

HLTA Newsletter

March 2014

Welcome to the Easter edition of our HLTA North of England Newsletter. We hope you find the information of interest and you are able to participate in our forthcoming events. We have tried to make this a bit of a special edition as amazingly 2014 marks the 10 year anniversary of the first teaching assistants achieving HLTA status. There are now over 40 000 HLTAs across the country! In this newsletter we aim to celebrate the breadth of roles fulfilled by HLTAs and the huge contribution they make to the lives of children and young people across our region.

HLTA status: Progress Update



The number of Teaching Assistants engaging in preparation and going forward to assessment continues at a steady pace. Since September 2012 when the funding ceased there have been 904 new HLTAs, 294 of which have achieved the status in the 6 months from September 2013 – February 2014, so all very positive. It is clear that schools continue to value the status: the assurance it carries that individuals are indeed working at a 'higher level'; and the recognition the status brings to hard working and committed colleagues. These have always been important factors in the success of the HLTA status and remain so 10 years after the first awards were made.

Professional Development Events for HLTAs

In June and July we are holding a series of Professional Development Events for HLTAs across the region. In previous years these events (we called them HLTA conferences in the past) have been really popular enabling us to offer a range of development opportunities to the HLTA community. We decided this year to focus on mathematics as we understood from both secondary and primary HLTA colleagues that this was a very current concern in many schools. We are really pleased that Dave Godfrey from 'Number Fun' has agreed to lead all three of our events. Dave is a Maths Consultant, Trainer and experienced teacher with an enthusiasm for all aspects of mathematics. He is designing a day for us which will explore mathematics as an everyday learning experience and demonstrate how mathematics can be enjoyable and stimulating for all children and across a wide range of subject areas. Dave's particular passion is using music as a creative tool for learning mathematics so expect lots of practical activity and singing!

Flyers for the events have already been circulated to schools and the HLTA Community but this is also included in the newsletter just in case you have missed it. We hope you will be able to join us and please pass the flyer to other HLTA colleagues who may be interested. Places are limited so early application is advisable. As usual there is a reduced cost to members of the HLTA Network Community.

Outstanding HLTA of the Year 2014



You will probably be aware that for the past few years we have made an award in each of the three regions that make up the North of England for the 'Outstanding HLTA of the Year'.

Nominations are made and endorsed by colleagues and then assessed by a panel of colleagues from the HLTA community (including previous winners of the award). All shortlisted candidates, together with a guest and a colleague are invited to a celebration event in July (this year the event will be held on the evening of 8 July) in the prestigious Lewis Jones Suite at Headingley Carnegie Stadium in Leeds. The

evening includes contributions from previous winners and is a really exciting part of our calendar of events.

This year is particularly special for a couple of reasons. Firstly, the beginning of HLTA status being awarded was in 2004, 10 years ago so a bit of an anniversary! Secondly, and for the first time in 2013 the other Regional Providers of Assessment decided to hold their own awards for Outstanding HLTA and then all regional winners were invited to the Houses of Parliament for a tour and celebratory lunch at which an award was made to the National winner, selected by the Chair of the National Partnership, Sir Richard Rose. We were so pleased that Jenny Blunstone, our Yorkshire and Humber winner was selected as the National Winner, well done Jenny!

Information about this year's award and how to nominate candidates has been circulated previously. If you have not received this and would like to nominate a colleague, please contact Debbie for the necessary paperwork. We would be grateful if you could talk about this with school colleagues and encourage participation. The award really helps to raise the profile of HLTA status and recognise the impact that HLTAs make every day on the lives of children and young people.

For further information please contact:

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Keeping up to Date:

The Moodle resources have recently been updated but we thought you might be interested in hearing about a few new publications which have recently come to our attention. These are as follows:

***Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants – Guidance for School Leaders and Teachers*, Peter Blatchford, Anthony Russell and Roy Webster, Routledge, Nov 2012 ISBN-10: 0415661285, ISBN-13: 978-0415661287**

Teaching assistants have become an integral part of classroom life, yet pioneering research by the authors has shown that school leaders and teachers are not making the most of this valued resource. Results from the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project showed that the more support pupils received from teaching assistants, the less academic progress they made. Yet it is not decisions made by the teaching assistants themselves, but decisions made by school leaders and teachers about how their support staff are used and prepared, which explains these provocative results.

Prompted by the wake-up call the DISS project findings provided, this timely book of guidance will help school leaders and teachers in primary and secondary schools improve the way they use teaching assistants, and will add real value to what can be achieved in the classroom. Based on the authors' collaborative work with schools in the Effective Deployment of Teaching Assistants (EDTA) project, this book provides essential, practical tools and classroom-tested strategies that will allow schools to conduct a fundamental review of current practice and provides a framework for reforming teaching assistant deployment and preparation, and the way they interact with pupils.

Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants provides much-needed and well-informed guidance on how to unleash the huge potential of teaching assistants working in schools and is essential reading for all school leaders.

***Provision Mapping: Improving Outcomes in Primary Schools*, Anne Massey, Routledge, Nov 2012, ISBN 10: 041553030, ISBN 13: 978-0415530309**

Written by an experienced practitioner who has a very current understanding of the school context, this book gives a fantastically clear, detailed and realistic strategy for primary schools with regards to raising attainment and inclusive practice. Anne Massey has provided a cogent and manageable system of provision mapping for whole-school improvement. – Pippa Whittaker, SENCO, Hans Price Academy, UK.

'This very detailed book will enable schools to develop whole school approaches which improve outcomes and ensure that they are removing barriers to participation and achievement for all children.' – Dr Peter Grimes, Principal Lecturer in Inclusive School Development, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK.

This highly practical book contains all the guidance and resources a school will need in order to implement an efficient and effective system of pupil progress tracking and evaluative Provision Mapping. It is a tried and tested system that has been shown to improve outcomes for all pupils, including those with SEN, and sits at the very heart of school self-evaluation.

***The Perfect SENCO*, Natalie Packer and Jackie Beere, Independent Thinking Press an Imprint of Crown House Publishing Sep 2013 ISBN-10: 178135104X, ISBN-13: 978-1781351048**

The Perfect SENCO is an essential guide for those with responsibility for ensuring high quality provision for, and progress of, pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Over recent years the job of the SENCO has become more strategic and will now include provision mapping, working in partnership with parents, supporting other colleagues, commissioning services, demonstrating pupil progress and ensuring value for money. In essence, it is a role which contributes significantly to whole-school improvement. The Perfect SENCO provides guidance for Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) and other senior leaders on working in a strategic way to support improvement. It will be of use not only for potential or newly appointed SENCOs, but also for those who are more experienced and wish to keep their day-to-day practice up to date. Including key information and practical tips, The Perfect SENCO is a useful point of reference for busy senior leaders. The book can be used to encourage reflection of current policy and practice, to support cultural or systemic change and to consider ways of coordinating SEN provision to successfully raise the achievement of pupils with special educational needs. The book makes reference to the national changes occurring as a result of 'Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs' SEN Green Paper and the resulting new SEN Code of Practice. It supports SENCOs, Inclusion Managers and Coordinators, SEN Governors together with Senior Leaders to start considering the implications of the changes

***Brilliant Teaching Assistant: What you need to know to be an outstanding teaching assistant*, Louise Burnham, Prentice Hall, Mar 2011, ISBN-10: 0273734423, ISBN-13: 978-0273734420**

What does it really take to become a brilliant teaching assistant? - Are you getting the most out of your current support role? Are you aware of the training and development opportunities available to you? How do you become more effective in the classroom? What can you do to take your career further? *Brilliant Teaching Assistant* answers these questions and many more. Outlining the key duties and responsibilities of the role, and illustrated with examples from practical contexts, Louise Burnham will show you how to shine in the classroom and focus on your continuing professional development to aim for the next step in your career in education.

***The Evident Value of Teaching Assistants*, Education UNISON Jan 2012**

UNISON carried out a survey of school leaders in autumn 2012 on the value of teaching assistants (TAs) to schools. This was in response to public debate on their role and at a time of focus on pupil attainment and resource utilisation. Some recent research on the pupil premium and the Sutton Trust Teaching and Learning Toolkit (2012) suggest that TAs have little or no impact on pupil attainment. These findings are set against a background of ever-increasing numbers of TAs, with nearly 220,000 employed in England in 2011 and evidence that much of the pupil premium funding is being spent to recruit more. The best people to throw light on this paradox are those responsible for raising standards in schools and employing TAs: school leaders. An online survey was launched, containing open-ended questions without the offer of options, to gather rich descriptions of how schools deploy TAs;

about teamwork and training; how and why they are valued, as well as the barriers that leaders face in deploying them effectively. A wealth of qualitative detail emerged and is reflected in this report.

National HLTA of the Year Award 2013

Interview with Jennifer Blunstone - 17/03/2014



HLTA North has sought proactively, to recognise the quality of the contribution made by Teaching Assistants and Higher Level Teaching Assistants to the education and achievements of children and young people across the three Regions that make up the North of England. For several years we have sponsored and managed 'Outstanding HLTA of the Year' awards in the North East, North West and Yorkshire and Humber Regions.

This year for the first time, The National HLTA Assessment Partnership (made up of all six of the former TDA Regional Providers of Assessment) invited nominations for the 'National HLTA of the Year'. HLTA North nominated the three winners of our 2013 Regional Awards: Lesley Henderson, North East; Jennifer Blunstone, Yorkshire and Humber; Samantha Gibson, North West. We are delighted to report that as part of a special event in London, attended by nominees from all nine Regions nationally, Jennifer Blunstone was selected for 2014 'National HLTA of the Year' award.

Jennifer is Manager of the Learning Support at the Nidderdale High School & Community College in Pateley Bridge, North Yorkshire. We asked Jennifer if she would be prepared to be interviewed for this special edition of our newsletter and are delighted that she agreed.

Jenn please tell me how you got into Learning Support (and what motivated you to do this)?

'I used to be a manager with one of the banks that was seriously damaged during the financial crisis and not surprisingly, I was looking for a career change. At the time I was Chair of the PTA at my own children's school and did some voluntary work in the school, including reading support and organising events such as discos for the children and the school's Christmas fair. I loved my work with the school and looked for a more permanent opportunity to work with children.'

What was your role when you started?

'My first job in school was as a general teaching assistant working one to one with a student who suffered from Cerebral Palsy. My role was to support the student's inclusion as far as possible in mainstream school activities.'

How has your working life changed since achieving HLTA Status?

'HLTA Status helped me take more responsibility in school. I joined the English Department working with small groups of students with special needs, searching for initiatives and interventions that would help them make the required educational and personal progress.'

'I wanted to make a new career in education. I wanted to be a teacher but could not afford to do a fulltime degree. I decided to take HLTA as a stepping stone'

'I am currently doing the second year of a part time Foundation Degree in Education Studies at York St John and providing that all goes well I will gain my BA in Education Studies next year. The degree programme involves travelling from Pateley Bridge to York and back often early in the morning and late at night; and my school has been really supportive and encouraging, including rearranging timetables to help me study.'

In 2013 you became 'Outstanding HLTA of the Year' for the Yorkshire and Humber Region, how did that come about?

'My manager nominated me and a member of my team wrote the 'supporting statement'. I was selected by a panel of assessors from the two other HLTA North Regions.'

Tell me about the Award Evening in Leeds

'The celebration and award ceremony was held at Leeds Carnegie Stadium and I was very surprised when I won the award for the Yorkshire and Humber Region. I was a little bit cross when I found out that my Headteacher and my boss both knew in advance that I had won and didn't tell me (HLTA North invite all shortlisted nominees to attend the celebration with representatives from their school and families but insist that the successful candidates do not know the result until the award ceremony.)'

You were subsequently nominated by the Region for the National HLTA of the Year Award, would you tell me about your visit to London and how you learned of your Award?

'It was all a bit surreal and bizarre – I was blown away!'

'I went with all the Regional Winners for a tour of the Houses of Parliament – we were all very naughty and sat down where we shouldn't. Then we went for lunch and to the National HLTA Assessment Partnership's award ceremony.'

'I was amazed that I won, it seemed very strange – we are such a little school (320 students) from such a small place (Pateley Bridge). Our mantra is 'Good quality local Education' – we are part of our community and know all our pupils.'

How have the Regional and National Awards impacted upon you and your role?

'They have given me much more self-confidence and also confidence that my Learning Support Centre is heading in the right direction.'

'In some schools, from what I hear, the learning support teams do not feel equal with other teaching staff. At Nidderdale we are very much integral to teaching and learning and we all feel that we are part of the team.'

What do you say to those thinking of taking on preparation for HLTA Status?

'Definitely do it!'

'The process is very rigorous but for me it didn't feel hugely onerous it was much more about recognition for what we already do every day in our roles. Going through preparation does make you think about your own role and practice. You look at what you are doing in a different light.'

'Even when I get QTS I do not think I want to change my role and what I do. I am there to take pressure off the English Teachers by taking specific initiatives, such as raising levels of Literacy across subject and curriculum areas. We are currently working closely with Primary Schools to tap into their expertise in teaching and learning as this transfers well to our more vulnerable/disadvantaged students many of whom are working at Level 2 in areas such as Science rather than KS4.'

Jenn, is there anything you would like to add in summary?

'I would like to say that becoming and working as an effective HLTA is all about team effort. Learning Support and Teaching Staff – everything we achieve is a result of working together as a team.'

Interview carried out by Dr Edward John Smith (Former Senior Assessor, HLTA North)

HLTA 10th Anniversary

Interview with Judith Robson - 17/03/14

This is the tenth anniversary of the HLTA Status the first Candidates gaining the status in 2004, When thinking about who might be an appropriate case study to include in this newsletter we had



little difficulty in selecting Judith Robson (some HLTAs may know her by her former name of Judith Howes). We were all delighted when Judith agreed to be interviewed.

My first contact with Judith was in 2003/2004 when I was working with the then TTA and DFEE to develop and pilot the HLTA standards and assessment process for what became Phase1. Dr Gill Tricoglus led the preparation of the pilot group in the North East (NE) and I had a similar role in Yorkshire and Humber (Y&H). In order to avoid conflicts of interest, Gill assessed the Y&H candidates and I assessed the NE group.

We were as new as anyone else to the assessment process and simply learned and developed our practice as we worked. Imagine how scary it was when I heard that one of my first candidates for assessment had just been awarded the title of 'Teaching Assistant of the Year' for the North East and Nationally, by the DFEE. Fortunately for me, Judith's practice was as outstanding as her reputation had led me to believe! (Judith also received an MBE for Services to Education in 2004)

Judith please tell me how you got into Learning Support (and what motivated you to do this)?

'I started as a parent helper, became a member of the PTA and Parent Governor. My experience in these roles led me to see Learning Support as an area of work that I would enjoy and to which I could contribute. I was interested in school and how children developed. I wanted to support my own children by understanding what was happening in school and transferring that knowledge to their lives outside school.'

What was your role back in 2003/2004?

'I was a Teaching Assistant in Key Stage 2 my role was focussed on ICT (the Government at the time had just rolled out funding for IT in schools). I was also working with the community – involving parents in family learning.'

I remember that you were the DFEE's 'Teaching Assistant of the Year' in 2004, how did that come about?

'In 2004 the Education Action Zone (EAZ), in collaboration with my Headteacher, nominated me. The process was similar to the model used these days by HLTA North and the HLTA National Partnership to select Regional and National "HLTAs of the Year" except that it included a school visit from the Department, where staff and pupils were interviewed about my practice. I was initially nominated for the Regional Award and then progressed to the National Final. It was very exciting as they sent a TV crew to the school for the day, filming and interviewing children and staff.'

'2004 was a really exciting year as I was also awarded an MBE for 'Services to Education'.

You were part of the North East's first pilot group of candidates for HLTA Status, how did that happen and why did you want to be involved?

'The EAZ were asked to put six people forward for the Pilot. The first thing I had to do was, very quickly go and do my "Level Twos". I got involved because I saw HLTA as validation and acknowledgement of "who you are" and the "job you are doing". It instils confidence and self-confidence. HLTA is not just about a job it's about who you are.'

How has your working life changed since achieving HLTA Status?

'My role is nothing like it was – totally different - the HLTA award gave me the confidence to do things I had not even tried before!'

'I went on from HLTA in 2004 to get a degree in Education Studies from Teesside University and a PGCE in Adult Learning (QTLS Status)'

'I now work for Stockton Local Authority supporting people to do what I managed to do for myself'

What do you say to those thinking of taking on preparation for HLTA Status?

'I talk to people about their role and encourage them to reflect upon what they do and why. I help Learning Support Staff to see where they fit into the Teaching and Learning spectrum.'

'The reflection part is really important, as it makes you think about what you do and why you do particular things (you often do these on "autopilot") it helps the individual unpick their practice and behaviour.'

What advice would you give to someone seeking support for their personal and professional development?

'There is a career structure (even if it is not always clearly visible) and I help people explore where they want to go and how they can get there. You can get nowhere without the right qualifications. That said it depends upon the individual and their circumstances. For some, going straight to structured, academic routes is appropriate but sometimes HLTA is a good place to get confidence prior to starting on more structured learning.'

What do you think is the future for HLTA?

'The future of HLTA has not changed, it is strong, so far there are still lots of people coming forward and the HLTA is valued in schools - "it does what it says on the tin". Plenty of Universities recognise its value and are prepared to award points for HLTA as "Accredited Prior Learning".'

'In due course perhaps we will need to put in place more formal "Training and Development Routes" acknowledging that many of those achieving the HLTA Standards as part of their role (for whom the "Preparation and Assessment Only route" was appropriate) have already got the Status. Some candidates coming forward in the future may need a more personalised, level of development and support.'

Judith, is there anything you would like to add in summary?

'Achieving HLTA Status creates a thirst for knowledge'

Judith Robson is a School Workforce Development Officer with Stockton on Tees, Local Authority

Interview carried out by Dr Edward John Smith (Former Senior Assessor, HLTA North)

Susan Bosberry, Secondary HLTA Representative & Vice Chair of the National Partnership Board



I have the pleasure of working in the Science Department at Bishop Barrington School in Bishop Auckland, County Durham. I represent HLTAs from Primary, Secondary and Colleges within the North of England on the HNAP (HLTA National Assessment Partnership) Board. HNAP was created in response to the withdrawal of Government funding for the assessment of HLTAs. This assessment process is now delivered, assessed and monitored by the Regional Assessment Providers. The Board was also set up to monitor the assessment process, ensuring uniformity and maintenance of high standards across all five regional providers. I am proud to be Deputy Chair. My role on the Board is to report and comment on proposals in the agenda. A significant proposal has been the introduction of Level 2 tests in Maths and English which will enable aspiring HLTAs to achieve the status if, for whatever reason, they do not have evidence of their qualifications.

I was also involved with The National Outstanding HLTA Award, this was a celebration event in 2013 to celebrate 10 years of HLTA. Dr Richard Rose, Chair of the Board, presented the award to Jenny Blunstone from Yorkshire and the Humber.

I have reported to the board that HLTAs in my school are included in the Quality Assurance process within their own departments, and are observed alongside teaching staff using current OFSTED criteria. These Quality Assurance observations continue to ensure that high standards of practice are maintained by HLTAs.

Being involved with HNAP reassures me that the HLTA assessment process is as stringent now as it has always been and that the Regional Providers continue to strive for the recognition and reward of the skills and knowledge of aspiring HLTAs. As a member of the Board I work alongside dedicated professionals from a range of disciplines and have had great opportunities to meet HLTAs from all parts of the country.

Evolution from an HLTA Network to an HLTA North Professional Association

HLTA North partners are proposing to develop the existing HLTA North Network into a Professional Association for Learning Support Staff across the Northern Region. We would really welcome your ideas to help us to take this forward.

We think that the Professional Association should be named by its members. Its role would initially be:

1. A provider of focussed, quality assured, CPD and recognised qualifications at pre and post HLTA; at undergraduate and post graduate level, underpinned by credible Higher Education Institutions
2. A provider of quality assurance and accreditation, underpinned by credible Higher Education Institutions
3. A centre for reliable and valid research, focused on those who support learning in our schools, underpinned by credible Higher Education Institutions
4. A source of quality information for anyone who supports learning in schools

We believe that this should be a Professional Association which supports its members to achieve their aspirations. We want it to provide:

- A forum for professional development through the sharing of high quality practice at all levels of experience
- A means of genuine achievement and recognition through customised, personalised and quality-assured CPD
- A way to promote the roles and value of learning support staff in the context of Local and National policy

A properly constituted Professional Association will help Learning Support Staff to get on to the road to goal achievement, recognition, self-confidence and satisfaction.

Short Questionnaire		YES/NO
Q1:	Do you feel this could be the way forward for Learning Support Staff?	
Please can you explain your view?		
Q2	What would you feel that a Learning Support Staff Professional Association should provide for its members?	

Please Email your responses to:

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