



**THE ASSOCIATION OF TRUST SCHOOLS (ATS), ZIMBABWE**  
*"Promoting educational excellence in Independent Schools"*

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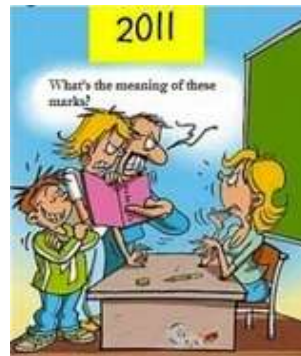
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Dear ATS Parent

### WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?



What is the meaning of this cartoon, where the parents are asking the same question to different people: "What's the meaning of these marks?" Allow me to suggest what the meaning of it is. It is about **prepositions** and **shapes**.

Such situations as depicted in the cartoon arise as a result of wrong prepositions (if you can think back to your school days and English lessons) and wrong shapes. The main preposition suggested by the cartoon is

'against'; in the first picture the school and the parents are against the child while in the second the parent and the child are against the school. What is clear is that both are wrong; neither approach helps. Some would be quick to suggest that the answer would be for the school and the parent to be 'for' the child, working for the child's benefit and future. Commendable though that is, it still would not be the solution. The best solution, the only really productive solution, will be if we employ the preposition 'with', instead of 'against' or 'for'. The school with the parent with the child need to work together to find a solution to the problems. In the same manner, if we think of shapes, we should not be thinking of the school, parents and child as being in different corners of a triangle but rather all placed within a circle.

So, what is the meaning of this letter? Our schools need circles (the symbol of perfection and eternity), not triangles; we need 'with', not 'against. In all our situations, we need to work **with** each other, not taking sides and not making points (as triangles do) but encompassing all parties involved. For a school to run smoothly, we need the following four wheels (circles) to roll correctly.

As stated above, we need the **school, parent and child** to work with each other. In addition, we need the **Board, SDC and Management** to work with each other. That is why ATS runs workshops for all parties, to understand their role and responsibility. We need **ATS, Ministry and schools** to work with each other. That is why we are working with each other to ensure strong Child Protection policies and systems, among others, are in place. We need one **ATS school and another ATS school and another ATS school** to work with each other. That is why Heads meet together regularly.

The problem with prepositions is that they pre-position, they position themselves before all else and before any thinking. In a similar way individuals can take up our own preferred position before any others and not want to move. We take sides, we make points, we want to be at the top – in other words we create triangles instead of circles yet wheels will only work if they are circles not triangles.

The bottom line is this: if we are not with, we are against. And the meaning of that is that none of us will go anywhere if we do not go with each other. **ATS** would then stand for **All Together Stronger**.

I wish everyone within our school communities a wonderfully fruitful and meaningful term.

TIM MIDDLETON  
Executive Director, ATS