

## Frequently Asked Questions – WCSD IB Diploma Program

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**What is the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program?** The International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IB DP) is an internationally recognized program that offers 11th and 12th grade students an opportunity to participate in rigorous coursework that extends their thinking and prepares them for college and beyond. Over two years, students take six courses; write an extended essay of independent research guided by a faculty member; participate in reflective and balancing experiences outside the school day that are creative, active, and service based; and participate in deep critical thinking through the TOK course.

**What are the advantages of enrolling in the IB Diploma Program?** Students who complete the IB DP are preparing for college and life success. Students gain a broad world view; follow in-depth approaches to the academic structure; and develop time management, problem-solving, research, and organization skills that will remain with them long after their IB experience is over. CAS experiences provide students opportunities for involvement in giving back to the community beyond the walls of the school. Students are assessed over two years based on global standards. Students are assessed in multiple ways including externally developed and scored exams, oral language exams in both the student's native language and an acquired language, and on projects such as a science laboratory notebook, art portfolios, essays, and various projects. Students who successfully complete the IB Diploma Program curriculum are among the most prepared for college courses, even at highly selective colleges and universities.

**Why should I encourage my child to take IB courses?** Students who succeed in the IB Diploma Program do better than many other groups of student in university level work. Studies have been conducted that indicate IB students maintain higher grade point averages at universities and are more likely to graduate in four years than student who have not participated in the IB Diploma Program (visit [www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org) ). In addition, university admissions officials expect students to take the most challenging courses, of which they are capable, while in high school. Also, student who take IB courses learn to see the world from multiple perspectives to examine different points of view, and to see themselves as part of the world community. The IB Diploma is the most prestigious high school diploma in the world. It is the only diploma recognized internationally, and the program of choice for many selective secondary schools around the world. More than 400 colleges and universities in the United States provide admission, scholarships, and advanced standing for the IB Diploma recipients.

**What preparation does a student need in order to be successful in the IB Diploma Program?** Since the IB courses offer a high degree of challenge, student should be highly motivated learners. To participate in the IB Diploma Program, students should take the most challenging courses they can, and begin a second language as soon as possible. To minimize the need for students to take extra courses along with their IB requirements, students should complete graduation requirements that are not offered as part of the Diploma Program. Future IB Diploma students should have strong reading and writing skills along with consistent study habits. It is not required, but highly recommended that students interested in the IB DP begin taking advanced courses in middle school and WCSD Pre-IB course during their 9th and 10th grade years.

**Why should I encourage my child to take WCSD pre-IB courses?** The WCSD pre-IB courses were put in to place to build advanced pathways. The WCSD pre-IB courses are taught by staff members who work closely with the IB DP teacher to align the work. In addition, WCSD pre-IB staff receive IB training and on-going feedback from the IB DP coordinator. The WCSD pre-IB courses will build an understanding of rigor and reflective thinking.

**How do IB courses compare to other high school courses?** IB courses are more challenging than typical high school courses. IB course are aimed at highly motivated students who seek challenging, yet engaging and fulfilling academic opportunities. Additionally, the IB Diploma Program is aimed at students who seek involvement in their education that extends beyond the classroom. The IB DP is a well-rounded six subject program taken over two years which is distinctly different from any current high school offering.

**Are all IB Diploma Programs alike?** All authorized IB Diploma Programs share certain features; they must provide subjects within six content areas; they must offer appropriately demanding coursework to prepare students adequately for the IB exams and various assessments; and they must maintain a staff of trained IB teachers. The similarities allow an IB student to travel and enroll in the program regardless of location. One major difference among IB schools is course offerings.

**What training do IB teachers receive to prepare them to teach the IB classes?** IB teachers attend training seminars offered through the IB Americas offices. In addition, they receive periodic updates and notification of curriculum changes from the IB Curriculum Center. As course curriculum is updated, teachers attend further training approved by IB Americas.

Teachers access the Online Curriculum Center to connect with IB teacher and examiners from around the world. In addition, the WCSD IB Diploma Program is part of the Midwest Association of IB Schools (MIBS). This allows staff to meet and discuss the implementation of the IB Diploma Program, as well as receive current updates from the IB Organization (IBO).

**When do I begin taking IB Diploma Program courses?** The IB Diploma Program is for students in 11th and 12th grades. The courses begin in 11th grade and are two years in length. There are WCSD “pre-IB” courses offered in 9th and 10th grade to better prepare students for the IB DP, however, the WCSD pre-IB courses are not offered through the IB Organization, but are created by the Waterloo Schools to support advanced programming pathways.

**Are IB students segregated from the rest of the student body?** The IB Diploma Program is a small cohort of 25 students or less. Currently, both high schools run one cohort, however they can offer two cohorts as program needs expand. IB Diploma students are in a cohort for many of their classes, creating a strong community of learners and new friendships. IB learners are actively involved in their school and community. The IB classes are taught by staff who teach various subjects at both high schools, therefore students will travel throughout the school with all students.

**How do I enroll in the WCSD IB Diploma Program?** Both high schools offer the IB Diploma Program. Therefore, any student enrolled in the Waterloo Schools is able to apply to be part of the program. An application must be submitted to the WCSD IB Coordinator prior to admittance into the program. Both East and West High Schools have an IB Diploma coordinator and counselor at the building to discuss scheduling needs with potential candidates and provide IB information.

There are no defined criteria a student must meet to be admitted. However, it is advised that potential IB candidates take advanced courses (WCSD “pre-IB”) to prepare for the level of rigor.

**Are IB courses weighted?** Yes, as College Board Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) course are recognized as being academically more rigorous, it is the policy of the Waterloo Community School District to weight student grades (see WCSD policy 504.22). Weighting a grade adds to the grade point value earned in the class. Grades in weighted classes will each receive one extra point. Therefore, an A in a weighted class will yield 5 grade points. **Only AP and IB courses will be included in the weighted scale.** The WCSD “pre-IB” courses are not weighted.

**What is the difference between AP and IB?** Both AP and IB curricula offer rigor for motivated students. Both are considered to be high quality preparation for college and university courses. Both culminate in exams that are externally moderated and equate to college credit based on scores. However, the well-rounded approach to the IB Diploma Program is significantly different from taking an AP course.

Some of the differences between AP and IB include:

- IB teachers work collaboratively to make connections between and among subjects.
- IB courses provide a well-rounded and balanced understanding of core concepts.
- IB Diploma students participate in two years of self-directed, mentor monitored research.

- IB Diploma students reflect on outside of school activities that provide balance.
- IB Diploma students participate in service work and reflect on how it supports community growth.
- IB Diploma students reflect on ways of knowing and areas of knowledge in the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course.
- IB courses are offered over the course of two years with culminating exams at the end of the student's senior year. AP courses are typically offered in one year with a culminating exam at the end of that year.
- IB teachers have some input into each student's test score by means of the Internal Assessment portion of the course. The teacher's input is moderated to ensure the same standards apply worldwide. A student's AP score is determined by the AP exam alone, which is externally scored.

**What does the IB Diploma Program cost to participate?** Presently, all students who participate in the IB Diploma Program will have their IB registration and exam fees paid through the Waterloo Community School District.

**Do American colleges and universities "favor" either the IB or AP methods of preparation?** Post-secondary institutions recognize that students who perform well on either IB or AP exams are likely to be successful in college. However, as 21st century skills ([www.educateiowa.gov](http://www.educateiowa.gov)) continue to influence curriculum and instruction, the IB DP is directly in line with the tenets of college and career readiness:

*We must develop learners who work comfortably with people from other cultures, can solve problems creatively, write and speak well, think in a multidisciplinary way, and evaluate information critically. – Gerwitz, 2007*

Most universities publish their recognition policies on their websites. For more information, please visit the IBO website.

**What is the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO)?** The IB Diploma Program is governed by the International Baccalaureate Organization in Geneva, Switzerland and administered by the Curriculum and Assessment Center in Cardiff, Wales. The organization originated in 1968 in Europe as a single program for internationally mobile student to prepare them for university, ensuring quality educational standards for student regardless of where they live. Today, the IBO continues to provide high quality education for a better world. Information on the IBO can be found at [www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org).