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Primary Years Programme

Frequently asked questions about the Primary Years Programme

What is the Primary Years Programme?

The Primary Years Programme (PYP) is a curriculum framework for young learners aged 3–12 designed by the International Baccalaureate (IB). Founded on a philosophy that recognizes a child's natural curiosity, creativity and ability to reflect, the PYP generates a stimulating, challenging learning environment to nurture those assets and foster a lifelong love of learning in every child. The PYP, like all IB programmes, is transdisciplinary, meaning students learn across subject areas while investigating big ideas.

Does the PYP have a specific set of standards?

In the PYP, students learn about significant concepts through units of inquiry. The six transdisciplinary themes that guide units of inquiry and compose a year of study are:

- Who we are
- Where we are in place and time
- How we express ourselves
- How the world works
- How we organize ourselves
- Sharing the planet.

Units of inquiry interweave subject areas such as mathematics, language arts, science and social studies. This approach encourages students to make their own connections between what they learn in core subject areas and how it relates to the world around them.

The school outlines its specific knowledge content and academic curriculum, guided by the following five essential elements:

- The **knowledge** content is organized under the transdisciplinary themes. Each school decides which specific topics to study under each theme.
- The learning **skills** aim to help students become independent, well-functioning, self-motivated learners.
- The learning **attitudes** aim to develop a lifelong love of learning and nurture a child's curiosity and confidence.
- The **action** component emphasizes the need to connect the student with his or her own potential and responsibility for using what was learned.
- The rigorous guidelines for **classroom practices** to match the educational philosophy and values of the IB are communicated through professional development and a school's internal reflection process.

What are the advantages of an IB education?

- IB World Schools (the only schools authorized to offer IB programmes) are subject to a strict accreditation process monitored by the IB, ensuring that schools provide a high-quality education.
- IB teaching methods and curriculums are research-based and draw from the best educational practices from systems around the world.
- IB teachers are required to participate in many professional development opportunities to continually promote their awareness of current educational practices and new thinking.
- IB students develop a sense of the world around them and their responsibility to it. (See "What is an IB Education?")
- IB programmes are recognized internationally and ease the educational transitions of mobile students so that their education is not adversely affected if their families relocate.

Do IB teachers receive special training?

All PYP teachers receive professional development in IB's approaches to teaching and approaches to learning from certified IB workshop leaders. This is a requirement for IB World Schools implementing the PYP.

Are IB programmes considered "gifted" programmes?

The PYP is implemented schoolwide and adapted by teachers to meet the learning needs of all students. In most cases, the Middle Years Programme (MYP) is also a schoolwide program. All PYP teachers are required to participate in collaborative planning and reflection to make their teaching practices consistent and to foster a holistic approach to education. A growing body of evidence suggests a positive relationship between teacher collaboration and student achievement.

Does implementing an IB programme mean my child's school will not teach local or national standards such as the Common Core?

The IB is committed to making sure that students in IB programmes meet and exceed local or national standards. With the implementation of any IB programme, schools are required to examine their curriculum carefully to ensure that there is alignment with local, state or national standards. More information on the IB and the Common Core is available at *www.ibo.org*.

Have studies been done on the impact of the PYP?

The IB places great value on external validation of its programmes, curriculums and professional development. A recent Global International Schools' Assessment study found that PYP students outperformed non-IB students in mathematics, reading and writing. Additional studies on programme impact, quality assurance, programme development and assessment research are available at *www.ibo.org/research*.

When do students start and finish the PYP? When do they transition to the MYP?

The PYP is designed for students aged 3–12 (preschool and primary grades). The MYP spans students aged 11–16, and the Diploma Programme (DP) and Career-related Programme (CP) is for the last two years of high school, students aged 16–19.

How can I learn more about the IB and PYP?

- Visit the IB website at *www.ibo.org*
- Attend school meetings and events
- Speak with your school's PYP coordinator
- Speak with your child's PYP classroom teacher.

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What is an IB education?

IB's mission and philosophy

At the centre of an International Baccalaureate (IB) education are students aged 3 to 19 with unique learning styles, strengths and challenges. The IB focuses on each student as a whole person. Thus, IB programmes address not only cognitive development but social, emotional and physical well-being. The aim is to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people with adaptable skills to tackle society's complex challenges and who will help to make it a better, more peaceful world.

Validating the efficacy of the IB's four programmes are *research* and more than 45 years of practical experience. IB programmes emphasize learning how to learn and teaching students to value learning as an essential, integral part of their everyday lives. The IB promotes the development of schools that:

- inspire students to ask questions, pursue personal aspirations, set challenging goals and develop the persistence to achieve those goals
- develop knowledgeable students who make reasoned ethical judgments and acquire the flexibility, perseverance and confidence they need in order to bring about meaningful change
- encourage healthy relationships, individual and shared responsibility and effective teamwork.

Measuring Outcomes

To measure what students have learned and to monitor their progress, IB teachers use a range of assessment strategies including formative assessments that provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to develop their teaching and by students to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and target areas that need improvement. Teachers use summative assessments which are internationally benchmarked for older students, and are criterion-referenced. This means students are measured against a set of agreed upon learning outcomes rather than graded on a "bell curve" as in norm-referenced assessments.

The IB's four programmes

Primary Years Programme

In the *Primary Years Programme (PYP)*, the IB's youngest students learn about and use knowledge, concepts and skills from a variety of subjects to explore six transdisciplinary themes and begin to develop the attributes of the *learner profile*.

Middle Years Programme

The *Middle Years Programme (MYP)* is a challenging framework that encourages students to make practical connections between their studies and the real world and culminates in a personal project. Students who complete the MYP are well-prepared to undertake the IB Diploma Programme.

Diploma Programme

Career-related Programme

In the final two years of high school, students can choose to enter either:

- the *Diploma Programme (DP)*, a curriculum which emphasizes both breadth and depth of knowledge. The DP is made up of six subject groups and a core, comprising theory of knowledge (TOK), creativity, activity, service (CAS) and a research paper of up to 4,000 words, the extended essay (EE);
- or, the *Career-related Programme (CP)*. The CP is combines two IB diploma courses with school-based, career-related study. It equips students to pursue further education or to enter their chosen career path immediately.

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