



# BCA Newsletter



PERFORMANCE VERSUS LEARNING

## PRINCIPAL'S LETTER

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### Performance versus Learning

As you will see from this newsletter, BCA students have been competing in maths and chess championships, delivering two recent wonderful school shows in KS1 & KS2, and taking high-stakes examinations in Secondary & DP. Next week will see our annual Sports Days for the whole school.

We applaud the efforts and achievements of the students, which are of course wonderful to see, but it's also a useful moment to reflect on the critical distinction between performance and learning.

In an educational context, learning may be defined as the *"relatively permanent changes in behavior or knowledge that support long-term retention and transfer"*. Performance on the other hand means the *"temporary fluctuations in behavior or knowledge that are observed and measured during training or instruction or immediately thereafter"* (Soderstrom and Bjork, 2015)

In all of the activities of the pupils, we recognise the performance (the educational 'icing on the cake') but what we really celebrate is the learning before, during and after. This was certainly true last weekend with the Graduation Ceremony of the Class of 2025. In this fine group of young men and women we now have our first BCA alumni!

Our IB Diploma graduates chose to engage with probably the most rigorous pre-university academic preparation that exists. Similarly, Soderstrom and Bjork (2015) in their comparison of learning with performance, ask teachers to consider *"abandoning the path of least resistance with respect to their own teaching and study strategies"*. This is hard to do. Everyone wants results.

As educators we also have to be sure that achieving mechanical competency in a task, leading to a good performance, does not at the same time mask gaps in general understanding. 'Teaching to the test' carries this risk. So too does accelerating children so that they can read but not understand, or quickly provide a correct answer by following a prescribed series of steps, without understanding the problem itself. Our synthetic phonics programme in Lower Primary, for example, is but one tool in a 'whole language approach' to the teaching of reading. We want our students to not only read a sentence correctly, but understand its meaning and appreciate its context, and moreover develop a deep enjoyment of and desire to read. BCA teachers are well aware that changes in short-term performance (enabling us to conveniently tick a box to say 'achieved') often bear no relationship to long-term learning.

Furthermore, we recognise that substantial learning can occur in the absence of any discernible changes in performance. Mistakes, errors, poor decisions are often the very conditions that yield the most durable and flexible learning. If teachers and



parents push for a strong performance today, this may not translate into the type of learning that will be evident tomorrow. Learning takes time, is often messy, and we have to embrace that, avoiding illusions of competence.

Performance is important, but performativity does no-one any favours. At BCA one of the strengths of the curriculum is that it is referenced to and validated by regular internationally-standardised testing, from Reception right through to Baccalaureate. But at the same time, at IGCSE and IB level, we know that high-stakes examinations can be highly stressful for our students, so we have to proceed carefully: too much emphasis on building a 'tower of performance' may lead to it crashing down later. We hope that our students and their teachers will continue to be as much motivated by the intrinsic values of learning as they are by extrinsic pressures to perform.

So, as we enjoy the performances (on the stage, on the sports field etc) let's celebrate what really matters: the learning that has resulted.

Sources:

*Soderstrom, N.C. and Bjork, R.A. (2015) Learning Versus Performance: An Integrative Review. Perspectives on Psychological Science 2015, Vol. 10(2) 176–199.*



Mr Harry Lock  
Principal



Checkmate- BCA students enjoy success at the recent Inter-schools Chess Tournament.

EARLY YEARS ZOO TRIP











KS1 SUMMER SHOW: THERE'S A SUNFLOWER IN MY SUPPER



KS2 SUMMER SHOW: DAVID HATTENSCARF AND THE WONDERS OF THE WORLD







## ELOY MORENO VISIT

Our Spanish Literature Teacher recently invited the famous writer Mr. Eloy Moreno, to visit the school to be interviewed and participate in discussions with students about teenage relationships.

More than 80 children attended, from BCA, the Escola Sant Ermengol and the Escola de Segona Ensenyança d'Encamp. After discussing very interesting topics with the author, the students participated in Spanish Literature workshops.

It was a fascinating and meaningful experience for all of them.



## INTERNATIONAL AWARD EXPEDITIONS

Our Year 10 students, who are participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award went to the beautiful Incles Valley and the Juclar Refugi for their Bronze expedition. They stayed overnight and completed an independent journey with their teachers in the background for support.

Our Year 12 and Year 13 students are working towards their Silver Award. Here the expedition is longer and more challenging. They too need to prepare and lead themselves; real explorers!





## SECONDARY MATHS ACHIEVEMENTS

### UK Junior Mathematics Challenge

The UK Junior Mathematics Challenge occurred during the Easter holidays this year, yet we still had 8 students keen to give up their holiday to do the exam!

Students taking the exam can achieve a Bronze Award (top 50% of all participants), Silver Award (top 25%), or Gold Award (top 8%).

Congratulations to the winners of Bronze Awards, and the winner of the Gold Award, from Year 8:

- M.A.H.
- T.G.S.M.
- F.G.S.M.
- J.H.I.



### Spanish Mathematical Olympiad

For the first time, BCA took part in the Spanish Mathematical Olympiad, which is hosted by the Spanish school, for all Year 9s (2nd ESO) in Andorra. Of the fourteen Year 9s that entered the first round, a hugely impressive nine of them qualified as the top 60 in Andorra, out of over 800 participants(!) and progressed to the final.



The final was held at the Mariá Moliner school, where students sat an individual exam and a group challenge (which presented an extra linguistic challenge for our non-native Spanish/Catalan speakers).

One of our students placed 10th in the entire country, therefore winning themselves a cash prize which was presented in the prize giving ceremony at the Aixovall centre on 22nd May:

Congratulations to Year 9 student IT, pictured below with his older brother, who accompanied him to the ceremony.



## ANDORRAN COUNCILS

Last April, the *consellers* of Year 6 and Year 9 met for the first meeting between the four participatory councils of Andorra la Vella: the *Consells d'Infants*, *Joves*, *Gent Gran* and *la corporació* shared ideas to improve mobility on foot, expand green areas and enhance sports facilities.





On the other hand, the *Consell General* hosted the 23rd meeting of the 'Consell General dels Joves', where Secondary school students from all over the country debated the six bills that they had previously presented and worked on in the schools and later in the working commissions in the *Consell General*.

We are very proud of how our students have represented us in both events. Congratulations!



## NOTICES

### Bank Holiday in June

**9th Juny** - Pentecost

**24th Juny** - Sant Joan (Only in Andorra la Vella)

### BCA Sports Days 2025

- **Early Years & Primary Sports Day** - Wednesday 11th June, at the Encamp Rugby Pitch.
- **Secondary Sports Day** - Thursday 12th June at the Joan Samarra Estadi Comunal in Andorra la Vella.

Parents are welcome at both events - please come and support! Both will be starting at 9.30 more or less.



## GRADUATION

### Milestone moment

Our Class of 2025 and their parents and teachers celebrated in style at BCA's first ever graduation ceremony.

In the beautiful setting of the Les Pardines Mountain Resort, we recognized and reflected on the achievements and contributions of each of these young men and women.

First to join BCA in the early days of the school, first to enter Secondary School, first to take IGCSEs and then the IB Diploma, and first to graduate.

Onwards and upwards, and welcome back anytime as the first alumni.











