IBRAHIM WAZIR

I grew up in a small village in southern Lebanon, the youngest of three sons. My mother was a teacher and my father a bus driver. My interest in mathematics and science was sparked very early on when I was in elementary school, when my father changed careers. He was quite talented in mechanics and so was hired to maintain our village's electric generator. Ours was a poor village and could not afford finding spare parts easily, yet despite the difficult conditions he managed to keep it running for 15 years with very little outside help. I became interested in mechanical engineering then and used to help my father dismantle engines and put them back together. After 12th grade, I moved to Beirut in 1967 where I attended the Hagazian College and the American University. My parents were saving money for my travel to the US to study mechanical engineering, but my plans changed when I met my wife and decided to stay. So, my interest went back to mathematics and statistics. I never thought I would be a teacher. But while at university, I began teaching at private schools and enjoyed it so much that it turned into a career.

I graduated in 1972 with a bachelor's degree in mathematics after the birth of my first daughter, who coincidentally turned out to have my math genes and even surpassed her father by completing her PhD in algebraic number theory. My second daughter, although she claims not to have an ounce of math skills, shares my joy of teaching and is a university professor. My son is multitalented in music, languages, and international relations and recently started his own business.

When the Lebanese civil war broke out in 1974, at first my wife and I tried to stick it out – I taught Math at several private schools, and we kept above water (and in safety) for a few years. But then the conflict escalated and we decided to take our three children out of the country. We moved to Vienna in 1978 and I got a job as a Math teacher first at the Vienna International School and then the American International School in Vienna. Over the 31 years I have been teaching there, I have been Department Head ('til 2008), developed an outstanding IB program, and taught countless students mathematics with a focus on problem-solving. I founded and am presently the chairman of the International Schools Math Teachers Foundation, ISMTF, a non-profit foundation whose purpose is to provide support in the enrichment of teaching and learning of mathematics at international schools. In between all this I managed to finish a Master's degree in Economics from Webster University, complete a number of post graduate courses at Michigan State University on math education, and attend a summer institute at the University of Chicago.

I worked for the IB as an Assistant Examiner, then as Deputy Chief Examiner for HL Math, and finally as Chief Examiner for Further Math. I took part in three cycles of curriculum development (1990–1992, and 1996–2005), and was involved in introducing GDCs to the IB as well as to the international schools in Europe and the Middle East. I also wrote items for the ACT and read examinations for the College Board's AP Calculus Exams. I have run several IB workshops for both new and experienced teachers in Europe, Asia Pacific and North America. I have held workshops and talks about Technology in Teaching Mathematics, among others, across the globe for the past 20 years. Parallel to my work at and for schools, I also teach Statistics, college algebra, and discrete mathematics at Webster University in Vienna, where I have been the department head since 1995. At Webster, I was presented with the Excellence in Teaching Award in 1993.

My previous publications include an article on "The Critical Points of Polynomial Families", published in The College Mathematics Journal, Vol. 27, No. 4, Sept. 1996, and 6 case studies for Statistics for Business and Economics (book and website), Anderson et al, and published by Thomson, 2007.