that each of the projects would be conceptualised with reference to the *Four Roles* model. By framing each of the literacy interventions in terms of this comprehensive model, and by implementing each within a carefully conducted action research approach, the researchers aimed to demonstrate and evaluate effective teaching practice and to improve learning outcomes for students with learning difficulties and those with disabilities in ACT schools. The research also aimed to add to the knowledge base about the applicability of the *Four Roles* model in typical classroom settings, because despite its growing acceptance, the framework has not been systematically interrogated in typical Australian classrooms.

The literacy framework for the research

In an increasing globalised society in which knowledge management, information and information transfer are becoming more important, access to the range of literate practices that focus on more than code breaking, skill development or knowledge transmission is necessary. Literacy involves managing a variety of texts in a variety of social and cultural contexts.

All students including students with disabilities need to engage with this wider range of literate practices. All students must have the opportunities and resources to develop the language skills they need to pursue life's goals and to participate as fully as possible as informed, productive members of society.

Freebody and Luke (1990) developed the *Four Roles of the Reader* framework as a means of responding to the complexity of reading and to the challenging task of becoming a successful reader in today's world. The model shifts the focus from trying to find a 'single right method' to the broad repertoire of textual practices that are required in new economies and cultures.

Through the *Four Roles of the Reader* students are supported in developing a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate and appreciate texts. They are able to draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, their understanding of textual features and how purpose and audience shape the way texts are formed, and develop their skills as reflective, creative and critical individuals.

There has been extensive uptake of the framework nationally in *regular classrooms* and its non-prescriptive and flexible framework is acceptable to teachers.

Whatever the developmental level of students, all *Four Roles* need to be taught systematically and explicitly, and crafted by the professionally informed teacher making decisions about the emphasis and ways of intertwining these roles based on knowledge of their students.

Four Roles of the Reader

Roles/Resources	What successful readers know and do
<p>Code breaker</p> <p>decoding the codes and conventions of written, spoken and visual text</p>	<p>Understand</p> <p>the relationship between spoken sounds and written symbols</p> <p>the grammar of texts</p> <p>the structural conventions of texts</p>
<p>Text participant</p> <p>comprehending written, spoken and visual texts</p>	<p>Make meaning by drawing on</p> <p>own experiences and prior knowledge</p> <p>knowledge of similar texts</p>
<p>Text user</p> <p>understanding the purposes of different written, spoken and visual texts for different cultural and social functions</p>	<p>Know that</p> <p>different types of texts have different purposes</p> <p>these purposes shape the way texts are structured and formed</p> <p>apply this knowledge in using (eg comprehending, creating, transforming) text</p>
<p>Text analyst</p> <p>understanding how texts position readers, viewers and listeners</p>	<p>Is aware and can identify how</p> <p>texts are not ideologically natural or neutral but are crafted to represent the views and interests of the writer</p> <p>information, ideas and language in texts influence reader perceptions</p> <p>texts empower or disempower certain groups</p>

Van Kraayenoord, Elkins, Palmer, Rickards et al. (2000) point out the growing inequalities in the delivery of literacy and numeracy programs to students with disabilities. They state that the delivery of successful literacy and numeracy programs requires that the cultural and linguistic diversity of students is addressed. These authors also argue for more collaboration between specialist teachers and regular classroom teachers so that the inclusion of students with disabilities is supported.

Van Kraayenoord et al. (2000) describe the principles and strategies operating at the school and classroom levels that are conducive to positive learning experiences and student progress. They report that the literature clearly shows that one method, program or set of material will not meet the needs of all students. They state that teachers and support staff should ensure that programs and materials are based on educational goals that reflect:

- A holistic outcomes approach to education;
- Goals that are the same as those for other students;
- Research and theory about learning and literacy; and
- Inclusive teaching strategies.

The *Four Roles of the Reader* reflected these considerations. The framework promotes inclusive teaching practices in that teachers may focus on one of more particular roles to meet the diverse needs of their students. The framework uses a non-deficit approach and through each of the roles promotes the development of a repertoire of flexible practices attuned to the needs of diverse learners.

Comber (2002) notes that while code breaking skills are necessary, they are not sufficient. They must be complemented by a range of skills, including making meaning, text use and text analysis through critical literacy. Comber also points out the literate practices demanded of students in the middle years are significantly different from those that have been the focus of early year's literacy teaching and learning. What is required to meet these changes is not one, simple, single-method approach but one which ensures that students are provided with the resources they need to engage with, and learn from, a program which is culturally responsive and future driven. The Framework of the *Four Roles of the Reader* contains this range of literate practices. As they integrate all four roles, teachers ensure that single code breaking approaches are enriched and real life contexts are promoted.

Consistent with international and national trends, the ACT has given priority to ensuring that schools welcome and provide appropriate programs for all students including those for whom learning poses particular challenges. For example, the ACT Government through the *Within Reach of Us All* Government School Plan and its associated action plans is emphasising the importance of access and participation of all members of the community in society. Inclusive practice involves meeting the needs of all students through effective teaching and learning plans and strategies.

The framework of the *Four Roles of the Reader* addresses the diversity and inclusivity of contemporary schools. The framework recognises that:

- Different pedagogical approaches impact differently on different groups of students so teachers need a repertoire of flexible learning and teaching strategies;
- Different students need different styles of instruction to acquire the learning schools offer;
- Different students need different modes of assessment to demonstrate their learning;

- A relevant and intellectually challenging curriculum matched to student need is necessary to engage and connect students to their learning;
- A non-deficit approach to students is essential and is achieved by acknowledging and valuing their diverse sociocultural, language and ethnic backgrounds; and
- A student's resources, interests, talents, aspirations, ideals, concerns and needs are the best foundation for increasing that student's ability and motivation to learn.

The research that was undertaken in the ACT aimed to build on teachers' current practice and so the *Four Roles of the Reader* model was used to extend and enrich current approaches to the teaching of literacy to the target group. As many current approaches concentrate on only one or two aspects of the model, the goal was to identify, trial and evaluate ways of including the all essential areas of reading in literacy interventions.

The overarching research question was: How can the *Four Roles of the Reader* model be integrated with existing programs and approaches to improve literacy outcomes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities? The specific topics were:

- Action Research and Professional Education
- The ACT Learning Difficulties Project
- The Ten Projects
 - Is the *Four Roles* model an effective strategy to motivate and improve the reading comprehension skills of boys with learning difficulties?
 - Does on-line and the *Four Roles* model assist in teaching students to read specific stories and to provide relevant and accurate comments on the story line?
 - 'I know that word': The *Four Roles* model framework literacy approach in a Learning Support Unit (Level 5)
 - Harry Potter- A Wizard of an Idea! : Using the *Four Roles* model to enhance Literacy for Students with a Disability
 - Teaching Literacy to Students with an Intellectual Disability using the *Four Roles* model
 - How can the *Four Roles* model influence teaching practices?
 - 'It's Four Weddings and a Funeral': Examining the Literacy Framework of the *Four Roles* model for Teachers of Students with Intellectual Disabilities
 - Using the *Four Roles* Model to Inform the Teaching of Learning Support Centre Students
 - Assessing the Effectiveness of Teacher Adaptations of the *Four Roles* model for Students with Disabilities
- Expanding repertoires of practice in literacy education: Special needs students and the *Four Roles* model
- Fishing, friendship and the *Four Roles* model: The intricate interplay of actor networks, theory and practice

Detailed description of methodology

The research was conceptualised as a multi-component action research project to which each separate study would contribute and each study was designed to meet particular objectives. The methodology of each study is detailed in Spinks and Kilham (in draft awaiting Minister's approval).

Mills (2000, pp. 18 & 20) describes action research as 'systematic inquiry done by teachers (or other individuals in the teaching/learning environment) to gather information about – and subsequently improve – how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn'. A feature of this particular project was that the studies were conceptually linked and therefore they were more in the nature of *Design Experiments*, as explained by Freebody in the 'Teachers' Resource Book (in draft awaiting Minister's approval).

While the Research Partners set the direction, suggested focal points and prescribed a general methodology for the entire project, the teacher-researchers were given the freedom to develop their projects within these agreed parameters. In this way the research partners maintained the overall coherence and focus of the research while allowing the teacher-researchers to contextualise and apply the model in a range of selected ACT schools.

The teacher-researchers were given intensive professional development in the *Four Roles* model and provided with ongoing supervision throughout the research. In addition, the teacher-researchers received rigorous, post-graduate level training in the design, conduct and evaluation of action research and they were supervised and supported throughout the project. This thorough attention to professional development, support and monitoring aimed to ensure procedural integrity in the teacher-researchers' application of the *Four Roles* model and of the Action Research methods and procedures. The teacher-researchers were also given opportunities to share and compare their progress, to learn from and support each other, and to refine the focus and direction of their respective projects with reference to the overall aims of the research.

In addition to individual project data, the project manager arranged for data collection related to the project as a whole. The results of the project evaluation are elaborated below.

Procedures

Establishment of teacher-researcher teams

Once DEST confirmed acceptance of the proposal and allocated the funds, the project was widely publicised in schools and given prominence by school leaders. Teachers from across the three sectors were invited to attend an information session. At this meeting, the project was described, the possible focal areas explained and an overview of benefits for participating teachers was provided. In addition to the obvious benefits of participation in a prestigious research project, other benefits included advanced training in professionally relevant areas, academic credit towards a Graduate Certificate or Masters Degree, publication and conference presentation opportunities and career development.

Pairs of teachers were invited to submit brief expressions of interest (EOIs) that responded to the advertised criteria. Optional evening workshops were offered to assist and encourage teachers to participate in the process. Two consultants on the *Four Roles* model, Ms Rita van Haren and Ms Janette Vervoorn, provided specific assistance on the model. Professor Shaddock, Dr Murik, Dr Kilham, Ms Williams and Mr Spinks of the University of Canberra assisted potential applicants to refine and frame their research questions.

The Advisory Committee assessed and prioritised the EOIs submitted by the two person teams. Attention was given to sampling issues including the 5:2:1 allocation across the three sectors, the spread of projects across the focal points and the potential contribution of each project to the research as a whole. Successful applicants were notified and asked to formally accept the invitation to conduct one of the projects.

Clarification of projects

Before the projects commenced, the newly formed research teams were brought together for a workshop with the Research Advisory Committee, a group nominated by the Research Partners. At this half-day workshop chaired by the Research Manager, the focus of each of the projects was discussed and refined. Following this meeting, the Project Manager wrote to the teacher- researchers and confirmed the focus of their research, their timelines and responsibilities.

Professional development

The research partners gave high priority to professional development for the teacher-researchers and so the budget allocated sufficient resources for substantial PD about the *Four Roles* and about the conduct of action research. Prior to the commencement of the projects, two half days of PD were provided on the *Four Roles* model. Additional training, consultation and support on the model were provided throughout the research.

Furthermore, as it was essential that the teacher-researchers were competent in the framing, conduct and reporting of action research, they were brought together for intensive teaching about the method and they were given general support and consultation and specific advice throughout their projects.

A key 'quality control' component was the development of a detailed research proposal. Research teams were required to submit proposals and to adapt them as directed by the Project Manager. Projects could only commence after approval by the Project Manager. Apart from methodological considerations, key considerations in the proposals were the gaining of formal approval by the school executive and compliance with all ethical guidelines.

Conduct of the research

The research teams were mentored and supervised throughout their projects. In addition to periodic, face-to-face meetings for training and trouble-shooting, the research teams and the consultants were involved in ongoing communication through a web-based 'bulletin board' facility. This ongoing networking opportunity had a primary aim of fostering a team approach, reducing professional isolation and sustaining the research teams so that all projects could be successfully completed.

Data collection

Action research methodology is a process of inquiry that responds and reacts to what happens over the life of the research. Because the teacher-researchers developed the methodology for each project, and because they adapted their teaching in response to the analysis and interpretation of data, it is not possible to generalize about this aspect of the project³. However, the teacher-researchers were advised to collect pre- and post-intervention data on the students involved. In addition and where appropriate, they were advised to select from the following:

- Results on standardised tests;
- Running records;
- Diary, journal and log entries;
- Perspectives of stakeholders;
- Mapping on 'First Steps Reading Developmental Continuum';
- Informal reading inventories;
- Observations/anecdotal records;
- Evaluation of writing using holistic scoring and rubrics;
- Portfolios of student's writing;
- Outcome indicators from English curriculum documents; and
- Surveys and interviews.

Data analysis

Similarly, it is not possible to generalize about data analysis as each project was unique, and again, all data are provided in the Teachers' Resource book (Spinks & Kilham, in draft awaiting Minister's approval). The teacher-researchers were instructed in a range of techniques and, as indicated above, they proceeded with their Project only after it had been approved. The teacher-researchers were supported and supervised throughout their projects by experienced researchers and considerable attention was given to the validity, reliability and general credibility of their approaches to data analysis.

The PD sessions on the *Four Roles* model and on action research suggested the following possibilities for data analysis techniques:

- Pre- post-comparisons using inferential statistics;
- Descriptive statistics on survey data;
- Thematic analysis of diaries, journals and logs;
- Standard qualitative analysis programs; and
- Independent assessment of portfolios, running records and similar data according to agreed criteria.

³ Full details of the methodology of each Project have been provided in the Resource Book that was compiled as a 'deliverable' of this project, (Spinks & Kilham, in draft awaiting Minister's approval).

Dissemination strategy

It was expected that the conduct of this well publicized, cross-sectoral research would in itself have a general positive impact in schools in the Australian Capital Territory. In addition, the research partners agreed on a comprehensive set of interrelated dissemination strategies that were selected to have maximum influence on teachers and students across the sector.

It was agreed that the results of the research would be publicized on the websites of the research partners and the major dissemination via the web will occur once DEST has accepted the project reports. The aim is that each of the partners will dedicate a separate section of its website to the results of the research.

Towards the end of the project there were two separate days of practitioner-led workshops for the research teams to overview and discuss their research with teachers from across the three sectors.

A Resource Book for teachers on the application of the *Four Roles* model will be widely disseminated throughout ACT schools once Ministerial approval has been obtained.

In addition to the practitioner-led workshops there have been a number of school-based Professional Development presentations, the latest being an after school session on 17 May 2005.

Evaluation

The entire project was evaluated using a well-trialled program evaluation model (Irwin, 1991; Shaddock, 1999). This approach focuses on program inputs, program processes and program effects and pays particular attention to the intentions and outcomes of the project as perceived by key stakeholders. Data were also collected from the teacher-researchers about their experience (see Appendix 1) and from teachers who were introduced to the *Four Roles* model at a post project Practitioner-Led Workshop (see Appendix 4).

Summary of projects

As described above, this research was conceptualised as ten projects applying the *Four Roles* model of Freebody and Luke (1990) to the literacy of students with learning difficulties. Although the projects were conceptually linked they focussed on different aspects of literacy, with students of varying abilities, ages and settings. These are detailed below.

Gaynor and Stephen investigated the effectiveness of the *Four Roles* model as a teaching strategy for motivating and improving the reading comprehension skills of boys' with learning difficulties. It is significant to note that the research project was implemented with *all* of the students in the year five mainstream class being involved. However, for the purpose of this research, qualitative and quantitative data were collected on two students who had been previously receiving learning support.

The Gaynor and Stephen investigation involved:

- Collaborating with learning support and year teachers;

- The use of Raison’s Cooperative Reading model (2001) as a basis for a literacy block program;
- Implementing Proximal Grouping so that all students worked with a mix of students;
- Selecting and providing a range of texts suited to the interest of the students via the introduction of a classroom survey to give the students control over their own reading and learning;
- Explicitly teaching *each* of the roles of the *Four Roles* model to the students (this took three weeks);
- Introducing Cooperative Reading Groups; and
- Adjusting the timetable to accommodate a 90 minute Literacy block, per day for eight weeks.

Gaynor and Stephen observed several notable *positive* outcomes from the eclectic program they provided for their students, including the following:

- Improved levels of reading and comprehension;
- Increased social interaction and ability to work cooperatively in a variety of social groupings;
- Increased risk taking in language used in written tasks;
- Increased self esteem and confidence towards reading;
- Improved oral communication skills, especially in verbalising their thoughts and ideas about text; and
- *Lessened* stress related behaviour in the context of group activities.

Gaynor and Stephen commented on timetabling issues and the increase in time spent ‘marking’ students’ work. However, their conclusion was that the Action Research was rewarding and effective and that the *Four Roles* model, when supplemented by approaches such as Cooperative Reading, improved students’ literacy.

Maher and Hill conducted their study at an all girls Catholic College in a mainstream setting. Two students with a disability in the year seven class were the focus of the research. One student has a profound hearing loss, and the other a mild learning difficulty. (Both students receive intensive support with literacy activities.)

Maher and Hill introduced the *Four Roles* model as a *catalyst for assisting their students to become independent writers whilst still catering to the needs of all of the class members*. It should be noted that this study was coupled with a ‘*Quality Teaching Initiative that focused on incorporating technology into the classroom?*’ and so it incorporated an online component.

Maher and Hill involved the students in:

- Participating in creating a website based on Luke and Freebody’s *Four Roles* model: http://vision.cangoul.catholic.edu.au/teaching/online/curriculum/stage_four/ezone/index.htm;
- Studying popular magazines and complete on-line activities designed to facilitate an understanding of the four reading roles and how they transfer to the writing process; and
- Using WebQuest, ‘...an inquiry-oriented activity in which most or all of the information used by learners is drawn from the Web’ (Dodge, 2001).

Perceived outcomes of the Maher and Hill research were that students with learning difficulties and disabilities (and other class members):

- Gained an understanding of the *Four Roles* model;
- Transferred this understanding to the writing process;
- Independently used computer technology to present their work; and
- Challenged gifted students.

Maher and Hill reported also that the project must be regarded as a success because:

... 'Not only did all of the students in the class gain a greater understanding of the reading and writing process, but we as educators, have expanded our repertoire of effective teaching practices... It gave us new ways of differentiating the curriculum and it enabled us to gain a stronger understanding of the possibilities of cooperative learning strategies.'

Zimmer studied students with moderate intellectual disabilities and focussed on the question, *how can the 'Four Roles' model assist in teaching these students to read specific stories whilst providing relevant and accurate comments?*

Zimmer's classroom approach was to:

- Individualise the reading program by producing custom made books for each student based on what they liked to do at home. 'Literacy activities are not only socially constructed but they are also culturally specific' (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2000). These books were read at least three times a week;
- Ensure that students had opportunities to share their information about weekend activities and use Boardmaker symbols to represent what they had done;
- Encourage student participation in discussion, co-operative learning, and the sharing of ideas. Self made 'big books' were then used for 'Guided Reading' activities.

Major student outcomes arising from this research were that students:

- Displayed a greater interest in engaging in text because of the student centred approach;
- Initiated communication about text; and
- Did 'access stories' and 'comment on the story line' with a higher degree of relevance.

Zimmer added a note of caution however, relating to timing and staff changes as they affected student compliance. Zimmer suggested that it would be prudent to commence such a program at the beginning of the school year and let it run for at least two terms.

Stephenson implemented explicit teaching in her classroom, and used specific assessments and pre and post data collection for the project. The key question was *how does engagement in visual text through oral language, encourage and develop student skills and engage them in print text, when using the Four Roles model as a framework?* Each of the eight students in Stephenson's class had either a learning difficulty or a disability.

Stephenson researched the Model thoroughly before implementing it. Strategies and practices were then developed to suit her students and their classroom environment. These included the development of:

- Units of work focussing on a specific theme that the students could relate personal experiences to;
- Resources relating to themes using a variety of media - big books, charts, picture books, concept pictures, theme word lists, sight words, theatre listening posts, video, music, excursions;
- Phonics programs and whole word activities;
- Reading resources relating to themes which were delivered via shared and guided reading sessions;
- Sight- word resources; and
- Teaching materials for student use.

Classroom strategies initiated by Stephenson were:

- Explicit teaching of the *Four Roles* model skills;
- Provision of ample opportunity for oral participation and practice at using the model; and
- Daily literacy program delivery.

While commenting that many factors *could* have influenced the outcomes of the research (degree of disability of student, working environment, class size, classroom resources, teacher- aide support, and timetabling issues), Stephenson concluded that major observable outcomes were that:

- Students' attitudes to learning had changed positively and that they were now confidently engaging in oral communication, visual, and print texts; and
- Students were taking more risks with unfamiliar tasks and texts.

Stephenson subsequently acknowledged that the *Four Roles* model approach would be continued as a framework for literacy programming with that particular class.

A thematic narrative study of 'Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets' (by J.K. Rowling) was the strategy used by **Listing** to introduce her Secondary College students to the Luke and Freebody (1999) *Four Roles* model. Listing's research focussed on: *how to engage and challenge students in the class, in meaningful literacy experiences and improve their reading outcomes through the study of a narrative text?*

Listing's students have widely differing needs and reading abilities (non readers to confident, independent readers) with an age range of 16 to 20.

Listing's study involved:

- Fostering a scaffolded approach to text, using audiotapes already purchased by the college;
- Encouraging students to study one chapter per week whilst using a variety of activities to support the *Four Roles* model;
- Choosing a list of high frequency words from the Harry Potter text;
- Creating and using a cloze test for a section of text from the novel;
- Testing students on these at the beginning and end of the intervention;
- Using the Four Resource Guideposts and Indicators for Reading Developmental Continuum (First Steps) and completing these for targeted students in the class;

- Completing pre/ post intervention student profiles for self assessment (First Steps);
- Keeping a log of teaching activities documenting the *Four Roles* model area targeted, level of student engagement, and teacher comments/reflection for the purpose of future planning; and
- Collecting work examples from students over the intervention period which were then used to inform further planning and reflection.

A parent questionnaire was constructed and sent home at the completion of the intervention to gauge parents' perceptions of their student's progress.

After this project had concluded, Listing concluded that 'results from the data analysis showed measurable improvement in literacy scores for targeted students directly related to their study of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*'. Indications were that this improvement carried over into other areas of literacy. Listing reported that students felt 'more competent with their reading by the end of the intervention, and levels of engagement were certainly much higher'. Furthermore Listing added that *her* 'confidence and skill development' had been enhanced during the process and that the *Four Roles* model (with student agreement) would again be used on another literacy classroom project.

Dresser explored *how the Four Roles model could be adapted and used to teach students with a mild to moderate intellectual disability to advance their reading and comprehension levels*. The students participating in the research were attending a special school with a one day period of integration into a mainstream school, weekly.

Dresser used the theme 'Shopping' over a period of eight weeks in line with Stagnetti's (2003) premise that *learning through play* helps to develop students' language, social and cognitive skills. This approach assisted the students to:

- Learn up to 50 themed sight words;
- Analyse theme related text;
- Use a range of appropriate computer programs;
- Make personalised books using photos and a Language Master;
- Develop their aural, verbal, visual and phonemic awareness skills;
- Read stories and make comparisons about experiences; and
- Participate in theme related excursions.

Outcomes observed by Dresser were that students:

- Showed 'enjoyment and enthusiasm' for the approach to the topic under study;
- Began to use prediction and selection skills;
- Became more observant in their school and local environment;
- Added to sight word vocabularies and began to read more complex texts; and
- Improved their overall reading, writing and comprehension skills substantially.

Once again, the lack of time was referred to by Dresser as an inhibiting factor during the progress of the study. However, she concluded, the *Four Roles* model was able to 'offer new ways of thinking and planning that enabled me to introduce new strategies to my students in innovative ways'.

The Cullerne, Dyer and Vincent team was challenged by the question, *how can the Four Roles model influence teaching practices?* Each of these teacher/researchers conducted their projects in three different educational settings, namely, ‘mainstream, level 5 special education and autism specific units’, in the one school. It is of significance to note that:

- Two members of the team used the *Four Roles* model to program whole-class activities around a common theme; and
- The other team member used an Individual Learning Program approach to programming, due to the specific nature of the student’s disability.

Students were selected because they presented with articulation difficulties, auditory processing and recall problems. Whilst the settings for each of the case studies were different the overall team focus was consistent.

Each member worked at:

- Improving teaching practice;
- Placing an emphasis on the students’ strengths;
- Improving the writing abilities/levels of the selected students (and others);
- Testing the ‘mutual suitability’ of strategies applied in the mainstream classes for special education children when integrated with a mainstream cohort and then, when returned to their own special needs classes; and
- Scaffolding of students in their writing by focusing on topics that were familiar to them.

Each of the case studies delivered a broad range of responses which were documented separately. The researchers collectively agreed that the *Four Roles* model had influenced their teaching practice substantially and thus, student outcomes improved. This was evidenced by students:

- Being extended and challenged beyond their general experience and subsequently being able to problem solve and risk take at a more advanced level than previously;
- Attaining higher levels of technical literacy skills;
- Developing an understanding that print has a consistent meaning; and
- Developing a positive attitude towards reading.

Whilst Cullerne, Dyer and Vincent agreed that there were several limiting factors in the execution of the project, they affirmed that the study of the *Four Roles* model and its flexibility had provided an opportunity for teachers and students from very different learning environments to work together on a productive and educationally sound program. They reported that their teaching repertoires had been extended by engaging in a collaborative approach to the *Four Roles* model.

Patrick examined *how the Four Roles model could be used to engage and challenge students through a range of literacy experiences using print and visual texts, exploring the concepts of relationships that have meaning for them.*

Patrick’s eight female students (with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities) ranged in age from sixteen and twenty years although only two of the students were the focus of the study. It is useful to note that the class in which this research was undertaken was a personal development class. The study of texts such as novels and video was not ‘usual’

in this context. As part of the implementation process, within this setting, Patrick initiated:

- Explicit teaching (*Four Roles* model);
- Peer tutoring and reciprocal teaching;
- Shared reading activities;
- Modelled and ‘think aloud’ strategies (van Kraayenoord et al., 2000);
- Extension of literacy activities with more focus on *the students*;
- Expansion of teaching strategies; and
- Use and assessment of prior knowledge of students (using text/video of ‘Four Weddings and a Funeral’ as a focus/motivation for exploring relationships).

Patrick observed that not only did the *Four Roles* model transform the students’ understanding of text but that ‘comprehension took on quite a new meaning for them and that they [the students] have enthusiastically all taken to this new approach to learning English’. Patrick then concluded by acknowledging that ‘... this framework can be applied to *any* subject where literacy is an important part of learning’.

A mainstream school was the setting in which **Thistleton** investigated how the Luke and Freebody *Four Roles* model could be applied *to inform the teaching of students with a learning disability, working in a Learning Support Centre*.

Thistleton initiated changes within the LSC program by using the *Four Roles* Framework for a half hour session, daily, during the school’s ‘K-6 ‘literacy hour’ block. Eight students from years 3 and 4 were involved in the research for a period of eight weeks. Each small group teaching session included:

- Teacher ‘read aloud’ sessions as well as group and individual oral reading;
- Partial text focus;
- Text revisits;
- Student question and answer sessions; and
- Support of less able/confident students.

Thistleton maintained that pre planning was essential for ‘focal consistency’ when using the Freebody (1992) model. She also stressed that the promotion of student involvement, teacher discussion and question sessions, on a regular basis, were important.

Observed changes in student behaviour at the end of the eight weeks of research showed that they were:

- Volunteering to read aloud to the group; and
- Supporting, prompting each other and, joining in.

Of interest is Thistleton’s comment concerning the group’s initial resistance to ‘harder text’, when the study commenced. She reports however that as time went by, students were ‘quick to arrive and get involved. They were generally disappointed when it was time to return to class’.

Other positive outcomes of the research reported by Thistleton were:

- A maintaining of student enthusiasm throughout the study, because of the variety of text focus;
- An increase in student spontaneity, enthusiasm, and enjoyment of literacy activities; and
- The gaining of confidence to express opinions, ideas and initiate discussions.

Thistleton reported that whilst the research ‘did not produce instant results that were observable in all areas of school life’; the greatest change was in the students’ willingness to ‘have-a-go’. She really summed up the success of the endeavour when reporting that a student, at the end of the project, asked, (midst enthusiastic agreement)... ‘Can we do this again next year? It was fun!’

Van Haren and Vervoorn conducted an analysis of all of the studies undertaken by the sixteen teacher-researchers and they reported on the outcomes in a paper entitled *Assessing the Effectiveness of Teacher Adaptations of the Four Roles model for Students with Disabilities*. Van Haren and Vervoorn set out to answer the question ‘How useful is the literacy framework of the *Four Roles* model for teachers of students with disabilities?’

Their data indicated that:

- Improved student outcomes were demonstrated in the qualitative and quantitative data of the studies;
- The *Four Roles* model was associated with increased student engagement across all students;
- Teachers’ evaluations of the relevance and applicability of the *Four Roles* model were positive;
- Improvements in student performance generalised to other aspects of literacy and/or of the curriculum;
- The action research model that was implemented in this program acknowledged, promoted and celebrated the professionalism of classroom teachers;
- The action research model implemented in this project highlighted the value of professional learning communities; and
- Many teachers commented on the amount of disruption to teaching that occurs in contemporary classrooms.

Detailed reports on each study are presented in a teachers’ resource book edited by Spinks & Kilham (in draft awaiting Minister’s approval).

Outcomes and findings

Another level of analysis in this project was the application to the project as a whole of the ‘Program Evaluation Model’ that focused on ‘program inputs, program processes and program effects as perceived by key stakeholders’. The results of this analysis are now provided.

Towards the end of the project the teacher-researchers were invited to respond to a 21-item Questionnaire (see Appendix 2). Two researchers proposed themes emerging from these data, refined them into ten categories into which the data could be reliably classified, and then classified the 280 discrete ideas contained in the data.

1. Expectations

66 discrete ideas

The responses from the teacher-researchers indicated that the development of Action Research skills was a 'high expectation' (70%) and that the opportunity to explore how they could improve their literacy teaching skills for students with disabilities was a keen priority also.

One researcher expected that 'the *Four Roles* model would be inappropriate for students with a disability' but this expectation was not confirmed, i.e., the model turned out to be appropriate. Another researcher hoped for 'the opportunity to become more professional' and also expressed the view that 'students' progress *would* remain constant'. However, this researcher reported some unexpected outcomes, including that 'Students acquired literacy skills at a faster rate during the project', and that 'Students were able to address more abstract concepts than first perceived'. This surprise with students' progress was expressed by a number of the teacher-researchers and suggests that when teachers lower their expectations to accommodate students' learning disabilities then their lowered expectations may restrict students' learning.

Another expectation was that collegial and professional relationships would be 'strengthened'. It was gratifying to note at the conclusion of the project the 100% consensus from respondents that their prior expectations had been 'satisfactorily' or 'very satisfactorily' met.

2. Assistance from colleagues and mentors

21 discrete ideas

Comments from the teacher-researchers indicated that professional development on the *Four Roles* framework, action research techniques and the project direction were clear and helpful. The teacher-researchers also indicated that school principals, colleagues, and school boards when briefed on the project were 'supportive and encouraging'. Two researchers were *invited* by their school principals to participate in the research. It was evident also that peer support and assistance with timetabling arrangements played a major role in the project's in-school management.

3. Parental involvement.

13 discrete ideas

Responses concerning parental involvement indicated that generally parents participated in the project by:

- Attending meetings;
- Giving approval and support for their child's involvement; and
- Being given an undertaking that they would be kept informed of progress and given a copy of the research results when the project was completed.

4. Responses from other teachers and colleagues

30 discrete ideas

School principals, class teachers, colleagues and learning assistance staff were generally those who had input into the selection of student participants in the research project. Researchers reported that all involved were interested in learning about the *Four Roles* model and wanted to know more about ‘testing methods, data collection and findings.’ Two researchers indicated that colleagues were also keen to ‘try’ the *Four Roles* model in their classes with another colleague ‘so motivated’ that the *Four Roles* model had subsequently been included in the school’s literacy program. Support with resources, classroom logistics and the sharing of knowledge were other collegial aspects that were commented on in the evaluation.

5. Networking

22 discrete ideas

87% of the teacher-researchers indicated that they networked on a daily basis either by email, telephone or by having discussions with school colleagues. In-services, fortnightly meetings and meetings with the project partners were also listed as integral means of regular communication.

6. Time management and change

47 discrete ideas

The time allocated to the Action Research in-class phase differed across the projects. However each of the teacher-researchers (with the exception of two who were not working in classrooms) dedicated blocks of eight or nine weeks to the *Four Roles* model’s implementation. The time spent on a daily basis was between 60 minutes and 180 minutes and scheduled on either 4 or 5 days, or weekly.

When asked if they had changed their plans throughout the conduct of the Action Research, all but one respondent said ‘yes’. Reasons given for doing so included the need to:

- Place less focus on strategies; and
- Use themes and thematic analysis in the programs.

One researcher indicated that the regular classroom curriculum was not followed during the project, because student gains would ‘not be recognised’ if changes had *not* been made. Careful planning in the early stages of the project was cited by another researcher as the reason for *not* changing plans during the research phase.

67% of the teacher-researchers said that they *had* made changes to their classroom teaching and cited the following examples:

- Use of a community based reading program instead of regular program;
- Changes in questioning techniques;
- Extension of students beyond ‘the familiar’; and
- Use of more visual resources.

It was significant that all respondents said that they had *built* the *Four Roles* model framework into their program. One teacher-researcher indicated that ‘plans have been made to adopt this program into the middle school also’ as the *Four Roles* model framework ‘has become an integral part of the Literacy Program’.

Classroom management was generally affected positively with the researchers commenting that:

- Classroom management was ‘not an issue’;
- The enjoyment factor improved;
- Literacy activities were more structured which enabled students to self manage; and
- The *Four Roles* model slotted into the daily program ‘without major adjustments’.

One teacher-researcher used proximal groupings which reportedly ‘...was very interesting from a management and productivity perspective’. (In this project, mixed gender groups produced satisfactory work results, while work productivity decreased in male gender groups. In female gender groups, productivity increased.)

7. Satisfaction with the Professional Development

9 discrete ideas

The teacher-researchers expressed 100% satisfaction with the professional development in Action Research techniques and the *Four Roles* model.

8. Professional development and dissemination processes

38 discrete ideas

Staff meetings, peer discussions and guidance sessions were the most common method of in-school dissemination. Reports made to the School Board, newsletters and email communication were means by which the wider community was reached. One researcher included the research information in the school’s Literacy Curriculum (and subsequently shared in a prestigious National Literacy Award).

In terms of professional development resulting from the research, the initiatives to date have included:

- Presentations about the projects to colleagues and peers;
- Presentations to pre-service teachers, e.g. by modelling lessons; and
- Showcasing the research at two one-day conferences for teachers at the University of Canberra.

9. Support given during dissemination phase

13 discrete ideas

Researchers were encouraged by the recognition of student progress, support by staff and expressions of ‘parental pleasure’. One teacher-researcher reported that the librarian purchased additional resources, loans were generously extended to support the research and all support requests were granted. Dissemination was also aided by the principals’ willingness to place the *Four Roles* model project on staff meeting agendas. It was also

reported that in one school staff assisted the researcher by proof reading research drafts and giving valuable feedback.

10. Positive outcomes from the research process

21 discrete ideas

Comments relating to student outcomes showed an increased interest in literacy activities, a growth in student independence and a rise in the level of students' self esteem. An improvement in writing and reading skill development was also reported (students not relying on visual texts only) along with students' increased willingness to take more risks with their literacy learning. Interestingly, *oral language* skills were said to have improved also. Through this project some students developed the ability to work in groups for the first time.

Along with the development of colleagues' awareness of the *Four Roles* model the teacher-researchers indicated that colleagues were interested in adopting the model and using teaching strategies observed and the methods used for data collection. One teacher-researcher commented that colleagues were interested in the notion that 'real research' was being undertaken and that teachers were not depending on state testing.

Overall, the comments from parents showed their 'pleasure in students' progress' whilst acknowledging an 'increase in dialogue concerning literacy'.

11. Other comments

15 discrete ideas

'Thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in this project' was a concluding comment typical of responses received from participants. Other concluding comments were: 'I grew professionally and my classroom practice became more focussed', 'I didn't feel that I had the ability to do it on my own', and, the 'project reinforced my belief in an integrated curriculum as the most beneficial approach to literacy skill development'.

Consistently respondents acknowledged a growth in confidence, professionalism and an enhancement of their literacy skill development and teaching styles. The extension of professional dialogue opportunities and enjoyment were also commented on.

In addition to feedback from the teacher-researchers, feedback was also sought from teachers who were introduced to the *Four Roles* model by the teacher-researchers at a Practitioner-Led Workshop (see Appendix 3). These teachers indicated that the Professional Development provided on the *Four Roles* model was highly interesting and useful for their work as teachers. Full details of their feedback are provided in Appendix 3.

How the research could influence classroom practice and the impact on student outcomes

- The research demonstrated that the *Four Roles* model provides a successful framework for all students including those with significant intellectual disabilities. Consequently, one practical implication of the research is that teachers do not need to use a different curriculum framework for programming for these students because

a literacy program based on the *Four Roles* model is applicable to all students, irrespective of level of functioning;

- The *Four Roles* model was applicable to secondary students;
- The *Four Roles* model made it possible for teachers to scaffold students' access to the same curriculum;
- The *Four Roles* model provides teachers with new ways of thinking about and planning appropriate interventions for students with a significant intellectual disability;
- Teachers who learned about and systematically used the *Four Roles* model to guide their teaching became more confident teachers of literacy and they extended their professional repertoires;
- In the few cases where follow-up testing was possible, the *Four Roles* model was associated with the maintenance of literacy gains made by students with significant intellectual disabilities;
- The *Four Roles* model encouraged teachers to raise their expectations for students with cognitive disabilities and to provide them with opportunities to acquire a range of relevant literacy skills that they may previously have thought were beyond their students' capabilities. The research reinforced the well known impact of teacher expectations on student performance and the need for teaching programs designed for students with special needs to avoid offering them diluted and self-limiting curriculum options;
- Teaching strategies for promoting literacy of students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities produce dramatic results when the teacher personalizes stories and prepares individual alphabet books that incorporate familiar people, names and words; and
- Although all of the teacher-researchers acknowledged that classroom research is challenging, and indeed one project was not completed because of logistical and other reasons, all demonstrated the ability to design an intervention, collect data and to make data-based decisions about their teaching in typical Australian classrooms. In so doing these they demonstrated how a focus on student outcomes can drive educational programming and interventions. These teacher-researchers also demonstrated the utility of classroom-based action research that is fully supported and rigorously conducted.

Analysis of issues resulting from the research

The teacher-researchers in this project demonstrated the ability to engage in systematic and extensive study about a theoretical model. Furthermore some of them successfully applied the model to literacy teaching for students with significant disabilities despite the fact that the model had not previously been extensively trailed with these students. The teacher-researchers applied the model accurately and creatively in their classrooms. The implication is that with substantial professional development about appropriate *theory*, contemporary teachers improve their professional *practice* in demonstrable ways. As was pointed out earlier in this report, the action research model that was implemented in this program acknowledged, promoted and celebrated the professionalism of classroom teachers.

Another implication is that successful professional development may require more than the ‘one-day, visiting expert, tips for teachers and a good barbeque’ format. This project demonstrated the value of the longer-term, ‘serial activity’, professional development.

This project demonstrated that all students can acquire literacy skills when they are carefully taught. However, many teacher-researchers involved in this project commented on the amount of disruption to teaching that occurs in today’s classrooms. While a diverse, enriched and challenging curriculum is desirable, there needs to be a sense of priority in the pursuit of curriculum goals, particularly for students who experience difficulties in learning. Without the skills that allow them to participate meaningfully in the curriculum (such as having the ability to engage in a range of literate practices), students will quickly lose touch with the curriculum, *particularly* if it is diverse, enriched and challenging. The issue is not ‘either-or’ (literacy vs. other aspects of the curriculum) but it is one that requires a thoughtful integration of curriculum goals and a systematic focus on the priority needs of each student.

The interventions conducted by the teacher-researchers were relatively short – about a term – and some admitted to having very limited expectations of significant progress being made by some of their students. The fact that this was not the case illustrates that carefully designed and executed teaching programs can be successful in a relatively short period of time.

The action research model implemented in this project highlighted the value that teachers derive from participating in professional learning communities, from sharing with colleagues and from being given opportunities to research their practice, to publish their work and to present at formal conferences.

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Appendices

- Appendix 1: Teacher-researcher evaluation questionnaire
- Appendix 2: Questionnaire for teachers introduced to the Model at a post-project 'practitioner-led conference'
- Appendix 3: Four Roles Workshop: DEST Literacy Project 23 February 2005

Appendix 1: Researching effective teaching and learning practices for students with disabilities

QUESTIONS FOR THE ACTION RESEARCHERS

Dear Colleagues

Congratulations on completing your action research on the *Four Roles* model of Freebody and Luke. As you know, this research was funded by DEST and one of the research 'products' is a review of the entire process. As I need to compile the data soon in order to meet the Project deadlines, would you please complete this questionnaire and return it to me before December 10.

Thank you so much for your assistance,

Tony Shaddock PhD

Project Manager

Your name: **PLEASE BLOCK PRINT CLEARLY**

.....

Your research

partner(s)/team:.....

Title of your project:

.....

1. When you were approached to do this project, what were your expectations?

2. Subsequently, why did you become involved?

3. What did you do in the pre- planning stages of the project to familiarize yourself with the *Four Roles* model?

4. What assistance/training did you receive from the project consultants prior to the commencement of your research?

5. How did you gain the support of your principal/colleagues/school board for this project?

6. How did you involve parents in your research?

7. Who had input into the selection of students for inclusion in this project?

8. How did your colleagues in your school respond/react to the research proposal?

9. What involvement did the school board have, if any?

10. Approximately how much teaching time did you allocate to the *Four Roles* model?

11. How did you network with other researchers during the project?

12. During the conduct of your research did you change what you had planned to do? If so, what were these changes and why did you make them?

13. What changes have you made to your classroom teaching as a result of your research?

17. What Professional Development about the *Four Roles* model has occurred as result of this research, within your school or elsewhere?

18. What support did you receive from your principal and teaching colleagues during the dissemination phase?

19. What additional positive outcomes from your research have you observed?

(a) In your students?

(b) Among your colleagues?

(c) Among parents?

20. Were your prior expectations about the research met/ or not met?

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for teachers introduced to the Model at a post-project 'practitioner-led conference'

Four Roles Workshop: DEST Literacy Project

23 February 2005

1. In what ways has today's workshop increased your knowledge of the *Four Roles* model?

2. What impact do you think today's workshop on the *Four Roles* model will have on:

- (a) Your teaching in general?

- (b) Your teaching of students with learning difficulties or disabilities?

3. Do you have any comments about the action research that was discussed by your colleagues at today's workshop?

Were any of the projects particularly relevant to you? Why/why not?

Please rate today's workshop on the following dimensions:

	Very High	High	Average	Low	Very Low
Interest level	5	4	3	2	1
Ease of understanding	5	4	3	2	1
Practical	5	4	3	2	1
Usefulness for my teaching	5	4	3	2	1

Any additional comments?

Thanks so much for this feedback.

Tony Shaddock
 Project Manager
Researching Effective Teaching and Learning Practices for Students with Disabilities.

Appendix 3: Four Roles Workshop: DEST Literacy Project 23 February 2005

1. In what ways has today's workshop increased your knowledge of the Four Roles model (4RM)?

Participants said that the 4RM Workshop:

- Provided an opportunity for review/ revision of the 4RM model and thereby improve students' literacy learning. (6)
- Was an Introduction to the 4RM (4)
- Offered new ways of programming and gave practical examples for improving literacy. (3)
- Offered competent ways to improve student's literacy skills. (2)
- Provided specific examples for special education settings. (1)

2. What impact do you think today's workshop on the Four Roles model will have on:

(a) Your teaching in general?

Respondents said that 4RM would impact on their teaching generally by providing:

- New strategies for teaching literacy. (5)
- Ideas for lesson planning. (4)
- Confidence to continue with current practice whilst extending and adapting current programs. (3)
- Knowledge for activity base expansion. (2)
- A cooperative reading linkage. (2)
- A 'mentoring model' to assist class teachers. (1)
- An impetus to 'energise teaching'. (1)

(b) Your teaching of students with learning difficulties or disabilities?

Respondents said that 4RM would impact on their teaching of students with learning difficulties by:

- Developing a variety of ways of engaging in literacy activities. (2)
- Adapting lesson plans to suit individual needs. (2)
- Providing a format for (or linkage to) cooperative reading. (2)
- Assisting with the planning of lessons.(2)

- Implementing different planning processes.
- Using the literacy framework to challenge students and give balance to the program.
- Employing new strategies and using media such as 'PowerPoint and digital portfolios'.
- Reaffirming 'that all students can learn'.
- Gaining confidence to extend students beyond previous levels of learning.
- Using experiential situations to 'link text' and use 'dramatic play' in literacy learning.
- Refocussing on classroom 'dynamics'.
- Making a commitment to use the 4RM. in class.

3. Do you have any comments about the action research that was discussed by your colleagues at today's workshop?

Were any of the projects particularly relevant to you? Why/why not?

Respondents commented generally that the Action Research was detailed, of interest and contained many aspects/elements that were 'relevant and could be applied to *their* particular settings.

Zimmer, Dyer and Vincent's projects were specifically mentioned as being 'particularly useful'.

Please rate today's workshop on the following dimensions:

	Very high	High	Average	Low	Very Low	
Interest level:	5	4	3	2	1	(M = 4.6)
Ease of understanding	5	4	3	2	1	(M = 4.7)
Practical	5	4	3	2	1	(M = 4.5)
Usefulness for my teaching	5	4	3	2	1	(M = 4.3)

Any additional comments?

Participants' comments generally reflected their 'appreciation and thanks' for having had the opportunity to participate in the 4RM Workshop. 'Thank you for providing this learning opportunity. More projects like this would be very useful' were typical responses given.

Thanks so much for this feedback.

Tony Shaddock
Project Manager

Researching Effective Teaching and Learning Practices for Students with Disabilities.