



# THE ORYX

*The weekly newsletter of Windhoek International School*

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

### A Modest Proposal

A few weeks ago Beth Smith wrote a piece in The Oryx wondering about the value of homework. The debate continues within the school.

The first point to make is that we set homework because we set homework. It's what schools do. They have always done it. They always will do it.

I'm afraid that isn't good enough. Any practice that the school endorses and employs must be justified – and justifiable. "Because we've always done it," is not a good answer. "Because other schools do it," is even worse. "Because parents expect it," pretty much takes us back to where we started.

People (parents, teachers, politicians...) generally believe what they want to believe, often when there is absolutely no empirical evidence to support their opinion. (Just wait till I write about the imaginary value of school uniform.) So I know that there will be readers of this piece who cannot believe that I'm even questioning the importance of homework. "Of course homework matters," they will think. "It's obvious."

Actually, it's not.

One of the most significant contributions to educational thought in recent years has been John Hattie's *Visible Learning* (2009). He studied over 800 meta-analyses and extracted 138 factors that affect student learning. Where did homework come on this list? 88th. 88th out of 138. Not even in the top half.

The picture is, of course, nuanced. Is English homework more useful than Mathematics? Is homework more valuable for slow learners than highly academic students? Is it more useful for older or younger children? Are there ways in which homework is actually counter-productive? Are there other things children can do with their time that would be more beneficial? Does homework teach time management skills? Is the setting and marking of homework a good use of teachers' time? You'll have to read the book to get the answers but, in a nutshell, the value of homework in most cases can be measured on a scale from *negligible* to *somewhat*.

In no study has it ever been shown to make a significant contribution to student learning.

One interesting idea I have come across is that some students *want* to have homework. And that makes sense to me. They enjoy the subject. Their teacher has inspired them. They want to know more. They will do their homework willingly and probably productively.

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## Dates to Remember

### March 2017

- **13 - 17:** Secondary Week A
- **15 - 16:** SPTC/ Primary SLC
- **16:** Independence Assembly
- **17:** End of Term 3
- **21:** Independence Day
- **27:** Start of Term 4



### Staff Feature

#### Chrizelda Steenkamp - Executive Secretary

I was born and bred in Namibia. My parents were too although my grandparents originally moved here from South Africa. I was born to a couple of lovesick teenagers really, so while my parents finished college I lived for the first 3 years of my life on a farm with my grandparents.

When I was 11 with Afrikaans as my only language, my parents moved from Rehoboth to Swakopmund and put me in an all English school. I hated them for it but looking back on it now, it was the best decision they could have made for my sisters and me (yes, I have three of those, all younger, the last-born 20 years younger).

We moved to Windhoek when I was 13 and I've lived here ever since.

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So, might there be some merit in making homework optional?

Let me promptly reassure parents (and some teachers) that we have no immediate plans to abolish homework. But I would like to hear what parents think.

Optional homework? Thoughts?

**With best wishes**  
**Peter MacKenzie**

## PRIMARY PRINCIPAL

With the student-led conferences coming up next week, the students are actively preparing for what they will be showing their parents/caregivers. Parents/caregivers can prepare for the conferences as well. Your role in the conferences is an important one.

### What is the Role of the Parent in Student-Led Conferences?

1. Listener - Give your child your undivided attention. **Turn off your cell phone.**
2. Be positive, provide encouragement, ask questions and talk with your child about the work that is presented.
3. Identify ways you can support your child to achieve goals.
4. Take time to visit the specialist teachers as well.

### Some examples of questions you may want to ask your child are:

- Why did you enjoy this activity/task?
- What did you find difficult or challenging?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What did you learn from this work/unit?
- Why do you like this activity?
- Which subject is your best subject? Why?
- How do you think your writing/reading/mathematics/art, etc. has improved?

### Tell me about....

- what you would like to work on/improve.
- what you are really proud of about your learning this year.
- What you think you do best.

The student-led conference is a time to celebrate your child's learning. Thank you in advance for your support of and participation in the student-led conferences. I think you will appreciate seeing how well your child knows him/herself and also to see what he/she has learned.

**Regards,**  
**Beth Smith**

## What's up in the PYP?

For the past 14 months the IB Primary Years Programme at WIS has been going through a process of evaluation. Every five years a PYP school should evaluate the implementation of the programme based on the IB Standards and Practices. The PYP self evaluation study provides the opportunity to celebrate and

**Staff Feature continued**

I attended St. Paul's College and did really well, but the academic pressure to perform and the financial constraints on my parents became too much so halfway through Grade 10 I moved to Delta Secondary School Windhoek which I eventually matriculated from.

I was always a very academically inclined student and won many awards and prizes throughout my school career which I worked very hard for, so it was no surprise when I finished high school feeling somewhat spent and burned out, and not really knowing what I wanted to do.

But I didn't know how to sit still and I didn't want to waste money studying something I wasn't sure about so two months after I graduated from high school I started working full-time at an Auditing Firm as an accounting clerk. I was good with numbers but didn't like the monotony of the work so I got transferred to the secretarial department where I registered CCs and companies for clients.

I also worked part-time as a waitress/bartender in pretty much every restaurant in town over a number of years until I had my daughter.

It was during my employment at Namibia Airports Company as assistant company secretary that I found my niche for professional writing and minute-taking. It was also during my time at MCA Namibia, an American-funded development programme that I learned about the value of being a part of something so much bigger than myself.

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acknowledge where our school is at in the process of implementing this programme.

Early on in our evaluation journey, before we formed our inquiry groups, our staff had the chance to review the standards and practices and discuss what they mean. They looked at all the Standards for: Philosophy, Organisation, and Curriculum and assessed these aspects against how we implement and interpret this programme in our school. The inquiry groups rated the

standards and practices and came to a consensus of what we do well, and what we will need to develop further. A parent survey was also circulated to get some feedback from the wider community. This self-study was compiled and a report was written and sent to the International Baccalaureate in December 2016.

**What next?**

The next step of this process is for a visiting team representing the IB to come to our school and visit. This visit is taking place over three days, on the **29th-31st March 2017**. Our visiting team will consist of, Mrs Isla Gordon, visiting from Aga Khan Academy in Kenya and Ms Cindy van den Heuvel, visiting from South Africa. Their role is to verify and acknowledge our self evaluation study and to confirm that what we say we are doing is what we are doing. They will spend two days visiting our Primary section of the school, visiting classrooms, meeting with staff, looking at documentation, meeting parents and students. Based on this visit and our report they will conclude and summarise their findings. The aim of this visit is to recognise the work done so far and to give us measurable recommendations to further guide our development for the next five years. The visiting team will compile a report on their findings and this report will be our guide to create and set targets for future action.

I would like to thank all those who have been involved in this process.

**Best wishes**

*Avril van Zyl - PYP Coordinator*

**NARREC**

**Staff Feature continued**

As time went on and jobs came and went, I enjoyed the work but started resenting the whole corporate professional environment and eventually made a tough decision to get out. I had only ever worked in Corporate and I was basically unemployed for about a year. life I sat still. And I breathed.

Then I got the job at WIS. The work, pretty much the same, but the environment: Infinitely better!! I love the experience so far of being a part of this community and my daughter loves it too.

I love the real sense of internationalism, the warmth and friendliness of staff and fellow parents. It's a really good fit for both me and Skye.

Roots and Shoots students went on a field trip to NARREC - Namibia Animal Rehabilitation Research and Education Centre - on Monday, February 27th.

We saw different birds that were either confiscated because they were captured illegally or they were injured and could not be released in the wild. We learned that NARREC helps to protect bird species, especially birds of prey in Namibia.



We also learned that birds of prey are an important part of the food chain. We need them.

The Roots and Shoots team helped roll bird posters created for NARREC to distribute to other individuals and organizations in Namibia to help them learn more about these important birds. To learn more about NARREC, click [here](#).

*Barbara Wilson*

## Early Years department



Toddlers- KG2 held its much-anticipated funday on March 3. Children laughed, took part and enjoyed having their own special sports day.

For this special day, teachers prepared six stations of fun, engaging and challenging events for students, including the

sack race, traditional egg and spoon races, obstacle course, tyre race and the celebrated tug of war event.

Sports Day was not only a fun day of activities that emphasized the importance of physical fitness –the day also served to reinforce the teamwork and motor skills taught during students’ PE lessons and daily motorics.



**!TAKE NOTE!**

**This week is the final week for afternoon activities. There will be NO afternoon activities next week (13 - 17 March).**

**School is then closed for a 1 week break (20 - 24 March) and reopens on 27 March.**

**Afternoon activities will resume on Tuesday 28 March.**

To conclude, Fun Day 2017 in Early Years, was an 'eventful' day full of joy, eagerness, and effort. Everybody took part in some way or another. Thank you to PTA for supporting our parents with school goodies and delicious coffee.

Congratulations to all students, teachers, and parents for great participation and enthusiasm. Please click [here](#) to view photos from our event.

*Early Years Team*

## **SECONDARY PRINCIPAL**

### **To do homework or not to do homework**

I would like to piggyback on Mr. MacKenzie's words with regards to homework. In the Secondary School students are expected to do homework. Teachers are advised to give homework that is meaningful and to set homework taking into account the other subjects' expectations and homework as well.

At the moment, we have quite a number of students who are not regular with their homework. If a student has not done his/her homework three times in a specific subject, they will go to a reflection session on a Friday after school where we try to discuss the reasons for homework and what the benefit of doing it is. But most students do not find these reflection sessions useful and some are in reflection sessions almost every Friday because homework is not done in one or the other subject.

Very often, the students feel that they should not have given a reflection session, because they tried, they did some of the homework, they forgot their homework at home and many other reasons. But, all these reasons, don't justify for students not be organised and not to be properly prepared for class.

Being prepared for class means: having all materials (textbooks, exercise books, stationery, homework tasks etc.) available at the start of the lesson for the lesson to be successfully conducted. It means that a student should have looked at their timetable the night before (yes, the school bag should be packed the night before) and look at each subject they have the next day, look on Edmodo and make sure all is done.

When should homework be done? The day it is given or the night before it is due? It is a bit risky to only do the homework the night before it is due. If there is something that is not clear, there is no chance to speak to the teacher to clarify. Therefore, it is best to do the homework the day it is received.

What if I don't know something and cannot complete the homework fully? Already when homework is given in class, students should check if they understand and ask the teacher if there is something that is unclear. If something is not clear when homework is done, students should approach the teacher about it. These days there are many platforms (Edmodo, email, asking) to do that.

And as Mr. MacKenzie says, maybe it is worth having a debate about the value of homework in its different forms - it revises work done in class, it checks if work done in class has been understood, it helps a child manage time and get organised, it sometimes involves creative tasks. Is this something we want to continue enforcing? Should homework be voluntary for students? If it is, would the ones who really need the consolidation and revision be mature enough to decide to do the homework?

**Regards,**  
**Maggie Reiff**

## Secondary School Sports

This past few weeks have been a busy time for our WIS students in the sporting arena. We have had with our students competing in a range of sporting codes both in school and club competition. Recent highlights include The Namibia Swim National, Inline Hockey and Field Hockey Competitions, Inter Schools Athletics Competitions, and Senior Inter House Athletic Events, National Archery Events, Volleyball Fixtures and most recently we have three teams entered into the newly formed Hopsol Football League.



At last weekend's Swim National WIS had four swimmers competing in the premier event in Namibia. Between Ashraf, Melvina, Viktoria and our Zoe, who has recently joined WIS, they secured over 30 medals between them.

Well done to all the boys who have taken up the huge challenge of participating in the Hopsol schools league and thank you to the parents who have encouraged (and occasionally consoled) the children. This is a really high standard of competition and our teams have found the first two rounds of matches very tough. However with training and hard work we expect to get some positive result throughout the season.



*Thomas Jackson-Read*

## TRANSFORMING EVERYDAY OBJECTS

### Year 9 Sculpture Exhibition

In the 1950's Pop Art emerged as a force that would forever change not only the nature of art itself, but the acceptance of everyday iconography. Pop artists took on the ordinary, the mundane and the familiar as they explored popular culture through their art.

We see and use money, pens, medication, erasers and scissors on an almost daily basis. What happens when we come across one of these in the street, but 10 times their original size? The Year 9 Sculpture exhibition in the foyer of the PLC over the past week attempted to give viewers their personal answers to this question...



JOHAN VICTOR LIEBENBERG  
**Supplements**

"I made two antidepressants to show how people rely on drugs."



UNOMUINJO KATJIUONGUA  
**Cut the Labels**

"...people label each other, which is bad ... I can stop it like scissors cutting those labels."



SOLA MOROTA-ALAKIJA  
**Our Story**

"I haven't been alive for too long, but I've been around just long enough to know that when you have a problem, no prince in shining armour is going to swoop in and save the day."



YOZIKA KAUAPIRURA  
**Your Imperfections are Perfect**

"People think that they need to look perfect for society, but what they don't know is that they are perfect..."



FIONA FARRELL  
**The Power of the Pen**

"Your life is your story and you choose what to include and what to exclude."



# Cancer Association of Namibia

21/81/096 - WO 30 - Incorporated Association not for Gain

www.can.org.na  
E-mail: help@can.org.na  
Tel: 061 - 237740  
Fax: 061 - 237741  
PO Box 30230  
Windhoek

6 March 2017

Windhoek International  
Att: Margarete Reiff  
Windhoek  
E-mail: mreiff@wis.edu.na

Dear Margarete,

*"Aldot Emberek"*

A phrase I once heard when visiting Hungary as a 16-year old choir boy, singing for my country. It was a phrase that stuck with me, and the meaning "Blessed People" was an invaluable tool of hope that I live by – "Blessed are those, who bless one another... to be blessed as one!"

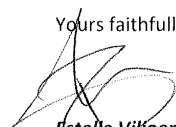
On behalf of the board of directors, management staff of the Cancer Association of Namibia (WO30), as well as all brave cancer fighters in Namibia, I would like to thank you for being a blessing to this great fight against a disease that burdens our people and cause so much hurt.

Know, that through your dedication to support CAN with the annual Spray-a-thon, we have been a blessing in the lives of many – together we have made an impact.

We would not have done or continue to do so, without your support!

The Cancer Association of Namibia team value your dedication and commitment and we look forward to sharing the magic and inspiring hope.

Yours faithfully,



**Estelle Viljoen**  
Deputy CEO  
Cancer Association of Namibia

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Directors: Ms S Nambinga (President), Adv. D Obbes (Vice-President), Mr R Hansen (CEO), Sr M Katjire,  
Dr JF Steyn, Mr H Gous, Dr M Greeff, Mr HH Diehl, Mrs L Swart



# OMBA GALLERY EXHIBITION

## Y(OUR) RE-AKSHUN

IBDP VISUAL ARTS  
EXHIBITION

OPENING NIGHT: APRIL 4TH  
2017

DURATION: APRIL 4-11 2017

*Daniela Santos  
and Rantia Abner*



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NAMIBIA  
CRAFT  
CENTRE

For ALL Windhoek International School families!

# Italy Ski Trip

In a WIS first, all families with students in the school are invited to join us on a Ski Trip to Italy.

The resort and hotel we are travelling to cater specifically for families with children. Students in Year 10 and up (from August 2017) are welcome to join the school without their families if they prefer.

Younger children can enjoy various snow-orientated activities in the “Ski Kindergarten” during the day, while the older siblings, parents and staff get instructed in the art of skiing on the slopes next to them.

Various other activities are also available, including Ice Skating, Relaxing in the Spa, Dog Sledding, Shopping, Pizza Evenings etc.

For more information, contact Mr. Smit at [rsmit@wis.edu.na](mailto:rsmit@wis.edu.na), or visit the Outdoor Education Website by following this link/ scanning the QR code below, or see the weekly Oryx.

<https://sites.google.com/a/wis.edu.na/wis-field-trips/italy-ski>



<i>Destination:</i>	<i>Passo Tonale, Italy</i>
<i>Date:</i>	<i>8 – 18 December 2017</i>
<i>Who?</i>	<i>Any family with children from Toddlers to Year 13</i>