

Newsletter



A note from the President's desk

At times, when I look at the mountain of documents coming out of Education Queensland's offices I feel like those young students lined up at the door of the year one classroom, the first day of school, the first day of year 1. Cast your mind back a few months and picture them.

Like them, I feel like nothing fits, my uniform is too big, my shoes are too big, the school is too big. It's all a little overwhelming and I miss my mother.

The biggest challenge facing the teaching profession, and especially support, resource and all other teachers working with children experiencing learning difficulties is that of change.

Many pictures spring to mind – it's like an avalanche, a tsunami. We need to realize that it's not going to end and that the pace of change will continue to increase. Here are some ideas on how to thrive and grow.

What's in it for me? As committed professionals we need to look for those elements within the change that will help us grow as service providers. By going through the process we may become better teachers. Our students will benefit. The teachers who consult with us may benefit.

What do I let go? We can't do it all. We need to critically examine each new proposal and work out what to treasure and what to let go. The best practice of 1974 (when remedial teachers were being trained in increasing numbers on behalf of Education Qld) is not the best practice of 2003. Some of our service delivery will need to improve.

Reframing the picture. Our year one students long to learn and grow. Each year they enjoy new challenges. It seems we need to learn from our students, and take on the mantle of lifelong learners. Our professional picture perhaps needs to be reframed.

So this year I am trying hard not to use the word change, but to use words like professional refreshment, growth and learning. It's still a lot of work to keep up, but it helps me to be more positive about the professional challenges ahead.

Your association is alive and growing as well. It is part of our vision to help you in your professional journey. Please keep in touch.

David Waterworth

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From the Editor

With change comes the possibility of renewal. With the middle of 2003 come and gone maybe you will find out what is happening to your association. The Remedial and Support Teachers Association of Queensland has undergone a rigorous bout of navel gazing during the first six months of this year.

We found out what was good about our organisation and what we could do better. On the plus side we have strenuously advocated for you, our members, in the corridors of power from the Minister of Education to various assistant director generals and heads of departments in head office. We know we have been successful when the association receives letters to invite our participation and comments on various initiatives.

What we felt we needed to do better was to inform our membership of our activities, ideas, issues and professional development. To that end we will be contacting the membership in a number of ways. We will in future produce four newsletters each year they will respond to current topics and point the direction to support materials. Stephen Mysliwy will be the editor for these four. They will be brief but we hope informative.

Michael Boyle will continue as our journal editor, producing two high quality professional journals each year. The first will contain submissions from the current RSTAQ/LDA conference. A November issue of the journal will contain articles and reviews of vital professional concern to support teaching,

In addition to our hard copy we will also make use of vast web based resources. The association website will continue to refer you to articles that can help inform and extend our practice, providing TIPS as contributed by our members and keeping you abreast of news relevant to our organization

We would like to thank Joy Seary and Ross McGreevy for their tireless efforts in helping to inform the membership through the production and distribution of our journals in the past, keeping the database current and in general responding to the need to deal with many issues that require instant 'running' responses. Due to work and family commitments they will be unable to continue in this role. Joy will continue as an active committee

member helping to coordinate our valuable professional development opportunities.

Stephen Mysliwy

RSTAQ and some early connections

RSTAQ is really the tale of two associations, RTA (Remedial Teachers' Association) and STA (Support Teachers' Association). Both of these have their separate stories up to their amalgamation in 2001. In this issue of our newsletter, we share with you the first half of the story (a brief history of RTA) and hope to bring to you part 2, a brief account of the secondary association at a later date.

Some background to RTA

Queensland was ahead of the pack in Australia in providing a course for the training of Remedial Teachers. As John Elkins recalled, 'the short (or term 2) courses began around 1952 and students were rewarded with a Certificate in Diagnostic and Remedial Teaching. They continued until the Colleges of Advanced Education were set up, and it was regarded as inappropriate for universities to be offering sub degree courses.'

A trial service was instituted in 1959 instigated by Margaret Outridge, a guidance officer at the times and later to become senior inspector within special education. As she reflected, '*In the late fifties I assessed so many perceptually handicapped children that the need was obvious. I went to Bill Wood, our Director, and said I would like to start a remedial education service. That was mid 1959. He suggested a trial run, but he was so busy he forgot it was to be a trial and I didn't remind him. He said I could pick a teacher, so I chose Edna Fury, and together we selected appropriate students from the Wynnum-Manly area. After a term of intervention I wrote a report on the outcomes, which were most pleasing.*' From that point remedial services grew very slowly. Early remedial teachers were Carmen Smith, Glenda Page (Williams) and Doreen

Nicolson. The first Learning disabilities class opened in 1968. As Margaret recounted, ‘I recall that in 1968 I was able to convince the powers that be that there should be special classes of six for severely affected children. The first class opened at Kelvin Grove with Marie Hutchinson as the inspired teacher.’

Some of the most influential members of the Remedial Teachers’ Association (RTA) were a product of the Schonell course. Members such as Margaret Toohey, Joan Lane, and Pat White-Davison, Glenda Page were a product of the University of Qld initiative, which included a supervised practicum. Mainstays at the Schonell Centre who were involved in the training of candidates included Kathy Cochrane (the first president of RTA), Joan Atkinson a teacher in the Schonell course, and Win Apelt who lectured for many years out of the Schonell Centre. This course was later incorporated into the Bachelor of Educational Studies course but without the practicum.

Eventually through the negotiation of the Department of Education under the leadership of Margaret Outridge and the Mt Gravatt CAE a postgraduate course was established implemented by Sadie Foster and Marie Byrne. Marie Byrne was a member of the RTA executive for many years. Teachers who had completed at least five years of classroom practice could apply to be released by the department to do either the remedial or resource courses, the latter being established to provide a model that emphasised collaboration between the support teacher and classroom teachers. In practice the training for both groups was very similar with both groups completing a certificate course initially after a semester study. A follow-up semester was offered to those completing the certificate after these teachers had spent some period, typically two years in the field. A full diploma was the reward for completing the second semester.

Janet Christensen secretary of RTA in the early days provided the following information about the rationale for its formation and also identified some key players:

- There were very few Remedial teachers in 1960 in the state of Qld.
- A few unqualified persons set themselves up as private providers – perhaps a reaction to the parents of ‘backward’ kids who pushed to for help to meet the needs of their children

- A number of qualified Remedial teachers felt that there needed to be some standards that parents and schools could recognize
- RTA was a result of the above need – so that only appropriately trained teachers were eligible for membership (e.g., through the Schonell course, later through Mt Gravatt post graduate certificate and diploma, Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education post-graduate course and the post-graduate course available through James Cook University in Townsville.
- Kathy Cochrane from the Schonell Centre was the first president, Geoff Swan the vice-president, Janet Peterson the secretary; the patron was the Minister for Education, Allan Fletcher.
- Geoff Swan was the second president and Glenda Page the second secretary.

Website updates

In recent times most additions to the website have been to the **News** section. We urge you to take an occasional look in this section to keep abreast of the processes of the committee. As the editor mentioned something of a renewal has been taking place (if not a renaissance).

Please also note as well that a couple of new sites have been added to the **TIPS** page under **www**. See in particular:

- **MyRead: Strategies for teaching reading in the middle years**

supports teachers of underperforming students in the middle years (Years 4 – 9).

- **WiLEARNs**

Wisconsin LEARNs (Literacy Education and Reading Network Source) is a complete literacy resource to support teachers and families in teaching the process of reading.

- **Media Literacy Clearinghouse**
<http://www.med.sc.edu:1081/>

Teachers involved in teaching visual literacy and

critical literacy will love this 'storehouse' of images. The resource is described succinctly as having the purposes to provide for K-12 educators who wish 'to learn more about media literacy, integrate it into classroom instruction make their students more media aware.'

See for example, 'Deception and Advertising' a lesson plan for students, key questions for consumers to answer, under 'Deciphering advertisements' and the variety of images presented as successful advertising under 'AdAge – The advertising century'. <http://adage.com/century/>

Stanford Report: Remediation training improves reading ability of dyslexic students
<http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/2003/february26/dyslexia-226.html>

For those interested in the neuropsychology and chemistry of dyslexia it is worthwhile looking at this article. A program is described that, it is claimed, can 'rewire' the brain of one experiencing this disability. The focus of the program seems to focus on the sophisticated delivery of phonemic awareness skills.

University of Maine: Research

<http://www.umaine.edu/research/UMTRReading.htm>

Those of you are familiar with the work of Jeffrey Wilhelm from his presentations in **Tasmania** a couple of years ago -

<http://www.discover.tased.edu.au/english/jwforum.htm>

might enjoy exploring his work further through the University of Maine. One of his great interests at the moment is catering for the literacy needs of boys. The review posted here describes his current focus.