

ALTA NEWS



Back (L-R): Gem Rowe, Paula Williams, Bènda De Silva, Maureen Baldeo
Front (L-R): Paula Lucie-Smith, Hetty Sarjeant, Marise Warner
ALTA Board of Directors 2006-2007



Mar 2007 Volume 13 Issue 1

BELMONT 624-2582/3442 84 Belmont Circular Road	Mon-Thurs Fri	9am-5pm 8am-4pm	altapos@alta-tt.org
SAN FERNANDO 653-4656 St Paul's Anglican Church Hall, 3rd Floor, 12 Harris Promenade <i>Marilyn Rampersad</i>	Tues/Wed/Fri	10am-3pm	altasfd@alta-tt.org
ARIMA 664-2582 Arima Terminal Mall <i>Arlene Wallace-Romero</i>	Tues/Thurs/ Fri	9am-5pm	altaarima@alta-tt.org

www.alta-tt.org

TUTOR-COORDINATOR MEETING & STUDENT EVALUATION



All tutors should meet with their individual coordinators in April. This is important to review how to evaluate student progress. Your coordinator will help you draft the *End-of-Level Evaluation* report, which when complete must be returned for her approval and signature. What you write guides the students' next tutor, so give a comprehensive picture of the whole student, not just their literacy skills, as well as helpful tips.

Note that you should report on all students who started in your level in Sept. 2006. For students who have discontinued class, tick the 'dropped out' box and, where you know the reason, write why the student stopped attending.

End-of-Level student evaluations must be submitted to ALTA no later than mid-June to allow time to print individual student certificates for tutors to collect at the June 30th Belmont meeting. Students, especially those going to Level 3, need their certificate to go to the next level.

Note that once a student is awarded a certificate, that student should not be repeating the level. This hinders the progress of the student and also means that the ALTA database will not be correct for that particular student. We have had instances where students 'beg' to stay in a class or the teacher feels that the student needs another year in that particular level. In this case, the student should not be given a certificate.

Also, let your coordinator know if you plan to continue teaching in September 2007 and at what level. This is important, as placement of new tutors is done in May-June.

ADDITIONAL STUDENT ACTIVITY: HOW TO VOTE & NEW BIRTH CERTIFICATES

Because this is an election year, ALTA trainer Marilyn Rampersad is preparing a supplementary activity on the voting process, probably in the form of a role-play which takes students through the steps to cast their vote. Tutors should fit this into one of the two Feedback and Practice lessons next term.

A Feedback and Practice or Review lesson should also be used to help students to fill out the form for the new electronic birth certificate, since all TT birth certificates need to be replaced with the new version. Reading Circle guides should also include this as an activity. Once the form is filled in, students may either mail or drop in at the venues listed on the back of the form. ALTA has copies, or these can be downloaded from <http://www.gov.tt>

DATABASES - CLASS ATTENDANCE REGISTERS NEEDED NOW!

In December 2006, Jill Chin Aleong joined ALTA Belmont on a part-time basis to get our student and tutor databases in order. She has made a huge difference to the database design, which was apparently very cumbersome and had 'ghosts' and 'orphans'. At last ALTA has someone who really understands computer data management, though she says that ALTA students present unique challenges! These challenges require that:



1. Tutors must be very careful about spelling students' names. Sometimes we have one spelling on the initial assessment, another on the attendance register and yet another on the end-of-level evaluation. Which is the right one? We understand that students, especially beginners, do vary the spelling of their own name. It is important that tutors submit to ALTA a consistent spelling on all documents to avoid the database showing three students, each with incomplete data, where really they are all the same person.
2. Every student must have a unique identifier since so many have exactly the same name (think of surnames like Charles, Williams, Lewis!). For this reason, from September 2007, the Initial Student Data form will require the tutor to ask the student for their mother's name and write this on the form.
3. At the end of every term, especially Term 1, tutors must submit their attendance register with each student's telephone number written below their name. The attendance register is to check that all current students are on our database and the phone number is to differentiate between students with the same first and last name, which occurs quite often (see 2 above). Every year, tutors submit end-of-level reports in Term 3 on students who are **not** on our database.

Only if our data is accurate can we use the database to see trends, identify issues and measure ALTA's effectiveness. This is dependent on our volunteer tutors providing timely and accurate data. Everyone hates form-filling and paperwork, but this is critical to an effective national programme.



So, please check that Term 1 and Term 2 attendance registers have been submitted. If not, you have lots of options to choose from: 1) drop these in to any ALTA office; 2) fax; 3) photocopy & mail to ALTA Belmont; 4) email the version in Excel; or 5) scan and e-mail. Do remember to fill in the tutors' attendance as well.

ANNUAL TUTOR MEETING

Saturday 30th June - mark the day on your calendar!

AGENDA

- 9.00-10.00am** Continuing tutors register & pay for refresher
Collect: Refresher homework
Completed Student Certificates (to hand out before end of Term 3)
June Newsletter
Flyers for National Student Registration
Submit student names for TV and radio interviews
- 10.00-10.30am** ALTA updates
- 10.30-12noon** Guest speaker; questions
- Noon:** Refreshments in the courtyard. (Bring to share!)

1-DAY REFRESHERS FOR CONTINUING TUTORS



Aug: Thurs 23rd, Sat 25th (South), Tues 28th

Sept: Sat 8th

Pieces of unedited writing needed: This is necessary to give tutors much-needed practice with editing. The best way to do this is to ask two or three students to write their draft on a sheet of paper to give to you at the end of class without your editing it. The piece should preferably be without your input (spelling, grammar, etc.) but if you have given help, write this below the student's writing. Copy and mail/deliver to ALTA South. Edit with the students at the start of the next lesson during card review.

2007 TUTOR TRAINING COURSES

- Tues Course:** 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 May & 5 June
Bethel Pentecostal Church, Arima
- Thurs Course:** 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 May & **Fri** 8 June
UTT, Couva
- Sat Course:** 5, 12, 19, 26 May & 2, 9 June
ALTA Belmont



ARIMA OFFICE - MORE STAFF, LONGER HOURS

Please note the new Arima office hours: Tues & Thurs are now **9am - 5pm** (instead of 9am - 1pm). Friday remains the same. We welcome Alana Lynch-Gomez, who trained as an ALTA volunteer tutor in 2005, as the new receptionist there. Arlene's workplace projects have increased considerably making it impossible for her to handle the day-to-day running of the office.

PLANNED VIDEO/DVD OF TRAINING COURSE

ALTA would like to record the presentation sessions of the ALTA Training Course, preferably at each of the three venues, to produce a video and DVD for both current and new tutors to reinforce their learning. If you know anyone who can help with the recording, editing and video/DVD production, please call or email ALTA.



ALTA'S 15TH ANNIVERSARY

The editor of the *Express*, Alan Geere, met with Paula, Brenda De Silva and Maureen Baldeo, and has agreed to feature ALTA in September for our 15th anniversary. Students and teachers who are willing to be interviewed by an *Express* reporter should give their names to Rosie as soon as possible, as the *Express* is ready to start doing the interviews now. We are particularly looking for students' success stories. They do not have to be current students; past students are fine. Students and teachers must agree to have their photo in the newspaper!

ALTA's 15th Anniversary T-shirts are to be available at the Tutor Meeting on 30th June in Belmont. We plan to order T-Shirts, Polos (sleeveless) and cropped Tees in the following colours: purple, lime green, blue and black, in all sizes – S, M, L, XL. At the June Meeting, we will have samples and order forms.

STUDENT GLASSES - GREAT STUDENT OFFERS

With the assistance of Mr. Mark Webster from the Rotary Club of Piarco, ALTA was able to get excellent student packages with free eye tests and discounts on frames and lenses from Ferreira Optical, Imperial Optical, Visual Eyes and Value Optical. Other opticians who have helped in the past continue to offer discounts to ALTA students.



Joanne is spending many hours scheduling appointments for students whose names were submitted by tutors. Tutors should impress on students the importance of attending and being on time for these. Failure to do so jeopardizes the entire programme. If a student does not keep his/her appointment, he/she will NOT be re-scheduled.

Ferreira has also offered limited spaces to ALTA students, who really cannot afford to pay even the reduced cost of the optician's package, at their 'charity clinics'. These clinics offer free eyewear; 2 students have already received free glasses from the Chaguanas clinic. In the PoS area, 8 students' names have been submitted to Ferreira's. The next clinic will be in Trincity. Teachers should carefully select students for these charity clinics. Our sincere thanks go to Rotary of Piarco and all participating optical companies. Submission of student names for glasses is closed for this academic year.

READING CIRCLE UPDATE

There has been an improvement in student attendance at Reading Circle venues. Thanks to all tutors who encouraged their students to get the extra reading practice and also to the volunteers who faithfully show up every week to assist these students with their reading.

In addition to the existing nine Reading Circles, a new Reading Circle started in March at Curepe Holy Saviour School, on Thursday from 5-7 pm.

NEW PUBLICATIONS/TEACHING MATERIALS

- *Beginner Reader 3* (Encourage Level 1 repeaters or Level 1s going to Level 2 to purchase in order to get the needed fluency practice.)
- *Sight Word Cards, Book 3A* (Now pink!)
- *Tutor Training Course Handbook* (Revised)
- *Phonics CD* (Now available at a cost of \$25)
- *Games CD* (Games for Bks 3A & B, and Beginner Bk. 3, have been added. Available from your coordinator to copy to your computer.)



FUNDING & DONATIONS

Company/ Organization	Project
JB Fernandes Foundation (US Trust)	Revision of first ALTA 1 Warner is currently work materials and suggestion:
John Phillips Trust	Beginner Reader 3
Neal & Massy Foundation	ALTA Adult Workbook
Sagicor	Sight Word Cards Book



*including carpet squares for the South Office - to create a uniform cover for the varied floorings we found there. Now we're looking for free or discounted carpet laying!

BG EASY READERS ON CRICKET

Our CEO, Paula Lucie-Smith, attended the Queen's Park Oval launch of a series of reading books on the theme of cricket. Sponsored by British Gas, the series called "Get Caught Reading" targets Infants 2 to Standard 4, but several titles are appropriate for adults. BGTT kindly donated 180 sets (10 books in each set) to ALTA for the Reading Circles and for loan to students. Each ALTA venue may borrow 1 set from our offices, to be returned by July. Encourage parents/grandparents in your class to read the books to their children!



CONTRACT ALTA TEACHING - EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES!

ALTA offers its services to companies and government agencies through its Workplace Branch, managed by Arlene Wallace-Romero from the Arima office (and her cell phone!). Workplace programmes begin with a needs assessment, from which a programme of instruction is developed.

ALTA tutors are currently employed at Mittal Steel (Pt Lisas) and Caribbean Fisheries (PoS). The Ministry of Science, Technology & Tertiary Education Retraining Programme will begin another cycle in early May.

Good workplace tutors should have: (1) taught two levels; (2) the ability to write good reports and modify writing lessons to workplace requirements; (3) sensitivity to employer's issues.

In the workplace, we tend to work with Level 2 students first since the progress of these students is apparent earlier to the employer. We continue with the Beginner or Level 1 if invited to do so.

OPTIMUM NUTRITION & SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES

*Summary of an article by Deborah Colson & Patrick Holford
Dyslexia Review, Summer 2006, Vol. 17, No. 3*

One of the most limiting concepts in human sciences is the idea that mind and body are separate. Mental health problems are very much on the increase in children – from autism and learning difficulties to hyperactivity and aggression. A major reason for these increases is often sub-optimum nutrition.

Studies at the Brain Bio Centre have found that the four biochemical factors that most contribute to learning disorders are: blood sugar control, essential fat deficiencies, vitamin and mineral deficiencies, and food allergies.

There is no doubt that the brain functions better with a constant and even supply of its primary fuel, namely glucose. But foods that contain fast-

releasing carbohydrates and sugar lead to temporary hyperglycaemia followed by hypoglycaemia, which cause mood and behavioural changes. When researchers at Yale University gave 25 healthy children a soft drink, the children's adrenalin level increased over 5 times above normal for up to 5 hours. Most had difficulty concentrating and were irritable and anxious.

A study of dyslexic children found that a diet high in sugar caused more erratic eye movements than a sugar-free diet. Better blood sugar control may improve not only attention, but also vision.

There is also plenty of evidence that the essential fats EPA and DHA, both members of the omega-3 family of fats, improve mood, cognition and behaviour in children. These essential fats are so called because they must be taken in through diet; they cannot be manufactured in the human body. Dietary sources of omega-3 fats are: sardines, mackerel, salmon, herring, trout and fresh tuna. 'Trans fats', which are used to extend the shelf-life of foods, block the conversion of essential fats into vital brain fats.

In a 2001 study, children with the worst essential fat deficiencies showed poorer reading skills and lower general ability than non-deficient children. Outward symptoms include: rough dry skin, eczema, cracked lips, dry hair, brittle nails, and excessive thirst.

Ensuring eye and brain are nourished is important especially if your child is struggling with reading and writing. Vitamin A is essential to vision and is found in meat, fish and eggs, as well as in beta-carotene, the vegetable form, which is converted in the body. B complex vitamins protect the neurons.

In addition, important minerals for young minds are magnesium and zinc. Magnesium deficiency is associated with low mood, anxious or hyperactive behaviour, insomnia, constipation and headaches. Zinc deficiency is associated with low mood, poorer learning skills and also frequent infections and white spots on the fingernails.

A large number of studies provide evidence that supplementation of nutrients can result in significant improvements in mental abilities, especially in children with learning difficulties. In addition to specialist teaching, children with dyslexia can benefit massively from the right nutrition:

- Eat more nutrient-rich foods
- Include a multivitamin/mineral supplement with zinc
- Minimize sugar intake (ice cream, sugary snacks & soft drinks)
- Cut down on refined or processed foods
- Include plenty of essential fats (from seeds and oily fish)
- Add anti-oxidants such as Vitamin E
- Minimise intake of fried foods and saturated fat

For more info: www.foodforthebrain.org www.brainbiocentre.org