

18 May 2007

Dear Parents

As part of our exciting curriculum and challenging experiences, St Hilda's involves students in the International Competitions Assessment for Schools, ICAS, formerly known as the **University of New South Wales Competitions**. All students in Years 3-6 participate in the Mathematics competition, and all students in Year 6 participate in the Mathematics, English and Science competitions.

Rationale for student participation

Student participation in these competitions provides the School with additional, objective and alternative data to complement and enrich the information we already have on file. It also provides extra school-wide data and baseline information to help with improvements or refinements in these subject areas. The multi-choice questions are set on a scale of increasing difficulty, designed to stretch and challenge students' knowledge in these subject areas; for example a Year 6 paper may include questions ranging from Year 6 to Years 8/9. Please note that while students are **not expected** to be able to answer the more complex questions, it also enables them to reveal conceptual understandings that are above their current age-related norms.

Competition Structure

The multiple-choice papers have time limits, thus providing us with data on the students' ability to work in a timed situation. It also provides students with additional experience in completing this style of paper. However, as with all multiple-choice papers, there are strengths and weaknesses, and the chance of students 'guessing the correct answer', which will **boost** results. Factors that may produce **lower** than expected results include unfamiliarity with the format of the paper, fatigue, stress or illness on the day. Due to these factors, teachers do not rely solely on any one source of information when assessing students' learning and achievement.

Comparison with WALNA and other schools/students

The University of New South Wales Competitions provide different data from that provided by the WALNA assessments. The WALNA assessment involves all students from every school across the State, and is designed to compare students of all abilities from Years 3-7, providing information relating to minimum benchmarks. For St Hilda's Junior School, these data assist in identifying those students who need extra assistance in the area of mathematics, literacy, or both.

The International Competitions Assessment for Schools, (ICAS), is undertaken by numerous schools across Australasia, many of which enter their very capable students only. It provides us with useful comparative data on how St Hilda's students compare with those at other schools, and in relation to a particular cohort.

Dates for the Competition:

Science

Year 6: Thursday 10 May

Mathematics

Years 3-6: Tuesday 22 May

English

Year 6: Tuesday 19 June

If you have any questions regarding these competitions, please contact your daughter's class teacher or me.

Yours sincerely

Julie QuanSing-Rowlands
Head of Junior School