Welcome to the August newsletter!

The third term is well underway in Australia and we are approaching the end of the ICAS cycle with our last International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS) paper (Mathematics) to be sat on Tuesday, 11 August 2015.

We recently received this interesting feedback from a teacher about their use of ICAS, which I wanted to share with you:

“Our school uses ICAS as part of our formal assessment programme, with every student from Years 7 - 10 sitting the exam in Science. This gains meaningful feedback on specific outcomes which helps direct our teaching and improve the learning of the students for the future.

The marks/grades also reinforce student performance against their peers and year cohort within the school and across the country.

The tracking of marks from one year to the next also provides excellent feedback to monitor student learning gain.”

Results are now Available for ICAS Digital Technologies and Science

For those of you sitting ICAS Digital Technologies and Science, results are now available in our online student results page. We will also be publishing the results for ICAS Spelling and Writing towards the end of this month.
For more information about student results, we created a document on [how to get the most from your results](#).

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**ICAS Competition Winners**

This year, we ran prize competitions for selected schools entering ICAS Digital Technologies and Science for the chance to win $500 prizes payable to the school's P&C (or equivalent body). The following schools were successful:

- St Peters Collegiate Girls School, SA
- Young High School, NSW
- Norfolk Island Central School
- Horsham College, VIC
- Marion Primary School, SA

Congratulations to all of the winners!

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**Practice Online for ICAS Mathematics**

If you still need further preparation for [ICAS Mathematics](#) on Tuesday, 11 August, you can purchase [Practice Online Mathematics](#) from our [online shop](#).

![Buy Practice Online Mathematics](#)

We have two series of [Practice Online Mathematics](#) for Years 3 to 12 students that provide instant feedback summarising both students' overall results and performance in each skill area assessed. Practice Online Mathematics tests are developed by the same team of Maths experts that develop our [ICAS Mathematics papers](#).

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**A trick for staying focused**

Here's a question for you: Do you control your day or do you simply react to it? Or to put it another way—how often do you feel like all you did was keep your head above water?

A former Army sniper shared a trick for staying focused in [Business Insider](#).

**The trick**

Once upon a time, before emails and office life, I was a sniper in the Army. As a sniper, I was trained to go into a dangerous area, collect reconnaissance, and get out without ever being seen. This is the hardest part of the job. Most people think it’s all about shooting from really far away, and while that’s certainly an important skill, it’s not the most difficult.

Staying virtually invisible, while moving from point to point with 75+ pounds of gear in extreme weather, while being completely exhausted, requires a tremendous amount of focus. The fatigue, the discomfort, the racing thoughts are all distractions that can throw off your focus and your cloak of invisibility that keeps you alive.

So how do you brush off distractions and maintain your focus? Well, when the external stimuli take over and you begin to lose focus on your priorities, my sniper instructors taught me an extremely simple and profound trick to regain control.

**SLLS: Stop, Look, Listen, and Smell**

They said, “When the heat, weight, and fatigue take your focus off moving in silence and invisibility, take a SLLS break —
Stop what you are doing. Look around. Listen to your surroundings. Smell your environment.”
The purpose of this is to take a timeout and refocus. This allows you to stop reacting to the external stimuli, be mindful of your environment, and focus on what really matters.
Yes, it works. It helped me be invisible as a sniper. And later on, at my desk job, I discovered that it helped me regain control of my workday when all I was doing was reacting to emails and other people’s priorities.
One particular day, I was attempting to buckle down and knock out several hours of important, but monotonous work. It was crucial I completed it that day, but my mind was struggling to stay focused, and my attention bounced around from other people’s conversations to my phone to anything but what I needed to do. Time for a SLLS break! After five minutes of stopping and refocusing with SLLS, I was able to sit down with resolve and accomplish my work.
Bonus: It even helped me in my personal life to be more mindful and focused. I was able to soak up and fully experience a recent backpacking trip to the Yucatan peninsula.
So, how do you use this trick to immediately make an impact and help you regain control of your workday and personal life?

The challenge
Set a recurring alarm on your phone for every two hours, between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., that simply says “SLLS.” This is your cue to take a SLLS break. Stop whatever you’re doing, look around, listen to your surroundings, and smell your environment. Whether it’s for 30 seconds or five minutes, take as long as you need to regain clarity on the present moment.
By doing this you’ll stop the reaction cycle and be able to focus on the present — allowing your mind to breathe and enter a higher state of thinking where you decide what’s important and worthy of your time. You’ll regain mindfulness and purpose by taking back control of those elusive thoughts that usually escape you during stressful moments.
The every-two-hour alarm is just a starting point. Practice this until it’s a habit, then turn off the alarm. Use this trick whenever you’re feeling overwhelmed, when you’re just reacting to the world around you, and when you want to take control of your day and your life.

Until next time,

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