2013 A retrospective

As we begin 2014 it is important to look back at the achievements of the ATA in the past 12 months. We started the year with 412 members and finished the year with 503 – the largest membership we have ever had. Early indications in January are that this growth should continue. Whilst we helped to shape the formation of The Tutors Association (TTA) in the UK, created a new supplement to the ATA Code of Conduct addressing issues in the online space and negotiated an insurance deal with AON, the two most notable achievements through 2013 were:

- The development and launch of a tutor accreditation
- The launch and formalisation of the Global Tutoring Association (GTA)

Tutor Accreditation

For over four years the ATA Board has realised that there was a need for a form of tutor accreditation required for the Australian private tutoring market. However, despite approaches from Telstra and Pearson the ATA Board decided to partner with a private equity group from Melbourne with a proven and successful record in the online space. AccreditedTutor (www.accreditedtutor.org) is the ATA’s recognised provider for tutor accreditation and has already had 120 tutors signed on as accredited members.

Apart from the need for an industry-based benchmark, accreditation demonstrates responsible self-regulation. It is expected that across the world industry-based accreditation for private tutors will become the model that is used to benchmark best practice standards.

The national accreditation service should not only benchmark best practice in the industry. It should also add value to accredited members by helping parents to find accredited businesses and accredited tutors and thus take on tutors with appropriate qualifications.

Moreover, AccreditedTutor is authorised to undertake national criminal background checks. Effectively this means that tutors who undertake accreditation are also getting a national background check done. When the State and Territory laws vary between jurisdictions this is a very important aspect of accreditation and it brings unity to a set of disparate laws in regards to child protection.
The Global Tutoring Association (GTA)

Following on from a meeting in Vienna in October 2011, a meeting was held in Greece in July 2013. Here the GTA was properly advanced with a draft Code of Ethics, a Press Release and overall structure negotiated. The formation of the GTA is crucial for several reasons:

- Many nations need guidance in setting up national associations. In the absence of a cogent national body the GTA provides an opportunity for business to benchmark best practice

- Governments across the Asian region and also through Europe are starting to move towards a position of regulation. This is particularly the case as the private tutoring sector in each nation is growing and mainstream educators are concerned about the commercial imperative outweighing the educational imperative

- The GTA can assist in lobbying governments and sharing resources for the improvement of tutoring practices in all nations. Moreover it can guide in the formation of responses to regulation and can assist in the formation of national associations that address proactively the issue of regulation

- The GTA can effectively help businesses and national associations address issues arising from technology and the ease with which IP can be stolen from tutoring businesses. A global framework can help to articulate the issues, research and provide advice to member businesses and organisations and also assist in bringing action against businesses or organisations that flout IP rules

- The GTA can align the research from various nations and thus create effective policy platforms for the lobbying of national governments with respect to the benefits and management of private tutoring

These two aspects, accreditation and the launch of the Global Tutoring Association (GTA) have been notable achievements. However the year has been a success for the ATA for other reasons as well. Financially, income is up and the net increase in revenue for the annual year is just under $11,000. A summary of the relevant financial data is detailed here:

### 2013 Finance Data

#### Income from Memberships

- ATA Membership: $80,678.65
- Other income: Advertising in newsletter: $2,600
- Total income: $83,078.65

#### Expenses

- $72,420.77\(^*\) (*includes $5,000 loan to GTA for set up)
- Net increase in bank (Nov 2012 – Oct 2013): $10,657.88

#### Insurance

The proportion of ATA members taking up insurance is in the order of 72 – 78%. We know that 350 (70%) members out of 503 have insurance but there would be many more that have taken up the offer but have not advised the ATA Office.

ATA members can see from the slides of the 2013 AGM (available on the ATA website) that there are several important plans for 2014. These plans are detailed below.
2014 Plans

**A new ATA website**

During late December and through most of January the ATA website is being updated so that the best available technology is going to be used. This shall streamline the registration and also re-registration of memberships. The intention will be to have all receipts and certificates electronically generated so that the costs of administration and the time required to process memberships shall fall.

Integrated into this website shall be an improved search function such that parents and prospective clients will be able to search not only geographically, but also by subject type. Members will have the option to list or nominate up to five subjects that they would like to come up in a member search.

There will also be a capacity for anyone visiting the website to sign up to the newsletter subscription.

The intention is to have on-going surveys and polls conducted through the site which will help us to better tap community needs and frame policy responses around that.

Analytics will also help up see what people visiting the site want from us so that we can better serve the needs of the community on behalf of our members.

**New Corporate partnerships: AON and Pixelblitz**

Our new year begins with two significant corporate partnerships under finalisation. The first is with AON who will replace AAMI as our insurance provider. They are offering a better insurance product for slightly less cost. More details on this partnership will be detailed in a formal launch later in January or in early February.

The second partnership is with Pixelblitz – the company redesigning the ATA website. Pixelblitz has been brilliant in helping us design a flexible solution at a cost that is better than any other we have had. Moreover, communication has been excellent and this has helped in the transition to an improved offering to our members.

### ATA Private Tutoring Scholarships

At the AGM the trial scheme for the Private Tutoring Scholarships was announced. The purpose of this scheme is to assist families that are struggling to afford private tutoring where there is a perceived need for such tutoring. This need can be identified through national testing schemes such as NAPLAN or through tests given by school counsellors or educational psychologists.

The trial scheme will involve the allocation of $2,500 to two families, with close cooperation with the student’s school. In the first instance a numeracy scholarship will be devised including relevant pre and post testing. The $2,500 will pay for 30 sessions of tutoring (one to one), pre testing, post testing and administration.

Once the numeracy scholarships have been drafted then the second half of the year will be spent devising the literacy scholarships.

### The expansion of the ATA through new ventures

Once the website is fully functional, then the actual administration time for ATA memberships should decline, freeing up time to develop the ATA through new ventures. Such ventures include the expansion of the membership through targeted marketing to particular groups undertaking different forms of private tutoring/teaching.
The ATA Code of Conduct has finally been translated into Hindi. This means that the Code is available in each of the following languages:

- English
- Simplified Chinese
- Traditional Chinese
- Korean
- Japanese
- Greek
- Italian
- Vietnamese
- Hindi

It would be good to have the code translated into French, Spanish and Arabic, and translation into these languages will be pursued in 2014. The translation of the Code is extremely important as it help articulate to people from many backgrounds, the standards expected of tutors who are members.

Many people in cultural groups where English is not the first spoken language, are disadvantaged in Australia when it comes to the provision of services, such as private tutoring. Thus, ensuring the Code is available in different languages is essential to helping protect the vulnerable in minor groups.

In November the following email was received from Hong Kong:

“I can see from your website that much is moving along dynamically. Congratulations on that. I was consulting it to download your Code of Conduct in order to share it with a group in China. [The fact that the Code is available in Chinese was a further bonus!] So in this respect ATA is having further influence beyond Australian shores.…

I see that early in the new year you will be amending the Code to bring in internet tutoring. That seems to me another very desirable development. Could you possibly send me the revised Code as soon as it is available? I will then be able to call attention to those parts too.”

We receive emails from all around the world and were recently contacted by a tutoring association in the Netherlands and from a business in Ukraine seeking advice in setting up their own national association. The ATA Board believes that we have a duty as a viable and growing association to help businesses to effectively self-regulate in their own nations and thus stop the international tide of regulation that is rising.
International News

News from Germany

The VNN-Awards 2014

For the first time on February the 23rd 2013 the VNN awarded a prize for exceptional Tutoring-Schools in Germany. As Germany has 16 federal states there was a chance for 16 colleges (one in each state) to get this prize for exceptional projects. Because the awards were brand new colleges from only 4 states took part in the competition. We hope to receive more applications this year. Deadline for registration is December 31st 2013. The Award winners get marketing assistance by the VNN and a small statue of the Owl of Minerva, The Tutelage Goddess of Teachers.

With this prize, the Board of the VNN wants to underline the value of tutoring and the great efforts of the private tutoring schools and their tutors in helping pupils and students to become more successful in school and to accomplish their career expectations.

The mainstream school sector as well as the teaching trade unions still want to make private tutoring schools needless. They will never succeed because pupils want these extra lessons for many reasons. One important reason is for example an underfunctioning or unpopular school teacher.

The 2014 VNN Awards will be held on February 1st 2014, the German “Day of Individual Promotion”, which was established by the VNN many years ago.

How about national associations consider establishing this day internationally?


By Cornelia Sussieck

News from the USA

2013 has been an exciting year for the National Tutoring Association (NTA), and the NTA Board of Directors is thrilled to share some of the highlights with the ATA.

Over the last several months, the NTA has rebranded it’s entire online presence starting with a complete website overhaul, and culminating with the integration of comprehensive social media presence. The rebranding of the NTA has also initiated several new partnerships, three of which I will highlight in this piece. The NTA is also proud to announce the dates for our semi-annual conference, which will be held in Tampa Florida from April 5th-9th 2014.

Alliance with Testive

The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is an admissions requirement for most colleges/universities in the United States, and high school students often seek out SAT tutoring to provide them with an advantage when applying to these highly selective institutions. Testive is an adaptive SAT-preparation software that was developed at the Massachusetts Institution of Technology (MIT), which provides students and coaches with immediate feedback on the student’s progress. The software also generates questions based on ability level. This feature allows for a highly customizable and data driven tutoring experience. Testive has also integrated pedagogical tools into the user experience, all of which, aid in the student’s learning process.

Alliance with Tutor Universe

Tutor Universe is an Iowa based startup that recently launched an online tutor marketplace where students and tutors can collaborate via online tutoring. Tutor Universe provides tutors with an online classroom that boasts a fully functional whiteboard and file up loader. This technology is bridging educational divides and connecting students and tutors.
Alliance with The Tutor Report

The NTA most recently partnered with The Tutor Report, a great resource for tutors who are interested in building a tutoring business. The Tutor Report provides free business tools and is a thought leader in the tutoring industry. The resources provided by the Tutor Report at not limited to tutors in the United States. If interested follow this link for more information: http://thetutorreport.com.

The NTA Semi-Annual Conference

The 2014 NTA conference will be held in Tampa Florida from April 5th-10th. Keynoting the event is Levar Burton, followed by appearances from Marilee Sprenger and Cheewa James. Please visit http://bit.ly/nta-2014 for a comprehensive list of concurrent sessions and conference events.

On behalf of the National Tutoring Association, I would like to thank the Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) for providing us with an opportunity to engage its members through this newsletter. The ATA is a valuable resource, and an international thought leader on the topic of tutoring. The NTA looks forward to learning about the amazing work you are doing, and invite you to connect with us on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/NationalTutoringAssociation and Twitter http://twitter.com/ntatutor.

Eric Clark
NTA Board Member
Director of the Center for Academic Success - Eastern Nazarene College

Idols and false profits...

An article by Dan Kedmey, titled, “Rich and Famous: Why Hong Kong’s Private Tutors Are Millionaire Idols – In an exam system that puts a premium on cramming, a little star power can go a long way” - was printed in Time on 30 December 2013. In this article the author looks at how a tutoring business called King’s Glory emphasises the cult of the celebrity tutor. The tutors are not to focus on knowledge – only results. In this context, anything not expected to be examined is ‘rubbish’ and must not be taught. And, in order to keep students focused the tutors are taught how to increase their personal charisma and train for presentation. The top tutors are selected on the basis of their looks and charm, rather than their ability.

In an interview with a general manager of one of Hong Kong’s largest private tutoring businesses I was told that the background academic strength of top tutors did not matter. What mattered was how well they can present. I asked the General Manager if he had children and he said yes. I asked him if he would have his own children tutored by these tutors and he paused. He then said no. When I asked him how he could allow a focus on style but not substance he said that the parents were too stupid to know differently. He said that over time ‘it might change’ as if buying time as his children grew.

Of course it helps that exams are often predictable and that students can be manipulated because they are impressionable. However, consider this. I was preparing a student from Hong Kong for a medical entrance exam, one component of which requires an interview. I asked him this question: “Who are you most inspired by?” He immediately replied, “Nelson Mandela”. When I asked him why he said, “Because I want to be like him and be the change I want to see in the world”. He then smiled.

I asked him who else he was inspired by and the boy was speechless. He could not think of any other name to drop and had no pre-prepared answer to fall back on. He looked ordinary and weak. He even almost became teary. The training for an answer had trained him not to think in a situation where the question was unexpected. His embarrassment may make him think of being more authentic, or it may simply make him think ‘I need a few more people I can talk about.’

And so we come back to the idols and their false profits. Contrary to ‘teaching rubbish’ the best tutors provide a context and framework for lifelong learning. True idols inspire others to become stronger, not through dependence and slogans but through creating independence. Through questioning everything - including the students use of the tutor themselves. They help students to help themselves become free of idols and idol worship. And in so doing these tutors aim to make themselves redundant rather than rich.

In the meantime, the cult of celebrity tutors is an assault on education, placing money ahead of minds and style in place of substance.