

HASS Conference – Report for the TRB

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Billions to be invested in Humanities Education in our schools

The Humanities revolution in our schools - utilitarian only education found to be wanting in preparing young people for the changing 21st Century world

Students protest demanding more Hums

A protest broke out at Eastern High School in Sydney today as students demanded at least 30% of the curriculum being dedicated for Humanities education



Students protesting

The system agrees

An education spokesperson agreed that Hums is one of the most important subjects in the curriculum and have set in place for the change to have 30% of the curriculum dedicated to Humanities Education.

Jobs galore from learning humanities in school

The Labor Party has verified that students gain employment as a result of the skills and understandings they gain by completing Humanities classes. They have backed the protest of students that hums is undervalued in the curriculum.

Investment in Hums educations

The Federal Government has just announced an infusion of 2 Billion Dollars in humanities education. All schools will be provided with grants for purpose built Hums classrooms and professional learning for teachers in the area of Humanities Education.



Universities back the Hums move

All universities will now be required to offer extensive pre-service courses in the area of history, geography, civics and citizenship and economics and business. Without passing these courses teachers will be considered unfit to teach in Australian schools.

Social futurist back plan

A group of eminent futurologists have put out a press release stating that for a "functioning healthy society in Australia these reforms must be implemented as soon as possible! Without the reforms, we are in for strife as a society.

Malcom McInerney's keynote and dream front page (above) certainly set the tone for the HASS conference – it was good to be amongst people who felt that the humanities are increasingly important in our globalised society, even in the face of pressure from STEM.

My main aim for the conference was to gain more understanding of the challenges faced by Primary School teachers when delivering the Geography component of the HASS curriculum. As an executive committee member of the Geography Teachers' Association of South Australia (Secretary, Co-convenor of Geography Conference 2017), I want to be in a position where we can assist primary teachers develop confidence in geographic skills through professional development.

Challenges and opportunities

Technology

It was apparent that many teachers (primary and secondary) want to improve their Geographic Information Systems (GIS) skills, but are confused where to start, especially with the abundance of technology and apps available. The GTASA has several workshops at this year's conference for teachers of all year levels that will expand people's skill sets.

Blended classes

Many primary teachers reported that they were unsure which approach to take with HASS in a blended class (eg, 5/6 class). Some were attempting to cover two different Knowledge and Understanding areas at the same time, which was concerning. I feel that ACARA or another relevant body should be giving these teachers more concrete advice in terms of teaching the content in alternate years.

Australian Electoral Commission

The representative from the AEC delivered an engaging workshop that demonstrated how the preferential voting system works. This term my Year 9 students have been using the learning paths on their website <http://education.aec.gov.au/making-a-nation/> to complement the Making a Nation history unit. I have found the resources to be of very high quality, stimulating higher order thinking, and useful for the teacher, as they give suggestions on different ways the resources can be used in the classroom. I am really looking forward to running a demonstration on the preferential voting system next week with the class.

The education officer from the AEC was an outstanding presenter, and I see a great deal of value in funding a return visit from Canberra.

Tourism teacher networks

There were a great number of teachers in the Ethical Tourism workshop who had been given Stage 1 to teach for the first time, but had little support and training from their school. Whilst perhaps not large enough to have their own professional organisation, there is certainly a need for a network for SACE Tourism teachers in South Australia. The GTASA is running a workshop on Voluntourism as part of the 2017 Conference, which is appropriate for SACE Tourism teachers.

Greater involvement from GTASA

I raised the above issues with the GTASA Executive Committee and we have resolved to offer to run workshops at next year's HASS conference, particularly (but not exclusively) those aimed at Primary Geography teachers. These could be about GIS using Google Maps; how to use simple apps such as Epicollect to collect data on local walks to be used in the classroom; simulation games; fun ways to teach concepts like longitude and latitude etc.

Links with HTASA

It was excellent to have so many representatives from the HTASA at the conference, and I appreciated the opportunity to be introduced to so many of them. I am hoping to form a reciprocal arrangement about cross promoting each other's conferences and workshops through our online journals.

HASS SA online presence

A recommendation I would like to make to HASS SA is the improvement of their online presence. I feel a Facebook page or group would be better suited than a Facebook profile. It would be beneficial for conference attendees to have a way of connecting with each other through HASS SA post-conference. I did find it very beneficial that they put up conference resources after the conference.