

Term 3 2007 Newsletter

HOTmaths is Hot Stuff!

As a school embarking on a middle years program, and looking for alternatives to the traditional forms of assessment, we have been trialing a relatively new online program called *HOTmaths*. I first saw it at a New South Wales mathematics conference two years ago and decided to trial it. The program has been an instant success with our students and teachers. It provides lots of variety with notes, worksheets, quizzes, animation, new opportunities for learning, informal assessment and record-keeping.

With our Year 7 and Year 8 students, we have faced the problem of what and how to assess whilst trying to follow curriculum outcomes, but assessing in terms of criteria. *HOTmaths* provides the opportunity for students to work at their own pace through each of the topics covered in class. Students are able to try quizzes at the beginning, middle and end of each topic on a variety of difficulty levels. How differentiated is that! Students are also able to retry the quizzes as often as they want. In terms of criteria, therefore, we have been able to track progress in selected, or all, topics and report more accurately where students are at and how they have progressed.

Students are more comfortable with this practice as they no longer have to face the 'big test' and can work on these tasks when they are ready, at home or school. We give students some structure and deadlines but most are able to have several attempts at each of the tasks.

So without even knowing it, students are being informally assessed on a regular basis. We have other forms of assessment, such as project work which incorporates self and peer assessment and an end of semester exam, but *HOTmaths* allows us to take the pressure off students during the semester. The students have become more motivated to improve as they can see their own progress. There is also a basic number skills competition in which students enthusiastically participate.

We have taken a differentiated curriculum approach to our course structures for Years 7 and 8 and *HOTmaths* facilitates this even more. Try it ...

www.hotmaths.com.au.

Buino Vink
Head of Mathematics
Australian International School, Singapore