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.”

If you haven't already done so, I suggest you look into our ICAS reports and explore the opportunities to know more about your students. If you need further assistance in understanding ICAS reports, we invite you to make an appointment with one of our professional Assessment Consultants. You can request a visit by emailing pd@eaa.unsw.edu.au.

You are invited to attend the 2015 Assessment in Schools Conference

The 2015 Assessment in Schools Conference will be held on 12 and 13 October 2015 at UNSW Global in Rosebery, Sydney. The conference is accredited with BOSTES and can be used towards completing your compulsory professional development quota for this year.
This year's presenters include Professor Chris Davison, Head of the School of Education at UNSW; Professor Wan Ng, Professor in Technology-enabled Learning & Teaching at UTS; Barry Dean and Matthew O'Brien from Brisbane Boys College. They will be presenting a range of topics, including:

- Enhancing Teacher Assessment Literacy: Practice what we preach.
- The current status of non-cognitive assessments in schools.
- The future of educational assessment.

Make sure you also come along to the conference dinner with a talk by Associate Professor Richard Buckland who will speak on Gamification, MOOCs and IT tools that make teaching fun. The conference costs $160 per person and the conference dinner will be an additional $65.

Click here to register now.

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!

Practice Online for ICAS Mathematics

If your students need further preparation for ICAS Mathematics on Tuesday, 11 August, they can purchase Practice Online Mathematics from our online shop.

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.

The Eight Minutes That Matter Most

Brian Sztabnik, an English teacher from New York, wrote in Edutopia about four ways to make a strong impact at the beginning of a class:

Trend with YouTube
YouTube reaches more 18- to 34-year-olds than any cable channel. One hundred hours of video are uploaded to it every minute. There's something for every grade, subject, and approach on YouTube. Not only does it make learning HD visible, it also allows teachers to make connections that could never happen before. I had my students draw comparisons
between Carl Sandberg’s poem “Chicago” and the Chrysler Super Bowl commercial featuring Eminem. Fifteen years ago, I would have had to keep my finger on the record button of my VCR remote and pray for it to air. YouTube makes anticipatory sets a whole lot easier.

**Start with Good News**

If you want to create a safe space for students to take risks, you won’t get there with a pry bar. Edutopia blogger Todd Finley starts his classes with two minutes of sharing good news. Classrooms that celebrate success build the comfort necessary for students to ask critical questions, share ideas, and participate in honest and open discussions. Starting with celebrations is a short, easy way to get there.

**Cross Disciplines**

Toss a football around the class before you teach the physics of a Peyton Manning spiral. Play a song that makes a classical allusion for your mythology unit. Measure the angles of a Picasso painting in math class. Integrating other disciplines teaches students that ideas and concepts do not stand alone but rather exist within a wider web of knowledge. Starting with another discipline can open their senses to deeper learning.

**Write for Five**

Kelly Gallagher says that students should write four times as much as a teacher can grade. Students need to write -- a lot -- if they are to improve. One way to achieve that is to start each day with an essential question that students must spend five minutes answering. If done day after day, it becomes ritualistic and builds stamina. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe have a diverse list of essential questions.

Until next time,

Neville Walter
Marketing Manager, International and Domestic
UNSW Global

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