



THE JOY OF LEARNING

The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence; it is to act with yesterday's logic.

- Peter Drucker

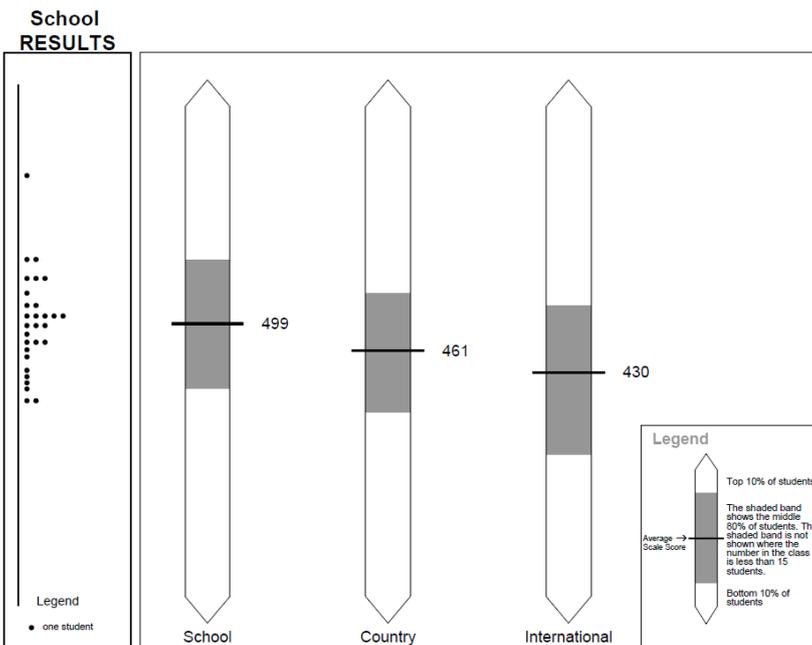
Dear Parents

I have recently travelled to Johannesburg to interview prospective candidates for our College Mathematics Head of Department post. Travelling gives one time to think and reflect and I am always amazed at the diversity of thinking, the diversity of cultures and the diversity of attitude I hear in the vast array of conversations one eavesdrops on, at airports, on the aeroplane and in restaurants. It struck me how negative these conversations can sometimes be. South Africans have the tendency to find what is wrong in a situation rather than seeing what is beautiful and good about it as well. I am not talking about being unrealistic or sticking your head in the sand with regard some of the significant issues which we are confronted with as a country but I am suggesting that if we moan about something, we should make an effort to find solutions to the problem as well as act by offering our expertise and advice.

Unfortunately the same patterns of behaviour can even be seen in our own beautiful town and at times, even in our own school. As I stated in my previous newsletter, I am amazed at how magnificently our school is doing on the academic front. My May newsletter referenced our outstanding results in the International Benchmarking Tests, which in themselves indicate that we are producing OUTSTANDING academic results at Oakhill. Our Matric results continue to be OUTSTANDING in every respect and yet I still hear conversations which question these facts.

Please can I assure you that Oakhill School has and will continue to make significant strides in ensuring that your kids get a world-class education. I say it often: we are not a perfect school but we certainly deal with issues once they are raised and we are striving to get better all the time. On that note, I would like to share the IBT results as compared to other countries around the world. Oakhill's results are reflected in the column on the left.

IBT English Results: Grade 3

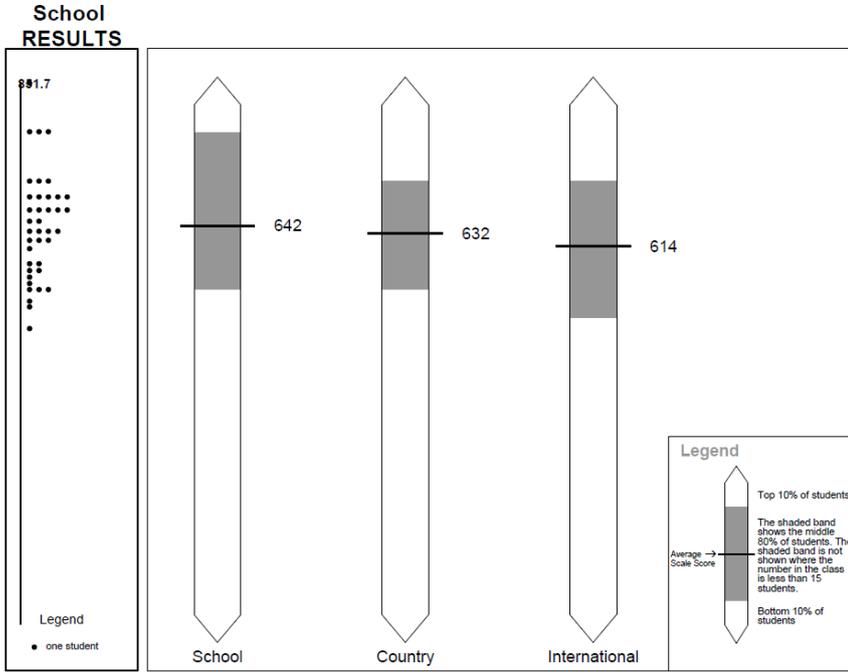




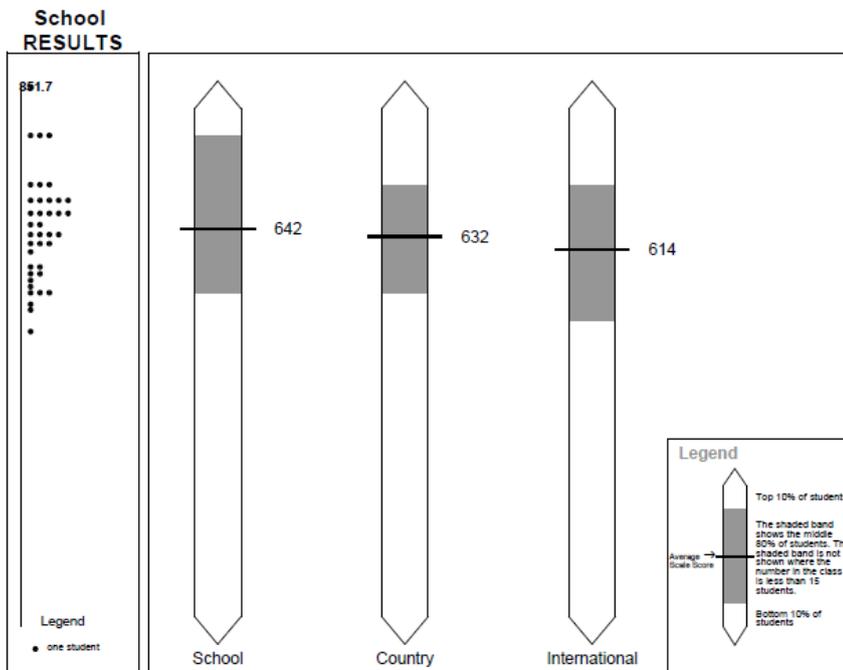
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IBT English Results: Grade 6



IBT English Results: Grade 9

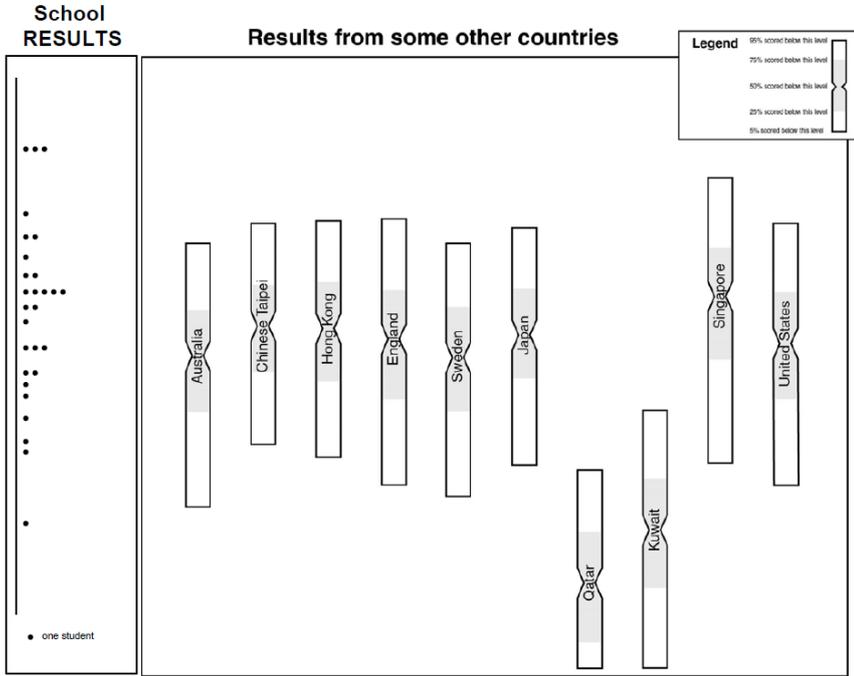




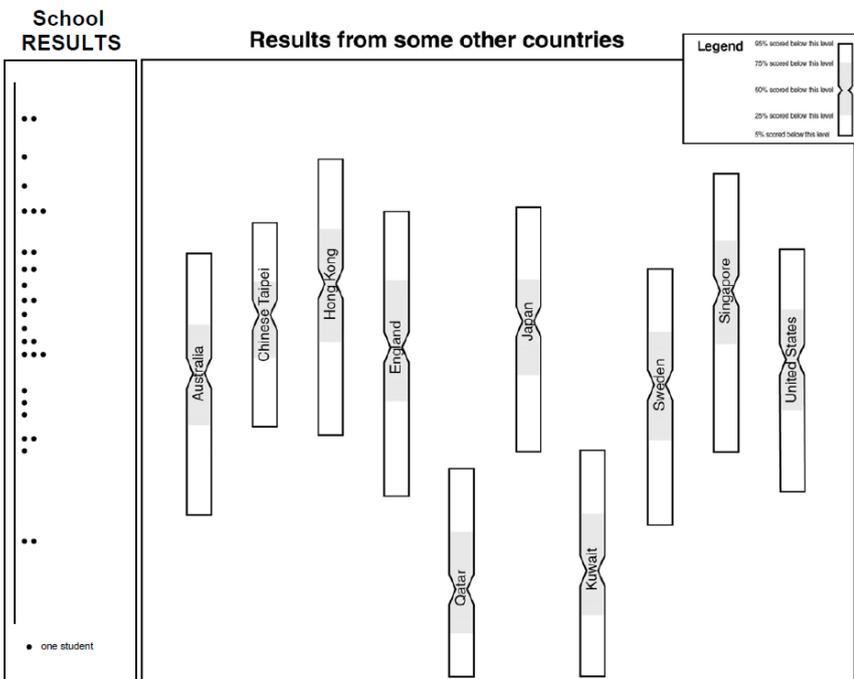
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IBT Science Results: Grade 6 - as compared to other countries reflected below:



IBT Mathematics Results: Grade 3

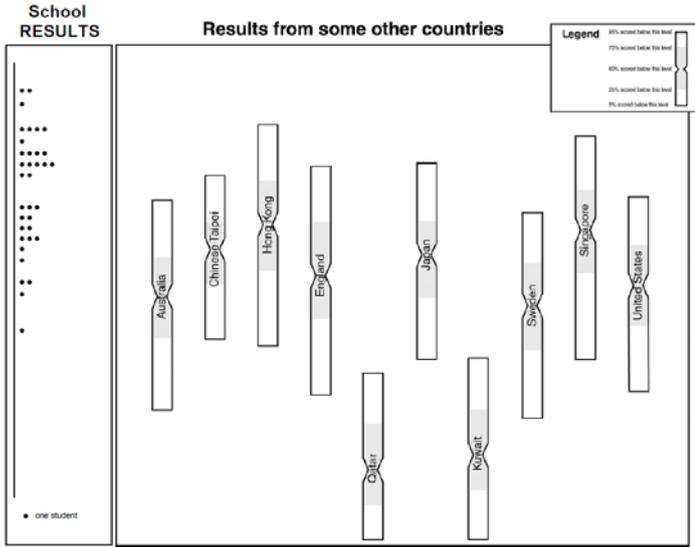




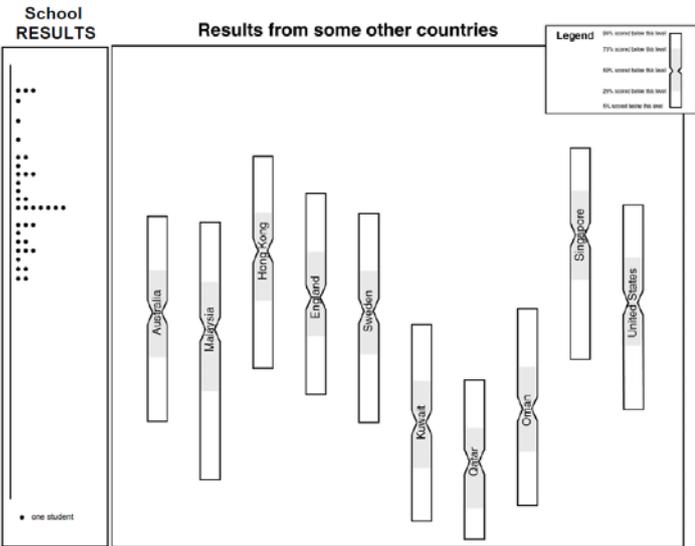
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IBT Mathematics Results: Grade 6



IBT Mathematics Results: Grade 9



These IBT results are world-class and certainly indicate that we have a great team of teachers at every level of our organisation. They also reflect that our school is comparable to any great school internationally.

I have said much about Oakhill’s Matric results in the past but it is important to know that we have a 100% Matric pass rate since 1992 and furthermore we have a university entrance percentage which moves between 92% and 98% year on year.

So if you are concerned that your daughter or son will not leave Oakhill with the tools, skills and results needed to take him or her further in life please think again! Oakhill genuinely prepares kids for whatever they would like to do after school and our Old Oaks flourish and fulfil their dreams once they have left school.



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I do not often comment on our Scholarship Exam process, but after various comments relayed to me via our Oakhill parents, I feel it necessary to state that unfortunately, I can easily distinguish between those kids who have been schooled in the independent sector as opposed to those who have been schooled in local government schools. The difference is significant: this does not mean that kids who go to local government schools are not capable but it does mean that they are not used to the higher academic standards required of them at an independent institution. Next year, 7 of the Top 10 in the Scholarship Exam come from independent schools. Only one candidate comes from a local Knysna school and two from a government primary school in Plett.

There is no doubt that the gap in academic standards is beginning to show more and more and this makes our benchmarking exercises very important as we progress. The facts are that 98% of independently educated Matrics pass their first year of university and complete their degrees as opposed to the 56% of government school candidates who fail their first year of university. I am not proud of these statistics but our country, and ultimately parents in this town, should not put their heads in the sand if they want their children to be internationally competitive. These are not pleasant facts but they are nevertheless FACTS.

Small classes, a nurturing environment, and most importantly, an obsession with allowing kids to grow independent and critical thinking processes, are some of the important keys to an Oakhill education. Learning is no longer about regurgitating the facts. Now you need to interpret, analyse, synthesize and apply this knowledge. The American Philosophical Association's "Consensus Statement Regarding Critical Thinking" says: *the ideal critical thinker is habitually inquisitive, well-informed, trustful of reason, open-minded, flexible, fair-minded in evaluation, honest in facing personal biases, prudent in making judgments, willing to reconsider, clear about issues, orderly in complex matters, diligent in seeking relevant information, reasonable in the selection of criteria, focused in inquiry, and persistent in seeking results which are as precise as the subject and the circumstances of inquiry permit.*

Oakhill, like other great independent schools, produces students who are not followers, they are leaders who can think for themselves, are innovative, creative and forward-looking problem solvers. Oakhill kids of the future will make a difference around the world. Oakhill kids will challenge the status quo and stand up for values which matter and build community, and ultimately a country that desperately needs young men and women who are prepared to make a difference.

Oakhill is forging a path which others will eventually have to follow. We have created an environment which allows young men and women to grow, to flourish and to ultimately fly as can be seen from the wonderful stories of numerous Old Oaks around the world.

- Only last week did we get word that **Alistair Pott** (Matriculant in 2000) has been headhunted by Google to join them at the beginning of July.
- **Frances Maughan-Brown** continues to complete her PhD at Boston College in the USA.
- Word has it that **Caspar Lee**, our famous YouTuber, has recently been cast in the Spud 3 movie. It might be filmed at Michaelhouse but there will be an Oakhill actor present!
- **David Vermeulen** will be the opening act for the Parlotones on Saturday – so if you haven't booked please do so and join us at the Lost Plot.

- And we have current pupils who are also achieving outstanding results in numerous spheres:
- **Nicola Giliomee** has just received another top sponsorship from Pure Nutrition after winning the Rooiberger MTB race this past weekend.
- **Mikayla Oliver** will represent South Africa at the Track Cycling Championships in Scotland in August.
- **Niklas Martin** will be participating in the Wedge Classic this holiday and if you have not noticed he is the face of their advertising campaign!



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- **Kristin Groenewald** achieved outstanding results in the International Benchmarking Exam which placed her first in the country.
- **Franco Duminy** has been selected as a provincial fisherman.
- **Iqraa Daniels** achieved a position in the top 15 of the English Olympiad. She is one of 7,500 pupils who entered.
- **Mark Davies** is our very own entrepreneur.
- **Luyolo Mvimbi** was selected to represent South Africa in Los Angeles – he is an opera singer.
- **Florence Watson** recently won a poetry competition.

There are many more achievements but this newsletter is not just about that.

Staffing

I would also like to announce that we have appointed a young graduate, **Zach Viljoen**, from the University of Stellenbosch, from the beginning of 2014, to boost our Mathematics and Physical Sciences departments which continue to grow. Zach is a bright young man with diverse interests and I have no doubt that he will help extend our capacity in both these areas as we progress into 2014.

It is also exciting to be able to announce that we have finally, after an 18 month search, found a magnificent candidate to fill our College Mathematics Head of Department post from the beginning of 2014. Peter Vieyra, who came to Oakhill after I convinced him to help turn this department around, is finally going to be allowed to retire. After almost 45 years in education, I have no doubt that he is going to enjoy a little more free time which he will spend with his family. I will certainly have more to say about him at the end of the year.

With regard to our new candidate for this position, I am afraid I am only at liberty to share his name and experience with you at the beginning of next term, to allow his current employer to work out their communication with their community.

I am also pleased that we have been able to appoint **Jaco Smit**, from Network Wise, to run our network and be responsible for helping us implement our decision to enable our campus to cope with the rigours of the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) decision. Jaco will be ensuring that our network is built around supporting learning, thinking and curriculum development which will enable your sons and daughters to be proficient IT users. We have also recently bought Apple iPads for the Prep School and they will begin to use these in Term 3. I am sure there will be further teething problems but we are not rushing the process to ensure thorough and rigorous debate about implementation.

All these decisions revolve around implementing technologies which will help facilitate our students engaging with the learning process more meaningfully and I have no doubt that we continue to make huge strides in this area. We will communicate with you regarding which devices and specifications we recommend for each grade going forward, but as indicated, please do not panic about this implementation because we are going to be taking it slowly to ensure success. If your son or daughter wants to purchase a device and you need help with this process, I would urge you to contact Jaco and his team at itsupport@oakhillschool.co.za

I also have to announce that **Barbie Leibbrandt** has resigned, effective from the end of Term 3. This is a huge blow for our Marketing department but I have no doubt that in true Barbie-style, she will be handing over a department which is in good shape all-round. Her larger-than-life presence will be missed on our campus and her 18 years of service to this institution, sometimes through very difficult situations, has allowed our school to grow, but more importantly to understand, live and breathe the true meaning of love and caring for each other. Her presence looms large here and her smile and cheery welcome will be sorely missed by staff, children and parents alike. She leaves in a positive frame of mind though, as she has always wanted to open a shop which sells love and happiness, and who could be a greater Chief Happiness Officer than Barbie herself? We wish her every blessing and we will obviously be saying an appropriate goodbye next term.



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Lastly...

I am not going to make a comment about our Cricket side losing to the English, but I would like to comment on the Springbok game against the Scottish, where that wonderfully talented young man, Siya Kolisi, stepped onto the field to a roar of approval from all South African supporters. It is wonderful to see how sport can draw a diverse group of people together in support of a cause, and I am hoping that our new Sports Campus will do just the same when it kicks into action early next year. This development has certainly given us momentum and I am encouraged by so many of you who have chosen to take up the voluntary debenture offer, which will allow us to provide world-class facilities for your children in the years to come.

We would also like to complete the renovation of our current Art Block into state of the art classrooms for drama and art as well as providing a modern library and IT space for both schools. We have raised a significant amount toward this project but we are still about R2.5 million short of the targeted amount, and I would urge you to contact us if you would like to help ensure that this facility becomes a reality by 2014.

Pat Basset said: truly outstanding schools thrive because they evolve to challenge, inspire and prepare students for an open-ended future. I am confident that Oakhill, under the guidance of your dedicated Board, continues to strive to create a world-class school right here in the heart of Knysna. I know I am biased, but I truly believe that we are getting it right. We are facilitating the joy of learning in our young men and women so that they can enjoy lifelong curiosity and fulfilment.

Thank you for giving us the privilege of facilitating this journey with you and I wish you every blessing as you spend the next three weeks with your kids.

Kind regards

Shane Kidwell
HEADMASTER