

Experimental Research – Intermediate

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Authentic learning is real life learning. It is a style of learning that encourages students to create a tangible, useful product to be shared beyond the classroom. Authentic learning, particularly in Science, engages all the senses allowing students to create a meaningful and useful, shared outcome. They are real life tasks.

It is sometimes difficult for teachers to engage their students in authentic learning opportunities in an increasingly crowded curriculum. The Science Talent Search (STS) provides a perfect opportunity for authentic learning by encouraging independent, self-motivated project work amongst students of Science and giving students the opportunity to communicate their achievements to a wider audience. The STS also gives the general public an opportunity to see the quality of work being achieved in science by school students.

Seventy-seven entries were submitted to this year's Experimental Research (Intermediate) section of Science Talent Search. Pleasingly, the number of entries was 25% higher than last year, many were of a high standard, with just under a quarter receiving bursaries (8 major and 9 minor). Again, girls were very well represented in the competition this year. It was clear this year that many students thrived when given the opportunity to work on a real life project that inspired them personally.

Some of the topics of investigation entered this year included: Yoghurt made at home; Jumbled text and reading time; Does colour improve our memory?; Reaction and distraction and The cooling effect of engine oil on computer components. Not only did these entries involve creativity to come up with an original idea to investigate, but also the discipline required to undertake a controlled experiment, to document the process in detail and maturely discuss the results of their experiments.

It was a pleasure to coordinate the Experimental Research Intermediate section. We appreciated the opportunity to work with our many valued judges to discover the many students with talent and creativity who participated in this authentic learning opportunity this year. We acknowledge and thank the teachers who put in so much effort and the students who accepted the Science Talent Search Experimental Research challenge.