NEWS FLASH:

6th August 2014

Members vote overwhelmingly in favour of change

In this morning’s Special General Meeting there were 125 votes in favour of the change and 1 vote against. The resolution, called in order to change the ATA Constitution such that the corporate structure will become non-profit in character rather than not-for-profit, was therefore resoundingly passed. The ATA Board will now pursue charitable status through the ACNC and the ATO.

ATA CEO Mohan Dhall and ATA Chairperson Storm McGrath following the overwhelmingly positive vote by members

We are very pleased with this momentous change and will keep you updated as we progress.
Editorial

The ATA has recently decided to embrace the online space and streamline how operations are conducted. In so doing, the ATA Board had agreed with the CEOs vision to utilise technology better. This will mean that from October all memberships renewals and new memberships shall be applied for through the website. When moving from a manual space to a technology-based one there will be some adjustment processes that will take place. From October we expect:

1. Members shall receive three email alerts letting them know about a renewal that’s pending. The first email will be several weeks prior to the renewal date and second will be a week prior to the due date. The third reminder will occur on the day the membership lapses.

2. Members will be able to pay online and need not download forms or send cheques. All payments will be made through the secure payment gateway provided by PayPal.

3. Memberships processed online will receive their certificate and tax invoice instantly through email and thus will be able to obtain the benefits of membership instantly. Over time, upon successful payment of membership fees the use of the logo will be enabled by the automated system.

This online processing shall reduce the time it takes to become a member, will reduce costs associated with printing and posting certificates, will reduce error rates arising from manual processing and interpreting of written data. Members will enter their own details thus minimising administrative error.

With all change comes a period of adaptation and adjustment and it is to be expected that there will be some refining that will need to take place once the changes are fully operational. Members are asked to be patient as the changes are done to benefit members, the ATA and those wanting to join, as well as reduce costs and save time.

New protection - use of ABN

Following two incidents where one actual member and one potential member used false ABNs we remind prospective and current members that an ABN is required when renewing.

Expect a call from the office or an email requesting your business ABN or your own ABN. Administration staff in the office will be checking the ABN on the Business Register prior to completing any membership. Furthermore, all already submitted ABNs will be checked for their veracity over the coming months.

This added layer of protection has been implemented to both our members.
Testing for Thinking

The NAPLAN results have been released and the assessment of those results has drawn attention to the writing task. ACARA, in our view, has an approach to testing that encourages thinking. By not revealing the nature or genre of the writing task prior to testing, the NAPLAN testing regime has become, arguably for the first time, a proper assessment of literacy.

ATA CEO Mohan Dhall said, “In any robust form of national assessment for literacy and numeracy, there should always be a mix of predictable test items and also unpredictable test items. Both are useful in assessing the skill, competency and understanding of students. That some students did not attempt the written task indicates a very important factor. Teaching students to take academic risks by attempting questions is, of itself, an important task.

Of course, all assessments ‘test’ the students, those who teach and also the actual assessors – thus a cogent understanding of the implications of the new approach to NAPLAN is very important.”

The ATA takes the view that the results from the NAPLAN tests should be used to make informed decisions about the use of supplementary accredited tutors who can fill skills and knowledge gaps.

The ATA would like specialised funding for one-to-one tutoring support for kids at literacy and/or numeracy risk as identified by the NAPLAN results. Accountable tutoring intervention would work best when schools work closely with tutors in the interest of students. This requires a close connection between parent groups, tutors, principals and the teaching unions.

National Literacy and Numeracy partnership with schools required

This week is national literacy and numeracy week (NLNW). Next week the NAPLAN (National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy) are released. The Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) is reminding parents and educators that the Commonwealth government should inform parents about the optional use of tutors in addressing literacy and numeracy issues. At present the NLNW website provides some useful, though limited advice to parents:

http://www.literacyandnumeracy.gov.au/literacy-activities-0

The Commonwealth government also provides very useful advice to teachers, including lesson ideas and activities. However, in the view of the Association, the information is limited on account of a significant oversight. It would be useful and appropriate for the Commonwealth government to remind educators and parents that the level of illiteracy and innumeracy is quite high and that there are remedial support options available for parents and schools. It is estimated that about 20% of Australian children will not even achieve basic benchmarks in literacy and/or numeracy.

ATA CEO, Mohan Dhall said, “Direct investment in a cogent plan to address literacy and numeracy issues is required. NAPLAN results, the observations of teachers and parents, should all be harnessed to make effective accountable interventions for support. The provision of tutoring vouchers to families, for use with private tutors is an option that should be utilised. In Britain, the USA, Malaysia and South Africa this option has been used to successfully address literacy and numeracy issues.”

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Within intuition

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In Australia we have accredited and accountable tutors who can work closely with schools and families to ameliorate the disadvantages that are evident.”

The Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) takes the view that literacy and numeracy experts, schools, principals, teachers, parents and accredited private tutors should all work together to assist the most disadvantaged of learners.

Mr Dhall added, “However, at present a lack of imagination at the national level, combined with a short-sighted view of private tutors, means that a vital resource is not being used as it could be. Setting national literacy and numeracy benchmarks, including a timeline for the successful attainment of those benchmarks by all students, should energise and provide focus for the national effort. Tutors can be used by schools, as they are in Britain, to supplement mainstream education whilst providing accountability to the formal sector.”

The homework debate by: Karen Keast

Just how important is homework? It’s an issue that’s sparked heated debate for decades, and now a Victorian parliamentary inquiry has considered whether homework is an essential development tool or an unnecessary burden.

The Victorian Parliament’s Education and Training Committee found there are positive benefits in homework when it comes to developing both academic and life skills but homework can reduce the amount of time students spend pursuing other activities and interests.

It also found homework has academic benefits for some ages and stages compared to others – with definite advantages for secondary school students while providing almost no benefit for primary school students.

The inquiry considered the potential for reinvented forms of homework learning through advances in technology, such as flipped learning, and found homework clubs provide benefits in overcoming disadvantage.

It also determined tutors can add benefit to the education system.

The inquiry found minimum standards and possibly accreditation are required “to ensure that parents know when they are engaging a tutor to assist their child’s learning, they are employing someone who is familiar with and understands the formal curriculum, is suitably qualified and who will work within the education system”.

The Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) made a submission to the inquiry outlining the benefits of responsible self-regulation and particularly accreditation, where all accredited tutors are required to undergo a national crime check.

Tutors and homework

ATA CEO Mohan Dhall says homework only adds value when it reinforces classroom learning.

“Homework is inherently meaningless if it doesn’t have a purpose, if it isn’t a part of something broader and if it doesn’t add value,” he says. “Most homework isn’t like that, it’s just done numbingly mindlessly because that’s what we have always done.

“Anything that engages the mind, thinking, connection between family members, and critical thinking over time, as reading becomes more complex, of course (that provides benefits).
“The only issue that I see arising is parents feel upset when there is no homework given and they feel as though schools aren’t being accountable,” he adds.

“What tutors have to be mindful of is not allowing the student to defer to a tutor every time something requires a little bit of effort.

“Where there’s a need for reinforcement then homework is great but if a school’s doing its job, there should be very minimal need for supplementary homework.”

Mr Dhall says tutors can support mainstream education, providing time for students’ homework to be completed.

“If they do then that will mean the distraction or the pressure arising from that can be moderated and can support families who are time-poor,” he says.

“Tutors have to make sure that the students are becoming more and more independent in their homework and they are acquiring key skills so that over time they can manage that themselves.”

Mr Dhall says tutoring centres should set homework, when necessary, to reinforce learning.

“It’s the tutor’s duty to make sure there’s enough practice and reinforcement of basic skills, knowledge and understanding to help students become more robust in their learning.”

Homework clubs

Mary Campbell, relations coordinator for the Institute for Advancing Community Engagement which is part of Australian Catholic University (ACU), says homework clubs are vital for disadvantaged students.

“Homework clubs are about community capacity building,” she says. “It’s about intergenerational learning and it’s connecting people in learning together and it’s creating a sense of social inclusion — it’s not just about children doing a worksheet.”

ACU is involved in a range of Homework Support Programs designed to provide study support, tutoring and homework for vulnerable children and youth, from newly arrived refugees through to those affected by dysfunctional families.

Ms Campbell says Victoria’s Atherton Gardens program, a partnership with The Smith Family and the Fitzroy community, provides vital one-on-one support for 120 students each week.

Under the program, which has won a NAB School’s First State Award, Bachelor of Education third year pre-service teachers from ACU volunteer their time to assist primary school students.

Ms Campbell says the program has achieved incredible results, and in much more than literacy.

“The children don’t get that sort of academic support at home because for many of them their families are not literate in their first language let alone in English, and with a different education system here it’s hard to navigate,” she says. “It’s a really exciting place to be and our outcomes are so positive and multi-dimensional, and 99 per cent of children attend every week, even though it’s not compulsory.

“For our children, it’s more than just the homework and the acquisition of knowledge, it’s about social inclusion, it’s about raising aspiration, it’s about the promise of them getting to higher education and having this mentor on the journey with them.

“I think anything that relates to engaged, meaningful, purposeful learning is positive,” she adds. “Homework can be a wonderful thing — when it’s done well.”

Source: Karen Keast, ‘The homework debate’ from Accredited Tutor:

https://accreditedtutor.org/the-homework-debate/
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Australian Tutoring Association CEO Mohan Dhall said both handwriting and computer-based learning tasks have their strengths, but training a student in one and examining them in another is proving problematic.

‘We are seeing complications where students sitting for extended periods of up to 30 to 45 minutes in a standard exam are starting to hurt themselves,’ he told Daily Mail Australia.

Students are cramping up during handwritten HSC exams. The hand-written HSC exam could soon be shelved because students are struggling to grasp pens and pencils without suffering cramps. With the introduction of computer-based learning now so widespread among schools, many students have lost the ability to write and concentrate for long periods in exam halls.

In some instances, students are presenting to doctors with cases of cramp because they are finding the transition from tablet-learning back to hand-writing tests too hard to manage.

The problem has opened up the debate for the future of handwritten HSC exams and whether or not they should remain.

Dr Rosemary Prosser, a hand therapist, said the demise of the three-hour handwritten exam ‘could come sooner than you think.’ She said when students who have been learning online or in front of a screen for six years try to revert to handwriting, they often can’t handle the transition.

‘We see a lot of HSC students coming to us before exams,’ she told The Sunday Telegraph.
ATA in the Press

Article from Daily Mail Australia

**Days of hand-written school exam could be over as students cramp and struggle to write their HSC**

- Computer-based learning is killing-off students ability to write properly
- Hand cramps becoming more prevalent while focus and concentration is declining
- Experts say students are suffering 'sore hands’ after 30-45 minute period
- A hybrid system of computer based and hand-written learning a solution

By DANIEL MILLS, PUBLISHED: 3.08.14 | UPDATED: 01:09 AEST, 4.08.14

Students are cramping up during handwritten HSC exams

The hand-written HSC exam could soon be shelved because students are struggling to grasp pens and pencils without suffering cramps. With the introduction of computer-based learning now so widespread among schools, many students have lost the ability to write and concentrate for long periods in exam halls.

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With the introduction of computer-based learning - many students have lost the ability to write and concentrate for long periods in exam halls.

‘At the end of the exam they have cramps and sore hands.’

‘Why, if we are training them using one skill, are they being tested using another?’

He said teaching a ‘hybrid system’ where handwriting and computers could co-exist would give students a much more holistic skill-set.

‘When you have students on tablet devices, they do things simultaneously and use multiple thinking skills…But what it detracts from is focused thinking and concentration,’ and that's where handwriting helped, he said.

Dr Rosemary Prosser, a hand therapist, said the demise of the three-hour handwritten exam ‘could come sooner than you think.’ She said when students who have been learning online or in front of a screen for six years try to revert to back handwriting, they often can’t handle the transition.

‘We see a lot of HSC students coming to us before exams,’ she told The Sunday Telegraph.
NSW Secondary Principal’s Council president Lila Mularczyk said there could come a time when sitting exams without pens would be a reality.

Both Ms Mularczyk and Mr Dhall agreed that Australia does not yet have the technological capabilities to provide a state-wide HSC program in a computer-based format because of equity and access issues for schools.

“What do you do in a suburb with two private schools that have access to broadband but a school in a different suburb does not?” Mr Dhall said.

A fully-functioning broadband network which all school had access too, like the NBN, would help circumnavigate this issue. But if handwriting exams are on the way out then: ‘We have to have a transition phase that recognises writing skills are on the decline,’ he said.

Read more: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2714567/Students-suffer-cramps-hurt-WRITING-mean-decline-hand-written-HSC.html#ixzz3LUPQoxOs

Global news From the President of the NTA

The National Tutoring Association (NTA) is the oldest and largest association in the U.S. devoted to the training and advancement of tutoring professionals and supports research into best practices and standards for all tutorial personnel. The NTA has made significant achievements and established itself as the premier organization in the field. Our membership has significantly grown, and we train and certify more tutors and tutor trainers than any other organization.

Some very exciting things have been happening this year. The NTA is currently offering Webinars. The topics include tutor training, academic coaching, and assessment. Attending Webinars will help to fulfill NTA certification requirements or earn continuing education units for re-certification and professional development. The NTA is happy to announce the formation of official NTA Chapters.

In addition to other benefits, a discounted membership rate will be given to members who create or participate in chapters. Members are encouraged to consider creating a chapter. If you would like more information about forming an official NTA Chapter, please contact Dr. Sandi Ayaz, the NTA Executive Director, or one of the NTA Board Members listed on our website.

The NTA East Coast Regional Training and Certification will be sponsored by the East Coast Regional Chapter from March 30 – April 1, 2015. Information about this event will be available soon on our website. I am delighted to inform you that we have chosen Tampa, Florida as the permanent location for our National Conferences.

Pamela Bandyopadhyay, Ph.D.

NTA President
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