



Overview of IB in the United States

Background

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968 as an independent, not-for-profit education foundation. Its original purpose was to facilitate the mobility of students internationally by providing schools with an upper secondary school diploma recognized by universities around the world. Since then, its mission has expanded, and it now provides an internationally recognized education available to students of all ages.

The International Baccalaureate Organization aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end, the IBO works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

- IBO Mission Statement

The IBO offers three programmes: the Diploma Programme (for students aged 16-19), the Middle Years Programme, created in 1994 (for students aged 11-16) and the Primary Years Programme, created in 1997 (for students aged 3-12).

There are over 1500 schools in 116 countries that have chosen to offer one or more of IB's academic programmes. The greatest concentration of IB programmes is in the United States, with 426 Diploma Programmes, 49 Middle Years Programmes and 30 Primary Years Programmes.

IB's Core Values

The IBO has established a high reputation as a leading organization in the field of international education. IBO's core values underscore three important qualities of its programmes: international understanding, intellectual rigor and high academic achievement. The work of the IBO is determined by its core values:

- Motivated by its mission: the IBO seeks to create a better world through education.
- International-mindedness: the IBO embraces diversity.
- Quality: the IBO values its reputation for high standards.
- Partnerships: the IBO achieves its goals by working together.
- Participation: the IBO actively involves its stakeholders.

Funding the IBO

The IBO is primarily funded by fees from IB schools, with additional income from professional development workshops and catalogues. The IBO has established a fee structure, which requires authorized IB schools to pay an annual registration fee. In return for this fee, the IBO provides services that aid schools implementing IB programmes, including training workshops and materials for IB teachers. The IBO also provides a system of internal and external assessment for two of its programmes, the Middle Years and Diploma Programmes. Currently, schools fund IB programmes through a variety of ways, including grants, district funds and student fees. The IBO does not regulate how schools fund their IB programmes.

The IBO and National Education

The IBO believes that relevant education begins with an understanding and appreciation of one's own culture. From that perspective, comes an understanding and appreciation of differing cultures and histories. This belief is emphasized in the structure and curriculum of the IB programmes.

The IBO realizes that public education carries with it the aspirations of a nation. United States Secretary of Education Rod Paige underscored the importance of this in a 20 November 2002 policy statement, "We are ever mindful of the lessons of Sept. 11 - one of which is that all measures of a rigorous K-12 education must include a solid grounding in other cultures, other languages and other histories." Secretary Paige went on to say that he would "seek to partner with states to provide new resources in support of high-quality, K-12 programmes that provide international knowledge and skills in our nation's classrooms." Those schools that wish to give an emphasis to environmental studies, to anti-landmine programmes or other world issues can do so, but within a programme that is intellectually challenging for everyone.

For the IBO to maintain an appropriate relationship with its international network of participating schools, it cannot and will not interfere with a school's affairs. Therefore, there is no encroachment on the school's management, governance and instruction.

The IBO respects the rights and needs of all schools to satisfy their local, state and national requirements. An important strength of the IB programmes is its flexibility in terms of content selection, classroom resources, pedagogy and assessment. IB accommodates a diversity of thought, backgrounds, opinions and world-views.

As an independent non-governmental organization, the IBO is directed by a Council of Foundation (i.e., Board of Directors). The Council is made up of representatives of participating schools and regional advisory committees. The IB's main functions are to develop education programmes and assessments and negotiate with governments and universities for recognition of those programmes. The IBO, along with approximately 400 other organizations, is officially recognized as a non-governmental organization of ECOSOC (the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations). This relationship with the United Nations and its agencies does not extend to curriculum development or assessments.

The IB Curriculum

An IB education spans all the major disciplines: mathematics, language arts, history, sciences, the arts and foreign languages. The programmes blend a variety of courses to ensure that students receive a comprehensive liberal arts education.

IB's academic programmes are constructed as frameworks that require teachers to choose from a range of topics and materials that they believe are important for their students. For example, the literature programme's prescribed book list indicates which book selections should be included, but does not specify any works that should be excluded; teachers have the flexibility to choose books outside of the prescribed book list. These frameworks include descriptions of the required and optional topics, how students will be assessed and the criteria against which they will be measured.

While IB's programmes are broadly written, they do have standards and programme regulations by which schools must abide. In the case of the Diploma Programme, the regulations allow IB to assure universities and ministries of education that the marks students receive are of equivalent value, regardless from which school a student may come.

Academic Strength

IB programmes are rigorous. Students completing the Diploma Programme are highly prepared for post-secondary work in universities throughout the world.

Clifford Adelman's 1999 study, *Answers in the Toolbox*, has quickly become one of the most quoted and respected studies about students' participation in advanced programmes serving as a predictor of future academic success. In his study, he found that advanced coursework in high school correlated more strongly with degree completion than other variables such as student GPA, parents' education, test scores or class rank. The study also found that the correlation was evident regardless of the socioeconomic status or ethnic background of the student. Adelman's research provides fundamental support for devoting precious education resources to IB and similar programmes.

The strength of an IB education is widely recognized. Deans and directors of admissions from universities throughout the US value the weight of an IB education.

According to Jimm Crowder, Director of Admissions at Macalester College, "Students seeking the finest [high school] preparation available for an American college should consider the International Baccalaureate. The IB offers an integrated curriculum that provides students with the skill needed to be world-class scholars and an educational philosophy that prepares them to be first-class citizens. I do not know of a more comprehensive and appropriate learning model."

Fred Hargadon, Director of Admissions at Princeton University agrees, "IB is a first-rate programme, one we are familiar with, and it prepares students for a university like ours."

IB students are accepted to universities at higher than average rates. A 2003 survey of graduating IB seniors in the United States found that IB students were accepted more often by post-secondary institutions than the general admission pool of applicants. For more complete information on the 2003 IB US Student Survey, please contact IBNA at ibna@ibo.org.

The academic strength of IB's programmes is also one of the main reasons why other nonprofit education organizations, like the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), frequently partner with IBO. MCEC is an organization that seeks to address the needs

of children of US military personnel. According to Dr. Mary Keller, Executive Director of MCEC, "From the very beginning, MCEC has encouraged military children to pursue a rigorous academic programme. One programme we have singled out for attention is IB. We encourage military students to look for demanding courses that challenge them academically as well as programmes 'without borders' that are available worldwide - the IB programme fits both requirements!"

Assessment

Assessment is a key component of IB's Middle Years and Diploma Programmes.

With the Middle Years Programme, classroom teachers use a common set of IB-designed assessment criteria to mark their individually designed examinations. The classroom teachers' marks are reviewed by a team of specially trained Middle Years Programme teachers from North America and around the world to ensure that the assessment criteria are applied equally to the work of all Middle Years Programme students.

The Diploma Programme includes assessment of student work both by outside examiners as well as the student's own teachers. All assessment undergoes careful review or moderation to ensure that a common, international standard is applied equally to the work of students around the world.

Responsibility for all external academic judgments about the quality of Diploma Programme candidates' work rests with IB external examiners, led by chief examiners with international authority in their fields. External examiners are university professors, high school teachers and other academic authorities from North America and around the world.

An essential element of IB external assessment is that standards are the same worldwide. External assessments are also moderated, a process by which a sample of every examiner's marked papers is reviewed, and remarked if necessary. This process helps achieve consistency among examiners of the same subject.

Internal assessment is an important aspect of IB's overall assessment strategy. It recognizes the professional role of the teacher and gives students a chance to show what they can do over time, not just in the pressured context of a final examination. Internally assessed work generally counts for 20% of a student's final grade in a subject. Since teachers' grading patterns may vary from school to school and country to country, the IBO may evaluate teachers' marks and may adjust them so that international parity is maintained. This process is called external moderation of internal assessment.



Overview of IB in the United States

Support for the IB

Educators



"As we become more and more of a global society, and our schools represent a greater diversity of students, it is essential that the schools' curriculum and instructional strategies reflect the changing landscape of our educational environment. To this end, the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) provides rigorous academic programmes and assessments, a high quality teaching staff and an unwavering commitment to prepare students to be citizens in an international community. IBO is to be commended for its visionary approach to promoting a more peaceful world by engaging students, staff and community in a greater awareness of, and appreciation for, differences between and among the peoples of the world."

Dr. Gerald Tirozzi
Executive Director
National Association of Secondary School Principals



"The International Baccalaureate programmes' emphases on critical thinking skills, increased content knowledge and an interdisciplinary approach to education not only prepare students for success at the post-secondary level, but also for life and the world of work."

Dr. Kathleen Plato
Supervisor of Advanced Placement Programmes
Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction



"There will be an increasing premium on educational systems that can travel more easily across borders and meet the needs of globally organized businesses and social services. For example, the well-known Geneva-based International Baccalaureate secondary school programme is now used in [over 700] schools throughout the world; and the International Baccalaureate Organization has developed elementary and middle school curricula. Such trends and systems may not directly challenge individual and cultural identity; indeed their success across the globe presupposes that they do not clash with local values in Detroit, Denmark or Delhi."

Howard Gardner
"Too Many Choices?"
The New York Review
11 April 2002



"The International Baccalaureate programme is a critical component in our efforts to accelerate learning for all students. It helps our school district define high standards and high expectations for student performance. We find the curriculum to be unparalleled and because there is an external evaluation of student performance with established worldwide standards, we are provided with an audit of our increase in rigor."

Eric Smith
Superintendent
Anne Arundel County (Maryland) Schools



"We are interested in providing high school students in our school district every opportunity to take rigorous and challenging courses in their high school years. A few years ago, we seriously reviewed the International Baccalaureate programme and reached a decision that this programme would be a positive educational opportunity for our students. Additionally, since approximately 50% of the students in our district are children of military families stationed at Fort Hood, we felt this programme would assist these students in facilitating their transition when their families move during the high school years. The IB programme is offered at many of the high schools where military families are stationed. We are pleased with the programme and looking forward to naming our first diploma candidates this year at graduation."

Dr. Charles Patterson
Superintendent, Killeen Independent School District, Killeen, Texas
President, National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS)
Past President, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development



"The International Baccalaureate programme raised the bar for all advanced academic programmes in Fairfax County Public Schools. Student enrollment and achievement in IB courses at our most diverse schools show that high expectations lead to high performance. The IB programme teaches our students that being smart is not a matter of heredity, but of motivation and hard work. The programme leads students to deeper understandings of themselves and the world around them—basic skills for success in the 21st century."

Bernadette Glaze
Coordinator for Advanced Academic Programmes
Fairfax County (Virginia) Public Schools



“The International Baccalaureate Programme (IB) has provided the opportunity for our students to challenge themselves to higher levels of educational excellence. The IB has provided the foundation for intellectual curiosity and academic rigor to thrive. The students are able to see the world through a different set of lenses, under the direction of capable, caring teachers and school educators. In reality, the IB has been one of the most effective ways our school district has leveled the playing field for students no matter where they live, who their parents are, and despite their socio-economic status.”

Delores Hopkins
Associate Superintendent
Jackson (Mississippi) Public Schools



“Send us prepared students a la IB... It is the ‘best’ high school prep curriculum an American school can offer.”

Marilee Jones
Director of Undergraduate Admission
Massachusetts Institute of Technology



“International Baccalaureate provides an enriched, educational experience for students who seek a global perspective and who appreciate an interdisciplinary approach to learning. During my son’s participation in the high school IB programme, his understanding and value of culture developed and expanded as he learned about the interdependent nature of all disciplines and people groups. His teachers guided him and his classmates to effectively analyze and evaluate information and experiences as they discussed implications for current and future decisions. His study of literature, the arts, the social sciences, mathematics and the sciences shaped him as a learner who questions the world in which he lives and who synthesizes and creates new understandings for himself and others. Participation in IB eventually led to his successful completion of the Baylor Interdisciplinary Core Programme and a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Baylor University and contributed to his continued thirst for learning.”

Mary Christopher, Ph. D.
Assistant Professor/Certification Officer
Hardin-Simmons University



“One of the advantages of an IB curriculum is its structure and quality. It is a coordinated programme, well established, well known and well respected. We know the quality of IB courses, and we think the IB curriculum is terrific.”

Christoph Guttentag
Director of Undergraduate Admission
Duke University



"IB is well known to us for excellent preparations. Success in an IB programme correlates well with success at Harvard. We are always pleased to see the credentials of the IB Diploma Programme on the transcript."

Marilyn McGrath Lewis
Director of Undergraduate Admission
Harvard University



"I have always been a supporter of the International Baccalaureate. It is a thoughtful and genuinely intellectual curriculum with an unusually high degree of integrity and connectedness. There is no other curriculum anywhere that does a superior job of both educating students and inspiring a true and broad-based love of learning."

William Shain
Dean of Undergraduate Admissions
Vanderbilt University



"The rigor of the IB Diploma requirements meets our recommendation for the strongest high school preparation possible... In sum, the IB diploma candidate who has met the challenge successfully receives strong consideration from the William and Mary admission committee."

Allison Jesse
Former Associate Director of Undergraduate Admission
College of William and Mary





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Support for the IB

IB Graduates



"...I can't imagine a better experience than the journey I have made since graduating from the IB programme. I learned a lot at St. Pete High, but I have to say in retrospect that the course in Latin American History left the biggest impression on me. Exploring the United States' tragic relationship with the countries of Latin America caused me to think critically for the first time about the power of reporting facts accurately (or inaccurately, for that matter) and placing them in a realistic context. I try to keep that lesson in mind in all the work that I do."

Adam Elend

School: St. Petersburg High School, St. Petersburg, Florida, USA
Year of graduation: 1995



"My career may have taken a different turn from what I had planned, but I still take every chance I get to advocate for the IB programmes. My brother and I are both IB diploma graduates... Now, I am working as a writer for the Alzheimer's Association national office. I do much of the solicitation and stewardship writing for the Development division. So, I seem to have found my niche in doing "behind-the-scenes" support for fundraisers. It has been a wonderful association to work for and I feel like I am continuing to make a difference, no matter how small. I knew from my CAS experience that this was important to me; I just never imagined that I would end up having to decipher scientific reports as part of my job! (Thank goodness for Mrs. Tosto, IB Biology, HL!)"

Anya (Henry) Kompare

School: Lincoln Park High School, Chicago, Illinois, USA
Year of graduation: 1991



"I was admitted to all of the universities to which I applied and offered scholarships, I am now a student at Guilford College in North Carolina on the presidential scholarship, where because of my IB scores I was able to enter with 12 credits. I am majoring in psychology. I loved my experience as an IB student, even all the long nights working on papers and studying. It is an experience I would never give up, nor would I ever discourage any student from studying in the IB programme."

Laura Marie Myerchin

School: Cajon High School, San Bernardino, CA, USA
Year of Graduation: 2001



"I am a student in Ridgeview High School's International Baccalaureate Programme. ...The International Baccalaureate Programme is one of the best things American education has ever experienced. It is not merely a fad programme with a high sounding name. Nor is it just another ploy to destroy real education...

The Programme has been around for many decades and has proved its worth in thousands of students who have graduated from it. Not only have they been handed scholarships left and right, but there is an astonishing number of graduates who have been accepted into the world's leading universities.

This programme teaches students to think outside the box, to speak in public and to manage a successful career while milking life for all it is worth.

...With every passing day, it becomes more vital that students think globally. Just because the International Baccalaureate programme is teaching them to do so does not mean that it has a left-wing agenda.

The United States imports and exports billions of dollars of goods each year. We cannot sustain our way of life without outside nations. We should be thinking on a global scale, not secluding ourselves from the world.

We need to applaud (the people who run our public schools) and support the International Baccalaureate programme because it is the only light at the end of the tunnel for our education system."

Melissa Sue Dossey

School: Ridgeview High School, Orange Park, Florida, USA

Year of Graduation: 2004

From: "Letters from Readers," *Florida Times-Union*, 5 March, 2004

